9 Mental health-related Supported Accommodation Assistance Program services

9.1 Introduction

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) National Data Collection (NDC) includes data that provide information regarding the use of SAAP services by those clients with psychiatric or other mental health problems, defined by their having *mental health-related closed support periods* (see Key concepts box below). This chapter presents information on these mental health-related closed support periods, provided by SAAP agencies in 2006–07.

The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program

The SAAP is governed by the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Act 1994*, with funding provided jointly by the Australian Government and the state and territory governments. The primary aim of SAAP is to provide people (*SAAP clients*) who are homeless or at risk of being homeless with transitional *supported accommodation* and *other support services* in order to assist them to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance and independence. Agencies funded through SAAP provide a range of both accommodation and non-accommodation support services.

Data presented in this chapter have been extracted from the Client Collection component of the SAAP NDC held by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, one of three distinct segments of the SAAP NDC. The Client Collection contains information on clients receiving SAAP support lasting for at least 1 hour. However, while participation and consent rates are high, not all SAAP agencies participate in the SAAP NDC and not all clients of participating agencies give valid consent to providing their details to the NDC. For further details regarding the scope and coverage of the SAAP Client Collection, see Appendix 1.

Key concepts

A *SAAP client* is a person aged 18 years or older or an unaccompanied child (aged under 18 years) who:

- receives support or assistance from a SAAP agency which entails generally 1 hour or more of a worker's time on a given day; or
- is accommodated by a SAAP agency; or
- enters into an ongoing support relationship with a SAAP agency.

Supported accommodation is accommodation paid for or provided directly by a SAAP agency. This includes crisis or short-term accommodation, medium to long-term accommodation or other SAAP-funded arrangements such as accommodation in hostels, motels, hotels and caravans, or community placements. This category also includes other types of support, such as meals and/or showers, in addition to accommodation.

(continued)

> ***Other support services*** refers to the assistance, other than supported accommodation, provided as part of an ongoing support relationship between a SAAP agency and the client.
>
> An ***accommodation period*** is the period in which the client was in SAAP-supported accommodation. A client may have no accommodation periods or one or more accommodation periods within a support period.
>
> A ***closed support period*** is a support period that had finished on or before 30 June of the reporting year.
>
> ***Mental health-related closed support periods*** are closed support periods for which at least one of the following were reported:
>
> - the source of referral to the SAAP agency was a dedicated psychiatric unit
> - the main, or other, presenting reason for seeking assistance was the client's psychiatric illness or mental health issue
> - the client reported an accommodation type of psychiatric institution either before or after SAAP support
> - the type of support needed, provided or referred was psychological services or psychiatric services.
>
> An ***accompanying child*** is less than 18 years of age and has a parent or guardian who is a SAAP client. This means that the child accompanies a parent or guardian at any time during the parent or guardian's support period and/or receives SAAP assistance directly as a consequence of a parent or guardian's support period.

Mental health-related SAAP services

The SAAP Client Collection includes information on source of referral, presenting reasons and type of assistance. Information from each of these data elements has been used to indicate whether or not a SAAP support period was mental health-related and, in turn, how many clients received mental health-related closed support periods.

The number of mental health-related closed support periods reported in this chapter is an underestimate of the actual number of such support periods for the following reasons:

- Data presented in this chapter are unweighted, meaning there has been no adjustment for undercounting of support periods due to the non-participation of some agencies and the non-consent of some SAAP clients to the provision of their data. The data, therefore, are not comparable with other data published from the SAAP Client Collection, nor between *Mental health services in Australia* publications.

- Information on presenting reasons for seeking assistance is only collected from clients who give consent. In addition, consenting clients with mental disorders may not report 'psychiatric illness' as a presenting reason.

- Information is collected by workers in SAAP agencies; these workers may not be trained to assess a client's need for psychiatric or psychological services.

It is important to note that some clients that were identified as having had mental health-related closed support periods may have had other closed support periods for which no mental health-related information was reported. These latter support periods are not included in the data presented in this chapter.

Further information on the SAAP collection, including coverage, data quality and the use of unweighted data in this chapter, is presented in Appendix 1.

