



**CONSUMER EXPERIENCES OF  
EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN  
MELBOURNE'S NORTH AND WEST**  
**Annual Consumer Survey 2022**

[March 2023]

# Acknowledgement

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This Report has been compiled by the Consumer Participation Working Group of the Northern and Western Homelessness Local Area Service Networks in Melbourne.

The Networks would like to thank all those people, with a lived experience of homelessness, for so generously sharing their thoughts and experiences with us.

The Working Group would also like to acknowledge all the homelessness workers, who are so committed to learning from those people who have sought our assistance.



The Northern and Western Homelessness Networks also acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

# Use of the Report

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The Working Group asks that, anyone who uses all or parts of this Report acknowledges the Northern and Western Homelessness Networks and references the source of any components of the Report that they use.



## Warning

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Readers are advised that much of the content of this report is distressing, with explicit descriptions of traumatic experiences in emergency accommodation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### i. Crisis Accommodation

Crisis accommodation refers to a temporary living arrangement that provides shelter and support to people who are experiencing a crisis, such as homelessness, domestic violence, or other forms of personal crisis. Crisis accommodation can take many forms, including emergency shelters, short-term housing, or transitional housing. The primary goal of crisis accommodation is to provide a safe and supportive environment for individuals or families who are in urgent need of a place to stay. This may include access to food, clothing, and other basic needs, as well as support and counseling services to help residents address the underlying issues that led to their crisis.

Crisis accommodation may be provided by government agencies, non-profit organizations, or private providers. It may be available for a few days or weeks, or for a longer period of time, depending on the needs of the individuals or families involved. There are several chronic issues with crisis accommodation in Melbourne:

- **Insufficient supply:** There is a shortage of crisis accommodation in Melbourne, particularly for certain groups such as single men and those with complex needs. As a result, many people are forced to sleep rough or stay in unsafe or overcrowded conditions.
- **Poor quality:** Some crisis accommodation in Melbourne can be of poor quality, with issues such as inadequate heating or cooling, pest infestations, and lack of basic amenities.
- **Lack of support services:** Many people in crisis accommodation have complex needs, such as mental health issues or substance abuse problems. However, there is often a lack of support services available to help these individuals address their underlying issues and transition to more stable housing.
- **Inappropriate locations:** Some crisis accommodation may be located in areas that are isolated or far from essential services, making it difficult for residents to access support and resources.
- **Short-term nature:** Crisis accommodation is often only intended as a short-term solution, which means that individuals may have to move frequently and do not have the stability and security that comes with long-term housing.

These issues have been exacerbated by Melbourne's ongoing housing affordability crisis, which has made it increasingly difficult for many people to find affordable and stable housing. As a result, there have been recurrent calls for increased investment in crisis accommodation and support services, as well as more affordable housing options to help people transition out of crisis accommodation and into long-term housing.

### ii. Background

- **Why the survey is being conducted**  
Every year the Northern and Western Homelessness Networks survey people they have assisted throughout the year to garner information about how people are experiencing homelessness and how the service system can improve its responses.

A common theme in feedback received is the appalling nature of crisis accommodation that people are referred to. There are only 423 government funded crisis beds in Victoria. In one year services in Melbourne's north and west had to access 10,000 crisis beds. When the government funded beds are not available, services purchase accommodation from the private market: hotels, motels and rooming houses.

Services have limited funding available to purchase private crisis accommodation. In order to assist as many people as possible, services have to access lower cost accommodation. Whilst we seek to source serviced apartments and better quality accommodation, where we can, we find that many providers will not take referrals from homelessness services – or demand unaffordable bonds.

In 2017 the Annual Consumer Survey focussed specifically on consumers' experiences of all forms of crisis accommodation. The results provided us with guidance on the time of accommodation the Sector should be advocating for and led us to launch [\*Crisis in Crisis: The Appalling State of Emergency Accommodation in Melbourne's north and west.\*](#)

Following the release of the Report the Networks agreed to boycott some of the worst of the private rooming houses.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing provided funding for two project workers to further explore the issues raised in Crisis in Crisis. These project workers prepared a report: [\*Crisis in Crisis II: The Way Forward.\*](#) The Report contains 24 recommendations for an improved crisis accommodation system. Whilst many of the recommendations sit with Government, the Sector formed the Crisis in Crisis Working Group, to assist us to progress the proposals outlined in the Report .

The Sector remains divided on a critical question: is any bed better than no bed? We determined that only consumers could answer this question. The 2022 Consumer Survey focussed specifically on consumer experiences of purchased private crisis accommodation, with a view to informing the question of whether the Sector should continue to refer to accommodation that is unsuitable and often unsafe for consumers or whether these options are better than the alternatives (sleeping on the street or in other unsafe situations).

- ***Consumer Participation working group***

Each year the Networks' Consumer Participation Working Group draft and collate the Annual Consumer Survey, making recommendations to the Networks about improvements that can be made, based on the feedback received.

The Consumer Participation Working Group has worked with the Crisis in Crisis Working Group to analyse and respond to the 2022 Annual Consumer Survey, because the findings inform the briefs of both Working Groups.

### **iii. Findings**

When considering the demographic profile of the respondents to this survey, it was found that respondents were more likely to identify as male, Aboriginal and a person with disability when compared to the Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) consumer base. This might suggest that the cohort of crisis accommodation consumers is demographically divergent to the broader SHS consumer base; it might also suggest that these cohorts are more likely to engage in survey data collection. The demographic profile of the respondent cohort is as follows:

- 41.7% of respondents (25/60) identified their gender as 'female', compared to 61% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 11.9% of respondents (7/59) identified as Aboriginal, compared to 9% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 12% of respondents (8/66) identified as a person with disability, compared to 2.8% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 55% of respondents (36/66) identified as having a mental health issue, compared to 31.6% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 28.8% of respondents (17/59) were singles or couples with children, compared to 27.3% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.

- 61% of respondents (36/59) were singles living alone, compared to 68.9% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.

Of the total number of respondents (n=66), the most frequently experienced crisis accommodation option was hotel or motel accommodation, with 80% of respondents stating that they had been referred to or had found crisis accommodation in this setting. Rooming houses were the second most frequent, followed by serviced apartments, backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation and caravan parks.

Among the accommodation types there was a high degree of variability in the likelihood that a consumer was allocated or had personally purchased accommodation in the geographical location that they had connections (social, familial etc.) with. People in rooming/boarding houses were most likely to be dwelling there outside of their preferred location, with people in serviced apartments and caravan parks being the only groups likely to be located in their preferred location.

All accommodation types were more likely to be stressful than not. The most stressful accommodation setting was rooming/boarding houses. Whether or not homelessness support services were provided during accommodation experiences, most consumers felt unsupported. In backpackers/hostel/Airbnb and caravan park accommodation, feelings of being unsupported were most pronounced.

Backpacker/hostel/Airbnb accommodation was regarded by consumers as the dirtiest, most unsafe, overcrowded and insecure accommodation typology. There was a strong correlation between how overcrowded an accommodation setting is, and perceived levels of safety and security. Generally, the cheapest accommodation settings (and those more likely to be personally sourced) were also the least clean and most overcrowded.

Each question produced significantly different responses, and given these reasons stated above, the most appropriate primary source of data used in analysing whether any accommodation is better than no accommodation, is Question 1.

Approximately 83% of respondents stated that homelessness services should not book potentially unsafe accommodation, even if it is the only accommodation available. When considering other indicators (such as accommodation type, gender, age, disability, level of support and accompanied by children), it was found that:

- accommodation typology had relatively low impact on determining a consumer's willingness to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings
- accommodation experiences that were overcrowded, with more shared amenities, low levels of security and that are more likely to be personally sourced, reduced consumers' willingness to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings
- women were less likely to willingly be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings
- men were more likely to willingly be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings
- women who experienced no case management support, who were over 40 years old, under 28, or who identified as lgbtq were less willing be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings
- all straight single cis-men of Australian background were willing to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings
- people with children were less willing to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings, a majority of whom were people of non-Anglo Australian background.
- people aged 24 and under were far more willing to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings than any other age cohort.
- receiving or not receiving support, as well as identifying as a person with disability had minor or negligible impact on willingness to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings.

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## METHODOLOGY

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### **i. Survey design and data collection**

This survey was designed by the Consumer Participation Working Group, a working group of the Northern and Western Homelessness Networks that includes consumer representatives. Consumers and practitioners contributed to reviewing, initially by a consumers advisory group and practitioners and finally by Anglicare Vic Research Ethics Committee (AVEC). The survey received ethical clearance before distribution.

Practitioners from homelessness funded programs were asked to provide information to consumers about the survey and to ask whether consumers would be prepared to participate anonymously in the survey. Those consumers wishing to participate had the option of completing a paper or online survey. The default format was completion of an online survey, as this provides a higher degree of confidentiality for the consumer. Where a consumer did not have access to a phone/computer or lacked the technical literacy required to complete the survey, the consumer was offered a paper version. Options provided to consumers aligned with each agency's COVID SafePlan, developed in accordance with the version of the [DHHS Homelessness Guidelines](#) that is current at the time of the survey.

Homelessness services were deemed to be Essential Services and homelessness workers were 'permitted workers'. Consequently, practitioners are adept at provision of services according to the current Guidelines, which provide current health advice on COVID safe methods of interaction with consumers. Consumers were only asked to complete the survey within the context of an existing support relationship with a worker.

Homelessness funded organisations provided an interpreter, if required, to assist consumers to participate in the survey. Practitioners, and their supervisors, were provided with an information sheet about the survey and consumers were provided with a plain language information and consent statement. Practitioners reviewed the information sheet and obtained consent before a consumer participated in the survey.

Survey responses were collated by the Consumer Participation Working Group and analysed in collaboration with RMIT University academics.

### **ii. Analysis**

A total of 72 responses were collected. After an initial clean of the data to screen incomplete responses, it was determined that there were 66 valid responses. Analysis follows a descriptive methodology. Descriptive qualitative survey analysis aims to describe and understand the characteristics of a particular group, phenomenon or event, and is concerned with understanding the subjective experiences of individuals. In part, qualitative responses have been quantified to understand the frequency of experiences that consumers of crisis accommodation have.

Descriptive analysis of qualitative survey data involves systematically analyzing responses to open-ended questions in order to identify common themes or patterns. The results of the analysis are typically presented in the form of themes or categories that emerge from the data. In this survey report, the data is thematically categorised according to demographic profiles and accommodation experiences, and then cross-tabulated to glean deeper understandings of consumer perspectives. Cross-tabulation analysis is used to examine the relationship between two or more categorical variables, and can be useful for identifying patterns or relationships between different variables, and for understanding how different groups are similar or different from each other.

Percentages noted in the tables and graphs of this report represent a proportion of the total amount of people who responded to that particular question. Each respondent has the opportunity to identify multiple experiences of crisis accommodation across multiple accommodation contexts. Proportions are calculated against total amount of cohort individuals, not total amount of experiences. All percentages are expressed as whole numbers, rounded to the nearest whole.

Singular demographic data points (such as gender or aboriginality) that are discussed in relation to others data points (such as mental health or sexuality) are done so in order to highlight the intersectionality of experiences within the homelessness service sector. Any insights derived from the combination of indicators should not be used to pathologise or overdetermine any cohort characteristics. Rather, the prevalence of some indicators (such as mental health) within some demographic cohorts (such as Aboriginal people), reflects a compounding effect of disadvantage that is used in the initial assessment of crisis accommodation need and eligibility.



## CONSUMER PROFILES

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This section of the survey analysis addresses two objectives:

- to identify the demographic profile of the respondents and represents them as cohorts, and
- to identify what crisis accommodation settings these cohorts experience

A total of 72 people responded to the survey, 28 fewer than 2020 and 100 fewer than in 2019, with a completion rate of 88%; there were 66 valid respondents to the survey after initial cleaning. Overall, 12 respondents did not submit a response to any of the demographic questions in the survey, whilst some respondents submitted only partial responses to the demographic segment of the survey. A demographic snapshot, presented below, has been calculated against the number of available responses to each survey question, and is compared to 2020-21 data made available by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare<sup>1</sup>:

- 41.7% of respondents (25/60) identified their gender as 'female', compared to 61% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 11.9% of respondents (7/59) identified as Aboriginal, compared to 9% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 12% of respondents (8/66) identified as a person with disability, compared to 2.8% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 55% of respondents (36/66) identified as having a mental health issue, compared to 31.6% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 28.8% of respondents (17/59) were singles or couples with children, compared to 27.3% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.
- 61% of respondents (36/59) were singles living alone, compared to 68.9% of the Victorian SHS consumer base.

Respondents to this survey were more likely to identify as male, Aboriginal and a person with disability when compared to the SHS consumer base. This might suggest that the cohort of crisis accommodation consumers is demographically divergent to the broader SHS consumer base; it might also suggest that these cohorts are more likely to engage in survey data collection.

### **i. Minor cohorts**

Two significant minority cohorts were evident in the data: Aboriginal people and LGBTQ people.

Fifty-nine (59) people answered the demographic question pertaining to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Seven people identified as Aboriginal, accounting for ~12% of responses; all were aged between 37 and 50. A majority (86%, n=6) of Aboriginal respondents were female and 14% (n=1) identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual or questioning. About 43% of all Aboriginal people were accompanied by children, and all respondents (n=7) identified as having a mental health issue or challenge.

As represented in Table 2 below, 100% of Aboriginal respondents experienced hotel/motel accommodation, this is the only cohort in the entire survey to have universally experienced this accommodation setting. Rooming house accommodation was also experienced at a higher rate (57%) to that of the total respondent cohort (48%).

Table 1 — accommodation experiences of Aboriginal people

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	7	100%	0	0%	7	100%
Serviced apartment	1	14%	0	0%	1	14%
Rooming house/boarding house	4	57%	0	0%	4	57%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	0	0%	1	14%	1	14%
Caravan park	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Fifty-seven (57) people answered the demographic question pertaining to sexuality and gender diversity (LGBTQ). Eight (8) people identified as identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, trans, asexual or questioning, accounting for ~14% of responses; all were aged between 30 and 65. About 25% of all LGBTQ people were accompanied by children, and 80% respondents (n=6) identified as having a mental health issue or challenges.

Table 2 — accommodation experiences of LGBTQ people

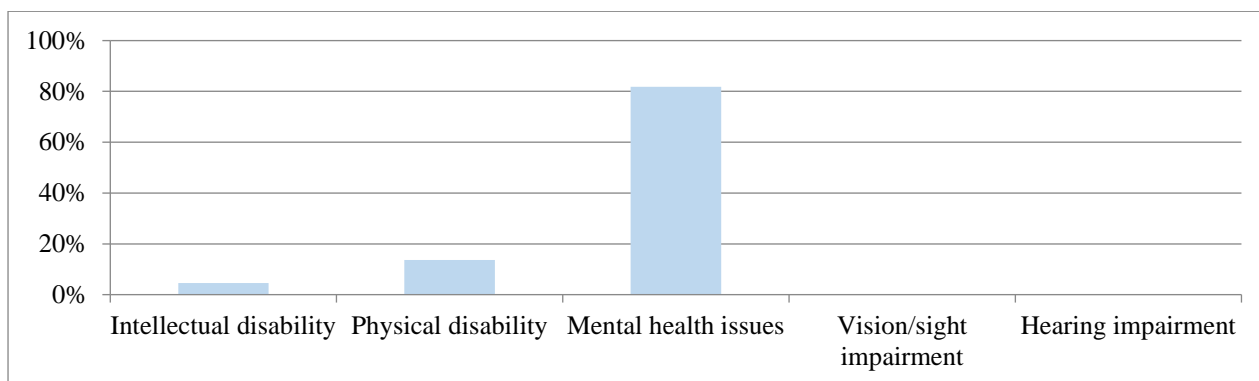
<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	5	62%	1	12%	6	75%
Serviced apartment	1	12%	0	0%	1	12%
Rooming house/boarding house	3	37%	0	0%	3	37%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	0	0%	1	12%	1	12%
Caravan park	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

## ii. People with disability

Two-thirds of all respondents (n=44) identified as having a physical disability, intellectual disability or mental health issues<sup>12</sup>. Mental health was the most common form of disability (see Graph 1). People with disability had a wide age distribution between 19 and 70, with 45% identifying as female, 52% as male, and one person identifying as transgender. About 16% of people with disability also identified as Aboriginal; all Aboriginal people identified as a person with disability.

<sup>1</sup> Although the characterisation of mental health issues as disability is a contested and fluid determination, for the purpose of this report and following current Victorian legislation (Equal Opportunity Act 2010), mental health issues are treated as a form of disability.

<sup>2</sup> There was an error in the design of this survey – participants completing the survey online could only select one option; whereas those completing paper versions of the survey could select multiple options. Therefore, the responses to these questions are under representative.



Graph 1 — people with disability, type distribution

The distribution of accommodation experiences among people with disability were similar to the total distribution of experiences among all respondents. There are no significant deviations, although it is noted that people with disability strongly favoured referrals by a homelessness service, with lower rates of self-initiated accommodation experiences (see Table 3).

Table 3 — accommodation experiences of people with disability

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	32	73%	2	5%	34	77%
Serviced apartment	7	16%	1	2%	8	18%
Rooming house/boarding house	19	43%	4	9%	23	52%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	4	9%	3	7%	7	16%
Caravan park	4	9%	1	2%	5	11%

### iii. People with children

About 31% of respondents (n=18) were people with children, 94% (n=17) of whom were single parent households, and 78% (n=14) of whom identified as women. People with children were aged between 24 and 53, and 72% (n=13) were also a person with disability.

People with children were far more likely to experience hotel/motel accommodation, and less likely to experience rooming house accommodation (see Table 4). However, one (1) couple with children and three (3) single women with children experienced rooming house accommodation, all single women were referred to a rooming house by a homelessness service.

Table 4 — accommodation experiences of people with children

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	15	83%	2	11%	17	94%
Serviced apartment	3	17%	0	0%	3	17%
Rooming house/boarding house	4	22%	1	6%	5	28%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	0	0%	1	6%	1	6%
Caravan park	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

#### iv. Female identified

A total of 25 respondents identified as women, the average age of whom was 42 years old, and ranged from 23 to 63. Nine (9) respondents indicated that their household did not include children (2 couples without children, 7 singles without children), with 56% (n=14) respondents indicating that they were a single person with child/children, and 1 couple with children. The majority of respondents were born in Australia (n=17, ~68%), and 7 born overseas in a non-European country. A total of 6 respondents identified as an Aboriginal person, 24% of the total cohort. Over 16% of respondents identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual or questioning, and 80% identified as having a mental health issue or physical disability.

