



Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

Homelessness insights

To 31 March 2026

How to find your way around this report

This report brings together a wide range of data and insights about homelessness in New Zealand, with a focus on people living without shelter. Here's how to get the most out of it.

Key points

Start here for the overarching interpretation of the data and observations. (page 3)

Government support

A description of some of the programmes and initiatives funded, planned or underway that contribute to addressing homelessness. (pages 4 to 5)

Government-held data

Housing-related service-use data: Data from Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Social Development, including outreach services, housing first, emergency and transitional housing, and the social housing register.

(pages 9 to 16)

Support when leaving state care: This section includes short summaries of data available from the Department of Corrections and Oranga Tamariki.

(page 16)

Provisional figures from Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora: Insights from the health system including hospitalisations and emergency department visits, and accommodation check-ins with people using specialist mental health and addiction services.

(pages 17 to 18)

Council and provider data

Figures from around the country: Local figures that show whether there might be people living without shelter in that area and whether the numbers might be increasing or decreasing.

(pages 6 to 8)

Observations from around the country: Themes and context drawn from group sessions with council staff and non-government organisations who work with young people, as well as sector insights.

(pages 19 to 20)

The broader system and research

Broader system insights that may be affecting homelessness: Some data from the broader system that can impact on homelessness, including employment, migration and rental trends.

(pages 21 to 22)

Research and reports of interest: A selection of research and reports for further reading.

(page 23)

Introduction

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, 2}

This report shares insights on homelessness using data and observations. It mainly focuses on people living without shelter but also includes information on other types of homelessness where possible. Most data is current to March 2026, though some sources have delays.

Living situations that provide no shelter, or makeshift shelter, are considered as ‘without shelter’.¹ These include situations such as living on the street and inhabiting improvised dwellings (for example, living in a garage, a shack or a car).

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 (of whom at least 34,560 were Māori) who were severely housing deprived on 7 March 2023, including 4,965 people (1,308 Māori) estimated to be living without shelter.

Stats NZ is working closely with Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to establish a Homeless and Transient Populations Data Advisory group. The group will play a key role guiding wider statistical system design around homeless populations, ensuring different perspectives are woven into decision-making from the outset. While this work progresses, this Homelessness Insights report draws on multiple different types and sources of data to identify potential trends and drivers of these.

Things to remember while reading this report

- Pay attention to the dates and time periods covered by each data source – they’re not always the same.
- Check the description of the figures you’re looking at, for example, these might be households, people, or bed nights.
- For local insights, use the area breakdowns and observations from around the country to add context.
- Check the footnotes and links provided for more detail on definitions or data sources.

Key points

- Data available from around the country indicates that the number of people living without shelter may have begun to stabilise, with some large and small centres beginning to see a decrease. However, council staff from most of the areas we engaged with reported increasing numbers of people living without shelter over the past six months.
- Local council staff around the country have noted that local outreach, practical wraparound supports and better coordination between agencies are helping services connect with people who are living without shelter.
- The latest data on broader drivers such as rental affordability and residential construction shows that while the situation remains challenging, these are softening. However, a number of pressures remain for those already vulnerable to homelessness.³
- Homelessness is still a challenge, particularly for Māori who remain overrepresented, other key groups include women, older people and young people.
- Homelessness happens for many overlapping reasons, for example, health and disability-related challenges interacting with other factors such as housing affordability and family and social support.
- It is not possible to tell whether changes described in this report reflect existing trends and broader economic and social contexts or are attributable to policy changes.
- We cannot 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.

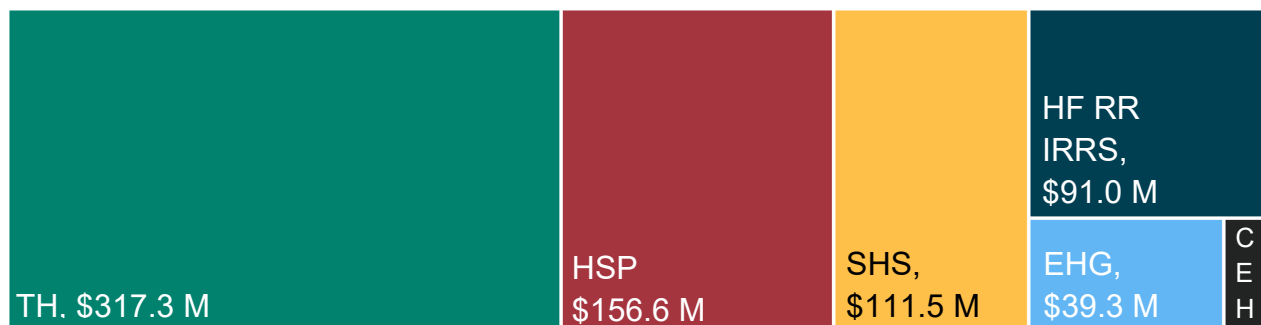
The Government's Going for Housing Growth programme means it's focused on addressing the housing market by freeing up land, removing planning barriers, improving infrastructure funding and incentivising councils to support housing growth.

