



Australian Government
Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

2005 Community Housing National Social Housing Survey—key results

40bulletin

Main findings

- Forty-six per cent of all households in community housing comprised single people living alone.
- For 80% of main income earners the main income source was a government pension or benefit of some sort.
- Forty-six per cent of tenants reported that they or a member of their household had a disability or health condition that limited their ability to participate in activities or for which assistance was required.
- Seventy-four per cent of tenants stated that their quality of life had improved since moving into community housing.
- The benefits of living in community housing that were identified by tenants were being able to remain living in the area, able to feel more settled in general, and more able to manage their rent and money.
- Eighty-five per cent of tenants were satisfied overall with the service provided by their housing organisation, with the highest level of satisfaction reported for treatment by staff.

Introduction

The National Social Housing Survey collects valuable information about the nature of the community housing sector through a survey of mainstream community housing tenants assisted under the 2003 Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement. This information can be used to highlight the features that distinguish community housing from other forms of social housing.

In 2005, the survey was mailed out to a randomly selected sample of community housing tenants. A total of 2,935 tenants completed and returned the survey. This represented 33% of the tenants sampled. This relatively low response rate needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the information presented in this bulletin.

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A profile of community housing tenants

The 2005 survey gave some insight into the profile of community housing tenants in Australia. The following section outlines some of the features of community housing tenants.

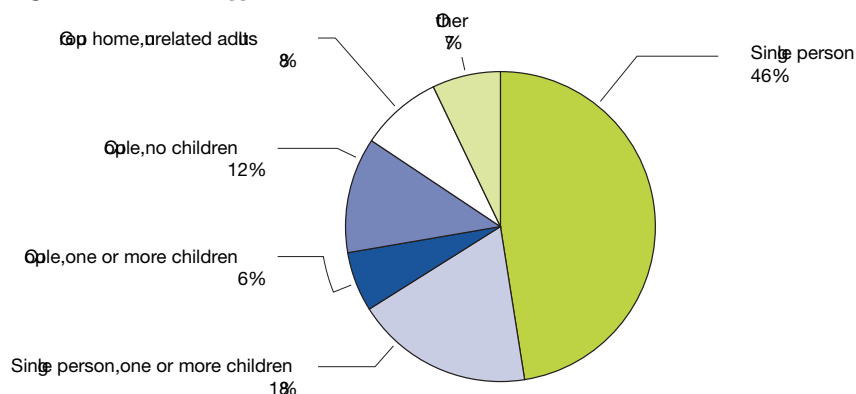
Age and gender

In 2005, 35% of community housing tenants who responded to the survey on behalf of the household were aged between 35 and 54 years and 18% between 55 and 64 years. Five per cent of tenants were aged 24 years or less and 13% were aged 75 years or more. The majority (62%) of these community housing tenants were female.

Household type

The majority of households (46%) comprised single people living alone and 12% were couple-only households (Figure 1). 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 8% of all households.

Figure 1: 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 approximately 80% of households the main income source of the main income earner was a government pension or benefit of some sort. Twenty-seven per cent received a disability pension; approximately 26% received an aged pension; 7% unemployment benefits; and a further 20% received some other form of government support/benefit. Fourteen per cent of main income earners received a wage or salary.

Support needs

Community housing organisations provide homes for a range of people. For some it is simply an affordable way of getting a home, whilst others have particular needs, such as those with a disability. Forty-six per cent of tenants reported that they or a member of their household

