



advance to zero

local communities
ending homelessness



The Australian VI-SPDAT Version 3: Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool

FAQs for Experienced Users

The Vulnerability Index and the VI-SPDAT versions 1 and 2 have been used in Australia since 2010. This factsheet is for users who are familiar with previous versions of these tools and would like to learn more about specific content and changed scoring of the Australian VI-SPDAT Version 3. For more general information about the VI-SPDAT Version 3 see VI-SPDAT Version 3 Summary Fact Sheet and VI-SPDAT Version 3 - FAQs.

What factors have influenced the latest version of the Australian VI-SPDAT?

The latest Australian version of the VI-SPDAT is Version 3 (2020). Following evaluation from users across Australia and in consultation with OrgCode, the VI-SPDAT has been updated to ensure more accurate information around lived experience of homelessness, physical and mental health factors that impact on homelessness, as well as the risk of violence and domestic violence experienced by those who are homeless. The new VI-SPDAT builds on existing local data analysis as well as creating a national data base to help understand the gaps in services and policies that address homelessness in Australia

In comparison to previous versions of the VI-SPDAT, it is noted that the acuity scores are higher in Version 3 of the Australian VI-SPDAT. Does this affect the acuity scores that an individual may reach, and will this affect its comparison to previous versions?

There are limited concerns regarding Version 3's comparison to the previous versions. It is acknowledged that due to the increased weight given to 'Wellness', that an individual could score much higher in Version 3. At this time however, it should still be comparable to versions 1 or 2.

Will the categories that determine whether the score's ranking is low, medium or high, be redistributed, given the higher scoring range?

Not at this point. The categories will be re-evaluated further down the track. Having enough data to review will provide OrgCode with the information they require to

determine and advise of any changes to the categories.

What is the rationale for wellness weighing so heavily on the VI-SPDAT Version 3 scoring compared to other factors?

The VI-SPDAT aims to identify individuals who are medically vulnerable. The rationale behind the increase in weight on the scoring is due to the higher impact that health can have on an individual while experiencing homelessness and the known higher rates of morbidity for rough sleepers. Research on this topic has identified the correlation between homelessness, increased use of emergency health services and higher risk of mortality.

In regard to the weight of the domains, is the history of homelessness now underweighted?

Yes, in comparison to the wellness domain, the history of homelessness does look underweighted. However, it is important to note that the VI-SPDAT is to be used with individuals who are experiencing homelessness only. Length of time of homelessness is still a factor that all communities need to prioritise when looking at housing allocation.

In relation to the questions around risk of violence, why does question 8 score 1 and question 9 score 2, resulting in a potential score of 3?

Question 8 is “Are you currently being harmed or risk of being harmed by another person such as a spouse, parent relative or friend?”

Question 9 is “Have you experienced violence or threats of violence, such as punching, kicking, attempted strangulation, use of weapons or controlling behaviour, in the last six months, that has had an impact on feeling safe?”

These questions are being trialled in the Australian VI-SPDAT Version 3, and have been added following advocacy from the domestic violence sector.

- » If there is imminent risk to the participant’s safety, this should be addressed immediately as a first priority.
- » The points allocated to these questions reflect the vulnerability of participants sleeping rough, who are also experiencing violence while being on the street, particularly for women.
- » The wording of these questions has been carefully crafted following consultation with specialist domestic violence groups.

How should we collectively collate feedback from people with lived experience about their lived experience of doing this version, to inform any future versions of the VI-SPDAT?

Please contact the AAEH, who will remain in discussion with Orgcode, to provide feedback on the VI-SPDAT Version 3. It is essential that future versions of the VI-SPDAT be informed by user experience. Contact us at info@aaeh.org.au