Homelessness Insights June 2025



This report aims to provide insights into homelessness using a range of data and observational reports. The focus of this report is on those living without shelter, however where possible we have included information regarding all categories of homelessness. Where available, data has been presented to March 2025, however some data sources have a lag.

Key messages:

- The most robust estimate we have of those living without shelter is the 2023 Census estimate² of 4,965. However the data and observations we have collated from around the country indicate this has increased. It is not possible to quantify the exact size of this increase, however it appears to be greater than our 3 percent population growth.
- People living without shelter are the smallest category of homelessness, they can be very transient and their circumstances may change from night to night. This combined with a history of trauma that leaves many with a distrust in authority, means that it can be very difficult to quantify this group.

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.¹

The most robust estimates of homelessness are severe housing deprivation estimates from the five-yearly Census. These suggest there were at least 112,500 people who were severely housing deprived on 7 March 2023, including 4,965 people estimated to be living without shelter.

- 2023 Census severe housing deprivation estimates suggest that people living without shelter are more likely to be older, with 55 percent males and 44 percent females. Data and observations do not suggest any significant change in these characteristics.
- HUD and MSD service-use data indicates a likely decrease in the number of people living in temporary accommodation, however we do not currently have further information on this group from other sources.
- Looking at what people receive in the 6o days following a household exiting emergency housing, allows us to understand the support received by 85 percent of households who exited in December 2024. 37 percent were housed in social housing, 29 percent went into transitional housing, and 19 percent received the accommodation supplement.³ Some of the remaining 14 percent may be living without shelter, however this cannot be confirmed. From May 2024 to March 2025, 972 households were housed through the Priority One Fast Track, including 2,055 children.
- It is not possible to determine the extent to which changes described in this report reflect existing trends and broader economic and social contexts or are attributable to policy changes.
- A number of programmes and supports are in place to respond to homelessness, and connect people with the health and social services they need, including community navigators, housing brokers, and ready-to-rent courses, along with financial supports to secure and maintain accommodation.

Common themes we've heard from Councils

- Increased numbers of people living without shelter this summer, compared to the last summer.
- Cross-agency groups are collaborating on approaches and/or data.
- Concern that planned K\(\text{ainga}\) Ora dwellings/complexes/units have been paused/stopped.
- They also described concerns that have been raised in other forums:
 - the threshold for mental health assessment being too high
 - Corrections releasing people into 'no fixed abode'
 - people who do not trust government won't engage with MSD and/or Police.

From February to April 2025 we spoke with staff working in homelessness-relevant areas at Porirua City Council, Kāpiti Coast District Council, Hutt City Council, Auckland Council, Hutt City Council, Dunedin City Council, Wellington City Council, Rotorua Lakes Council, Hamilton City Council, Whangārei District Council.

2023 Census living without shelter estimates²

Living situations that provide no shelter, or makeshift shelter, are considered as 'without shelter' (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). These include situations such as living on the street and inhabiting improvised dwellings (for example, living in a garage, a shack, or a car). This is measured as either:

- living as a roofless or rough sleeper with no other address
- living in an improvised or mobile dwelling with no other address and a low dwelling income (under \$43,000 equivalised).

Living without shelter situation	Number of people			Preva	Prevalence per 10k people		
	2013	2018	2023	2013	2018	2023	
Roofless/rough sleeper	30	207	333	0.1	0.4	0.7	
Improvised dwelling	1,425	1,347	1,116	3.4	2.9	2.3	
Mobile dwelling	2,667	2,070	3,516	6.3	4.5	7.1	
Total	4,122	3,624	4,965	9.7	7.8	10.1	

We have insufficient data to draw any conclusions as to whether the numbers of those sharing someone else's private dwelling, living in uninhabitable housing, or homelessness overall have increased, decreased, or remained stable since the March 2023 Census.

Demographic breakdowns of those living without shelter:

- The median age was 55 years.
- 1,293 were aged 65 years and over (26.0%).
- 603 were under 15 years old (12.1%).
- There were 2,748 males, 2,166 females and 54 people of another gender.
- 1,308 were Māori (26.3%).
- The TAs with the highest rates per 10,000 population were Buller (84.0), Far North (74.2), Westland (60.9), and Ōpōtiki (56.8).
- The three TAs with the highest numbers were Auckland (747), Far North (525), Whangarei (237), these were followed by Christchurch, Western BOP, and Tasman (171, 168, 165 respectively).

