

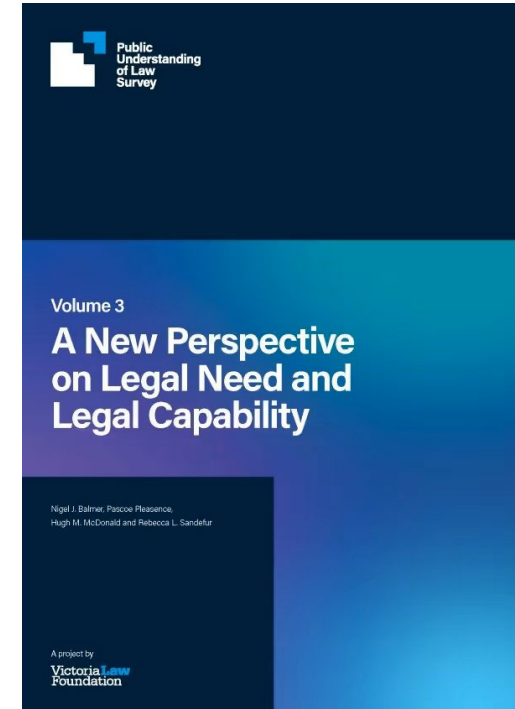
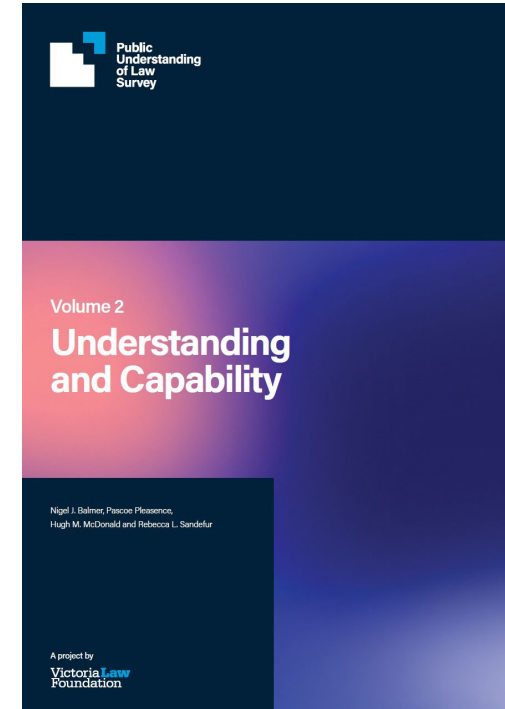
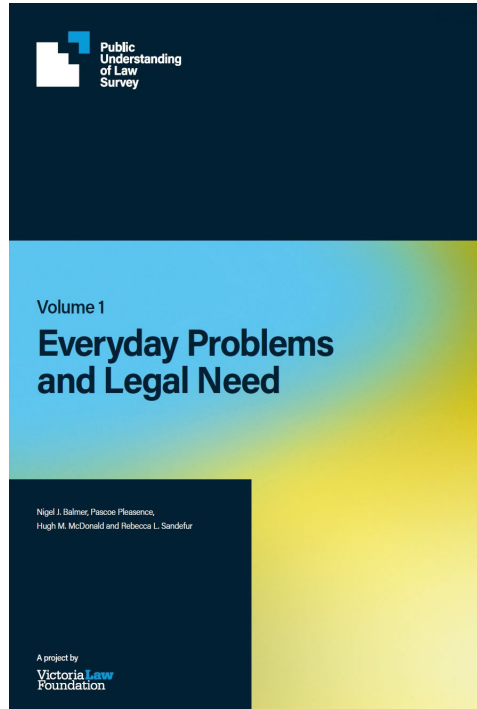
Legal needs and housing status: **Insights from the Public Understanding of Law Survey**

