

3 Client characteristics

A total of 30,390 clients were recorded on the NIMS database as having received open employment support between 1 July 1997 and 30 June 1998 (Table 3.1). This represents an increase of nearly one-quarter (23.6% or 5,800 clients) compared with the number of clients recorded as having received support in 1996–97. The number of recorded clients also increased between 1995–96 and 1996–97 (by 19.2% or 3,966 clients) from 20,624 in 1995–96 to 24,590 in 1996–97.

The number of additional clients who received support during 1997–98 (for whom data were not provided) was estimated to be 743 from information provided by non-responding outlets. A further 25 active clients were recorded on Not-on-NIMS forms at the end of June 1998; these forms record clients who have not yet been entered onto the outlet’s database, either for administrative reasons or because they have not consented to their information being included on the national database. Thus the total number of clients was estimated at 31,158, with about 2% (768) not recorded. The estimated number of clients has increased by 5,096, from 26,062 in 1996–97 to 31,158 in 1997–98, an increase of 19.6%. There was a similar percentage increase (20.3%) in the preceding year, from 21,656 in 1995–96.

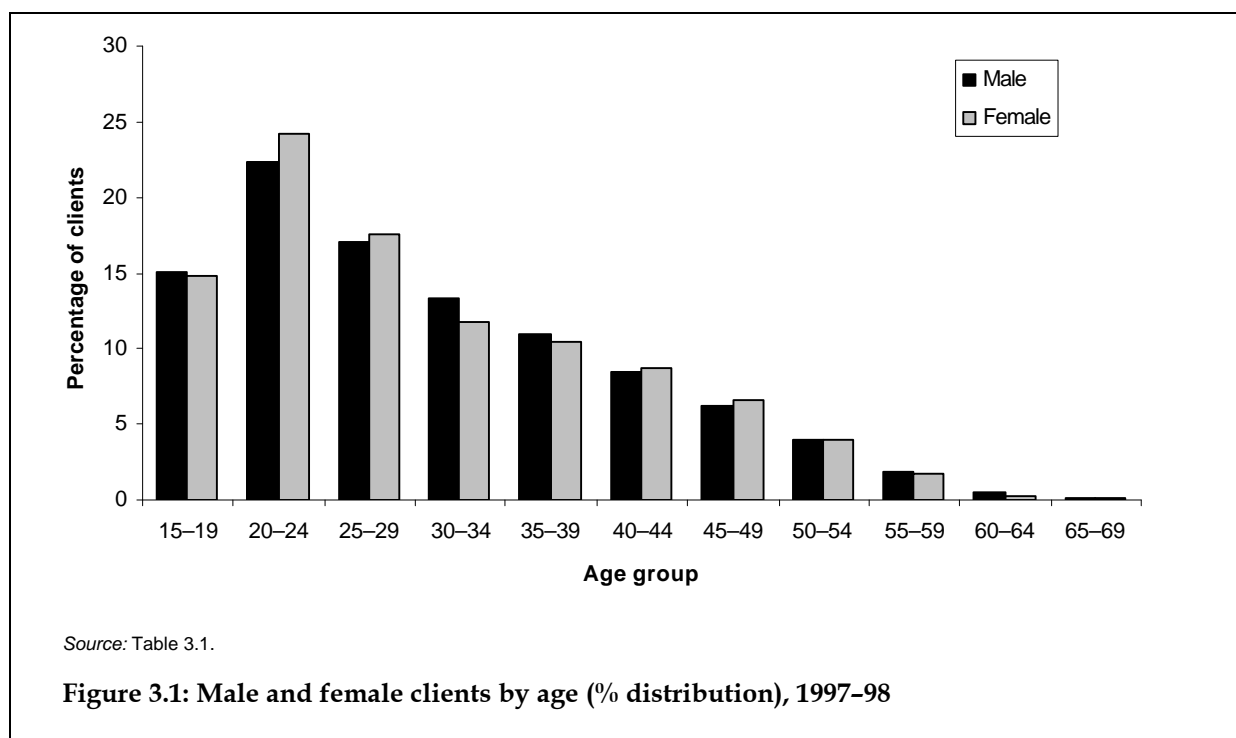
Of the recorded clients, around two-thirds (64%) were male and one-third (36%) female (Table 3.1). This ratio has remained constant since 1995–96.

