## Data quality information — Sector overview G, Housing and homelessness services

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| Data quality information |
| Data quality information (DQI) provides information against the seven ABS data quality framework dimensions, for performance indicators in the Housing and homelessness services sector overview.  Where Report on Government Services indicators align with National Agreement indicators, DQI has been sourced from the Steering Committee’s reports on National Agreements to the COAG Reform Council.  Technical DQI has been supplied or agreed by relevant data providers. Additional Steering Committee commentary does not necessarily reflect the views of data providers. |
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DQI is available for the following performance indicators:

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## Performance indicators

### Low income households in rental stress

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

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| **Indicator definition and description** | |
| **Element** | Outcome |
| **Indicator** | Proportion of low income households in rental stress |
| **Measure (computation)** | Numerator: Number of low income households in rental stress  For low income households, computation for numerator:   * Household income is gross household income, excluding Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) * Rental expenses is the amount paid in rent, plus any rates payments made by the tenant, less CRA or other ongoing rental assistance. * Household is included in the numerator if weekly rent payments exceed 30 per cent of household income.   Denominator: Total number of low income rental households, defined as being those households in the bottom two quintiles of equivalised disposable household income (excluding CRA or other rent assistance) calculated separately on a state by state and capital city balance of state basis.  Computation: Number of low income rental households in rental stress x 100, divided by Total number of low income rental households. |
| **Data source/s** | Survey of Income and Housing (SIH). |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment. |
| **Relevance** | SIH  The SIH collects data on the housing costs and income from usual residents of private dwellings in Australia. Rent payments, rates payments and CRA are separately identified.  While the SIH does collect information on CRA, it does not separately identify other forms of ongoing rent assistance.  The SIH excludes the 0.8 per cent of the Australian population living in very remote areas. This exclusion impacts on comparability of data for the Northern Territory, where these people are around 23 per cent of the population. As a consequence of this exclusion, comparisons between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people in remote areas are not available.  The 11,290 renter households with nil or negative total income (0.9 per cent of all low income renter households) have been included in the denominator but excluded from the numerator. |
| **Timeliness** | The biennial SIH is enumerated over a twelve month period to account for seasonal variability in its measures. Results for 2011-12 were released in July 2013. |
| **Accuracy** | SIH  In 2011-12, the SIH sample size was decreased from 18,071 households in 2009-10 to 14,569 households in 2011-12. The expansion of the 2009-10 sample for an extra 4,200 households located outside capital cities to better support COAG performance reporting was maintained. The additional pensioner sample of metropolitan households whose main source of income was a government pension benefit and / or allowance included in the 2009-10 SIH and HES samples to improve analysis for the Pensioner Beneficiary Living Cost Index was not maintained.  The final sample on which estimates are based is composed of persons for which all necessary information is available. Of the selected dwellings, there were 18,298 in the scope of the survey, of which 14,569 (80 per cent) were included as part of the final estimates.  Most of the non-response was due to householders that were not able to be contacted. To account in part for non-response, SIH data are weighted by: state, part of state, age, sex, labour force status, number of households and household composition.  At the national level this Performance Indicator for 2011-12 has a relative standard error (RSE) of 3 per cent. RSEs are higher for state and territory measures, and for other disaggregations |
| **Coherence** | The data items used to construct the measures are consistent between cycles within each data source and support assessment of change over time.  In 2011-12, the ABS has taken steps to improve the quality of CRA data through modelling, based on eligibility criteria. Data for 2007-08, 2009-10 and 2011-12 have been calculated using the new method and consequently, data for 2007-08 and 2009-10 has been revised |
| **Accessibility** | The unit record data used to compile this measure are available to other users through the Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURFs) released by ABS. |
| **Interpretability** | Information is available for both collections to aid interpretation of the data. See the Survey of Income and Housing, User Guide, Australia, 2011-12 on the ABS web site. |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/ issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:   * SIH data are only available every two years. An assessment of the relative speed of change in results for this indicator is required to determine whether more regular data collection is necessary. * The size of the RSEs mean that the data may not be adequate for measuring change over time for some disaggregations. Small year to year movements may be difficult to detect if the size of the RSEs is large compared to the size of the difference between estimates. * Low income households in State or Territory housing authority dwellings have access to rebated rents and generally pay no more than 25 per cent of their assessable income in rent. * The measures of low income households in rental stress produced by the SIH are a point in time measure and not designed to measure sustained rental stress. They would not include rent adjustments yet to be made by the state and territory housing authority. |