Among women only three accommodation options were experienced: hotel/motel; serviced apartment; and rooming house/boarding house. A small fraction of all accommodation experiences were as a result of respondents finding their own accommodation (3 experiences among 34), with a strong reliance of referrals by the homelessness service sector. In total, hotel or motel accommodation was the most common crisis accommodation setting experienced by women, more than twice the frequency of serviced apartment settings, and seven times as frequent as serviced apartments (see Table 5).

Table 5 — accommodation experiences of people identifying as female

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	19	76%	2	8%	21	84%
Serviced apartment	3	12%	0	0%	3	12%
Rooming house/boarding house	9	36%	1	4%	10	40%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Caravan park	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

#### v. Male identified

In total, 33 respondents (50%) identified as male with an average age of 43 years old, ranging from 18 to 70. Twenty-seven (27) respondents (~82%) indicated that they were single households that did not include children, 3 (~9%) were singles with children, and 3 (~9%) selected 'other'. The majority of respondents were born in Australia (n=27, ~82%), and 6 born overseas in a non-European country. One (1) respondent identified as an Aboriginal person, 3% of the total cohort. Over 9% of respondents identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual or questioning, and 70% identified as having a mental health issue or physical disability.

Only 31 respondents indicated the type of accommodation that they have experienced. Among men all accommodation options were experienced. A small yet above average fraction of all accommodation experiences were as a result of respondents finding their own accommodation (12 experiences among 66), with a strong reliance of referrals by the homelessness service sector. In total, hotel or motel accommodation was the most common crisis accommodation setting experienced by men, matching the average of the respondent cohort (see Table 6). All experiences of other accommodation setting were higher among males than any other groups, see Respondent Average column.

Table 6 — accommodation experiences of people identifying as male

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>Respondent Average</i>
	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Hotel/motel	25	80%	0	0%	25	80%	80%
Serviced apartment	6	19%	2	6%	8	26%	18%
Rooming house/boarding house	14	45%	4	13%	18	58%	48%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	5	16%	4	13%	9	29%	18%
Caravan park	4	13%	2	6%	6	19%	9%

## vi. Age

Of the 59 people who identified their age, the largest age cohort people aged between 25 and 54 years old (n=40, ~68%), follow by people over the age of 55 (n= 12, ~20%) and then young people aged 24 and under (n=7, ~12%). The total number of children cannot be accurately identified, however 18 respondents identified children (aged under 18) as part of their household composition.

People aged between 25 and 54 had an average distribution of experiences across accommodation settings (see Table 7).

Table 7 — accommodation experiences, ages 25-54

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	33	82%	2	5%	35	87%
Serviced apartment	5	12%	1	2%	6	15%
Rooming house/boarding house	13	32%	3	7%	16	40%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	3	7%	3	7%	6	15%
Caravan park	3	7%	0	0%	3	7%

People aged over 55 had much fewer experiences of hotel/motel accommodation, with a significant reliance of rooming house accommodation and caravan parks (see Table 8).

Table 8 — accommodation experiences, aged 55+

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	5	42%	0	0%	5	42%
Serviced apartment	1	8%	1	8%	2	17%
Rooming house/boarding house	8	67%	2	17%	10	82%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	2	17%	0	%	2	17%
Caravan park	1	8%	2	17%	3	25%

People aged 24 and under had much slightly above average frequency of experiences in hotel/motel accommodation, with a higher frequency of serviced apartments but much lower frequency of rooming house accommodation (see Table 9). There were zero experiences of backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation and caravan parks.

Table 9 — accommodation experiences, aged ≤24

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Referred by a homelessness service</i>		<i>Found the accommodation myself</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hotel/motel	6	86%	0	0%	6	86%
Serviced apartment	2	29%	0	0%	2	29%
Rooming house/boarding house	1	14%	0	0%	1	14%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Caravan park	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

## ACCOMMODATION PROFILES

This section of the survey analysis addresses two objectives:

- to identify the qualitative experiences of consumer cohorts in specific accommodation settings
- to identify the reasons why people leave crisis accommodation settings.

Of the total number of respondents (n=66), the most frequently experienced crisis accommodation option was hotel or motel accommodation, with 80% of respondents stating that they had been referred to or had found crisis accommodation in this setting. Rooming houses were the second most frequent, followed by serviced apartments, backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation and caravan parks (see Table 10).

*Table 10 — accommodation experiences of total respondents*

<i>Accommodation setting</i>	<i>Total</i>
Hotel/motel	80%
Rooming house/boarding house	48%
Serviced apartment	18%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	18%
Caravan park	9%

Among the accommodation types there was a high degree of variability in the likelihood that a consumer was allocated or had personally purchased accommodation in the geographical location that they had connections (social, familial etc.) with. People in rooming/boarding houses were most likely to be dwelling there outside of their preferred location, with people in serviced apartments and caravan parks being the only groups likely to be located in their preferred location (see Table 11).

*Table 11 — dwelling in non-preferred geographical area*

<i>Accommodation setting</i>	<i>Total</i>
Rooming house/boarding house	75%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	58%
Hotel/motel	55%
Serviced apartment	32%
Caravan park	17%

All accommodation types were more likely to be stressful than not. The most stressful accommodation setting was rooming/boarding houses (see Table 12).

*Table 12 — stressful accommodation experiences*

<i>Accommodation setting</i>	<i>Total</i>
Rooming house/boarding house	71%
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	67%
Serviced apartment	67%
Hotel/motel	58%
Caravan park	57%

Whether or not homelessness support services were provided during accommodation experiences, most consumers felt unsupported. In backpackers/hostel/Airbnb and caravan park accommodation, feelings of being unsupported were most pronounced (see Table 13).

Table 13 — feeling unsupported

Accommodation setting	Total
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	90%
Caravan park	83%
Rooming house/boarding house	68%
Serviced apartment	58%
Hotel/motel	45%

Backpacker/hostel/Airbnb accommodation was regarded by consumers as the dirtiest, most unsafe, overcrowded and insecure accommodation typology (see Table 14). There was a strong correlation between how overcrowded an accommodation setting is, and perceived levels of safety and security. Generally, the cheapest accommodation settings (and those more likely to be personally sourced) were also the least clean and most overcrowded.

Table 14 — respondent descriptions of accommodation

Accommodation setting	Dirty	Unsafe	Overcrowded	Insecure
Backpackers/hostel/airbnb	73%	67%	73%	90%
Rooming house/boarding house	52%	55%	42%	45%
Caravan park	50%	50%	33%	50%
Serviced apartment	58%	33%	42%	42%
Hotel/motel	40%	34%	28%	28%

### i. Hotel/motel

In total, 80% (n=53) of respondents indicated that they had experienced hotel/motel accommodation. Of these, 49 were referred by a homelessness service and four (4) were personally sourced by consumer.

When asked if consumers were given enough information about the accommodation when it was booked, and did the standard of the accommodation meet their expectations, 45 people responded. Of those referred, 40% (n=18) indicated that they were not given enough information, and that the accommodation did not meet their expectations. The remaining 60% (n=27) indicated that they were given enough information, and/or that the accommodation did meet their expectations.

When asked to provide more information, respondents that answered ‘no’ describe that ‘the accommodation was dangerous’, that some were ‘just given an address and no further information’, having ‘no idea if I could stay day to day and wouldn’t be told until after checkout time’. Some hotel/motel experiences were subjectively better than others, with some respondents saying that ‘Coburg Inn was horrible and Park Motel was excellent’. Despite the inadequacy of some accommodation options being well known, some consumers were referred there against their wishes: “I told them I had been to Coburg Motor Inn before and was attacked there. I also got bed bugs. But they still sent me back there.”

Qualitative reasons given in relation to the inadequacy of hotel/motel accommodation are represented in the text box below (Box 1).

A majority of consumers (55%, n=29) were allocated hotel/motel accommodation outside the geographical location that they had connections with, with 38% (n=20) allocated hotel/motel accommodation in the area that they had connections with. About one-third (32%, n=17) of hotel/motel experiences were with children. When asked ‘If the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it?’, 77% (n=41) responded ‘no’, 15% (n=8) responded ‘yes’ and 8% (n=4) did not respond.

- 58% (n=31) said that their stay was **stressful**
- 45% (n=24) felt that they were **unsupported** in their accommodation



- 40% (n=21) said that their accommodation was **dirty**
- 34% (n=18) felt **unsafe** in their accommodation
- 28% (n=15) said that their accommodation was **overcrowded**
- 28% (n=15) felt **insecure** in their accommodation

When asked to describe the condition of hotel/motel accommodation settings, respondents were given the following indicators to choose from: Dirty, Over crowded, Stressful, Not safe, Insecure, Clean, Not crowded, Supportive, Safe and Secure (see Graph 2).

- For 5 ½ half weeks I stayed in a 1-bed place with children, with only a microwave for my family.
- I participated in the search for accommodation so I was given all the information. The accommodation did not meet my expectations because it was a constant struggle to receive towels/toilet paper, it was unclean, the bathroom was not suitable for my mobility requirements and the providers were not pleasant.
- The Coburg Motor Inn was full of drugs and criminal behaviour
- Was told the property was clean and safe. When I got there and it was dirty, unhygienic and unsafe to live in, with no locks on the doors and no secure storage.
- No-one could be prepared for what I experienced. There was so much violence and really unclean/smelly/messy/filthy/bed bugs. So much homophobia in crisis accommodation environments. I had to go back into the closet. It was like being in the school yard in the 70s. At the homelessness service, there were rainbow flags everywhere. I assumed care would be taken to place me in a safe place but no-one asked about my sexuality. This wasn't taken into consideration at all.

*Box 1 — consumer responses to hotel/motel accommodation that did not meet their expectation*

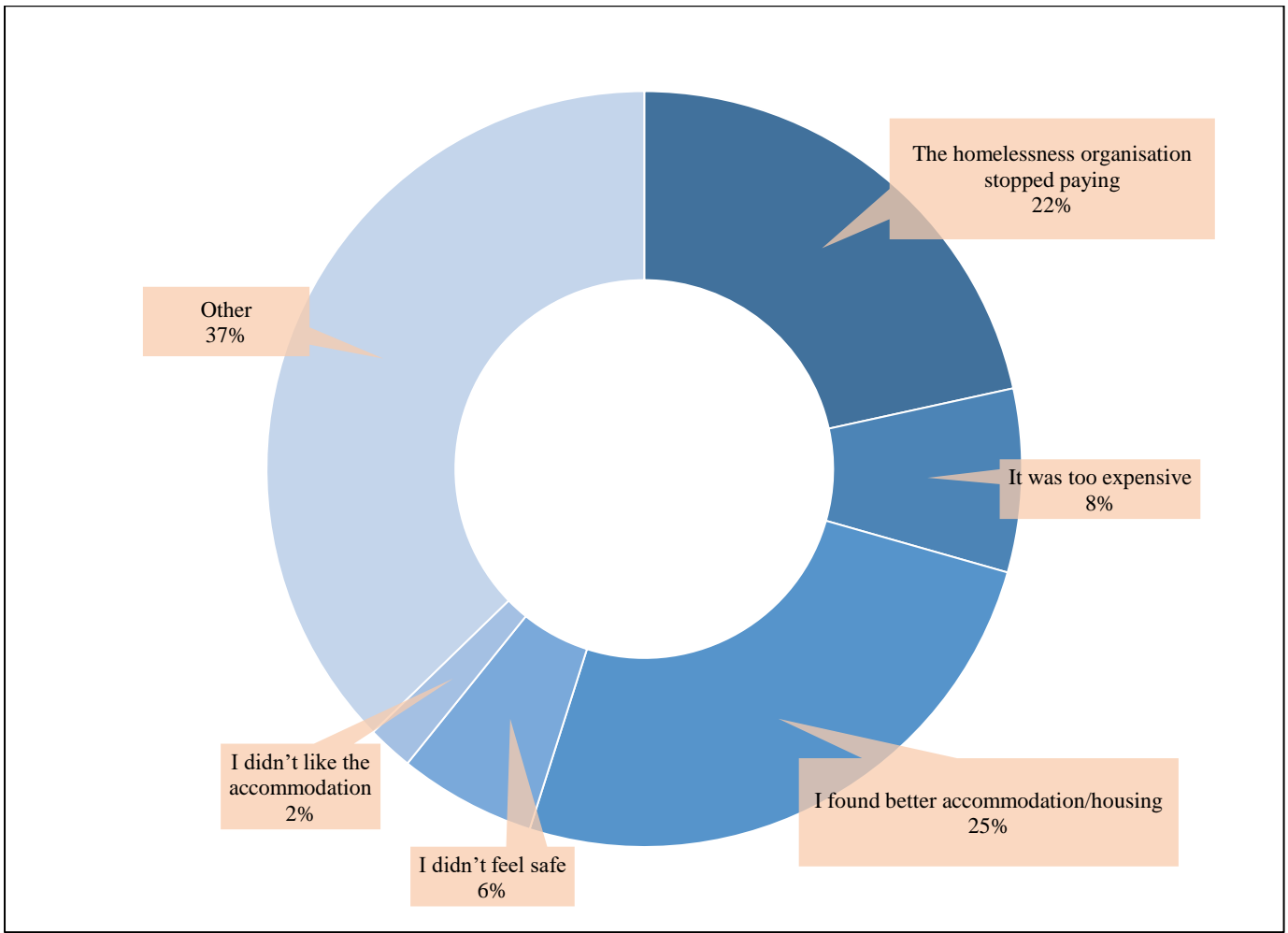


Graph 2 — consumers descriptions of hotel/motel crisis accommodation

Although positive responses figured more frequently than negative responses, when asked to elaborate upon their experiences, 17 people provided responses that reflected a negative experience compared to 7 positive experiences. A sample of the qualitative responses that highlighted negative experiences is represented in Box 2 below.

- Each hotel room has been provided with sub par living standards and needs to focus on cleanliness. I'm quite amazed that these hotels are 3 star.
- Nothing good about it. It was dangerous. People broke into my room. Residents stabbed each other in the neighbouring room. I could hear every word, every beg for help. The was the scariest night of my life.
- Being placed with other people who have complex needs makes things unsafe/when you are trying to change your life for the better.
- The uncertainty of it all.
- Too much drug activity
- Became overcrowded when my family joined me. It was somewhat safe. Sometimes other people staying at hotel were having dramas with drug and alcohol issues became quite loud that you were able to hear it. The police were called several times during my stay there.

Box 2 — qualitative descriptive responses to hotel/motel crisis accommodation

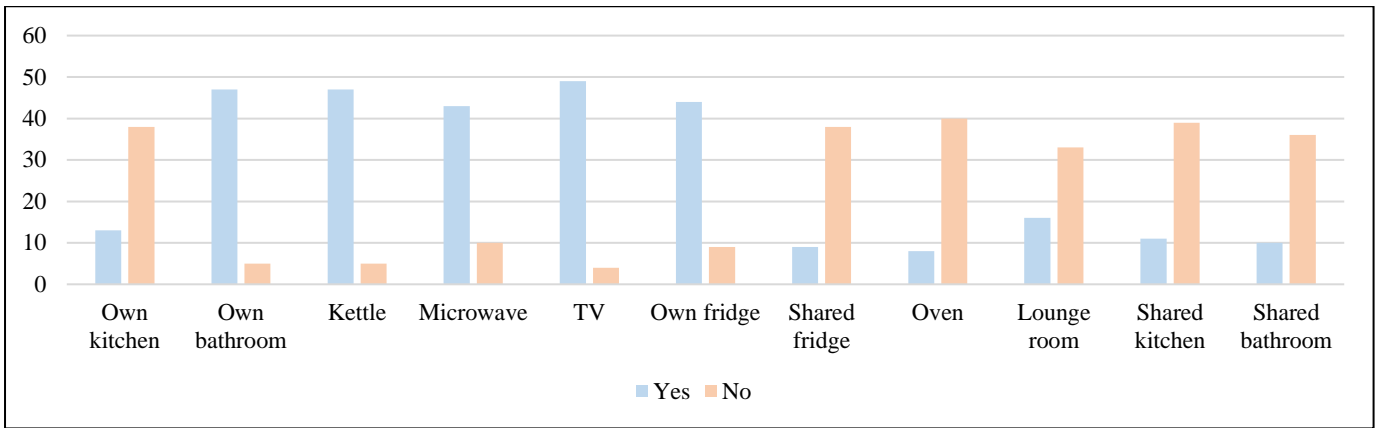


Graph 3 — response for exiting hotel/motel crisis accommodation

The descriptions reflect experiences of hotel/motel accommodation that are also echoed in consumer responses to reasons why they left their accommodation (Graph 3), with about 6% (n=3) stating that they left because they felt unsafe. About 32% of consumers (n=17) left their accommodation because they found better emergency accommodation, simply an upgrade in levels of adequacy. Just under 19% (n=10) of consumers left accommodation after their homelessness service provider ceased funding for their stay, and about 8% (n=4) left because it was too expensive.

Eight (15%) consumers moved into more secure and longer-term accommodation within the homelessness and social housing system: 9% (n=5) were allocated transitional housing, 2% (n=1) accessed crisis supported accommodation, 2% (n=1) accessed refuge accommodation and 2% (n=1) was allocated a H4F (Homes for Families) tenancy. Three (6%) access private accommodation options such as a residential tenancy, short-stay accommodation, and returning to live with family. One person exited crisis accommodation and was incarcerated in the corrections/justice system.

The condition of hotel/motel accommodation settings varied widely and many respondents noted that liveability was highly dependent upon the provider, reflecting a broader lack of standardisation across the crisis accommodation infrastructure. The provision of amenities affected comfortability of stays, as well as the safety and ease of managing one's affairs. Consumers were asked to note the primary amenities in their hotel/motel accommodation, these included kitchen, bathroom, kettle, microwave, television, fridge, oven and lounge room. Responses represented in Graph 4, below, indicate that hotel/motel options are more likely than not to include a personal bathroom, kettle, microwave and television. However a lack of lounge room (which may include a dining space) and an oven in most accommodation options means that the preparation of meals is limited to microwavable ready-meals. Given the variability of amenities, consumers also experienced accommodation settings without basic appliances or spaces to prepare food or wash securely (represented as qualitative feedback in Box 3).



