



MINISTRY OF HOUSING
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Severe Housing Deprivation Estimate

Frequently Asked Questions



What is the 2018 Severe Housing Deprivation Estimate?

The New Zealand definition of homelessness was published by Stats NZ in 2009. Homelessness is defined as *living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing: are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing.*

The operational definition of severe housing deprivation attempts to estimate the number of people on Census night who were homeless, these categories have been defined as:

1. Living without habitable accommodation due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing.¹ This is described as 'without shelter' and includes people who were living rough, in an improvised dwelling, or in a mobile dwelling not in a motor camp.
2. Living in a non-private dwelling, due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing. This is described as 'temporary accommodation' and includes two groups: Those who live in emergency or transitional accommodation provided by non-government organisations, including night shelters and women's refuges on Census night; and those who live in camping grounds, motor camps, boarding houses, hotels, motels, guest accommodation, or marae.
3. Living as a temporary resident in a severely crowded, permanent private dwelling due to a lack of access to minimally adequate housing. This is described as 'sharing accommodation'. These are people who are staying in a severely overcrowded permanent private dwelling (ie, with a deficit of two or more bedrooms) who are not part of the 'host household' ie, the owners or listed tenants.

Why has it been produced and what will it be used for?

This information helps to support what we know about people living in this situation, so we can make sure we have the right supports in the right places for this population.

This report provides an updated estimate of those living in these circumstances in early 2018 reinforcing the need for the initiatives we have in the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan sets out the Government's vision for reducing and preventing homelessness. HUD is looking at how the action plan can now focus on the current challenges facing people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness.

One of the useful aspects of the way this estimate is collated is the different cohorts identified, highlighting the different populations we work with and the need for the different levels of support and targeted services we fund and provide.

This work is being considered alongside more current data and information we have from the providers and agencies we work with to inform how initiatives are implemented to support people in the right ways in the right places.

How was it developed and who by?

Homelessness is defined as living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing are:

- without shelter
- in temporary accommodation
- sharing accommodation with a household, or
- living in uninhabitable housing.

Amore, Viggers, Baker and Howden-Chapman used available data from the 2001 and 2006 Censuses, as well as data from emergency housing providers, to estimate how many people were experiencing 'severe housing deprivation' (which is synonymous with 'homelessness'). This estimate was published in 2013, and subsequently updated by Amore in 2016, using 2013 Census data.

The *Severe housing deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018* report updates this estimate using data from the 2018 Census.

A separate report is still to be produced on the number of people estimated to be living in uninhabitable housing.

Who uses the information in the estimate?

Public servants in central and local government, and NGO housing providers use the estimate information as a guide for the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness. It is also currently an outcome measure for HUD.

Can we trust the Census 2018 information in the estimate?

The estimate is presented in the report with a number of caveats regarding the data. This report has been reviewed by several experts and we feel confident that the Census data has been analysed and presented appropriately.

Is the number of homelessness people in New Zealand growing, or not as fast as feared?

This estimate cannot tell us whether the number of people experiencing homelessness currently is growing or not. Due to the number of changes made to the 2018 Census, any comparison over time is not recommended.

However, understanding that people will want to compare over time, the authors have noted that compared with 2013, the rate of severe housing deprivation in 2018 had increased by 0.7 per 10,000 people, an increase of about 4,400 people. This increase was largely due to more people sharing accommodation in severely crowded houses.

Can we use the figure 41,600 with confidence?

We feel confident that this is a minimum estimate of the number of people experiencing Severe Housing Deprivation in March 2018.

What are the limitations of the information in the estimate?

There are a number of limitations to consider when interpreting and using the results presented in this report. The 2018 severe housing deprivation count, like previous estimates, will have underestimated the true level of severe housing deprivation in New Zealand. Scope changes, census operational difficulties, and quality limitations inherent in surveying people experiencing homelessness mean comparisons over time are not recommended. These caveats are detailed on pages 10 to 12 of the report.

What initiatives has the government got to help address homelessness?

A total of \$570m has been allocated to deliver 8,000 new, warm, dry public homes across the country over the next four to five years. We expect this will be split between approximately 6,000 public housing homes and 2,000 transitional homes.

It is a top priority of this Government to ensure New Zealanders have safe, warm housing. This latest commitment means that by the end of 2024 the Government will have delivered 18,000 additional places since this Government took office.

Since the Alert Levels were put in place, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has secured over 1,200 motel places and continues to look for more. These places are mainly in motels and are for those who are homeless, e.g. people staying in night shelters and sleeping rough.

Housing First is the Government's primary response to homelessness. The programme seeks to house and support people who have been homeless for a long time or who are homeless and face multiple and complex issues.

The Aotearoa Homelessness Action Plan continues to drive our work to prevent and reduce homelessness and implementation is continuing for most of the 18 immediate actions. Some actions may be delayed due to COVID-19 and we are continuing to review these in light of alert level changes and working closely with iwi, providers and other government agencies to respond to immediate need.