The age distribution was similar for males and females although a slightly higher proportion of female clients were aged 20–24 years (Figure 3.1). There was a higher proportion in the age group 15–19 years among new clients (20%) compared with all clients in 1997–98 (15%). The median age has increased from 27 years in 1996–97 to 28 years in 1997–98.

Table 3.1: Number of clients by sex and age, 1997–98

Sex	15–19		20–24		25–29		30–44		45–59		60–64		Total ^(a)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All clients														
Male	2,911	15.1	4,339	22.4	3,301	17.1	6,334	32.8	2,321	12.0	102	0.5	19,333	100.0
Female	1,633	14.8	2,674	24.2	1,946	17.6	3,424	31.0	1,345	12.2	21	0.2	11,057	100.0
Total	4,544	15.0	7,013	23.1	5,247	17.3	9,758	32.1	3,666	12.1	123	0.4	30,390	100.0
New clients in 1997–98														
Male	1,718	20.1	1,569	18.4	1,276	15.0	2,758	32.3	1,143	13.4	53	0.6	8,532	100.0
Female	1,021	20.6	979	19.7	757	15.3	1,524	30.7	655	13.2	12	0.2	4,957	100.0
Total	2,739	20.3	2,548	18.9	2,033	15.1	4,282	31.7	1,798	13.3	65	0.5	13,489	100.0
Clients with applicant support only														
Male	250	17.3	233	16.1	232	16.1	502	34.7	212	14.7	10	0.7	1,445	100.0
Female	166	21.0	138	17.5	108	13.7	258	32.7	116	14.7	2	0.3	789	100.0
Total	416	18.6	371	16.6	340	15.2	760	34.0	328	14.7	80	0.3	2,234	100.0

(a) Includes 19 clients aged 65–69 and 20 clients for whom age was unknown.



During 1997-98, 4,793 clients were recorded by agencies as withdrawing from open employment support (Table 3.2). Nearly half (47%) of these withdrawals were client-initiated and nearly two-fifths (38%) were agency-initiated. One in 10 clients (10%) withdrew from support because they transferred to another agency and one in 20 (5%) because they became independent workers.

A further 3,149 clients with support prior to 1 July 1997 (i.e. the beginning of the financial year) had not received support during the 1997-98 financial year but had no recorded reason for ceasing support. These figures suggest that, in some cases, clients have ceased open employment support without this being recorded.

Table 3.2: Number of clients who ceased support by reason for ceasing support, 1997-98

Reason for ceasing support	Number	%
Independent	257	5.4
Transferred	466	9.7
Agency-initiated	1,797	37.5
Client-initiated	2,273	47.4
Total	4,793	100.0

Of the clients receiving open employment support in the 12 months to 30 June 1998, 1.8% (537) were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (Table 3.3), which is slightly less than the estimated proportion in the Australian population (2.1%) as at 30 June 1998 (ABS 1998b).

Table 3.3: Number of clients by origin, 1997–98

Origin	Number	%
Not Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, South Sea Islander	28,596	94.1
Aboriginal	508	1.7
Torres Strait Islander	29	0.1
South Sea Islander	47	0.2
Unknown	1,210	4.0
Total	30,390	100.0

In 1997–98, 90% of clients were born in Australia, 3% were born in another country classified as English-speaking, 5% were from countries classified as non-English-speaking and 2% were recorded as 'not known' (Table 3.4). These percentages are identical to those in 1996–97. The distribution of people according to country of birth differs from the estimated distribution in the Australian population. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that 76% of the population were born in Australia, 9% in other English-speaking countries and 14% in non-English-speaking countries as at 30 June 1998 (ABS 1998b).

