

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Those most affected by housing crises and homelessness are the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged and, among them, women and children who have experienced family violence.

Jasmine had finally had enough. Late one night, with her two boys, she drove away from the house that held so much pain and so many bad memories. In the weeks before leaving, Jasmine had been gathering information about her options, and knew that women who wanted to be safe could go to a Specialist Homeless Service. She even had the crisis line number memorised, and as soon as she was far enough from home to feel safe, she pulled over and called the number. She had taken the first step, the one she thought she would never be brave enough to take.



'Jasmine's Story' retold by Dr Anne Coleman, Senior Lecturer in the School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania.

Homelessness

As at Census night in 2011, **42 per cent** of homeless people in Tasmania were female. The majority of all homeless people were living in temporary accommodation with friends or relatives.

Table 1. Percentage of females and males, by type of non-permanent dwelling in Tasmania, 2011

Type of homeless dwelling	Boarding house	'Severely' crowded dwelling	Temporarily with other household	Temporary lodging	Supported accommodation	Improvised dwelling	All
Number	240	183	501	21	479	157	1 581
% Females	30	45.9	44.5	71.4	46.3	28.7	41.8
% Males	70	54.1	55.5	28.6	53.7	71.3	58.2

Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011*, Cat No 2049.0, Table 7, ABS, Canberra.

There were lower numbers of homeless females than males across all age brackets in the non-permanent dwellings outlined above. The greatest difference was between the ages of 55 and 64, with women **30.6 per cent** less likely to be homeless, while the ratios were closest for males and females between the ages of 19 and 24.

Table 2. Percentage of females and males, by age, in non-permanent dwellings in Tasmania, 2011

Age Years	Under 12	12-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All
Females	46.8	47.2	47.5	40.8	39.2	36	34.7	39.4	41.8
Males	53.2	52.8	52.5	59.2	60.8	64	65.3	60.6	58.2

Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness 2011*, Cat No 2049.0, Table 7, ABS, Canberra.

Specialist Homelessness Services

In 2014-15, an estimated **7 328** Tasmanians received support from government-funded Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS)¹; **53.8 per cent** of those who received support were female.

Age groups

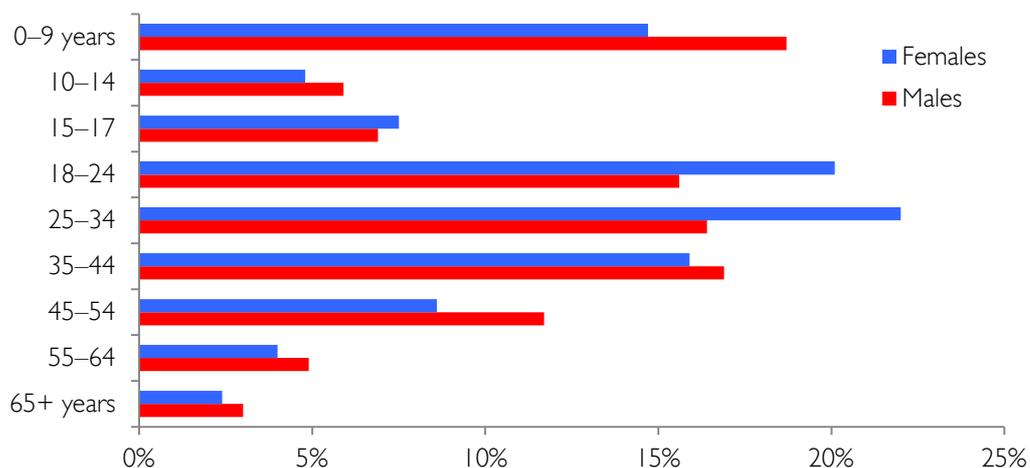
The largest age group accessing SHS services were clients aged between 25 and 34 years, representing **19.4 per cent** of all clients. The majority of these clients (**60.9 per cent**) were female.

More females accessed SHS than males between the ages of 18 and 34 years. Men had a higher representation in the older age groups.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2014-15*, SHS Collection, Supplementary tables Tasmania, Table 1.

Of all clients accessing SHS services, **2 128 (29 per cent)** were aged 0 to 17 years. Children aged between 0 and 9 years, represented approximately **16.5 per cent** of all clients, of which **47.9 per cent** were female.