9.2   SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods

In 2006–07, there were 15,067 SAAP clients with at least one mental health-related closed support period (Table 9.1). The average number of mental health-related closed support periods per client was 1.6.

Clients aged 25–44 years represented over half (52.5%) of the total number of clients for 2006–07. The number of clients per 100,000 population was highest for the group aged 18–19 years and lowest for those aged 65 years and over (150.2 and 8.7 per 100,000 population, respectively) (Table 9.1).

There were more female than male clients with mental health-related support periods in 2006–07 (52.5% compared with 47.5%). However, the rate of access to mental health-related closed support periods, as measured by the age standardised rate, was higher for male clients (116.5 per 100,000) than for females (100.0).

In 2006–07, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made up 12.0% of clients with mental health-related closed support periods. This proportion is considerably higher than the estimated Indigenous population proportion of 2.5% of the total Australian population as at 30 June 2006 (ABS 2007b). The age standardised rate for Indigenous Australians was 447.7 per 100,000 for closed support periods, which was almost 5 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (91.5).

Most clients (86.1%) were born in Australia. The age standardised rate for Australian-born people who had a SAAP mental health-related closed support period in 2006–07 was twice that of the overseas-born clients (81.8 and 40.8 per 100,000 population, respectively). The rate for the number of closed support periods for Australian-born clients was also twice the rate for overseas-born clients (123.3 and 60.3 per 100,000 population, respectively).

The SAAP clients in 2006–07 who were overseas-born (13.9%) can be classified into English Proficiency (EP) Country Groups (see Appendix 3 for details). There was considerable variation in client rates of access between the EP country groups, ranging from 35.3 to 55.2 per 100,000 population. When usage rates were calculated for the number of closed support periods, those individuals born in EP group 3 had the highest usage rates (76.5 closed support periods per 100,000 population).

Children accompanying clients

Information is collected on children who accompany their parent(s) or guardian(s) to SAAP agencies or who require assistance from a SAAP agency as a result of their parent or guardian being a client of the same agency. The number of 'accompanying children' is additional to the number of clients (i.e. adults and unaccompanied children) detailed above.

In 2006–07, 6,713 children accompanied clients who had mental health-related closed support periods. Over three-quarters of these children were aged 0 to 12 years (Figure 9.1).

Table 9.1: SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods: demographic characteristics and number of support periods, 2006–07

Client demographics	Clients			Closed support periods		
	Number[a]	Per cent of clients [b]	Rate[b][c] (per 100,000 population)	Number[a]	Per cent of support periods [b]	Rate[b][c] (per 100,000 population)
Age (years)						
Under 15 years	382	2.5	9.4	449	2.0	11.1
15 to 17	1,263	8.4	147.0	1,557	7.0	181.2
18 to 19	852	5.7	150.2	1,087	4.9	191.6
20 to 24	1,952	13.0	131.8	2,482	11.1	167.6
25 to 44	7,906	52.5	132.4	11,801	52.9	197.6
45 to 64	2,476	16.4	47.8	4,401	19.7	85.0
65 years and over	236	1.6	8.7	539	2.4	19.8
Sex						
Female	7,907	52.5	77.5	10,877	46.2	100.0
Male	7,160	47.5	69.5	12,679	53.8	116.5
Indigenous status						
Indigenous Australians	1,668	12.0	334.7	2,256	10.7	447.7
Other Australians	12,275	88.0	61.3	18,754	89.3	91.5
Country of birth						
Australia	12,685	86.1	81.8	19,029	85.7	123.3
Overseas	2,055	13.9	40.8	3,185	14.3	60.3
Overseas-born [d]						
EP country group 1	694	33.8	42.0	1,122	35.2	62.9
EP country group 2	426	20.7	35.3	672	21.1	45.3
EP country group 3	774	37.7	52.4	1,165	36.6	76.5
EP country group 4	161	7.8	55.2	226	7.1	71.1
Total number	**15,067**	**100.0**	**73.4**	**23,678**	**100.0**	**108.5**

(a)   Number of clients for Indigenous status, and number of closed support periods for Indigenous status and Country of birth, were missing or not reported for more than 5% of the total.

