



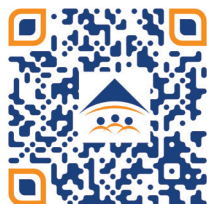
Men who experience homelessness on a medium or long term basis have been found to experience higher rates of mental illness than males with a stable housing history<sup>xi</sup>. A significant number of men (around 20 per cent) experiencing homelessness may have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), not necessarily related to military service<sup>xii</sup>.

### Chronic homelessness

Research indicates that men aged 35 and over make up the majority of those who may be classified as chronically homeless<sup>xiii</sup>. This group are those who have a minimal history of successful tenancy, often cycling through homelessness services, boarding houses, rough sleeping and back again. The detrimental impacts of long term homelessness on mental and physical health are well documented but include chronic illness, an increase in the likelihood of developing an affective or schizoid-type disorder, breathing difficulties and premature death. Chronic homelessness is also often linked with dependency and mental illness and multiple indicators of disadvantage. Long term housing with appropriate connections to support services has been shown to deliver positive outcomes for men who have experienced long periods of homelessness.

### References

- i Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011* cat. No. 2049.0
- ii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015, *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2014-15*
- iii ABS, 2012, op cit
- iv AHURI, 2004, *The role of re-housing in preventing re-offending*
- v AHURI, 2010, *Pathways from out-of-home care*
- vi Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2012, *Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, September 2011*
- vii National Housing Supply Council, 2013, *Fourth State of Supply Report 2013*
- viii American Psychological Association, 2005, *Helping men help themselves*
- ix Johnson and Chamberlain, 2011, *Homelessness and substance use: which comes first?*
- x Johnson and Chamberlain 2011 op cit
- xi Mental Health Council of Australia, 2009, *Home Truths: Mental Health, Housing and Homelessness Report*
- xii MISHA, 2012, *How Homeless Men Are Faring: Baseline Report*
- xiii Common Ground Australia, n.d., *Other Common Ground Initiatives*

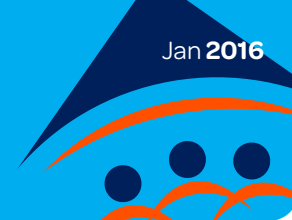


### Homelessness Australia

[www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au)

Homelessness Australia

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# Homelessness and men



## How many men are homeless?

Of people who stay in boarding houses:  
**74.8% male, 25.2% female**



Of people who sleep rough:  
**67.6% male, 32.4% female**



Of people staying in supported accommodation for the homeless:  
**49% male, 51% female**



The ABS estimates that 59% of people aged 18 and over counted as experiencing homelessness on Census night 2011 were men<sup>i</sup>. This equates to 44,760 people. In addition, almost 70,000 adult males were supported by specialist homelessness services over the course of 2014-15<sup>ii</sup>.



Homelessness Australia

Creating a framework for ending homelessness





## Where are men staying?

Males aged 35 and over are dramatically over-represented in the boarding/rooming house and rough sleeping populations.

Males comprise three quarters of people considered by the ABS to be experiencing homelessness in boarding/rooming houses on Census night and just over two-thirds of people sleeping rough or in improvised dwellings.

The split between adult males and females in the group staying temporarily with friends and relatives is fairly even. By contrast, specialist homelessness services accommodate more women than men<sup>iii</sup>.

There are certain groups of men who are overrepresented in homelessness data.

Men exiting custodial arrangements are vulnerable to homelessness, with an increased chance of offending if they are homeless. Research has found that 50% of people exiting from prison were transient (not in stable accommodation) post-release, with those moving house more than twice in the three month period since they were released a key indicator of reoffending<sup>iv</sup>.

Young men exiting statutory care or juvenile justice are at higher risk of homelessness than other young men are. They may have experienced abuse or trauma prior to, or while in statutory care and this can have detrimental impacts on health and wellbeing, in particular mental health and psycho-social functioning. Australia-wide there are 1700 15-17 year olds exiting state care each

year. Research has shown that many are discharged into inappropriate housing and that many will experience extended periods of homelessness or housing instability<sup>v</sup>.

## Causes of homelessness

Younger men aged 15-24 report family breakdown is a common cause of homelessness as well as seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services<sup>vi</sup>. Older males are more likely to report financial crisis or being unable to afford to maintain their housing as common causes of homelessness.

Other men come to experience homelessness as a result of a series of adverse life events that are triggered initially by a financial crisis that may follow an economic downturn or result from unemployment.

The current shortage of affordable housing properties is affecting both men and women. There is currently a projected shortage of over 500,000 homes that are affordable and available to people in the bottom forty percent of income earners<sup>vii</sup>. Given the current chronic shortage of affordable housing it is not difficult to see how the loss of a job and the resultant depletion of savings can result in the loss of housing. Of 10,000 properties available for rent in Sydney in the June quarter of 2011, just one was affordable to a single person on Youth Allowance or Newstart. The shortage of dwellings that are affordable and available to persons in the bottom 20% of income



earners topped 200,000 in 2011. The affordable housing crisis is a common cause of homelessness among men and it prevents people from being re-housed quickly when they fall into homelessness.

## Impact of homelessness on men

While younger males are less likely to seek support from specialist homelessness services than females this should not be taken as clear evidence that more young women experience homelessness than men. There is some evidence that men across all age groups are less likely to seek help than women, whether from a GP or mental health professional or for housing and homelessness related issues<sup>viii</sup>.

Homelessness can have a serious detrimental impact on health and wellbeing and can exacerbate both mental and physical illness.

Research has found that men who enter homelessness via the mental illness or substance abuse pathway have been found to experience longer periods of homelessness than people who enter homelessness via other pathways<sup>ix</sup>, spending an average of 60 months experiencing homelessness.

Other studies have shown that high numbers of males aged 25 and over develop substance use problems after becoming homeless<sup>x</sup>. This has been seen by many as a means of adapting to homelessness and/or coping with the anxiety/stress of the experience.

