
Data quality information — Housing and homelessness services, sector summary G

Data quality information

Data quality information (DQI) has been prepared for the first time for the 2011 Report on Government Services. DQI provides information against the seven ABS data quality framework dimensions, for performance indicators in the Housing and homelessness services sector summary.

Where RoGS indicators align with National Agreement indicators, DQI has been sourced from the Steering Committee's reports on National Agreements to the COAG Reform Council.

Technical DQI has been supplied or agreed by relevant data providers. Additional Steering Committee commentary does not necessarily reflect the views of data providers.

DQI are available for the following performance indicators:

Low income households in rental stress	2
Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions	4
Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard	6
Australians who are homeless	8

Performance indicators

Low income households in rental stress

Data quality information for this indicator has been sourced from the Steering Committee's report to the COAG Reform Council on the National Affordable Housing Agreement (data supplied by ABS), with additional Steering Committee comments.

Indicator definition and description

Element	Outcome
Indicator	Proportion of low income households in rental stress
Measure (computation)	<p><u>Numerator</u>: Number of low income households in rental stress</p> <p>For low income households, computation for numerator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household income is gross household income, excluding Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)• Rental expenses is the amount paid in rent, plus any rates payments made by the tenant, less CRA or other ongoing rental assistance.• Household is included in the numerator if weekly rent payments exceed 30 per cent of weekly household income. <p><u>Denominator</u>: Total number of low income rental households, defined as being those households in the bottom two quintiles of equivalised disposable household income (excluding CRA or other rent assistance) calculated separately on a state by state and capital city balance of state basis.</p> <p><u>Computation</u>: $\frac{\text{Number of low income rental households in rental stress} \times 100}{\text{Total number of low income rental households}}$</p>
Data source/s	Survey of Income and Housing (SIH) – for numerator and denominator.

Data Quality Framework Dimensions

Institutional environment	For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment .
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SIH collects data on the housing costs and income from usual residents of private dwellings in Australia. Rent payments, rates payments and CRA are separately identified.• While the SIH does collect information on CRA, it does not separately identify other forms of ongoing rent assistance.• The SIH excludes the 0.8 per cent of the Australian population living in very remote areas. This exclusion impacts on comparability of data for the Northern Territory, where these people are around 23 per cent of the population. As a consequence of this exclusion, comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in remote areas are not available.• Household disability status cannot currently be obtained from the SIH. It will be available from the 2009–10 survey onwards.• The 16 000 renter households with nil or negative total income (0.5 per cent of all low income households) have been included in the denominator but excluded from the numerator. Analysis of the 17 000 renter households with nil or negative income in 2005–06 showed that average household net worth for these households was \$226 000, compared with \$50 000 for all other low income renter households.
Timeliness	The biennial SIH is enumerated over a twelve month period to account for

seasonal variability in its measures. Results for 2007–08 were released in August 2009.

- Accuracy**
- The total sample take in 2007–08 was 9345 households, with a response rate was 84.0 per cent. Most of the non-response was due to householders that were not able to be contacted, and only one-sixth of the non-response was due to households refusing to participate in the survey. To account in part for non-response, SIH data are weighted by: state, part of state, age, sex, labour force status, number of households and household composition.
 - At the national level this Performance Indicator for 2007–08 has a relative standard error (RSE) of 5 per cent. RSEs are higher for state and territory measures, and for other disaggregations.
 - In 2009–10 the SIH sample has been doubled to 18 000 households. While this will reduce national RSEs on average by 30 per cent, the improvements will be larger for estimates for some of the smaller states and territories.
- Coherence** The data items used to construct the measures are consistent between cycles within each data source and support assessment of change over time.
- Accessibility** The unit record data used to compile this measure are available to other users through the Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURFs) released by ABS.
- Interpretability** Information is available for both collections to aid interpretation of the data. See the Survey of Income and Housing User Guide on the ABS web site.