(b)   The percentages and rates shown do not include those clients or closed support periods for which the demographic information was missing or not reported.

(c)   Rates were directly age-standardised, with the exception of age which is a crude rate, as detailed in Appendix 2.

(d)   For definition of the English Proficiency (EP) Country Groups, see Appendix 3.

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.1: Children accompanying SAAP client with mental health-related closed support periods, by age and sex of child, 2006–07
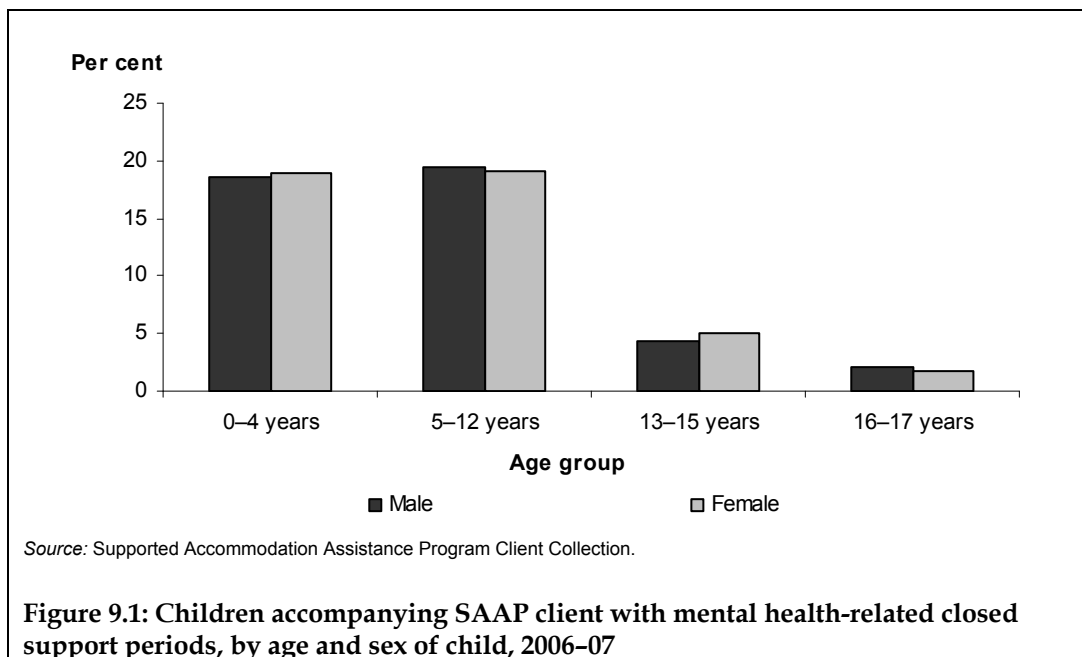
Client groups

In the SAAP data collection, each client is allocated to a client group based on the client's sex, age group and the mode of presentation to the SAAP agency. In 2006–07, the most commonly reported client group with mental health-related closed support periods was unaccompanied males aged 25 years and over (38.3%), followed by unaccompanied females aged 25 years and over (17.8%; Figure 9.2). The client group least receiving mental health-related SAAP closed support periods was males with children (0.9%).