Table 3.4: Number of clients by country of birth, 1997–98

Country of birth	Number	%
Australia	27,385	90.1
Other English-speaking	1,010	3.3
Non-English-speaking	1,472	4.8
Not known	523	1.7
Total	30,390	100.0

Note: The classification for country of birth is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. 'English-speaking' countries are defined as Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, USA, Canada and South Africa.

In 1997–98, the preferred language of the vast majority of clients was English (94%), followed by sign language, Italian and Greek (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Number of clients by most common preferred languages, 1997–98

Language	Number	%
English	28,452	93.6
An Australian Aboriginal language	88	0.3
Italian	119	0.4
Greek	110	0.4
Vietnamese	100	0.3
Arabic (including Lebanese)	85	0.3
Spanish	58	0.2
Cantonese	45	0.1
All other spoken languages	759	2.5
Sign language	476	1.6
Little/no effective communication	47	0.2
Not known	51	0.2
Total	30,390	100.0

Two-thirds (67%) of clients receiving open employment support in 1997–98 lived with family members at the time they commenced support and one-fifth (20%) lived alone (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6: Number of clients by type of accommodation, 1997–98

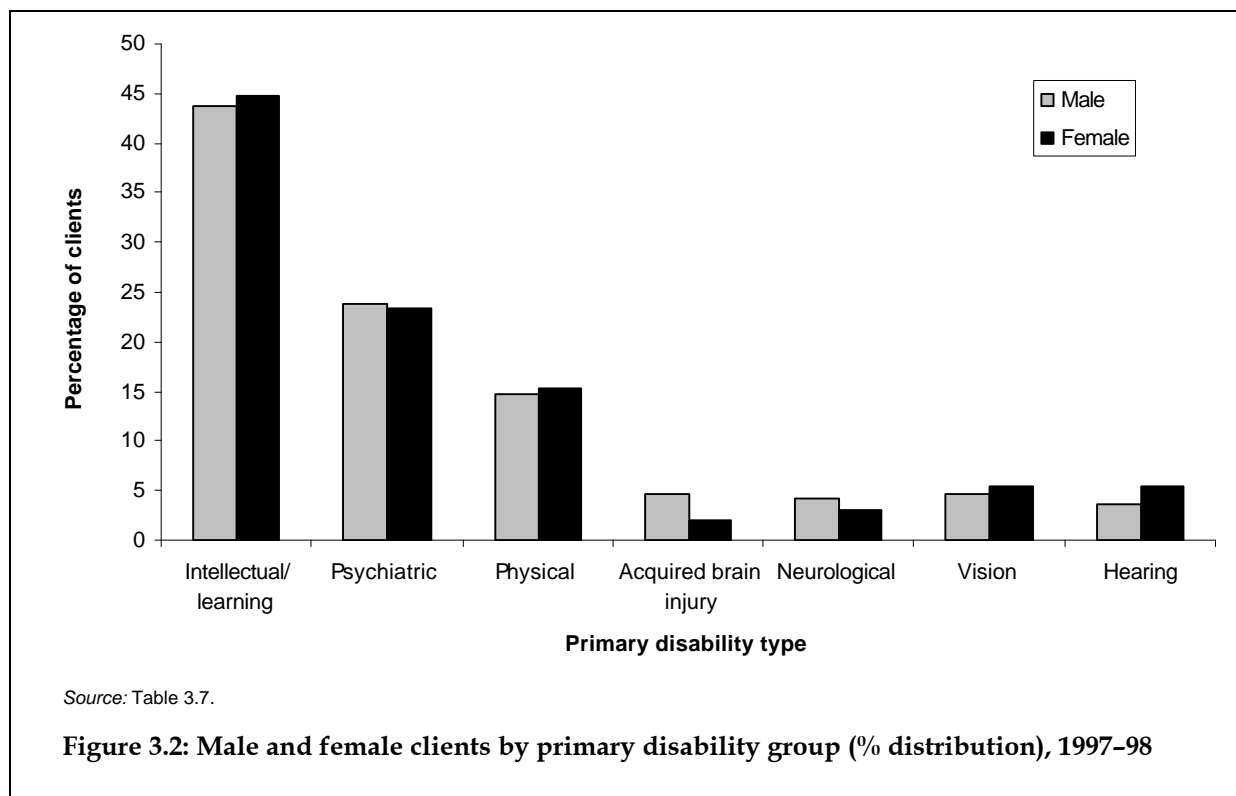
Accommodation type	Number	%
Lives with family members	20,276	66.7
Lives alone	6,099	20.1
Special-purpose accommodation	1,060	3.5
Other community	1,031	3.4
Institutional accommodation	124	0.4
No usual residence	94	0.3
Not known	1,706	5.6
Total	30,390	100.0