New insights from the 2023 severe housing deprivation estimates

- Two-thirds (67.9 percent) of all people estimated to be severely housing deprived in 2023 were living in the same place for a year. This indicates that living in severe housing deprivation is not a temporary situation for many people.
- The prevalence of severe housing deprivation for single parent families was 488.4 per 10,000 people in households.

Observations from the sector

Concern regarding:

- the upcoming winter months, noting increases in people and families rough sleeping, living in cars, garages, overcrowded or uninhabitable conditions and couch surfing.
- increasing levels of hopelessness, alongside increases in clients with complex needs due to methamphetamine use, anti-social behaviour and severe mental health concerns.
- a greater supply of housing needed to support those who are homeless (privately owned housing pulling out of Housing First programmes and an increase in insurance rate for CHPs to house those with chronic/complex needs resulting in them housing fewer people with these needs).

PARS (Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Services)
Taranaki describe
"unsustainable couch surfing is those who are more vulnerable than our actual rough sleepers, as their bodies are transactional (whether through sexual acts or used to commit crimes on behalf, etc)"

Figures from around the country are all indicating upwards trends in people living

without shelter and related reports from the public.

Figures from **Auckland Council's** latest quarterly update shows that as at the end of May 2025 the 6 providers with outreach capacity were working with 809 unsheltered clients⁴ who were sleeping in cars, streets and local parks, up from 653 in January this year, and 426 in September 2024.

Tauranga City Council call centre data shows they had 619 homelessness-related reports from the general public in 2024, up from 423 in 2023. From January to mid-April this year there have been over 250 reports.

PARS **Taranaki's** 6-monthly snapshot of clients showed they had an increase in those living without shelter from 10 in June up to 35 in December. **Taranaki Retreat** have estimated the current numbers

Taranaki Retreat have estimated the current number of rough sleepers in New Plymouth is 30 to 35 individuals.

Porirua City
Council initiated
quarterly Point in
Time Audits for
rough sleepers
from June 2024
with a total of
four audits
conducted to up
to March 2025.
These audits
have reported 7,
11, 13, and 18
rough sleepers
respectively.

Christchurch City Mission – outreach workers engaged with 270 new clients in the 6 months to the end of March 2025, up from 156 in the prior 6 months.

Whangārei District Council has seen an increase in the number of <u>public reports</u> related to homelessness from 680 in 2023 to 1066 in 2024, at the current rate, they're forecast to reach over 1200 reports in 2025.

They have a current rate of 32.8 percent of activities associated with homelessness involving antisocial behaviour in the first four months of

2025, up from 29.6 percent in 2024.

Wellington City Council averaged 28 public reports of homelessness per month for 2023, this average was 42 for 2024, and currently sits at 37 for January to March 2025.

Downtown Community
Ministry (DCM) in
Wellington detailed that for
the January to March 2025
period, 328 people were
recorded as homeless, a 5
percent increase on the
same period a year prior (312
people). Of these 141 people
were recorded as rough
sleeping for January to
March 2025, a 24 percent
increase on the same period
a year prior (114 people).

Limited data from other parts of the sector show:

- As at the end of March 2025, the Department of Corrections estimate at least 350 people were serving post-release orders with no fixed abode.
- An upwards trend in patients presenting at hospital emergency departments for whom no address was recorded from 34 in the month of November 2023 to 64 in the month of November 2024.

HUD-funded Outreach services

Map shading presents 2023

Census estimates⁵ of living

without shelter per 10,000

population, darker shades

mean higher rates

For those outreach clients we have the information for from September 2023 to March 2025:

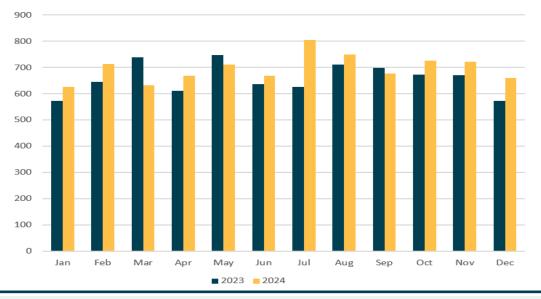
- over half the client households (55.6 percent, about 300 client households) were living without shelter when they were initially engaged, a further 8.0 percent were living in temporary accommodation, 18.5 percent were sharing someone else's private dwelling and 17.9 were in another situation, such as overcrowded housing or insecure tenure.
- the most common reason for clients being homeless was a family or relationship breakdown (30.5 percent). Other reasons include loss of employment or income (11.1 percent), legal issues or incarceration (9.1 percent), mental health and addiction (6.6 percent), domestic abuse (4.7 percent), and being previously homeless (2.7 percent), other housing related reasons made up 18.7 percent.