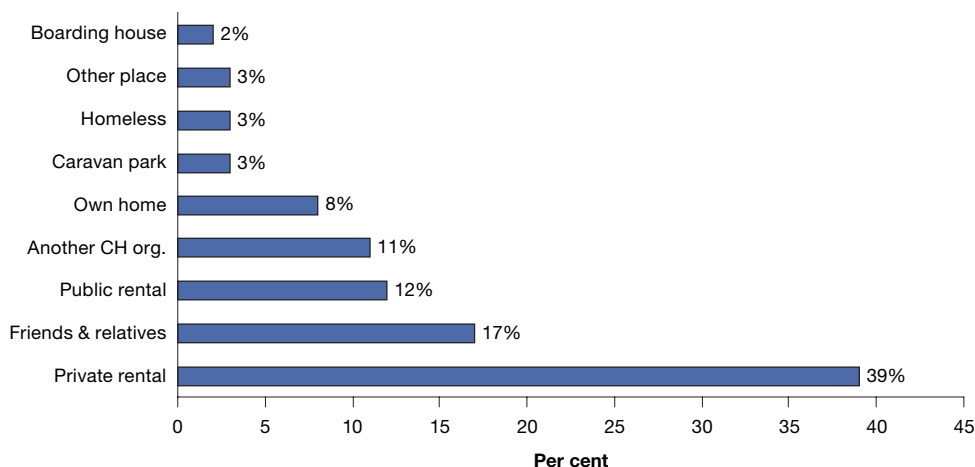
had a disability or health condition that limited their ability to participate in activities or for which assistance was required.

Twenty-five per cent of tenants reported that they or a household member required support, in addition to the housing assistance they received, within the last month. The greatest area in which support was required was daily living support (68% of households), which includes such things as dressing, showering, cleaning and preparing meals. Forty-seven per cent of households required personal support (e.g. needs assessment, counselling) and 38% required community living support (e.g. living skills development, recreation/leisure).

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

Figure 2 shows that 62% of the tenants surveyed had been living in rental accommodation (i.e. private rental, public or community housing) before moving into their current home, with the majority of those living in private rental housing (39%). Just over one in six (17%) had been living with friends and relatives.

Figure 2: Prior housing situation



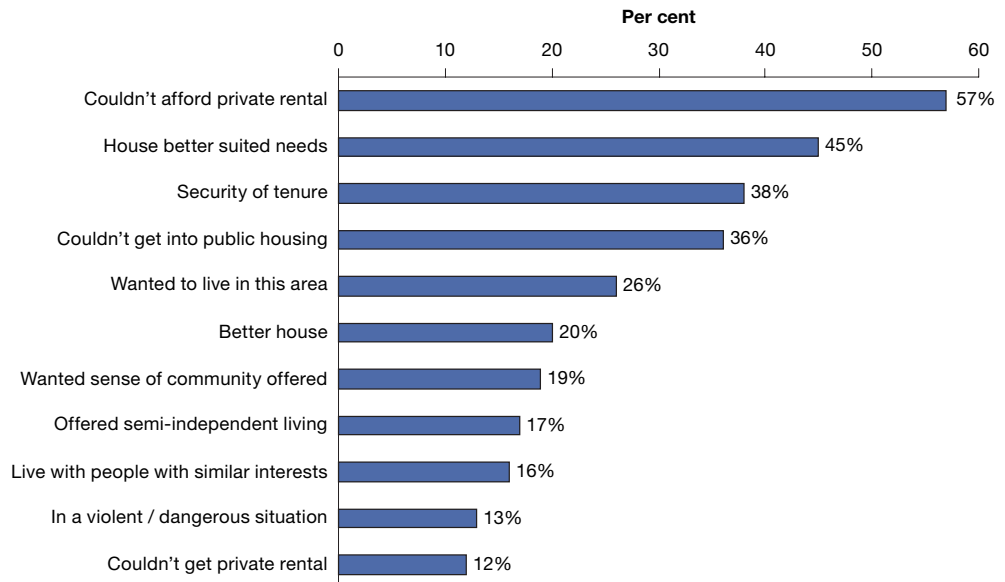
The main reasons given by tenants for choosing to move into community housing are shown in Figure 3. Note that, as tenants could give more than one reason, the total exceeds 100%.

The most frequently given reasons were being unable to afford private rent (57%) and that the house provided by community housing better suited their needs (45%). The security of tenure offered by community housing was another frequently given reason for moving to community housing (38%), along with being unable to get into public housing (36%).

Tenants also gave reasons related to the lifestyle community housing offers. Twenty-six per cent of tenants stated that they wanted to remain in the area, 19% said they wanted the sense of community offered and 17% mentioned semi-independent living as an important reason for moving to community housing.

