The Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement Framework:

DASHBOARD 2021

VERSION 3.0

July 2021

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Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness

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The Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH)

The WA Alliance to End Homelessness is comprised of a group of individuals and organisations that have come together to end homelessness in Western Australia.

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Disclaimer

The opinions in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness or any of its organisations.

CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the 2021 update to the *Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement Framework: Dashboard* (the *Dashboard*), which was first released in August 2019, and updated in February 2020. The *Dashboard* is an evolving, accessible, and visual platform designed to present and report on outcomes relevant to the key targets of the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH). The *Dashboard* aims to answer the following question: Are we are 'on track' to end homelessness in Western Australia?

1.1 Background

In July 2018, the WAAEH published the *Strategy to End Homelessness* (the *Strategy*). The *Strategy* articulates a 10-year plan to end homelessness in Western Australia, invoking a whole-of-society response. The *Strategy* comprises nine broad targets across the following areas: reducing and ending homelessness; preventing homelessness through addressing 'structural' and 'individual' drivers of homelessness; improving policy and practice within the service sector; and, improving measurement, accountability, collaboration, and governance mechanisms. Those targets relating to reducing, ending and preventing homelessness, which have been operationalised and for which data exists, form the backbone of the present version of the *Dashboard*.

The *Dashboard* sits alongside both the *Strategy* and *The Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Framework* (the Framework). The WAAEH, via Shelter WA, received funding from Lotterywest to develop the Framework to measure and monitor progress towards ending homelessness. The Centre for Social Impact at The University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), a founding member of the WAAEH, undertook the task of developing the Framework.

The *Framework* applies a complexity science approach to theorising systems of social change. This manifests itself in (a) the focus on a web of domains beyond simply the core homelessness targets; and, (b) the multi-level structure of the Framework—causal factors are identified across micro (individuals), meso (organisational, program and service indicators) and macro (population-level) levels of society. The complexity approach provides the rich platform to build the evidence base required to undertake effective practice and policymaking.

The *Framework* is organised into seven domains, which are broad, conceptual 'buckets' into which one or more outcomes can fit. The seven domains that form the backbone of the Framework are: (1) The State of Homelessness; (2) Structural Factors; (3) Individual Factors; (4) Representation, Voice and Advocacy; (5) Resources; (6) Collaborative Efficacy; and (7) The Social Services Sector. Each domain is then divided into outcomes (such as Outcome 1.1 'Homelessness is decreased') and further into specific indicators (e.g. Indicator 1.1.1 'Rates of overall homelessness') and then into precise measures (e.g. 1.1.1.1 'The overall rate of persons aged 15 years and over across all homeless categories in Western Australia').

A comprehensive Framework needs to account for and assess the state of homelessness itself (e.g., the overall rate of homelessness, rates of rough sleeping or rates of chronic homelessness), the drivers into and exit out of homelessness and the efficacy of the homelessness service system response. At this juncture, we have focused on the state of homelessness itself and the drivers of homelessness. We hope to address the measurement of other components of the Framework, namely, policy and practice within the service sector; and, improving measurement, accountability, and governance mechanisms, soon.

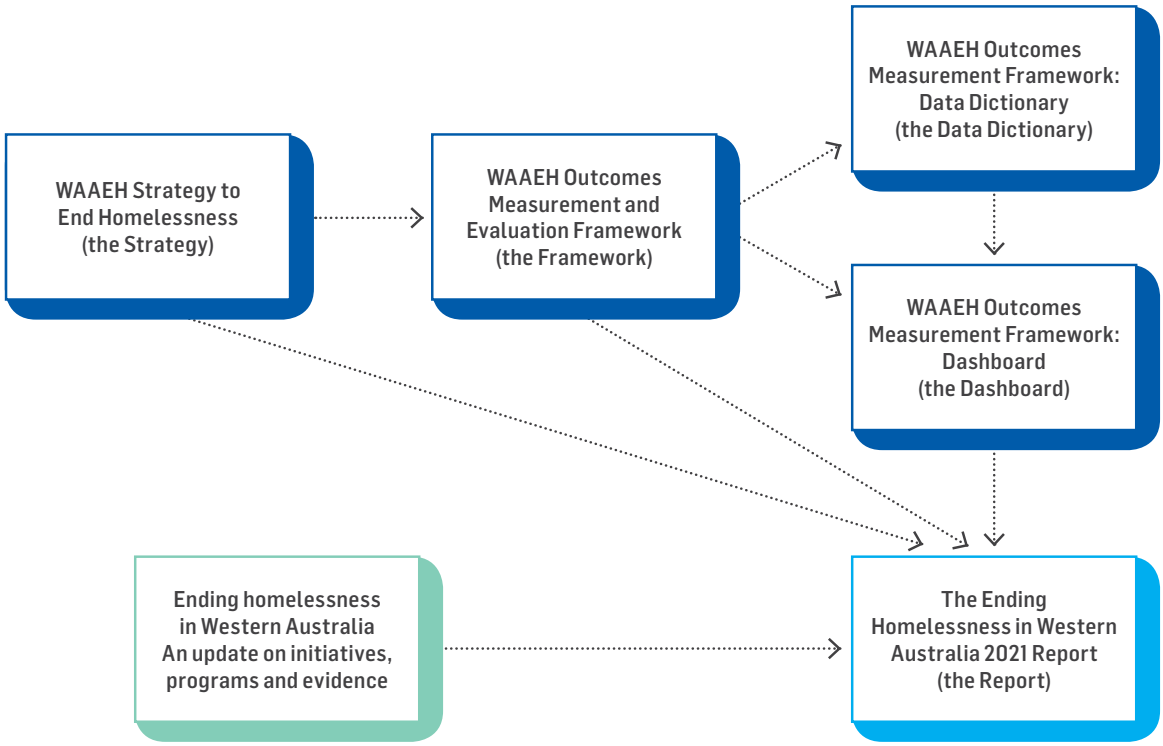
The Framework is accompanied by two documents; the *Dashboard (Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement Framework: Dashboard)* and the *Data Dictionary (Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Framework: Data Dictionary)*.

Where we currently have data available, the *Dashboard* presents key measures related to the nine targets. The *Dashboard*, while still in early stages of development, has been expanded significantly since the first version of the prototype published in 2019. As compared with Version 1 of the *Dashboard*, the nine targets have been categorised into two overarching ending homelessness targets: (1) responding to homelessness targets, and (2) preventing homelessness targets. Responding to homelessness targets, detailed in section 3, examine the trends of the individuals experiencing homelessness and those accessing homelessness services to monitor the prevalence and response to homelessness in Western Australia. Preventing homelessness targets, in section 4, presents data on key drivers of homelessness (which relate to Target 4), indicating trends across housing, health, economic, labour market and social measures, with explanatory notes about the implication of this data for homelessness outcomes in Western Australia.

The second related document the *Data Dictionary*, which operationalises the Framework by detailing the rationale, methodologies, targets and data for each measure of the Framework. The Data Dictionary is a comprehensive measurement tool and will be updated as the homelessness landscape in Western Australia evolves alongside policy, practice, and research.

The *Dashboard* provides trends in key targets and brief comment on these trends. *The Ending Homelessness in Western Australia 2021 Report* (the Report) provides further commentary on these trends as well as providing a review of the initiatives, programs, and policies in Western Australia. The 2021 Report will be released in August 2021. Figure 1.1 summarises the interrelationships between the Strategy, the Framework, the Data Dictionary, the Dashboard, and the Report.

FIGURE 1.1 Summary of WAAEH Outputs



1.2 The broader context

The *Strategy* and *Framework* are not operating in a vacuum. There are common threads between this project and other community and government initiatives.

The Western Australian Government's *Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity* (2019a) report highlights key goals of the Western Australian Government across a range of sectors—including the economy, environment, education, community safety, Aboriginal wellbeing, and regional prosperity—which overlap with many of the population-level outcomes adopted in the Framework. The *Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity* whole-of-government targets program was deferred indefinitely when the WA Government focused attention on the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, the *WA Outcomes Measurement Framework* presents a whole-of-sector approach to community outcomes in an interconnected, hierarchical wheel; this is in keeping with the approach of the WAAEH *Framework* which emphasises the interrelated nature of the drivers of homelessness and homelessness responses. Similarly, the WA Government's *Budget* papers apply an Outcomes Framework to expenditures and policy directions that, in practical terms, will also contribute to achieving the WAAEH targets (Western Australian Government, 2020).

Most importantly, since the publication of the WAAEH *Strategy to End Homelessness* and the publication of Version 1 of the Framework and *Dashboard*, the Western Australian Government has released *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030* (Western Australian Government, 2019b).

The *WA Government Homelessness Strategy* is largely consistent with the WAAEH's own homelessness strategy and includes a commitment to ending rough sleeping and chronic homelessness. *All Paths Lead to a Home* also includes a commitment to developing an Outcomes Measurement Framework "to make sure the *Strategy* is achieving its intended goals and to enable progress to be measured against outcomes". It notes that "integration points will also be established with the *Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement Framework and Evaluation Framework* developed by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia" (Western Australian Government, 2019b, p.12). As the WA Government further implements its *Strategy* and develops its Outcomes Measurement Framework, we will further develop the *Dashboard* measures.

1.3 The purpose of the Dashboard

The *Dashboard* is a powerful tool for visualising and analysing diverse evidence relevant to the WAAEH *Strategy*. The purpose of the *Dashboard* is to communicate findings to the WAAEH and its affiliates, to policy makers, to the homelessness sector, and to the broader community with an interest in ending homelessness in a way that is clear, timely and useful. The *Dashboard* functions as a reference point to see where current efforts are producing results and where there is need for renewed focus for future initiatives. For the broader Western Australian community, the *Dashboard* will help to generate interest and deepen understanding of the state of homelessness in Western Australia.

The 2021 *Dashboard* will be accompanied by a developmental evaluation report *The Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness: Ending Homelessness in Western Australia Report* (The Report), which brings together key findings from the *Dashboard*, detailed analysis of the WA Advance to Zero homelessness data and an examination of programs and initiatives in Western Australia to understand where we are at in the journey to end homelessness in Western Australia by 2028.

Together with the complementary publications the Framework, Data Dictionary, and the Report, the *Dashboard* provides the information needed to inform effective, adaptive action towards ending homelessness in Western Australia.

2. THE WAAEH 10-YEAR STRATEGY TO END HOMELESSNESS TARGETS

The *WAAEH Strategy to End Homelessness* articulated nine targets to be achieved in the 10-year timeframe. The *Dashboard* is organised around these nine WAAEH *Strategy* targets and examines trends in targets in two main fields (see Table 2.1 below):

- Responding to homelessness; and,
- Preventing homelessness.

Section 3 covers the Responding to Homelessness Targets while section 4 covers the Preventing Homelessness Targets. There are several targets for which we don't yet have reliable data. We hope to include these targets in future editions of the *Dashboard*.

TABLE 2.1 The WAAEH Strategy Targets

Ending Homelessness in Western Australia by 2028	
Responding to Homelessness Targets	***Preventing Homelessness Targets***
Target 1: Western Australia will have ended all forms of chronic homelessness including chronic rough sleeping. ***Target 2:*** No individual or family in Western Australia will sleep rough or stay in supported accommodation for longer than five nights before moving into an affordable, safe, decent, permanent home with the support required to sustain it. ***Target 3:*** The Western Australian rate of homelessness (including couch surfing and insecure tenure) will have been halved from its 2016 level. ***Target 5:*** The current very large gap between the rate of Aboriginal homelessness and non-Aboriginal homelessness in Western Australia will be eliminated so that the rate of Aboriginal homelessness is no higher than the rate of non-Aboriginal homelessness. ***Target 6:*** Those experiencing homelessness and those exiting homelessness with physical health, mental health, and alcohol and other drug use dependence needs will have their needs addressed. This will result in a halving of mortality rates among those who have experienced homelessness and a halving in public hospital costs one year on for those exiting homelessness. ***Target 7:*** Those experiencing homelessness and those exiting homelessness will be supported to strengthen their economic, social, family and community connections leading to stronger well-being and quality of life outcomes. Employment among those experiencing homelessness will be significantly increased. Over half of those exiting homelessness will be employed within three years of moving into housing. Well-being and quality of life will equal those of the general population in the same timeframe.	***Target 4:*** The underlying causes that result in people becoming homeless have been met head-on, resulting in a reduction by more than half in the inflow of people and families into homelessness in any one year. ***Target 8:*** A strong, collaborative and adaptive network of services and responses across the community services, health, mental health, justice, and education sectors will exist working collectively to address the underlying causes of homelessness and meeting the needs of those who become homeless. ***Target 9:*** Measurement, accountability and governance mechanisms that are robust, transparent and open to external review will be operating, providing an on-going means for assessing progress in meeting the goals of Ending Homelessness in Western Australia in 10 years.

Source: WAAEH Strategy to End Homelessness (2018).

Where data is available and publicly accessible for a key measure, we have constructed a figure or table illustrating the current trend in the data and included a brief explanatory note about the implication for homelessness.

For the measures relating to the core Domain 1 of the *The State of Homelessness in Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness Outcomes Measurement Framework and Evaluation Framework*, we have also indicated a projected trend line that is theoretically required to be achieved in order to meet the 2028 target. Future data will be added to the graph, and the distance from these points to the trendline could provide a visual indication of whether we are making consistent progress towards the target.

The trendline is indicative only, and fluctuations on and off the trendline are to be expected. Examples of data points have been added at future data release time points (e.g. the 2021 Census) for illustrative purposes only. Although these example data points have been arranged in a trend towards the 10-year target, they are not intended to serve as milestones.

Measures relating to the drivers of homelessness *(WAAEH Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Framework* Domains 2 and 3) and thus relate to the prevention of homelessness do not have an associated target, but we presented the recent trends in the data.

It is important to note that the *Dashboard* does not contain the comprehensive set of measures relating to the nine *Strategy* targets. Rather, the *Dashboard* visualises key measures for which data is available that can provide a broad overview of the domains and communicate trends across the complex system of homelessness. For a comprehensive list and operationalisation of measures, refer to the *WAAEH Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Framework* (the Framework) and the *WAAEH Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Framework: Data Dictionary* (the Data Dictionary).

Throughout the *Dashboard* the term Aboriginal is used in recognition of the fact that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. Data retrieved from national sources may have originally used the terms 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' people. However, the statistics referred to relate to Western Australia and not Australia more generally and the term is that which is preferred in Western Australia by Aboriginal people.

3. RESPONDING TO HOMELESSNESS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

3.1 Reducing the overall rate of homelessness

The Western Australian rate of homelessness (including couch surfing and insecure tenure) will have been halved from its 2016 level

TARGET 3

There are two key sources of data on rates of homelessness in Western Australia: The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data (ABS, 2016) and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC); (AIHW, 2020a). The data from the two sources differs due to different definitions of homelessness utilised. For specific information and limitation of data sources, refer to the Framework.

In the Census, 'homelessness' refers not only to rough sleeping, which is often the most visible form of homelessness in society, but also to a variety of unstable housing situations, such as couch surfing (staying temporarily with other households), living in boarding houses, being housed in supported accommodation and living in 'severely crowded' dwellings (ABS, 2016).

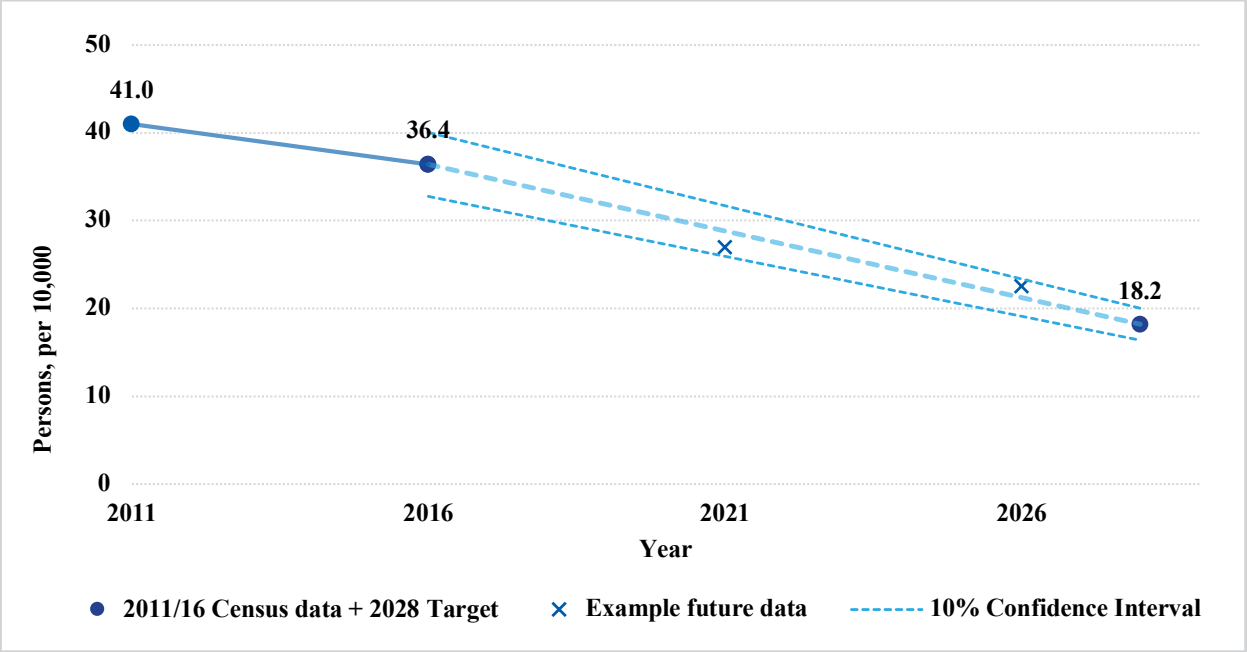
In the SHSC, the rate of homelessness is determined by calculating the number of clients of specialist homelessness services who are homeless on entry into specialist homelessness service support at the beginning of their first support period for the year, and then dividing this number by the total Western Australia population. Homelessness, as defined by the SHSC, includes having no shelter or residing in an improvised/inadequate dwelling, staying in short-term temporary accommodation, or being without tenure while housed (AIHW, 2020a). The SHSC definition of homelessness does not include a component for severely overcrowded dwellings which is included in the Census definition.

The focus of Domain 1: *The State of Homelessness* of the Framework is to halve the 2016 rate of homelessness in Western Australia by 2028. This target has been broken down into a set of measures within the domain, encompassing the overall rate of homelessness, homelessness in various categories, the rates of Aboriginal homelessness and the economic barriers that prevent a sustained exit from homelessness. Some key measures and associated graphs are represented below.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate the overall state of homelessness in Western Australia using two data sources: the ABS Census of Population and Housing and the SHSC. Figure 3.1 depicts the persons per 10,000 identified as homeless, across all homeless operational groups in the 2016 Census. In 2016, 36.4 per 10,000 Western Australians were homeless according to the Census. To achieve the target of halving the rate of homelessness by 2028, this rate will need to decrease to 18.2 persons per 10,000. Example future data as well as a trendline and confidence intervals are displayed to demonstrate the trajectory needed to achieve this target.

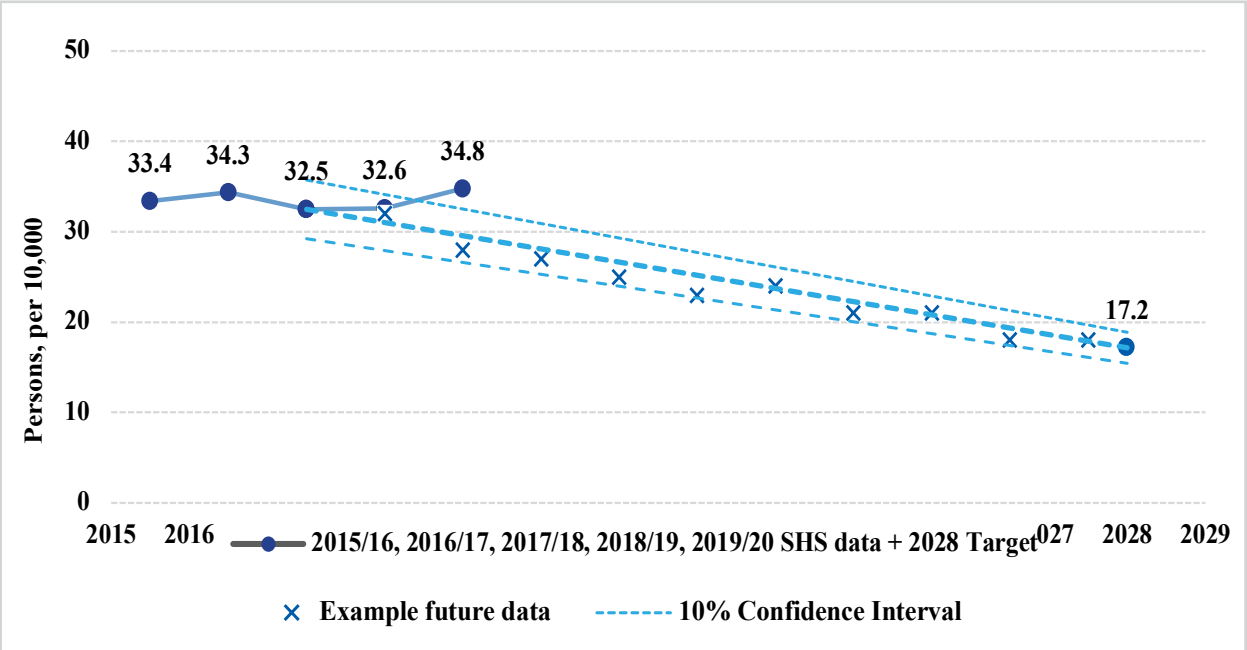
Figure 3.2, similarly, depicts the persons per 10,000 identified as homeless in the SHSC from 2015/16 onwards. In 2016/17, 34.3 Western Australians per 10,000 were homeless. As described in the Framework (p. 24), the SHSC only collects information from those individuals that access services, which, together with the different definitions of homelessness adopted helps to explain why this number is lower than the Census figure of 36.4 persons per 10,000. In 2017/18 and 2018/19 the rate decreased slightly to 32.5 and 32.6 respectively, before increasing to 34.8 in 2019/20, above the trajectory for the target of 17.2 persons per 10,000 by 2028.

FIGURE 3.1 The rate of homelessness among persons aged 15 years & over in Western Australia (Census)



Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness.
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

FIGURE 3.2 The rate of homelessness based on Specialist Homelessness Service clients in Western Australia (SHSC)

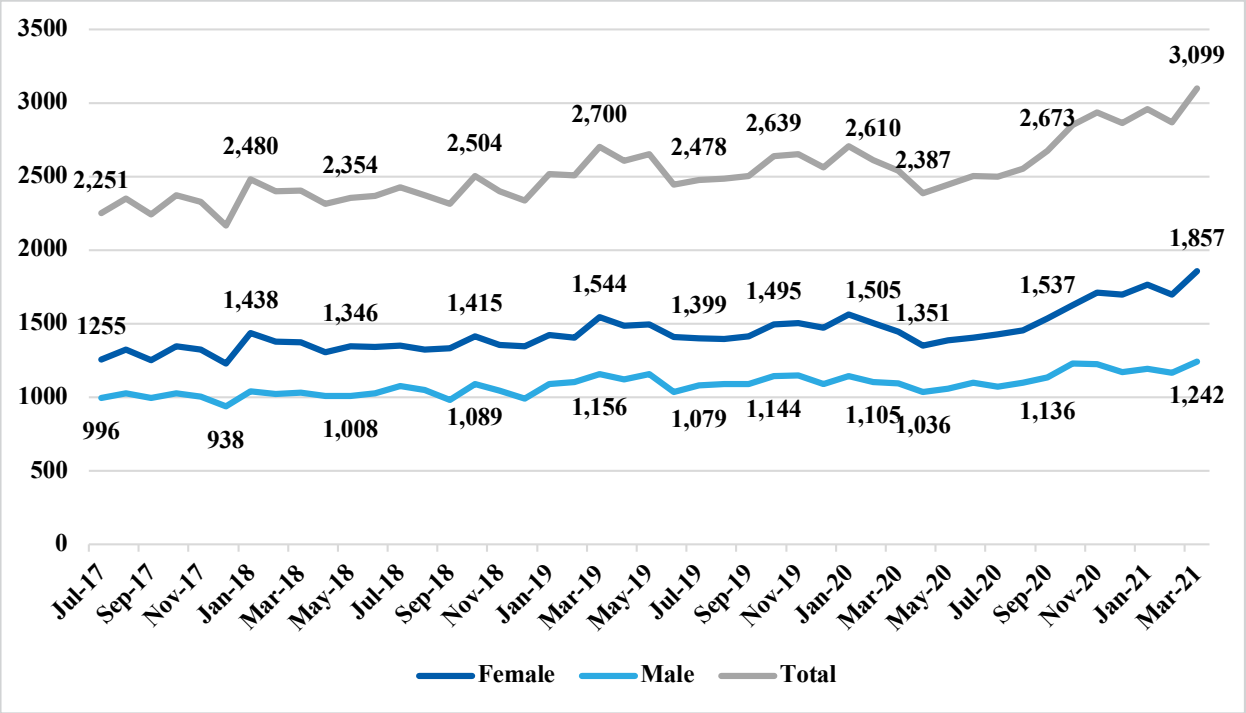


Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2019–20
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/summary

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 plot raw numbers of homeless and at-risk of homelessness clients as well as the share of all clients who are homeless (as opposed to at risk of homelessness) accessing SHS in Western Australia from mid-2017 to March 2021. The raw numbers for both groups show a drop in clients accessing SHS in April 2020, coinciding with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and likely attributed to nation-wide lockdown measures which resulted in many services cutting back director service delivery for a period. By December 2020, the numbers of both client groups increase to approximately pre-pandemic levels and there is a further increase in March 2021. Not yet seen in these figures are the impacts of the end of various pandemic supports in early 2021, such as eviction and rental increase moratoriums, and financial supplements (e.g., JobKeeper and the coronavirus supplement). The increase in the monthly series in recent months may reflect the provision of additional funds to services from government which enabled them to meet previously unmet needs and the recent rapid tightening in the Perth housing market.