Data Gaps/Issues Analysis

- Key data gaps/ issues** The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:
- SIH data are only available every two years. An assessment of the relative speed of change in results for this indicator is required to determine whether more regular data collection is necessary.
 - The size of the RSEs mean that the data may not be adequate for measuring change over time for some disaggregations. Small year to year movements may be difficult to detect if the size of the RSEs are large compared to the size of the difference between estimates.
 - Low income households in State or Territory housing authority dwellings have access to rebated rents and generally pay no more than 25 per cent of their assessable income in rent.
 - While the definition of assessable income varies across jurisdictions, social housing administrative data indicate that the survey estimates of rental stress, as reported by the SIH, are not a reliable indicator of sustained rental stress in this sector because they are a point in time estimate that may not include rent adjustments yet to be made by the State or Territory housing authority.

Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions

Data quality information for this indicator has been sourced from the Steering Committee's report to the COAG Reform Council on the National Affordable Housing Agreement (data supplied by ABS), with additional Steering Committee comments.

Indicator definition and description

Element	Outcome
Indicator	Proportion of Indigenous households living in overcrowded conditions
Measure (computation)	<u>Numerator</u> : Number of overcrowded Indigenous households. Calculated using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard for requiring one or more additional bedrooms <u>Denominator</u> : Total number of Indigenous households <u>Computation</u> : $\frac{\text{Number of overcrowded Indigenous households} \times 100}{\text{Total number of Indigenous households}}$
Data source/s	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) – for numerator and denominator. Note NATSISS and NATSIHS provide data on a triennial basis. Data from 2008 is sourced from NATSISS.

Data Quality Framework Dimensions

Institutional environment	For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment .
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An Indigenous household is a household where at least one usual resident of any age identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. In the NATSISS, an adult provides information about household composition and the number of bedrooms in each. Housing utilisation was unable to be derived for about 1 per cent of Indigenous households.• In the 2008 NATSISS, household income was either not stated or not known for 19 per cent of households. Therefore income quantiles are based on the 81 per cent of households for which this information was available.• The computation of this measure does not take into account visitors that were staying in the dwelling for less than six months. As such, it will underestimate overcrowding if there were a large number of temporary visitors on a regular basis.• The 2008 NATSISS did not collect information about dwelling type or main source of household income.
Timeliness	The NATSISS is conducted every six years. The 2008 NATSISS was conducted from August 2008 to April 2009. Results from survey were released in October 2009.
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The NATSISS is conducted in all states and territories and includes remote and non-remote areas. The 2008 sample was 13 300 persons /6900 households, with a response rate of 82 per cent of households.• In the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame, the 2008 NATSISS adopted a screening approach for locating its target population (compared to the more common approach of using a dwelling frame for general population surveys). Potential bias due to undercoverage in this screening approach was addressed by the application of adjustments to the initial weights, including adjustment based on the density of the Indigenous population in different areas. As undercoverage can result in variances across population characteristics, as well as across data items, caution should be exercised when interpreting the survey results. For more information see the 2008

	NATSISS Quality Declaration.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, this indicator has an RSE of 5 per cent at the national level. For the states the RSE was between 10 per cent and 20 per cent, while for the NT it was 6 per cent, 32 per cent for the ACT. Finer levels of disaggregation (e.g. by the inclusion of other cross classifying variables) may result in higher levels of sampling error.
Coherence	Data items used to construct the measures are consistent between cycles of the NATSISS and NATSIHS and support assessment of change over time.
Accessibility	See also National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008. The unit record data used to compile this measure are available to other users through the Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURFs) released by ABS.
Interpretability	Information is available to aid interpretation of the data. See Explanatory Notes in National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2008. The 2008 NATSISS Users' Guide will be released in 2010.