Specialist mental health and addictions (MHA)6,7

Preliminary data from Te Whatu Ora describing quarterly accommodation check-ins with clients indicates:

- Comparing the October to December quarter in 2024 with 2023, there was a 10.1 percent increase in clients who were homeless (1,915 to 2,109), a 4.9 percent increase for those in supported accommodation (4,750 to 4,984) and a 7.8 percent increase for those living independently (28,898 to 31,139).
- For most months from June to December 2024, there was an increase in the number of people receiving MHA services who were homeless, when compared with 2023 (see Figure 1 below).
- There were 660 people receiving MHA services who were homeless in December 2024, up from 572 in December 2023. These included 326 Māori in December 2024, up from 255 a year earlier.
- An increase was also evident in the number of nights spent in MHA facilities for people reported as homeless from July to December 2024 when compared with the same period in 2023. In December 2024 there were 954 total nights stayed by those reported as homeless, up from 669 nights in December 2023.

Figure 1: People receiving mental health and addiction services who reported 'homeless' as their Supplementary Consumer Record Accommodation status, collected 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2024



Rangatahi supported through Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki analysis⁸ of narrative reports from December 2024 noted young people leaving care or custody were finding it increasingly difficult to access emergency accommodation. However they also raised safety concerns regarding emergency housing, that it is oversubscribed, under-resourced and predominantly established to support adult clients.

Reports highlighted the difficulties rangatahi face moving on to more permanent accommodation due to challenges accessing public and private rentals, including:

- affordability
- extra challenges with signing a tenancy agreement under the age of 18
- not being prioritised for public housing, high wait times to access Kāinga Ora homes
- limited options for rangatahi with bail conditions
- not being able to access accommodation due to substance use but not being able to access support programmes without a fixed abode.

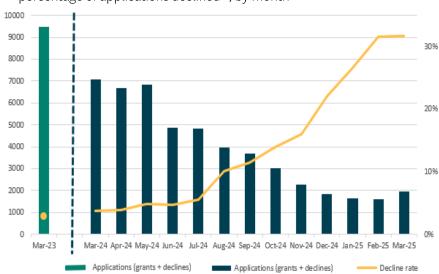
2023 Census Severe
Housing Deprivation
estimates show that 15 to
29 year olds are more
likely than other age
groups to be living in
temporary
accommodation or
sharing someone else's
private dwelling.

Emergency housing⁶

Emergency housing is a last resort and only used when there is a genuine, immediate housing need.

Across March 2025, 32 percent of applications for emergency housing were declined (up from 4% in March 2024, see Figure 2). The leading reasons⁹ that people were declined an emergency housing grant were: 'The need can be met another way' (34.3%), 'Circumstances could have been reasonably foreseen' (22.5%, this includes where the household is determined to have contributed to

Figure 2: Total Emergency Housing grant applications and percentage of applications declined¹⁰, by month



their emergency housing need), 'Not eligible for a grant' (16.7%), and 'Not an emergency situation' (14.7%).

Where people are declined emergency housing assistance, MSD may provide other options, such as a referral to Transitional Housing, or Housing Support Products that provide financial assistance, including rent and bond support to help people access and sustain suitable accommodation.

With Māori making up 60 percent of emergency housing clients¹¹, the number of households with a Māori primary client granted emergency housing was approximately 380 client households granted to 260 client households declined (a ratio of 1.46, compared to 1.06 for all applicants). This indicates that Māori households may be slightly more likely to have an immediate housing need that meets the eligibility for emergency housing.

There were 60 Pacific peoples' households¹¹ in emergency housing in March 2025, while 75 Pacific peoples' households were declined emergency housing (a ratio of 0.80).

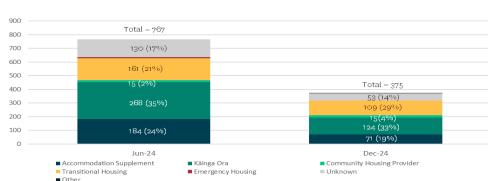
Average **length of time** spent in emergency housing is about

6 months, the same as it was a year ago. 12

About three-fifths of households in emergency housing are there for the first time,

this is gradually increasing.

