



# Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2007–08: summary

## Introduction

In 2007–08, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was the major government response to homelessness.<sup>1</sup> SAAP funded 1,562 non-government, community and local government organisations nationally to provide support and/or accommodation to people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness (AIHW 2009a: Table 2.3). These organisations ranged from small stand-alone agencies with single outlets, to larger bodies with multiple outlets. Each agency was set up to primarily focus on supporting a particular client group, such as young people, single men, single women, women and children escaping domestic violence, families, or a combination of client groups.

Although SAAP agencies supported and accommodated large numbers of people every day, they could not always meet all requests for SAAP accommodation. This bulletin presents key data on the people turned away from SAAP accommodation in 2007–08 and is a companion to the more detailed *Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2007–08* report (AIHW 2009b). More information about this topic, the components of the SAAP National Data Collection, a glossary and the counting rules governing the data used in this bulletin are contained in the full report.

<sup>1</sup> As part of the Australian Government's National Reform Agenda, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has rolled SAAP into the new National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), effective from 1 January 2009. The 2007–08 data presented in this report are not affected by this change.

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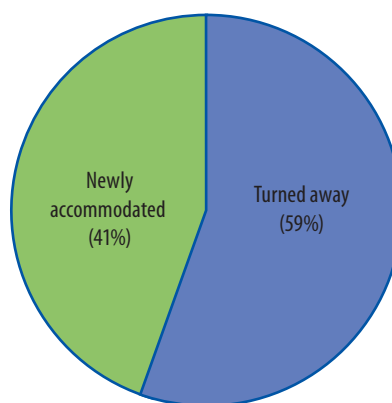
## How many people were turned away?

On an average day during the collection period, an estimated 654 people (436 adults and unaccompanied children and 218 accompanying children) required new and immediate accommodation in SAAP (AIHW 2009b: Tables 7.1, 8.1 and 9.1). Of these, 269 were able to be accommodated, while 385 people (241 adults and unaccompanied children and 144 accompanying children) were turned away without receiving SAAP accommodation.

### Turn-away as a per cent of people requiring new accommodation

This measure provides an indication of a person's likelihood of obtaining SAAP accommodation. When considered as a per cent of people requiring new and immediate SAAP accommodation (excluding those continuing their accommodation) on an average day (654):

- 55% of adults and unaccompanied children or just over 1 in 2 were turned away (AIHW 2009b: Table 7.1).
- 66% of accompanying children or 2 in 3 were turned away (AIHW 2009b: Table 8.1).
- 59% of all people or over 1 in 2 were turned away (Figure 1).



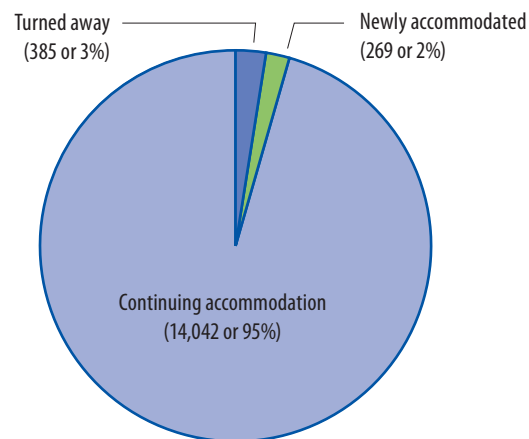
Source: AIHW 2009b: Table 9.1

**Figure 1: Turn-away for people who required immediate accommodation, Australia, 21–27 November 2007 and 14–20 May 2008 (per cent daily average number of people requiring new accommodation)**

### Turn-away as a per cent of total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation

This measure provides an indication of the ability of SAAP to meet the total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation.

People requiring new and immediate accommodation made up only 5% (654) of the total demand for SAAP accommodation (14,696, including those continuing their accommodation) on an average day (derived from Figure 2). When considered in this light, 2% (269) of all people who had a demand for SAAP accommodation were newly accommodated and 3% (385) were turned away. The case was similar when broken down for adults and unaccompanied children (3%) and accompanying children (2%).



Source: AIHW 2009b: Figure 9.2

**Figure 2: Demand for immediate SAAP accommodation for total people, Australia, 21–27 November 2007 and 14–20 May 2008 (daily average number and per cent of total demand for accommodation)**

The small number of people not accommodated relative to the total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation suggests that a small increase in the number of places available on an average day could have a significant impact on the level of unmet demand. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this is not the case (see AIHW 2009b: Chapter 10 for more detail).