Figure 1. Tasmanian SHS clients by age and sex, 2014-15

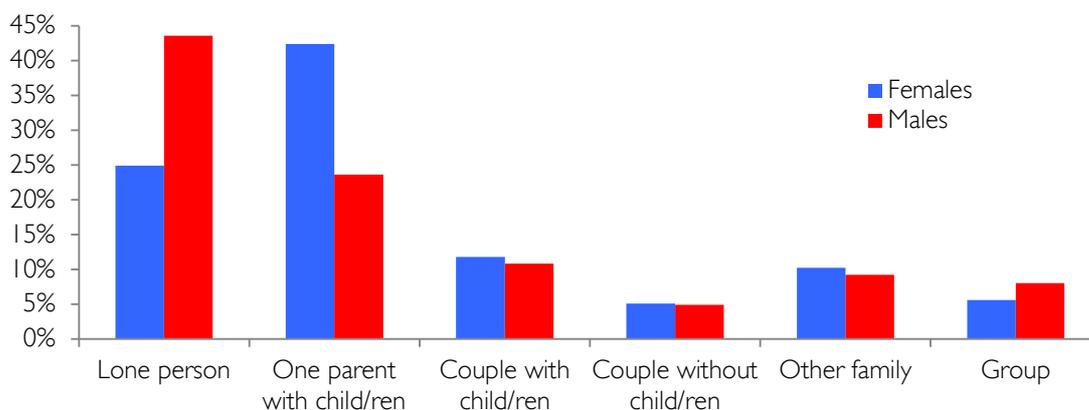


Data source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2014-15*, SHS Collection, Supplementary tables Tasmania, Table 1.

Family type

The largest family type category of clients accessing SHS was lone parents with children (**33.7 per cent** of all clients) and there were significantly more females (**67.8 per cent**) in this category. The second largest category was lone persons, in which males were significantly (**60 per cent**) more likely to be accessing services.

Figure 2. Tasmanian SHS clients by family type and sex, 2014-15



Data source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2014-15*, SHS Collection, Supplementary tables Tasmania, Table 6.

Support periods

Women were more likely to access support periods from six days to 180 days. Men were more likely to access support periods for up to five days.

Table 3. Support periods by time and sex, Tasmania, 2014-15

Support period	Females	Males
6–45 days	1 150	949
46–90 days	793	667
91–180 days	675	460
Over 180 days	438	398
Total	3 940	3 388

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2014–15*, SHS Collection, Supplementary tables Tasmania, Table 20.

Reasons for seeking support

The main reason for both women and men to seek SHS assistance was ‘accommodation problems’ (22.7 per cent and 21.5 per cent respectively). This category includes circumstances such as housing crisis, inadequate or inappropriate dwelling conditions and where previous accommodation had ended.

The second largest reason was ‘interpersonal relationship problems’. This category includes relationship or family breakdowns, sexual abuse and domestic and family violence. Significantly more women experienced domestic or family violence compared to men.

Table 4. Reason for seeking SHS support services by sex, Tasmania, 2014-15

Reason for seeking support	Females	Males
1 Accommodation problems	1 662	1 575
1.1 Housing crisis	910	810
2 Interpersonal relationships	1 062	608
2.1 Domestic and Family Violence	647	253
3 Financial	680	556
3.1 Financial difficulties	447	373

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2014–15*, SHS Collection, Supplementary tables Tasmania, Table 14.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

In 2012-13, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females made up **15.3 per cent** of all SHS clients², of which 57 per cent were female. Tasmanian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders women were more likely to access SHS services than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.³

Public housing

There were **12 871** people in public housing in Tasmania as at 31 December 2015, with women in the majority at **7 132 (55.5 per cent)** females⁴. There were fewer female public housing occupants than males between the ages of 0 to 19 years. However females represented more occupants than males in all other age categories.

Table 6. Public housing occupants by age and sex in Tasmania, 31 December 2015

Age (years)	Female	Male	Total	% Female
0-9	908	936	1 844	49.2
10-19	1 014	1 030	2 044	49.6
20-29	662	534	1 196	55.4
30-39	684	495	1 179	58.0
40-49	943	708	1 651	57.1
50-59	1 089	855	1 944	56.0
60-69	914	655	1 569	58.3
70-79	600	378	978	61.3
80+	318	148	466	68.2
Total	7 132	5 739	12 871	55.4

Note: the number of occupants in public housing has decreased due to the transfer of management of around 4 000 properties under the *Better Housing Futures* initiative in 2014.

Source: Housing Tasmania, 2015 *Public housing occupants by gender and age in Tasmania, December 2015*, unpublished data.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 *Census of Population and Housing, Basic Community Profile (Tasmania)*, Cat No 2001.6, Table B07, ABS, Canberra.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Specialist homelessness services 2012-13*, Supplementary tables Tasmania, Table 2.3.

⁴ Housing Tasmania, 2015 *Public housing occupants by gender and age in Tasmania December 2015*, unpublished data.

In summary

- Females comprised **42 per cent** of the homeless count on Census night in 2011.
- Females comprised **53.8 per cent** of SHS clients receiving support.
- Females were significantly more likely than males to access SHS support periods for over six days and up to 180 days.
- The largest category of clients accessing SHS was lone parents with children.
- The most common reason females sought SHS assistance was for Accommodation issues.
- Women were significantly more likely to access SHS services due to experiencing instances of family or domestic violence.
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander female SHS clients were over-represented compared to the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander population in Tasmania.
- There were more females than males accessing public housing.

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