

Homelessness, Survival Sex and Pregnancy

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Total homelessness = 116,427

- F = 49,017 (42%)
- M = 67,407 (58%)

Improvised dwellings/tents/sleeping out

- F = 2,762
- M = 5,443

Supported accommodation for the homeless

- F = 10,430
- M = 10,800

Women's Homelessness: 2016 Census

Other households

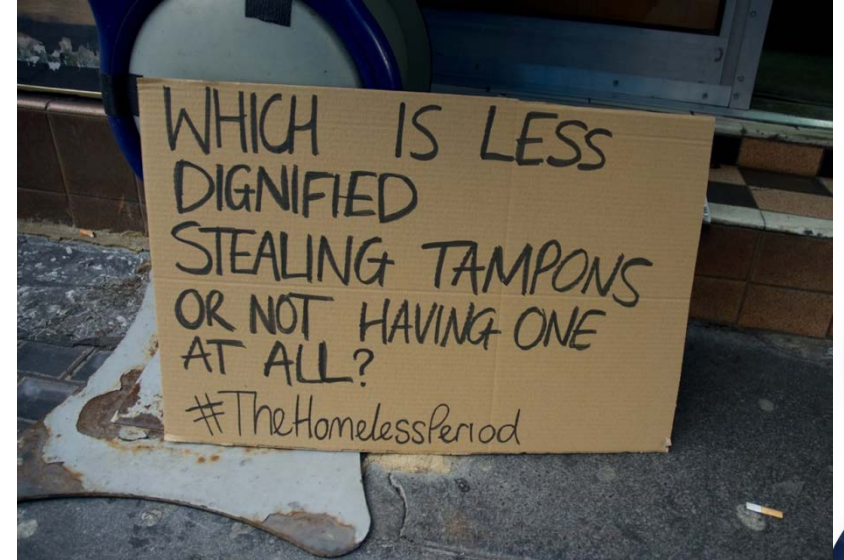
- F = 7,338
- M = 10,388

Boarding houses

- F = 4,653
- M = 12,834

Women's experiences of homelessness

- Family violence
- Income inequity
- Affordable housing
- Relationship breakdown
- Financial knowledge
- Pregnancy, parenting, family planning
- Access to space
- Lack of safety/homelessness-based violence
- Earning capacity while homeless



What is survival sex?

- Also referred to as: transactional sex, sex for favours, opportunistic prostitution, sex for shelter
- Exchange of sex for necessities such as food, accommodation, drugs, safety etc.
- Most research links survival sex with commercial sexual activity rather than as an aspect of intimate relationships
- Viewed as indicator of ‘risk behaviour’

ACTING ON EVIDENCE

Knowledge. Response. Prevention.

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Key findings:

- Exists within relationships
- Material support
- Physical protection
- Belonging/stability



Pregnancy and homelessness: Launch Housing

Key findings:

- No accurate data on number of women who are homeless and pregnant in Victoria
- Some homelessness services do not account for pregnancy in providing support until late term
- Specialist support services are available to Aboriginal women and young women but fewer available than required
- Women aged 25 years and over are the least likely to receive a specialised response
- Many pregnant homeless women have experienced family violence but may not receive a service due to overburdened service system
- Women may seek terminations due to homelessness
- Stigma for women in mainstream services

Key findings:

- Specialist health programs that provide wraparound services, continuity of care, and outreach
- Doulas, homeless nursing service
- Peer support programs with young women
- Homelessness workers located in hospitals

Support

- Locate specialist housing support workers in hospital settings to assist pregnant homeless women to access housing support
- Ensure homelessness and health services are aware of family violence
- Flexible Support Packages and the ways that they can provide support to pregnant homeless women experiencing family violence
- Promote homelessness, health and other services working together to provide long-term support to women during pregnancy and early parenting
- Enable services to provide relevant good practice elements of: continuity of care, outreach, wraparound provision of services and peer support
- Raise awareness of the needs of women who seek a termination rather than continue with a pregnancy
- Underpin service provision by trauma-informed care

Training and education

- Develop and implement a training package that assists housing and homelessness services staff to collect information about pregnancy status
- Building on current good practice, develop and implement specialised training for homelessness and housing service workers in relation to homelessness and pregnancy
- Promote understanding of the circumstances and needs of pregnant homeless women through education of generalist staff

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