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## Homelessness surges in capital cities

- Homelessness is becoming more concentrated in major cities, increasing from 48% to 63% of all homeless people between 2001 and 2016.
- The declining supply of affordable rental housing has had a marked impact on urban homelessness, particularly for severe crowding.
- The proportion of people living in severely crowded dwellings in capital cities has doubled in the 15 year period.
- Area-specific factors such as housing and labour market conditions and local demographics are major contributors to why homelessness is increasing in some areas more than others.
- Rough sleeping has transformed into an urban phenomena - nearly half of all rough sleepers in Australia are now found in capital cities.

Homelessness is becoming more concentrated in major cities, AHURI research has found; in 2016, 63 per cent, or nearly two-thirds of all homelessness people, lived in an Australian capital city, up from 48 per cent in 2001.

The research, **The changing geography of homelessness: a spatial analysis from 2001 to 2016**, reveals where homelessness is rising and falling across Australia, and was undertaken for AHURI by researchers from Swinburne University of Technology and RMIT University. It reveals that changes in homelessness rates across Australia are largely due to area-specific factors, which include housing and labour market conditions, local homelessness service capacity and demographic factors such as greater concentrations of males and unmarried persons in an area.

'We broke down what might be shaping the changing geography of homelessness into three components: the share caused by national factors such as recessions; the share due to the mix of different types of homelessness experiences (for example those sleeping rough, staying in supported accommodation, or living in severe crowding); and the share due to area-specific factors such as housing and labour markets,' said **Dr Sharon Parkinson** from Swinburne University of Technology.

In places where homelessness grew the fastest or the slowest, the characteristics of each area was the most important factor shaping the changing rates homelessness. This important finding suggests that the drivers of homelessness may differ between capital city, regional cities and other regional and remote areas.

In urban areas, the declining supply of affordable rental housing is associated with increasing rates of homelessness, particularly for severe crowding.

'Rising rental costs and a shortage in the supply of affordable rents to those with the lowest incomes coincide with areas where the growth of homelessness has been most marked over time,' said Dr Parkinson. 'A continued and expanded affordable housing supply-side response is critical to making inroads into preventing and resolving homelessness.'

While the research shows a high rate of homelessness in capital city central business districts and adjacent areas, moderate to high rates of homelessness are also dispersed across the metropolitan areas in middle to outer suburbs.

In Sydney, a corridor of high homelessness rates stretches from the inner city westward, through suburbs such as Marrickville, Canterbury, Strathfield, Auburn and Fairfield (more than 30 km from the CBD). In Melbourne, high homelessness rates are found in Dandenong (around 25 km south-east of the CBD), Maribyrnong and Brimbank to the west of the city centre, Moreland and Darebin to the north and Whitehorse (about 15 km to the east of the CBD).

The research found a number of factors occurring in capital cities, including:

- rates of homelessness are significantly associated with poorer areas with weaker labour markets
- rates of homelessness (particularly severe crowding) are strongly associated with areas that have higher than average concentrations of males
- severe crowding is more typical in areas with young children aged less than 14 years, but for other forms of homelessness, increases are most evident in areas where those aged between 25 and 40 years are more prevalent
- areas that are more culturally diverse—whether due to indigenous status or being from non-English-speaking backgrounds—have higher observations of homelessness and severe crowding
- homelessness rates, including severe crowding, are significantly lower in areas where the concentration of married people is highest.

While they are the most visible, people sleeping rough represent only a small fraction of those who are homeless (7% in 2016), however rough sleeping has also transformed into an urban phenomenon. In 2001, roughly one-third of rough sleepers (33%) were located in capital cities, but in 2016 nearly one-half of all rough sleepers (47%) lived in capital cities.

The biggest change, however, is the increase in people living in severely crowded dwellings. This group accounted for 35 per cent of all homeless people, with 27 per cent living in cities in 2001. By 2016 rates had soared to account for 44 per cent of all homeless people and with 60 per cent living in capital cities.

The report can be downloaded from the AHURI website at <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/313>

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## ATTACHMENTS

1. Share of national homelessness and national population by state/territory region: 2001 and 2016– TABLE

2. National shares (%) of homeless persons and population by area type: 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016– FIGURE

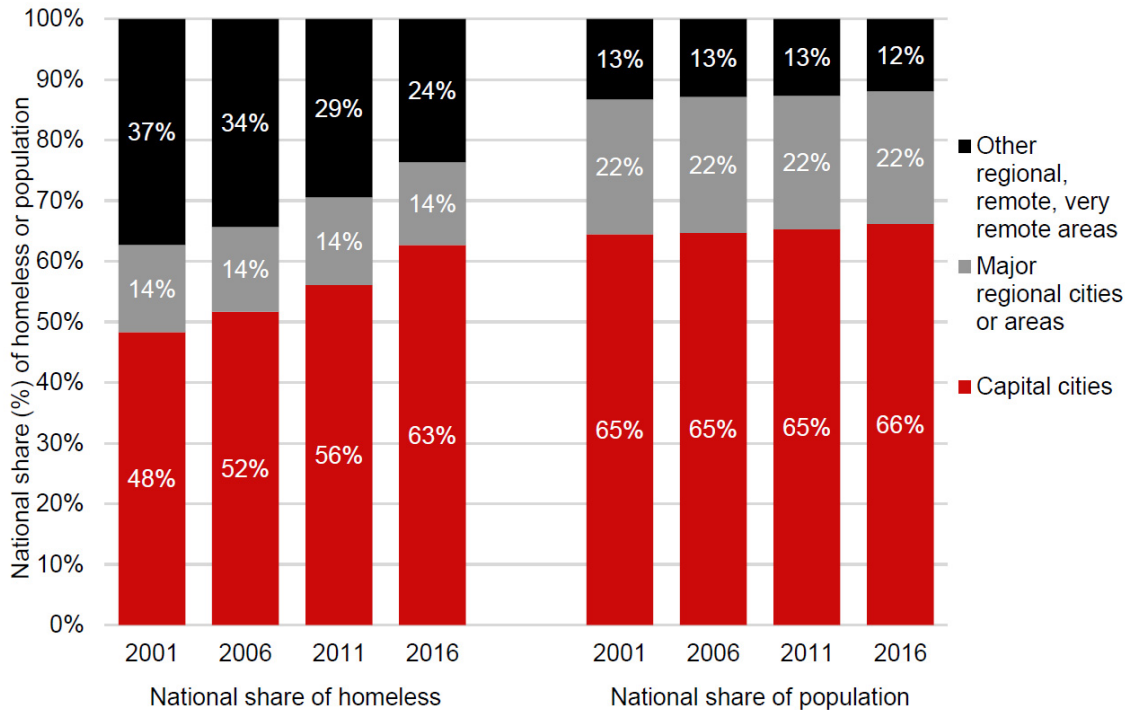
2. Share of severe crowding by area type, 2001–2016– FIGURE