Data Gaps/Issues Analysis

Key data gaps/ issues	<p>The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATSISS/NATSIHS data are only available on an alternating three-yearly cycle. • NATSISS data are of acceptable accuracy. However, a number of the RSEs for the disaggregations are greater than 25 per cent and should be used with caution. The size of the RSEs mean that the NATSISS data may not be adequate for measuring change over time for some disaggregations. Small year to year movements may be difficult to detect if the size of the RSEs are large compared to the size of the difference between estimates.
------------------------------	--

Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard

Data quality information for this indicator has been sourced from the Steering Committee's report to the COAG Reform Council on the National Affordable Housing Agreement (data supplied by ABS), with additional Steering Committee comments.

Indicator definition and description

Element	Outcome
Indicator	Proportion of Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard
Measure (computation)	<u>Numerator</u> : Number of Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard. The dwelling is assessed as being of an acceptable standard if it has all four basic facilities working (for washing people, for washing clothes/bedding, for storing/preparing food and sewerage) and not more than two major structural problems. <u>Denominator</u> : Total number of Indigenous households <u>Computation</u> : Number of Indigenous households living in houses of an acceptable standard x 100 / Total number of Indigenous households
Data source/s	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) – for numerator and denominator. Note NATSISS and NATSIHS provide data on a triennial basis. Data from 2008 are sourced from NATSISS.

Data Quality Framework Dimensions

Institutional environment	For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment .
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An Indigenous household is a household where at least one usual resident of any age identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.• In the NATSISS, an adult provides detailed information on basic household facilities and the number and types of major structural problems.• In the 2008 NATSISS, household income was either not stated or not known for 19 per cent of households. Therefore income quintiles are based on the 81 per cent of households for which this information was available.• The 2008 NATSISS did not collect information on dwelling type or household income type.
Timeliness	The NATSISS is conducted every six years. The 2008 NATSISS was conducted from August 2008 to April 2009. Results from survey were released in October 2009.
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The NATSISS is conducted in all states and territories and includes remote and non-remote areas. The 2008 sample was 13 300 persons /6900 households, with a response rate of 82 per cent of households.• In the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame, the 2008 NATSISS adopted a screening approach for locating its target population (compared to the more common approach of using a dwelling frame for general population surveys). Potential bias due to undercoverage in this screening approach was addressed by the application of adjustments to the initial weights, including adjustment based on the density of the Indigenous population in different areas. As undercoverage can result in variances across population characteristics, as well as across data items, caution should be exercised when interpreting the survey results. For more information see the 2008 NATSISS Quality Declaration.• Overall, this indicator has an RSE of 1 per cent at the national level, and 3 per cent or less for each state or territory. Finer levels of disaggregation (e.g. by

	the inclusion of other cross classifying variables) may result in higher levels of sampling error.
Coherence	Data items used to construct the measures are consistent between cycles of the NATSISS and NATSIHS and support assessment of change over time.
Accessibility	See also National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008. The unit record data used to compile this measure are available to other users through the Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURFs) released by ABS.
Interpretability	Information is available to aid interpretation of the data. See Explanatory Notes in National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2008. The 2008 NATSISS Users' Guide will be released in 2010.

Data Gaps/Issues Analysis

Key data gaps/ issues	<p>The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATSISS/NATSIHS data are only available on an alternating three-yearly cycle. • NATSISS data are of acceptable accuracy. However, a number of the RSEs for the disaggregations are greater than 25 per cent and should be used with caution. The size of the RSEs mean that the NATSISS data may not be adequate for measuring change over time for some disaggregations. Small year to year movements may be difficult to detect if the size of the RSEs are large compared to the size of the difference between estimates.
------------------------------	--

Australians who are homeless

Data quality information for this indicator has been sourced from the Steering Committee's report to the COAG Reform Council on the National Affordable Housing Agreement (data sourced from ABS), with additional Steering Committee comments.