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Figure 3: Reason for moving into community housing



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

Tenant participation

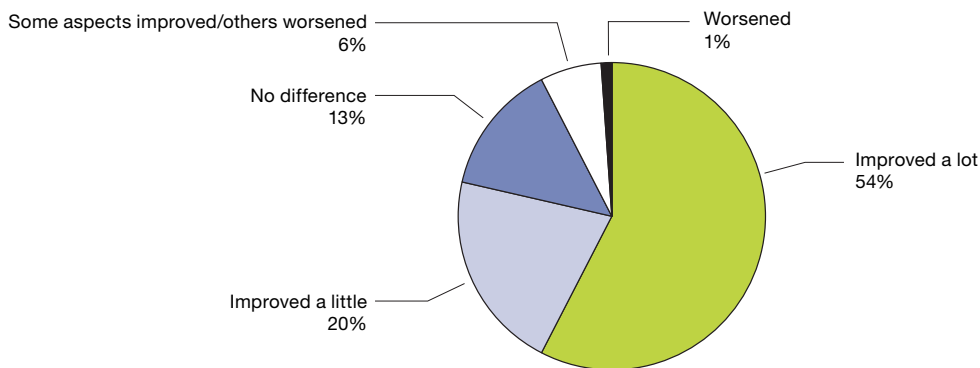
The ability to be involved in the decision making and management of the organisation is an aspect that differentiates many community housing models from other forms of social housing. The 2005 survey asked tenants about their involvement as well as how satisfied they were with their level of involvement:

- The most common forms of tenant involvement were providing help where possible/when asked (31%) and attending meetings (27%).
- Other forms of tenant involvement included attending social events/activities (20%), being a member of the organisation (18%) and helping with general maintenance/'working bees' (11%).
- Just over half of tenants surveyed (54%) were satisfied with their level of involvement and only 7% were dissatisfied. However, when the substantial number of tenants who answered 'don't know' were removed from this analysis, levels of satisfaction rose to 72%.
- Tenants of cooperatives were more likely to participate in their organisation than tenants of other types of organisations—only 9% of tenants in cooperatives said they had little or no involvement with their housing organisation compared to 64% of tenants in other types of organisations.

Benefits of community housing

Tenants were asked whether they thought living in community housing had changed their quality of life. The results for this question are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Quality of life of tenants



Note: Does not total 100% as those who said 'Don't know' or did not answer were excluded.

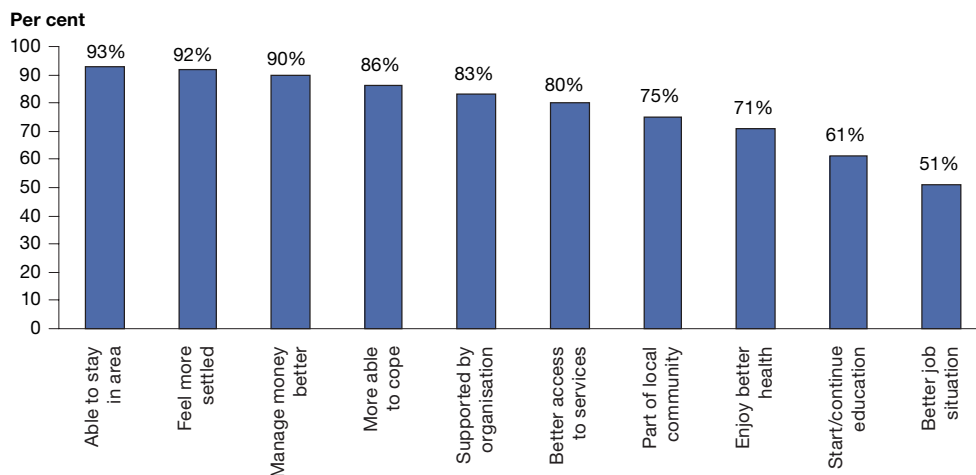
Almost three-quarters of tenants stated that their quality of life had improved since moving into community housing. Over half (54%) stated that it had improved a lot while 20% reported that it had improved a little. Thirteen per cent of tenants reported that living in community housing hadn't really made a difference to their quality of life, while 6% reported that some aspects had improved while others had worsened. Only 1% of tenants reported that their quality of life had worsened.