### 1: Share of national homelessness and national population by state/territory region: 2001 and 2016

Region	2001		2016	
	Share of homeless	Share of Aust.	Share of homeless	Share of Aust.
Sydney	16.1%	21.0%	24.9%	20.6%
Rest of NSW	8.1%	12.6%	7.5%	11.3%
<b>NSW total</b>	24.2%	33.6%	32.4%	31.9%
Melbourne	14.5%	18.0%	17.6%	19.1%
Rest of VIC	4.5%	6.5%	3.7%	6.0%
<b>VIC total</b>	19.0%	24.6%	21.3%	25.1%
Brisbane	6.7%	8.9%	8.0%	9.6%
Rest of QLD	13.6%	10.2%	10.6%	10.7%
<b>QLD total</b>	20.3%	19.1%	18.7%	20.3%
Adelaide	3.4%	5.9%	4.0%	5.5%
Rest of SA	2.7%	1.9%	1.3%	1.6%
<b>SA total</b>	6.1%	7.8%	5.3%	7.1%
Perth	4.2%	7.4%	4.6%	8.2%
Rest of WA	6.1%	2.4%	3.2%	2.4%
<b>WA total</b>	10.3%	9.8%	7.7%	10.6%
Hobart	0.5%	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%
Rest of TAS	0.8%	1.4%	0.7%	1.2%
<b>TAS total</b>	1.3%	2.4%	1.4%	2.1%
Darwin	1.9%	0.6%	1.5%	0.6%
Rest of NT	15.9%	0.5%	10.3%	0.4%
<b>NT total</b>	17.8%	1.1%	11.8%	1.1%
<b>ACT</b>	1.0%	1.6%	1.4%	1.7%

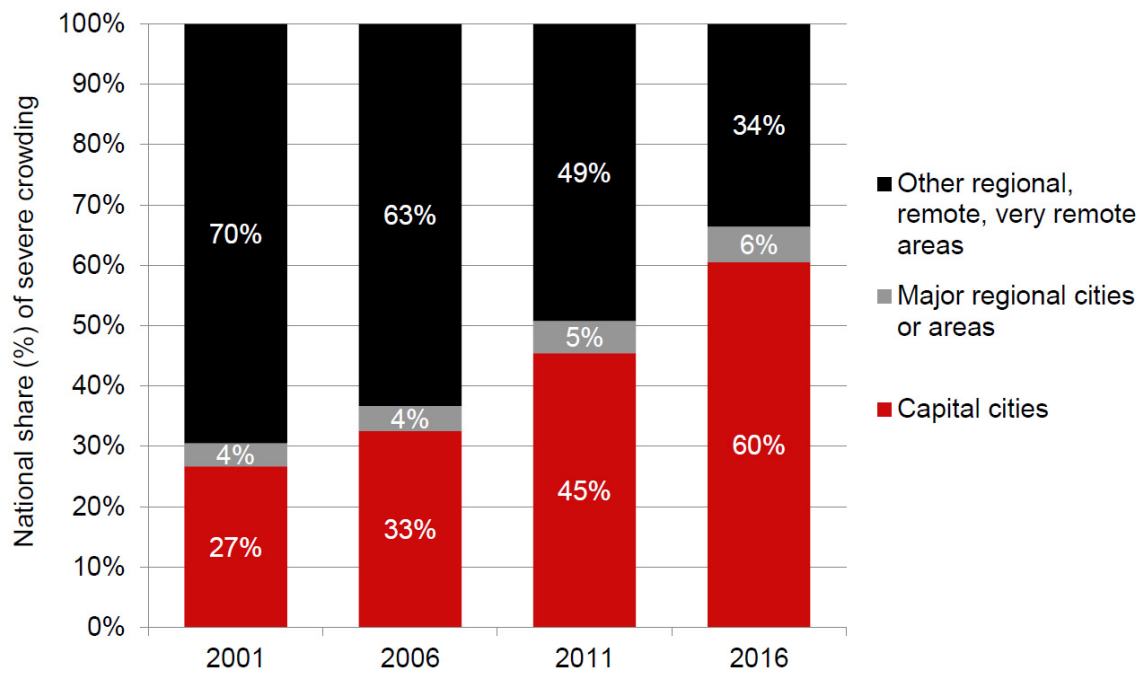
Source: Authors' panel dataset (ABS Census homelessness estimates and TSP).0

## 2: National shares (%) of homeless persons and population by area type: 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Source: Authors' panel dataset (ABS Census homelessness estimates).

## 3: Share of severe crowding by area type, 2001–2016



Source: Authors' panel dataset (ABS Census homelessness estimates).