**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households living in overcrowded conditions**

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| **Outcome:** | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding, particularly in remote areas and discrete communities | |
| **Indicator:** | Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that are living in overcrowded conditions. | |
| **Measure: (computation)** | The measure is presented as a proportion and is defined as:   * *numerator* — number of overcrowded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households (calculated using the Canadian National Occupancy Standard) * *denominator* — total number of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households for which bedroom requirements and dwelling details are known | |
| **Data source/s** | ***Public rental housing and SOMIH***  Data sets are provided annually to the AIHW by jurisdictions. The data contain information about public rental and SOMIH dwellings, households assisted and households on the waitlist, during the previous financial year and as at 30 June, and are drawn from administrative data held by the jurisdictions. The latest data are for the 2013-14 collection year.  ***Mainstream community housing***  Data are provided annually to the AIHW by jurisdictions and are sourced from community housing organisations via a survey and from the jurisdiction’s administrative systems. The annual data collection captures information about community housing organisations, the dwellings and tenancy rental units they manage, households on the waiting list, and the tenants and households assisted. Limited financial information from the previous financial year is also collected.  ***Indigenous community housing***  Data are provided annually to the AIHW by jurisdictions and are sourced from administrative data held by jurisdictional funding bodies as well as survey data from Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHOs).  The annual data collection captures information about ICHOs, the dwellings they manage and the households assisted at 30 June. Financial information is for the year ending 30 June. The latest data are for the 2012-14 collection year. | |
| **Institutional environment** | The AIHW is an Australian Government statutory authority accountable to Parliament and operates under the provisions of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987. This Act ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under strict conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality. More information about the AIHW is available on the AIHW website (www.aihw.gov.au).  The AIHW receives, compiles, edits and verifies data in collaboration with jurisdictions, which retain ownership of the data and must approve any jurisdiction level output before it is released. The finalised data sets are used by the AIHW for collation, reporting and analysis. | |
| **Relevance** | Public rental housing and SOMIH  The data collected are an administrative by-product of the management of public rental housing and SOMIH programs run by the jurisdictions and conform well in terms of scope, coverage and reference period.  Mainstream community housing  Community housing dwellings include all tenancy (rental) units under management of a community housing organisation (excluding dwellings managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations, State Housing Authorities or Specialist Homelessness Service agencies). Additional jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions also apply.  The data collected by the jurisdictions conform well in terms of reference period; however, due to the jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions, the data does not conform well in terms of organisation coverage and reporting.  Not all data items required are available for all households. Only households with complete information have been included in the calculation.  Indigenous Community Housing  Includes all dwellings targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are managed by an ICHO. ICHOs include community organisations such as resource agencies and land councils, which have a range of functions, provided that they manage housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. | |
| **Timeliness** | Public rental housing, SOMIH and mainstream community housing  Data are collected annually. The reference period for this indicator is 30 June 2014 for public rental housing, SOMIH and mainstream community housing.  Indigenous Community Housing  The reference period for this collection is the 2012–13 financial year and is mostly a 30 June 2013 snapshot, but also captures 2011–12 household activity. The most recent data available are for 2011–12. | |
| **Accuracy** | There are some accuracy issues with the data collected:  Public rental housing and SOMIH  The administrative data sets from which this collection is drawn have inaccuracies to varying degrees including missing data, out-of-date data and data coding or recording errors.  Not all data items required are available for all households, in particular multiple-family households. In these cases, the single/couple status of household members may be derived based on information that is available including household composition and age. Only households with complete information have been included in the calculation.  **Public rental housing exclusions**   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **PH** | **NSW** | **Vic** | **Qld** | **WA** | **SA** | **Tas** | ACT | NT | | Total ongoing households | 109,370 | 63,048 | 50,570 | 32,315 | 38,008 | 8,250 | 10,727 | 4,720 | | **Excludes:** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Households for which bedroom or required bedroom details unknown | 1,096 | 2,412 | 0 | 1 | 384 | 3 | 899 | 89 | | ***Exclusions as a % of total ongoing households*** | ***1.0*** | ***3.8*** | ***0.0*** | ***0.0*** | ***1.0*** | ***0.0*** | ***8.4*** | ***1.9*** |   .. Not applicable.  **SOMIH exclusions**   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SOMIH** | **NSW** | **Vic** | **Qld** | **WA** | **SA** | **Tas** | | Total ongoing households | 4,504 | . . | 3,270 | . . | 1,741 | 275 | | **Excludes**: |  |  |  |  |  |  | | Households for which bedroom or required bedroom details unknown | 73 | . . | 0 | . . | 67 | 0 | | ***Exclusions as a % of total ongoing households*** | ***1.6*** | ***. .*** | ***0.0*** | ***. .*** | ***3.8*** | ***0.0*** |   .. Not applicable. – Nil or rounded to 0.  Disaggregation can lead to small cell sizes which are volatile - very small cells have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.  Mainstream community housing  Data are incomplete for some jurisdictions due to non-reporting or under reporting by community housing organisations. The information was sourced via a survey of community housing organisations conducted by state/territory housing authorities and/or from administrative records held by them.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **NSW** | **Vic** | | **Qld** | **WA** | **SA** | **Tas** | **ACT** | | **NT** | **Aust** | | | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ongoing households | 2,448 | 492 | | na | 741 | 187 | 100 | 26 | | na | 5,088 | | | **Excludes** | **NSW** | **Vic** | **Qld** | | **WA** | **SA** | **Tas** | | **ACT** | **NT** | | **Aust** | | | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households for which household and tenancy details unknown | 5 | 46 | na | | 26 | 10 | 8 | | 0 | na | | 95 | | | ***Exclusions (%)*** | ***0.2*** | ***9.3*** | ***na*** | | ***3.5*** | ***5.3*** | ***8.0*** | | ***0.0*** | ***na*** | | ***1.9*** | |   Indigenous community housing  Complete data was not available for all dwellings or ICHOs in every jurisdiction. Data should be interpreted with caution as it may not fully reflect the entire funded portion of the jurisdiction. Due to poor coverage, the denominator only includes Indigenous households for which household groups and dwelling details are known. Due to poor coverage, a national value is not provided.  Completeness coverage:  Jurisdictions where coverage of the data for this indicator is less than 95 per cent are:   * Victoria: 81 per cent * Queensland: 47 per cent * Western Australia: 72 per cent | |
| **Coherence** | Data for individual jurisdictions may not be comparable to previous years due to differences in the accuracy of the data over time. Differences between jurisdictions concerning incomplete or missing information, out-of-date information and coding errors can affect the coherence of the outputs.  Public rental housing, SOMIH, mainstream community housing, and Indigenous Community   * From 2009-10, the CNOS has been used to calculate required bedrooms. In previous years, the Proxy Occupancy Standard was used, meaning that coherence over time has been affected by changes in methodology * The use of the CNOS and change to the definition of overcrowding as households requiring one bedroom or more in 2009-10 has resulted in an increase to the estimation of overcrowding.   Mainstream community housing  Community housing, for the purpose of this collection, includes all tenancy (rental) units under management of a community housing organisation (excluding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing organisations). Dwellings are excluded where the tenancy management is by the State Housing Authority or by specialist homelessness services agencies. Additional jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions also apply.  The data collected by the jurisdictions conform well in terms of reference period; however, due to the jurisdiction-specific inclusions and exclusions, the data does not conform well in terms of organisation coverage and reporting.  Not all data items required are available for all households. Only households with complete information have been included in the calculation.  Indigenous community housing   * Data within jurisdictions may not be comparable to previous years due to variation in the ICHOs that respond to the survey or for which jurisdictions can provide data.   As agreed by Housing and Homelessness Information Management Group (HHIMG), from 2011-12, the tenancy management status of dwellings has been collected. This refers to whether tenancy management of dwellings is the responsibility of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Housing organisation (ICHO) or whether the ICH dwellings are being managed by the State/ Territory Housing Authority. | |
| **Accessibility** | Annual data will be reported in Housing Assistance in Australia, which will be available publically on the AIHW website. Additional disaggregations are available on application and subject to jurisdiction approval. | |
| **Interpretability** | Metadata and definitions relating to this data source can be found in the National Housing Assistance Data Dictionary (AIHW Cat no. HOU147) (http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/181162).  Supplementary information can be found in the housing collection data manuals which are available upon request from the AIHW. | |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | | |
| **Key data gaps/ issues** | | The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:  ***Public housing, SOMIH and community housing***  ***Indigenous community housing***:   * Only three jurisdictions reported the data required to calculate overcrowding rates. * The data presented may not accurately represent the characteristics of the sector, particularly due to coverage issues. * Other published measures of overcrowding for Indigenous community housing define overcrowding as households requiring two or more bedrooms, rather than one as specified in the CNOS. |

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households living in dwellings of an acceptable standard**

Data quality information for this indicator has been drafted by the AIHW, with additional Steering Committee comments.