Of people attending open employment services 44% had intellectual/learning as their primary disability, followed by nearly a quarter (24%) who had a psychiatric disability and 15% who had a physical disability (Table 3.7, Figure 3.2).

Although the percentage distribution of primary disability group was quite similar for males and females, a slightly higher percentage of males than females had acquired brain injury or neurological disability recorded as their primary disability (Table 3.7). Women were more likely than men to be recorded as having hearing, vision or intellectual/learning disability as their primary disability.

Table 3.7: Number of clients by primary disability group and sex, 1997–98

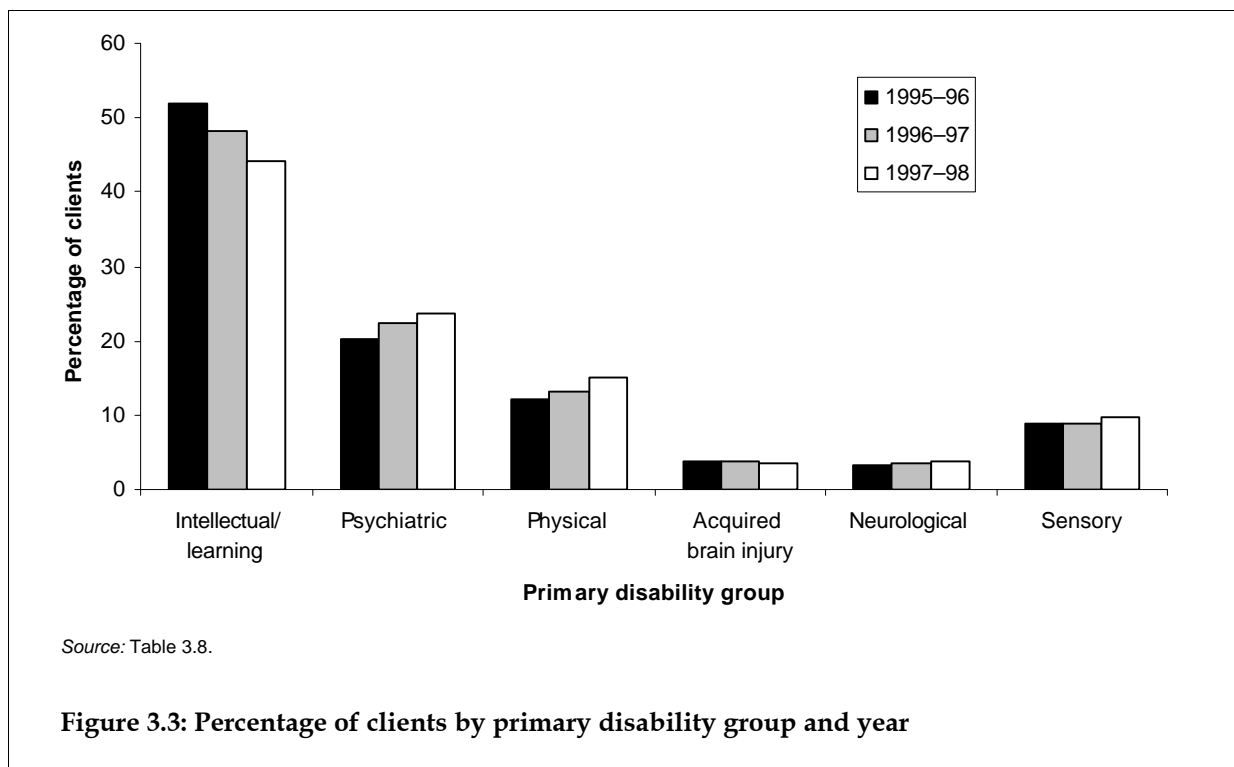
Primary disability group	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Intellectual/learning	8,467	43.8	4,949	44.8	13,416	44.1
Psychiatric	4,587	23.7	2,583	23.4	7,170	23.6
Physical	2,867	14.8	1,705	15.4	4,572	15.0
Acquired brain injury	884	4.6	222	2.0	1,106	3.6
Neurological	815	4.2	348	3.1	1,163	3.8
Vision	913	4.7	600	5.4	1,513	5.0
Hearing	704	3.6	594	5.4	1,298	4.3
Speech	67	0.3	31	0.3	98	0.3
Deafblind	29	0.2	25	0.2	54	0.2
Total	19,333	100.0	11,057	100.0	30,390	100.0
<i>Total %</i>		63.6		36.4		100.0



