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# **Nursing homes in Australia 1995–96**

**A statistical overview**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
and  
Department of Health and Family Services  
Canberra

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# Preface

Early this year, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare agreed to participate in a joint venture to publish nursing home and hostel data, and that the Institute would take over the task of producing the publications. These data were published previously in two series of annual reports entitled *Nursing Homes for the Aged: A Statistical Overview* and *Hostels for the Aged: A Statistical Overview* produced by the Department of Health and Family Services. The new series, Aged Care Statistics Series, includes reports on nursing homes and hostels that will be updated annually. It is envisaged that from 1997–98, the nursing home and hostel reported will be combined into one volume reflecting the amalgamation of the two systems as part of recent reforms to the structure of aged care services.

In order to produce up-to-date information, the Department and the Institute chose to produce the report showing 1995–96 data first. The report giving nursing home data for the years 1992–1995 will be published at a later date in one volume to provide a complete set of historical data for users.

The new series is largely consistent with the series it succeeds, although changes in data availability and the needs of information users have necessitated some differences. For example, tables showing newly available information (such as resident separation mode) have been included while tables for which relevant information is no longer available (such as compensation status) have been deleted.

This report presents a large range of statistics relating to nursing home utilisation. The statistics were derived from information held on the Nursing Home Payment System (NHPS) by the Department of Health and Family Services.

Information obtained from the NHPS includes personal characteristics of nursing home residents; their age, sex, marital status and other demographic characteristics; and their dependency levels.

The information in this publication is presented in the following sections:

- Population and nursing home service capacity;
- Nursing home residents and nursing home characteristics as at 30 June 1996;
- Nursing homes admissions and separations from 1 July 1995 to 30 June 1996;
- Nursing home resident characteristics as at 30 June 1996; and
- Nursing home resident dependency as at 30 June 1996.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and  
Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services

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David Learmonth, Peter Braun, John Patroni and Felix Usher in the Strategic Development Section of the Aged and Community Care Division at the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services provided the Institute with the nursing home data which were used to produce the statistics in this report, and made constructive comments on the draft report.

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Rod Hall of the Data Management Unit of the Institute provided valuable technical assistance with data transfer and programming, and Michael Paxton from the same unit also provided technical support in producing the statistics.

Amanda Nobbs of the Publications Section of the Institute arranged publication of the report.

# Main features

## Nursing homes

As at 30 June 1996, there were 1,472 nursing homes in Australia providing a total of 75,004 beds: an average of 51 beds per nursing homes. This represented 50 beds per 1,000 people aged 70 and over at the time. While nursing homes varied in size (7% had 20 beds or fewer and 6% had more than 100 beds), a large proportion (43%) of nursing homes had 21 to 40 beds and another 27% had 41 to 60 beds.

Almost half (48%) the beds in nursing homes in 1996 were managed by private-for-profit organisations, and 38% were managed by private-not-for-profit organisations. The remaining 14% were managed by State Governments.

## Nursing home residents

Of the 72,682 residents on 30 June 1996, 51,793 (or 71%) were female. Female residents were older than male residents; 52% of female residents were 85 years of age or older, compared with 30% of male residents.

As expected, the level of dependency of nursing home residents is high. Over 50% of residents in 1996 were assessed as requiring more than 23.5 hours of care each week (the highest 2 categories, 1 and 2, of the Resident Classification Instrument), and another 37% were assessed as requiring 19.5 to 23.5 hours of care (category 3). The 1996 proportions were higher than those of earlier years. The level of dependency is not related to the age or sex of the residents, nor is it related to whether the nursing home is managed by private-not-for profit, private-for-profit organisations, or governments.

A higher proportion of female residents than male residents were widowed (59% and 25%, respectively), and lived alone prior to admission to a nursing home (28% and 20%, respectively).

Persons of Indigenous origin were under-represented (0.8%) in nursing home residents.

About half (46%) of residents were in hospitals when they applied for admission to nursing homes; this proportion was slightly higher for males (50%) compared with females (45%). As a large proportion of residents did not provide the necessary information (26%), the true proportion of residents who were in hospital at the time of application would be higher than those reported above.

Of nursing homes residents on 30 June 1996, 30% had been a resident for less than 1 year and 20% had been a resident for 5 years or more. Length of stay of residents at

one point in time does not reflect the length of stay of all admissions, because those who stay for long periods are more likely to be included in the data at one point in time than are those who stay for shorter periods.

## **Nursing home admissions and separations**

There were 44,244 admissions to nursing homes in the year 1995–96, 25% of which were admissions for short-term respite.

Of permanent admissions, more than 65% were aged 80 or older (71% of females and 54% of males). Respite admissions were admitted at a slightly younger age; 55% were admitted at age 80 or older (61% of females and 55% of males).

In the year 1995–96, there were 42,061 separations from nursing homes, 26% of which were separations after a period of respite care.

Of separations from permanent care, 85% were separations due to death, 6.8 % returned to the community, and 2% were discharged to hospitals. Of those who died, 43% had stayed in the nursing home for less than 1 year, and 31% had stayed for less than half a year. A considerable proportion (16.3%) died after a stay of 5 years or more.

Of separations from respite care, 57% returned to the community, 14% were discharged to the same or another nursing home, 5% were discharged to hospitals, and another 5% died.