



Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

2005 Public Housing National Social Housing Survey—key results

41 Bulletin

Main findings

- Seventy-one per cent of tenants were satisfied overall with the service provided by their Housing Authority, with the highest levels of satisfaction reported for the provision of clear information and treatment by staff.
- The most influential aspect on overall satisfaction was day-to-day maintenance services.
- Seventy-eight per cent of tenants said their amenity needs (e.g. easy access and entry, the size of the home) were met by their current home and 86% of tenants said their location needs (e.g. being close to public transport or child care facilities) were met.
- Forty-five per cent of all households in public housing comprised single people living alone.
- For 81% of main income earners the main income source was a government pension or benefit of some sort.
- Forty-nine per cent of tenants were not participating in the labour force. The main reasons given for non-participation in the labour force were being unable to work (55%) and having a permanent medical condition (43%).
- Sixty-three per cent of tenants stated that their quality of life had improved since moving into public housing.
- The benefits of living in public housing that were identified by tenants were being able to feel more settled, more able to manage their rent and money; and able to remain living in the area.

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Introduction

The National Social Housing Survey (NSHS) collects valuable information about the nature of the public housing sector through a survey of tenants. This information can be used to identify the satisfaction of public housing tenants with the service provided, the benefits of living in public housing and information on tenant characteristics including tenant needs.

In 2005, the survey was mailed out to a randomly selected sample of 32,498 public housing tenants. A total of 15,436 tenants completed and returned the survey. This represented 48% of the tenants sampled. Non-response for the public housing NSHS may have influenced the results and this should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results presented in this bulletin.

How satisfied are tenants?

Overall satisfaction with public housing

Tenants were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service provided by the Housing Authority.¹ The results for the total national sample, excluding that proportion of tenants who did not answer the question, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Overall satisfaction

Sample size	14,605
Very satisfied	26%
Satisfied	45%
Subtotal: satisfied or very satisfied	71%
Dissatisfied	16%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, don't know/no opinion	13%

Nationally 71% of public housing tenants stated they were satisfied overall with the service provided by their Housing Authority. Twenty-six per cent of tenants were very satisfied and 45% were satisfied. Sixteen per cent of tenants were dissatisfied overall with the service provided.

When looking at overall satisfaction for all tenants, there were some differences between different subgroups of tenants:

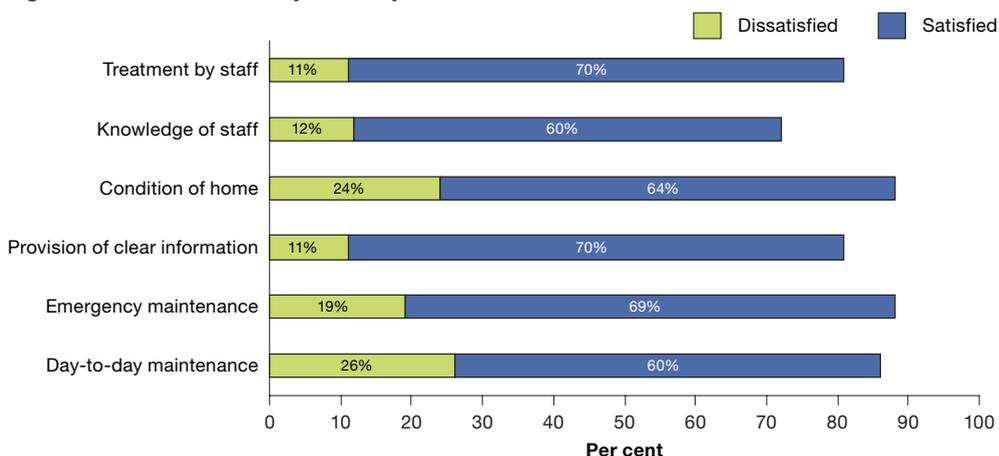
- Consistent with most satisfaction surveys, overall satisfaction with both service delivery and condition of the home increased with age.
- Households without dependants were generally more satisfied with both service delivery and the condition of their home than those with dependants.
- Tenants living in semi-detached houses or flats/apartments were generally more satisfied with service delivery than those living in separate houses.