Alongside this, the Government continues to invest in homelessness programmes, with recent actions focused on helping people who are rough sleeping into homes. Significant social and affordable housing delivery is underway through community housing providers, Kāinga Ora and Māori housing providers.

A new housing investment plan focused on those in high need for targeted investment of social housing and affordable rentals.

Government support

Homelessness is a problem New Zealand has grappled with for a long time, and it remains a challenge. People with no safe and appropriate place to stay need an immediate housing response and may also need additional support to secure and maintain stable housing.



TH	Transitional housing
HSP	Housing support products (financial assistance, for example, moving costs, bond payments, rent payments in advance) - Ministry of Social Development (MSD).
SHS	Social housing services (housing and support programmes), for example, Housing First, sustaining tenancies, rangatahi supported accommodation.
HF RR IRRS	Housing First and Rapid Rehousing income related rent subsidy social housing places.
EHG	Emergency housing grants – MSD.
CEH, \$10.1 M	Contracted emergency housing in Rotorua (this has now ended).

Figure 1: Annual Ministry and MSD spend on homelessness related programmes and assistance in the year to 31 March 2026

Programmes respond to severe housing need and are accessible through referrals from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and other government agencies, frontline workers, and directly through providers. These programmes support people to access interim and stable (private rental or social) housing, to maintain stable housing, and where needed, to connect with health and social services.

In September 2025, the Government announced five immediate actions to expand support for people who are sleeping rough and help them into homes in Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Christchurch. This included \$10.8 -11.6m per annum for 300 additional income related rent subsidy social homes for people in the Housing First programme and sleeping rough. This also included a \$10m investment for locally led initiatives in those areas, developed by experienced providers supporting people who are sleeping rough (flexing current contracts to bolster support).

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has also worked with providers to increase occupancy in transitional housing, for example, reducing the time between stays. MSD has

expanded staff guidance on using discretion for emergency housing grants and is connecting with local outreach services to support people without shelter to access MSD services and products.

In Auckland (as in other centres), local and central government agencies are working together to make support available at the right times and in the right places for people who are sleeping rough. Medium to longer term work is underway including reviewing housing and support programmes to make the system simpler and more effective.

Social housing of the right type, in the right place matched to housing need provides safe and secure housing for people who can't access private rental housing. The Government has begun multi-year reforms to make the social housing system fairer, more effective, and more efficient. Reforms will focus support on those with the most severe and persistent need, help people move towards independent housing where possible, and improve equity by reducing the gap between social and private housing costs (for example, Budget 2026 changes to housing subsidies).

Supporting the Government's broader commitment to accelerate Māori housing delivery in priority regions, in February 2025 the Government announced a \$200 million investment to support Māori housing providers to deliver 400 affordable rentals by June 2027. These will be delivered in Te Tai Tokerau, Te Tairāwhiti, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay, Waikato and Auckland.

A new flexible fund was announced in the 2025 Budget to enable people in high housing need to access stable and secure housing. The fund includes more than \$290 million over ten years from 1 July 2027 and is expected to support between 675 and 770 social homes and affordable rentals in its initial phase. Budget 2026 invests \$69.2 million in the Flexible Fund to deliver 1,800 to 2,250 additional social and other homes, over three years starting from 2028/29.

The Government's housing investment plan, released in November 2025 uses data and insights from communities to target funding to areas where it can have the greatest impact. Some of the highest housing need is experienced among whānau Māori, sole parent households with dependent children, older people, disabled households, and Pacific peoples (particularly in South Auckland). Based on this evidence priority locations for investment include the Far North District, South Auckland, Eastern Bay of Plenty (Whakatane, Kawerau, and Ōpōtiki), Tairāwhiti-Gisborne and Hastings. Further investment is also planned for main centres: Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch.⁴

The housing investment plan sits alongside the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD) 2025. Its vision is that everyone lives in a home and community that meets their needs and aspirations. To achieve this, the Government is fixing the fundamentals of the housing market: freeing up land, removing planning barriers, improving infrastructure funding and giving councils stronger incentives to support housing growth, resetting investment to help those most in need, improving efficiency and competition in building and construction, and improving rental markets.

Living without shelter figures from around the country

Care needs to be taken when interpreting results in the following section, the data is not standardised, and comparison periods differ depending on the data available. Changes in the number of people living without shelter in an area can only be assessed when comparable data from two time periods is available.

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.

Table 1: Legend for Table 2 describing any change in the data reported in Table 2

Code	Change	Description
•	No comparison	There is not enough data to determine whether the number of people living without shelter is likely to have increased, decreased or stayed the same.
–	No change	The data provided indicates that there is no clear difference in the reported number of people living without shelter.
↑	Increase	The data provided <u>indicates that there may have been</u> an increase in the number of people living without shelter.
↓	Decrease	The data provided <u>indicates that there may have been</u> a decrease in the number of people living without shelter.