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| **Indicator definition and description** | | | |
| **Element** | Outcome | | |
| **Indicator** | Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households living in dwellings of an acceptable standard | | |
| **Measure (computation)** | Numerator: number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households who indicated that their dwelling has at least 4 facilities and that they are working and did not indicate that they had more than two major structural problems.  Denominator: number of tenants who gave a valid answer to the facilities and structural problems question and who answered the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status question multiplied by 100. | | |
| **Data source/s** | AIHW  A contracted data collection organisation was engaged by the AIHW to conduct the 2014 National Social Housing Survey (NSHS). Data were collected via postal and online (self-completion) questionnaires from a randomly selected sample of SOMIH (South Australia and Tasmania), Public Housing and Community Housing tenants. In 2014, SOMIH tenants in New South Wales and Queensland completed the survey by face to face interview. For each social housing program (PH, SOMIH and CH) the tenants completing the questionnaires were from all jurisdictions which operated the relevant social housing program. | | |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | | | |
| **Institutional environment** | The AIHW is an Australian Government statutory authority accountable to Parliament and operates under the provisions of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Act 1987. This Act ensures that the data collections managed by the AIHW are kept securely and under strict conditions with respect to privacy and confidentiality. More information about the AIHW is available on the AIHW website (www.aihw.gov.au).  The AIHW receives, compiles, edits and verifies data in collaboration with jurisdictions, which retain ownership of the data and must approve any jurisdiction level output before it is released. The finalised data sets are used by the AIHW for collation, reporting and analysis. | | |
| **Relevance** | The 2014 NSHS includes tenants from public housing, community housing and state owned and managed Indigenous housing. The Indigenous Community Housing (ICH) sector was excluded from the survey. All states and territories participated in the survey if the relevant program was operated in their jurisdiction. All remoteness areas were included in the sample. For the postal component of the survey, the speed of delivery to, and returns from, more remote locations may have affected the number of responses received from tenants in these areas. | | |
| **Timeliness** | Data are not collected annually. Surveys for PH and CH were conducted in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010 2012, and 2014. Surveys for SOMIH were conducted in 2005, 2007, 2012, and 2014. For SOMIH tenants in 2014, surveys were completed via mail-out for two jurisdictions (South Australia and Tasmania) and face-to-face interview in the other two jurisdictions (New South Wales and Queensland).  The fieldwork for 2014 was conducted from 6 May–22 July for the ACT. For all other jurisdictions, fieldwork was conducted from 14 May–14 August 2014.  Fieldwork for the SOMIH face-to-face component was undertaken in NSW from the 19 May-5 June 2014 and in QLD from 3 June-2 July 2014.  Data on the characteristics of the household and its member relate to the time of the survey. Data on tenant satisfaction relate to the 12 months up to the time of the survey. | | |
| **Accuracy** | Missing data  Some survey respondents did not answer all questions, either because they were unable or unwilling to provide a response. The survey responses for these people were retained in the sample, and the missing values were recorded as not answered. No attempt was made to deduce or impute these missing values. A considerable proportion of tenants did not answer the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status question: 20.1 per cent of PH tenants, 0.9 per cent of SOMIH tenants and 20.2 per cent of CH tenants did not provide a response.  Response rates and contact rates  The accuracy of the outputs from the 2014 NSHS are affected by the response rates across the jurisdictions and at the National level (see response rate table below).  Overall, 42,827 questionnaires were sent to tenants in PH, CH and SOMIH (South Australia and Tasmania only), of which 12,594 questionnaires were categorised as being complete and useable, representing a response rate for the 2014 survey of 32.4 per cent; considerably higher than the 2012 survey of 16.3 per cent.  For the two SOMIH jurisdictions where the respondents completed the survey face- to-face (New South Wales and Queensland), a total of 1,581 interviews were attempted and 1,001 interviews were completed with an overall response rate of 63.3 per cent.  A low response rate does not necessarily mean that the results are biased. If the non-respondents are not systematically different in terms of how they would have answered the questions, there may be no bias, either in comparisons across jurisdictions or over time. Given the relatively low response rates for this survey, it is likely there is some bias in the estimates.