Figure 3: Numbers and proportions of people who access Housing Services after exiting Emergency Housing (up to 60 days)³



Analysis of data for 60 days following a household exiting emergency housing, shows that from June to December 2024, there was an increase in the proportion of households entering transitional housing (from 21 percent to 29 percent), a decrease in the proportion accessing an accommodation supplement (24 percent to 19 percent), and the proportion going into social housing remained the same (37 percent, see Figure 3). The proportion for whom their housing situation remains unknown reduced to 14 percent.

Transitional housing⁶

From April 2024 to March 2025 transitional housing has seen:

- a decreasing trend in the percentage of households whose primary reason for entering transitional housing was that they were living in temporary accommodation (from 35.9% to 27.5%), this is likely due to fewer people entering from emergency housing (Figure 4).
- a steady increase in single adult households (to 2,201), paired with a decrease in single parent

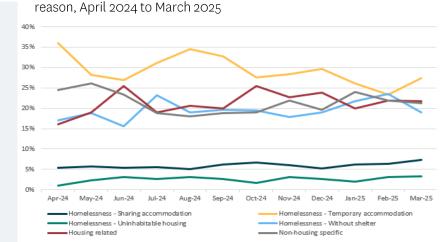


Figure 4: Percentage of households entering transitional housing, by

households (to 1,674), resulting in a very slight decrease in the total number of **people** in transitional housing nationally (from 11,735 in April 2024 to 11,565 in March 2025).

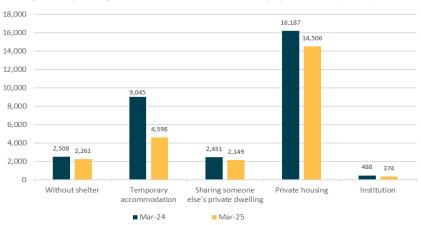
• 60.2% of households who exited transitional housing in February 2025, exited into long-term accommodation, while 9.1% moved in with family/whānau and 11.5% were removed by their provider.

Housing register⁶

From March 2024 to March 2025 the social housing register **decreased** by nearly a **quarter**.

There have been slight decreases in the numbers of households living in private housing (including boarding, private rentals and own home – from 16,187 to 14,506), sharing someone else's private dwelling (2,451 to 2,149) and living without shelter (2,508 to

Figure 5: Number of primary applicants on the social Housing register by living situation at the time of entry (or latest update)¹³



2,261, see Figure 5). ¹³ However, the number living in temporary accommodation has nearly halved (9,045 to 4,598). This means the proportions of households by living situation has shifted, with those in temporary accommodation making up just under a fifth (19.2 percent), while those in private accommodation made up three-fifths (60.7 percent) in March 2025.

There were 9,554 households with children on the social housing register in March 2025, down from 13,563 in March 2024. The Priority One Fast Track has meant 972 of these households, who were previously in emergency housing, have been housed since May 2024, including 2,055 children.

The largest decreases in terms of total numbers of households were seen in Auckland (2042 fewer households), Waikato (874 households), Bay of Plenty (677 households), and Canterbury and East Coast (660 households each). The steepest decreases were seen in Waikato (29.3 percent), East Coast (26.4 percent), Bay of Plenty (25.0 percent), and Central (24.6 percent).

Housing First – waiting to be housed

Housing First supports people living without shelter, with high or complex needs, to access and maintain stable housing and address trauma and other challenges.

As at the end of March 2025 there were 985 Housing First clients waiting to be housed. These clients receive support from providers as efforts are made to secure the right dwelling to meet their needs. Including time prior to entering the programme, around three in ten Housing First clients waiting to be housed have been homeless for one to two years (32.4 percent of those in Auckland, and 27.6 percent of those in other areas), with close to four in ten Housing First Clients waiting to be housed having experienced homelessness for 3 years or more (37.8 percent).

- 30.8 percent have experienced four or more episodes of homelessness.
- As at the end of March 2025 there were 49 households where the primary client was 65 years or older.
- Nearly 70 percent (68.7 percent) of Housing First households waiting to be housed outside of Auckland have a primary client who is Māori. In Auckland nearly half the Housing First households waiting to be housed have a primary client who is Māori, while over a quarter (26.7 percent) are Pacific peoples.