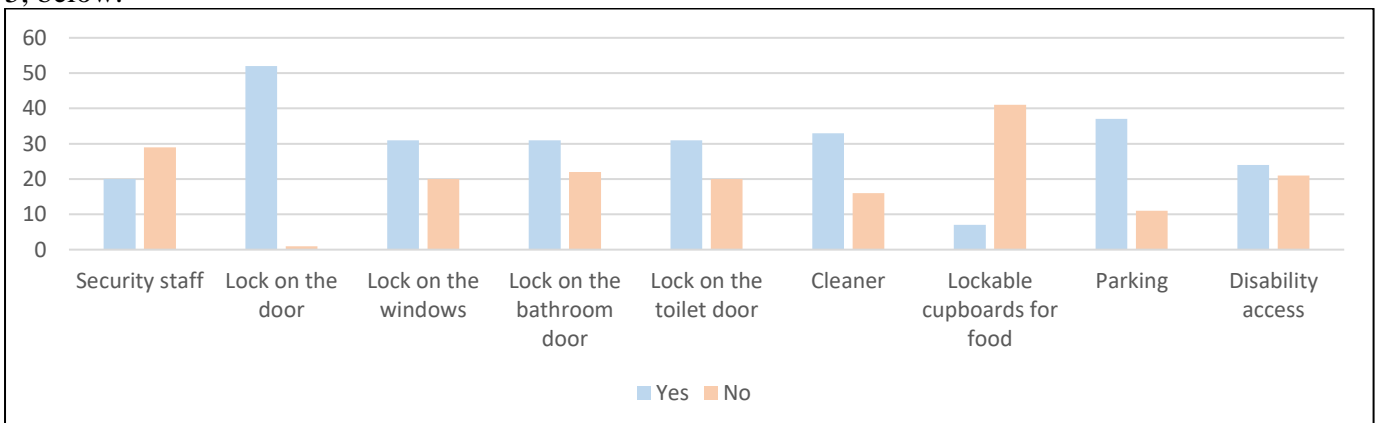
Graph 4 — amenities in hotel/motel accommodation

- Had to buy a lot of packaged foods because I could only heat in the microwave.
- Had to buy takeaway while staying there.
- Didn't feel safe to use the shared amenities.
- Not even a kettle or toaster. Can't afford to eat.
- It was very difficult not having a kitchen. My brother brought around a mini oven for me to use and I don't know what I would have done without it. I had to call my support services to assist with food vouchers etc because I'd spent all my money on takeaway food because I had nowhere to cook. This impacted my health. A lot of the food I was living on was low in nutritional value.
- Unable to cook my own food and had to go to a coin laundry to clean our clothes
- Happy to have basics and tv to spend time. Would have preferred to have kitchen.
- Once again, it really is dependent on the accommodation I was placed in at the time. As an example, some motels/hotels have kitchen amenities, some do not have any. Some just have a bed and toilet/shower, some have the full lounge areas and kitchenettes.

Other amenities that relate to security, storage of belongings and access indicated are represented in Graph

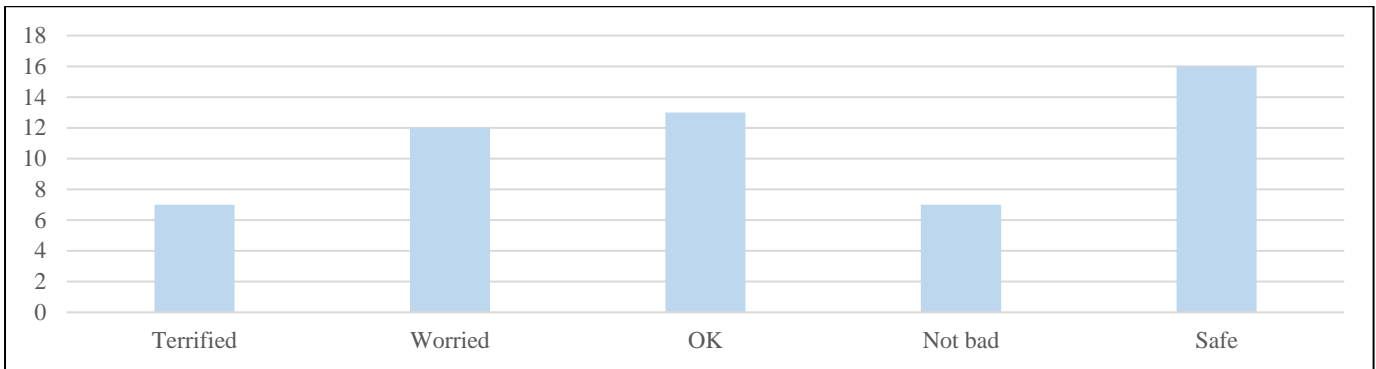
Box 3 — qualitative feedback, hotel/motel amenities

5, below.



Graph 5 — amenities in hotel/motel accommodation

When asked to describe how safe consumer felt in hotel/motel accommodation, 36% (n=19) indicated that they were worried (n=12) or terrified (n=7). A majority (n=35) indicated that they felt, relatively safe in their experience (see Graph 6). Negative appraisals of safety were supported by qualitative responses, summarised in Box 4, below.



Graph 6 — feelings of safety in hotel/motel accommodation

- There were lots of male-identifying people who were not guests, entering and leaving the accommodation. I was worried that myself and other women in the accommodation were not safe.
- Child Protection watch house. Reception would tell other residents private business, start rumours and fights. False info was provided to the access point and Child Protection. Invasion of privacy: the house/motel cleaner had a relationship with my ex partner and I was not aware of it.
- As I was checking out there was a guy sitting next to the counter masturbating. The staff just ignored him.
- I was unsure of the other people staying in the other rooms, what they were up to or capable of. Felt like I always needed to be ready
- People coming and going knocking on my door asking for money or drugs
- I was worried what was going to happen next and drug activity at the motel
- There was blood stain on the floor. The bed was dirty. Other residents were aggressive and drug dealers. Staff were horrible
- Drug use at hotel and constant police call out made it difficult

Box 4 — qualitative responses to feelings of unsafety in hotel/motel accommodation

## ii. Serviced apartment

Twelve (18%) respondents indicated that they had experienced serviced apartment accommodation, 10 of whom were referred by a homelessness service. When asked if consumers were given enough information about the accommodation when it was booked, and did the standard of the accommodation meet their expectations, 11 people responded. Of those referred, 50% (n=5) indicated that they were not given enough information, and/or that the accommodation did not meet their expectations. The remaining 50% (n=5) indicated that they were given enough information, and that the accommodation did meet their expectations. When asked to provide more information, the following responses (Box 5) were given.

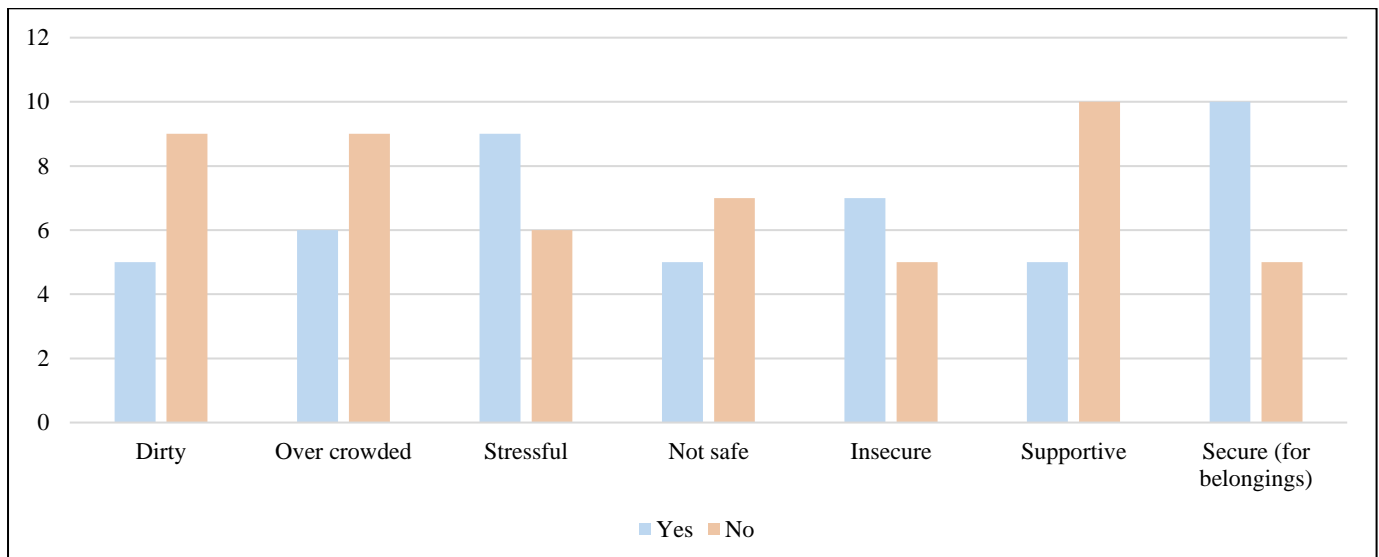
- No information given at all. Also was not told that I would have to co-contribute to the accommodation cost.
- Information of extension process not explained. Was just given an address and no further information
- No the motel didn't meet my expectations. 5.5 weeks I stayed in a 1 bedroom place [with children]. Only 1 microwave for my family.
- Was given directions and other information to get to the accommodation.

Box 5 — consumer responses to serviced apartment accommodation that did not meet their expectation

A majority of consumers (75%, n=9) were allocated serviced apartment accommodation outside the geographical location that they had connections with, with 25% (n=3) allocated serviced apartment accommodation in the area that they had connections with. Two (>17% ) of serviced apartment experiences were with children, and when asked 'If the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it?', 75% (n=9) responded 'no' and 17% (n=2) responded 'yes', one (1) did not respond.

- 67% (n=8) said that their stay was **stressful**
- 58% (n=7) felt that they were **unsupported** in their accommodation
- 58% (n=7) said that their accommodation was **dirty**
- 42% (n=5) said that their accommodation was **overcrowded**
- 42% (n=5) felt **insecure** in their accommodation
- 33% (n=4) felt **unsafe** in their accommodation

When asked to describe the condition of rooming/boarding house accommodation settings, respondents selected the following indicators (see Graph 7).



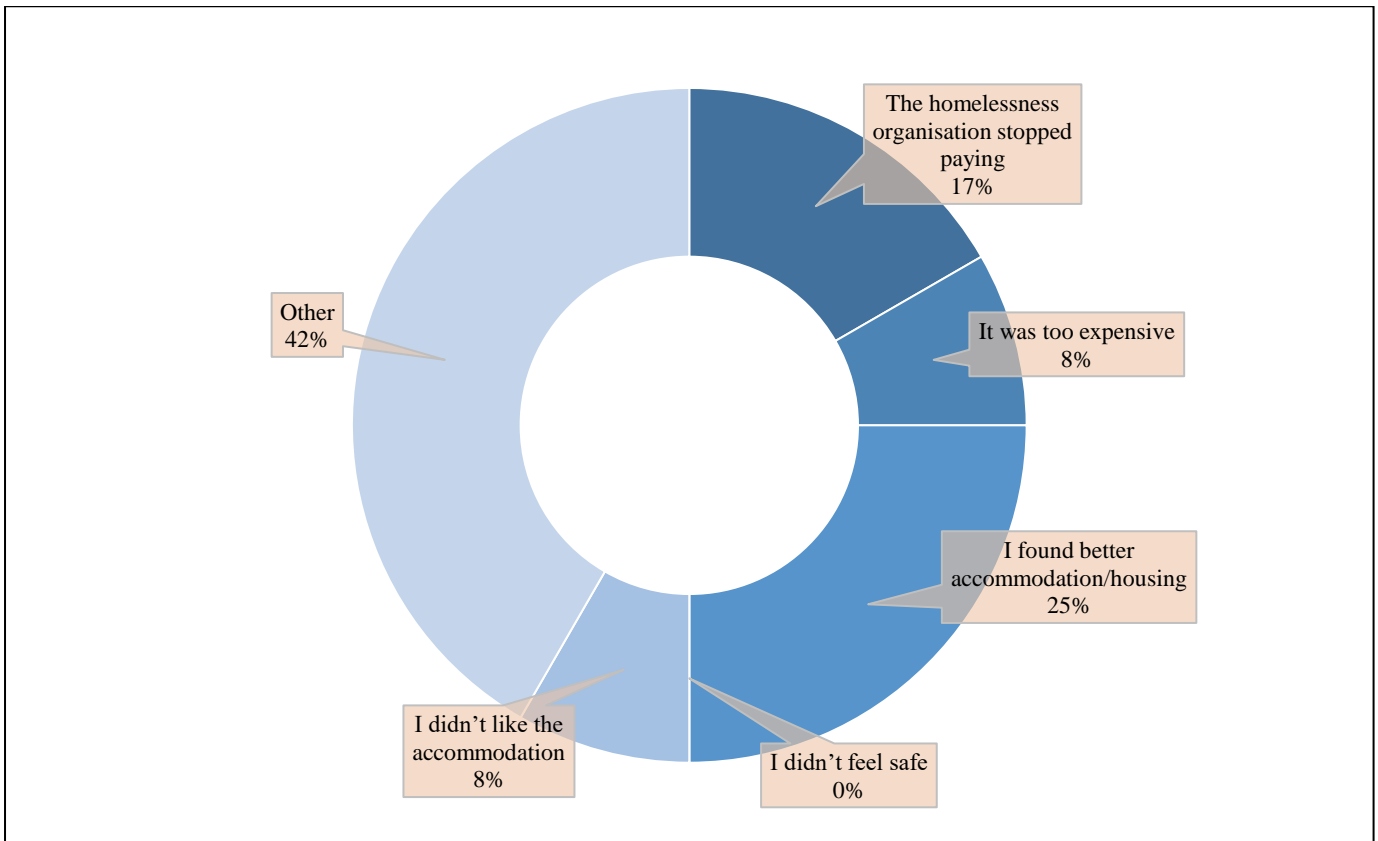
Graph 7 — descriptions of serviced apartment accommodation

Serviced apartments were comparatively more safe and clean. Responses were more balanced with a mix of negative and positive feedback from consumers. When asked to elaborate upon their experiences, the following responses in Box 6 below were collected.

- Different hotels (serviced apartments) are clean/dirty, crowded/not crowded. Some are better than others.
- It was stressful. People staying there had loud music and would always be yelling and screaming
- Some are; some aren't. High turnover and confusion caused lost/discarded belongings.
- Good in that it was secure with access to the building via a security pass only. Bad in that people staying at the accommodation & referred through crisis were not genuinely in crisis.
- It was better than being on the streets.
- It really is dependent on the accommodation I was placed in at the time and the people that was placed there at the same time that I was. Some are safe, some are unsafe.
- This was the first crisis accommodation I stayed in so unable to compare it to any other.
- Sometimes crowded, sometimes unsafe.
- Cockroaches in my room. Kitchen amenities were dirty.
- Locks and knowing a card needed to be used to enter the accommodation made me feel safe.
- Security at night and on weekends made it feel safer

*Box 6 — consumer experiences of serviced apartment accommodation conditions*

Notably, no respondents cited lack of safety as a reason for leaving their accommodation. The primary reasons were related to the expense of the accommodation and the acquisition of better accommodation. Consumer responses to reasons why they left their accommodation are highlighted in Graph 8. Detailed reasons ('other') as to why people left serviced apartment accommodation were unavailable in the data.



Graph 8 — response for exiting serviced apartment accommodation

Compared to other accommodation options, serviced apartments were relatively well-appointed with amenities (see Table 15).

Table 15 — amenities in serviced apartments

<i>Amenities in serviced apartments</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Kettle	100%	0%
TV	100%	0%
Own bathroom	93%	7%
Lock on the door	93%	7%
Microwave	92%	8%
Lock on the windows	91%	9%
Own fridge	83%	17%
Own kitchen	80%	20%
Lounge room	69%	31%
Parking	69%	31%
Cleaner	67%	33%
Disability access	55%	45%
Oven	46%	54%
Security staff	42%	58%

The condition of serviced apartment accommodation settings varied less than other forms of accommodation, however much like other accommodation settings respondents noted that that the liveability was highly dependent upon the accommodation operator. As a standard, serviced accommodation is generally reserved for families and couples or people with special needs. This is reflected in Table X above, serviced apartment accommodation were more self-contained and therefore likely to include personal spaces and amenities such as own bathroom or kitchen. Of all respondents who stayed in serviced apartments, only one (1) noted that they were ‘worried’, with the rest (11) stating that they felt ‘okay’, ‘not bad’ or ‘safe’.



Box 7 below represents a sample of qualitative responses to the amenities at serviced apartment accommodation.

- The apartment did not have an oven but did have a stove top. When being moved to an apartment although it was further away having cooking facilities to cook my own food helped.
- Heater doesn't have a remote so can't be used.
- Washing machine was broken during my whole stay. Was too scared to complain because i didn't want to be kicked out. My case manager helped with it.

### iii. Rooming house/boarding house

In total, 47% (n=31) of respondents indicated that they had experienced rooming/boarding house accommodation. Of these, 24 were referred by a homelessness service and seven (7) were personally sourced by consumer. When asked if consumers were given enough information about the accommodation when it was booked, and did the standard of the accommodation meet their expectations, 30 people responded. Of those referred, 46% (n=11) indicated that they were not given enough information, and/or that the accommodation did not meet their expectations. The remaining 54% (n=13) indicated that they were given enough information, and that the accommodation did meet their expectations. When asked to provide more information, respondents that answered 'no' described 'dangerous' accommodation that was 'unclean' and 'unsafe'. A common complaint about rooming house accommodation was related to rife homophobia, prevalence of bed bugs, normality of violence and the mix of genders.

Qualitative reasons given in relation to experiences of rooming/boarding house accommodation and the management of expectations from access points are represented in the text box below (Box 8).

- Was told the property was clean and safe. Got there and it was dirty, unhygienic and unsafe to live in. No locks on doors, no secure storage.
- The motel was okay but the rooming house was a different story. Immediately when I met the landlord he asked me about how I managed with violence and confrontation which terrified me. The key I was given did not work and I had to wait for another resident to let me in. There was supposed to be mostly women but there were men staying there too. This was distressing as a lesbian woman.
- No-one could be prepared for what I experienced. There was so much violence and really unclean/smelly/messy/filthy/bed bugs. So much homophobia in crisis accommodation environments. I had to go back into the closet. It was like being in the school yard in the 1970s. At the homelessness service, there were rainbow flags everywhere. I assumed care would be taken to place me in a safe place but no-one asked about my sexuality. This wasn't taken into consideration at all.
- I was not given any information.