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Jurisdiction** | **Sample size** | **Response rate** | | **Public housing** | | | | NSW | 4,991 | 40.0% | | VIC | 585 | 36.2% | | QLD | 564 | 43.3% | | SA | 619 | 45.5% | | ACT | 504 | 24.7% | | WA | 954 | 27.3% | | TAS | 506 | 34.9% | | NT | 509 | 27.3% | | **Community housing** | | | | NSW | 1061 | 26.3% | | VIC | 367 | 40.8% | | QLD | 370 | 35.9% | | SA | 354 | 32.8% | | ACT | 124 | 24.0% | | WA | 361 | 37.1% | | TAS | 300 | 29.2% | | **SOMIH** | | | | NSW | 501 | 54.9% | | QLD | 500 | 74.7% | | SA | 307 | 18.7% | | TAS | 83 | 26.9% |   Scope and coverage  For the 2014 NSHS, caution should be used when comparing trend data or data between jurisdictions due to differences in response rates and non-sampling error.  The 2014 NSHS sampling and stratification methods were similar to the 2012 survey i.e. sample was randomly selected of each jurisdiction’s PH, SOMIH and CH tenants. As requested by NSW stratified sampling by region/area was undertaken for NSW PH tenancies.  The 2014 NSHS was designed to meet minimum reliability objectives for key variables for each housing program.  Sample design  Simple random sampling was undertaken for all housing programs except for NSW PH in which stratified sampling was undertaken in order to obtain minimum sample size requirements for each area.  To produce reliable estimates, minimum sample sizes were set for each housing program. An additional overall 5350 booster sample was included: NSW PH (4,000) NSW CH (750) and WA PH (600).  The over-sampling of lesser populated states and territories produced a sample that was not proportional to the jurisdiction/housing programs distribution of the social housing population. Weighting was applied to adjust for imbalances arising from execution of the sampling and differential response rates, and to ensure that the results relate to the social housing population.  The weighting for the 2014 survey was calculated as the number of households in each jurisdiction (population) divided by the number of usable surveys (responses). All population counts were provided by the AIHW.  No completed survey was received from VIC PH ARIA 3, SA PH ARIA 4, TAS PH ARIA 4, NT PH ARIA 4 and SA CH ARIA 4. These areas are excluded from weighting.  Sampling error  The measure used to indicate reliability of individual estimates reported in 2014 was the relative standard error (RSE). Only estimates with RSEs of less than 25 per cent are considered sufficiently reliable for most purposes. Results subject to RSEs of between 25 per cent and 50 per cent should be considered with caution and those with relative standard errors greater than 50 per cent should be considered as unreliable for most practical purposes.  Non-sampling error  In addition to sampling errors, the estimates are subject to non-sampling errors. These can arise from errors in reporting of responses (for example, failure of respondents’ memories, incorrect completion of the survey form), the unwillingness of respondents to reveal their true responses and the higher levels of non-response from certain subgroups of the population.  The survey findings are based on self-reported data. | | |
| **Coherence** | In 2014, the data collected for SOMIH was sourced using two methodologies (via mail-out in two jurisdictions and via face-to-face interview in two jurisdictions).  Comparisons between data across jurisdictions should be undertaken with caution due to differences in response rates and non-sampling error.  Surveys in this series commenced in 2001. Over time, modifications have been made to the survey’s methodology and questionnaire design. As noted above, the sample design and the questionnaire of the 2014 survey differs in a number of important respects from previous versions of the survey. Please refer to data quality statements and technical reports for the relevant surveys before comparing data across surveys. | | |
| **Accessibility** | Published results from the 2014 NSHS will be available on the AIHW website, see National Social Housing Survey 2014: national report. Access to the confidentialised unit record file may be requested through the AIHW Ethics Committee. | | |
| **Interpretability** | Information to aid in interpretation of 2014 NSHS results will be made available on the AIHW website including the 2014 NSHS Technical Report, code book and other supporting documentation. | | |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | | |
| **Key data gaps/ issues** | | The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:   * Caution should be used when comparing data across or between jurisdictions as data are collected via survey vehicles and are subject to sampling and non-sampling error. * Survey weights are applied to the data when calculating outputs and performance indicators. * The SOMIH component of the survey in 2014 was conducted using a mixed methodology with two jurisdictions using face to face interviews (NSW and Queensland) and the other two jurisdictions collecting data via a mail-out survey (the same as the PH and CH components). * Response rates from the NSHS for PH, SOMIH and CH provide a general indication of data accuracy and reliability. Response rates for the 2014 NSHS were 32.4 per cent for the mail-out component and 63.3 per cent for the face–to- face component. |