Indicator definition and description

Element	Outcome
Indicator	Proportion of Australians who are homeless
Measure (computation)	The proportion of Australians who are homeless (primary homeless + secondary homeless + tertiary homeless, as defined by Chamberlain and MacKenzie)

The measure is defined as:

Numerator: Number of people who are homeless

Denominator: Number of Australians

No data are currently available for the numerator for 2007-08 and 2008-09. The data currently available to inform the measure for this indicator are sourced from the Chamberlain and MacKenzie research report which uses data from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, 2006-07 Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) client data and the 3rd National Census of Homeless School Students.

Data source/s Numerator: Sourced from the *Counting the Homeless 2006* national and state/territory reports. Population census data are collected every 5 years, SAAP data are published annually, and the National Census of Homeless School Students data are collected every five years.

Denominator: 2006 Census of Population and Housing (not adjusted by undercount estimates). Data are collected every 5 years.

Data Quality Framework Dimensions

Institutional environment The *Counting the Homeless* project is undertaken by researchers Chris Chamberlain of the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology and David MacKenzie of the Centre for Applied Social Research at the School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning, RMIT University, in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

- *ABS Census* - For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment.
- SAAP Collection – For information on the institutional environment of the AIHW including the legislative obligations of the AIHW and its governance arrangements, please see <http://www.aihw.gov.au/aboutus/index.cfm>
- National Census of Homeless School Students – This census is undertaken by the authors of the research report, *Counting the Homeless* with results published by FaHCSIA in the report *Youth Homelessness in Australia 2006*.

Relevance The research on which this measure is based was specifically commissioned for the purpose of counting the homeless. The use of the 'cultural definition' of homeless and associated concepts underpinning the Counting the Homeless research project are directly relevant to the numerator in this performance indicator.

As noted above, the methodology is subject to review.

Timeliness The Counting the Homeless report which provides the numerator for this

**Accuracy,
Coherence,
Accessibility**

performance indicator was released on the ABS website on 4 September 2008. State and territory Counting the Homeless publications were released on the AIHW website on 9 July 2009.

First Release 2006 Census variables which provide the denominator were available on 27 June 2007; Second release variables were available on 25 October 2007.

There are a range of issues in the Counting the Homeless methodology relating to accuracy, coherence and interpretability. There is potential under and overcounting of homeless people in the data sources used by Chamberlain and MacKenzie and their methodology attempts to address these issues in bringing the data sources together to produce the best possible overall counts. However, these methods are not perfect and may result in some double counting and other inconsistencies when the data sources are brought together. The broad methodology of the research has been published but there is little published documentation around the quality of the estimates as they relate to these dimensions or for the purposes of reporting data for this PI.

The Counting the Homeless review steering committee has produced an issues paper that has sought comments from stakeholders on issues in the methodology. This paper is available on the Homelessness Clearing House hosted by FaHCSIA. See

http://www.homelessnessinfo.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1195:have-your-say-issues-paper-from-abs-on-countingthe-homeless&catid=151:research-and-data&Itemid=43

ABS has published a quality statement on the dwelling structure variable collected in the Census which is relevant to the primary homeless count. See <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/BD9A932986DD5C7ACA25729E0008A899?opendocument>

Some of the issues identified to date are reported below by the ABS. However, there is some contention about the extent of the issues raised – as noted in the AIHW comments that follow.

ABS assessment of the accuracy and coherence of the numerator for PI:

Primary homeless – Data reported for this PI equates this homeless category with the cross-classification of the Census dwelling structure ‘Improvised home, tent, sleepers out’ with either usual residence at that structure or no usual residence. It is ABS’s view that many of the Census counts (up to half) observed in this cross-classification, are unlikely to represent people that meet the cultural definition of primary homeless. The Census is also likely to have missed some people that should have been both enumerated in this category and who would likely represent people that meet the cultural definition of primary homeless. The scale of undercount in this category is not known, but it is implausible that the homeownership, income, occupation and geographic location characteristics of those people overcounted in this PI will be similar to potential undercounts.