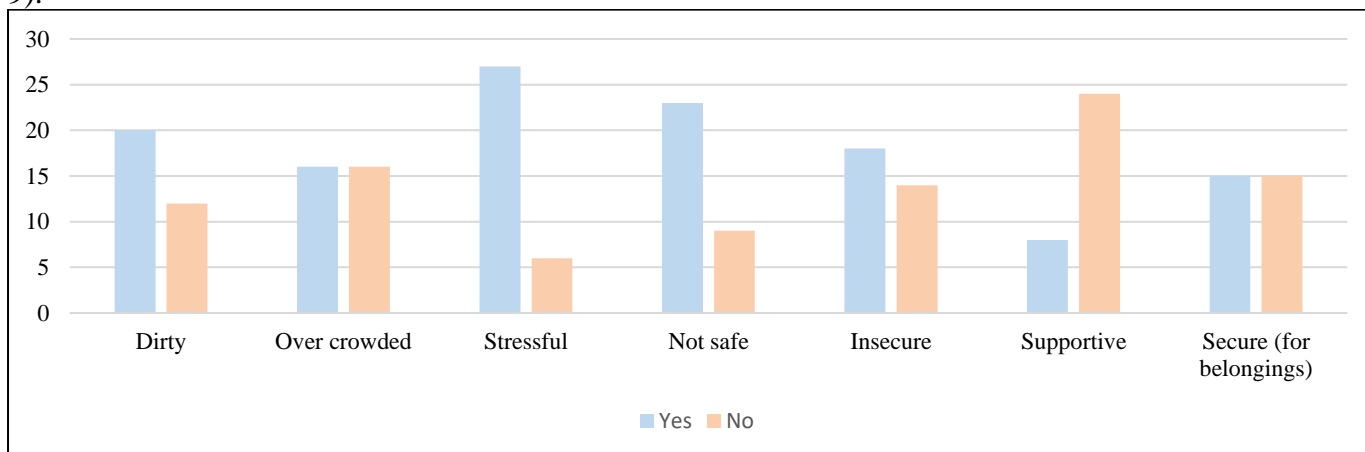
Box 8 — experiences of rooming/boarding house accommodation

A minority of consumers (32%, n=9) were allocated rooming/boarding house accommodation outside the geographical location that they had connections with, with 68% (n=19) allocated rooming/boarding house accommodation in the area that they had connections with. Two (>6% ) of rooming/boarding house experiences were with children, despite guidelines explicitly set to avoid such circumstances. When asked 'If the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it?', 86% (n=24) responded 'no' and 14% (n=4) responded 'yes', two (2) did not respond.

- 71% (n=22) said that their stay was **stressful**

- 68% (n=21) felt that they were **unsupported** in their accommodation
- 52% (n=16) said that their accommodation was **dirty**
- 55% (n=17) felt **unsafe** in their accommodation
- 42% (n=13) said that their accommodation was **overcrowded**
- 45% (n=14) felt **insecure** in their accommodation

When asked to describe the condition of rooming/boarding house accommodation settings, respondents selected the following indicators: Dirty, Over crowded, Stressful, Not safe, Insecure, Supportive and Secure (see Graph 9).

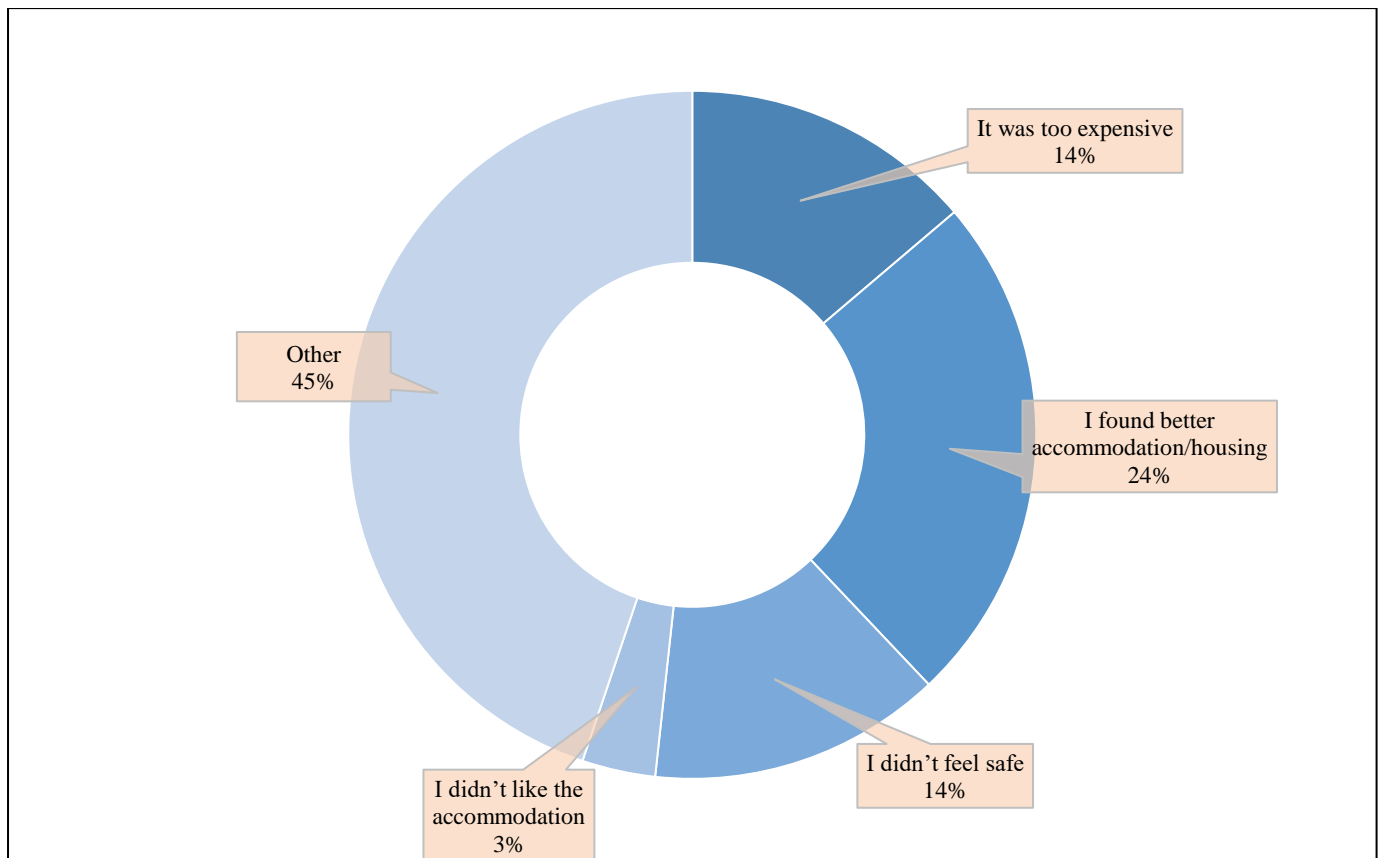


Graph 9 — descriptions of rooming/boarding house accommodation Unlike hotel/motel accommodation, negative descriptive responses figured more frequently than positive responses, when asked to elaborate upon their experiences, responses also reflected negative experiences. A sample of the qualitative responses that highlighted negative experiences is represented in Box 9 below.

- Not supportive and stressful as you take on other peoples problems
- It was glaringly obvious that the operator knew we had no other options and it feels like the take terrible advantage of our predicament.
- Bedroom door kicked in. People dealing meth and other substances. Strangers coming into the premises day and night. Prostitution onsite. Violent assaults regularly. Noise all night/could never sleep properly. Back door never properly secured so anyone could come in. Locks never changed - former residents had access.
- Really difficult time and had no other options. Had no money left after paying the rent. Place was disgusting. All my stuff was stolen.
- If there were okay people it was alright but there were always people with issues. None of us had any support so were doing the best to help each other without information or resources.
- Rooming houses have been unsafe and violent. Over crowded with other tenants who have been aggressive
- Filthy with no repercussions for people who don't abide by the rules. A lot of traumatic behaviour. The operators only intervened to remove people who owe rent.
- My access point was not helpful at all. I attended the access point in Preston after being told multiple times I had to attend. They completed a phone assessment but did not listen to my housing requirements. They only referred me to short-term accommodation. My case manager quickly found me a safe long term option. My rooming house is run by the Exodus Foundation.
- Case managers need to tell the people who live here to clean their clothes, showers and their rooms.
- Had to stick up for a resident who was being bullied, then got a warning for the altercation.

Box 9 — negative experiences of rooming/boarding house accommodation

The descriptions reflect experiences of rooming/boarding house accommodation that are also echoed in consumer responses to reasons why they left their accommodation (Graph 10), with three (3) people stating that they left because they felt unsafe. Seven consumers (7) who left their accommodation did so because they found better emergency accommodation, simply an upgrade in levels of adequacy and three (3) consumers left accommodation because it was too expensive.



Graph 10 — response for exiting rooming/boarding house accommodation

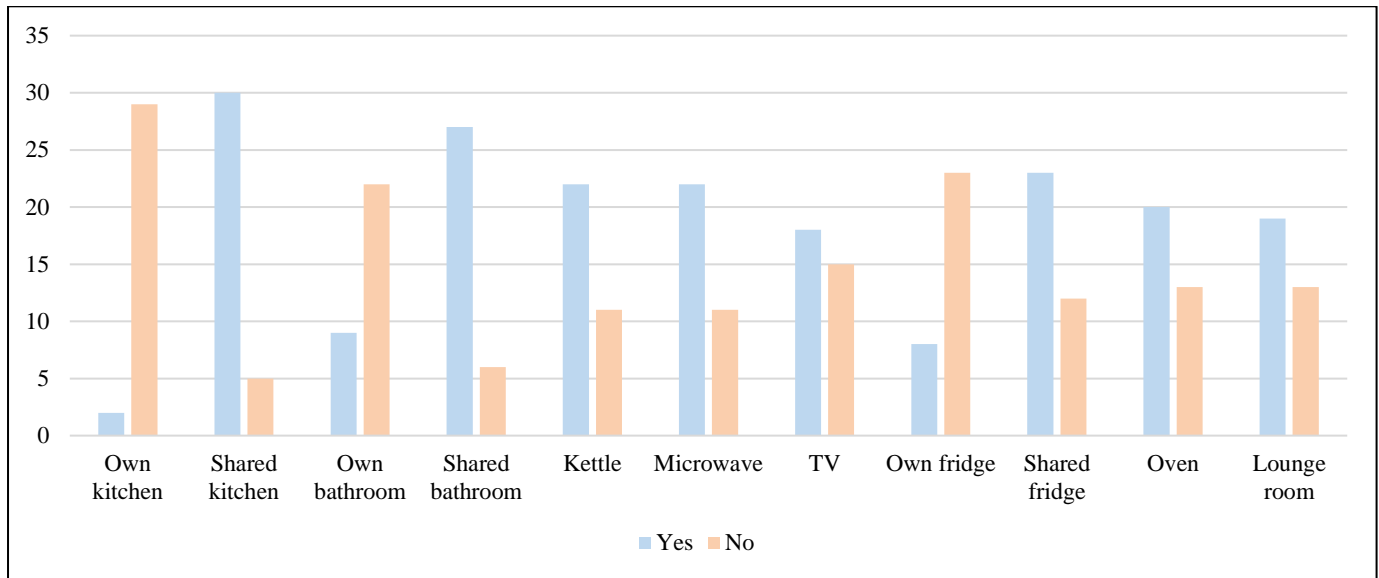
Approximately 45% of people provided ‘other’ as their response, indicating that unique exit pathways were more prevalent among people in rooming house accommodation than that of people in hotel/motel accommodation. Some of these pathways or reasons are described by respondents in Box 10 below.

- Jail time
- Dodgy landlord
- Terror for my personal safety
- To go to rehab
- Outreach support attended the property as a cold call and assisted me to move.
- With the assistance of a rooming house outreach worker I was linked in to MOSS (Merri Outreach Support Service) who assisted me to complete a priority housing application. This helped with other housing options
- Went to detox/rehab

Box 10 — reasons for exiting rooming/boarding house accommodation

Like hotel/motel accommodation, the condition of rooming/boarding house accommodation settings varied widely and many respondents noted that liveability was highly dependent upon the operator, reflecting a broader lack of standardisation across the crisis accommodation infrastructure, but more specifically, in the lack of enforcement of regulatory standards in rooming house accommodation. Consumers were asked to note the primary amenities in their rooming/boarding house accommodation, these included kitchen, bathroom, kettle, microwave, television, fridge, oven and lounge room.

As represented in Graph 11 below, rooming/boarding house accommodation (by design) is less likely to include personal/private spaces and amenities such as own bathroom or kitchen. The majority of spaces outside of the bedroom are shared. Box 11 below represents a sample of qualitative responses to the amenities at rooming house accommodation.

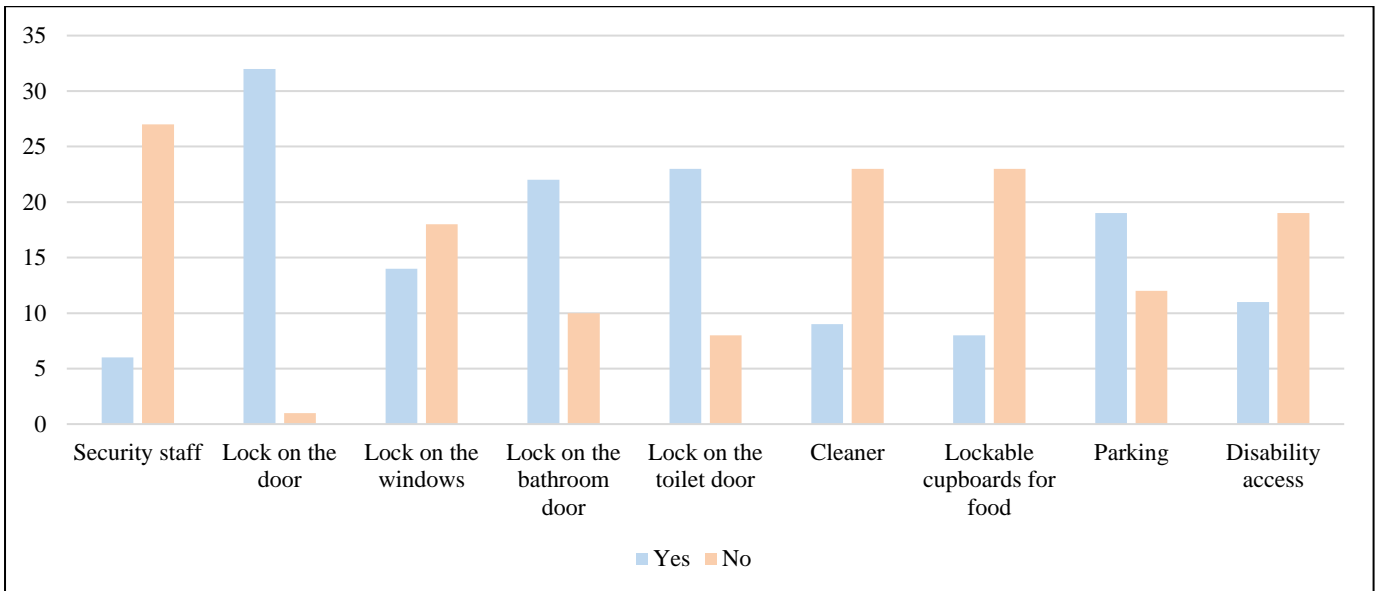


Graph 11 — amenities in rooming/boarding house accommodation

- Oven didn't work.
- Kitchen needs to be kept open for basic food needs. I suffer from dehydration here.
- I fucking hate this.
- Oven didn't work properly. Very limited in terms of cooking. Someone fell through the shower floor - it wasn't fixed for four months. There was another shower but that was also broken - for 9 residents.
- Food got stolen. Shared fridge was too small for the number of residents.
- The oven never worked. The shower was rotten and mouldy. My window was moving around in the rotten frame.
- People stole all my good toiletries that my daughter bought me from the shared bathroom.
- You could never leave food or anything anywhere communal. Had to store everything in your room otherwise it would be stolen
- There are activity rooms, cannot get access to the rooms and all the activities e.g. pool table, piano are broken
- Any amenities that have been provided are dirty, poorly maintained and do not work properly
- TV didn't work, kitchen amenities had to be self funded (i.e. kettle, microwave.)
- Became very depressed

Box 11 — qualitative responses to amenities in rooming/boarding house accommodation

Whilst appliances and amenities are provided —albiet shared and mixed experiences of their functionality— in rooming house accommodation, lack of safety, cleanliness and security were starkly evident in participant responses (see Graph 12). Disability access was more likely to not exist despite the high prevalence of disability among rooming house residents. Lockable doors were almost universal for bedrooms, but were less likely to be fixed to shared bathroom and toilet doors. Respondents qualitative responses are summarised in Box 12 below.



Graph 12 — amenities in rooming/boarding house accommodation

- Absence of security made me have to defend someone else.
- Cleaner did not show up for months because the place was unsafe/violent. Operator would never fix things - was really scared to attend the property.
- I was anxious the whole time - always on edge. Whenever I left I was worried my stuff would be stolen. Place was so dirty I felt gross just being there. There were only latches on the bathroom and toilet doors.
- The rooming house was in terrible condition. Lots of maintenance issues. Mould in the bathroom. They just painted over it. It kept coming back. Felt scared I was going to fall through the floor of the bathroom. Slipped and fell twice on the back porch which was rotten and broken and never properly repaired.
- Residents were compelled to do the cleaning. A cleaner came only when someone moved out.
- There was black mould in the bathroom and the fan didn't work. It had eaten through the bathroom walls and there was a mouse infestation that started in that hole.

Box 12 — conditions in rooming/boarding house accommodation

#### iv. Backpackers/hostel/Airbnb

Twelve (18%) respondents indicated that they had experienced backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation, six (6) of whom were referred by a homelessness service. Six (50%) respondents indicated that they personally sourced this accommodation type, which was proportionally much higher than other accommodation typologies. When asked if consumers were given enough information about the accommodation when it was booked, and did the standard of the accommodation meet their expectations, nine (9) people responded. Of those referred, 33% (n=3) indicated that they were not given enough information, and/or that the accommodation did not meet their expectations. The remaining 66% (n=6) indicated that they were given enough information, and that the accommodation did meet their expectations. When asked to provide more information, the following responses (Box 13) were given; no positive responses were recorded.