### Australians who are homeless

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

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| **Indicator definition and description** | |
| **Element** | Outcome |
| **Indicator** | Proportion of Australians who are homeless |
| **Measure (computation)** | The proportion of Australians who are homeless (as defined by the ABS)  The measure is defined as:   * Numerator - Number of Australians who are homeless * Denominator – number of Australians   and is presented as a *proportion*. |
| **Data source/s** | Numerator and denominator — Census of Population and Housing. Data  are available every five years. |
| **Data Quality Framework Dimensions** | |
| **Institutional environment** | For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment. |
| **Relevance** | A quality prevalence measure of homelessness that can be used to track changes over time allows society to both judge some aspects of the scale of the problem and hold itself and governments accountable for some outcomes at this broad level. To target prevention, or amelioration of the circumstances of homelessness, and measure progress, the locations of the homeless and their characteristics are required.  With homelessness having a prevalence of just 0.5 per cent, and with less than half of the people experiencing homelessness approaching a formal service for assistance, there are few data sources which can report on prevalence. Only the ABS Census of Population and Housing can support the estimation of the prevalence of homelessness.  Use of the Census in estimating homelessness provides cross classification by homeless operational groups and by the range of personal characteristics which are available. This allows the homeless population to be compared to the whole population as well as to other populations who may be marginally housed and whose living arrangements are close to the statistical boundary of homelessness or who may be at risk of homelessness. |
| **Timeliness** | Official homelessness estimates from the Census are available every five years, within 14 days of the publication of second release Census variables. The 2011 official homelessness estimates were released on 12 November 2012. |
| **Accuracy** | Official ABS estimates of the prevalence of homelessness use a methodology which is transparent, consistent and repeatable, and suitable for measuring change over time.  While ‘homelessness' itself is not a characteristic that is directly measured in the Census, estimates are derived from the Census using analytical techniques, based on both the characteristics observed in the Census and assumptions about the way people may respond to Census questions.  The Census is likely to under-enumerate some homeless groups such as homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and so called ‘rough sleepers’. Official ABS estimates of the prevalence of homelessness will reflect any such under-enumeration. In addition, due to the way that people may respond to the Census, official ABS estimates of homelessness are likely to underestimate the level of homelessness for both youth and people displaced due to domestic and family violence. However, trends are not expected to be affected by this level error.  ABS has developed a range of strategies for each Census aimed at maximising the enumeration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and those who may be ‘sleeping rough’. |
| **Coherence** | The ABS uses a consistent, transparent and repeatable methodology for estimating the number of people enumerated in the Census of Population and Housing who may be homeless on Census night. More details on the methodology can be found in the publication: Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001). The homelessness estimates can be compared to estimates for both the general population and for those in marginal housing at the boundary with homelessness.  Other collections which inform on other aspects of homelessness, such as the incidence of homelessness and people’s past experiences of homelessness, include the ABS General Social Survey and the AIHW Special Homelessness Services collection. Care should be taken when comparing homelessness data from different sources due to the different collection methodologies and the different scope of the collections. |
| **Accessibility** | In addition to published estimates in Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness (cat. no. 2049.0), other homelessness results from the Census are available from the ABS on request. Please contact the ABS on (02) 6252 6174 or living.conditions@abs.gov.au for more information. |
| **Interpretability** | Official estimates of homelessness are published in Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness (cat. no. 2049.0).  Back ground information on the methodology used to estimate homelessness can be found in Information Paper - Methodology for Estimating Homelessness from the Census of Population and Housing (cat. no. 2049.0.55.001). |
| **Data Gaps/Issues Analysis** | |
| **Key data gaps/ issues** | The Steering Committee notes the following key data gaps/issues:   * The Steering Committee recommends that potential alternative data sources for reporting against this indicator continue to be investigated for years where Census data are not available. * A new national Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) data collection commenced on 1 July 2011. The SHS data collection will expand the scope, type of information collected and provide more timely information of those people who are provided with specialist homelessness services, which may provide a proxy measure for this indicator. * There are currently no adequate counts of people experiencing homelessness who access mainstream services. However, the inclusion of homelessness flags in mainstream data sets is being explored, and there is a commitment to develop a common definition and standards for adoption in agency specific mainstream services datasets. |