The proportion of clients with the primary disability group intellectual/learning has declined over the three financial years of the NIMS collection, whereas the percentage of clients with a psychiatric or physical primary disability has increased steadily over this period (Table 3.8, Figure 3.3). There has also been a slight increase in the percentages of clients with neurological or hearing disabilities across the period.

Table 3.8: Number of clients by primary disability group and year, 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98

Primary disability group	1995-96		1996-97		1997-98	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Intellectual/learning	10,696	51.9	11,838	48.1	13,416	44.1
Psychiatric	4,178	20.3	5,515	22.4	7,170	23.6
Physical	2,492	12.1	3,260	13.3	4,572	15.0
Acquired brain injury	779	3.8	964	3.9	1,106	3.6
Neurological	664	3.2	864	3.5	1,163	3.8
Vision	1,007	4.9	1,096	4.5	1,513	5.0
Hearing	731	3.5	951	3.9	1,298	4.3
Speech	60	0.3	72	0.3	98	0.3
Deafblind	17	0.1	30	0.1	54	0.2
Total	20,624	100.0	24,590	100.0	30,390	100.0



One-fifth (20%) of clients had a primary disability that was episodic in nature. The primary disability group by far the most likely to be episodic in nature was psychiatric; 69% (4,981 of 7,170) of clients with a psychiatric disability were recorded as having an episodic disability, and 82% of people with an episodic disability in 1997-98 had a psychiatric disability (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9: Number of clients by primary disability and episodic nature of disability, 1997-98