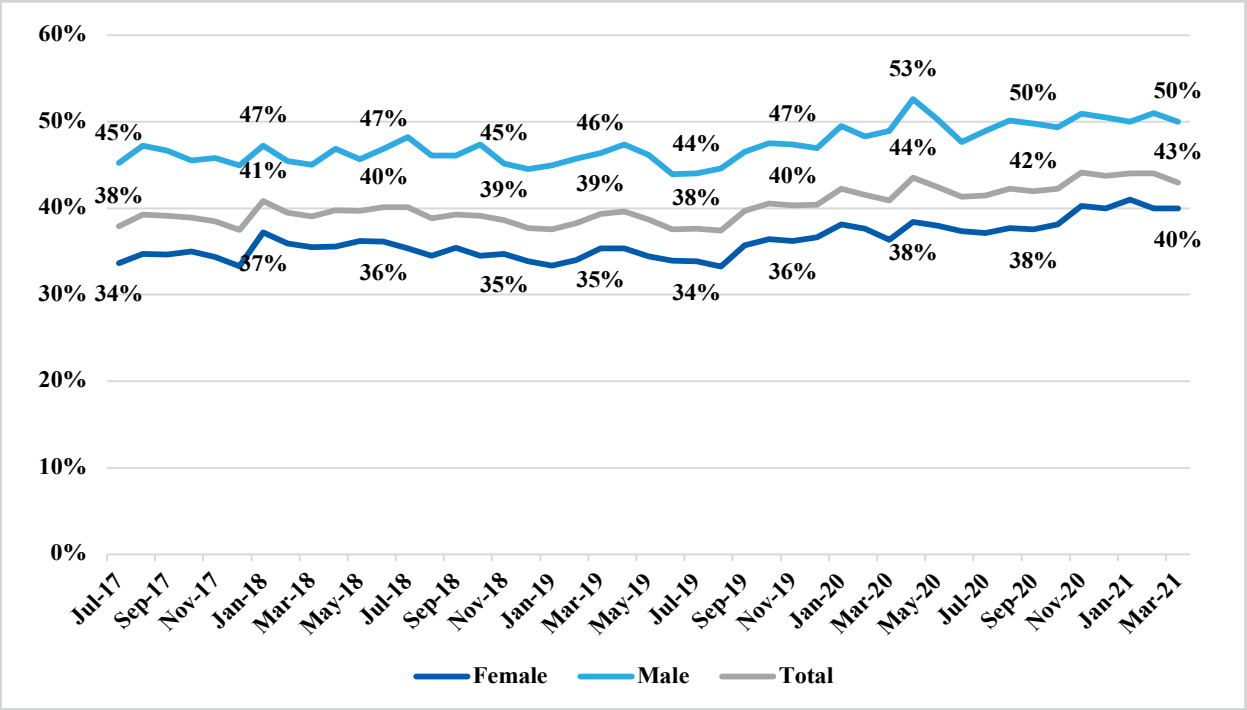
The monthly series also show that among male clients, a higher proportion are homeless compared to female clients, while the opposite trend is seen in clients at risk of homelessness.

FIGURE 3.3 Number of clients accessing Specialist Homelessness Services in Western Australia who were homeless on entry to support (SHSC)



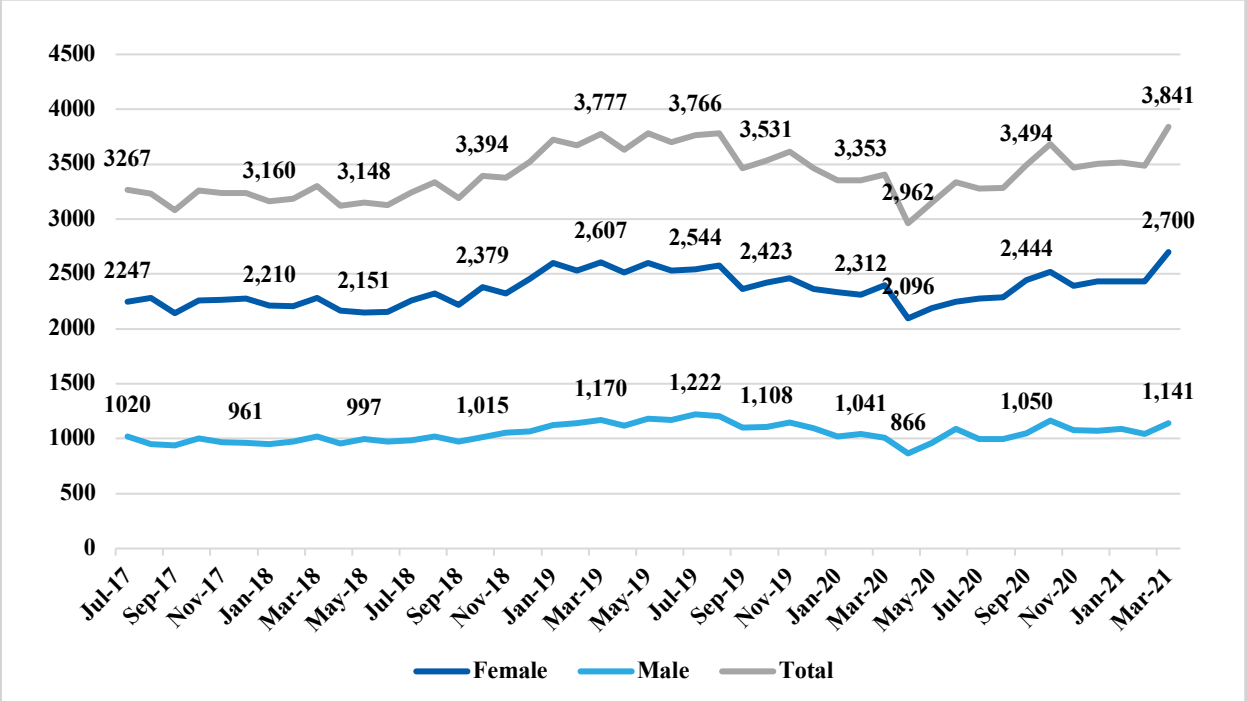
Source: AIHW 2021 Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data, Cat. No. HOU 321.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-monthly-data/contents/monthly-data

FIGURE 3.4 Proportion of all Western Australian Specialist Homelessness Service clients who were homeless on entry to support (SHSC)



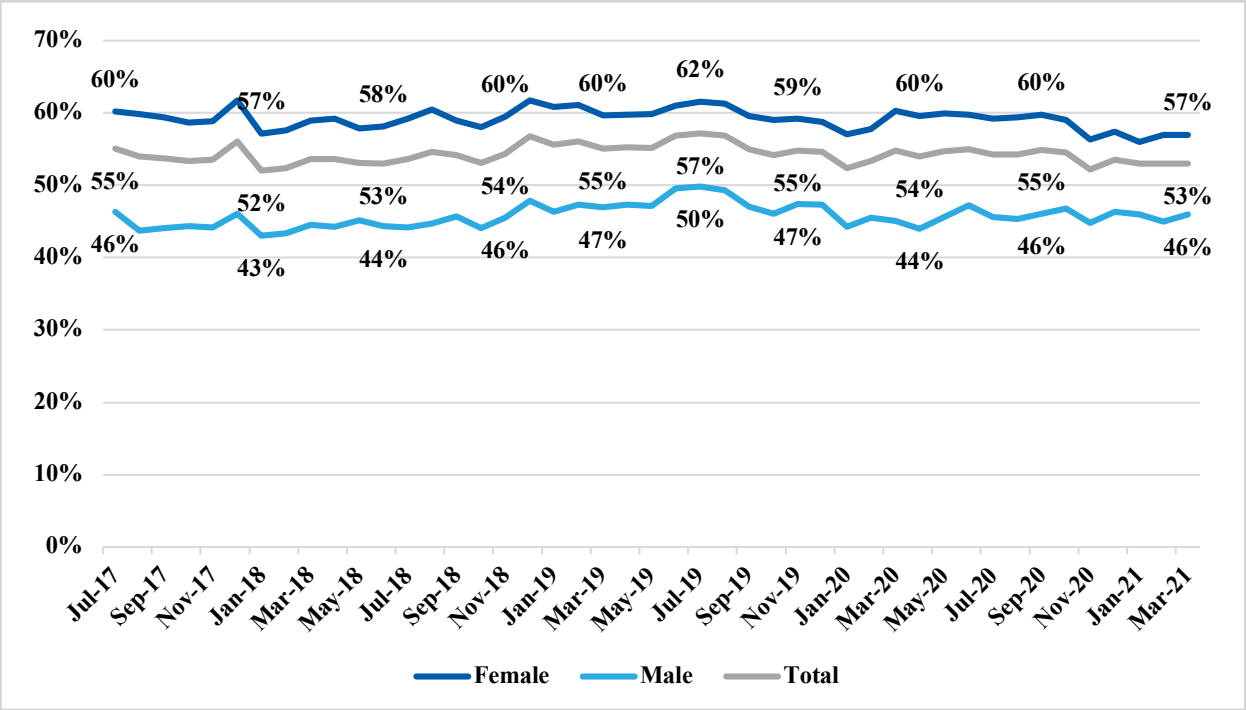
Source: AIHW 2021 Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data, Cat. No. HOU 321.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-monthly-data/contents/monthly-data

FIGURE 3.5 Number of clients accessing Specialist Homelessness Services in Western Australia who were at risk of homelessness on entry to support (SHSC)



Source: AIHW 2021 Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data, Cat. No. HOU 321.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-monthly-data/contents/monthly-data

FIGURE 3.6 Proportion of all Western Australian Specialist Homelessness Service clients who were at risk of homelessness on entry to support (SHSC)



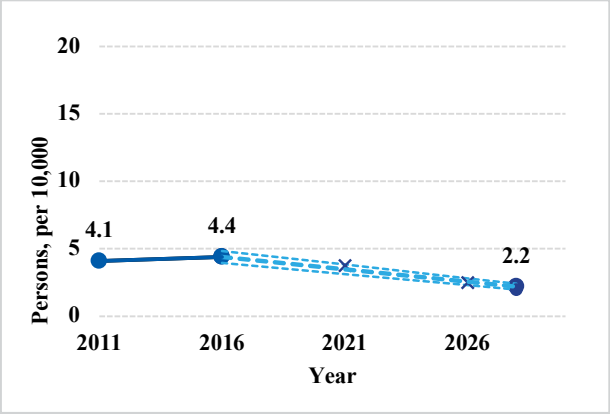
Source: AIHW 2021 Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data, Cat. No. HOU 321.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-monthly-data/contents/monthly-data

Figure 3.7 presents evidence from the Census on the rate of persons aged 15 years and over experiencing various forms of homelessness in Western Australia. To achieve the goal of halving the Western Australian rate of homelessness from its 2016 level, steps must be put in place to combat all forms of homelessness. When analysing homelessness, the Census categorises differentiates between five forms homelessness:

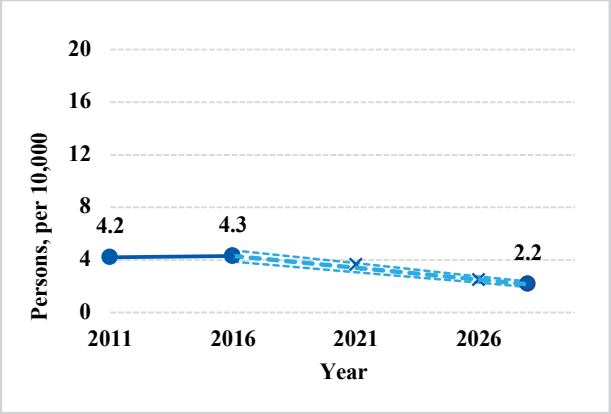
- Living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (Figure 3.7, Panel A)
- Living in supported accommodation (Figure 3.7, Panel B)
- Staying temporarily with other households (Figure 3.7, Panel C)
- Living in boarding houses (Figure 3.7, Panel D)
- Living in severely crowded dwellings (Figure 3.7, Panel E)
- Living in other temporary lodgings (Not shown)

FIGURE 3.7 Rate of homelessness for persons aged 15 years and over experiencing various forms of homelessness in Western Australia (Census)

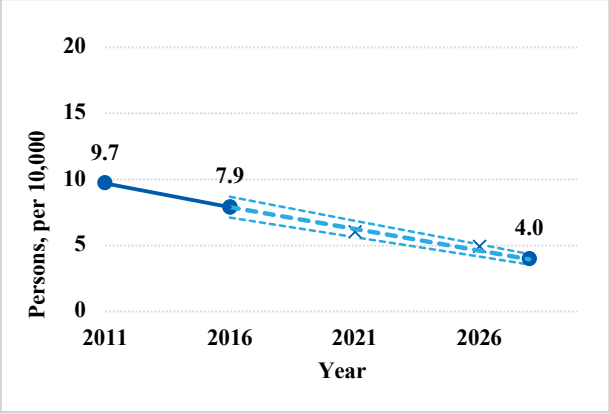
Panel A: Living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out



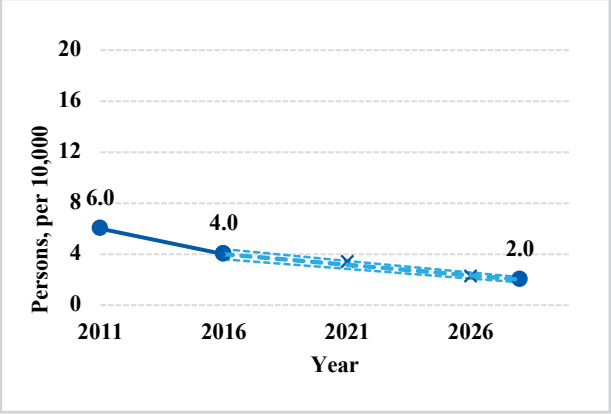
Panel B: Living in supported accommodation



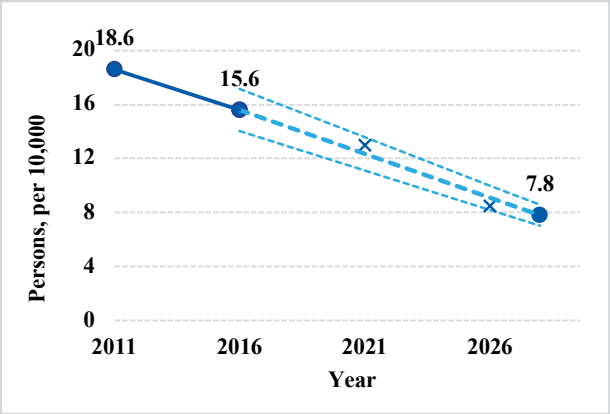
Panel C: Staying temporarily with other households



Panel D: Living in boarding houses



Panel E: Living in severely crowded dwellings



- 2011 and 2016 Census data, and 2028 Target
- × Example data
- --- 10% Confidence Interval

Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

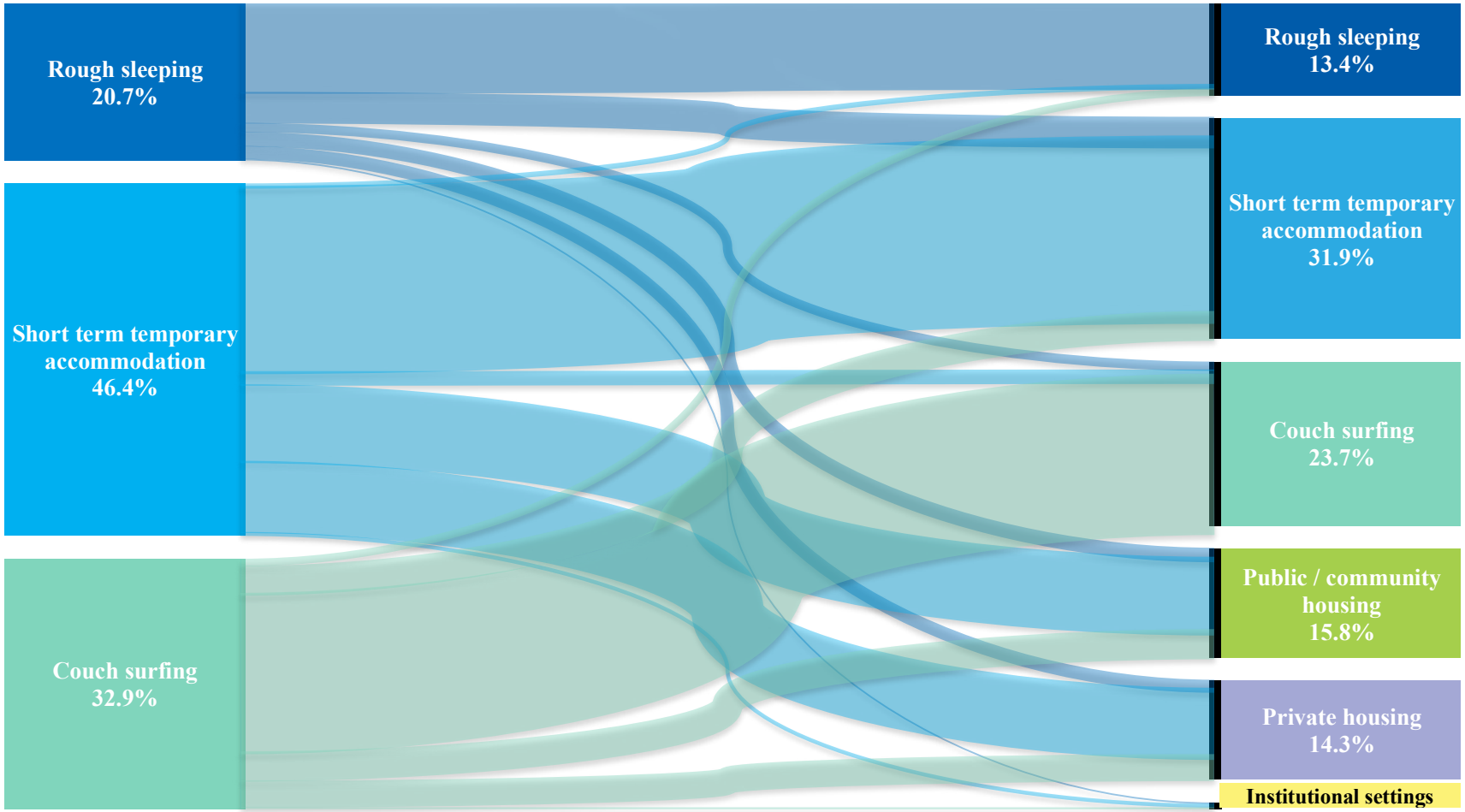
Figure 3.7, Panel A depicts the rate of Western Australians aged 15 years and over that live in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleep out in the open. From 2011 to 2016, this rate increased from 4.1 to 4.4 persons per 10,000. Significant effort is therefore needed to curb this trend and achieve the 2028 target of 2.2 persons per 10,000. Figure 3.7, Panel B, shows that the rate of those living in supported accommodation, has similarly slightly increased from 4.2 persons per 10,000 in 2011, to 4.3 per 10,000 in 2016. Further investment in interventions is required if we are to achieve the 2028 target of 2.1 persons per 10,000 in 2028.

Figure 3.7, Panels C, D and E tell a more optimistic story, all demonstrating marked decreases in 2016 compared with their 2011 rate. The number of young people staying temporarily with other households declined from 9.7 to 7.9 persons per 10,000 from 2011 to 2016, and if this rate of decline continues, we are on track to achieving the 2028 target of 3.95 persons per 10,000. Similarly, the rate of individuals living in boarding houses has decreased from 6 to 4 persons per 10,000 from 2011 to 2016. This rate of decline, if maintained, would allow us to reach the 2028 target of 2 persons per 10,000. Additionally, the rate of persons living in severely crowded dwellings has also decreased from 18.6 to 15.6 persons per 10,000, and as seen in Figure 3.7, Panel E this rate of decline is also on track to achieve the 2028 goal of 7.8 persons per 10,000. However, given the fluctuating nature of homelessness figures, the rate is unlikely to remain in a steady decline. Hence, despite the positive indications from recent data, significant effort is required to continue to reach the 2028 target of halving homelessness.

Figures 3.8 and 3.9 and Table 3.1 depict the flow of SHS clients from the start of support to the end of support.

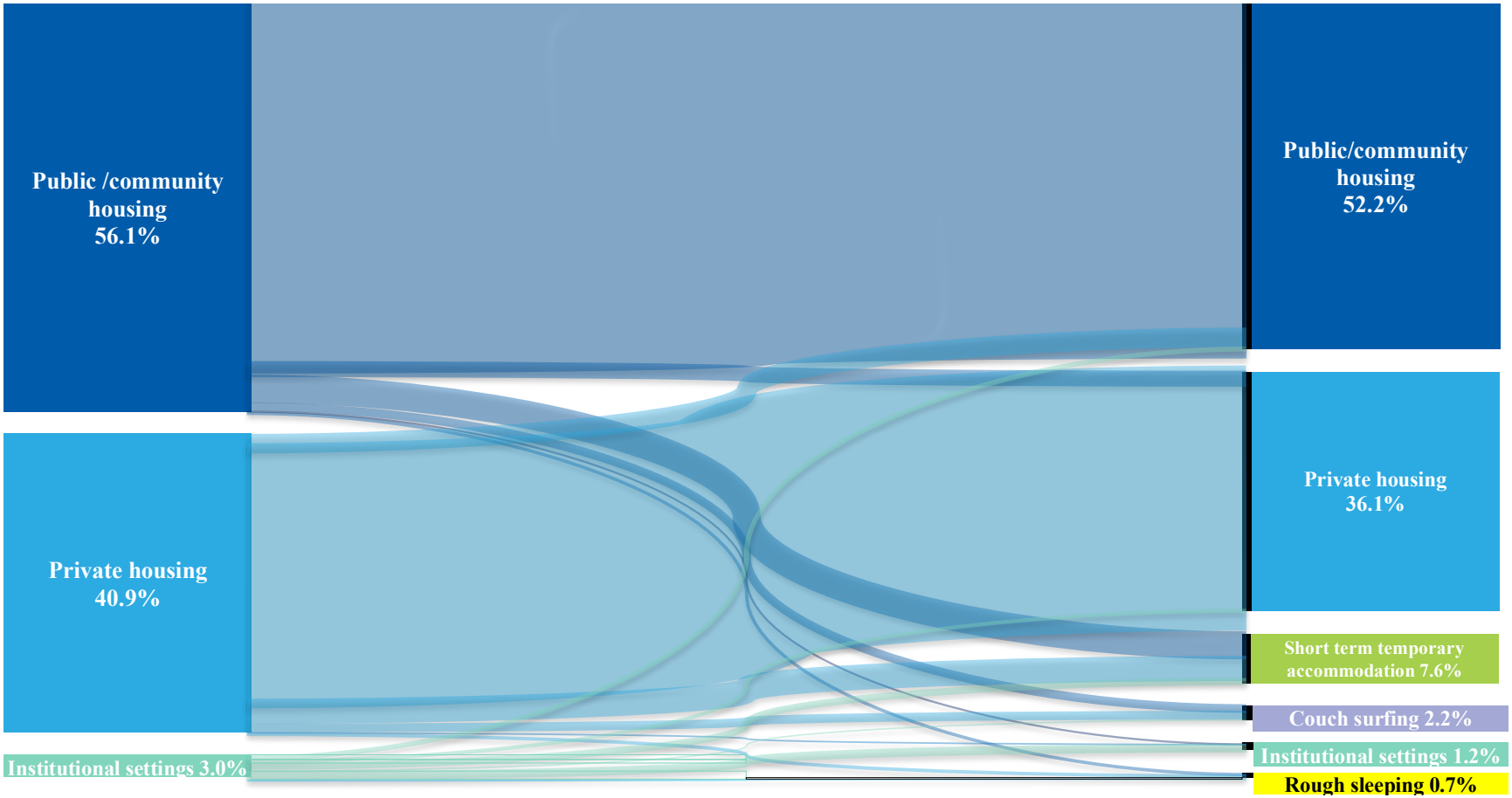
In the case of those experiencing homelessness on entry, the majority completed their support period in the same homelessness position that they began their support period in. In other words, those that began their support period rough sleeping, in supported accommodation or couch surfing remained in the same state at the end of the support period. However, while the majority of those who were experiencing homelessness at the beginning of the support period, remained homeless at the end of the support period, there are also relatively large positive transitions from homelessness to both social housing (15.8%) and private rental housing (14.3%). In the case of those at risk of homelessness, the very low proportion of clients that move from housing to homelessness and remain in the same permanent housing state is a very positive outcome showing that the vast majority of SHS clients at risk of homelessness at the beginning of the support period remained housed throughout their support period.

