

The data and their limitations

Introduction

Residential aged care in Australia was restructured in 1997–98. The two separate categories of residential care (nursing homes and hostels) were combined into a single program from 1 October 1997. As a result, the two previous data collection systems (the Nursing Home Payment System (NHPS) and the Commonwealth Hostel Information Payment System (CHIPS)) were replaced on 1 October 1997 by a single system—the ‘System for the Payment of Aged Residential Care’ (SPARC). This new system is the primary data source for this report.

The new system inherited all existing records on the NHPS at 1 October 1997. For the data on the CHIPS, only those records that related to the following two groups of people were carried over:

1. Those who were in a hostel at 1 October 1997; and
2. Those who had a valid Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) assessment covering 1 October; they were regarded as potential residents.

In other words, the records for residents discharged from hostels before 1 October 1997 are not available on SPARC although they are still available on CHIPS.

SPARC contains information gathered through a number of instruments. Among those instruments, the following three are directly relevant to this report:

- ‘Aged Care Application and Approval’, a form completed by persons applying for admission to an aged care home or someone (normally a carer) on behalf of the applicant;
- ‘Application for Classification’, a form completed by the aged care home to determine the resident’s overall level of care needs; and
- ‘Monthly Claim Form’, a form for claiming Commonwealth benefits completed by the aged care home as part of the monthly funding cycle.

Population data are from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’s general population databases supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Resident information

All residents admitted to residential aged care must have a valid Aged Care Application and Approval form. This form is valid for 12 months from the date of the approval decision. ACATs with delegation are authorised to approve the application form.

The information entered into SPARC from the Aged Care Application and Approval form is the major source for the following data items in the tables:

- sex;
- date of birth;
- marital status;

- pension status;
- indigenous status;
- country of birth;
- preferred language;
- resident's usual residence (prior to admission); and
- resident's living arrangements (prior to admission).

Not all residents had all the above characteristics reported on SPARC.

Resident Classification Scale

- The RCS application form is forwarded to State/Territory offices of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care by aged care homes for each resident admitted. On the basis of the information provided, residents are assigned to one of eight service-need categories for the purpose of funding. The information provided on the RCS status of residents is reported in Section 5 of this report.
- The Claim for Commonwealth Benefits form is sent to approved homes each calendar month as part of the payment cycle. It shows claim details for the previous month plus a 'forecast' schedule for the current month. The home checks the information and records data on separations and absences (hospital and social leave) for these residents. It also adds information on any newly admitted residents for the current month.

The claim form is the source for the following data items in the tables:

- Date of admission;
- Date of separation;
- Separation mode; and
- Admission type.

Populations used in the tables in this report

It should be noted that tables in this publication refer to several different subpopulations and, consequently, may not be directly comparable. The subpopulations covered in the tables in this report are summarised below.

Section 2: Residents and their characteristics

All tables in this section relate to the number of residents who were in aged care homes on 30 June 2000. This population includes all approved residents and totalled 135,991.

Section 3: Admissions and separations

There were 45,476 admissions for permanent care (permanent admissions) and 42,531 admissions for respite care (respite admissions) over the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. Tables 3.1 to 3.3 relate to these populations.

Tables 3.4 to 3.10 refer to separations from an aged care home over the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. There were 44,615 separations of permanent residents and 42,422 separations of respite residents.

Section 4: Characteristics of newly admitted residents

Tables in this section refer to the number of people admitted into residential aged care from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. Each person is counted once. For the full year reporting, there were 44,417 new residents for permanent care and 31,100 new residents for respite care.

Section 5: Resident dependency

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 in this section relate to the number of permanent residents as at 30 June 2000 (133,387 persons) who had been classified using the RCS. Permanent residents who did not have an RCS allocated (3,071 persons) are excluded from the tables. Respite residents are not included in this section.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 relate to people (42,873) who were admitted to residential aged care for permanent care during the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. Multiple admissions are excluded from these tables. People without an RCS (1,544 people) are excluded from the tables.

Tables 5.5 to 5.6 represent those permanent residents (42,618) who separated from residential aged care during the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. A total of 871 people without an RCS are excluded from the tables. Multiple separations are also excluded from these tables.

Data limitations

It should be noted that the accuracy of some specific data items may be limited. Such cases include:

- Some residents admitted under previous arrangements and State government nursing home residents did not report their century of birth and they have been assigned a century of birth arbitrarily. Consequently, in a small number of cases errors may have been made, e.g. a resident 102 years of age could be coded as 2 years old. Effort has been made to minimise this error against other available information. For example, if a resident is coded as 3 years old on the one hand and also reported as married or receiving an age pension on the other, the adjusted age of the resident is 103 years for this report. Such adjustments have been made for only a small number of residents.
- Information on whether an admission was from an acute hospital, previously available on NHPS, is not available on SPARC; therefore, relevant tables have had to be dropped from this report.
- Death indicator—In some cases, aged care homes may not be equipped to care for some terminally ill residents. Accordingly, such residents are transferred to acute-care institutions prior to death; hence there is an under-enumeration of discharges due to death.
- Length of stay—The length of stay of a resident is based upon the time between the date of admission and the date of separation in relation to completed stays, and between the date of admission and 30 June 2000 for current residents' incomplete stays. When a person is transferred from one home to another, the date of admission to the first home is the date from which the length of stay is calculated.
- The data on the number of residential places stored in the Aged and Community Care Management Information System (ACCMIS) are sensitive to dates of entry and ACCMIS is updated on a calendar monthly basis. Consequently the reader may find minor reporting variations depending on the version of ACCMIS used for the reporting.

- The types of aged care homes, such as government, private for-profit and private not-for-profit, previously recorded on both the NHPS and the CHIPS, are no longer identifiable on the new system (SPARC). Tables relating to this variable can therefore no longer be presented in this series.