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.2: SAAP clients with mental health-related closed support periods, proportion of support periods by client group type, 2006–07
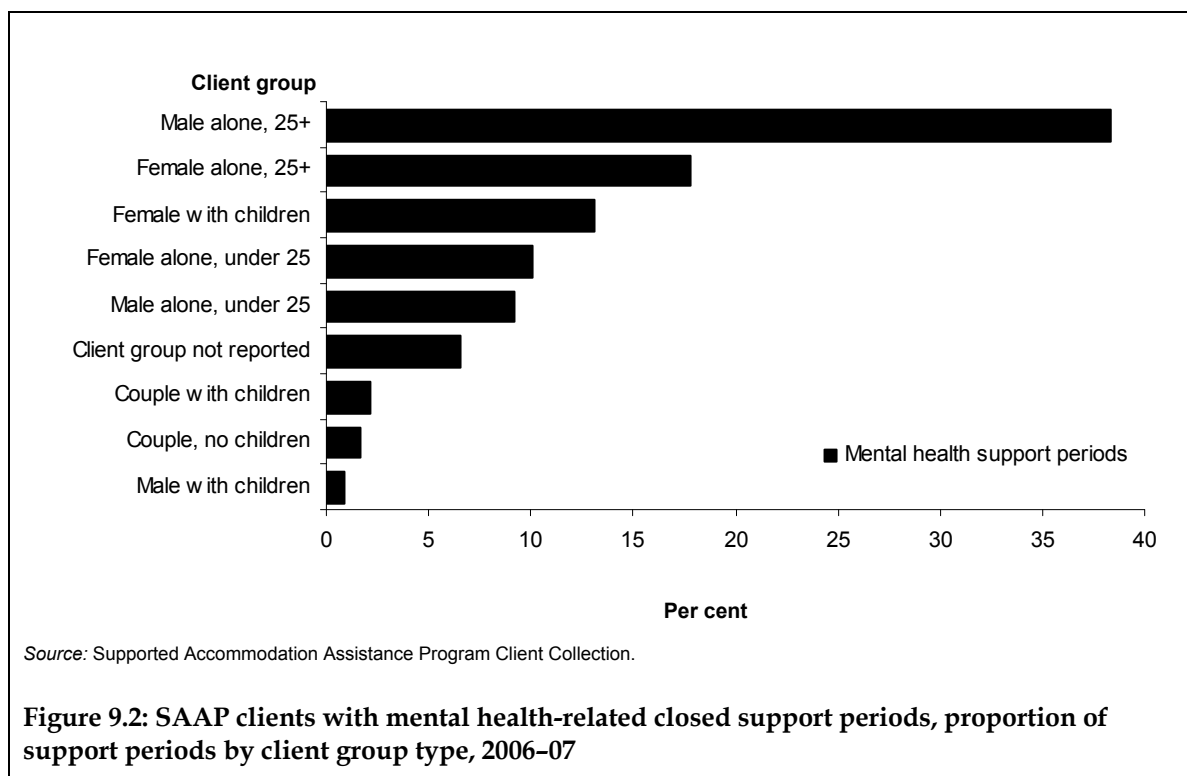
9.3 SAAP mental health-related closed support periods

The previous section provided details on SAAP clients who had a mental health-related closed support period in 2006–07. This section presents information on the closed support periods and the SAAP services provided to these clients. There were 164,896 closed support periods for all SAAP support types in 2006–07 (unweighted data), and 23,678 mental health-related closed support periods reported for clients, representing 14.4% of the total.

Type of support period

Of the mental health-related closed support periods provided by SAAP in 2006–07, 10,908 (46.1%) involved supported accommodation services, which may include other support services, while 12,770 (53.9%) involved a range of other support services, which did not include accommodation (Table 9.2).

Supported accommodation services were the dominant SAAP support service provided to clients in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory (Table 9.2). Other support services were the dominant SAAP service provided in Victoria and South Australia. Tasmania had an approximately even spread between supported accommodation services and other support services.

Taking population size differences into account, the distribution of mental health-related closed support periods varied considerably across each state and territory. In 2006–07, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of mental health-related closed support periods per 100,000 population (260.7), whereas Western Australia had the lowest rate (40.2).