¹ The term 'Housing Authority' is used generically to refer to each state/territory housing authority or department.

Satisfaction with specific aspects of service

As well as satisfaction with overall service, the survey measured tenant satisfaction with six main aspects of their home and the service being provided by the Housing Authority (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Satisfaction with specific aspects of service



Note: The response categories 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and 'Don't know/no opinion' are not shown and as such the figures do not add to 100%.

The highest levels of satisfaction were reported for treatment by staff and the provision of clear information (70% for each). Only 11% of tenants reported dissatisfaction with these aspects of service. Sixty-nine per cent of tenants were satisfied with emergency maintenance services but 19% of tenants were dissatisfied with this aspect of service.

The highest levels of dissatisfaction were reported for day-to-day maintenance services and condition of home (26% and 24% of tenants dissatisfied respectively). However, 60% or more of tenants were still satisfied with these aspects.

Which aspects of the home and service matter most to tenants?

Analysis of the survey results enables the aspects that most affect tenants' overall satisfaction with public housing to be identified:

- The most influential aspect on overall satisfaction was day-to-day maintenance services.
- The provision of clear information had the next greatest influence on overall satisfaction, followed by treatment by staff.
- Emergency maintenance services and knowledge of staff had the least influence on overall satisfaction.

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Satisfaction with dwelling amenity and location

The extent to which tenants' needs were met in terms of the amenity and location of their dwelling was measured in the survey. Table 2 presents the results for amenity and shows:

- Overall, 78% of tenants said their amenity needs were met by their current home.
- Easy access and entry was the amenity aspect for which the greatest proportion (90%) of tenants said their needs were met, followed by the size of the home (82%).
- The amenity aspects for which the lowest proportion of tenants said their needs were met were the safety and security of the home and safety and the security of the neighbourhood (72% for each aspect).

Table 3 presents the results for location and shows:

- Overall, 86% of tenants said their location needs were met by their current home.
- Being close to public transport was the location aspect for which the greatest proportion (92%) of tenants said their location needs were met, followed by being close to child care facilities (91%).
- Being close to employment/place of work and family and friends were the location aspects for which the lowest proportion of tenants said their needs were met (84% for each aspect).

A profile of public housing tenants

Beyond providing data about the satisfaction of tenants with various aspects of their home and the service they received from their Housing Authority, the survey gave some insight into the profile of the sector's tenants.

Age and gender

In 2005, the majority (41%) of public housing tenants who responded to the survey on behalf of the household were aged 45–64 years. A further 18% were aged 65–74 years and 14% were aged 75 years or more. Eighteen per cent of tenants were aged 35–44 years and only 9% were aged 34 years or less. The majority (65%) of these public housing tenants were female.

Table 2: Proportion of tenants for which current home met amenity needs

Amenity aspect	Proportion of tenants with needs met
Easy access and entry	90%
Size of the home	82%
Car parking	79%
Modifications for special needs	77%
Privacy of the home	76%
Yard space and fencing	75%
Safety and security of the home	72%
Safety and security of the neighbourhood	72%
Overall amenity	78%

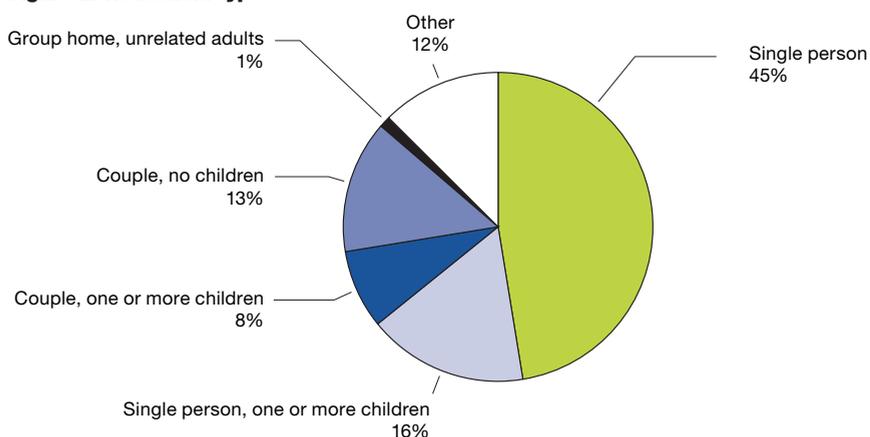
Table 3: Proportion of tenants for which current home met location needs