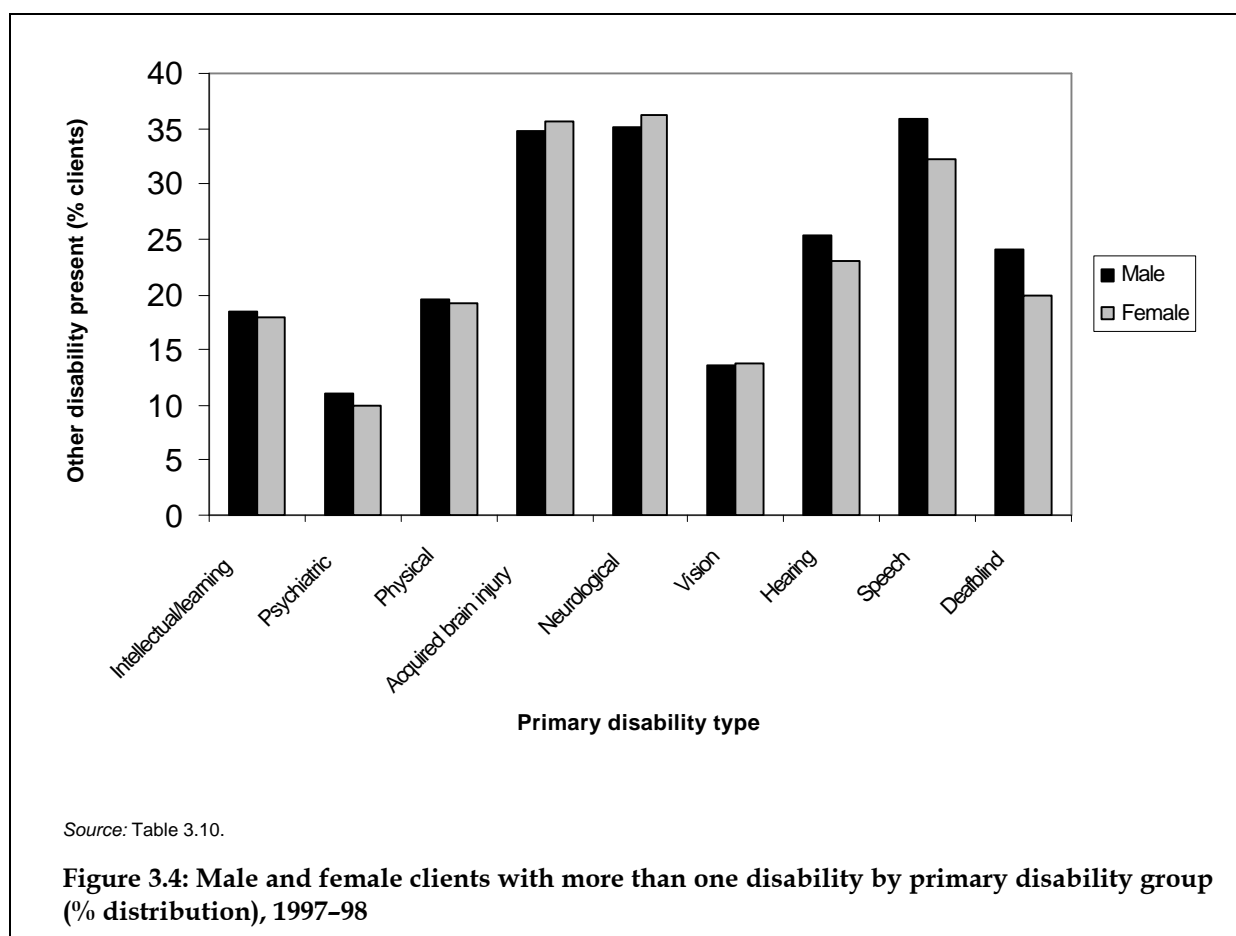
Primary disability group	Episodic		Not episodic		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Intellectual/learning	299	4.9	13,117	54.0	13,416	44.1
Psychiatric	4,981	81.6	2,189	9.0	7,170	23.6
Physical	360	5.9	4,212	17.3	4,572	15.0
Acquired brain injury	64	1.0	1,042	4.3	1,106	3.6
Neurological	347	5.7	816	3.4	1,163	3.8
Vision	13	0.2	1,500	6.2	1,513	5.0
Hearing	34	0.6	1,264	5.2	1,298	4.3
Speech	7	0.1	91	0.4	98	0.3
Deafblind	1	0.0	53	0.2	54	0.2
Total	6,106	100.0	24,284	100.0	30,390	100.0
<i>Total %</i>		<i>20.1</i>		<i>79.9</i>		<i>100.0</i>

Nearly a fifth (18%) of all clients in 1997–98 had at least one disability other than their primary disability (Table 3.10), compared with 19% in 1996–97 and 21% in 1995–96. In 1997–98, people whose primary disability was an acquired brain injury, neurological, speech, or deafblind disability were most likely to have another disability (Figure 3.4). People with the primary disability groups psychiatric or vision were least likely to have another significant disability.