Table 9.2: SAAP mental health-related closed support periods, by service type, states and territories, 2006–07
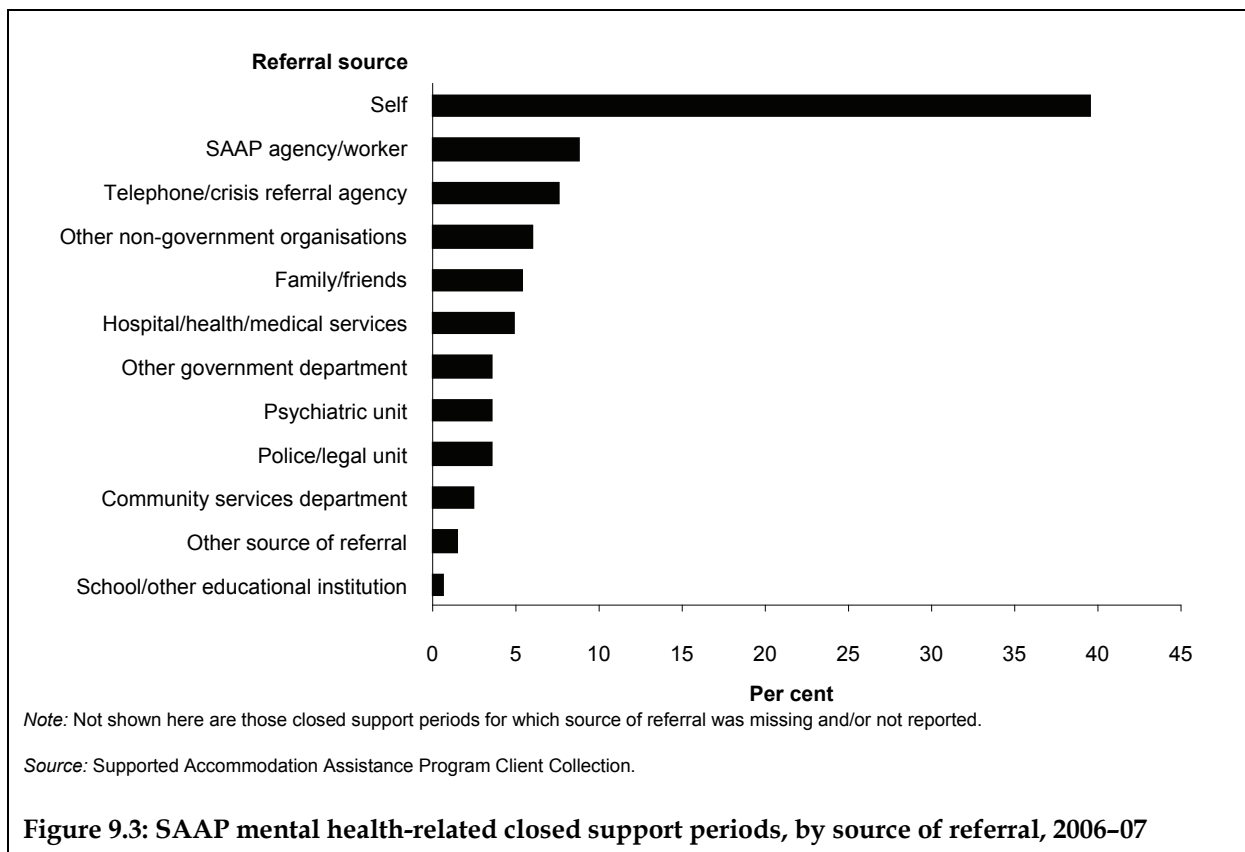
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
					Number				
Supported accommodation	3,937	3,058	1,736	542	529	370	294	442	10,908
Other support services	2,014	8,008	821	294	1,068	309	144	112	12,770
Total	**5,951**	**11,066**	**2,557**	**836**	**1,597**	**679**	**438**	**554**	**23,678**
					Rate (per 100,000)[a]				
Supported accommodation	57.4	59.2	42.0	26.0	33.6	75.2	87.4	208.0	52.3
Other support services	29.4	155.1	19.9	14.1	67.8	62.8	42.8	52.7	61.3
Total	**86.8**	**214.3**	**61.9**	**40.2**	**101.4**	**138.1**	**130.2**	**260.7**	**113.6**

(a)   Crude rate based on the Australian estimated resident population as at 31 December 2006.