Victoria Law Foundation Research Network
9 September 2025

Dr. Hugh McDonald, Research Director

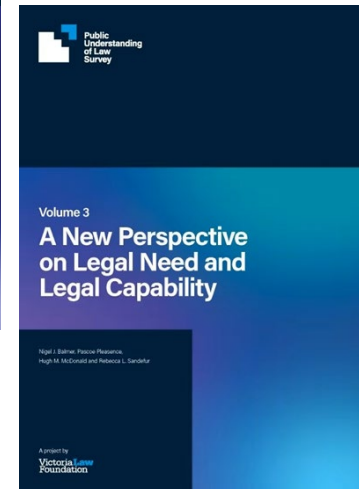
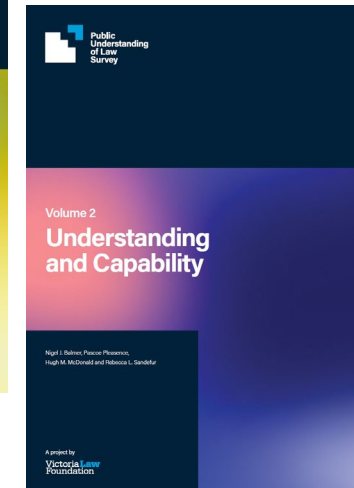
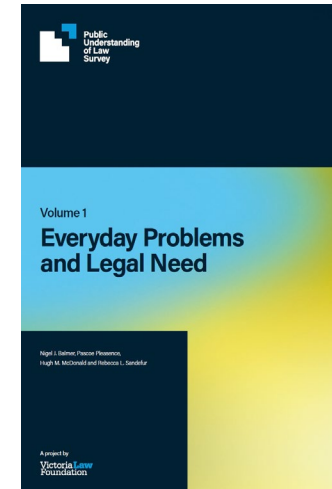
Today:

- New PULS findings
- Housing status measure
- What PULS tells us about renters and rental problems
- Brief look at what we know from PULS about single parents



Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS)

- Surveys legal need & legal capability
- Face-to-face probability sample of 6,008 Victorians. Provides representative insights
- Unique dataset – bottom-up, real-world, lived experience of what different people experience, do and achieve
- 3 volumes of headline reporting & briefing and other papers, more coming



Public Understanding of Law Survey (PULS)

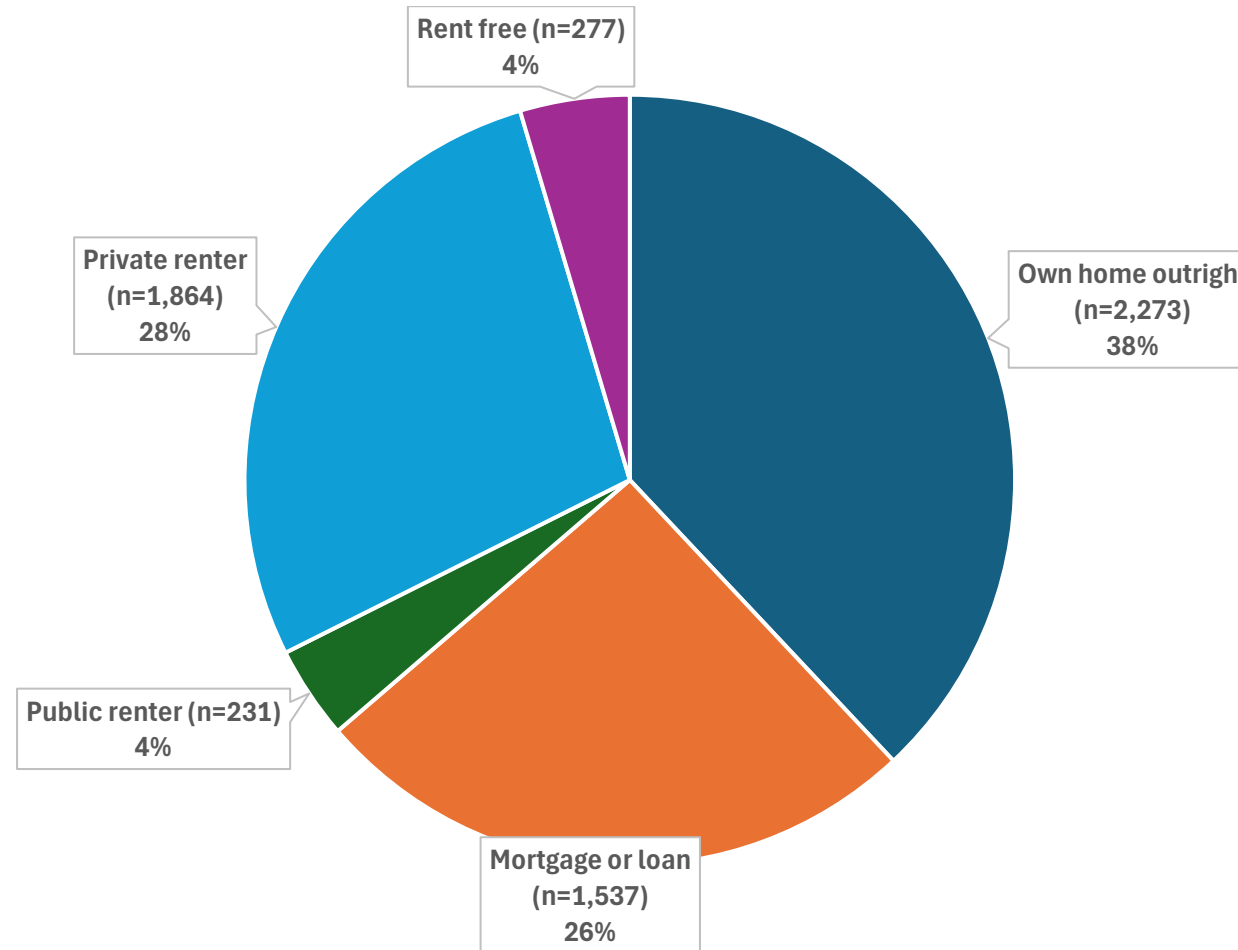
PULS captured respondents' housing status