Table 2: Figures sourced from around the country that provide a description of the extent, or any change in the trend of people living without shelter

Area (change)	Description
Whangārei •	At the end of March 2026 around 90 to 100 people living without shelter were accessing food and social services provided by Whare Āwhina. Whare Āwhina report a further 50 to 60 people who were also homeless, living from place to place.
Auckland ↓	Auckland Council's March update shows that on 31 st March 2026, six outreach providers had engaged with 586 people who were known to be sleeping in cars, streets and local parks. ⁵ This is down from 706 in January 2026, which was slightly higher than 653 in January 2025 and down from the peak of 940 in September 2025.

Area (change)	Description
South Waikato •	In mid-April South Waikato District council noted that fewer than six people were using their “Showers for the homeless” that are currently made available twice a week.
Whakatāne –	In mid-April 2026, Whakatāne District Council and partners reported 45 people who were sleeping rough and another 25 people sleeping in cars in Whakatāne and Ōhope townships. They note that while a number of the people have changed, the figures are the same as those reported in late October 2025.
Rotorua ↓	Te Pōkapū in partnership with community organisations identified at least 45 people sleeping rough or in cars in mid-October 2025. Based on a survey, they note that this is a decrease from three months, and twelve months prior to this. ⁶
Gisborne ↑↓	In mid-April 2026, community partners working with Manaaki Tairāwhiti reported 57 people sleeping rough in tents or vehicles, staying at the Oasis community shelter (30 men), or other unsuitable situations such as single parents living in a boarding house. This figure is up from 40 people in mid-September 2025; however, they report a drop in numbers over the last two years.
Napier ↑	<p>Whatever it Takes Trust report working with 112 people living without shelter from October 2025 to March 2026, an increase from 98 people for the same period a year earlier.⁷</p> <p>Manawa Ora Trust report working with 89 people living without shelter from October 2025 to March 2026, this was an increase from 37 people for the same period a year earlier.</p> <p>From October 2025 to March 2026 Te Hiwa a Māhaki report working with 55 rangatahi who were moving in and out of cars, couches, and unsafe temporary housing.</p>
Hastings •	Hastings District Council noted 10 to 15 people regularly sleeping rough, with a further 10 to 15 people living in their vehicles in April 2026. ⁸
New Plymouth ↑	Te Whare o Tapatahi ⁹ engaged 117 people experiencing street homelessness from October 2025 to the end of February 2026. As the YMCA was in the process of establishing Te Whare o Tapatahi from mid-April to the end of September 2025 they engaged 97 people experiencing street homelessness. ¹⁰
Masterton ↓↑	From December 2025 to March 2026 16 men and women (5 regulars) have accessed Kim’s Way Night Refuge, moving in and out of the

Area (change)	Description
	<p>refuge depending on their circumstances. This compares to 18 people (6 regulars) from the end of June to the end of September 2025.</p> <p>Shelter Masterton Inc runs a volunteer-led day centre. The centre has had 20 to 25 people most Mondays and around 20 on other days over the past few months, this is an increase from the 10 to 20 people reported previously.</p>
Palmerston North ↓	<p>In the three months to the end of March 2026 a Palmerston North City Council-funded outreach programme engaged with 26 people, housing 12. This compares with 1 July to 7 October when the programme engaged with 68 people, housing 18.</p>
Porirua –	<p>Porirua City Council's quarterly count reported 10 people who were rough sleeping in March 2026, this is down from the 18 reported for March 2025, and similar to the 11 in September 2025. Some fluctuation, however, has been noted by the count organiser, who reported that a week after the March 2026 count a further 8 new people were identified in the city centre, indicating similar numbers overall.</p>
Wellington ↑	<p>Downtown Community Ministry (DCM) recorded 163 people sleeping rough¹¹ from January to the end of March 2026, up from 145 in the same period the year before.¹² These were from a total of 332 people DCM recorded as homeless from January to the end of March 2026, a similar number to the 330 people for the same period a year before.</p>
Christchurch ↓	<p>Christchurch City Mission outreach workers connected with 209 new clients from October 2025 to the end of March 2026. This is a decrease from the same period a year before, when they connected with 270 new clients.</p>
Queenstown Lakes •	<p>Figures from Queenstown Lakes District Council's 2025 Quality of Life Survey¹³ report that 2.3 percent of a representative sample of 1000 respondents had had to live in a car, tent or on the street over the previous 12 months.</p>

Note: Where possible and available, comparisons in this table are made with the same period a year prior, this is because the number of people living on the street may vary with the seasons.

Housing-related service use data

This section describes some of the programmes and services funded by HUD and MSD to support people who may be experiencing homelessness. It shows how many people are using these services; not how many people are homeless across the country. Many of these programmes and services overlap, so the same person may be counted in more than one place. The numbers reflect aspects such as funding, staffing, policies, where services are located, and the availability of housing. They also give an indication of what demand for support looks like.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Development-funded outreach services

Homelessness outreach services aim to support people experiencing homelessness, particularly people who are sleeping rough or sleeping in other uninhabitable places. They work to remove barriers and connect people to housing, health care and other basic needs so they can move out of homelessness.