Actions announced as part of the Aotearoa Homelessness Action Plan include:

- improving transitions from acute mental health and addiction inpatient units
- piloting a rapid rehousing approach
- introducing housing broker roles to increase access to private rental housing
- introducing a flexible funding package for whānau with children in emergency housing
- introducing a local innovation and partnership fund
- building the capacity and capability of Māori providers
- ongoing involvement of people with lived experience of homelessness

Other actions build on and support existing initiatives. These include:

- urgently increasing the supply of transitional housing
- redesigning and expanding Sustaining Tenancies
- expanding housing support for young people leaving Oranga Tamariki care
- better preparing people for private rental (Ready to Rent programme)

Why is counting the homelessness population so hard?

There are several reasons, this population has more immediate needs than 'to be counted', the priority for them, for the providers supporting them, and for the funders is to support and provide funding to address these needs, rather than funding the level of resource required to count them.

Other reasons include:

- People may not consider themselves homeless – they're staying with friends/family until they can find a landlord to rent to them, save enough money, get a job that pays enough, etc.
- People may feel whakamā/ashamed, that they don't deserve any support, that their family don't approve of them anymore.
- People's living circumstances may be illegal, eg, camping without permission; renting someone's garage.
- People may be living off the grid – eg in the bush, so they aren't in a visible dwelling.
- As described in Allen and Clarke's rapid literature review of homelessness counts² for the Ministry of Social Development, point-in-time counts are useful for estimating the size of populations who are without shelter or in temporary accommodation, but often undercount those in shared accommodation or uninhabitable housing.

What is specifically new information in the estimate, that has not been captured previously?

New breakdowns that have not been included in previous reports include:

- Category of severe housing deprivation by gender, by age, and by ethnic group
- For total Severe Housing Deprivation, ethnic group by gender; and ethnic group by age group
- Category of severe housing deprivation by regional council area.

Māori

What Māori housing initiatives has the government got to help address homelessness? We are placing an emphasis on actions that take kaupapa Māori approaches and that aim to assist hapū, iwi and Māori organisations to address homelessness in a way that they consider best meets the needs and aspirations of their communities.

Kaupapa Māori principles underpin the development of the homelessness action plan, and will drive the design and delivery of actions to seek measurable change for whānau, hapū and iwi. This means that actions will work to improve outcomes for Māori experiencing homelessness and will work to prevent and reduce homelessness for Māori.

The action plan includes targeted actions to improve outcomes for Māori experiencing homelessness and increase the number of Māori providers. These include:

- partnering with iwi, hapū and Marae to prevent homelessness through whenua-based initiatives
- supporting Māori Community Housing Providers and other Māori and iwi providers to increase supply

- building capacity and capability of Māori providers to enhance their ability to provide services and support new and potential Māori Community Housing Providers
- supporting kaupapa Māori approaches to deliver actions in a way that demonstrate Māori principles.

Contracts worth \$2.2m have already been completed with Māori homelessness service providers to the end of June 2020, with more contracts in development.

What is known about Maori over-representation in these figures?

- Severe housing deprivation disproportionately affected ethnic minorities. Māori severe housing deprivation prevalence rates were close to four times the European rate, and the true levels of inequity are probably greater.
- The 2018 Severe Housing Deprivation estimate results indicate Māori made up:
 - 26 percent of those living without shelter
 - 18 percent of those living in commercial accommodation
 - 36 percent of those sharing accommodation.
- Rates of severe housing deprivation were high among Māori young people, including 7,644 young Māori under 24 years of age.
- The 2018 estimates for Māori are lower than what HUD is hearing from providers who work with Māori experiencing homelessness.
- Anecdotally homelessness providers, who are very aware of need, are advising HUD that homelessness has been getting worse, particularly among Māori.
- This report confirms that these figures are a likely undercount of Māori experiencing severe housing deprivation.
- There was substantial variation in response rates by ethnicity for the 2018 Census, with Māori particularly affected.
- The main impact on the severe housing deprivation estimate is that around 330,000 people could not be allocated to a household. Māori made up about a third of the 330,000 people missing from households and they are more likely to share with family or friends when they cannot access a place of their own.

What is known about Pacific people in the estimate?

- Severe housing deprivation disproportionately affected ethnic minorities. Pacific peoples' severe housing deprivation prevalence rates were close to six times the European rate, and the true levels of inequity are probably greater.
- The 2018 Severe Housing Deprivation estimate results indicate Pacific peoples made up:
 - 7 percent of those living without shelter
 - 9 percent of those living in commercial accommodation
 - 29 percent of those sharing accommodation.
- These figures are a likely undercount of Pacific peoples experiencing severe housing deprivation.
- There was substantial variation in response rates by ethnicity for the 2018 Census, with Pacific peoples particularly affected. The main impact on the severe housing deprivation estimate is that around 330,000 people could not be allocated to a household. Pacific peoples made up about a sixth (17 percent) of the 330,000 people missing from households, they are more likely to share with family or friends when they cannot access a place of their own.

Is there a regional breakdown of the numbers?

Yes, the total numbers and categories are available by region, as well as Territorial Authority and Auckland Local Board areas. However, ethnic group breakdowns have not been produced at area level.