FIGURE 3.8 Housing tenure outcome for clients with closed support periods who were experiencing homelessness at the start of support in Western Australia, 2019–20 (SHSC)



Source: AIHW 2020 Specialist homelessness services annual report 2019–20 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/data.

FIGURE 3.9 Housing tenure outcomes for clients with closed support periods who were at risk of homelessness at the start of support in Western Australia, 2019–20 (SHSC)



Source: AIHW 2020 Specialist homelessness services annual report 2019–20 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/data.

TABLE 3.1 Number of clients by housing situation for clients with closed support periods in Western Australia 2019–20 (SHSC)

	Housing situation at the end of support					
Housing situation at beginning of support	Institutional settings	Rough sleeping	Short term temporary accommodation	Couch surfer	Public/community housing	Private housing
Rough sleeping	14	798	274	81	126	113
Short term temporary accommodation	34	46	1,633	126	683	626
Couch surfer	17	66	259	1,399	261	234
Public/community housing	16	33	390	108	5,322	209
Private housing	10	35	351	109	272	3,662
Institutional settings	104	11	83	20	67	40

Source: AIHW 2020 Specialist homelessness services annual report 2019–20
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/data.

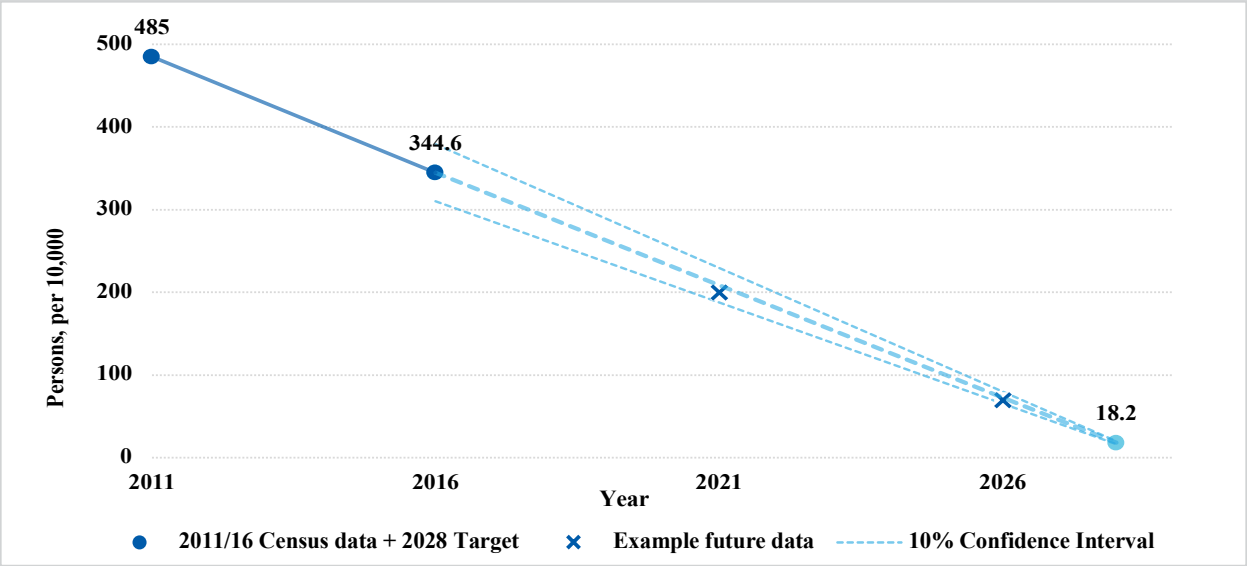
3.2 Reducing Aboriginal homelessness

The current very large gap between the rate of Aboriginal homelessness and non-Aboriginal homelessness in Western Australia will be eliminated so that the rate of Aboriginal homelessness is no higher than the rate of non-Aboriginal homelessness

TARGET 5

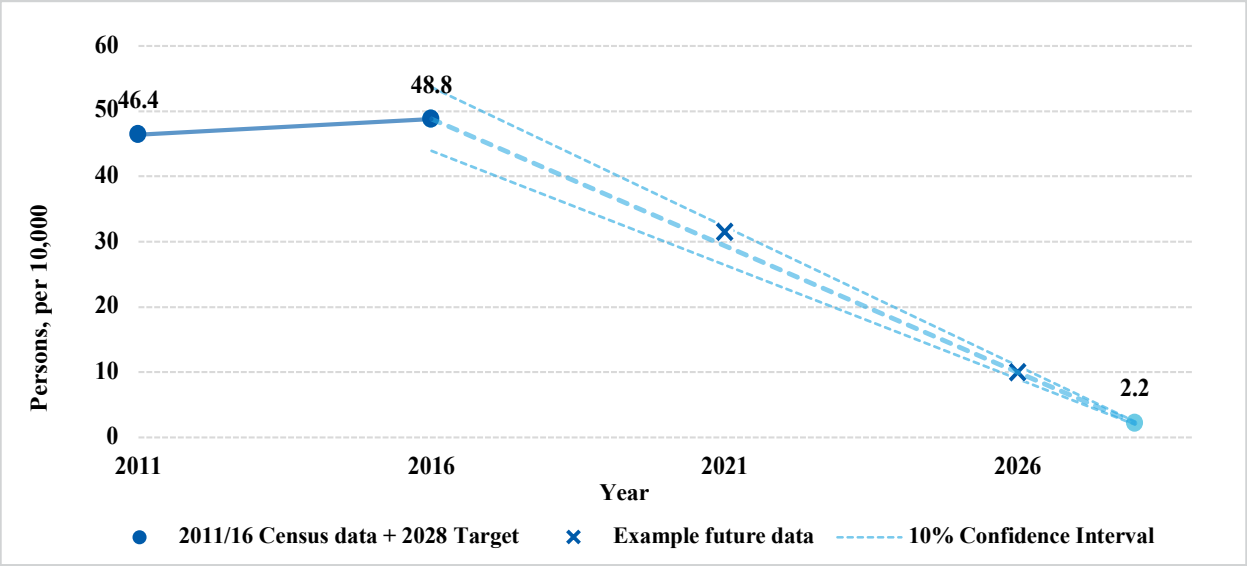
There is a significant over-representation of Aboriginal people in the Western Australian homeless population. While making up only 3.1% of the general population, Aboriginal form 29.1% of the homeless population (ABS, 2016). This substantial gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal homelessness is addressed in Domain 1: *The State of Homelessness* of the Framework and Outcome 1.9 of the Data Dictionary: *Aboriginal homelessness rates are no greater than non-Aboriginal homelessness rates.* The target for Aboriginal homelessness across all categories is to eliminate the over-representation, such that the rate of homelessness within the Aboriginal population is in line with that of the general population.

FIGURE 3.10 The overall rate of Aboriginal persons aged 15 years and over across all homeless categories in Western Australia (Census)



Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

FIGURE 3.11 Rate of Aboriginal persons aged 15 years and over living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out in Western Australia (Census)



Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

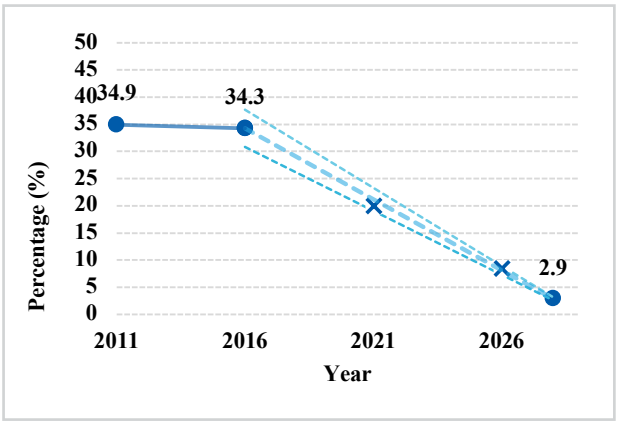
Figures 3.10 and 3.11 display the rate of Aboriginal homelessness in Western Australia, both in terms of the overall rate across all homeless operational groups, and the rate of people living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out, respectively. Between 2011 and 2016, there was a substantial decrease in the overall rate of Aboriginal, from 485 persons per 10,000 to 344.6 per 10,000. This rate of decline will need to be sustained for the next 10 years to achieve the goal of eliminating the over-representation of Aboriginal homelessness in Western Australia.

Figure 3.11 highlights a point of concern – that in this particular category ('living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out'), the rate of Aboriginal homelessness increased from 2011 to 2016, from 46.4 per 10,000 to 48.8 per 10,000. As this is reflective of the most extreme form of homelessness, strong focus will need to be put into

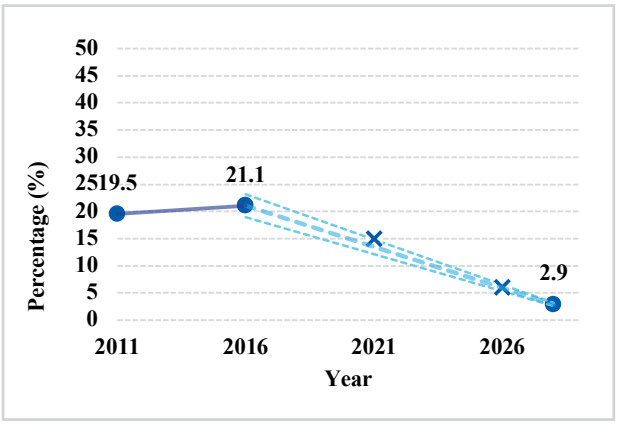
improving the ability of Aboriginal people within this category to exit it. There is a current focus on improving the geographical coverage of service systems into remote areas of the State and further developing the reach of culturally appropriate, Aboriginal-led service delivery models, as well as addressing the justice and legal issues plaguing Aboriginal homeless people in Western Australia. These efforts will go a long way to improving the rates of Aboriginal homelessness, and specifically facilitate the exit from rough sleeping (Kaleveld et al., 2018).

FIGURE 3.12 The proportion of those living in various forms of homelessness in Western Australia aged 15 years and over that identify as Aboriginal (Census)

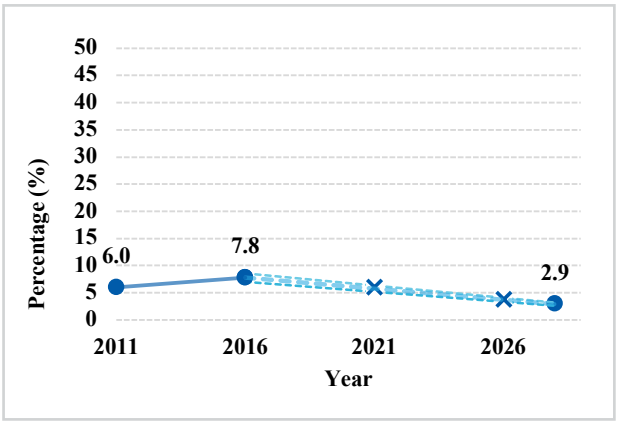
Panel A: Living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out



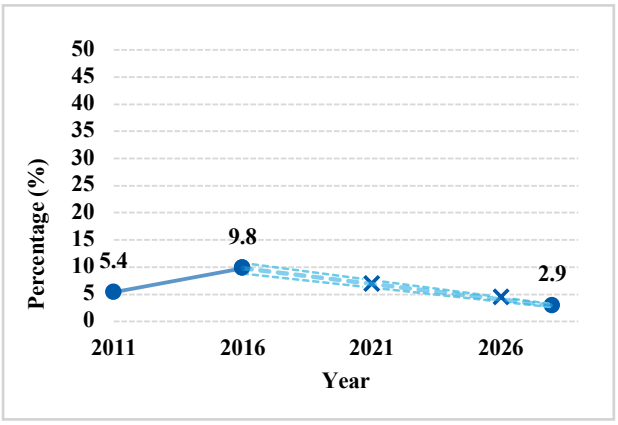
Panel B: Living in supported accommodation



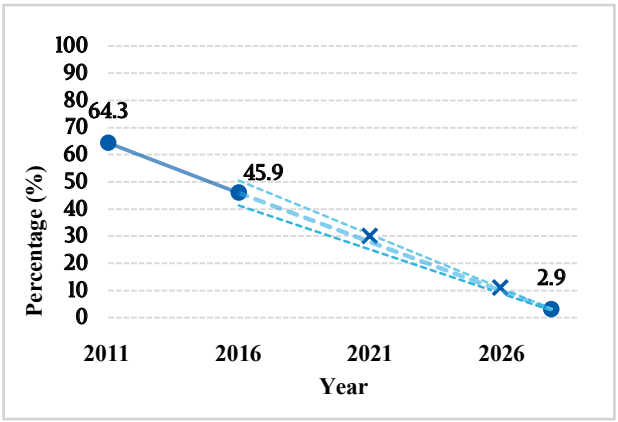
Panel C: Staying temporarily with other households

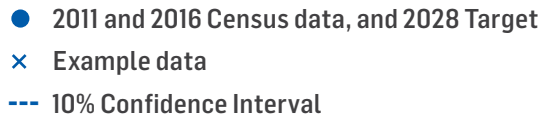


Panel D: Living in boarding houses



Panel E: Living in severely crowded dwellings





Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

When analysing homelessness, the Census categorizes Aboriginal homelessness into six categories:

- Living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (Figure 3.12, Panel A)
- Living in supported accommodation (Figure 3.12, Panel B)
- Staying temporarily with other households (Figure 3.12, Panel C)
- Living in boarding houses (Figure 3.12, Panel D)
- Living in severely crowded dwellings (Figure 3.12, Panel E)
- Living in other temporary lodgings (insignificant numbers so not shown).

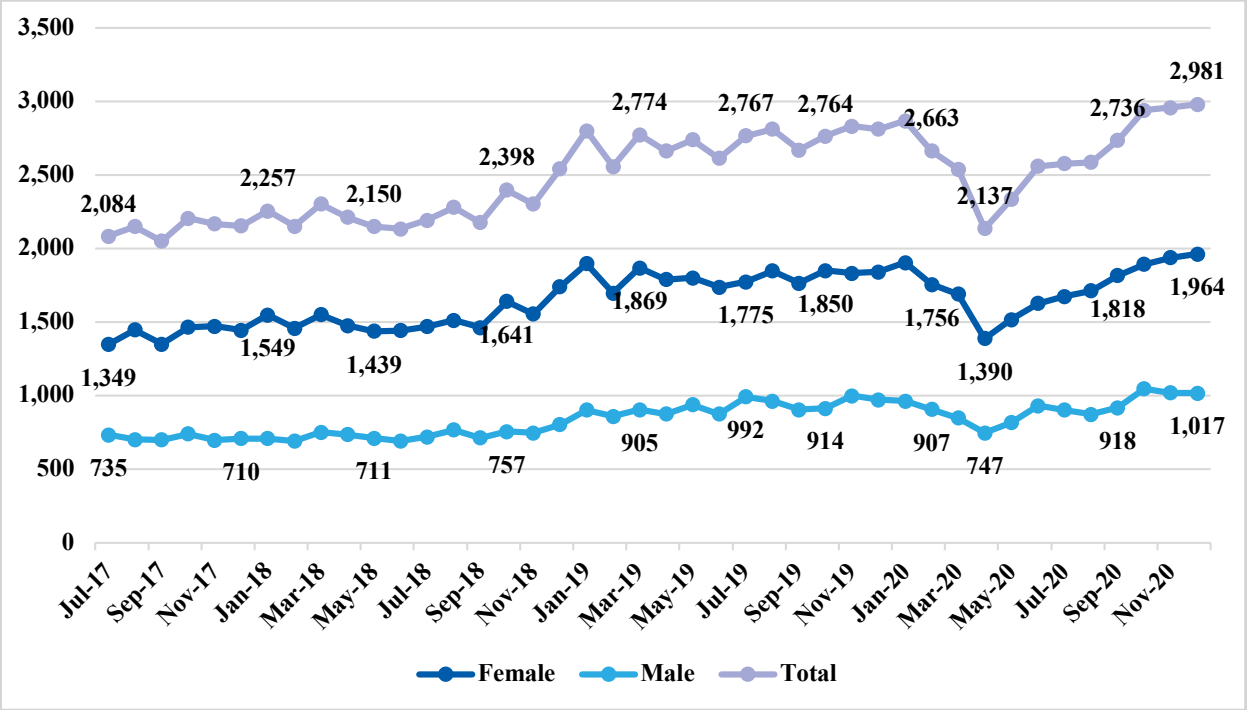
Figure 3.12 depicts the proportion of those living in various forms of homelessness in Western Australia aged 15 years and over that identify as Aboriginal, with data retrieved from the Census. This is subtly different from the data shown in Figures 3.10 and 3.11 – while 3.10 and 3.11 establish the proportion of Aboriginal people that are homeless, Figure 3.12 depicts the percentage of the homeless population in various groups that identify as Aboriginal.

As seen in Figure 3.12, Panel A, the percentage of those living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out that identified as Aboriginal decreased from 34.9% in 2011 to 34.2% in 2016. This will need to decrease substantially to reach the 2028 target of 2.9% – but doing so would imply that we have eliminated the over-representation of homeless individuals within the Aboriginal population. Similarly, Figure 3.12, Panels B, C and D all demonstrate the need for action, with an increase in homelessness rates (19.5% to 21.1%, 6.0% to 7.8% and 5.4% to 9.8% respectively) between 2011 and 2016. The fact that these have increased despite the rate of the general population living in these forms of homelessness either decreasing or staying relatively constant (Figure 3.7, Panels B, C and D) implies that the solutions currently employed are not working as well for Aboriginal people as they are for their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

Figure 3.12 Panel E, however, paints a more positive picture – the proportion of those living in severely crowded dwellings that identify as Aboriginal decreased from 64.3% to 45.8% from 2011 to 2016. Consequently, if this rate of decline continues until 2028 the target of 2.9% will be achieved, suggesting that the strategies currently being employed to reduce overcrowding may be effective.

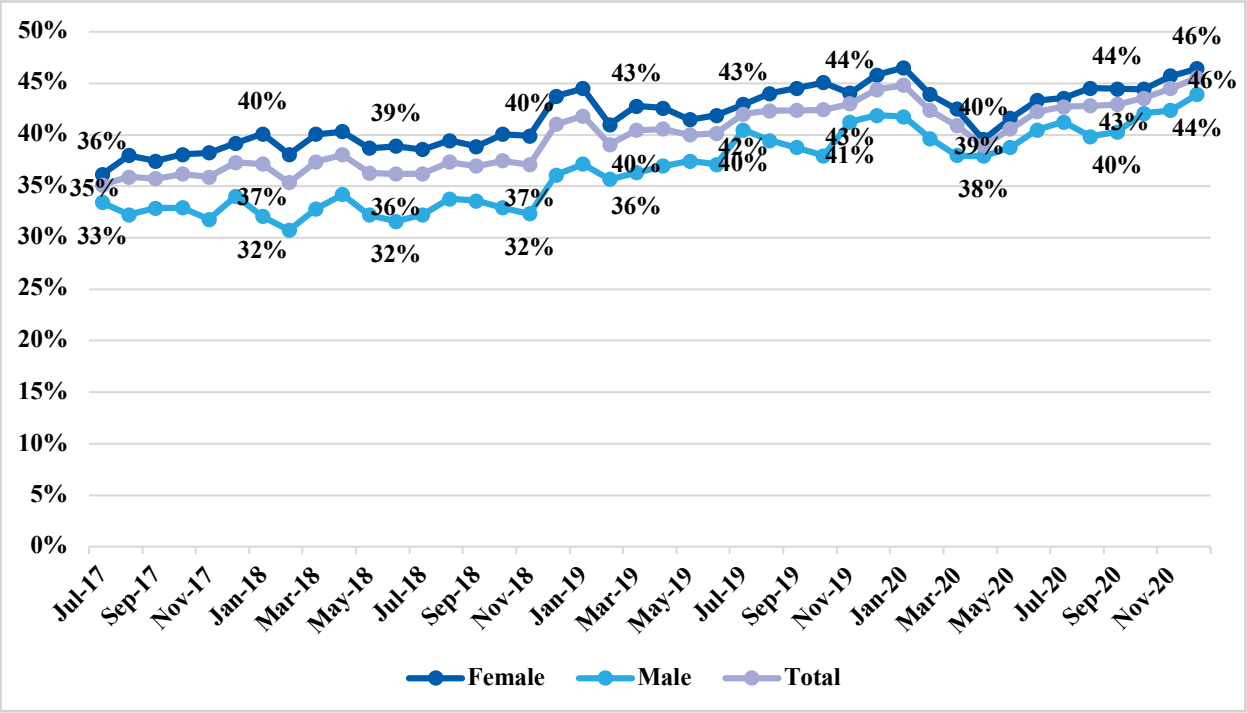
Figure 3.13 and 3.14 show the monthly trends in the number of clients who are Aboriginal accessing SHS in Western Australia and the proportion of all SHS clients who are Aboriginal. As with the overall figures of clients who are homeless/at risk of homelessness accessing SHSs, a drop in numbers can be seen in April 2020 around the time that COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic but then the number of SHS Aboriginal clients rise again above their pre-pandemic levels. The figures reveal a significant upward movement over time in the share of SHS clients who are Aboriginal.