Location aspect	Proportion of tenants with needs met
Shops and banking	90%
Public transport	92%
Parks and recreational facilities	90%
Emergency services, medical services/hospitals	88%
Child care facilities	91%
Educational and training facilities	88%
Employment/place of work	84%
Community and support services	89%
Family and friends	84%
Overall location	86%

Household type

The majority of households (45%) comprised single people living alone and 13% were couple-only households (Figure 2). Twenty-four per cent of households contained one or more dependent children. The majority of these households were single people living with one or more children. Group homes comprised only 1% of all households.

Figure 2: Household type



Note: The figures do not add to 100% as the percentage of tenants who did not answer the question is not shown.

Income source

For 81% of households the main income source of the main income earner was a government pension or benefit of some sort. Thirty per cent received an aged pension; 25% received a disability pension; 6% received unemployment benefits; and a further 20% received some other government support/benefit. Sixteen per cent of main income earners received a wage or salary.

Labour force participation and reasons for non-participation

In 2005, 49% of tenants were not actively looking for or available for work in the four weeks prior to the survey. Less than one-fifth (18%) of tenants were employed in full- or part-time work and a further 10% were unemployed, actively looking for work. A large proportion of tenants (24%) did not answer the question about labour force participation.

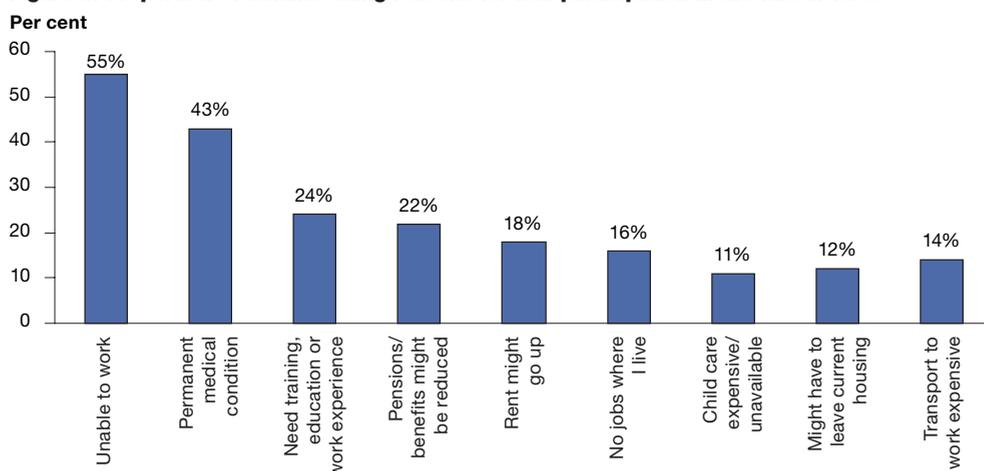
Tenants who were not actively looking for or available for work were asked to indicate whether various reasons influenced their non-participation in the labour force. The results are presented in Figure 3:

- The main reasons for non-participation in the labour force were being unable to work (55%), having a permanent medical condition (43%) and needing more training, education or work experience (24%).
- Twenty-two per cent of tenants expressed concern that their pensions/benefits might be reduced and 18% that their rent might go up.

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- Sixteen per cent of tenants said there were no jobs where they lived.
- Smaller proportions of tenants cited the following reasons: child care was too expensive/unavailable (11%), they might have to leave their current housing (12%) and transport to work was too expensive (14%).