At the end of March 2026, seven providers (funded by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development) were actively working with 635 outreach households. Of the 320 households for whom we know their initial housing situation:

- nearly two thirds (65.3 percent) were living without shelter when first contacted, including 23 children
- nearly ten percent were staying in someone else's private home
- nearly seven percent were in other situations like overcrowded or unstable housing
- just over five percent were in temporary housing.

Households reported many overlapping reasons for their homelessness (see Figure 2 for some of these¹⁴).

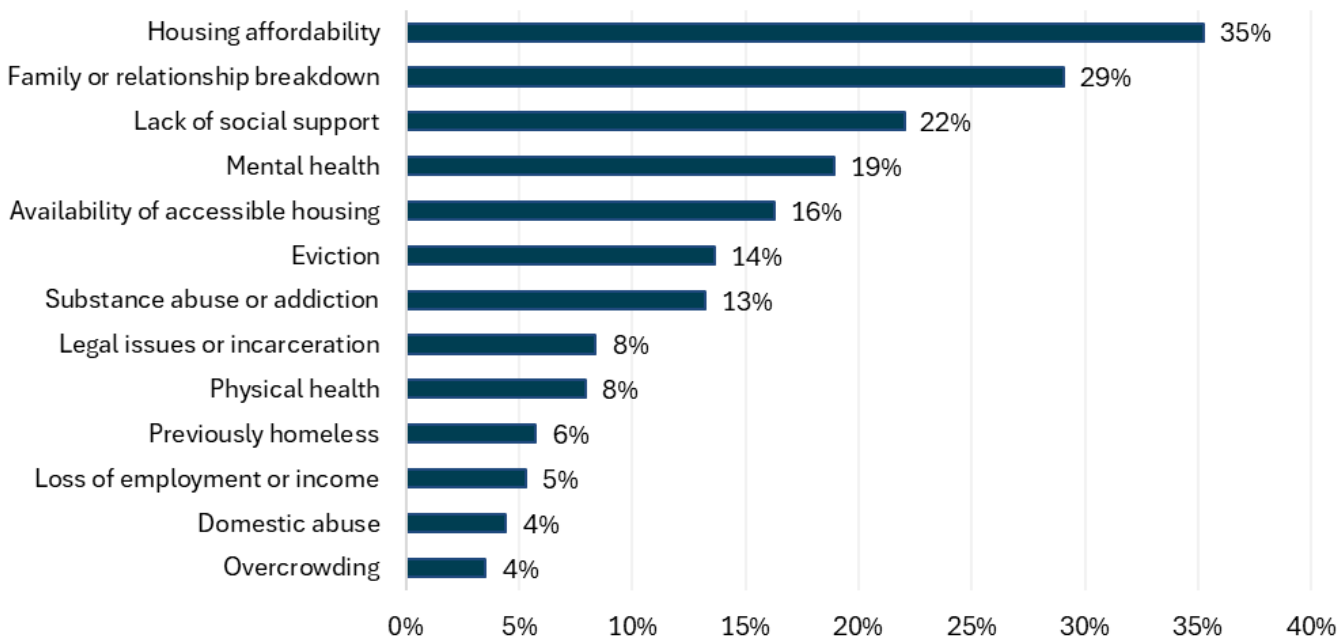


Figure 2: Reasons for homelessness reported by nearly 230 client households engaged with Ministry of Housing and Urban Development outreach providers at the end of March 2026

Note: We have analysed both the primary and additional reasons provided by client households, with multiple responses allowed.

Housing First – not yet in stable housing

The Housing First programme¹⁵ provides support for people experiencing chronic homelessness with high or complex support needs to access stable (private rental or social) housing, address trauma and other challenges, and prevent a return to homelessness. Support is ongoing and focuses on maintaining a tenancy. People in the programme who are not yet housed may be living in a variety of situations including with others, in temporary accommodation, or living without shelter. It can take time to build rapport with clients. When someone has been homeless for some time it can also take time for them to be comfortable interacting with services.

At the end of March 2026, 1,031 households¹⁶ in the Housing First programme were not yet in a stable home, down from 1,102 at the same time in 2025 (see Figure 3). The 2026 figure includes 442 households who had been in the programme for 12 months or more. These people get support from service providers who are working to find the right kind of housing for them and address other challenges. See also: Short-term actions to address homelessness section below.