Table 3.10: Number and percentage of clients with more than one disability, by primary disability group, 1997–98

Primary disability group	Males		Females		Persons	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Intellectual/learning	1,558	18.4	889	18.0	2,447	18.2
Psychiatric	503	11.0	258	10.0	761	10.6
Physical	560	19.5	328	19.2	888	19.4
Acquired brain injury	307	34.7	79	35.6	386	34.9
Neurological	286	35.1	126	36.2	412	35.4
Vision	124	13.6	83	13.8	207	13.7
Hearing	179	25.4	136	22.9	315	24.3
Speech	24	35.8	10	32.3	34	34.7
Deafblind	7	24.1	5	20.0	12	22.2
Total	3,548	18.4	1,914	17.3	5,462	18.0

Note: If other disability was not specified, it was assumed to be absent.



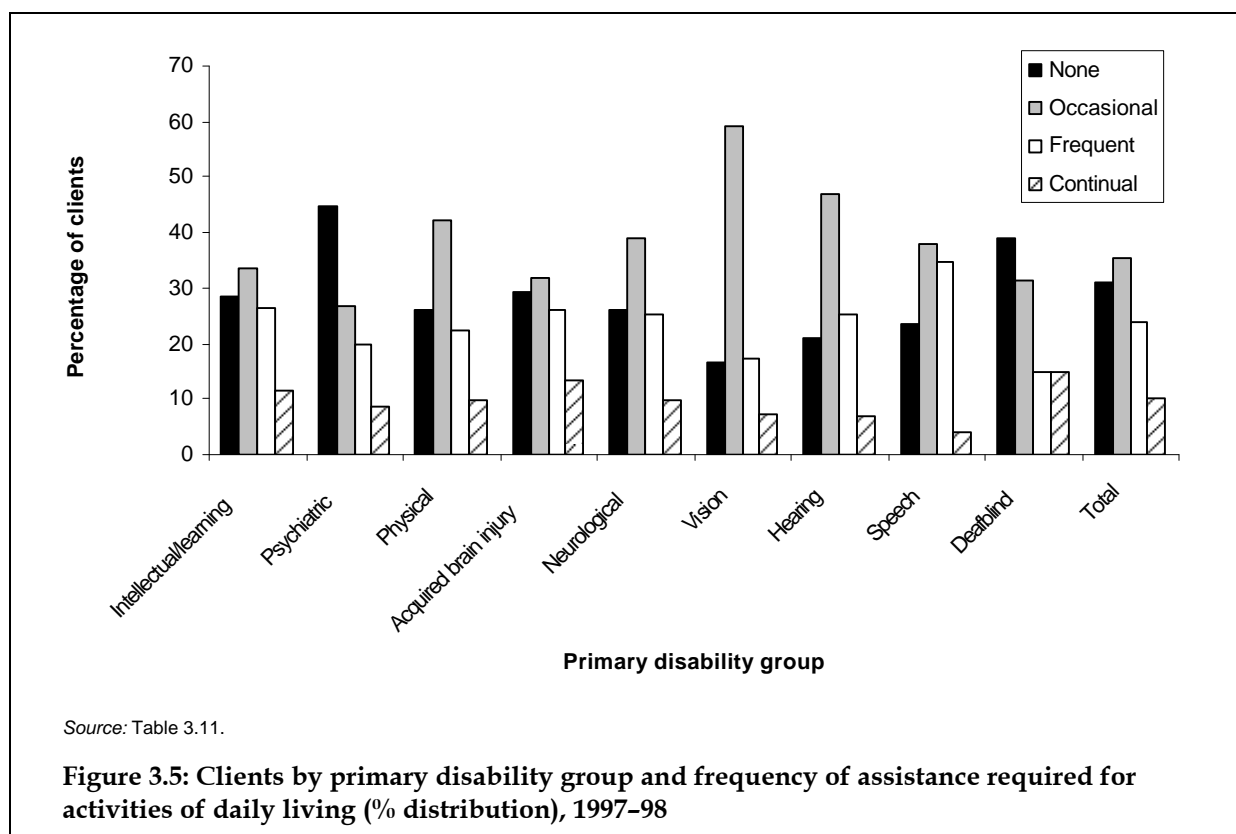
The frequency of assistance required by a client for activities of daily living (ADL) is categorised as 'none', 'occasional', 'frequent' or 'continual'. It refers to the frequency of assistance required in the areas of self-care, mobility and/or verbal communication.