Figure 3: Proportion of tenants citing reasons for non-participation in the labour force



Note: As tenants could give more than one reason, the total exceeds 100%.

Public housing tenure

The majority (54%) of public housing tenants had been a tenant of their Housing Authority for more than 10 years, with 24% of tenants holding tenure for more than 20 years. Only 10% of tenants had been a tenant in public housing for two years or less.

Where did tenants previously live and why did they move into public housing?

More than half (57%) of the tenants surveyed had been living in private rental housing before moving into their current home. A further 18% had been living with friends and relatives. Nine per cent of tenants were living in more transient accommodation (i.e. a private boarding house, refuge/crisis accommodation, caravan park or were homeless).

The main reasons tenants gave for choosing to move into public housing are discussed below. As tenants could give more than one reason, the figures exceed 100%:

- The most frequently given reasons were being unable to afford private rental accommodation (67%) and the security of tenure offered by public housing (32%).

- Eighteen per cent of tenants chose public housing as they wanted to remain living in the area they were in and 15% of tenants said the better house was a reason for choosing public housing.
- Nine per cent of tenants had previously been in a violent/dangerous situation and 8% couldn't get private rental accommodation.

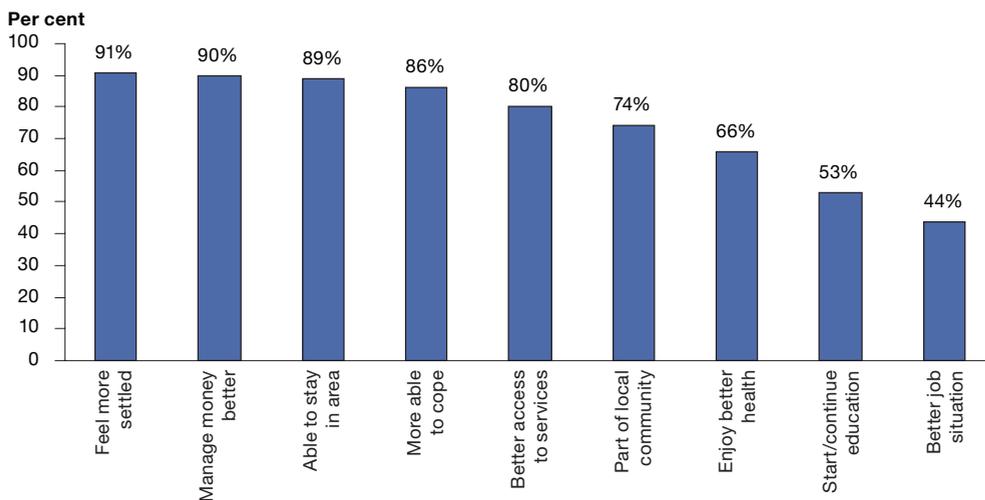
Benefits of public housing

Tenants were asked whether they thought living in public housing had changed their quality of life. Just under two-thirds (63%) of tenants stated that their quality of life had improved since moving into public housing: 42% stated that it had improved a lot while 21% reported that it had improved a little. Seventeen per cent of tenants reported that living in public housing hadn't really made a difference to their quality of life, while 11% reported that some aspects had improved while others had worsened. Only 2% of tenants reported that their quality of life had worsened.

Tenants were also asked whether they felt living in public housing had helped them in a variety of ways, such as helping them feel more settled or having better access to services they need. The full list of these 'benefits' can be seen in Figure 4. For each of these they were asked to say whether the benefit was something they had wanted to achieve or to have. If it was, they were asked whether they thought living in public housing had helped, hadn't helped, or hadn't helped yet but might in the future:

- The benefits of public housing most frequently identified by tenants were that tenants were able to feel more settled (91%), more able to manage their rent and money (90%), and could continue to live in the area (89%).
- Another important benefit identified was that tenants felt more able to cope (86%).

Figure 4: Benefits of living in public housing





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For more information about the 2005 Public Housing National Social Housing Survey, including state and territory level data, go to:
<<http://www.aihw.gov.au/housing/nshs/index.cfm>>.

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