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

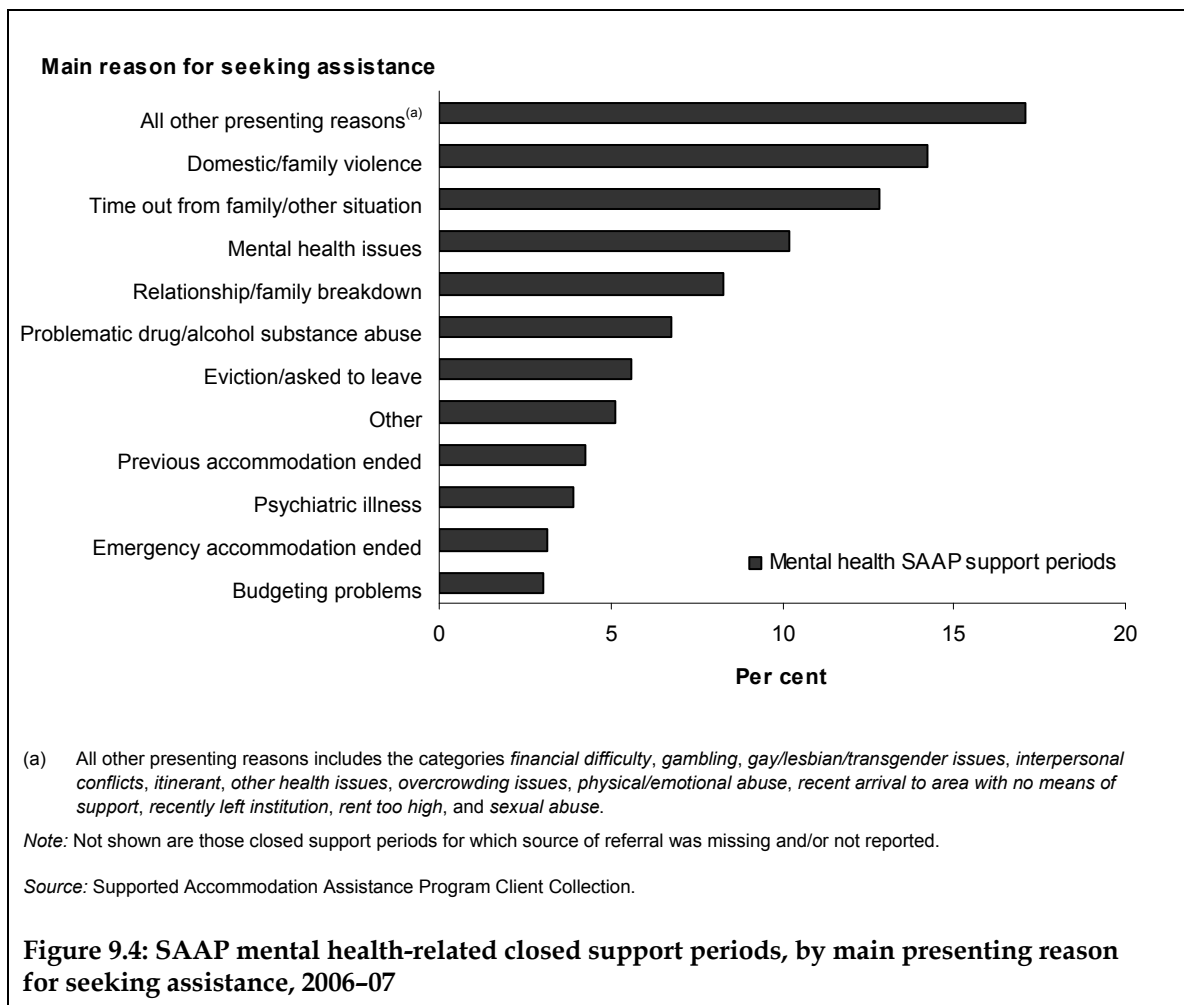### Source of referral to SAAP services

There are several ways in which prospective SAAP clients come in contact with a SAAP agency. In 2006–07, self-referral was the most common source of referral to SAAP services for mental health-related support periods (39.6%), followed by referrals from other SAAP agencies or workers (8.8%) and referrals from telephone/crisis referral agencies (7.6%; Figure 9.3).

Referral source

Self	
SAAP agency/worker	
Telephone/crisis referral agency	
Other non-government organisations	
Family/friends	
Hospital/health/medical services	
Other government department	
Psychiatric unit	
Police/legal unit	
Community services department	
Other source of referral	
School/other educational institution	

Per cent

Note: Not shown here are those closed support periods for which source of referral was missing and/or not reported.