Broader system insights that may be affecting homelessness

Lack of employment can add to household and relationship stress. We are currently seeing reduced numbers of people in paid employment, alongside rising unemployment (5.1 percent in March 2025, up from 4.4 percent in March 2024, <u>Stats NZ</u>).

Population growth can put pressure on our housing supply. In October 2023, net migration reached a peak (135,529 people) greater than the previous peak of March 2020 (91,680). Since then, net migration has steadily decreased (26,349 in March 2025, Stats NZ).

Rental inflation reduced to 1.0% in November 2024 after it peaked at 7.2% in September 2023 (Stats NZ). While this largely aligned with strong wage growth, affordability worsened for those who lost income or did not benefit from average wage increases. For these people, the cost of securing 6 weeks rent (4 weeks bond and 2 weeks rent in advance) may be prohibitive.

Availability of appropriate housing, such as for one-bedroom units, which dominate the Housing Register, as well as housing for those needing accessible homes, and intergenerational families requiring larger dwellings.

Residential construction provides greater supply, this has fallen from its peak, but has remained steady since late 2024 with 33,600 consented dwellings in 2024 (Stats NZ). This is still above pre-COVID levels.

Family violence can lead to people needing to urgently seek safety elsewhere. In 2024, 2.3 percent of people in permanent private dwellings were victims of family offences, an estimated 101,000 people. This is not statistically significantly different from the 1.6 percent in 2023 (70,000) people (NZCVS).

Alcohol, drugs and other substance addiction and abuse can be a barrier to accessing and sustaining a tenancy. Of particular note, the latest New Zealand waste water analysis showed an unprecedented 96% increase in methamphetamine consumption in 2024 (1434kg nationally) when compared with 2023 (732kg), with consumption increasing across all sites (NZ Police).

How the system is responding to homelessness

Increases in homelessness at any time are a concern, particularly when people are living without shelter, and we acknowledge the impact of this. We have programmes and services in place which aim to prevent this occurring, and to support people when this does happen.

We need appropriate and affordable housing, but as homelessness is driven by structural and system failures (eg, poverty, undersupply, and access to employment, health care and other services) and is triggered by a range of circumstances (eg, family breakdown, loss of employment or income, discrimination, and intensifying health conditions) there are other needs that must also be addressed.

Going for Housing Growth programme will bring about system level change by increasing housing supply and putting downward pressure on housing costs. This will take time and there will continue to be a need for government to support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Social housing of the right type, in the right place – matched to housing need – provides safe and secure housing for people who can't afford or access private rental housing. We are focused on social housing being provided in the places and to the people that need it most through our new investment approach and the review of the social housing system. Amongst other things, Budget 25 creates a new flexible fund for between 650 and 900 social housing and affordable social rentals for delivery from 2027 and commits new funding for up to 550 social homes in Auckland in 2025/26. Kāinga Ora has around 2,650 places under construction for delivery in the next two years, and Budget 24 provided funding for CHPs for a further 1500 places. Since the end of 2023 nearly 1000 affordable rental homes are planned for delivery by Māori housing providers.

Significant investment has been made in programmes and services which directly prevent and respond to homelessness. In 2024/25 and 2025/26 over \$550 million in funding through Vote Housing and Urban Development has been targeted to programmes including outreach, transitional housing, sustaining tenancies, housing first, and rangatahi supported accommodation. Budget 25 also confirmed \$100m over four years to relieve cost pressures for ongoing social housing for households supported by the Housing First and Rapid Rehousing programmes.

We are focused on ensuring these programmes and services are targeted appropriately and are effective in providing the right housing support at the right time to respond to and prevent homelessness. We are also working across Government to prevent homelessness before it occurs, identifying opportunities for early intervention.

MSD's needs assessments determine eligibility for employment, income and housing support, such as emergency housing grants, housing navigators, ready to rent courses, housing brokers, and financial assistance to help secure or maintain stable accommodation.