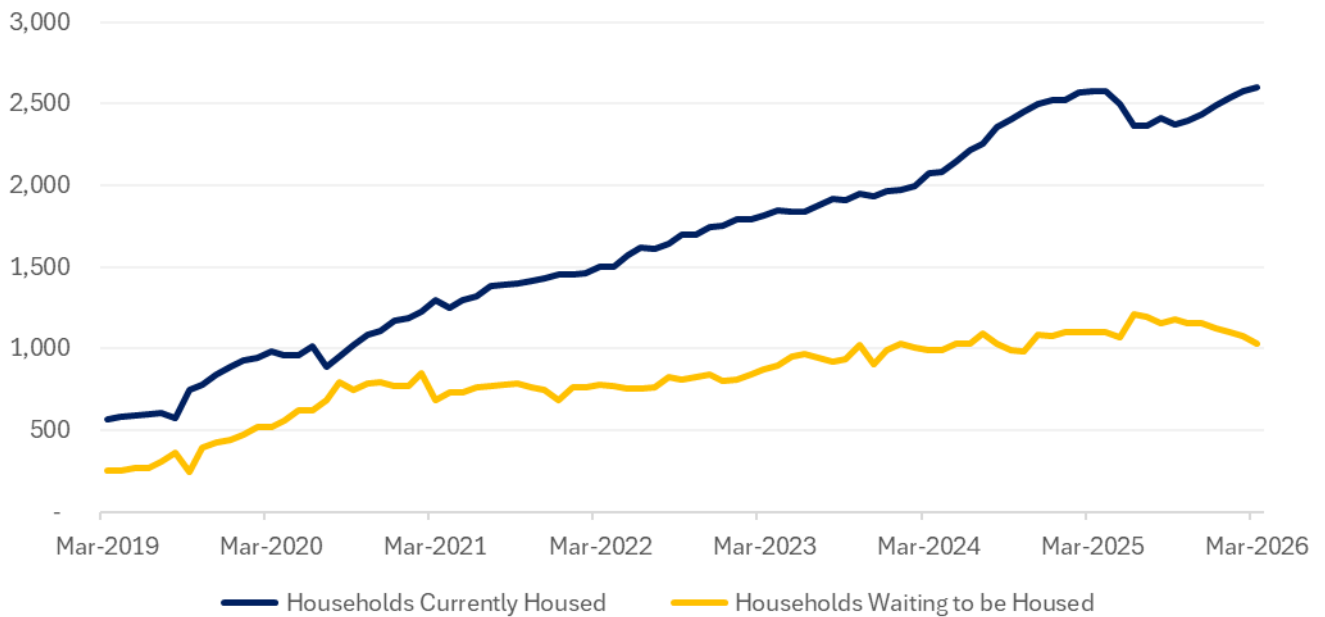


Figure 3: Number of households in the Housing First programme, March 2019 to March 2026

This decrease was notable for households with a primary householder who identifies as Pacific peoples, from 194 in March 2025 to 110 in March 2026. Most of these were in Auckland (169 down to 86). Auckland also saw a decrease in the number of primary householders who were Māori, from 271 down to 183, however as a proportion of Housing First households waiting to be housed in Auckland, this increased slightly from 46.2 percent to 49.7 percent.

The areas with the highest proportion of people waiting to be housed were the Far North (40 households, 36.0 percent) and Rotorua Lakes Districts (60 households, 35.9 percent) where over a third of households not yet housed at the end of March have been in the programme for three or more years.

As at the end of March 2026, over a quarter of Housing First households not in stable accommodation had experienced four or more episodes of homelessness. This proportion was highest for those in Christchurch (87.3 percent), Nelson (54.5 percent), Tauranga (46.7 percent) and Whangārei (44.0 percent).

The Far North District is notable for being the only area with more women than men who are primary householders for those in the Housing First programme not yet in stable housing.