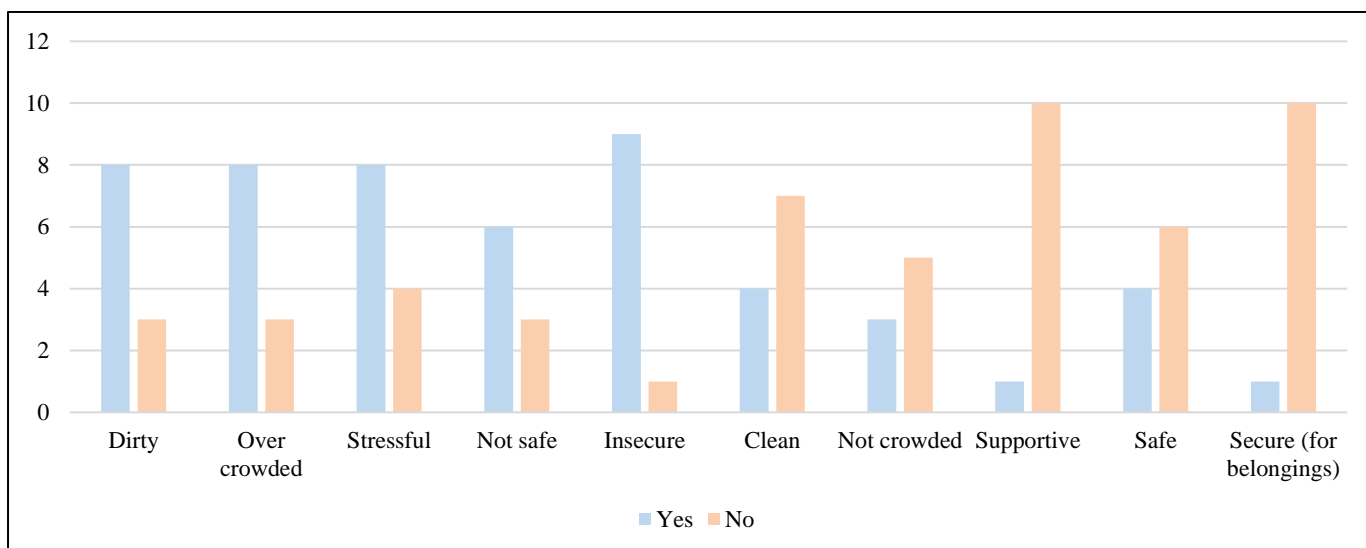
- There were no beds; people slept in sleeping bags. Floor was dirty. Hard to communicate with people; unsafe for belongings.
- Airbnb: door didn't lock - door swung open in the wind.
- When put in a room with other people, felt very unsafe.

Box 13

A majority of consumers (58%, n=7) were allocated backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation outside the geographical location that they had connections with. No backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation experiences were with children. When asked ‘If the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it?’, 92% (n=11) responded ‘no’ and 8% (n=1) responded ‘yes’. This is higher than average (83%) when considering all responses, indicating that some characteristics of this accommodation typology may be particularly influential in determining a client’s reticence in being referred to inadequate accommodation settings. Some significant perceptions of backpackers/hostel/Airbnb accommodation are as follows:

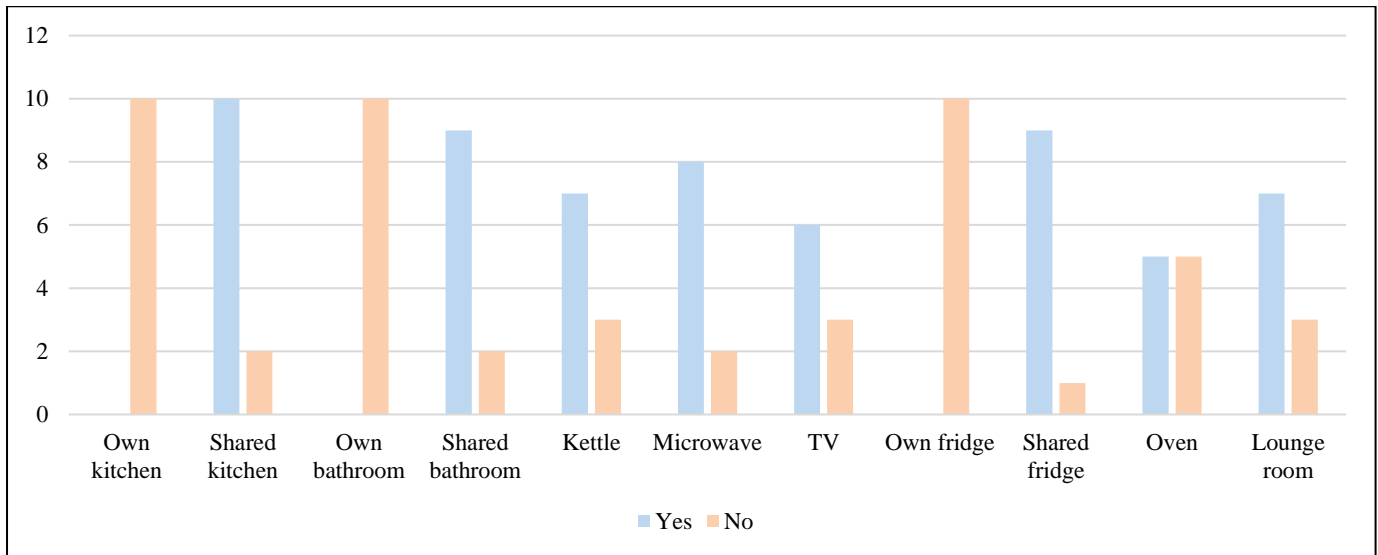
- 90% felt **insecure** in their accommodation
- 90% felt that they were **unsupported** in their accommodation
- 73% said that their accommodation was **overcrowded**
- 73% said that their accommodation was **dirty**
- 67% said that their stay was **stressful**
- 67% felt **unsafe** in their accommodation

When asked to describe the condition of rooming/boarding house accommodation settings, respondents selected the following indicators: Dirty, Over crowded, Stressful, Not safe, Insecure, Supportive and Secure (see Graph 13).



Graph 13

A minimum standard of amenities were found in hostels/backpackers/AirBnb, with high frequency of shared spaces and no private/personal access to a kitchen, bathroom or fridge (see Graph 14).

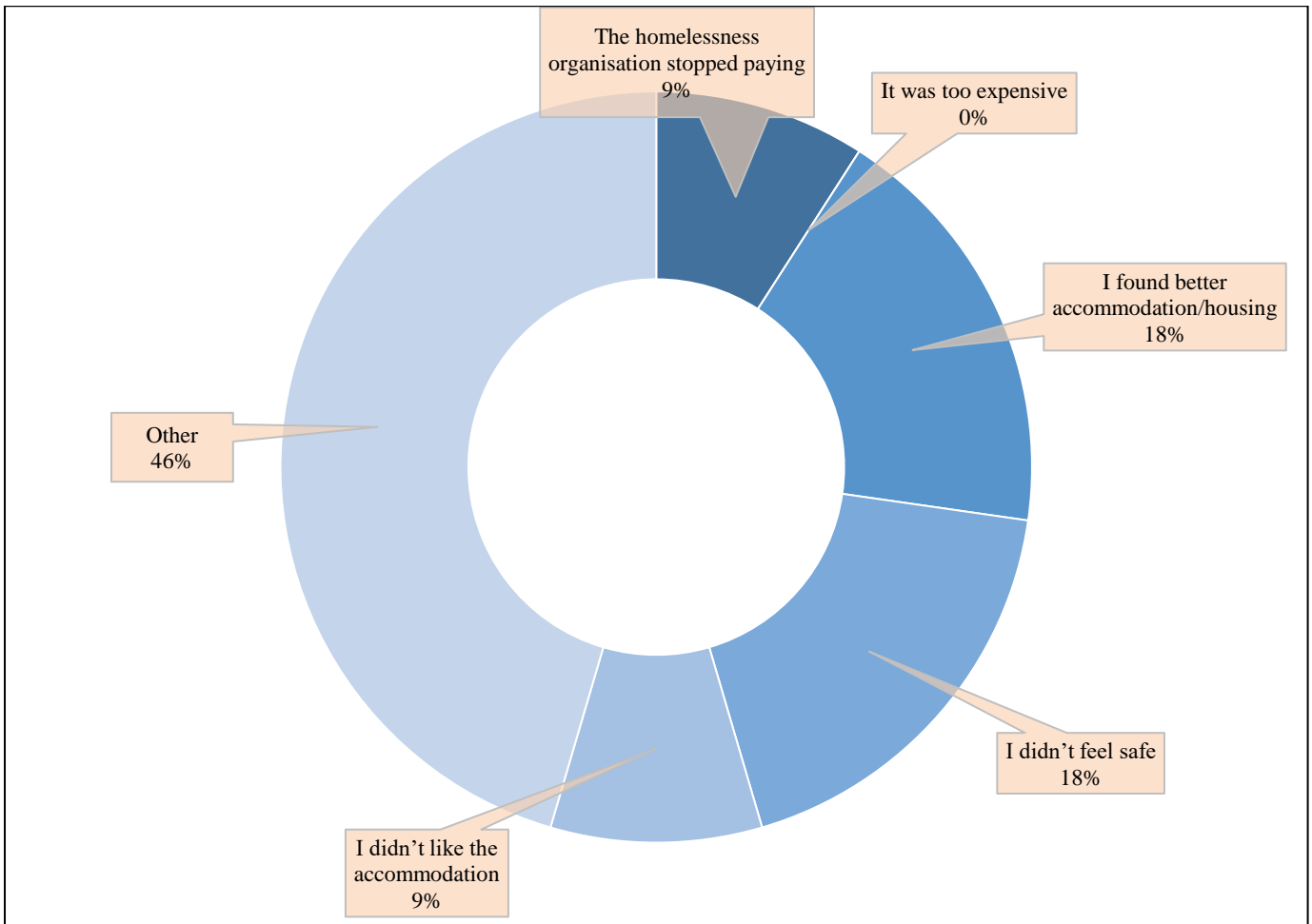


Graph 14

When asked to describe impact that the un/available amenities had on their stay, consumers responded with mixed feedback, including positive responses such as “it was convenient” and “staff were onsite”. More neutral feedback highlighted that security services were highly variable, as were cleaning services and disability access. Negative feedback highlighted informal accommodation arrangement in private backyards, overcrowding and a lack of security:

- It was a shed at the back of a house. Operators were dodgy.
- Five people in a room. Not sure about cleaner
- Would feel safer if there was security at hostels like there is at crisis supported accommodation
- Operator always high on drugs.

When asked why consumers left hostels/backpackers/AirBnb accommodation, expense was not given as an answer, which was expected given that this accommodation typology is the cheapest of all options. About a quarter of respondents indicated that they left due to safety concerns or because of a dislike for the accommodation setting. Like other accommodation types, ‘other’ was nominated as the most frequent reason for leaving (see Graph 15), which encompasses nuanced and diverse experiences (see Box 14).



Graph 15

- Jail
- I felt I overstayed my welcome
- Access point finally assisted me to move from this Airbnb to a rooming house in a suburb out of the area. After a month in hostels/hotels/airbnb, calling every day - sometimes 26 times a day to get a service from Front Door
- Stopped receiving money from the government
- Due to anxiety I have difficulties being around others and prefer not engaging with people

Box 14

#### v. Caravan park

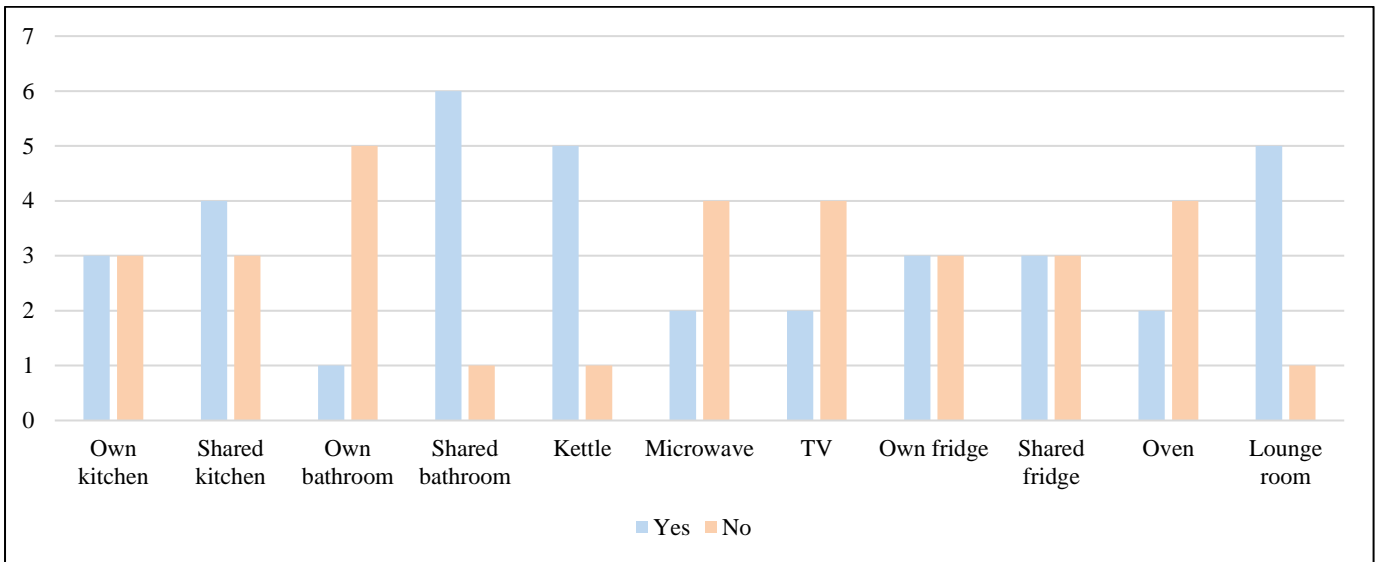
Six (9%) respondents, 100% of whom were single men aged over 50, indicated that they had experienced caravan park accommodation, four (4) of whom were referred by a homelessness service. Of those referred, 50% (n=2) indicated that they were not given enough information, and/or that the accommodation did not meet their expectations. When asked to provide more information, two (2) respondents indicated that they did not stay at the caravan park (after having purchased accommodation), and one noted that they had to clean the accommodation themselves before staying there. Only one (1) respondent indicated that they were staying in a caravan park outside of their preferred geographical location. When asked if the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it, zero (0) respondents answered 'yes'. Only two (2) respondents indicated that they had a support worker at the time of their stay.

- 83% felt that they were **unsupported** in their accommodation
- 57% said that their stay was **stressful**
- 50% said that their accommodation was **dirty**
- 50% felt **unsafe** in their accommodation

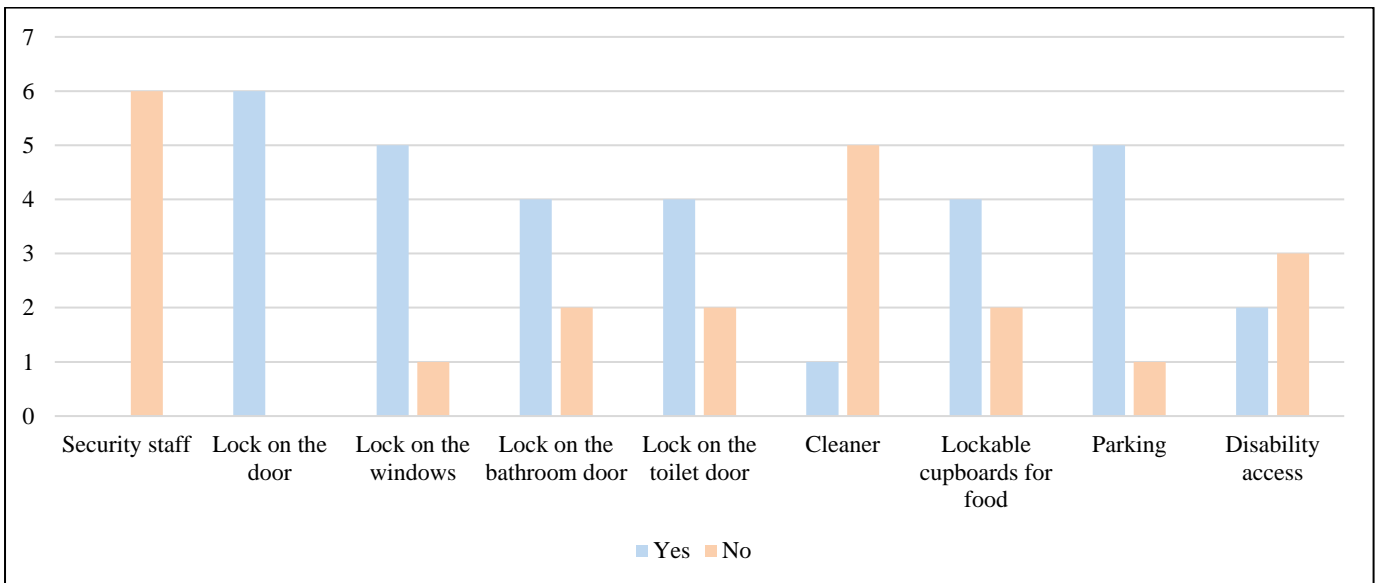


- 50% felt **insecure** in their accommodation
- 33% said that their accommodation was **overcrowded**.

Amenities varied across settings and the data suggests a mixed but even distribution of amenities, particularly kitchens and fridges (private and shared). Caravan parks were less likely to have an oven or microwave for personal use, and more likely to have shared toilet and bathroom arrangements. One exception was that caravan parks are more likely to have a lounge room when compared to other accommodation types (see Graph 16). Security services were not found among the experiences of respondents, and cleaning services were only slightly evident (see Graph 17).