FIGURE 3.13 Number of clients who are Aboriginal accessing Specialist Homelessness Services (WA) (SHSC)



Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2019–20.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/summary

FIGURE 3.14 Percentage of clients who are Aboriginal accessing Specialist Homelessness Services (WA) (SHSC)

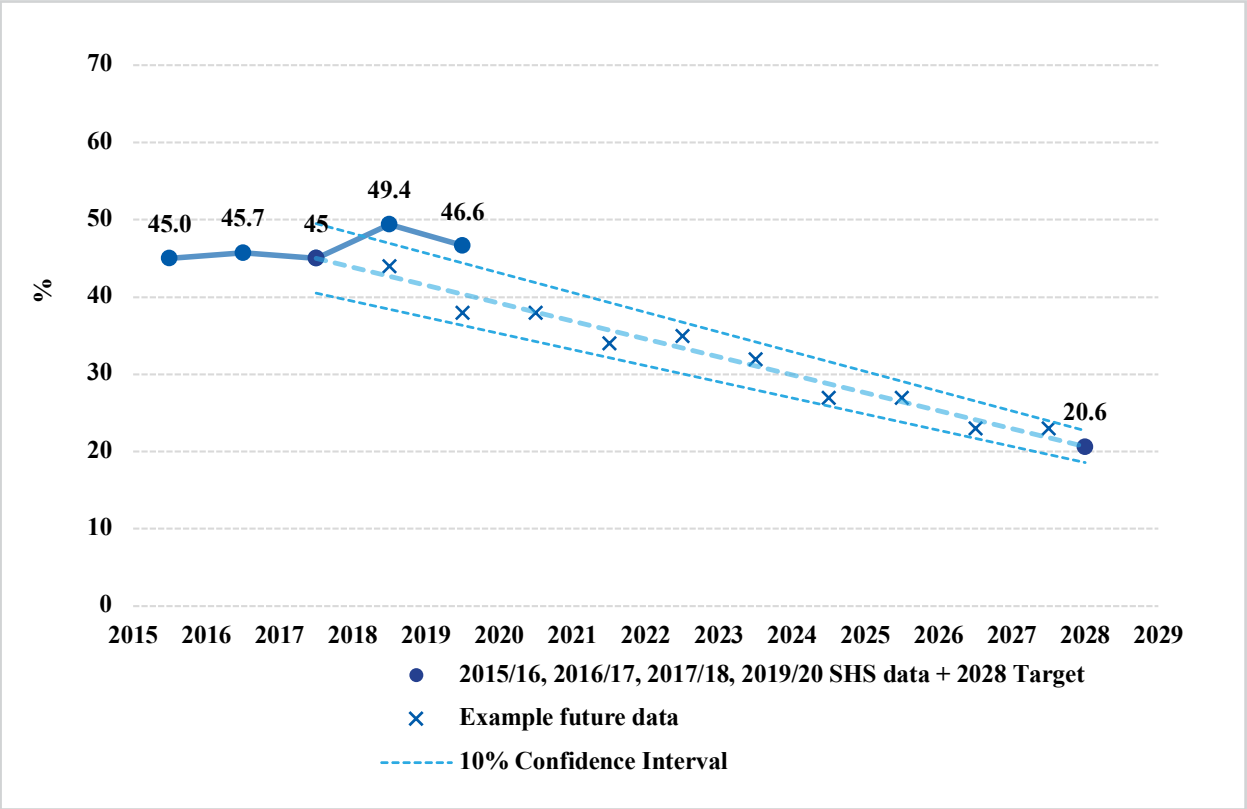


Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2019–20.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/summary

3.3 Reducing regional homelessness

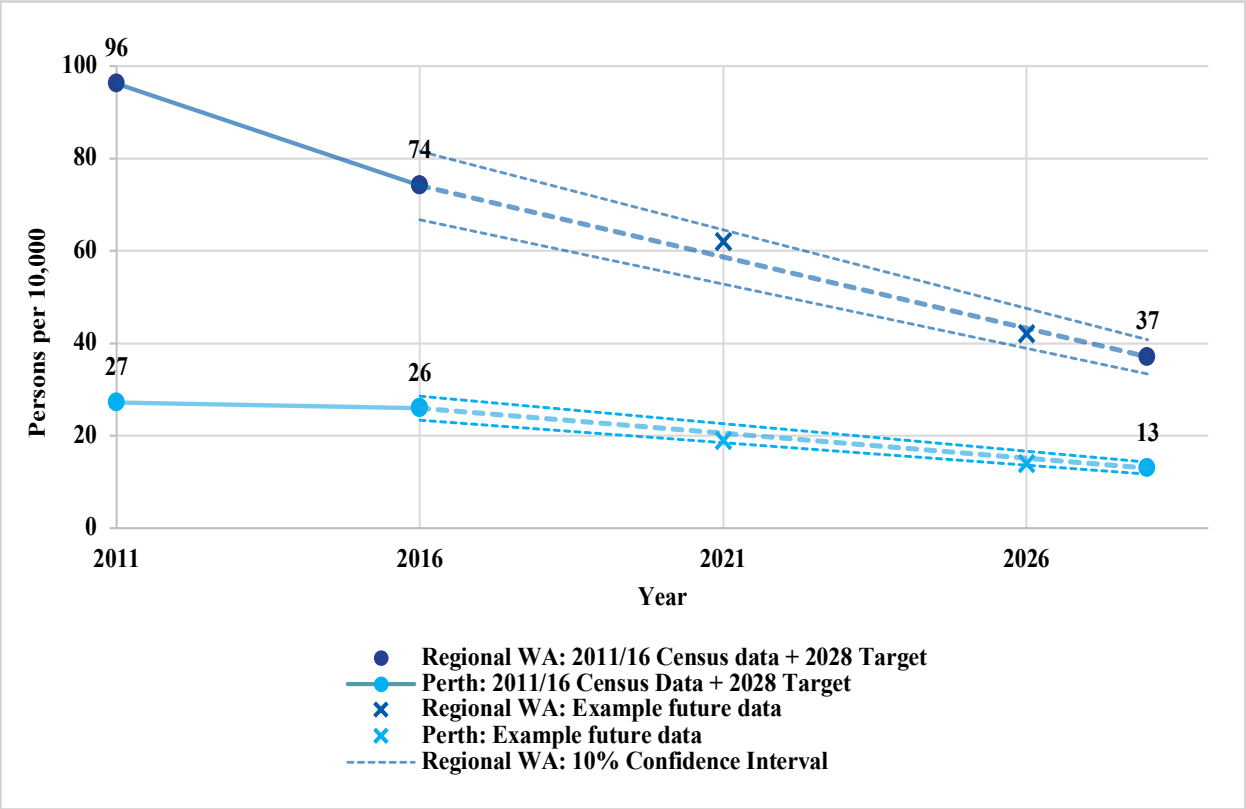
Another key aspect of the analysis of the state of homelessness in Western Australia is the rate of homelessness within regional areas. Geographic location can influence the drivers of homelessness, such as employment outcomes, the quality of education and access to support services. Currently, the rate of homelessness in regional Western Australia is more than triple that of the Perth Metropolitan area (ABS, 2016). Therefore, to end homelessness in Western Australia, the over-representation of those living in regional areas within the homeless population in Western Australia needs to be addressed. In addition to the over-representation of regional Western Australians in the Census homelessness figures, the proportion of SHS clients that live in regional areas is currently almost double the proportion of people living in regional Western Australia. By addressing the root causes of regional homelessness, such as quality of support services, we can work towards eliminating this pronounced discrepancy (National Rural Health Alliance Inc., 2013). Figures 3.15 and 3.16 represent for the state of regional homelessness in Western Australia.

FIGURE 3.15 The proportion of Specialist Homelessness Services clients that live in regional Western Australia (SHSC)



Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2019–20.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/summary

FIGURE 3.16 The overall rate of persons aged 15 years and over across all homeless categories in regional Western Australia (Census)



Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

Figure 3.15 demonstrates the proportion of SHS clients that live in regional Western Australia. While the rate of SHS clients in regional areas is not an accurate reflection of the state of homelessness per se (as not all SHS clients are homeless), it is reasonable to suggest that an over-representation of regional SHS clients could correspond to an over-representation of regional homelessness. The 2028 target for Figure 3.15 is to eliminate this over-representation, such that the rate of regional homelessness is the same as the rate of people living in regional Western Australia (20.6%).

Are we on track to achieve this target? Discouragingly, between 2015 and 2017 the proportion of SHS clients that live regionally was relatively stable. Further, updated 2019/20 figures show a small increase compared to previous years. Without significant effort to address the root causes of regional homelessness, such as a lack of employment opportunities and poor support services, it is unlikely that we will achieve our 2028 goal without additional investments.

Figure 3.16 uses Census data to demonstrate the difference in homelessness rates between those who live in regional Western Australia and those in Perth. For this measure, the 2028 target has been set at half of the 2016 rate – in this case 37 and 13 people per 10,000 for regional Western Australia and Perth respectively. While there needs to be a significant drop in the rate of regional homelessness, the 23% decrease that occurred between 2011 and 2016 (from 96 to 74 people per 10,000) indicates the trend is progressing in the right direction to achieve this degree of change.

FIGURE 3.17 Structure of homelessness across Western Australia, by remoteness (Census)

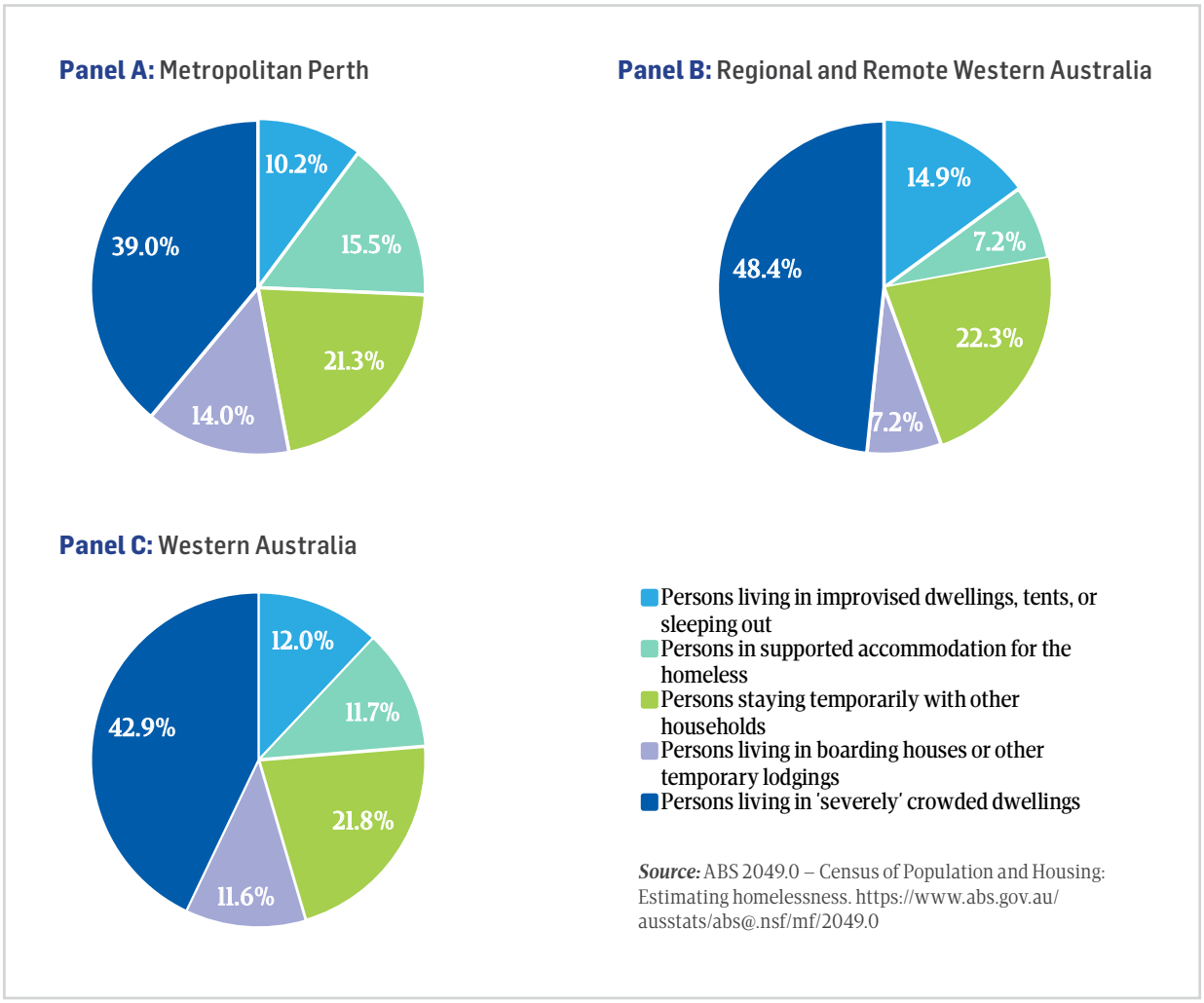
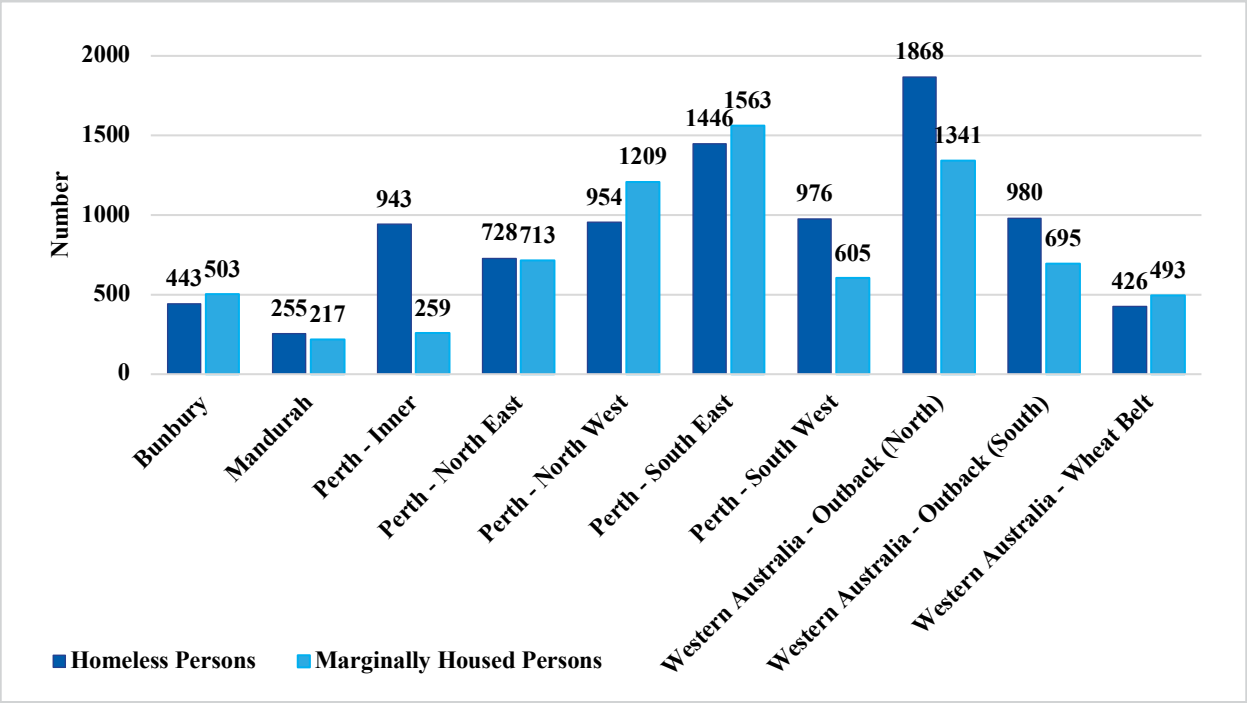


Figure 3.17 and 3.18 highlight the necessity of considering the impact of regional and place-specific factors on homelessness. The data for both figures is derived from the ABS Census of Population and Housing.

Figure 3.17 shows the differing composition of homelessness in metropolitan vs regional and remote Western Australia. The data shows that homelessness in regional and remote Western Australia is driven more by severe overcrowding than in Metropolitan Perth (48.4% in regional/remote Western Australia vs 39.0% in Metropolitan Perth). In Western Australia, the extent of overcrowding is particularly serious among Aboriginal families who make up a greater proportion of the regional and remote figures. Overcrowding is associated with potential negative impacts on children's wellbeing and development, including increased risk of infection-based illness, poor school performance, greater vulnerability to abuse and poor mental health (Commissioner for Children and Young People, 2014). Additionally, a greater percentage of the homeless population in regional and remote Western Australia are rough sleeping ('living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out'). Within the Perth homeless population, there is also variation in composition depending on the specific area. For example, the proportion of rough sleepers is much higher within the Inner Perth area. For more detailed information, please refer to *Homelessness in Western Australia: A review of the research and statistical evidence* (Kaleveld, Seivwright, Box, Callis & Flatau, 2018).

FIGURE 3.18 Number of homeless persons by statistical area level 4 (SA4) (Census)



Source: ABS 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0

Figure 3.18 visualises the regional spread of homelessness in Western Australia. The region representing the highest number of homeless persons is Western Australia – Outback North (comprising the Pilbara and the Kimberley regions). When we consider that these regions have markedly smaller populations, the situation is even bleaker – with the Outback (North) region having a homelessness rate of 191 persons per 10,000, far greater than the Perth rate of 26 persons per 10,000, or the overall Western Australia regional rate of 74 persons per 10,000. While homelessness and rough sleeping in inner city Perth is often the focus of media and policy attention, this data highlights the need to specifically address regional and remote homelessness to achieve WAAEH targets.

Poor employment outcomes in regional areas is one of the most significant drivers of regional homelessness. The State Government has acknowledged the importance of this issue by identifying 'regional prosperity through stronger regional economies' as one of the *Premier's Priorities for 2019–20* (Western Australian Government, 2019a). Specifically, the target has been set at increasing the number of employed persons in Regional Western Australia by at least 30,000 by 2023–24, which will go a long way in reducing the inflow of homelessness and providing the economic stability required for homeless individuals to maintain a sustained exit from homelessness. The *2019–20 WA State Budget* also contains the following outcomes of relevance (Western Australian Government, 2019b, p.208):

- Regional Western Australia has the investment to grow and create jobs.
- Regional Western Australia has the technology to grow and create jobs.
- Regional Western Australia has the skills and knowledge to grow and create jobs.
- Regional Western Australia has the social amenity, through recreational fisheries, to grow and create jobs.
- Regional Development Commissions contribute to the economic development of the regions

It is hoped that the attention given to regional Western Australia through these outcomes will lead to the greater economic involvement of homeless and formerly homeless people (Western Australian Government, 2019b).

3.4 Reducing chronic homelessness

Western Australia will have ended all forms of chronic homelessness including chronic rough sleeping

TARGET 1

No individual or family in Western Australia will sleep rough or stay in supported accommodation for longer than five nights before moving into an affordable, safe, decent, permanent home with the support required to sustain it

TARGET 2

For the purposes of the WAAEH *Dashboard*, *chronic homelessness* is defined as a history of rough sleeping or other forms of homelessness for more than 12 months continuously. There are limited data available that measure chronicity in homelessness.

Our data are from the Advance to Zero national database and were collected using the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT).

We looked at chronic homelessness in WA which we defined as an answer of more than 12 months to the question:

For how many months have you lived on the streets or in emergency accommodation?

Our analysis included 2,112 respondents who were interviewed by homelessness services at a support agency, other institution, on the streets of central or suburban Perth or in selected country centres in WA, such as Mandurah or Bunbury. The vast majority of the WA respondents were interviewed in Perth (93.1%), with 2.8% in Geraldton, 1.8% in Rockingham and 1.7% in Mandurah. Of these, only 153 (7.2%) had been interviewed previously.

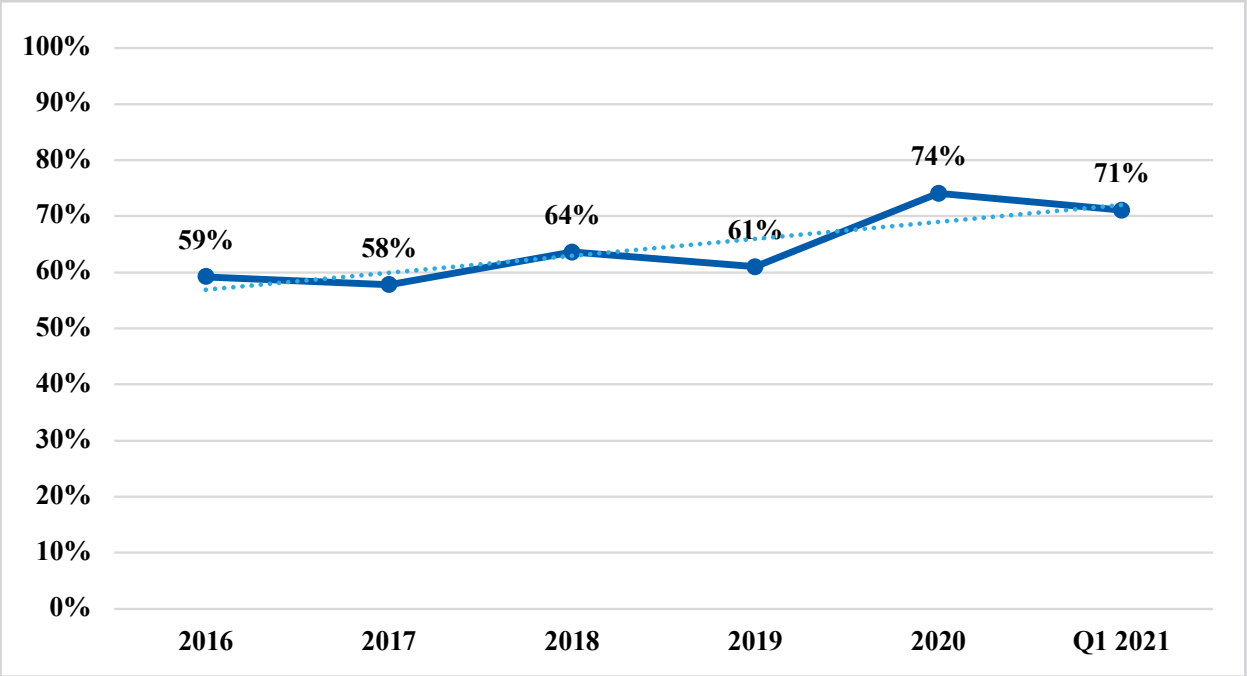
Our dataset included data from 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2021. For the respondents who provided the number of months they had lived on the street or in emergency accommodation, the mean time spent homeless was 58.8 months (~5 years). For the 1,275 respondents (62.7%) who exhibited chronic homelessness, the mean was 90.3 months (~7.5 years). For the respondents (37.3%) who did not exhibit chronic homelessness, the mean was only 5.6 months. The large differential in this mean for those exhibiting chronic homelessness is unsurprising, as, by definition, all persons with chronic homelessness were homeless for more than 12 months.

From 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2021, the proportion of respondents exhibiting chronic homelessness varied from 59.2% to 71.1%. From 2016 to 2020, there was an overall upward trend as indicated by the trend line of Figure 3.19. The peak in the proportion of respondents exhibiting chronic homelessness during 2020 and quarter 1 of 2021 may have been impacted by the effects of COVID-19 and may reflect an increase in the proportion of those chronically homeless in the overall homeless community.

The increase in the proportion of chronically homeless during and after the pandemic might have been impacted as follows. Research indicates that the 2020 lockdown may have increased the prevalence of family violence and consequently the absolute number of homeless persons (Usher et al. 2020). Further, the lockdown may have increased the prevalence of mental health issues and hence the number of homeless people (Pfefferbaum et al. 2020).

Other factors influencing the rise in 2020 and early 2021 may include the very low rental vacancy rate from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2020 (REIWA. 2021). This factor is likely to have made it more difficult for those already chronically homeless to improve their status, as well as extending the length of homelessness experienced by those who were homeless such that they were homeless for more than 12 months continuously, thus meeting the criterion for chronic homelessness. Further research is indicated to assess the cause of increases in this proportion during this period.

FIGURE 3.19 Proportion of Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool respondents that are chronically homeless (WA Advance to Zero)



Note: The Vulnerability Index–Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). Q1, Quarter 1.
Source: Advance to Zero national database 2016–March2021

From 2016 to 31 March 2021, there has been a 12.5% increase in the proportion of chronically homeless respondents. Further research is required to determine if there are factors in addition to the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown to account for this.

[1]The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) Fact Sheet and Q&A. https://aaeh.org.au/assets/docs/Publications/2020-VI-SPDAT-Factsheet-and-QA.PDF

Target 2; No individual or family in Western Australia will sleep rough or stay in supported accommodation for longer than five nights before moving into an affordable, safe, decent, permanent home with the support required to sustain it.

Target 2 requires further research before full operationalisation. Both the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC) data and the Registry Week surveys administered by the AAEH Advance to Zero campaign can produce proxy measures to estimate how well we are approaching this target. The VI-SPDAT questionnaire administered during Registry Week by the AAEH collects information on individual and family housing situations (including sleeping rough or staying in supported accommodation). This could be combined with the responses to the following question, which asks 'How long has it been since you lived in permanent, stable housing (with a secure lease/tenancy)?' to determine the number of individuals or families who are sleeping rough or staying in supported accommodation for longer than five nights.

Additionally, SHSC records include data on the number of nights clients spend in supported accommodation. While this does not include rough sleeping, the percentage of SHS clients spending more than five nights in supported accommodation could be a useful measure for this target.