Variable for analysis:

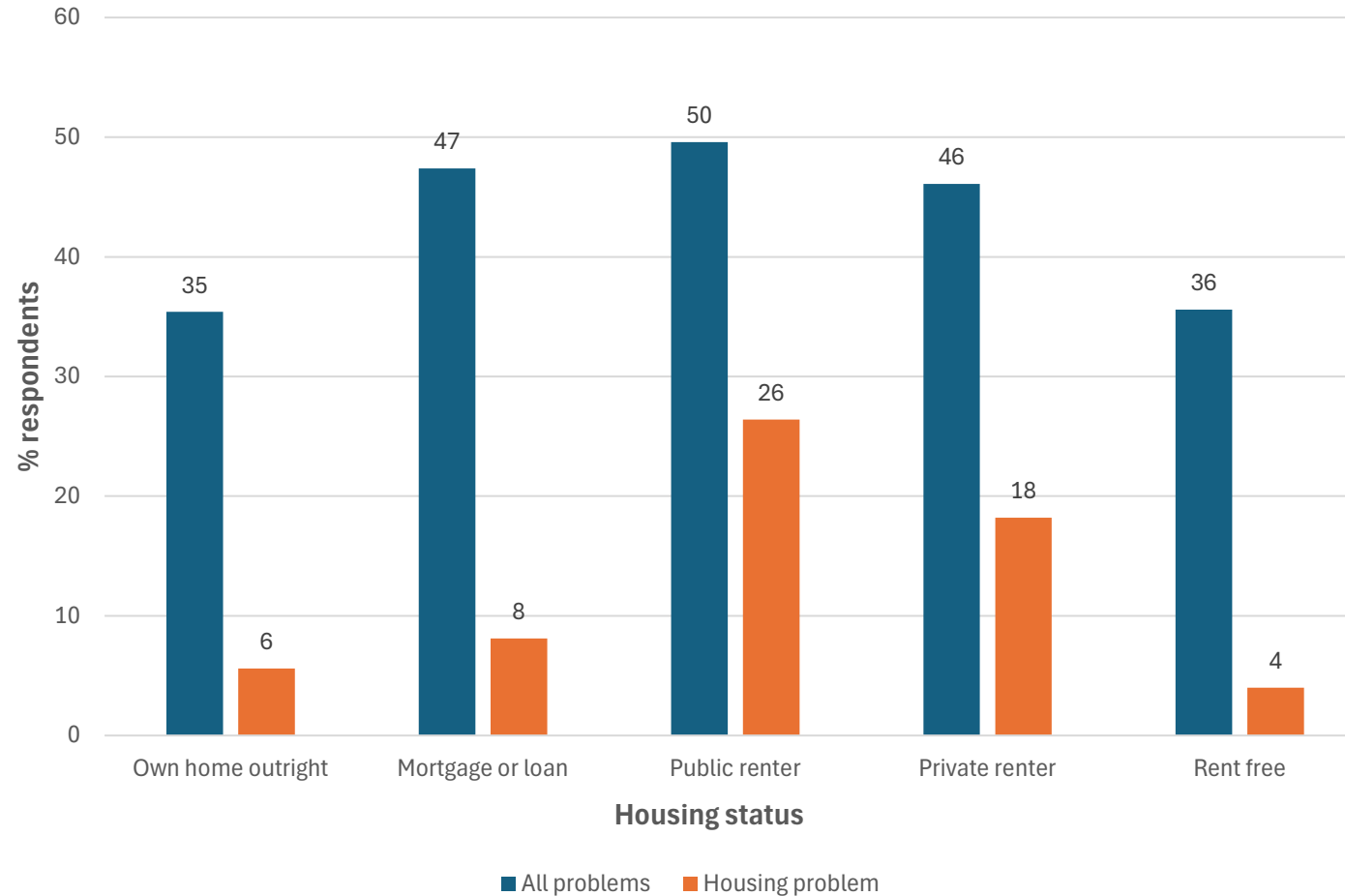
1. Own home outright (i.e. own without mortgage)
2. Mortgage or loan (i.e. owned with a mortgage or loan arrangements)
3. Public renter (i.e. rent from public housing or other community or social housing)
4. Private renter (i.e. rent from private landlord)
5. Living rent free (i.e. living with owners/renters and other precarious forms of residency)