Graph 16



Graph 17

## DIRE DILEMMAS

This section of the survey identifies crisis accommodation experiences that are more deleterious than having no accommodation support at all. Two questions were asked specifically in relation to this dilemma:

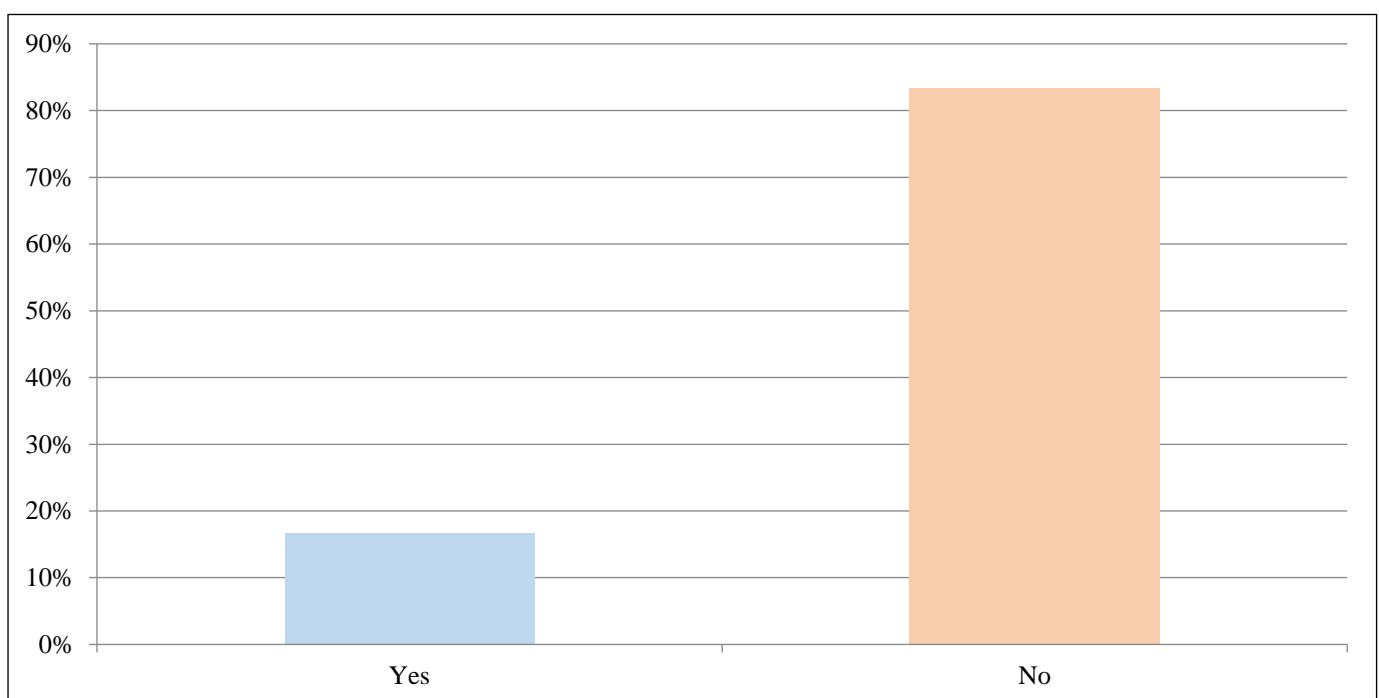
1. If the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it?
2. Thinking about your experience in crisis accommodation, is a bed that does not meet your basic needs, better than no bed at all?

Limitations in the data were evident. There was a high degree of variability between responses to each question, despite both questions being related, thus suggesting that a refinement of the questions may be needed. Question 1 implies the availability of other options within the system that are relatively safe, leading consumers to assume that ‘no accommodation’ is not an option. Within the homelessness service system, there are frequent occasions where potentially unsafe accommodation is the only option available, which is the essence of the dilemma that this question is targeting.

Question 2 implies that the physical bed, or its configuration, is the subject matter of the question. For instance, one respondent when asked this question answered: *I have back issues and sleeping on an unsuitable bed is more uncomfortable than sleeping on the floor. Beds should always meet people's basic needs.* The question assumes that consumer familiarity with sector jargon (e.g. bed). It also invokes a highly subjective determination of ‘basic need’, which varies among each individual. For instance, basic need can imply proximity to familiar areas, thermal comfort *etc.* which may lead to consumers responding that a bed that does not provide those things is indeed better than no bed, setting the standard quite high for inadequacy. The essence of the question, is to understand whether dire experiences in crisis accommodation are better than having no accommodation allocated at an access point.

Each question produced significantly different responses, and given these reasons stated above, the most appropriate primary source of data used in analysing whether any accommodation is better than no accommodation, is Question 1.

When asked, ***if the only available accommodation is potentially unsafe, should homelessness services still book it***, 60 people responded: 17% (n=10) responding ‘yes’; 83% (n=50) responding ‘no’ (see Graph 18). Graph 18 is used as a benchmark indicator, represented transparently in all subsequent graphs in this section.



Graph 18 — should homelessness services book unsafe accommodation, all responses

There were negligible differences in responses among respondents that had a least one accommodation experience as a result of referral from homelessness services: 20% (n=9) responding 'yes'; 80% (n=37) responding 'no'. A total of six (6) survey respondents indicated that all of their crisis accommodation experiences were as a result of them personally accessing private options, without referral. Of these, only one (1) respondent answered 'yes' to this question. It would be logical to assess only those experiences that were as a result of referral, given that respondents who did not receive a referral would have little exposure to the particular situation that the question describes. However, given limitations in the data format and sample size, all responses are analysed together, regardless of referral status.

In summarising the cross-tabulation analysis, it was found that:

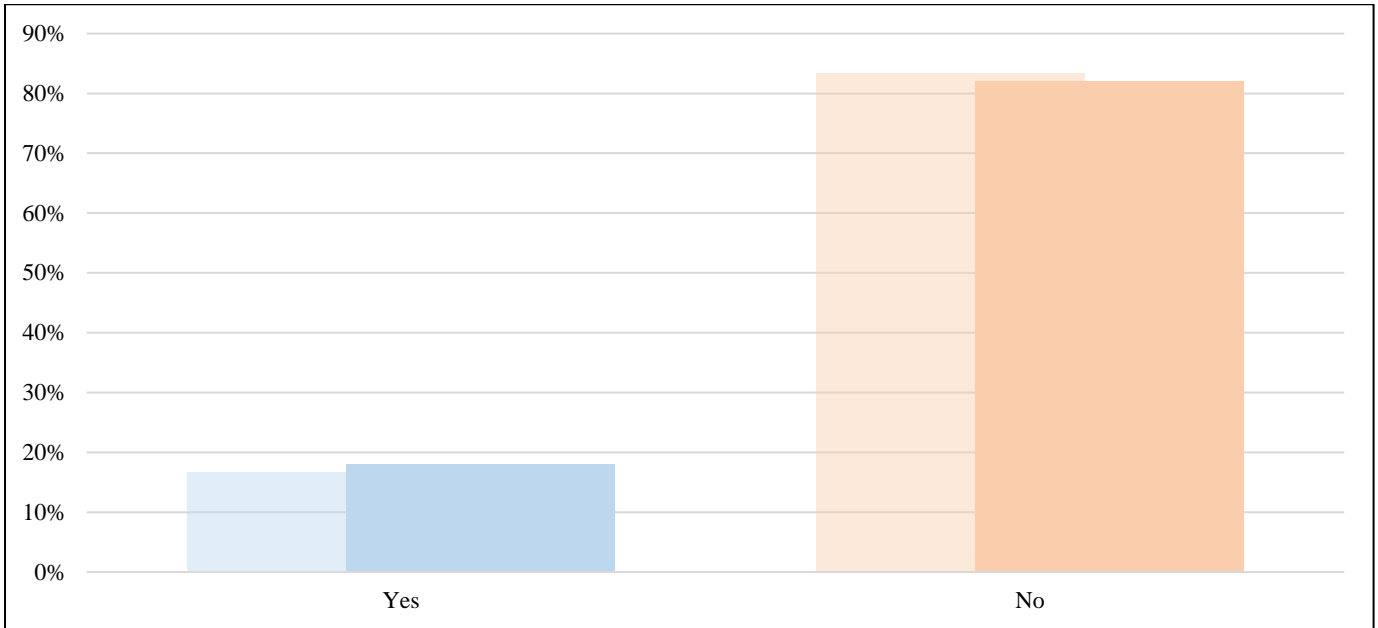
- accommodation typology had relatively low impact on determining a consumer's willingness to be referred to potentially unsafe accommodation settings.
- accommodation experiences that were overcrowded, with more shared amenities, low levels of security and that are more likely to be personally sourced, impacted upon a consumer's response; for this reason backpacker/hostel/airbnb and caravan park accommodation were significantly more likely to produce a 'no' response
- women were more likely to answer 'no' and men were more likely to answer 'yes'.
- women who experienced no case management support, who were over 40 years old, under 28, or who identified as lgbtq all said 'no'.
- all men who answered 'yes' were straight, single cis-men of Australian background
- people with children were more likely to answer 'no' and a majority were people of non-Australian background.
- people aged 24 and under were far more likely to answer 'yes' than any other age cohort.
- receiving or not receiving support, as well as identifying as a person with disability had minor or negligible impact on responses.

### **i. Accommodation typology**

Cross-tabulation findings for accommodation typology yielded only minor insights. Backpacker/hostel/Airbnb, rooming/boarding house and caravan park accommodation options were the only instances where responses were more in favour of 'no' (do not refer if unsafe), than 'yes' (refer even if unsafe). Serviced apartments and hotel/motel accommodation were slightly in favour of 'yes'. The following subsections expand on these typologies.

#### **a. Hotel/motel**

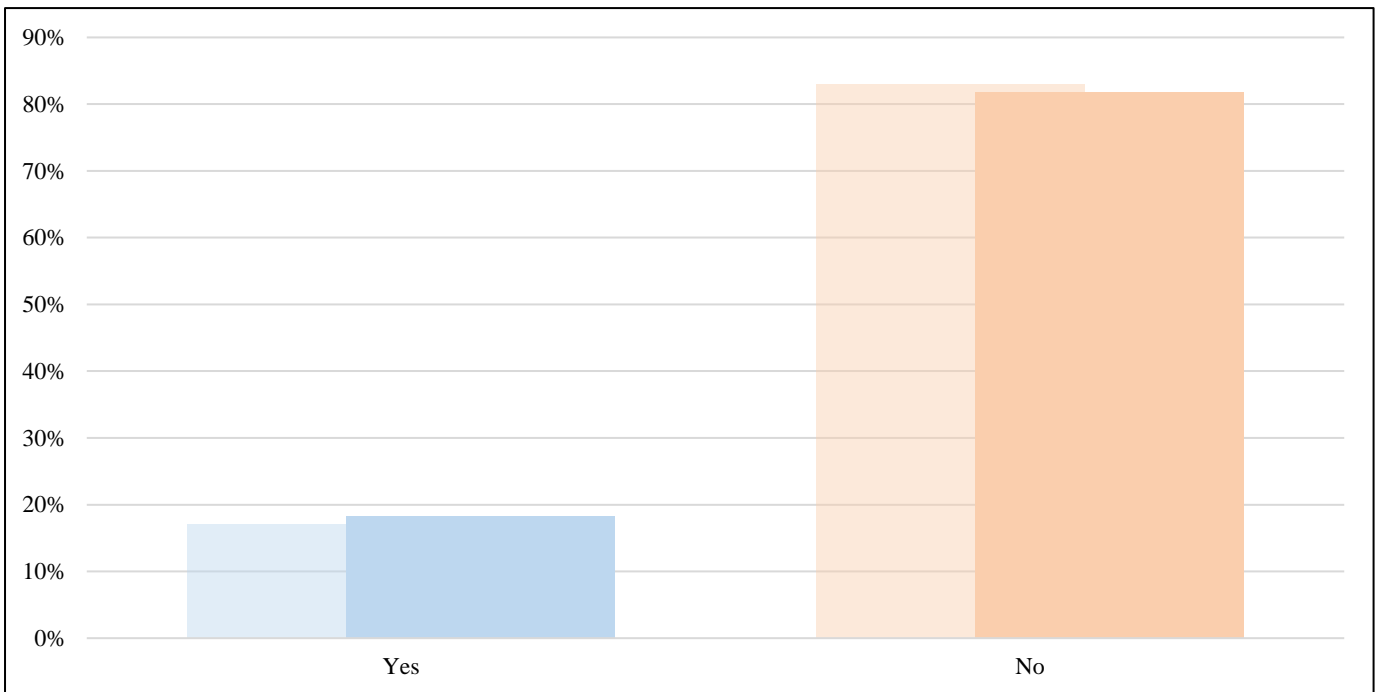
Fifty (50) people who responded to this question had experienced hotel/motel accommodation. Responses closely mirrored the total respondent cohort, with no meaningful deviation: 18% (n=9) responding 'yes'; 82% (n=41) responding 'no' (Graph 19).



Graph 19 — should homelessness services book unsafe accommodation, hotel/motel responses

**b. Serviced apartment**

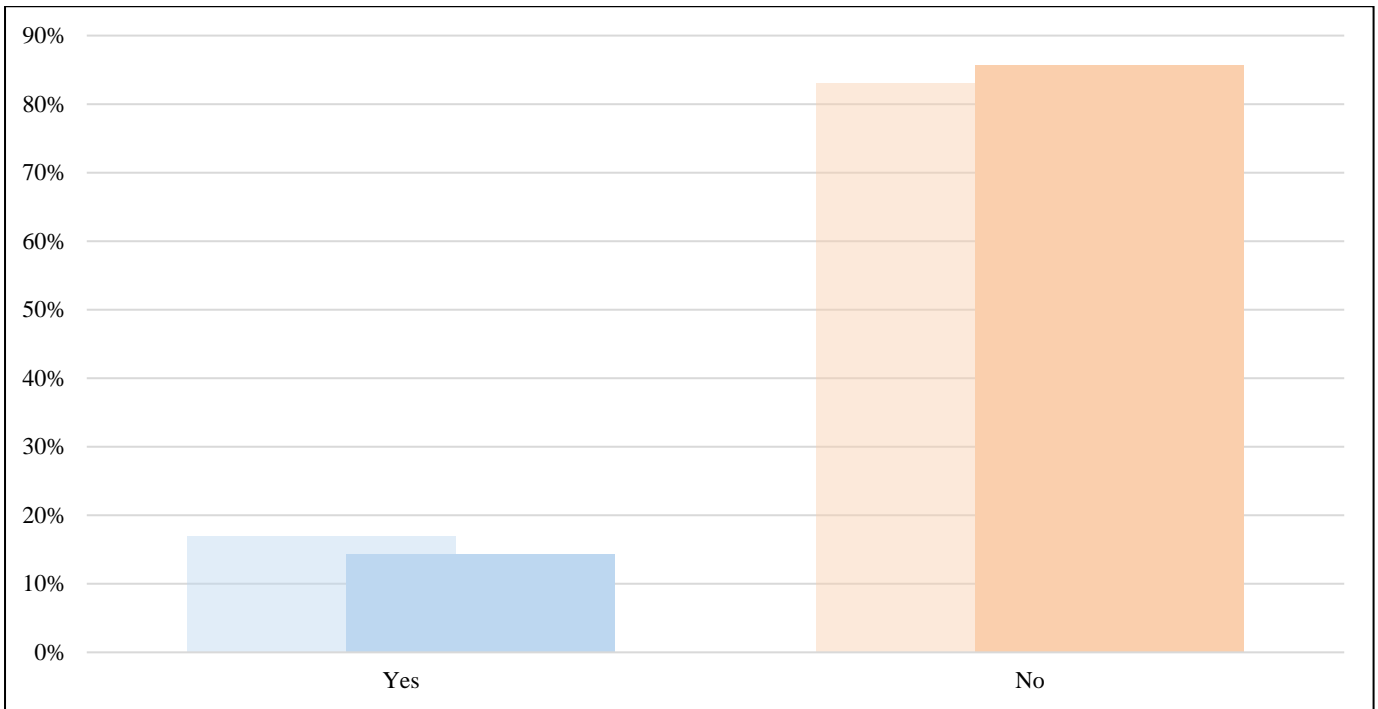
Twelve (12) people who responded to this question had experienced service apartment accommodation. Responses closely mirrored the total respondent cohort, with no meaningful deviation: 18% (n=2) responding ‘yes’; 82% (n=9) responding ‘no’ (Graph 20).



Graph 20 — should homelessness services book unsafe accommodation, serviced apartment responses

**c. Rooming house/boarding house**

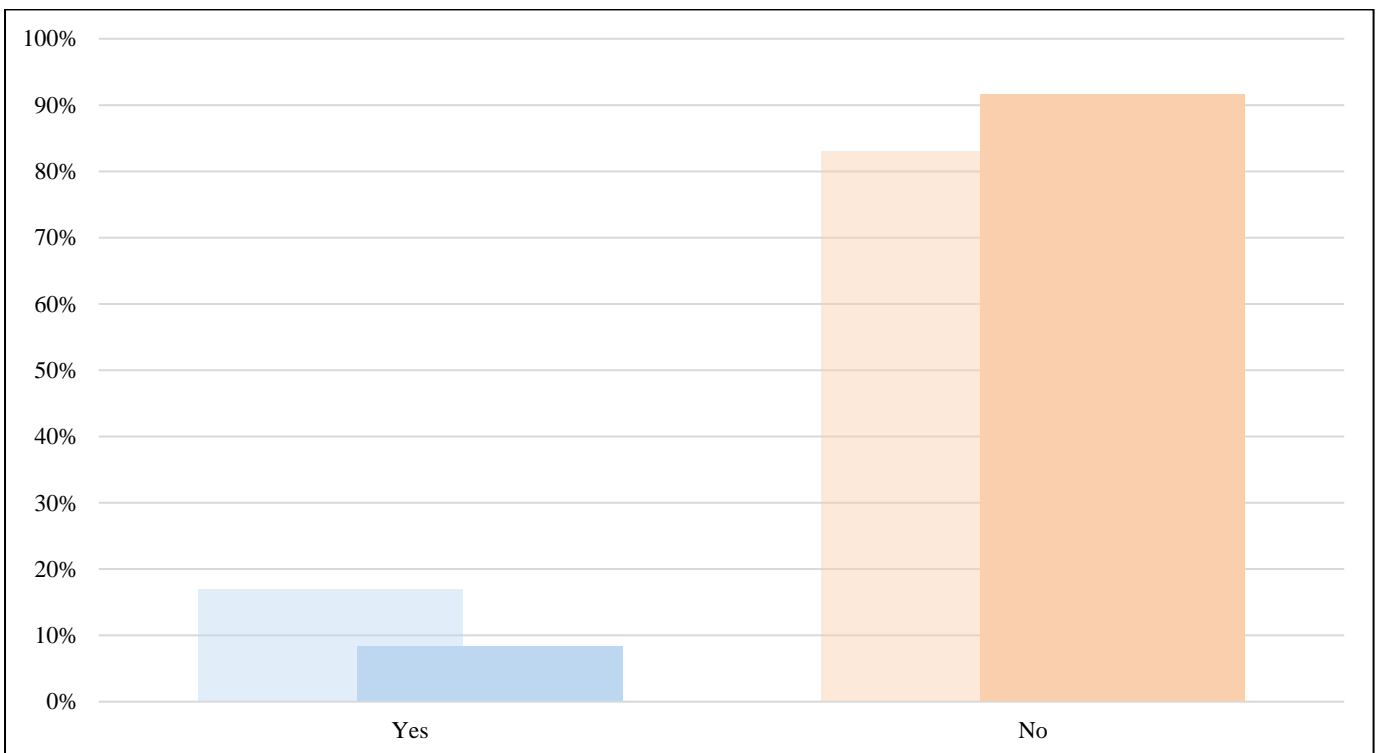
Thirty-one (31) people who responded to this question had experienced service apartment accommodation. Responses closely mirrored the total respondent cohort, with a slight deviation in favour of ‘no’: 14% (n=4) responding ‘yes’; 86% (n=24) responding ‘no’ (Graph 21).