3.5 Addressing the needs of those experiencing homelessness

Those experiencing homelessness and those exiting homelessness with physical health, mental health, and alcohol and other drug use dependence needs will have their needs addressed. This will result in a halving of mortality rates among those who have experienced homelessness and a halving in public hospital costs one year on for those exiting homelessness

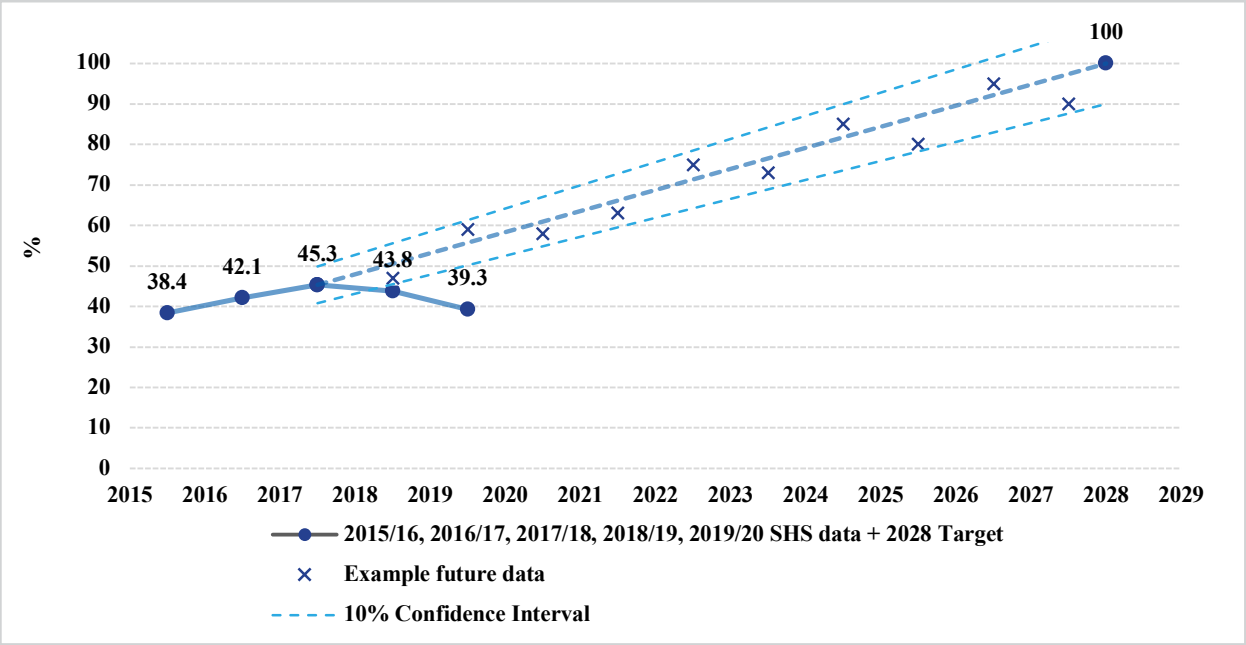
TARGET 6

Homeless and formerly homeless individuals experience significant issues in relation to physical health, mental health, and drug and alcohol use. Poor health outcomes and addiction can be both a cause and a consequence of homelessness. For example, those with unmanaged schizophrenia often end up homeless as their ability to participate in the economic and social life of society declines. Those with other unmanaged illnesses such as AIDS are vulnerable to homelessness, as the disease progresses, and the individual becomes unable to work. On the other hand, homelessness increases the risk of health problems such as skin disorders and parasitic infestations.

Part 1 of the Framework and Outcome 1.7: *Homeless and formerly homeless individuals have their health, mental health, and drug and alcohol issues addressed* explicitly operationalise this target. This will include data from Specialist Homelessness Services on the provision and access of health, and drug and alcohol use services among their clients, as well as WA Department of Health data on mortality rates and public hospital costs. This target considers not only the cost to the individual but also the economic burden on the public system of chronic homelessness when the complex health needs of the homeless population are not appropriately addressed.

While not directly measuring health needs, one broad indication of this target can be found in SHS public data and is illustrated in Figure 3.20.

FIGURE 3.20 The proportion of Western Australian Specialist Homelessness Services clients that end their support periods with their immediate case management needs met/case management goals achieved (SHSC)



Source: AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2017–18.
https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/summary

Figure 3.20 demonstrates that there was an improvement in the 2015–2017 period – where there was an increase that saw almost half of all individuals accessing SHS ending their support periods with their immediate needs and goals met. However, this number has decreased in recent years, with 39.3% of people in 2019/20 ending their support periods with their needs met, similar to the 2015/16 data. This is below projected targets, indicating a need for greater and sustained focus on understanding and addressing the complex needs of SHS clients.

People access SHS for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to their financial, accommodation, interpersonal relationship, and health conditions. In 2017–18, 18.8% of those who accessed SHS did so for health reasons (mental health, medical or drug and alcohol issues). An increase in the proportion of Western Australian individuals accessing SHS that leave with their immediate case management needs met would likely imply that those experiencing health issues will have had their needs met. This is not necessarily the case, however, and so a more in-depth analysis of the Unit Record Files of individuals who seek SHS is necessary, to ascertain the proportion of those who have initially accessed SHS for health reasons and end their support periods feeling as if these health needs have been met.

4.0 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

The underlying causes that result in people becoming homeless have been met head-on, resulting in a reduction by more than half in the inflow of people and families into homelessness in any one year

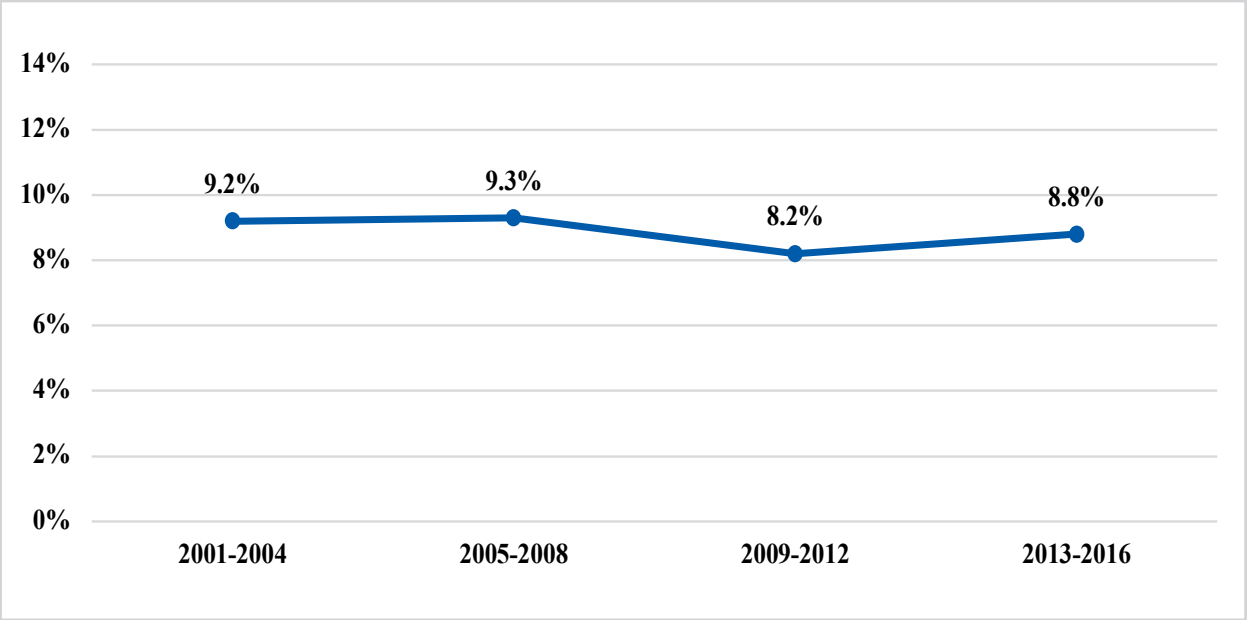
TARGET 4

The causes of homelessness are complex, encompassing a broad range of individual and structural determinants, including housing availability and affordability, economic and employment opportunities (or lack thereof), physical and mental health outcomes, domestic and family violence, and social and community connections. This target is operationalised predominantly in Domain 2: *Structural Factors and Domain 3: Individual Factors* of the Framework and Data Dictionary. While comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes of homelessness is beyond the scope of this *Dashboard*, the aim of this section is to visualise key drivers for which data is publicly available. The data has been predominantly sourced from the AIHW, the ABS and Western Australia Police Force Crime Statistics. Future iterations of the *Dashboard* will extend the analysis.

4.1 Housing affordability

The availability and accessibility of safe, secure, and affordable housing plays a vital role in preventing of entry to homelessness and facilitating a sustained exit from homelessness. The first two outcomes of Domain 2: *Structural Factors* of the Framework relate to Housing Supply and Affordability (Outcome 10.1.1) and Housing Quality (10.1.2). Domain 3: *Individual Factors* contains measures surrounding Housing Stress and Housing Quality (10.2.1).

FIGURE 4.1 Proportion of Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool respondents chronically homeless (WA Advance to Zero)

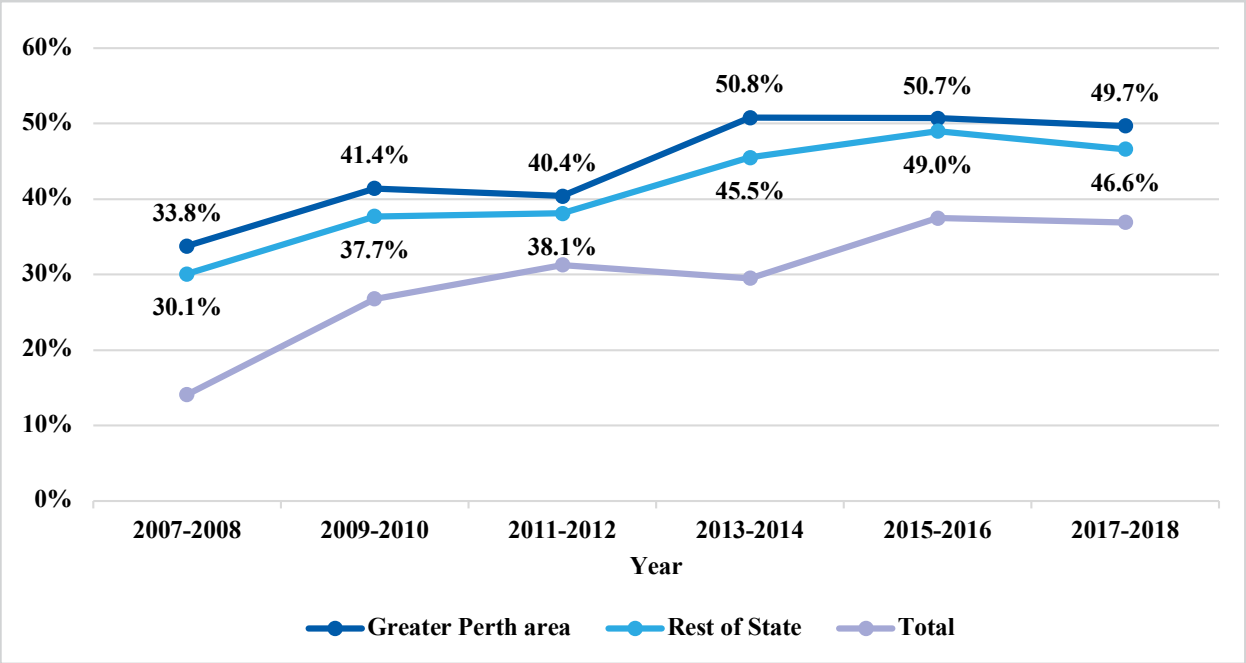


Source: Wilkins and Lass, 2018, The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 16. https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/2874177/HILDA-report_Low-Res_10.10.18.pdf

A household is defined as experiencing 'housing stress' if it has an income level in the bottom 40 per cent of Australia's income distribution and is paying more than 30 per cent of this income on housing costs. The proportion of households experiencing housing stress is derived from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (Wilkins & Lass, 2018). The HILDA Survey is a nationally representative household-based panel study, which collects information about economic and personal well-being, labour market dynamics and family life from its participants annually. The HILDA Survey is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and is designed and managed by the Melbourne Institute.

Housing stress and poor housing quality are risk factors for homelessness. With all other factors being equal, fewer Western Australians that are experiencing housing stress and more Western Australians living in safe and decent housing, should result in lower homelessness rates and rates of entry into homelessness. While there is no pronounced trend in housing stress statistics (Figure 4.1), the proportion of low-income households experiencing housing stress has declined overall since the mid-2000s. However, the rate did exhibit a slight upward trend between the 2009–12 and 2013–16 surveys, which, if continued, could increase entries into and inhibit exits out of homelessness.

FIGURE 4.2 Proportion of low-income rental households spending more than 30 per cent of their gross income on housing costs (rental stress) (%), by location, 2007–08 to 2017–18 (WA) (ABS)

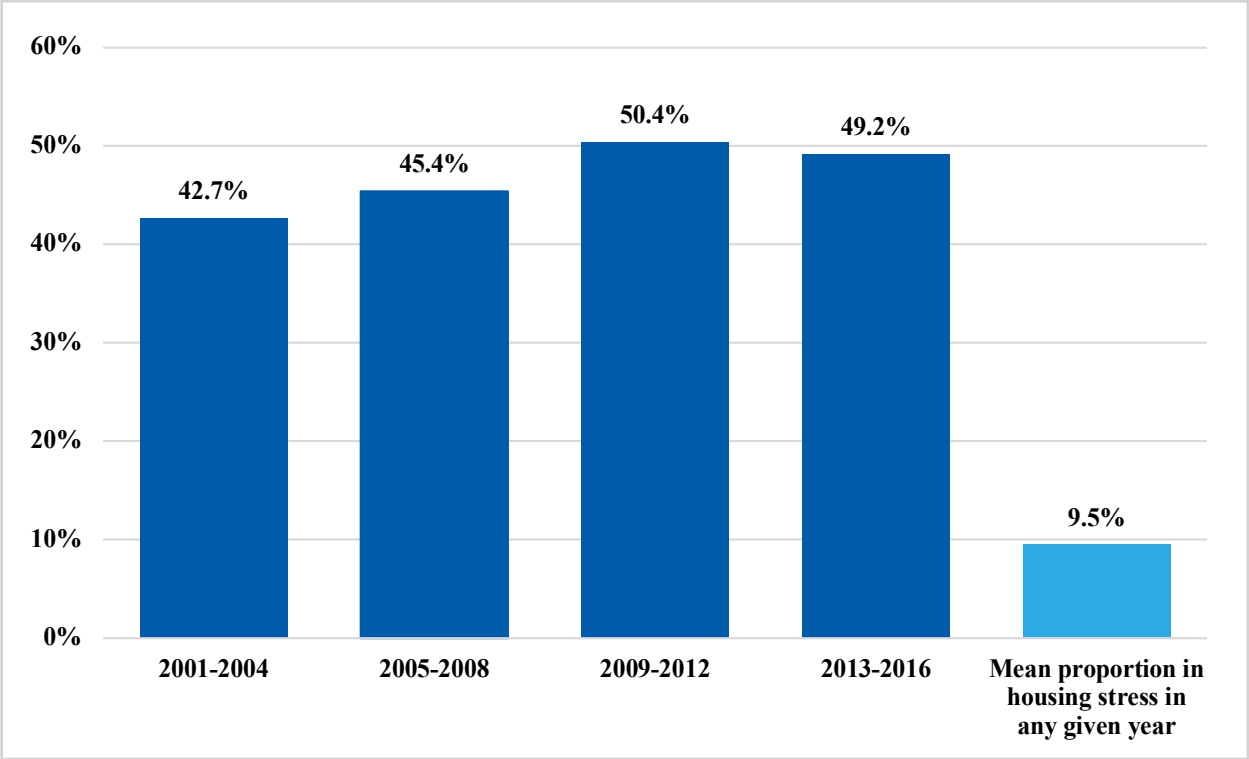


Source: ABS 4130.0 – Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2017–18 https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4130.0
Link to measure: 3.1.1.2: The proportion of Western Australian households experiencing rental stress.

The proportion of low-income households (bottom 40 per cent of equivalised income) in rental stress (spending more than 30 per cent of their gross income on rent) is collected in the biennial Survey of Income and Housing (SIH), conducted by ABS. Households with excessive rental costs may experience financial stress, impacting on their ability to afford other living costs such as food, clothing, transport, and utilities. In worst-case scenarios, acute rental or housing stress could lead to households becoming homeless.

Figure 4.2 indicates that there has been a general upward trend in the proportion of low-income rental households experiencing rental stress from 2007–09, peaking in 2013–14 and stabilising at a relatively high level. Location plays an important role in rental stress, with metropolitan households experiencing noticeably higher levels of rental stress than the rest of WA. To meet the target of reduction of inflow into homelessness, housing stress levels across Western Australia need to fall.

FIGURE 4.3 Proportion of low income households remaining in housing stress from one year to the next (%), by family type, 2001–04 to 2013–16 (Australia) (HILDA)

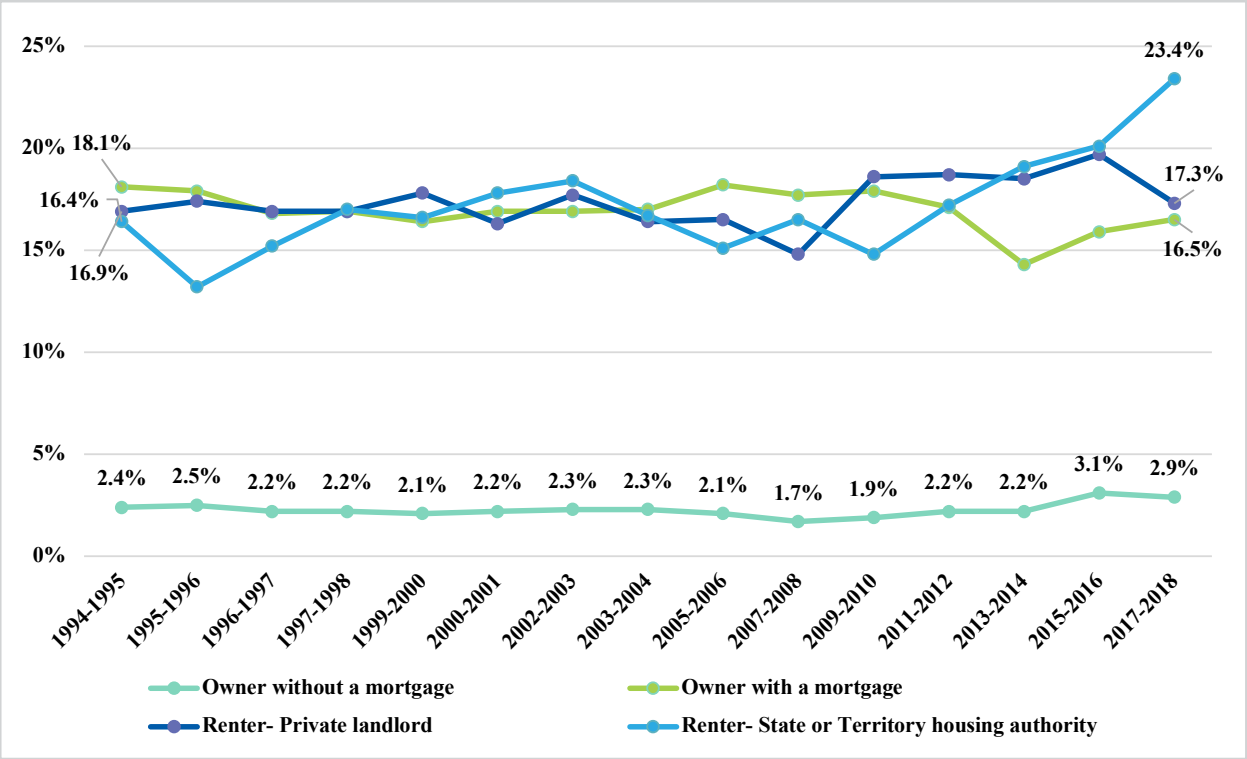


Source: The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 16, 2018. https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/hilda/publications/hilda-statistical-reports
Note: Data accessed via the AIHW Housing Data Dashboard: https://www.housingdata.gov.au/

The proportion of low-income households remaining in housing stress from one year to the next gives an indication of the persistency of housing stress in the population; that is, the extent to which households become 'trapped' in financially precarious housing situations. Data on persistence of housing stress is expressed as the proportion who remain in housing stress in the following year. This data was derived from the HILDA Survey and was accessed via the AIHW Housing Data *Dashboard* (AIHW, ongoing).

Despite a slight fall between 2009–12 and 2013–16 statistics, Figure 4.3 indicates that there has overall been a positive trend in the persistency of housing stress. Considering the role of housing stress as a driver of homelessness, the high proportion of low-income households remaining in housing stress from one year to the next is concerning, as a person who is continually under housing stress is in a financially unstable position and could be increasingly susceptible to homelessness. As such, Figure 4.3 emphasises the need to address housing stress in order to meet the overall targets of ending homelessness.

FIGURE 4.4 Housing affordability: housing costs as a proportion of household income, by tenure and landlord type, 1994–1995 to 2017–18 (WA) (ABS)

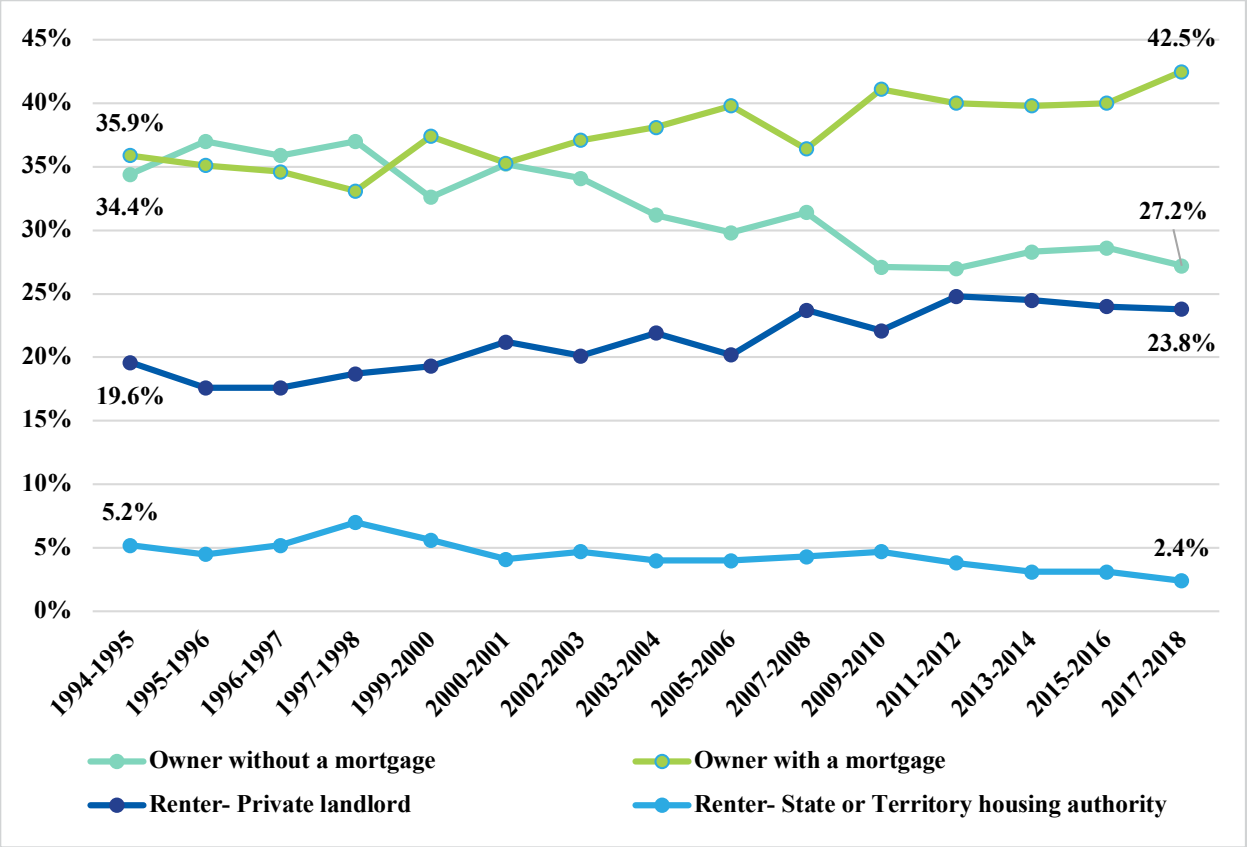


Source: ABS 4130.0 – Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2017–18. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4130.0
Note: Proportions have high margins of error and should be used with caution. See the ABS Housing Occupancy and Costs Quality Declaration for further details.

Given that housing costs are a major component of Australian household living expenses, housing costs as a proportion of income can give an indication of housing affordability. The data presented in Figure 4.4 are disaggregated by tenure and landlord type, highlighting the differences between homeowners with and without a mortgage, renters in the private market and renters in the WA Housing Authority public housing system. The data were derived from the biennial SIH, conducted by the ABS which collects information about income, wealth and household characteristics of persons aged 15 years and over in private dwellings throughout Australia.

Owners with a mortgage, however, have seen an increase since 2013 in proportional housing costs, which could suggest an increase in financial stress among this category. One notable trend is the relatively steady increase in proportional housing costs for renters with the WA housing authority, who account already for some of the lowest income earners in the State. This may be due to policy changes within the WA Housing Authority.