Research and reports of interest

- <u>Denied: The growing cost of denying young people access to shelter</u> released by Kick Back, Auckland Action Against Poverty and Action Station. A collation of case studies and quotes from young people (supported by Kick Back) describing the barriers they have faced accessing emergency housing through MSD.
- Counting Ourselves: Findings from the 2022 Aotearoa New Zealand Trans & Non-binary Health Survey published in late
 February 2025. This report includes questions exploring trans and non-binary experiences of homelessness and emergency housing.
- The Salvation Army provided a briefing for Ministers with a summary of observations and data from NGOs working with people experiencing homelessness and the barriers they've faced accessing services.
- The impact of transitions from emergency housing to public housing in Aotearoa New Zealand, a journal article authored by researchers at He Käinga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago, Wellington. This analyses the transition from emergency housing to public housing among individuals experiencing homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- The truth behind New Zealand's housing crisis released by the Auckland Housing First Collective summarises 50 OIA requests to local government and central government agencies describing data related to homelessness.
- Kathie Irwin and Associates have been contracted by the Coalition to End Women's Homelessness to develop a Gender Analysis Tool from a te ao Māori lens. This will include:
 - analysis of research in the area, including any gaps
 - conceptual frameworks
 - recommendations for use.

Data caveats

- 1. The Waitangi Tribunal found that the Crown breached our treaty duty of consultation through failure to adequately consult with Māori in the development of the homelessness definition in 2009 and through our failure to rectify this in the period since. The Tribunal made one recommendation in its findings from Phase One of the Kaupapa Inquiry into Housing Policy and Services that the Crown and claimants should work together in partnership to co-design a new definition (see <u>Kāinga Kore: The Stage One Report of the Housing Policy and Services Kaupapa Inquiry on Māori Homelessness</u>).
 - Two definitions were submitted to the Tribunal on behalf of different claimant groups, one of these proposed a narrower definition (see <u>Wai 2750, 3.1.226.pdf</u>), which overlapped with the New Zealand definition, the other proposed a wider definition (see <u>Wai 2750, 3.1.225(b).pdf</u>) which overlapped with the New Zealand definition, however it also took into account wider cultural concepts such as the loss of Kāinga, ahi ka roa, and tino rangatiratanga.
- 2. The actual number may be higher, as undercounting is likely to affect all categories of severe housing deprivation.
- 3. Regarding exits from Emergency Housing: 1) One percent of those who exited in December 2024 were classified 'Other', which includes those who have left New Zealand or are deceased (Figure 3); 2) the 'Unknown' category includes those who may now be experiencing homelessness and those who may have gone on to other suitable housing options; 3) this is a monthly figure that looks at spells ended across the month.
- 4. Auckland Council's providers note that numbers they provide are under-reported as many homeless are in cars, transient or hidden from sight.
- 5. We appreciate there are high 2023 estimates of those living without shelter in the West Coast of the South Island. We are reaching out to the sector to better understand this.
- 6. Caution is required when drawing conclusions about homelessness from service data (e.g., EH Grants, Housing Register, TH data, provider data). Service data is sensitive to operational and administrative changes (such as changes to management of the Housing Register) and reflects the number of people accessing a service. Service data does not measure the number of people experiencing homelessness.
- 7. Data from Te Whatu Ora is not a reflection of actual levels of homelessness of people accessing health services, rather the information that can be identified via the National Collections.
- 8. Oranga Tamariki. (2025). Oranga Tamariki Transition Support Services insight document: Thematic trends from Transition To Adulthood and Supported Accommodation returns relevant to housing for Transitions Young People. [Unpublished].
- 9. The system used to administer EH Grants is the system used for all hardship grants administered by MSD. While specific EH Grant decline reasons have been added to the system, staff are also able to select other reasons which may be more relevant to other hardship types. There is also a possibility for human error (eg, clicking the wrong reason).
- 10. An EH Grant decline represents an application that has been processed and considered ineligible. The number of declines should not be considered representative of unmet demand for services, as we do not know the level of need that does not progress to a processed application (Figure 2). A household may be both granted emergency housing, and declined emergency housing in a month.
- 11. Ethnicity comparisons are based on primary client rather than household data. There could be a household of Pacific Peoples, but if the primary applicant identifies as Māori that will be recorded.
- 12. Spell length defined as the period spent in EH between the date of the first grant and the recorded check out date of the last grant, where the client is not outside of EH for more than 28 days. Check out date identified when there is no subsequent grant for 28 days.
- 13. When a household enters the register, MSD staff select the client's living situation from 22 options. For simplicity, this report has used the Stats NZ homelessness definition to create higher-level categories where possible (without shelter, temporary accommodation, sharing someone else's private dwelling, private housing). Private dwelling is mostly made up of those who are renting or boarding. There may be some error due to variation in how MSD staff assign accommodation type (Figure 5).