

## **Cultural definition of homelessness:**

**4291 homeless households in Melbourne**

### **People as having mental health issues if:**

- **The individual had approached the agency seeking a referral to a mental health service;**
- **The individual was currently in, or had been in, a psychiatric facility;**
- **The case notes identified a mental health issue.**

**Lifetime prevalence of mental illness: 31%**

**15% had mental illness prior to becoming homeless**

**16% developed mental illness after homelessness**

**Table 1:** Age first homeless for persons whose mental health issue **preceded** homelessness

	N	%
Age 12 to 24	227	40
Age 25 or older	338	60
Total	565*	100

\*Information on age in 89 per cent of cases.

- **For those aged 24 or younger, the breakdown of family support usually occurred because the family could not cope**
- **Amongst those aged 25 or older, the breakdown of family support usually occurred following the death or incapacity of an elderly parent.**

**Table 2:** Age first homeless for persons whose mental health issue **followed** homelessness

	N	%
Age 12 to 24	530	78
Age 25 or older	152	22
Total	682*	100

\*Information on age in 97 per cent of cases.

- **The trauma of family breakdown impacted on the mental health of some teenagers. For other teenagers, substance abuse precipitated mental health issues.**
- **For many adults, homelessness itself caused anxiety and depression.**

# Common experiences

**Table 3:** Been in a boarding house by experience of mental illness and age first homeless

	Mental illness before homelessness		Mental illness after homelessness		All*
	Age 12-24 (N=228)	Age 25 + (N=336)	Age 12-24 (N=529)	Age 25 + (N=154 )	
	%	%	%	%	%
Boarding house	91	90	94	86	92

\* Information on 93 per cent of cases

# Common experiences

**Table 4:** Duration of homelessness by experience of mental illness and age first homeless

	Mental illness before homelessness		Mental illness after homelessness		All
	Age 12-24	Age 25 +	Age 12-24	Age 25 +	
	%	%	%	%	%
Long-term (12 months or more)	80	71	89	62	79
Medium-term (3-11 months)	8	13	7	18	10
Short-term (less than 3 months)	12	16	4	20	11
	100	100	100	100	100

\* Information on 93 per cent of cases

# Common experiences

**Table 5:** Episodes of homelessness by experiences of mental illness and age first homeless

	Mental illness before homelessness		Mental illness after homelessness		All* (N=1112)
	Age 12-24 (N=204)	Age 25 + (N=274)	Age 12-24 (N=505)	Age 25 + (N=129 )	
	%	%	%	%	%
Two or more episodes	80	73	90	65	81

\* Information on 83 per cent of cases

# **Early intervention – supporting families who have teenagers with mental health issues**

## **Breaking the cycle – ‘housing first’**

- 1) Allows people to engage with support worker at own pace**
- 2) Recognise that support can be time consuming**
- 3) Recognises need for long-term support**