Secondary homeless – It is highly likely that the use of multiple sources in compiling the data for this PI results in some double counting of people. For example, it appears that the SAAP ‘support period’ count was used to compile this PI, which counts people receiving support in a period that spans Census night but not necessarily being accommodated on Census night. This may overcount this population by between 40 per cent and 60 per cent in the PI, because those people overcounted in the SAAP count may be either no longer homeless on Census night, or counted in one of the other homelessness components of this PI sourced from the Census.

Tertiary homeless – Data reported for this PI has been compiled using Census data to identify dwellings that may house homeless people in single rooms without their own bathroom or security of tenure. It is the ABS view that it is not clear whether the appropriate dwellings are identified, and no account is taken in the compiling the PI of the personal characteristics of people enumerated in these dwellings in the Census in estimating this component of homelessness. Many of the Census counts observed in this research classification are unlikely to represent people that meet the cultural definition of tertiary homeless.

Overall, it is the ABS view that the youth homeless component of this PI is much higher than can be reconcilable with Census information about this population.

AIHW Comment on ABS Views

The ABS view on primary homelessness is based on an assumption about which people should or should not be included in the cultural definition of primary homelessness. The additional information included in the Census data quality statement on dwelling structure (linked above) has shed light on the characteristics of people in living in improvised dwellings, showing among other things that some of these people have jobs, reasonable incomes and mortgages. This raises issues about the state of disadvantage of some in this group. However, it cannot be assumed that all of these people do not meet the cultural definition of homelessness. These people meet the definition of living in substandard accommodation which forms the basis of the primary homeless definition.

While there will be situations where people are living in improvised dwellings while in the process of building their home, there will be other circumstances where people are in these dwellings due to problems of mental health, substance abuse, family violence and lack of affordable housing. All of these are of direct policy interest in the reform initiatives on homelessness. Unfortunately, there is no information that differentiates those with personal and housing problems from those that do not have such problems but choose to live in improvised dwellings.

Discussions about the definition of cultural homelessness and its application will form an important part of the review. There will be a number of stakeholders (government agencies, NGOs, sector peak bodies and the authors of the report) that will dispute the assessments made by ABS on the primary count and the youth count, either due to definitional issues or the contention that the Census is not adequate in identifying these people effectively. The review will allow for objective discussions around these issues, which will enable views to be provided and assessed. It is particularly important that Chamberlain and MacKenzie have a chance to put their views.

The ABS views are selective and all relate to possible over-counts with the possible interpretation that the overall numbers that have been published overstate the problem. The review will provide a better assessment of the overall picture by considering both under and overcounting, an improved understanding of definitions and how they should be applied, and how best to measure these with hard data and where adjustments may need to be made to gain a better understanding of the dimensions of homelessness.

Interpretability

The national Counting the Homeless report is available on the ABS website at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2050.0Main+Features12006?OpenDocument>

The state and territory Counting the Homeless reports are available on the AIHW website at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10832>.

Data Gaps/Issues Analysis

Key data gaps/ issues The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:

- A review of the Counting the Homeless methodology is currently being undertaken by the ABS, and the outcomes of the review are expected to be released during February 2011. The review has provided input to improve field collection procedures for the 2011 Census, and makes recommendations on how to improve the methodology used to derive estimates of the homeless population. The review will also produce reworked estimates using the recommended improved methodology as far as possible for the 2001 and 2006 Censuses.
- The Steering Committee recommends that potential alternative data sources for reporting against this indicator continue to be investigated for years where Census data are not available.
- A new national Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection is currently being developed and data are anticipated to be collected from 1 July 2011. The SHS data collection will expand the scope, type of information collected and provide more timely information of those people who are provided with specialist homelessness services, which may provide a proxy measure for this indicator.
- There are currently no adequate counts of people experiencing homelessness who access mainstream services. However, the inclusion of homelessness flags in mainstream data sets is being explored, and there is a commitment to develop a common definition and standards for adoption in agency specific mainstream services datasets.