PULS respondent housing status



Prevalence of justiciable problems and housing-related problems



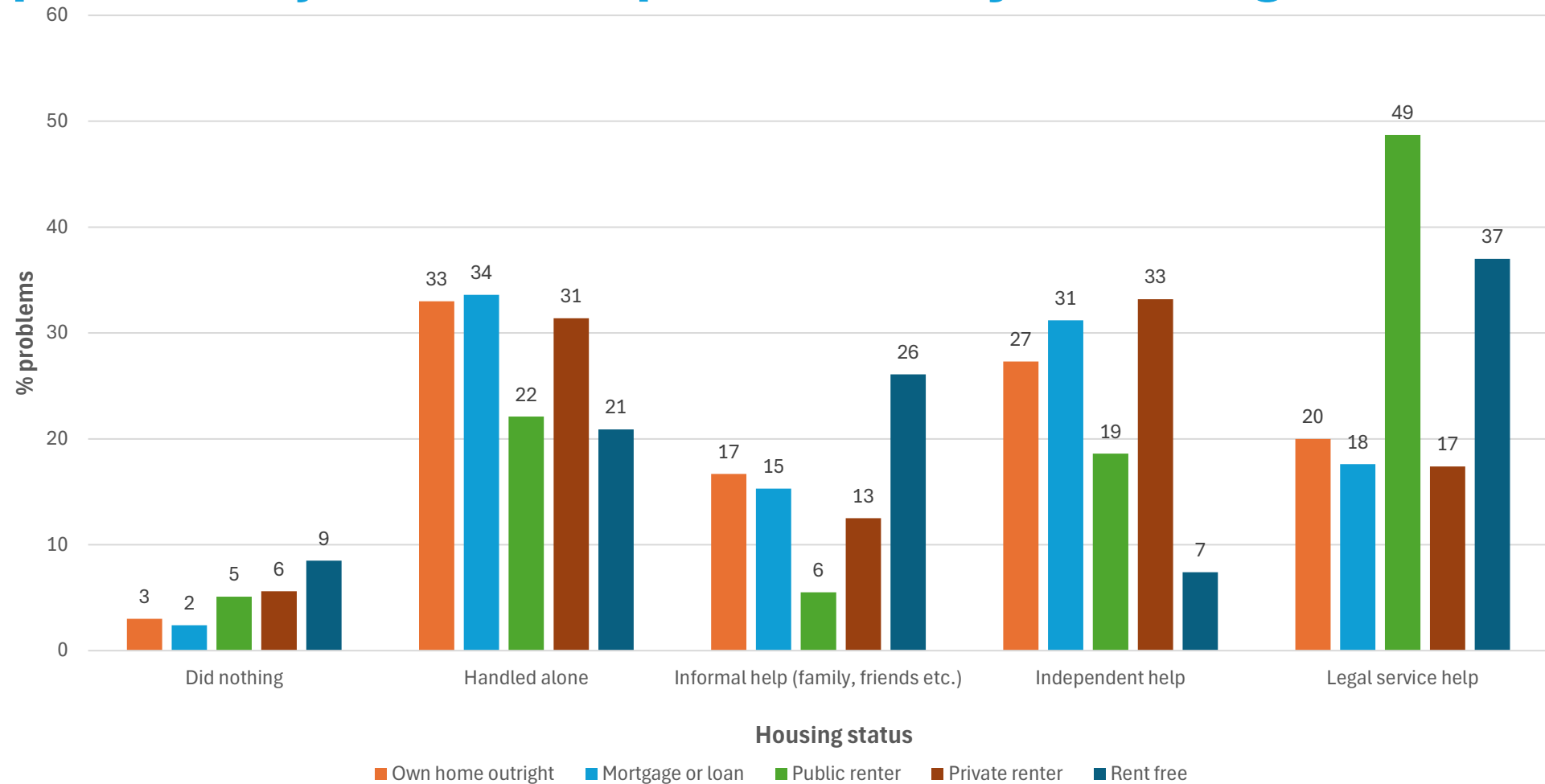
Prevalence of broad type of justiciable problem by housing status