FIGURE 4.5 Home ownership: Households by tenure type (%), 1994–95 to 2017–18 (WA) (ABS)

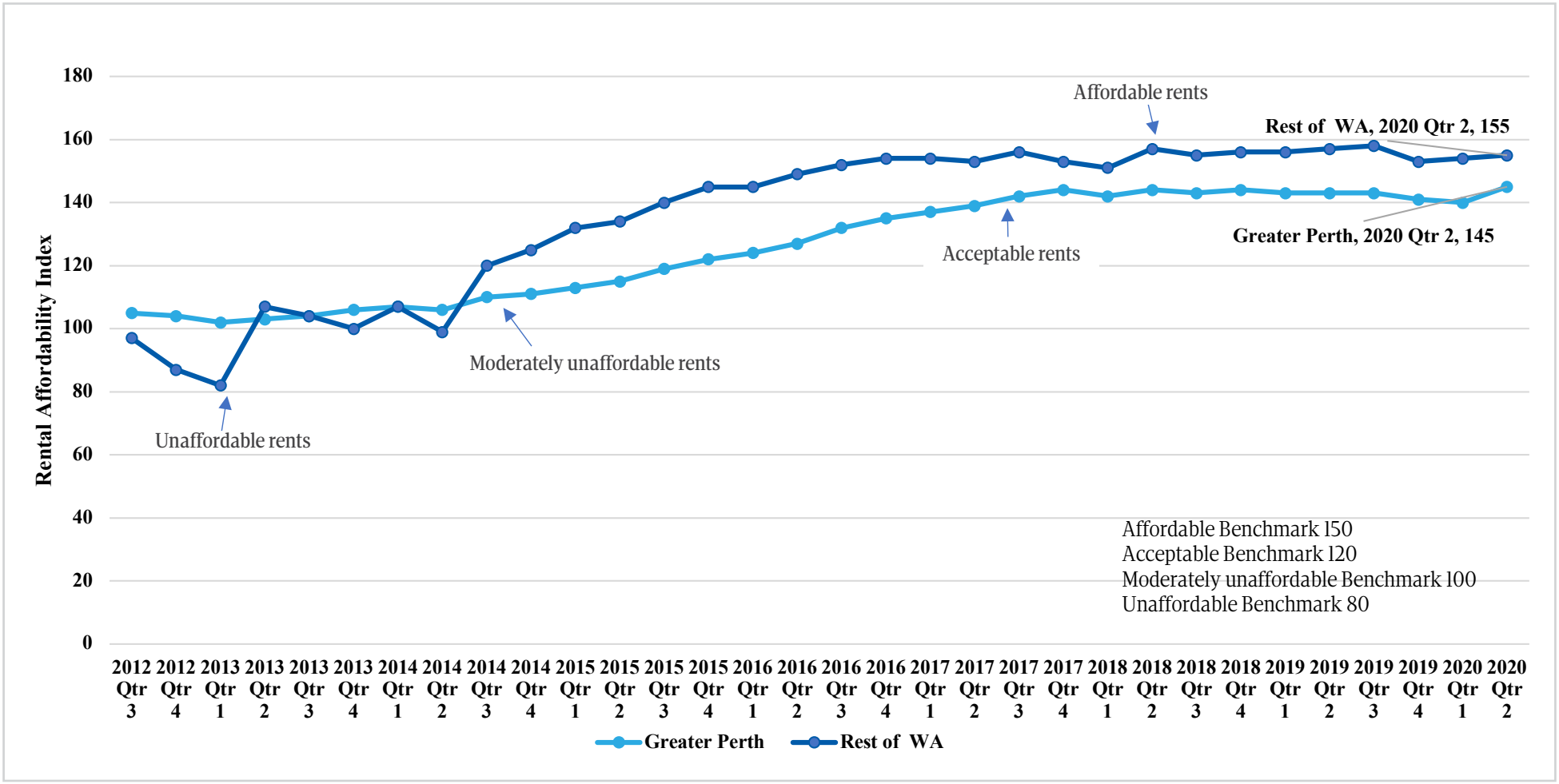


Source: ABS 4130.0 – Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2017–18.
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4130.0

The changes in housing tenure over time reflect trends in home ownership and the rental sector and highlights issues of affordability and accessibility of the housing market. There has been a steady increase in the trends of 'owner with a mortgage' with a comparable decline in percentage of 'owners without a mortgage' since 2000, suggesting that it may be more difficult for Western Australians to own a home outright. This is in keeping with external data suggesting Western Australians are experiencing high levels of mortgage stress (North, 2018). The percentage of households who are renting has steadily increased over time, suggesting that it may be more difficult for Western Australians to enter the housing market. Finally, renters from the WA State housing authority have decreased, particularly since 2009–10. This trend is consistent with the stagnating number of public housing dwellings (see Figure 4.7) and indicates that public housing is not keeping pace with population demand.

The data were derived from the biennial SIH, conducted by the ABS which collects information about income, wealth and household characteristics of persons aged 15 years and over in private dwellings throughout Australia. A key strategy of the State Government is to encourage independent home-ownership is the 'Keystart Housing Scheme Trust'. Within the Trust, the Asset Investment Program (AIP) "helps to ensure the provision of sustainable housing outcomes" (Western Australian Government, 2019a).

FIGURE 4.6 Rental Market: Rental Affordability Index, WA, 2012 to 2020, Quarterly (SGS Economics and Planning)



Source: Rental Affordability Index, SGS Economics & Planning. https://www.sgsep.com.au/maps/thirdspace/australia-rental-affordability-index/
Note: Data accessed via the AIHW Housing Data Dashboard: https://www.housingdata.gov.au/

The Rental Affordability Index (RAI) is a price index for rental markets indicating rental affordability relative to household incomes. The RAI is published by National Shelter, Community Sector Banking, Brotherhood St Laurence and SGS Economics & Planning. The RAI is calculated through a comparison of the median rental price of dwellings for which bonds were lodged in a geographic region for a given quarter, with the average weekly household earnings of that region.

Figure 4.6 indicates an overall positive trend towards more affordable rents over time in Western Australia in line with relatively stagnant economic conditions and low net population growth. However, given the consistently high proportion of low-income earners experiencing rental stress (see Figure 4.2), the increased rental affordability may be disproportionately impacted by moderate or high-income earners. However, the RAI provides information only up to Q2 2020. Since that time, the housing market has tightened markedly.

TIGHTENING OF THE WA HOUSING MARKET IN 2021

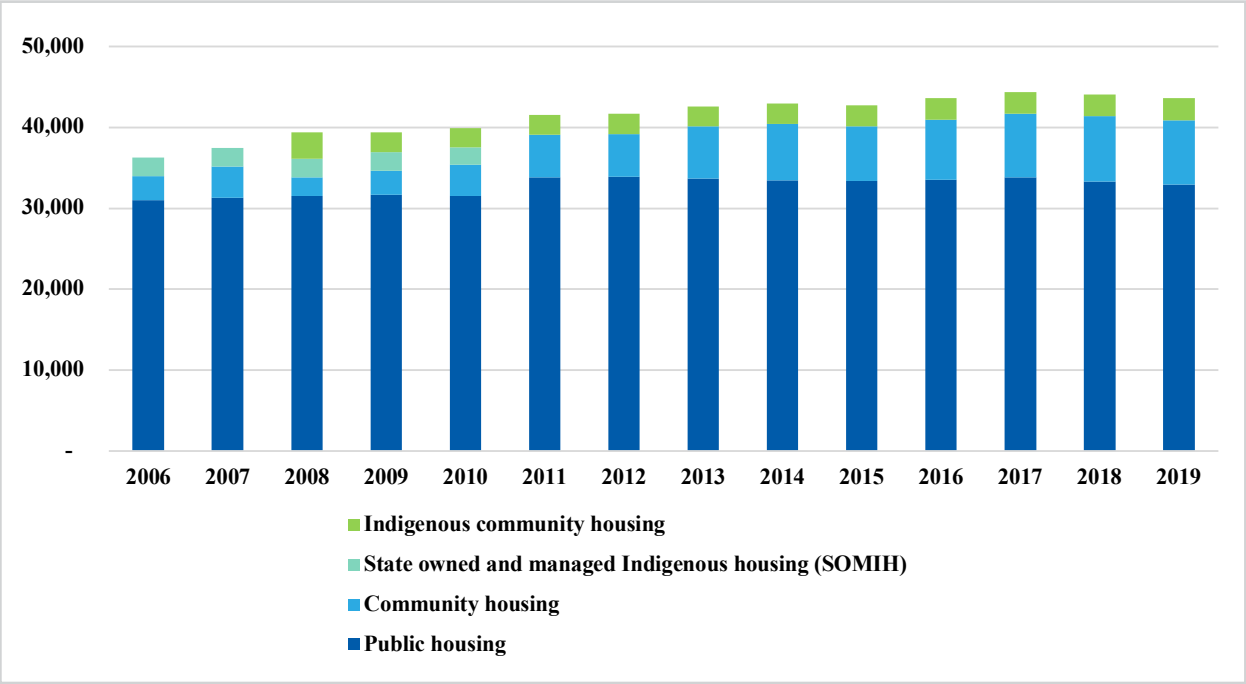
The latest *REIWA Residential property market update – March 2021 quarter update,* reveals that the Greater Perth region's house median price rose by 4.0 per cent over the last year while the region's overall median rent is $50 per week higher than the previous year. REIWA's Perth rental vacancy rate in May 2021 is down to 1.0% compared with a more balanced vacancy rate of 2.3% in May 2020.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Residential Property Price Index* for Perth rose 5.2% in the March quarter 2021 and rose 9.0% over the last twelve months. The March Quarter Perth rise was the largest quarterly rise since the December quarter 2009.

To address the availability of affordable housing options, the State Government in partnership with the private sector and non-government organisations is delivering the $394 million METRONET Social and Affordable Housing and Jobs Package (Western Australian Government, 2019a). In addition, the WA Government announced a $150 million Housing Investment Package in December 2019 and a $444 million Housing Stimulus Package which includes the Social Housing Economic Recovery Package.

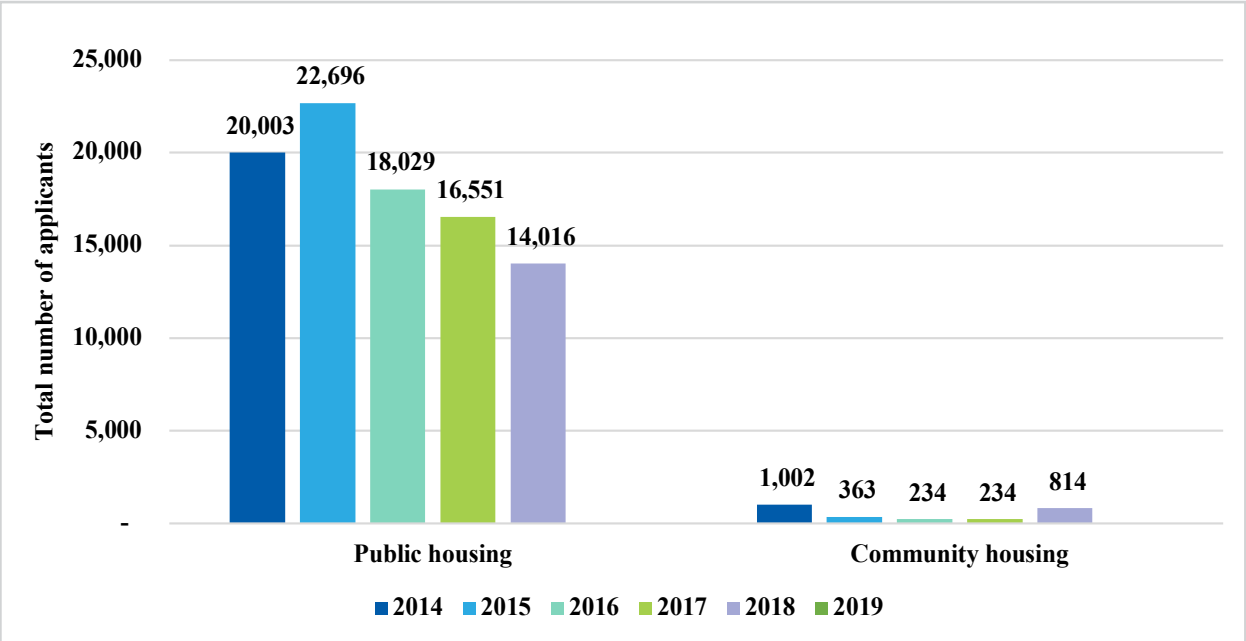
4.2 Housing Supply

FIGURE 4.7 Number of social housing dwellings, all areas, at 30 June 2006 to 30 June 2019 (WA) (AIHW)



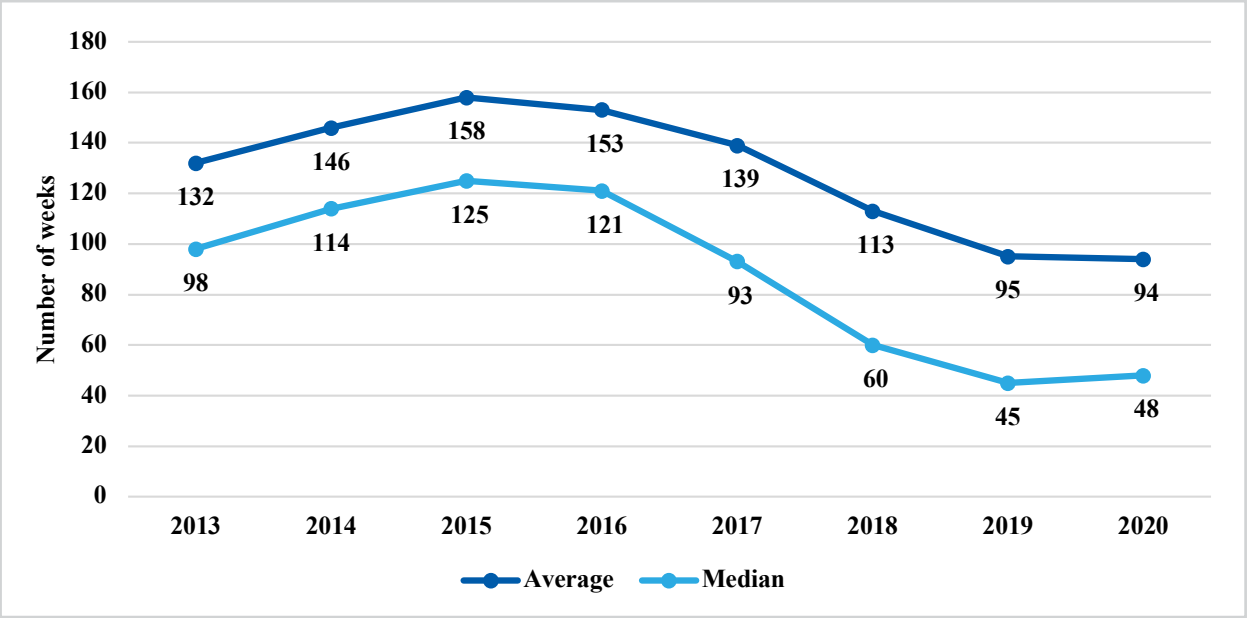
Source: AIHW Housing assistance in Australia 2020. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2020/data
Note: SOMIH is no longer applicable in Western Australia.

FIGURE 4.8 Total number of applicants on waiting list (excluding applicants for transfer), by social housing program, at 30 June 2014 to 2018 (Western Australia; AIHW)



Source: AIHW Housing assistance in Australia 2020. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2020/data

FIGURE 4.9 Waiting time to secure public housing accommodation, from 2012 to 2017 (WA) (WA Housing Authority)



Source: Government of Western Australia Housing Authority, Annual Report 2016–17. http://www.housing.wa.gov.au/HousingDocuments/Housing_Authority_Annual_Report_2016_2017.pdf and Government of Western Australia Department of Communities, Housing Authority Annual Report 2019–20 https://www.communities.wa.gov.au/media/2997/housing-authority-annual-report-2019-20.pdf

Social Housing in a Western Australian context refers to housing provided for people on low incomes or with particular needs by government agencies (Public Housing) or by not-for-profit organisations (Community housing and Aboriginal community housing; AIHW, 2019a).

Public housing is low-cost housing provided by the Western Australian Housing Authority for very low-income households who are often unable to obtain secure and affordable accommodation in the private rental sector (Government of Western Australia Housing Authority, 2017). The rent paid for public housing dwellings is calculated at 25 per cent of a household's gross assessable income or the market rent (whichever is less). The number of public housing dwellings (Figure 4.7), the length of the public housing waiting lists (Figure 4.8) and the average time on those waiting lists (Figure 4.9) in Western Australia are some indications of the availability of affordable housing for Western Australians, an important dimension of the structural determinants of homelessness.

Figure 4.7 indicates that, while there has been some increase in the number of community housing dwellings, the number of public housing dwellings has remained unchanged since 2011 which has not kept pace with the growth in households. This is evident by the long waiting times for households in need of public housing; Figure 4.9 indicates that, despite a small drop in waiting time since 2015, the average waiting time for a public house is still over two years. More positively, Figure 4.8 indicates that the number of households on the waiting list has significantly decreased from 2015 to 2018. Other important indicators of public housing quality and accessibility, such as overcrowding, may not be publicly available at present but should be included in future versions of the *Dashboard*.

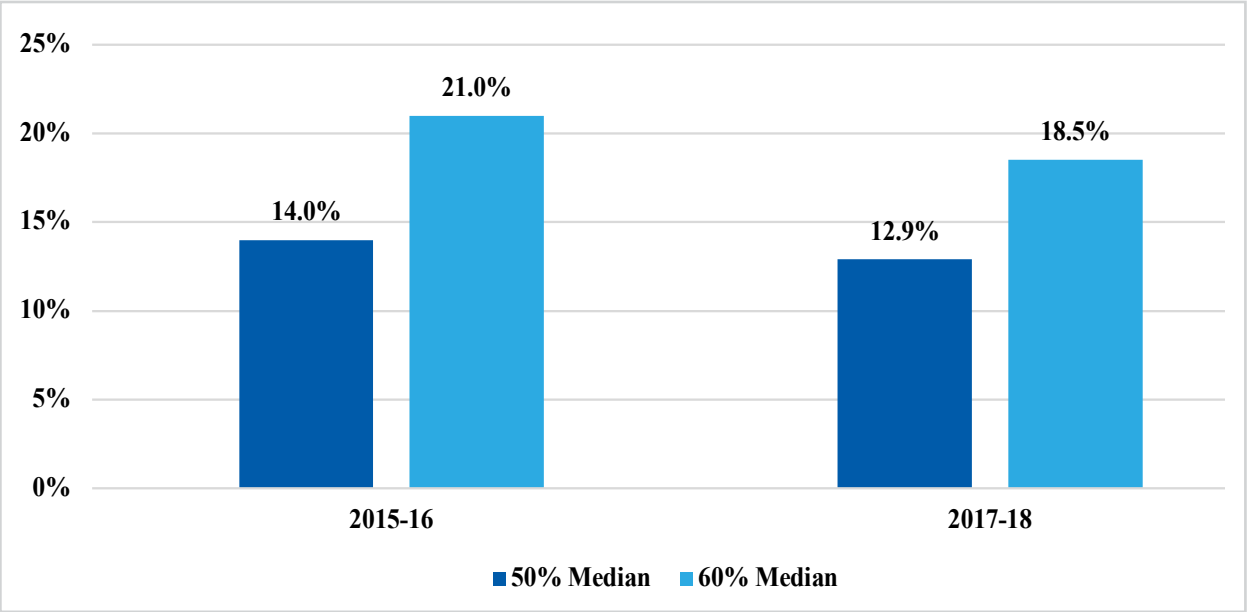
Accessible public housing is a vital measure in preventing low-income households from entering homelessness. The data presented in this *Dashboard* demonstrate a need in Western Australia for greater investment and policy development in the realm of public housing. As reported in the previous section, the Western Australian Government has recently significantly increased its commitment to growth in the public housing stock over the forthcoming period which will act to offset the recent decline in the public housing stock relative to the growth in households.

4.3 Poverty and unemployment

Two important economic drivers of homelessness are poverty and unemployment. Poverty and unemployment lead to financial and housing stress, poor physical and mental health, and social exclusion, all of which are drivers of homelessness. Homelessness can also make it more difficult for individuals to find and keep a job, further compounding the difficulty in obtaining a sustained exit from homelessness.

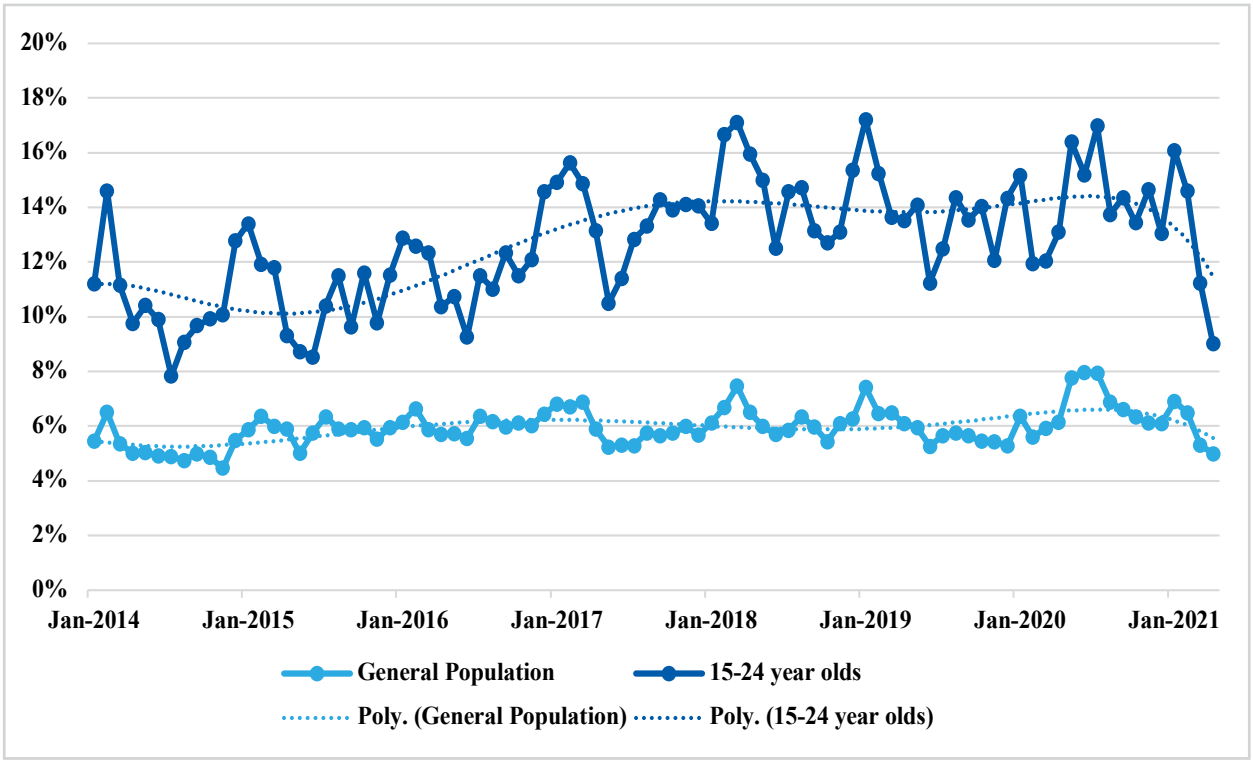
Estimates of poverty in Western Australia are available to 2017–2018. The 50% of median income is the most used international standard of poverty and represents a line which places considerable financial hardship on Western Australians particularly those in receipt of JobSeeker payments as the 100 Families WA research has shown (Seivwright and Flatau 2019). The rate of poverty in Western Australia is slightly below the national rate and has remained relatively high for some time.

FIGURE 4.10 Western Australian poverty rates, 50% and 60% of median income (ACOSS/UNSW)



Source: Australian Council of Social Services and UNSW Rate of poverty by state/territory of residence. http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/poverty/rate-of-poverty-by-state-territory-of-residence-of-people/

FIGURE 4.11 Unemployment rate, youth and general population (WA) (ABS)



Source: ABS 6020.0 – Labour Force, Australia. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0

Figure 4.11 demonstrates trends in the unemployment rate of both 15–24 year olds (youth) and the general population. As can be seen in Figure 4.11, there is seasonal variation in the data, where the unemployment rate is consistently higher in the Australian summer than in winter. The trendline is helpful in this regard, as it allows us to view general trends rather than simply seasonal changes.

One striking feature of Figure 4.11 was the consistent increase in the WA youth unemployment, a social group who are already disproportionately impacted by economic downturns and homelessness. Youth unemployment is the single factor most frequently associated with homelessness (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1989). Youth unemployment also exacerbates other contributing factors to homelessness, such as family conflict and lack of income. Preventing entry into homelessness by supporting economic participation and education among young people in the general population is, therefore, critical. The youth unemployment rate as well as underemployment rose sharply in Western Australia in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown in Western Australia but in the first few months of 2021 has begun to fall.