In 1997-98, less than a third (31%) of clients required no ADL assistance, more than a third (35%) required occasional ADL assistance, about a quarter (24%) required frequent assistance and 10% required continual ADL assistance (Table 3.11). People with a psychiatric disability were most likely to have required no ADL assistance (3,208 of 7,170 or 45%) and people with a vision disability were most likely to have required occasional ADL assistance (892 of 1,513 or 59%; Figure 3.5).

Table 3.11: Number of clients by primary disability group and frequency of ADL assistance required^(a), 1997-98

Primary disability group	None		Occasional		Frequent		Continual		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Intellectual/learning	3,815	28.4	4,518	33.7	3,546	26.4	1,537	11.5	13,416	100.0
Psychiatric	3,208	44.7	1,917	26.7	1,427	19.9	618	8.6	7,170	100.0
Physical	1,178	25.8	1,931	42.2	1,015	22.2	448	9.8	4,572	100.0
Acquired brain injury	323	29.2	349	31.6	288	26.0	146	13.2	1,106	100.0
Neurological	303	26.1	453	39.0	294	25.3	113	9.7	1,163	100.0
Vision	253	16.7	892	59.0	261	17.3	107	7.1	1,513	100.0
Hearing	273	21.0	608	46.8	329	25.3	88	6.8	1,298	100.0
Speech	23	23.5	37	37.8	34	34.7	4	4.1	98	100.0
Deafblind	21	38.9	17	31.5	8	14.8	8	14.8	54	100.0
Total	9,397	30.9	10,722	35.3	7,202	23.7	3,069	10.1	30,390	100.0

(a) Frequency of assistance required by the person in their overall situation, due to their condition, in one or more of the areas of self-care (bathing, dressing, eating and/or toileting), mobility (around the home or away from home) and verbal communication (called 'level of support required' in the NIMS data dictionary).



Sources of referral to open employment outlets were varied in 1997-98 (Table 3.12). The most common sources of referral were self (22%), Disability Panel (11%)*, secondary school (9%), the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) programs (6%), the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (6%), sheltered employment services and family members (4% each).

* Disability Panels were introduced as part of the Disability Reform Program in 1991. Disability Panels aimed to facilitate access to Disability Reform Packages, either by directly referring clients to a service or by endorsing activity plans designed by the service following referral of a client through alternative means. Following changes in late 1997 and early 1998 to the way in which employment services are delivered, Disability Panels are no longer in operation.

Table 3.12: Number of clients by referral source, 1997–98

Referral source	Number	%
Self	6,635	21.8
Family member	1,275	4.2
DETYA programs	1,854	6.1
Education system		
Secondary school system	2,710	8.9
TAFE college	1,000	3.3
University	18	0.1
Health and Family Services		
Another open employment service	827	2.7
Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS)	1,815	6.0
Jobnet	138	0.5
Partnership with industry project	9	—
Post-school options	758	2.5
Supported employment service	597	2.0
Special Employment Placement Officer	184	0.6
Sheltered employment service	1,262	4.2
Supported wage system placement	20	0.1
Employment skills development program	183	0.6
Other		
Another branch of same agency	685	2.3
Advocate/advocacy service	192	0.6
Community service network	1,456	4.8
Disability Panel (DRP) ^(a)	3,264	10.7
Employer	156	0.5
Hospital	161	0.5
Medical/health centre	1,272	4.2
Other Commonwealth Government	623	2.1
Other	2,272	7.5
Occupational therapist (not CRS)	81	0.3
Rehabilitation counsellor (not CRS)	388	1.3
State Government	538	1.8
Not stated	17	0.1
Total	30,390	100.0

(a) DRP numbers are smaller than those for the referrals recorded under disability panel status (Table 3.12). This may be explained by a lack of historical data kept by agencies, incorrect initial data entry or misunderstanding of the data dictionary.