	Own home outright	Mortgage or loan	Public renter	Private renter	Rent free	PULS overall
Goods and services	18.8	25.5	20.3	20.3	20.1	20.8
Housing	5.6	8.1	26.4	18.3	4	10.5
Fines	5.7	11.1	10.8	12.5	11.5	9.5
Employment	3.3	7.7	8.7	9.7	13.7	6.9
Family	3.5	4.2	11.2	7.6	3.6	5.1
Government Payments	3.7	2.6	11.7	6.6	2.9	4.5
Debt or Money	2	4.2	12.1	6.1	3.6	4.2
Injury	2.7	4.4	7.3	4.6	2.9	3.8
Government and Public Services	3.7	3.1	6.9	4	1.4	3.6
Business or Investment Property	2.9	3.4	0.4	2	0.7	2.6

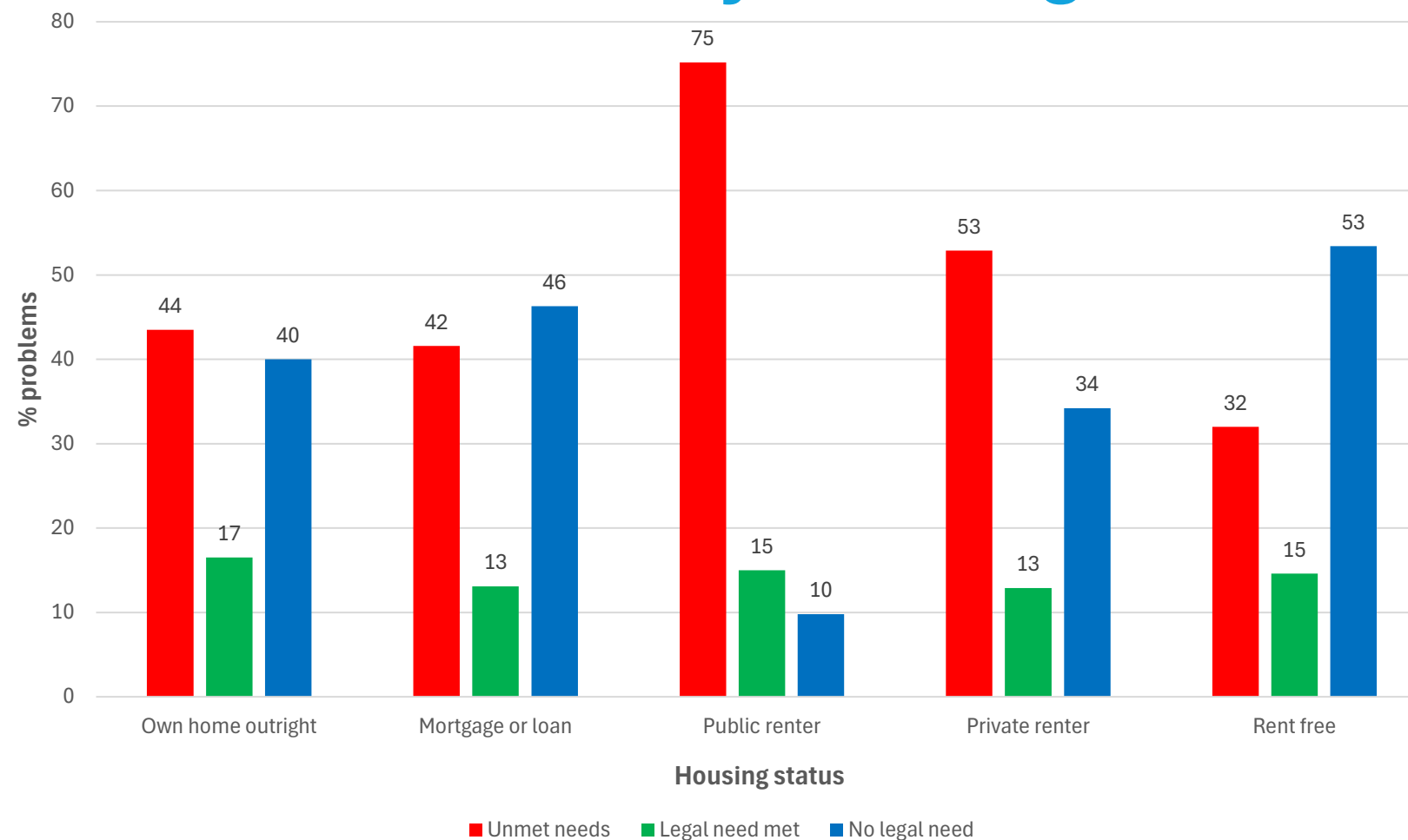
Prevalence of housing problem sub-type by housing status

	Home owner	On home loan	Public housing	Private renter	Rent free	Total
Neighbours - fences, trees, or building work	21.4	21.5	11.1	4.4	10.5	11.5
Neighbours - noise, litter, pets, or other antisocial behaviour	23.0	21.5	13.7	10.0	10.5	14.9
Neighbours - boundaries or rights of way or access to your property	7.5	5.6	0.0	2.0	5.3	3.5
Owned housing - a contract of sale / settlement	3.2	6.2	1.7	0.4	0.0	2.1
Owned housing - a loan	1.6	4.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.1
Owned housing - a strata or owners' corporation or common property	4.8	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
Owned housing - planning permission / building regulations	3.2	1.7	0.9	0.0	5.3	1.1
Owned housing - living in a retirement village	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rented housing - a rental agreement	3.2	5.1	5.1	9.0	5.3	6.7
Rented housing - a bond	2.1	4.0	2.6	6.8	0.0	4.8
Rented housing - rent payments	5.3	4.0	6.0	10.0	0.0	7.4
Rented housing - eviction	4.3	2.3	6.8	4.8	0.0	4.4
Rented housing - repairs, maintenance or security	8.6	14.7	35.9	40.1	42.1	29.2
Rented housing - harassment by a landlord	0.0	1.7	9.4	4.2	15.8	3.8
Rented housing - a strata or owners' corporation or common property	1.1	0.0	0.9	0.6	0.0	0.6
Rented Housing - transfer of tenancy or sub-letting	0.5	0.0	4.3	2.6	0.0	1.9
Rented housing - living in a retirement village	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Living in a nursing home, group or residential care facility	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.5
Other	10.2	4.5	1.7	3.8	5.3	4.9
Total Problem	100	100	100	100	100	100