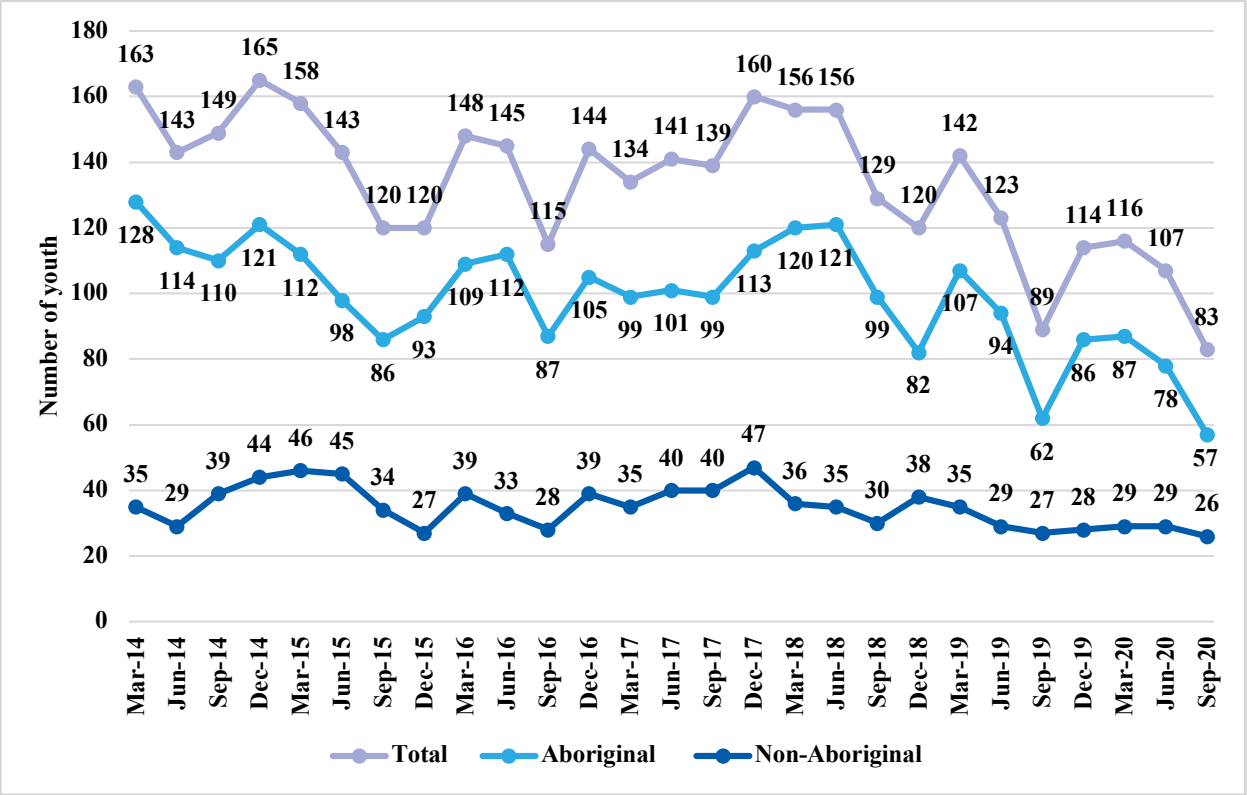
While not as high as the youth unemployment rate, trends in the general population were also increasing until the recent fall in 2021, showing a sustained increase in the WA unemployment rate – it has increased from 3.7% in November 2013 to 6.9% in January 2021.

Resolving a complex issue such as unemployment will require a response from all of society, including State Government policy reform. The need for a greater number of jobs is addressed in the Premier's Priorities, which articulates the goal of increasing the total number of employed persons in Western Australia by at least 150,000 by 2023–24. If achieved, this goal will contribute to curbing the increasing unemployment rate, one of the largest drivers of homelessness (Western Australian Government, 2019a).

4.4 Young people in custody and out-of-home care

Young people who have been in the custody of the state, whether in some form of out-of-home care or through the juvenile justice system, are at significantly higher risk of experiencing homelessness. In the *Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia* report, nearly two–thirds (63%) of homeless youth surveyed had been placed in some form of out-of-home care by the time they had turned 18 (Flatau, Thielking, MacKenzie, & Steen, 2015).

FIGURE 4.12 Youth detainees in custody by Aboriginal cultural identity (WA) (WA Corrective Services)



Source: Government of Western Australia Department of Justice, Corrective Services, 2019 https://www.correctiveservices.wa.gov.au/_files/about-us/statistics-publications/statistics/2019/2019-quarterl-youth-custodial.pdf and Government of Western Australia Department of Justice, Corrective Services, 2021 https://www.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/2020-quarter3-youth-custodial.pdf

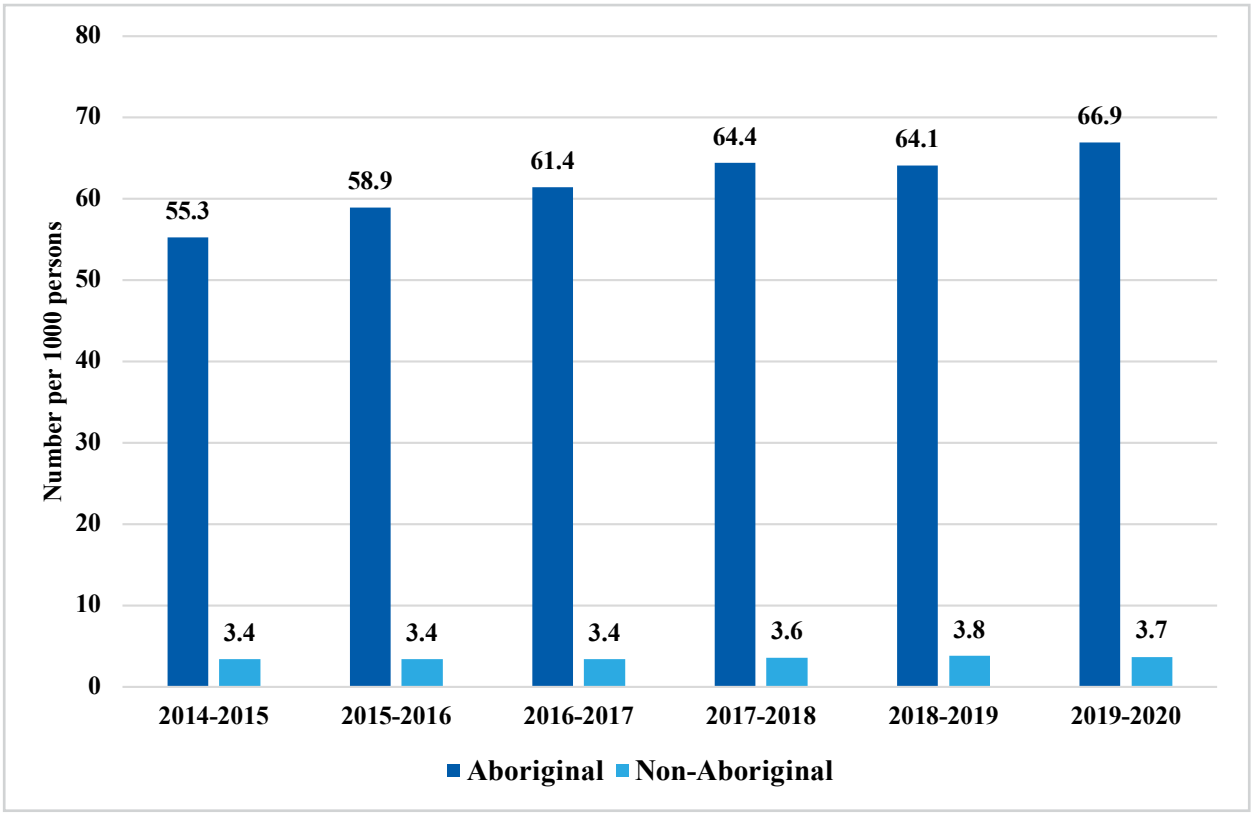
There is an established link between young people with experience in the justice system and lifetime risk of repeat episodes of homelessness. Figure 4.12 presents the number of youth detainees in custody, using data from the Western Australia Department of Justice, Corrective Services database (Government of Western Australia Department of Justice, 2019). When interpreting trends from Figure 4.11, it should be noted that the absolute number of youths in detention is small, in comparison to the general population. Notwithstanding this, just as Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in Australia's homeless population, Figure 4.13 indicates that Aboriginal youth are heavily over-represented in juvenile detention figures. In 2019, Aboriginal youth made up 73% of the total population of youth detainees in custody, despite forming only 3.3% of the general youth population.

On a positive note, the number of young people in custody has decreased in all three categories between 2014 and 2018. This is particularly impressive when it is considered that the general population of youth would have risen in this time, and there has consequently been a notable decrease not just in the *number* but also in the *proportion* of youth that are detained in custody.

The Premier's Priorities document sets a target of less than 50% of young offenders returning to detention within 2 years of release by 2022–23. The achievement of this goal would significantly contribute to reducing the number of youth detainees in custody, as it would involve the successful implementation of strategies for youth leaving detention to re-enter society, implying the economic involvement of the youth as functioning members of society. Long term, this will lead to less adult prisoners, as those who go to juvenile detention multiple times are far more likely to end up in prison as adults (Western Australian Government, 2019a).

The Western Australian Police Force is working with partner agencies in identifying and diverting youth from offending through early intervention, diversion, and prevention strategies. In targeting the high levels of Aboriginal youth detainees in custody, the 'Aboriginal Affairs Division' has been established to provide culturally sensitive solutions. The outcome relevant to these actions in the State Government outcomes framework is "Contribute to community safety and security". Similarly, efforts are being made to increase access to bail support, legal representation and parole for Aboriginal people, which falls under the outcome: "Equitable Access to Legal Services and Information" (Western Australian Government, 2019b).

FIGURE 4.13 Children in out-of-home care by Aboriginal cultural identity, number per 1,000 (WA) (AIHW)



Source: AIHW Child Protection Australia 2019–20, https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/child-protection/data#page1
Link to measures: 3.5.6.2: The number of children in out-of-home care in Western Australia; 3.5.6.3: The number of children in out-of-home care in Western Australia of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent

The data displayed in Figure 4.13 are derived from the *Child protection Australia 2017–18* reports, published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2021b). These data are of particular relevance as there is a strong association between individuals who have experienced out-of-home care and lifetime risk of homelessness, and an understanding of the increased rate of out-of-home care for Aboriginal people will help to understand the increased rates of homelessness for these groups. The risk of homelessness is particularly great among young people who 'age-out' of state-care system at age 18 with very little support networks. The steady, upward trend in the rate of children in out-of-home care among the Aboriginal population illustrated in Figure 4.13 is concerning.

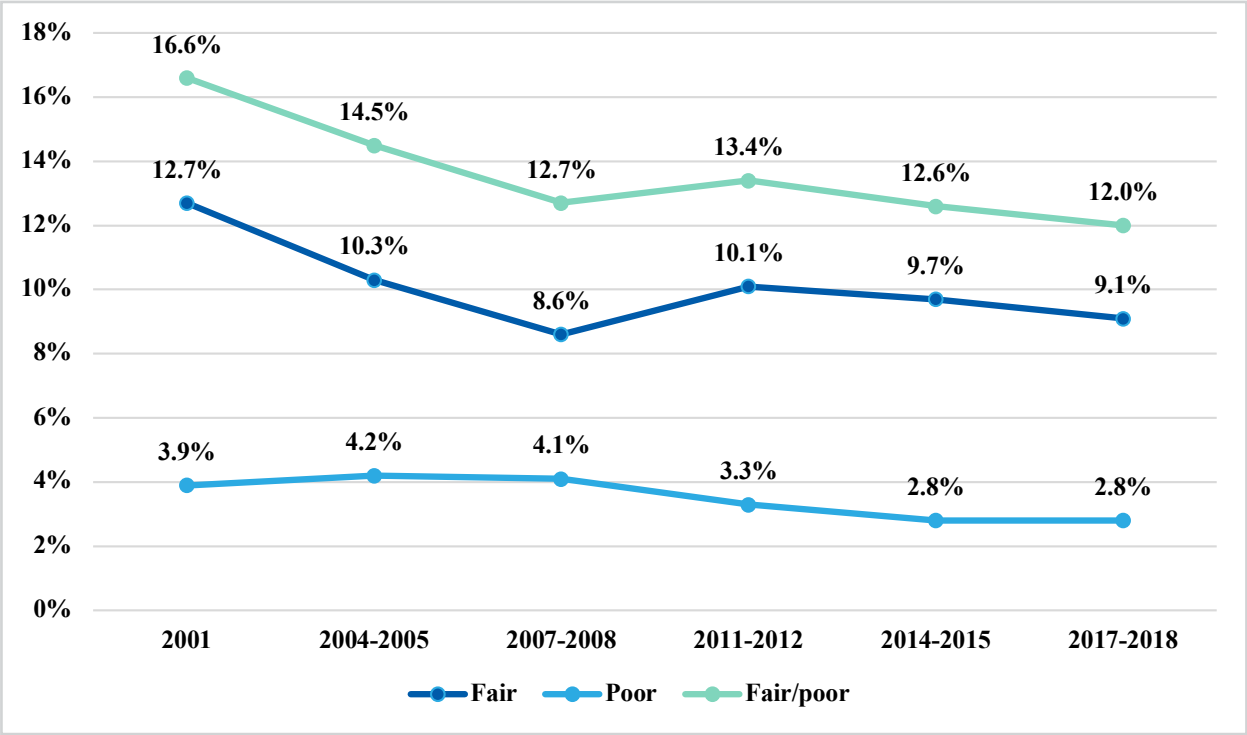
If we are to achieve a long-term reduction in the rates of Aboriginal homelessness, the rate of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care will have to diminish. Stronger support networks for this vulnerable group need to be developed, such as some Australian state governments' shift to trial extension of care on a voluntary basis for young people until the age of 21 years of age (Home Stretch, 2019). Aboriginal specific solutions are fundamental.

In the 2019–20 WA Budget, the State Government is implementing the 'Building a Better Future: Out-of-Home Care Reform' strategy, which will deliver an out-of-home care system that is focused on the needs of the child, is simultaneously safe and flexible, and has a legislative framework supporting best child outcomes. This is for children already in out-of-home care, but the government is also focused on preventing entry into the out-of-home care system through the 'Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy'. The outcome associated with these measures is: *"Family and individuals experiencing family and domestic violence, homelessness or other crises are assisted to build their capabilities and be safe"* (Western Australian Government, 2019b).

4.5 Physical and mental health

Poor health has a dual effect on an individual's risk of homelessness. While the management itself of ill health is costly, poor health can also inhibit an individual's economic and social participation. This economic burden can make it more difficult to manage day-to-day expenses, rendering an individual more susceptible to homelessness. The homeless population is disproportionately affected by poor physical and mental health, and substance misuse. Substance misuse can be both a contributing factor (i.e. *leading* to homelessness through impaired economic participation or loss of social support networks) and also a consequence of homelessness. It is, therefore, vital to monitor the health status among Western Australians in order to examine the role of physical and mental health as drivers of homelessness.

FIGURE 4.14 People that report their health status as fair/poor (WA) (ABS)



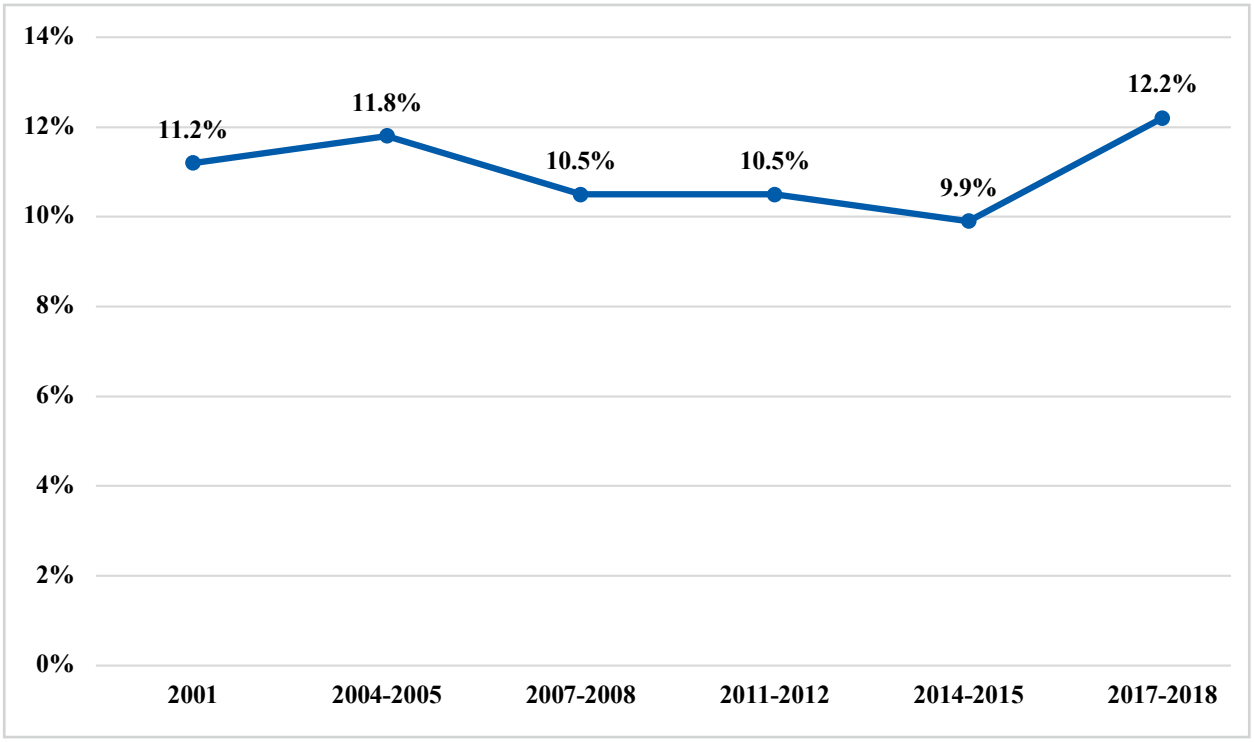
Source: ABS 4364.0.55.001 – National Health Survey: First Results, 2017–18.
https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4364.0.55.0012017-18?OpenDocument
Link to measure: 3.3.1.1: The proportion of Western Australian who rate their health status as 'Fair/Poor'.

The proportion of Western Australians that report their health status as fair/poor can provide an overview of the state of Western Australians' health as a whole. The data is derived from the ABS National Health Survey (NHS), a biennial survey that collects valuable information on a comprehensive range of health issues affecting Australians (ABS, 2018).

Figure 4.14 displays a declining trend over the last two decades of the proportion of Western Australians with fair or poor self-assessed health status. The percentage of Western Australians with poor health, specifically, has shown a slight decline but overall has remained relatively stable. This suggests that the decrease among those with 'fair' status is due to an *improvement* in health, rather than worsening.

This is a good sign in terms of drivers of homelessness; all things being equal, the stronger the physical and mental health of Western Australians, the lower the rate of homelessness.

FIGURE 4.15 Proportion of persons with High/Very High psychological distress (WA) (ABS)



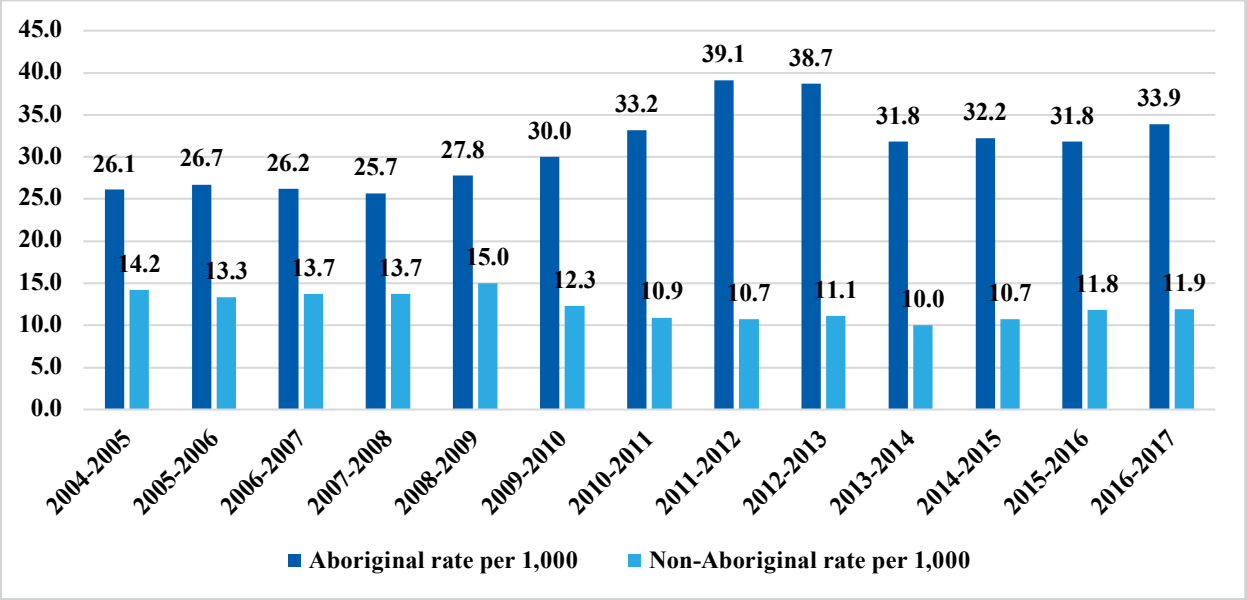
Source: ABS 4364.0.55.001 – National Health Survey: First Results, 2017–18.
https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4364.0.55.0012017-18?OpenDocument

The proportion of persons with High/Very High psychological distress in Figure 4.15 can provide a general overview of the mental health of the population. The data is derived from the NHS, a biennial survey that collects valuable information on a comprehensive range of health issues affecting Australians (ABS, 2018).

Figure 4.15 shows the percentage has fluctuated over time with no clear positive or negative general trend. However, it is important to note that the 2017–18 results show the highest percentage of the population with self-assessed high/very high psychological distress since the introduction of the NHS in 2001. This is of particular concern, as poor mental health – represented here by a proxy of high psychological distress – can cause significant economic stress due to both the cost of management and the loss of economic participation. This economic drain can in turn lead to poverty, personal vulnerability and disaffiliation, all key drivers of homelessness. Assessing and addressing the level of mental illness among the Western Australian population is an essential part of evaluating the role of poor mental health in homelessness.

The State Government in its 2019–2020 Budget has also delineated the outcome: "Accessible, high quality and appropriate mental health and AOD treatments", and has allocated $8.1 million for the continuation of the program *'Suicide Prevention 2020: Together We Can Save Lives'* (Western Australian Government, 2019b). These programs will hopefully lead to a reduction in the proportion of persons with High/Very High psychological distress.

FIGURE 4.16 Age-standardised hospitalisation rates for a principal diagnosis of mental health related condition, 2004–05 to 2016–17 by Aboriginal cultural identity (WA) (AIHW)



Source: AIHW, 2020. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2020 online tables. https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/access-data

Figure 4.16 provides another measure of mental health in Western Australia. The rates of hospitalisations for mental health issues are derived from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Aboriginal Health Performance Framework.

The most striking trend in Figure 4.16 is the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mental health hospitalisation rates. In 2014–15, Aboriginal Australians were three times more likely to be hospitalised for mental health issues. This is in keeping with other data on mental and physical health outcomes which demonstrate Aboriginal Australians are disproportionately impacted by higher rates of mental health issues than non-Aboriginal Australians. Among Aboriginal populations, deaths from suicide are twice as high, hospitalisation rates for intentional self-harm are 2.7 times as high, and the rates of high/very high psychological distress is 2.6 times as high compared to the general population (Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017).

Additionally, while the non-Aboriginal mental health hospitalisation rate has demonstrated a gradual (albeit, fluctuating) decline since 2004, the Aboriginal rate has increased and, while no longer at the peak level of 40.8 per 1,000 seen in 2011–12, remains higher than the statistics collected in the 2000s. Future research will be necessary to establish why the Aboriginal mental health hospitalisation rate peaked in 2011–12, and whether this was statistically significant, considering that the non-Aboriginal rate did not experience the same spike.

The rate of homelessness among Aboriginal people is far higher than for non-Aboriginal people. In Western Australia, over 30% of those counted are homeless identify as Aboriginal (despite Aboriginal population making up around 3% of the State's total population). Given the significant role of poor mental health as a driver of homelessness, the high rates of mental illness among the Aboriginal population must be addressed.