Tenants were also asked whether they felt community 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 5. For each of these, tenants were asked whether the benefit was something they had wanted to achieve or to have. If it was, they were asked whether they thought living in community housing had helped, hadn't helped, or hadn't helped yet but might in the future.

- The benefit of living in community housing that most tenants had achieved was being able to remain living in the area (93%).
- Ninety-two per cent of tenants said that they were able to feel more settled in general.
- Ninety per cent said that they were more able to manage their rent and money.
- Another important benefit identified was that tenants felt more able to cope (86%).
- Eighty per cent of tenants said that community housing helped them with better access to services.
- Seventy-one per cent of tenants surveyed said that community housing helped them enjoy better health, 61% that it assisted them in beginning or continuing with their education and just over half (51%) that community housing assisted them in improving their job situation.

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Figure 5: Benefits achieved through living in community housing



How satisfied are tenants?

Overall satisfaction with community housing

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

Table 1: Overall satisfaction

Sample size	2,935
Very satisfied	45%
Satisfied	39%
Subtotal: satisfied or very satisfied	85%
Dissatisfied	8%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, don't know/no opinion	7%

Note: 'Very satisfied' and 'Satisfied' results shown are rounded figures. Consequently, the sum of these results does not correspond to the figure reported for 'Subtotal: satisfied or very satisfied'.

Nationally 85% of community housing tenants stated they were satisfied overall with the service provided by their housing organisation. Forty-five per cent of tenants were very satisfied and 39% were satisfied.

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

- Consistent with most satisfaction surveys, overall satisfaction for 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.

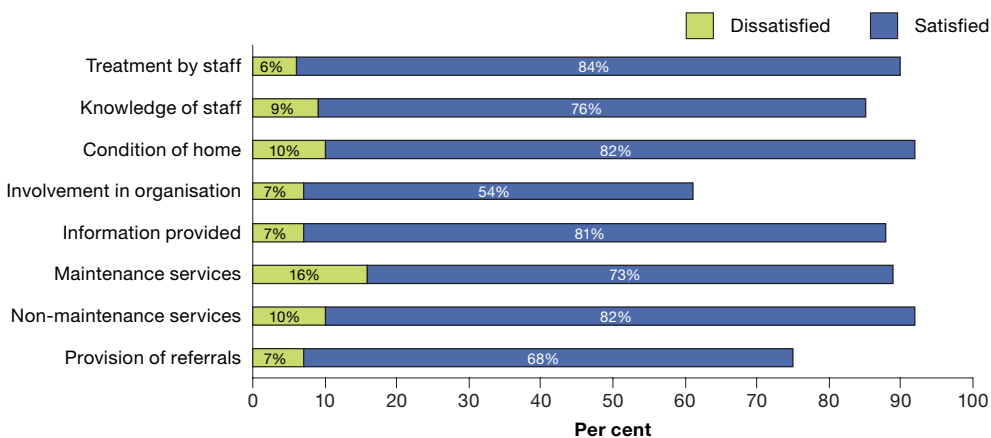
¹ The term 'housing organisation' is used generically to refer to the range of community housing provider models.

- Tenants living in semi-detached houses or flats/apartments were generally more satisfied with the condition of their home than those living in shared accommodation or separate houses.

Satisfaction with specific aspects of service

As well as satisfaction with overall service, the survey measured tenant satisfaction with eight main aspects of their home and the service being provided by the housing organisation (Figure 6).

Figure 6: 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 level of satisfaction was reported for treatment by staff (84%), with only 6% dissatisfied with this aspect of service.
- Eighty-two per cent of tenants were satisfied with the condition of the home and non-maintenance services. Only 10% of tenants were dissatisfied with both the condition of the home and non-maintenance services.
- The highest level of dissatisfaction is associated with maintenance services, with 16% of tenants dissatisfied. However, 73% of tenants are still satisfied with this aspect.

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

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

- The most influential aspect on overall satisfaction was non-maintenance services (e.g. support, advice, transfer availability, complaints or disputes).
- The condition of the home has the next greatest influence on overall satisfaction, followed by maintenance services.
- Involvement in the organisation and provision of support/referrals had the least influence on overall satisfaction.



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

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