Response to justiciable problems by housing status



Legal need met or not by housing status

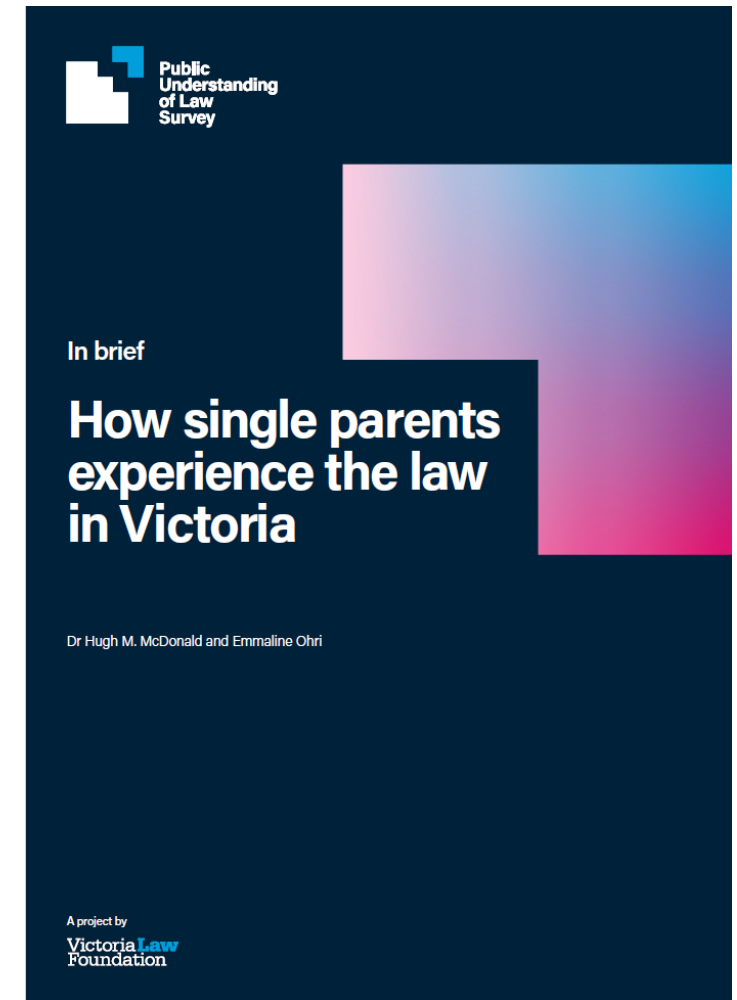


Takeaways

- Legal need varies by housing status
- While renters have the highest rates of housing-related problems, they don't just have housing problems, they also experience higher rates of many other types of problems, and have higher legal problem prevalence overall
- The type of housing problems renters most frequently experience concern repairs, maintenance or security of their rented housing
- Public Renters stand out as the housing status with the highest prevalence of justiciable problems overall, and of housing problems, and while they had the highest rate of advice from legal services, they also had the highest level of unmet legal need
- Private Renters fare a bit better than Public Renters, although they used legal services at the lowest rate, and after Public Renters, had the next highest rate of unmet legal need.

Looking at PULS findings for single parents:

- Justiciable problem prevalence varies by family status: single parents experience higher legal prevalence (49% cf. 42% overall)
- Single parents experienced higher rates of the following broad problem types
 - Family
 - Government payment
 - Debt & money
 - Housing



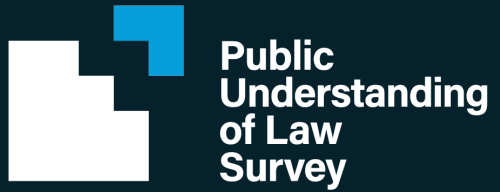
In brief

How single parents experience the law in Victoria

Dr Hugh M. McDonald and Emmaline Ohri

A project by
Victoria Law
Foundation

- Single parents more frequently did nothing in response to justiciable problems (7.1% of problems cf. 4% overall)
- Single parents had higher rates of unmet legal need (70%) compared to other types of families (38-49%) and PULS respondents overall (49%).



Thankyou

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