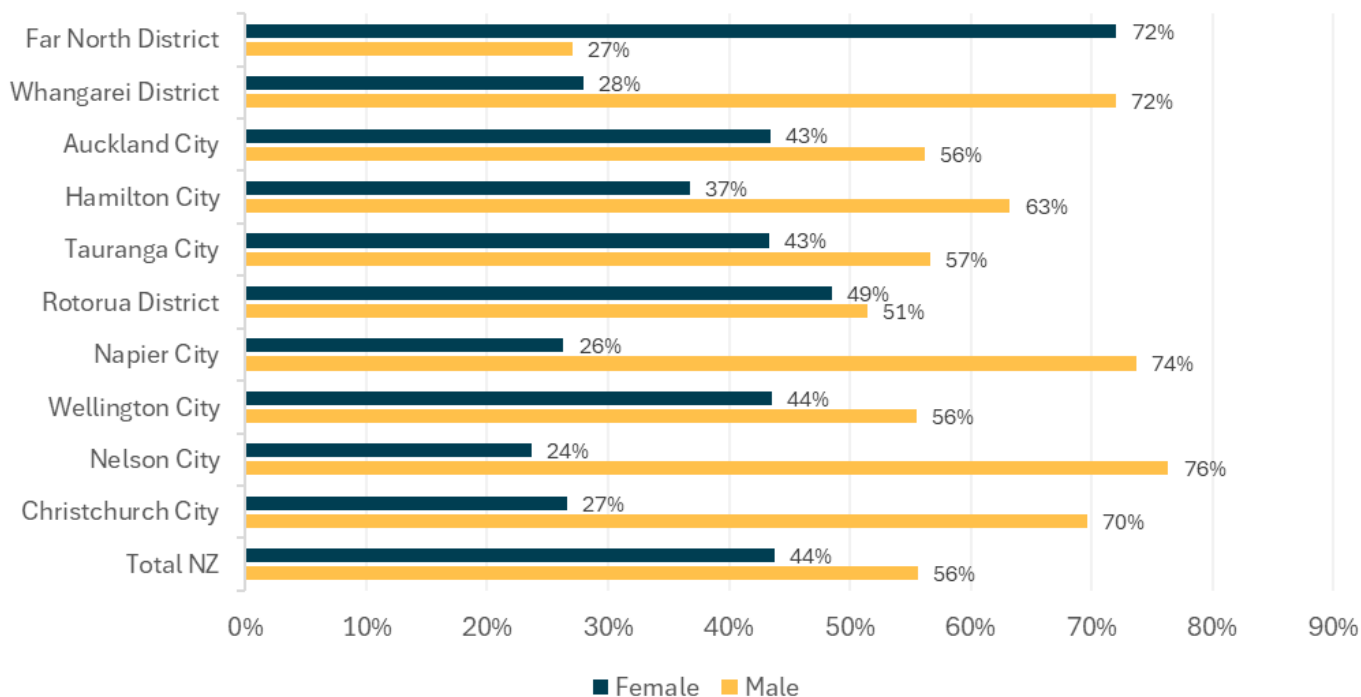


Figure 4: Gender of Housing First primary householders who are not yet in stable accommodation, percentages, as at the end of March 2026

Note: Marlborough District has been excluded due to small numbers. Percentages for those of another gender have been excluded due to small numbers.

Ministry of Social Development emergency housing grants

Emergency housing grants¹⁷ are a last resort and are used when there is an immediate and genuine housing need and no other suitable accommodation is available. Emergency housing is available to people who are eligible and need a short-term place to stay.

From 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026, a total of 12,207 emergency housing applications were received. Of these 8,154 applications resulted in grants (66.8 percent of all applications received, while 4,053 were declined (33.2 percent)).

Where emergency housing grant applications were declined, 71.5 percent of people went on to receive other forms of support within seven days, including housing support products, Accommodation Supplement, Transitional Housing referrals, or other hardship assistance.

In September 2025, MSD implemented a short-term initiative to support people sleeping rough to access housing, income and employment assistance. Through this initiative, more than 650 people were engaged, of whom approximately 410 were identified as sleeping rough.

MSD can identify whether people who leave emergency housing subsequently access other housing-related services, where this information is available in MSD data. Of households that exited emergency housing in December 2025:

- 36 percent moved into transitional housing,
- 28 percent received the Accommodation Supplement, and
- 14 percent moved into social housing, including Kāinga Ora and community housing providers.

The remaining households did not access any of these housing related services within the follow up period.

Note: These figures are based on the primary client receiving a housing related service within 60 days of exiting emergency housing.

Short-term actions to address homelessness

In September 2025, the Government announced additional short-term actions to support people living without shelter, including people sleeping rough or in cars.

An investment of \$17 million was made to deliver additional targeted support in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch, where areas have observed the highest numbers of people sleeping rough. The initiative enabled Community Housing Providers (CHPs) to lease up to 300 additional social homes from the private market for unhoused Housing First households (who are sleeping rough) and enable providers to develop local solutions that build on existing contracts and address gaps.

By the end of March 2026, 515 households had been housed in social housing through the Housing First programme, as a result of the actions. This included 278 households housed by better using existing capacity.

Over 280 households who had been sleeping rough were supported into transitional housing by the end of March 2026, through a combination of providing immediate access to transitional housing and additional support services that enabled providers to accommodate people sleeping rough. These households are expected to continue progressing towards social housing.

Outreach services and housing assistance centres supported households to connect with housing and wider support services in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch. On average, around 45 households per month were assisted into temporary or permanent housing. In February 2026, more than 140 people were supported onto the housing register through these services and centres, and nearly 320 people were connected to other forms of housing assistance including those managed by the Ministry of Social Development.

Transitional housing

Transitional housing¹⁷ includes temporary housing and supports for people with an immediate housing need who have nowhere else to stay, with a focus on wrap around support for people to move into stable housing such as private rentals and social housing.

Across March 2026 more than one in five households (23.5 percent) totalling 291 people entered transitional housing because they were living without shelter, this was higher than throughout March 2025 (19.0 percent, 248 people).

The make-up of households in transitional housing changed little between March 2025 and March 2026 (see Figure 5).

At the end of March 2026, these included 5,141 children in transitional housing,¹⁸ down from 5,607 a year earlier, while the number of adults was 5,845 (5,805 at the end of March 2025).