Graph 21 — should homelessness services book unsafe accommodation, rooming house/boarding house responses

**d. Backpackers/hostel/Airbnb**

Twelve (12) people who responded to this question had experienced backpacker/hostel/Airbnb accommodation. Responses closely mirrored the total respondent cohort, with a meaningful deviation in favour of ‘no’: 8% (n=1) responding ‘yes’; 92% (n=11) responding ‘no’ (Graph 22).



Graph 22 — should homelessness services book unsafe accommodation, rooming house/boarding house responses

**e. Caravan park**

Five (5) people who responded to this question had experienced caravan park accommodation. Responses were 100% in favour of ‘no’; one (1) respondent who had experienced caravan park accommodation did not answer this question.

## ii. Gender

Fifty-seven (57) respondents that replied this question identified their gender. Two (2) respondents identified themselves as transgender; there was no option in the survey to self-identify as non-binary. Both transgender respondents answered 'no' to this question.

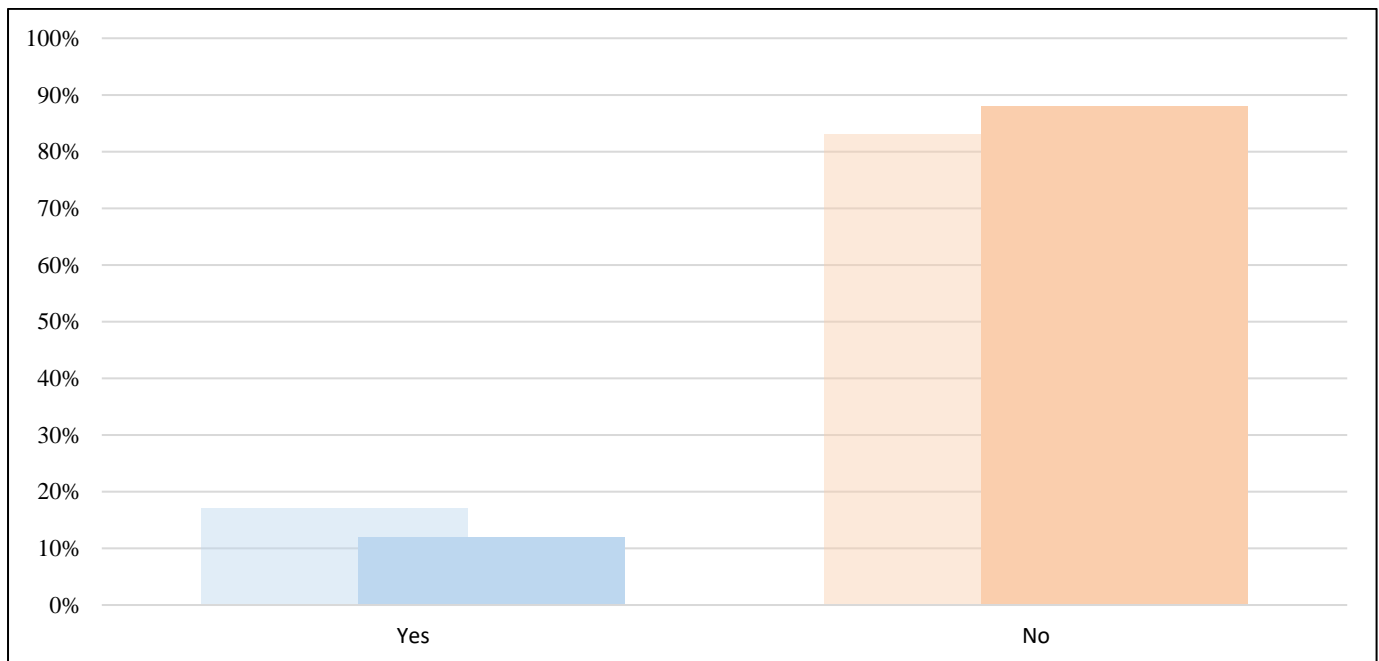
### a. Female

Twenty-five (25) people who responded to this question identified as female. Responses favoured 'no' in comparison to the benchmark, which is represented transparently in the graph below: 12% (n=3) responding 'yes'; 88% (n=22) responding 'no' (see Graph 23). When combined with other indicators, the following insights were derived:

- 100% (n=4) of all women who did not receive case management support from a worker while in crisis accommodation, said 'no'
- 100% (n=15) of all women aged 39+ said 'no'
- 100% (n=4) of all women aged 28 and under said 'no'
- 100% (n=3) of all women identifying as LGBTQ said 'no'

All women who answered 'yes' (n=3) were accompanied by children or a partner, were aged between 29-38. When women who answered 'yes' were asked if any bed is better than no bed at all, the following qualitative responses were collected:

- You can deal with somewhere that's not up to your standards than having nowhere at all. It's better to be off the streets in a warm place than not having a roof over your head.
- I have slept on some feral beds with mould but would prefer that to the street.



Graph 23 — should homelessness services book unsafe accommodation, female identified responses

### b. Male

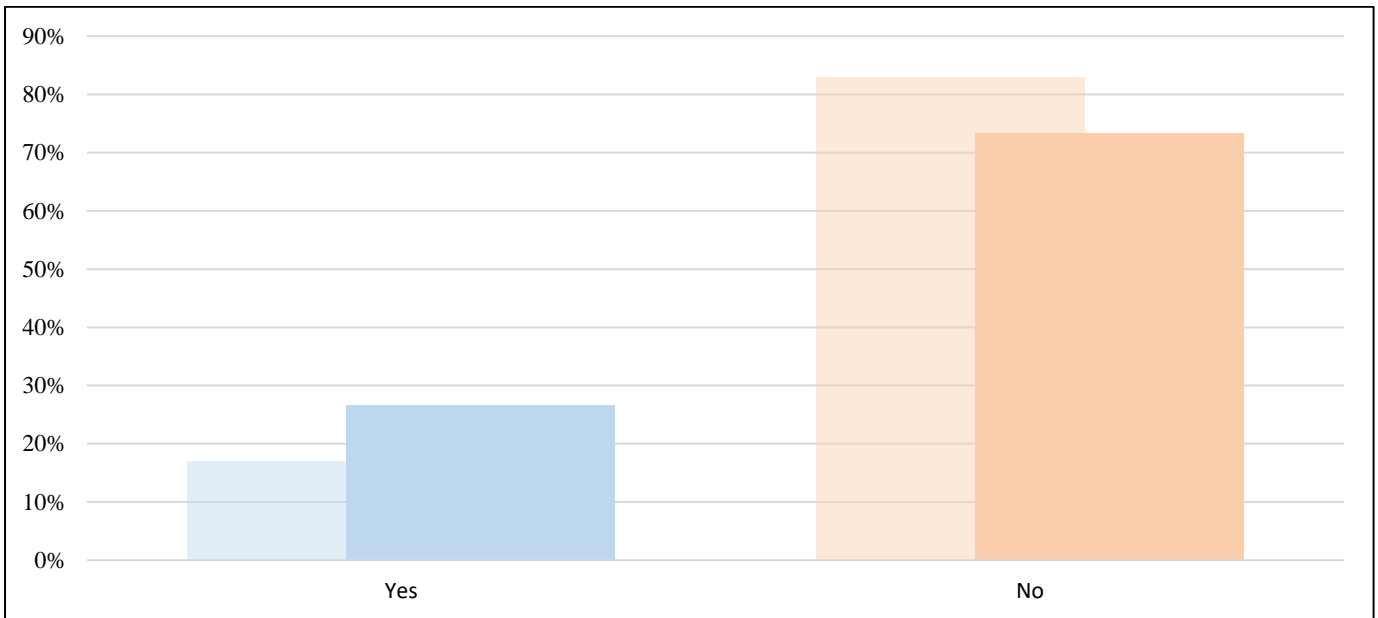
Thirty (30) people who responded to this question identified as male. Responses favoured 'yes' in comparison to the benchmark, which is represented transparently in the graph below: 27% (n=8) responding 'yes'; 73% (n=22) responding 'no' (see Graph 24).

When combined with other indicators, the following insights were derived:

- No men who answered ‘yes’ identified as LGBTQ, Aboriginal or had children accompanying them
- When asked ‘is a bed that does not meet your basic needs, better than no bed at all?’ only 1 out of 8 men answered ‘no’

When asked “is a bed that does not meet your basic needs, better than no bed at all?”, the following qualitative replies were collected:

- I would rather stay on the streets than a place where I feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Safer on the street than living in unsafe rooming houses.
- A bed is a bed, better than the street.
- No- if a place is unsafe, no bed is better
- Yes and No. If its unsafe then I dont want to go there but if the alternative is the streets and I have a family also to consider then I have no choice but accept the unsafe accommodation
- It can be easier for workers to book something that is unsafe as it has vacancies, but the person can be put in a dangerous situation
- The bed should always meet the basic needs of life.
- There should be an accommodation standard.
- It is a roof over your head at least. Thing's didn't work that should of in the room and I was to scared to complain because I was scared I would be kicked out for complaining.
- Not necessary, a safe and comfortable environment should be deemed essential.



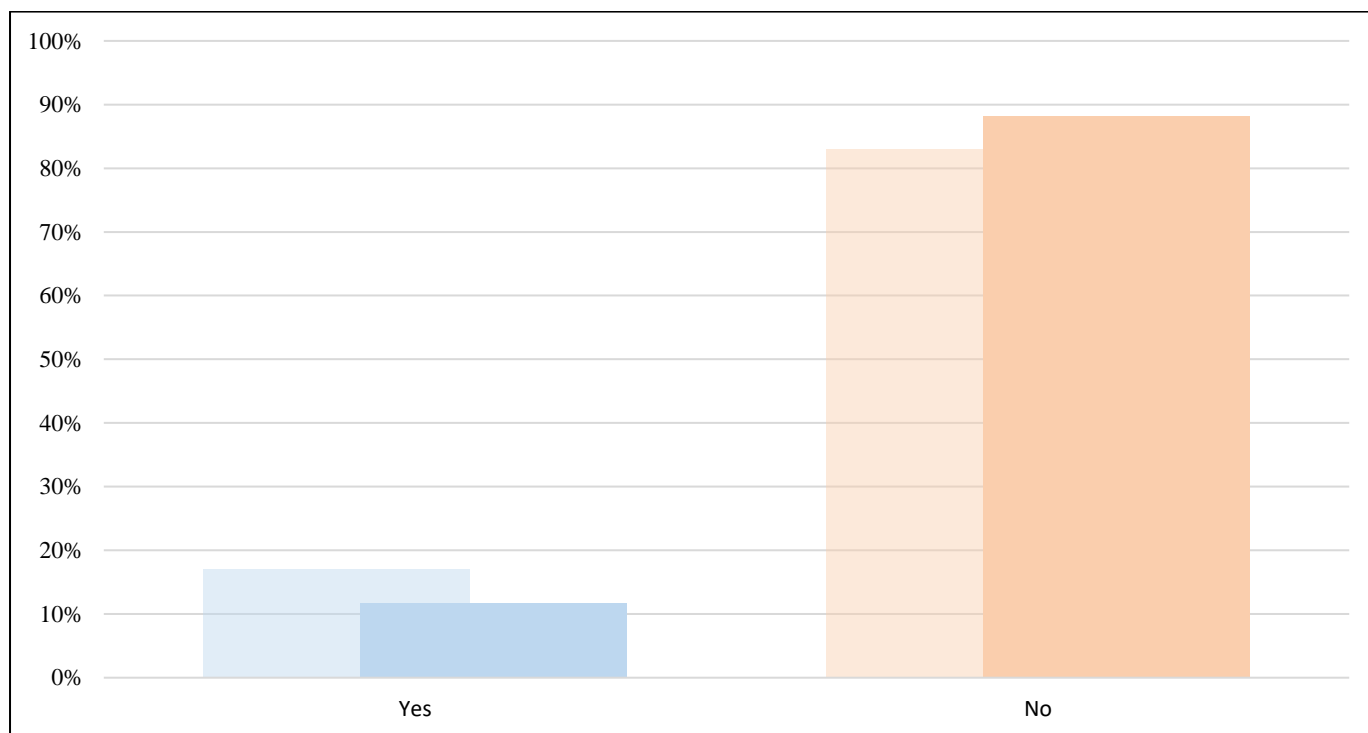
Graph 24

### iii. With children

Seventeen (17) people who responded to this question were people with children. Responses favoured 'no' in comparison to the benchmark, which is represented transparently in the graph below: 12% (n=2) responding 'yes'; 88% (n=15) responding 'no' (see Graph 25). Of the 15 respondents who answered 'no', 93% stayed in hotel/motel accommodation and were receiving case management support.

Less than half (40%) of respondents who answered 'no' were non-Aboriginal people born in Australia, 60% (n=9) were people born overseas or people of Aboriginal descent. This is the only instance in the entire survey where a racial and ethnic minority cohort were the majority respondent group. When compared to the question *is a bed that does not meet your basic needs, better than no bed at all?*, only two (2) respondents with children answered no to both questions. This assumes a strong perception among people with children that any bed is better than no bed, as the qualitative responses also confirm:

- Couldn't have my children on the streets
- Yes and no. If its unsafe then I dont want to go there but if the alternative is the streets and I have a family also to consider then I have no choice but accept the unsafe accomodation
- Need a roof over my head even though Motel was not clean enough for me or my children
- It I had not other choice I would take it



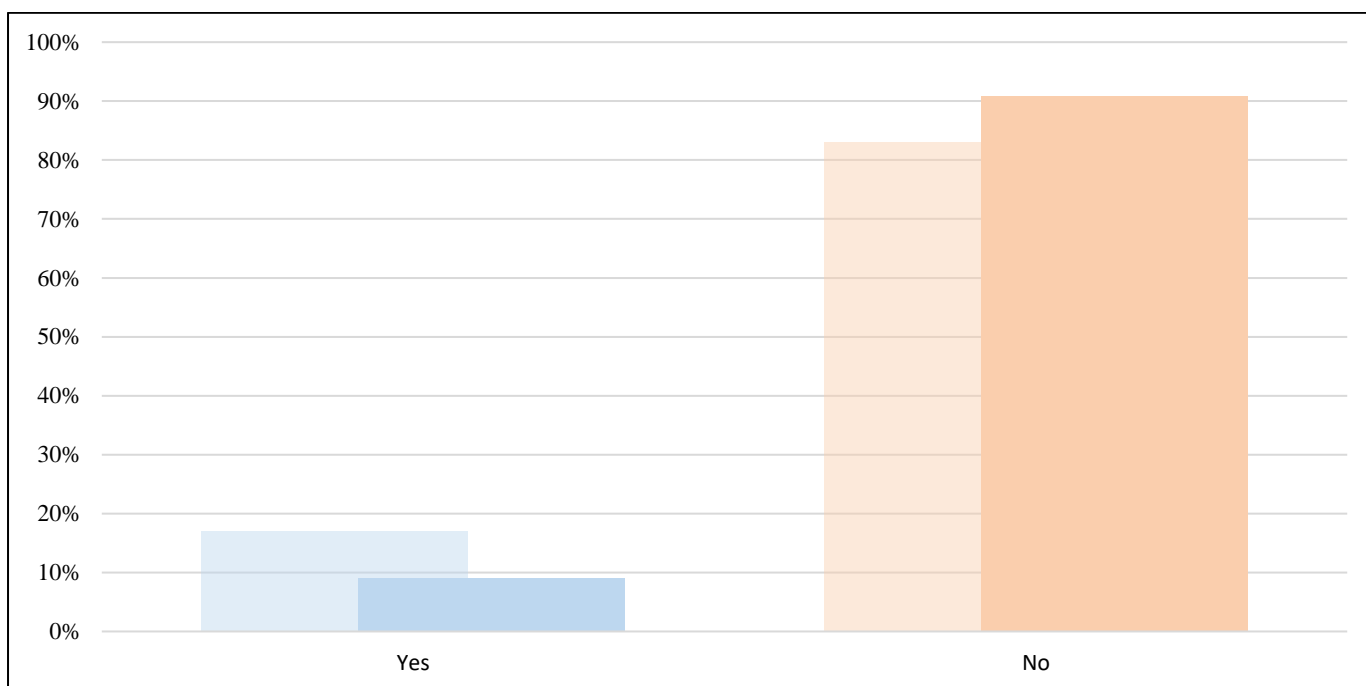
Graph 25



#### iv. Aged 55+

Eleven (11) people who responded to this question were aged 55 and over. Responses favoured 'no' in comparison to the benchmark, which is represented transparently in the graph below: 9% (n=1) responding 'yes'; 91% (n=10) responding 'no' (see Graph 26). Of the 11 respondents who answered 'no', 82% stayed in rooming house accommodation, and 100% (n=4) of women over the age of 55 answered 'no'. Qualitative responses:

- Safer on the street than living in unsafe rooming houses.
- I would rather feel safe and sleep in my car
- The rooming house I moved into had a filthy bed. I had to clean it before I could sleep on it. As soon as I could, I organised my own bed. A roof, even a terrible one with ice addicts, violence, drug overdoses and people addicted to child porn, is better than no roof at all. BUT IT IS NOT OK.