In its 2019–20 budget, the State Government aligned itself with the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030, which aims at:

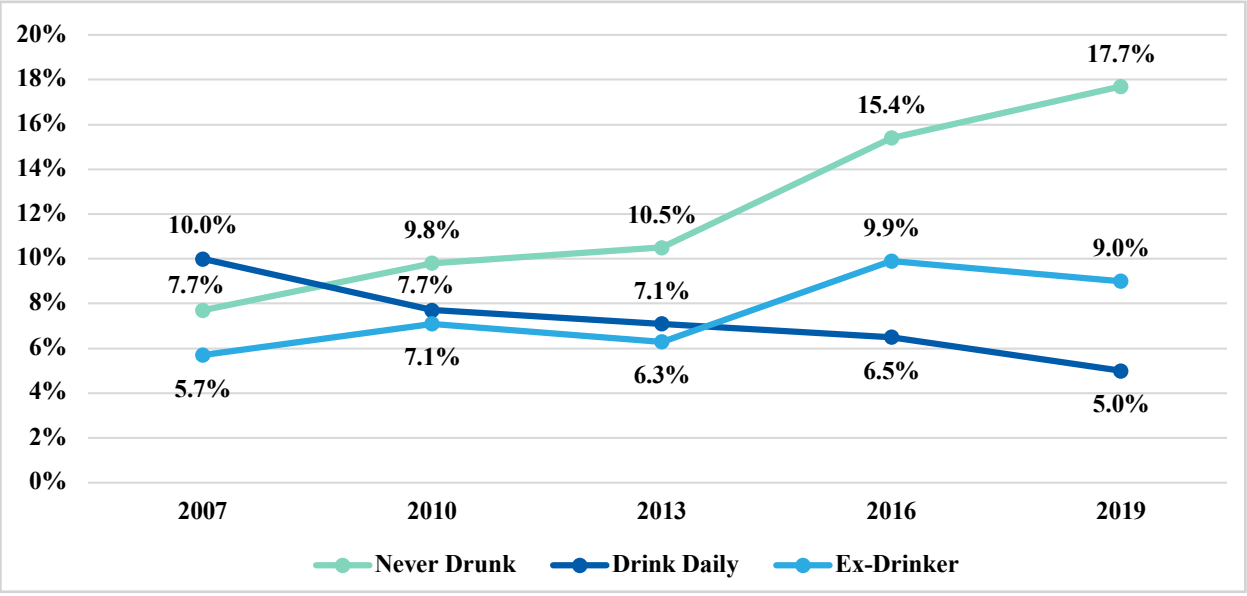
- promoting good health across the life course;
- prevention and early intervention;
- a culturally respectful and non-discriminatory health system;
- individual, family and community wellbeing;
- a strong, skilled and growing Aboriginal health workforce; and
- equitable and timely access to the best quality and safe care.

It is hoped that the continued Government support of health programs aligned with the Framework will reduce the discrepancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mental health hospitalisation rates. In addition, the State Government has pledged $1.6 million for a culturally appropriate housing facility for Aboriginal people and their families who are travelling from regional areas to receive care at Perth metropolitan hospitals, with the aim of encouraging more and more Aboriginal people to feel comfortable accessing medical treatment in Perth (Western Australian Government, 2019b).

There is a link between problematic alcohol and drug use and risk of homelessness. In addition to the detrimental health impact, substance abuse interacts with a range of other variables including financial stability and access to employment and training. Alcoholism is more prevalent among the homeless population than the general population, acting as both a driver into homelessness and a consequence of homelessness. From a psychosocial perspective, homeless individuals are susceptible to feelings of worthlessness, isolation and mental illness, including depression, which can exacerbate their susceptibility to alcohol abuse. Education campaigns play an important role in primary prevention of alcohol addiction as well as promoting available support services, which facilitates the mitigation of the homelessness risk created by alcohol misuse.

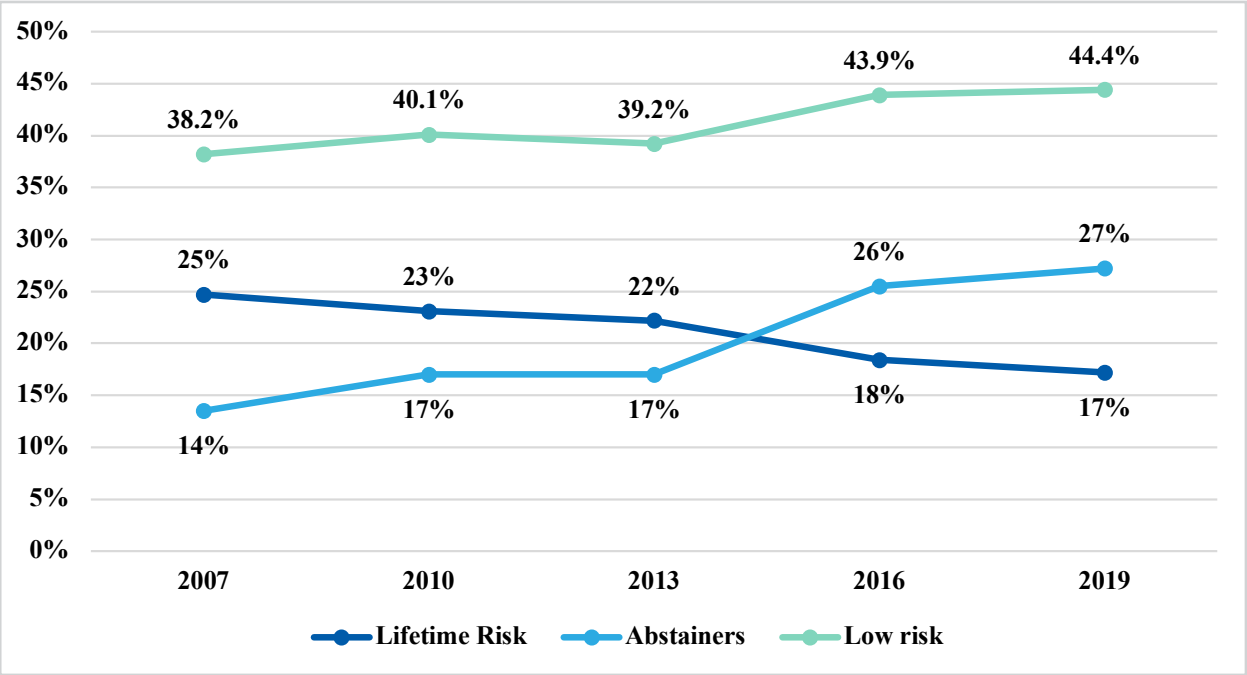
4.6 Alcohol and drug use

FIGURE 4.17 Alcohol Consumption, people aged 14 years or older, 2007 to 2019 (WA) (AIHW)



Source: AIHW 2021. Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia . https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/interactive-data/alcohol

FIGURE 4.18 Alcohol lifetime risk status, people aged 14 years or older, 2007 to 2019 (WA) (AIHW)



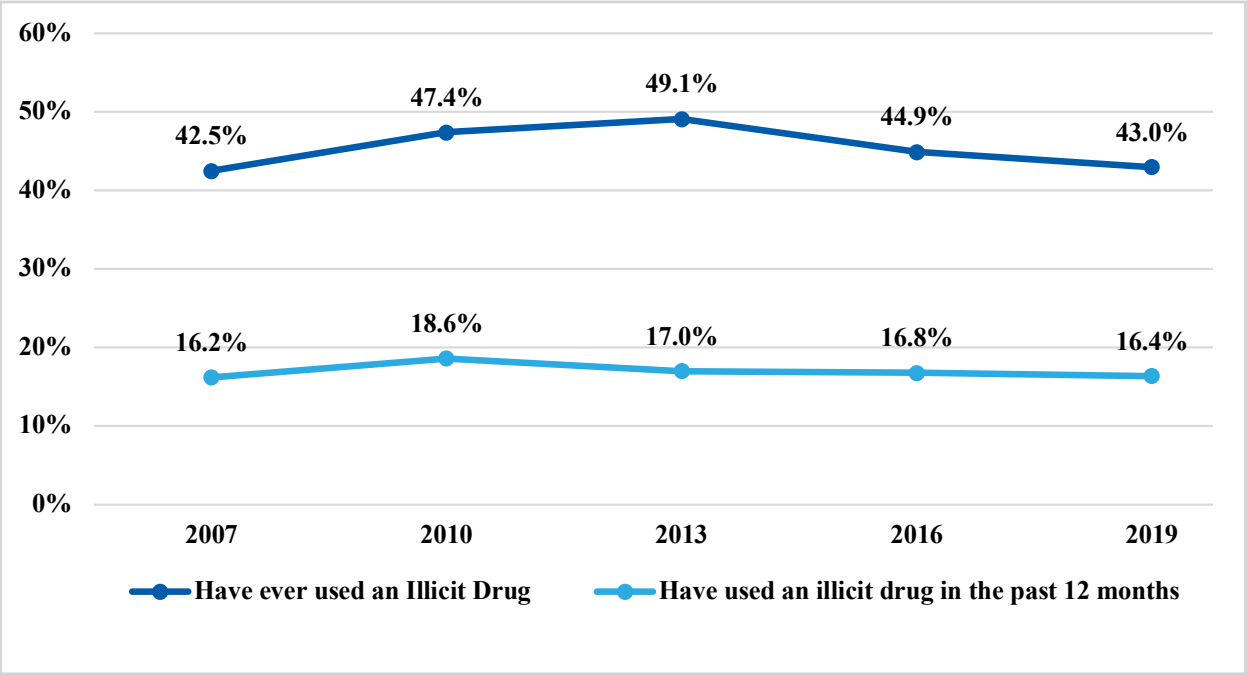
Source: AIHW 2021. Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/interactive-data/alcohol
Link to measure: 3.4.3.2: The proportion of the Western Australian population that consumes more than 2 standard drinks per night.

Figure 4.17 and Figure 4.18 represent trends in alcohol consumption and alcohol risk status among the general population (drinking levels of alcohol that is considered to pose a lifetime risk to one's health). These data are giving us a broad overview of alcohol risk at a population level.

In Figure 4.17, there has been a particularly sharp increase from 2013 to 2016 in the percentage of Western Australians who have either 'never drunk' or are 'ex-drinkers.' Inversely, the percent of those who 'drink daily' has shown a gradual decline. In Figure 4.17, the trends are not quite as sharp, but in the period between 2013 and 2016, there has been a positive growth in 'abstainers' and a slight fall in both 'risky' and 'low risk' (suggesting that some from the 'low risk' category have moved to 'abstainers' rather than shifted to 'risky' category). The AIHW has defined 'risky' drinking as consuming more than 2 standard drinks on average every day (AIHW, 2021b).

Both of these figures suggest that a positive shift in Western Australian drinking culture is taking place.

FIGURE 4.19 Illicit Drug use (WA) (AIHW)



Source: AIHW 2021 (PHE 221). Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/interactive-data/alcohol and AIHW, 2020, National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019 https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/77dbea6e-f071-495c-b71e-3a632237269d/aihw-phe-270.pdf.aspx?inline=true
Note: Lifetime illicit drug use by state after 2016 not available

There is a strong link between problematic drug use and risk of homelessness. In addition to the detrimental health impact, substance abuse interacts with a range of other variables including social connection, financial stability and access to employment and training. Illicit drug use is disproportionately prevalent in the homeless population and can be both a contributing factor (i.e. leading to homeless) and a consequence of homelessness. Substance misuse can also act as a barrier to a successful exit from homelessness (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008). Health promotion campaigns play an important role in primary prevention of addiction as well as promoting available support services, which facilitates mitigation of the homelessness risk created by substance misuse.

As can be seen in Figure 4.19, the rate of those that have used or continue to use an illicit drug in Western Australia has remained relatively constant which suggests that the measures currently being implemented may not be effective. One optimistic statistic to note is that the number of people that have ever used an illicit drug has declined from the peak of 49.1% in 2013 to 43.0% in 2019 while the number that have used an illicit drug in the last 12 months has only slightly declined, which suggests that those who have never used an illicit drug are less likely to do so. Future research will be necessary to investigate the causal factors of this increase between 2007 and 2013 and the subsequent decline beyond 2013.

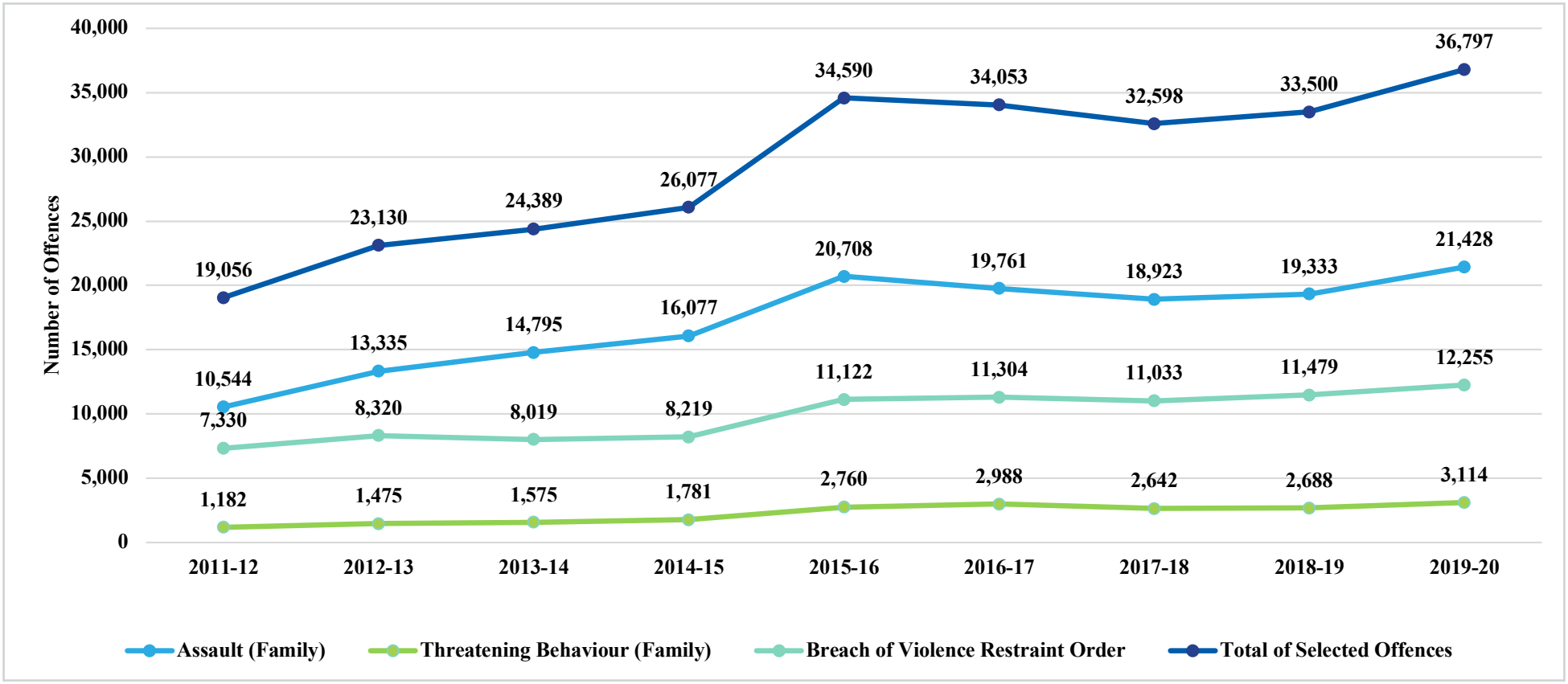
The Premier's Priorities identify illicit drug use as a severe problem within Western Australian society and set the target of reducing the proportion of the WA population who have taken an illicit drug in the last 12 months by 15% between 2016 and 2022. If achieved, the light blue trend line ('have used an illicit drug in the last 12 months') in Figure 4.19 will decrease to 14.3% by 2022, an important step given that illicit drug use is a major driver for homelessness. Some of the key strategies the State Government is implementing to achieve this goal is the continuation of the 'Meth Border Force' through the Australian Police Force, and through targeting criminal networks throughout the state. The 'Methamphetamine Action Plan Taskforce' has also been provided $40.5 million, and $31.6 million has been pledged from 2019–2020 to 2022–2023 for the 'North West Drug & Alcohol Support Program' (Western Australian Government, 2019a).

Within the 2019–2020 State Government budget, the outcomes: "Reduced incidence of use and harm associated with alcohol & other drug use" and "Accessible, high quality and appropriate mental health and AOD treatments" have been outlined. These align strongly with Outcome 3.4 of the Data Dictionary: "Western Australians are not engaging in problematic substance misuse" (Western Australian Government, 2019b).

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and their children. Given the role of domestic violence as a major structural driver of entry into homelessness, it is important to monitor the prevalence of domestic violence and trends in Western Australia. However, domestic violence rates are notoriously difficult to calculate accurately, owing to the fact that most incidences of domestic violence and sexual assault go unreported. With the caveat that Figure 4.20 does not reflect the true extent of the problem, WA crime statistics for Assault (Family), Threatening Behaviour (Family) and Breach of Violence Restraint Orders can be used as a proxy for domestic violence offences. This data is publicly available via Western Australia Police Force Crime Statistics (Western Australia Police Force, 2021).

The trend depicted in Figure 4.20 shows that reported family violence offences have increased by more than 100 per cent in the past decade. This includes a spike of 28.9 per cent between 2014–15 and 2015–16, with the total number of offences jumping from 27,277 to 35,168. While offences were showing a slight downward trend from this peak in 2015–16, an additional peak is now observed in 2019–20 which is attributable to an increase in family assault and breach of violence restraint orders. Only threatening behaviour was not seen to escalate. When interpreting the peak observed in 2019–2020 it is necessary to consider the potential impact of COVID-19 on trends of family violence offences. COVID-19 has been linked to increased reports of family violence and in conjunction with lockdowns, has been linked to increased economic security and social isolation (known contributors to family violence). From the perspective of homelessness, these statistics suggest that more work is required to reduce family violence to prevent new entries into homelessness.

FIGURE 4.20 Family violence offences, 2010–11 to 2019–20 (WA Police Force)



Source: Western Australia Police Force, 2021. Crime Statistics https://www.police.wa.gov.au/Crime/CrimeStatistics#/
Note: These are absolute number of offences, not rates, and do not take into account changes in population size.

5. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DASHBOARD

The *Dashboard* is an evolving platform of the Western Australian Alliance to End Homelessness. It includes a strong though still evolving set of indicators related to the domains of reducing and ending homelessness itself, and, preventing homelessness through addressing 'structural' and 'individual' drivers of homelessness. However, there are currently no baseline indicators for other domains and specifically for the following *Dashboard* targets:

Target 7: Those experiencing homelessness and those exiting homelessness will be supported to strengthen their economic, social, family and community connections leading to stronger well-being and quality of life outcomes. Employment among those experiencing homelessness will be significantly increased. Over half of those exiting homelessness will be employed within three years of moving into housing. Well-being and quality of life will equal those of the general population in the same timeframe.

Target 8: A strong, collaborative and adaptive network of services and responses across the community services, health, mental health, justice and education sectors will exist working collectively to address the underlying causes of homelessness and meeting the needs of those who become homeless.

Target 9: Measurement, accountability and governance mechanisms that are robust, transparent and open to external review will be operating, providing an on-going means for assessing progress in meeting the goals of Ending Homelessness in Western Australia in 10 years.

Both the Framework and the Data Dictionary provide important leads as to what *could* be measured with sufficient new investment in research and evaluation.

In tems of Target 7, it is well established that educational disadvantage, poverty and poor social relationships underpin homelessness in society. The paucity of data on social and economic outcomes for people with current or previous experiences of homelessness demonstrates the need for future research. For example, to evaluate appropriately this target, SHS client follow up is required for three years after they are in stable housing to assess clients' employment status, general wellbeing and quality of life. Potential measures for wellbeing and quality of life include the World Health Organisation-Five (WHO-5) Wellbeing Index and the World Health Organisation Quality of Life (WHOQOL) assessment, respectively.

Regarding economic connections, the rates of employment and scores on these measures among the currently homeless population can be compared with population norms through a combination of SHS and ABS data. As explored in the Data Dictionary, information about the formerly homeless population is currently difficult to access. However, Centrelink data and SHS unit record files can be linked with other databases where housing status is recorded to discern the formerly homeless population, and then the employment conditions of these individuals can be analysed using linked administrative data. This target is met when over half of those exiting homelessness are employed and there is no significant difference in wellbeing and quality of life scores between those who have exited homelessness into stable housing for three years, and the general population.

In regard to Target 8, collaborative efficacy is the extent to which actors within the network of organisations aiming to end homelessness are able to coordinate their actions and services to address causal factors effectively within the system of homelessness. The complexity of homelessness necessitates a varied system of specialised support services across fields, such as community services, physical and mental health, justice, education and employment. An approach that takes into account this complexity must include a high level of collaboration across all of these services, such that the client receives consistent information and effective assistance.

The different aspects of collaborative efficacy are articulated in Domain 6: *Collaborative Efficacy* of the Framework and Data Dictionary, specifically Outcome 6.1: *"Actors within the network of organisations aiming to end homelessness coordinate their actions to provide an effective effort toward addressing factors within the system of homelessness."* This is important as collaborative efficacy requires the aggregation of client outcome data and other forms of information exchange, and thus will allow all parties involved to measure homelessness to the greatest possible accuracy and act accordingly in a united manner.

At present, there are no sources of data on the extent of service and sector collaboration. Significant original research is required to evaluate the collaborative efficacy across the community services in Western Australia. Examples of key indicators for this target include:

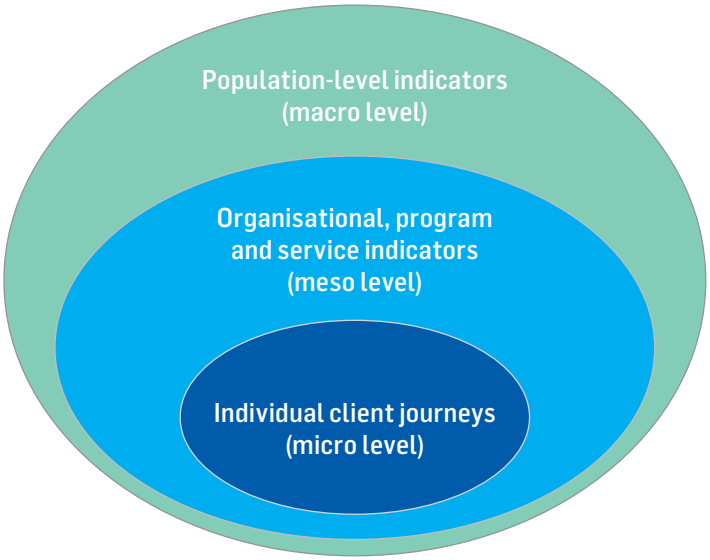
- Number of homelessness services sharing data for aggregation.
- Number of clients who feel there were no barriers to accessing services once they reached out and contacted a service.
- Number of homelessness services who assist clients with referral processes to another more suitable service
- Nature of partnerships between homelessness services and police and/or hospitals
- Number of homelessness services using the standardised client assessment tool.

In regard to Target 9, the Framework is a systematic approach to the identification, tracking, and reporting of data relevant to the complex system of homelessness. The Framework, Data Dictionary and this *Dashboard* are all dynamic documents and will be updated with developments in homelessness research.

Our goal is to create a comprehensive evaluation and accountability mechanism that will assess progress in meeting the WAAEH 10-year targets to end homelessness. This is necessary as rigidity and inflexibility in the methods being used in achieving homelessness will only result in delayed progress towards the goals. We need to be willing to transparently reflect on past experience and how we are tracking in achieving the Framework measures, including: the individual life outcomes of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness (micro level), the outcomes within and surrounding the organisations engaged in ending homelessness (meso level), and the broader sectors to which those organisations belong (macro level).

A multi-level approach also requires engagement with stakeholders from all levels, not only in the process of collecting data about the indicators across these levels, but also in the process of design and updating of the Framework itself. We picture this approach to the 'nested systems' of homelessness in Figure 5.1 below:

FIGURE 5.1 The multi-level, nested indicators of the WAAEH Framework



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THE WAAEH OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK IS A COMPREHENSIVE, SYSTEMATIC APPROACH to identifying, tracking and reporting data that reflects the interactions across multiple levels and factors which contribute to preventing homelessness and sustaining and enabling exit from homelessness; the direct voice of those with lived experience of homelessness; the extent to which homelessness is ended across Western Australia; and the extent to which programs and organisations achieve their intended results, and those experiencing homelessness are able to achieve their own goals.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK, VERSION 2.0, FEBRUARY 2020

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