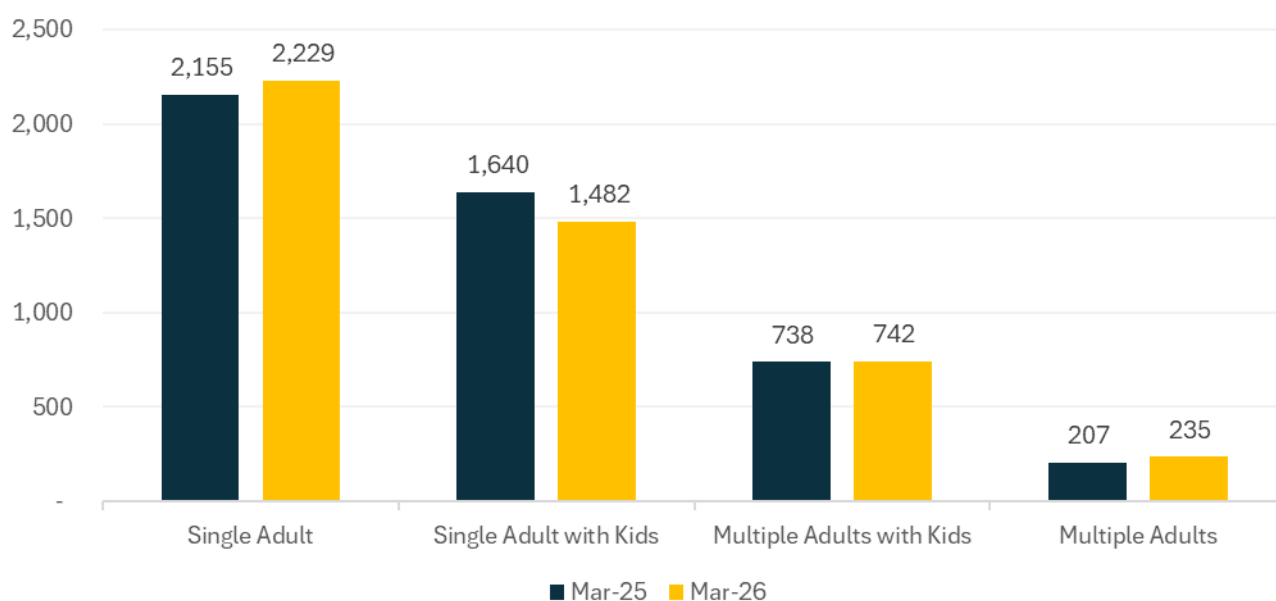


Figure 5: The make-up of households in transitional housing, March 2025 and March 2026

In February 2026, two out of three households leaving transitional housing (66.9 percent) moved into social housing or private rentals. Some were removed by their provider (5.4 percent), moved in with family or whānau (6.7 percent) transferred to other providers (6.7 percent), voluntarily left (7.6 percent), moved into a motel, lodge or boarding house (0.3 percent) or left for some other reason (6.5 percent).

Ethnicity data¹⁹ for the primary household applicants in transitional housing as at the end of September 2025 shows:

- in the Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, East Coast and Taranaki regions over 70 percent were Māori. In other areas, this ranges from 35 to 58 percent
- in Auckland similar proportions of people were Māori (43.9 percent) or Pacific peoples (42.4 percent).

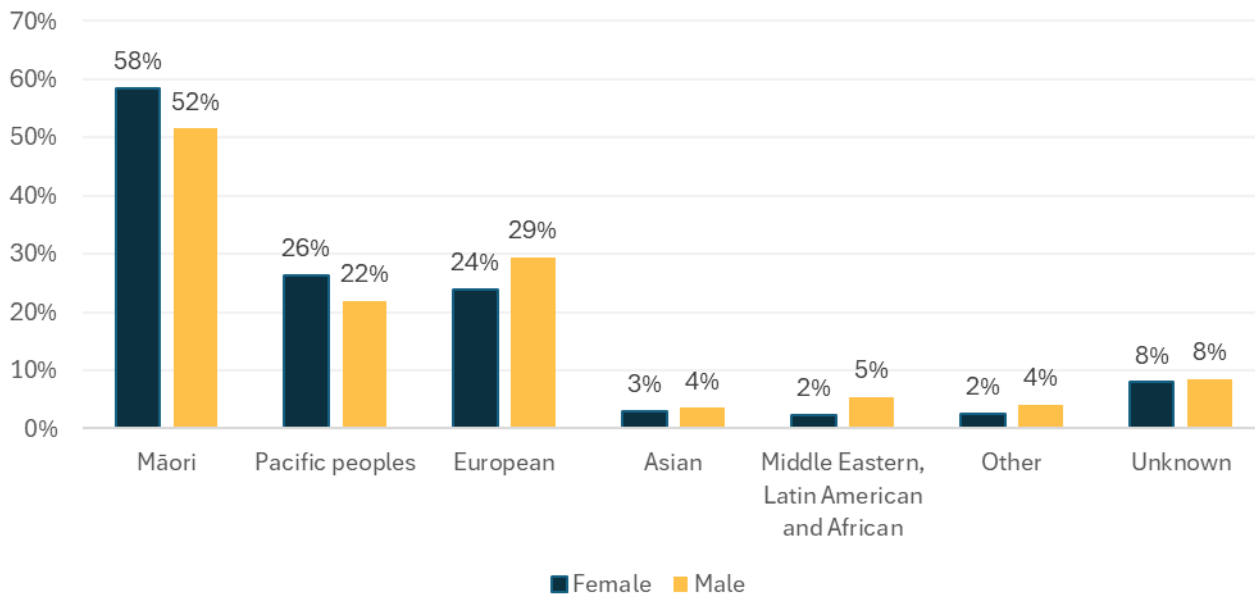


Figure 6: Gender and ethnic group of primary householders in transitional housing, as at the end of September 2025

Housing register

The housing register¹⁷ is used to prioritise who gets housing. Housing is offered to households based on the availability of a property to meet their needs.