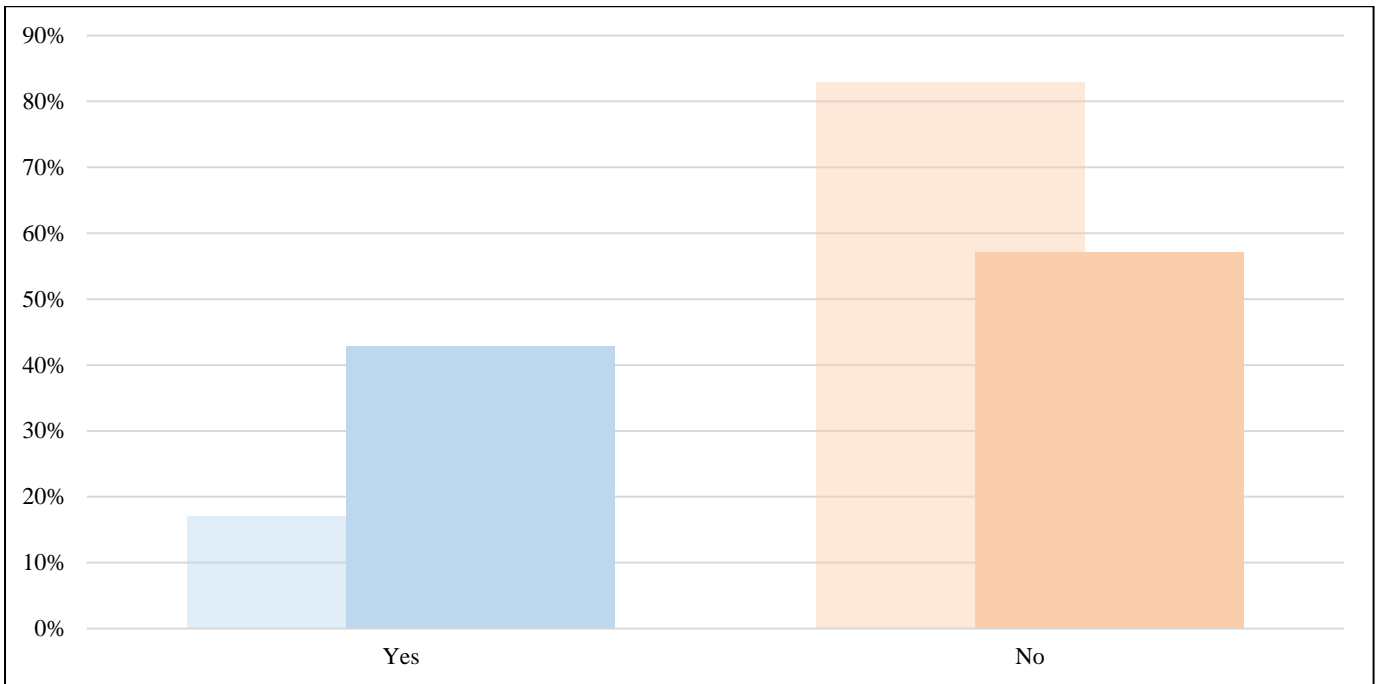


Graph 26

#### v. Aged ≤24

Seven (7) people who responded to this question were aged 24 and under. Responses favoured 'yes' in comparison to the benchmark, which is represented transparently in the graph below: 43% (n=3) responding 'yes'; 57% (n=4) responding 'no' (see Graph 27). Of the seven (7) respondents 86% stayed in hotel/motel accommodation, 100% (n=2) of women under answered 'no', compared to 60% (n=3) of males who answered 'yes'. Qualitative responses:

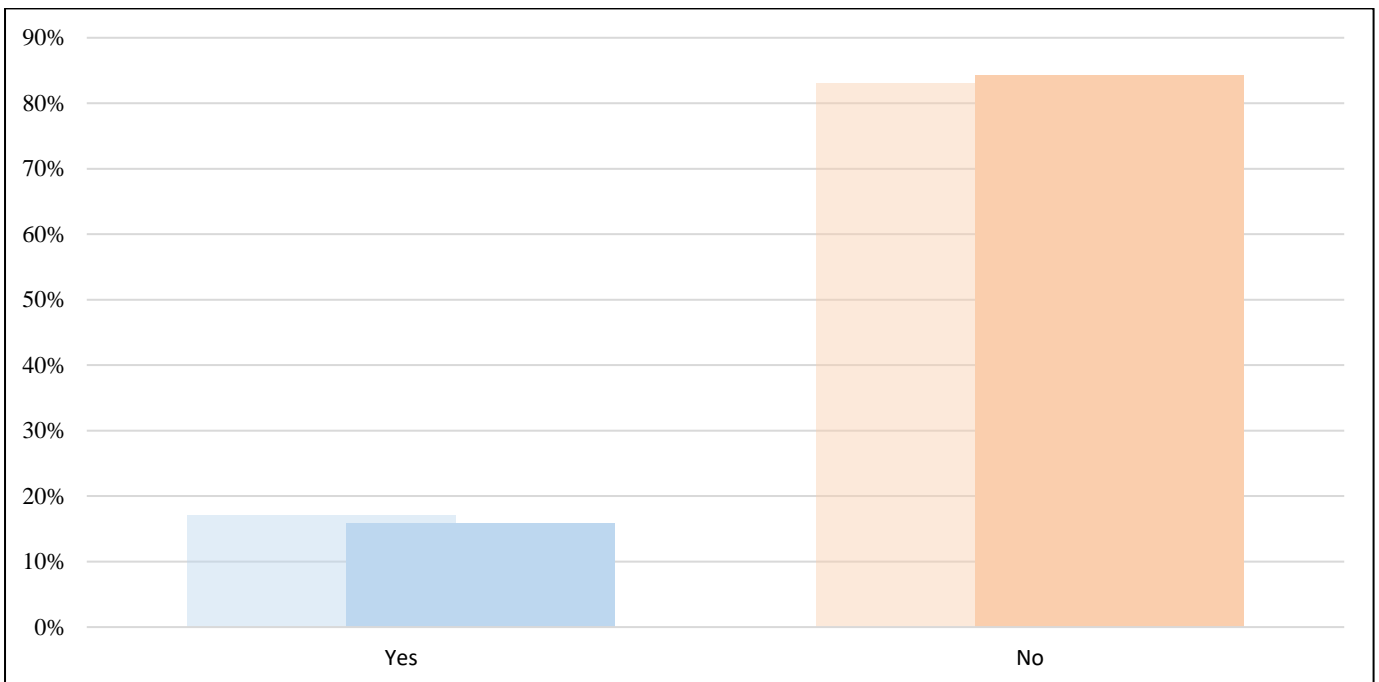
- It is a roof over your head at least. Thing's didn't work that should of in the room and I was too scared to complain because I was scared I would be kicked out for complaining.



Graph 27

**vi. Aged 25-54**

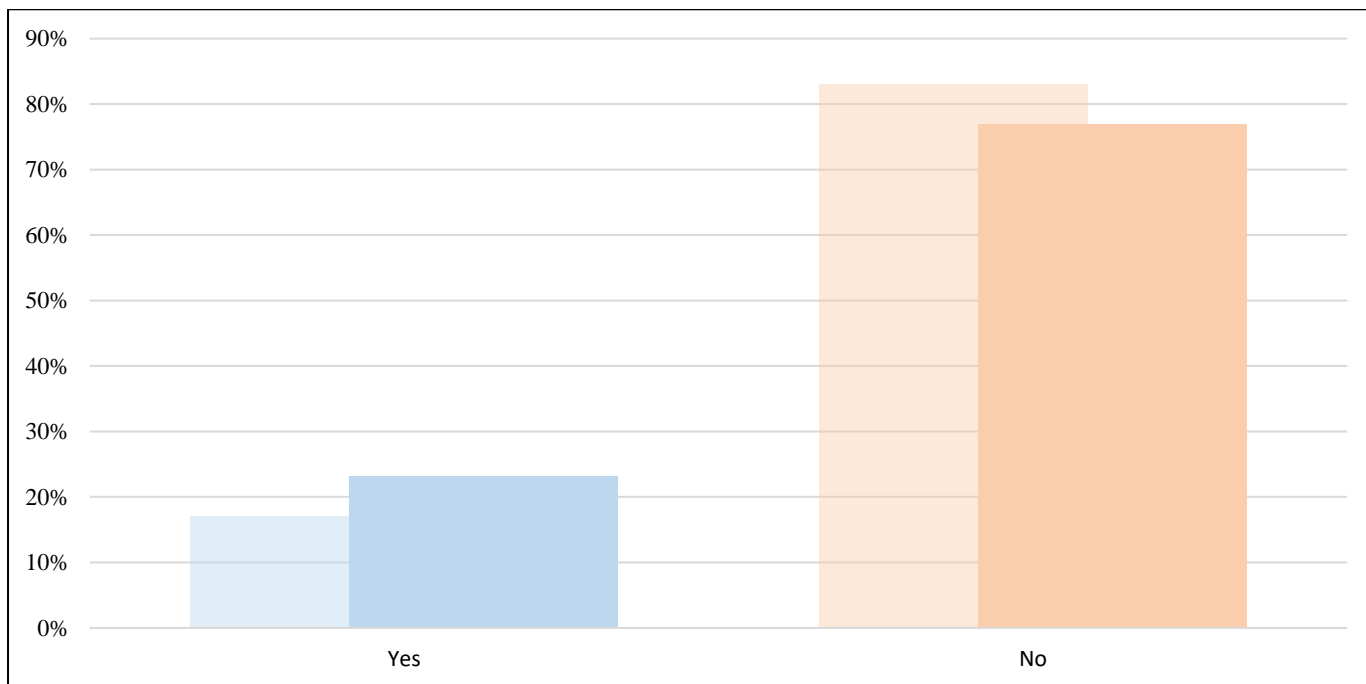
Thirty-eight (38) people who responded to this question were aged between 25 and 54. Responses closely mirrored the total respondent cohort, with no meaningful deviation: 16% (n=6) responding 'yes'; 84% (n=32) responding 'no' (Graph 28).



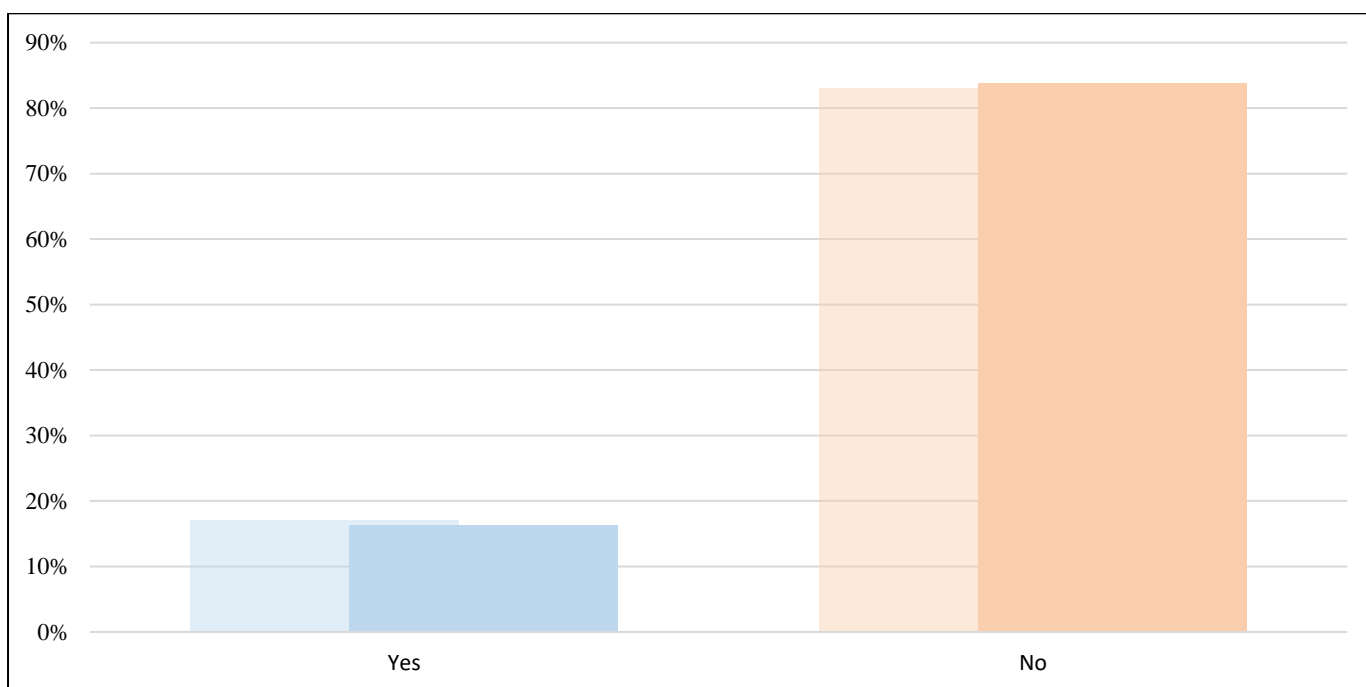
Graph 28

### vii. Receiving support

There were slight deviations observed when comparing people who received support and people who did not. In total, there were 13 people not receiving support, 77% (n=10) of whom answered ‘no’ and 23% (n=3) of whom answered ‘yes’ (see Graph 29). Responses favoured ‘yes’ in comparison to the benchmark and when compared to those who did receive support. A total of 43 people received support, among them 84% (n=36) of respondents responded ‘no’ to the question, and 16% (n=7) responded ‘yes’, closely mirroring the total respondent cohort, with no meaningful deviation (see Graph 30). These results suggest that people who did not receive support from a homelessness service whilst staying in crisis accommodation were more likely to accept a referral to an unsafe accommodation option.



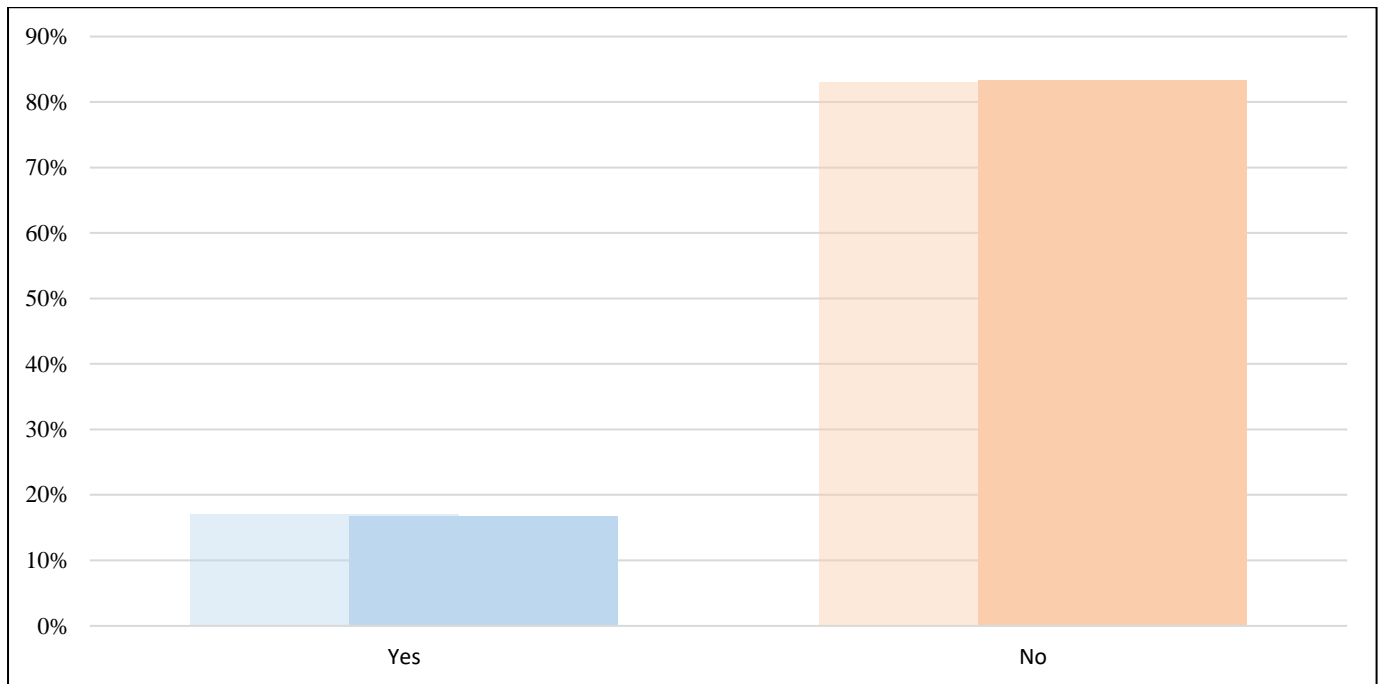
Graph 29



Graph 30

**viii. People with disability**

Forty-two (42) people who responded to this question identified themselves as a person with disability. Responses closely mirrored the total respondent cohort, with no meaningful deviation: 17% (n=7) responding 'yes'; 83% (n=35) responding 'no' (Graph 31).



Graph 31

## CONSUMER SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDBACK

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This section provides a summary of consumer-driven suggestions for improving the state of crisis accommodation infrastructure and homelessness service provision. The qualitative feedback below is derived from responses to the following question: If you had to stay in crisis accommodation again, how would you like it be? Responses have been edited for readability.

The most prominent comment was that crisis accommodation should be '**safe and clean**'. Approximately 20 responses contained reference to the need for safety, with an emphasis on privacy and self-containment with accompanying amenities such as one's own bathroom, room, cooking facilities and lounge. The lack of amenities had a knock on effect in respect to finances, with some consumers indicating that without proper facilities they were forced to buy more expensive ready-made or take-away meals: to have my own kitchen to cook and save money not buying fast food. Consumers indicated that accommodation should provide the **emotional security** of a home:

- More like a medium-term accommodation service with all the amenities: own bathroom etc. It's got to feel like home
- The exact opposite of what it was. More like where I am staying now at Ozanam House but self-contained and with access to regular support

According to consumers, **security and conflict resolution** at crisis accommodation settings is variable. Some consumers indicated in other survey response that police presence contribute to feelings of unsafety, and that there should be on-site security to prevent and resolve violence:

- Safe, specifically not to be stolen from.
- Safe, not as noisy. More security staff as there is lots of violence.
- More secure. Cleaner and a lot quieter. More access to kitchen facilities. I'd like it to be more stable so I don't have to extend my stay every week. This made me feel like I was living week by week and was really stressful.
- Wouldn't want to stay in crisis accommodation again.

Another common response was that 'stays need to be longer', with better communication about end-dates and extensions. Many respondents indicated that the **insecurity of tenure** and the uncertainty of not knowing when accommodation provision will end, negatively impacted their feelings of safety, for example:

Safe, supportive, no gossip, trust. Homelessness access point would not return my calls about extending accommodation. "Living on edge" that me and my kids would get kicked out. We got called on day of extension. This was very stressful.

Communication with homelessness services was a common complaint among consumers. The most overwhelmingly common feedback was that there simply was **not enough case support**, instead the sector relied upon private accommodation providers that did not hold the same duty of care:

Safe, clean, support provided to give hope about pathway out; care taken about who lives there; support onsite day and night. Private enterprise is in direct conflict with homelessness support. Their objective is to make money at any cost.

Accommodation coupled with support was seen as an immediate area of concern:

- Own bathroom, own kitchen, own lounge, case worker
- Support from case management
- Run by people who care and can give support

- More support on site. Clean, well maintained. More care about resident safety and who moves in, particularly if there is a shared space I am now in a self-contained 1-bedroom unit. I feel so much safer. I would prefer if crisis accom looked like this
- With the same case manager for me they will know us more better and will be familiar with us
- I would want to be accessing support from a case worker
- Safe, clean and support with a case manager
- Well supported
- Have more support.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/5f604810-d674-42a7-a547-82e3eec318e2/AIHW-HOU-327-SHS-data-tables.xlsx.aspx>