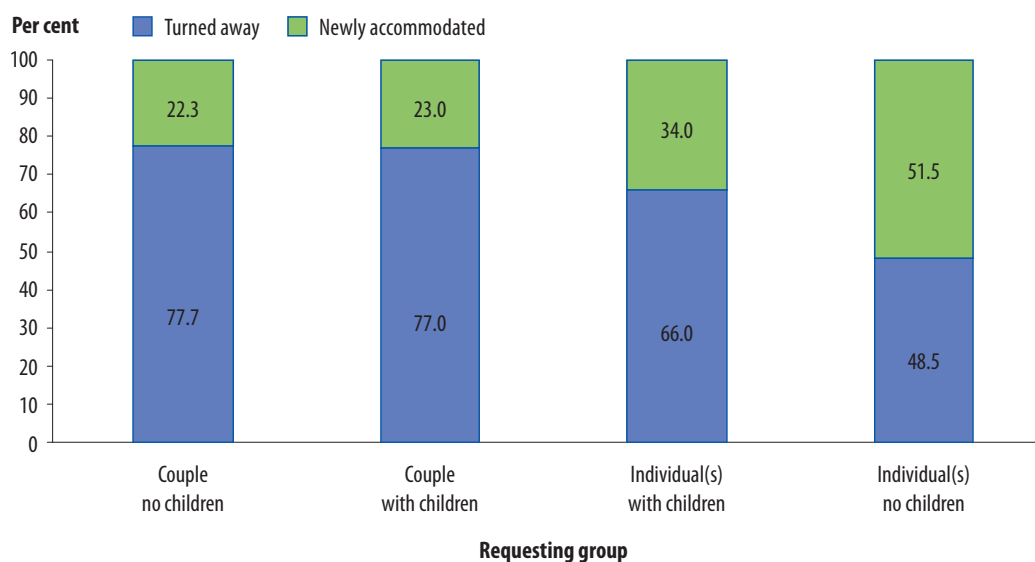
## Who was turned away?

It becomes obvious that some groups have more difficulty obtaining SAAP accommodation than others.

It must be noted that the Demand for Accommodation Collection does not allow estimates of turn-away to be calculated according to demographic characteristics (AIHW 2009b: Chapter 6). Therefore measures of 'turn-away' cannot be calculated for sex, age, country of birth, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. Data referring to these demographics relate to people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation, some of whom were accommodated later that same day.

## Requesting group

When considered as a per cent of all people requiring new accommodation, the most likely requesting groups to be turned away were family groups—78% of couples without children, 77% of couples with children, and 66% of individual(s) with children requiring new and immediate SAAP accommodation were turned away, compared with 49% of individual(s) without children (Figure 3). Individual(s) without children were the only group more likely to be accommodated than not.



Source: AIHW 2009b: Figure 9.1

**Figure 3: Turn-away for people who required immediate accommodation, by requesting group, Australia, 21–27 November 2007 and 14–20 May 2008 (per cent daily average number of people requiring new accommodation)**

When considered as a proportion of the total expressed demand for SAAP accommodation, SAAP was least likely to be able to meet the demand for accommodation from couples without children (AIHW 2009b: Table 9.2). Four per cent of couples without children who either required new accommodation or who were continuing their accommodation were not able to be accommodated, compared with between 2% and 3% for the other groups. This group, however, represented the smallest number of people requiring accommodation.

### Sex

Over half (55%) of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate accommodation were female, 45% were male (derived from AIHW 2009b: Table 5.4).

### Age

The majority of people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation were young people—over half (59%) were under 20 years of age (derived from AIHW 2009b: Table 5.5). A third (35%) were aged 20–44 years, with the remaining 6% aged 45 years and over.

### Country of birth

The vast majority of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation were born in Australia (92%) (derived from AIHW 2009b: Table 5.6).

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a valid unmet request for accommodation were slightly more likely than 'other Australians' to request immediate accommodation (56% compared with 51%, respectively) (AIHW 2009b: Table 5.7).

Around one third (30%) of all people with a valid unmet request for immediate SAAP accommodation were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (derived from AIHW 2009b: Table 5.7).

## What types of agencies were they turned away from?

People were most likely to be turned away from family agencies and general agencies. People were least likely to be turned away from single men's agencies.

## Why were they turned away?

The most common reason that individuals or groups were turned away was because of a lack of accommodation (in 83% of valid unmet requests) (AIHW 2009b: Chapter 4). This was either because insufficient accommodation was available at the agency itself (59%) or because a referral agency was unable to refer the group on because they had no vacancies on their books (24%).

## Conclusion

SAAP agencies appear to be operating to capacity, with the demand for SAAP accommodation unable to be completely met. Some groups experience more difficulty than others in obtaining SAAP accommodation. For more information about this and meeting the demand for SAAP accommodation, please see the full report (AIHW 2009b).

## References

- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2009a. Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2007–08 Australia. SAAP NDCA report series 13. Cat. no. HOU 191. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2009b. Demand for SAAP accommodation by homeless people 2007–08: a report from the SAAP National Data Collection. SAAP NDCA report series 13. Cat. no. HOU 211. Canberra: AIHW.



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