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.3: SAAP mental health-related closed support periods, by source of referral, 2006–07

Main reason for seeking SAAP assistance

As part of the SAAP data collection, SAAP agencies collect information on the main presenting reasons for which the client is seeking assistance for each support period. Multiple presenting reasons may be recorded for each support period.

Figure 9.4 illustrates the main presenting reasons for clients receiving mental health-related closed support periods. During 2006–07, of those clients receiving a mental health-related closed support period, 'mental health issues' or 'psychiatric illness' were reported as the main reasons for seeking SAAP assistance in 10.2% and 3.9% of closed support periods, respectively (Figure 9.4). 'Domestic or family violence' (14.2%) was the most common main reason for seeking assistance by clients receiving a mental health-related SAAP closed support period.

Main reason for seeking assistance

(a)   All other presenting reasons includes the categories *financial difficulty*, *gambling*, *gay/lesbian/transgender issues*, *interpersonal conflicts*, *itinerant*, *other health issues*, *overcrowding issues*, *physical/emotional abuse*, *recent arrival to area with no means of support*, *recently left institution*, *rent too high*, and *sexual abuse*.

Note: Not shown are those closed support periods for which source of referral was missing and/or not reported.

Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.4: SAAP mental health-related closed support periods, by main presenting reason for seeking assistance, 2006–07

Length of support period

The length of the closed support period is collected for each service provided. This can vary from less than 1 day to a full calendar year. The distribution of the length of stay for mental health-related support periods is shown in Figure 9.5. The most common length of stay was less than 1 day (24.0%) followed closely by 4–13 weeks (20.2%).

Length of support period

Length of support period	Per cent
Ongoing at end of period	~4
26–52 weeks	~5.5
13–26 weeks	~9
4–13 weeks	~20
2–4 weeks	~9
1–2 weeks	~8.5
4–7 days	~7.5
1–3 days	~11.5
Less than 1 day	~24

Per cent
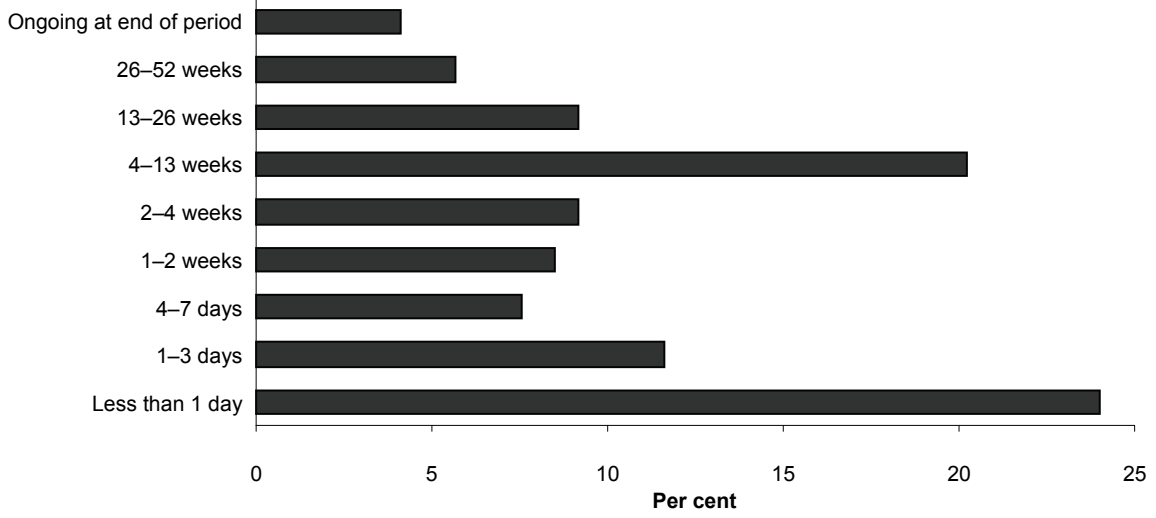
Source: Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Client Collection.

Figure 9.5: SAAP mental health-related closed support periods, by length of support, 2006–07