Figure 7: Number of primary applicants on the social housing register, June 2017 to March 2026

From March 2025 to March 2026 the housing register has remained fairly stable, increasing by just under 400 households, when seen over the long-term this has been a notable period of stability (see Figure 7 and Figure 8).^{20,21}

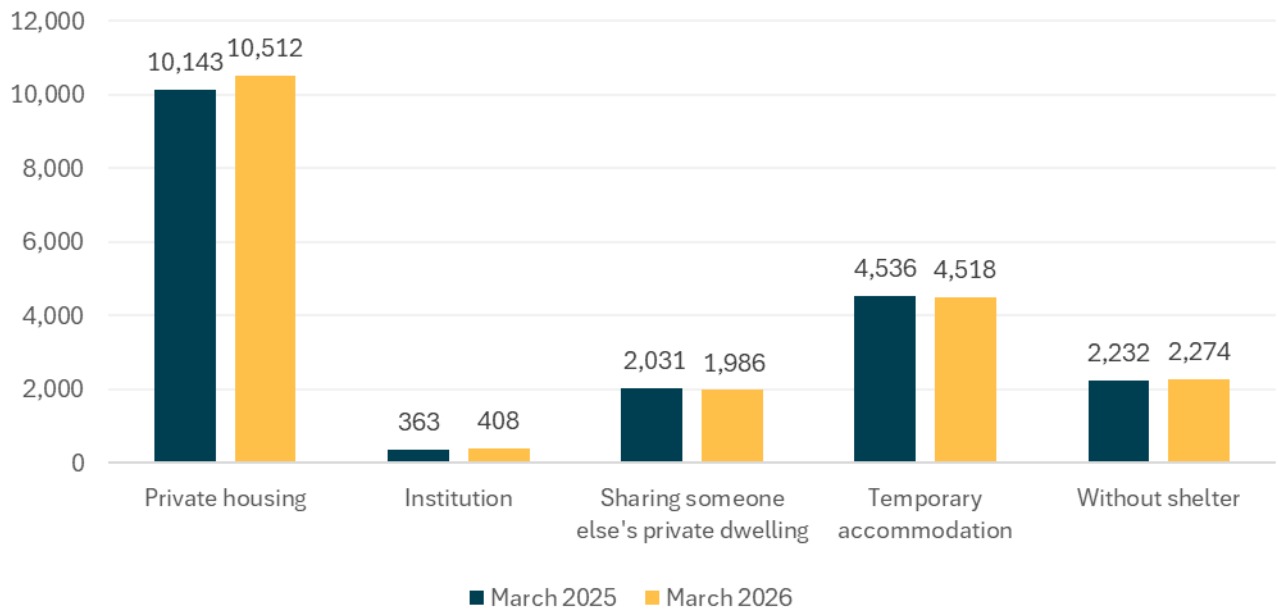


Figure 8: Number of primary applicants on the social housing register by living situation at the time of entry (or latest update)

There were 8,799 households with children on the social housing register in March 2026, down from 9,554 in March 2025. The priority one fast track means 1,101 households who were previously in emergency housing have been housed since May 2024, including 2,367 children.

Support when leaving state care or custody

Oranga Tamariki transition support services are available for 15- to 25-year-olds who have been in care or custody for over 3 months continuously from 15 years of age. From October 2025 to March 2026 financial assistance was provided to fewer than 6 young people who called the Oranga Tamariki transition assistance helpline seeking support for emergency accommodation. Assistance was provided to 13 young people in the same period the year before.

The Department of Corrections estimated that as at the end of March 2026, 532 people (10.6 percent) across New Zealand were serving post-release orders with no fixed abode. This is a 23.7 percent increase on the 430 people (9.1 percent)²² estimated to be in this situation in March 2025. These figures reflect people's living situation at the point in time the information is provided by them to the Department of Corrections and may not capture recent changes in their living situations, nor represent where they planned to live when they were released or where they were housed on the day of their release.

As at the end of March 2026 the areas with the highest numbers of no fixed abode as a proportion of all those serving post-release orders were Canterbury (17.7 percent, 104 people, up from 52 in March 2025), Taranaki/Whanganui/Manawatū (13.4 percent, 71 people up from 50) and the East Coast (12.5 percent, 37 people up from 25).

Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora data

Health service users with no fixed abode

The National Health Index (NHI) is a system that gives every person who uses health and disability services in New Zealand a unique number. This number helps healthcare providers identify patients correctly, including their address.

For people who used health services in New Zealand between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025: 1,037 people (1.92 per 10,000) had 'no fixed abode' recorded as the first line of their address in the NHI.²³ This is an increase from 929 for June 2024 (1.74 per 10,000) and 790 for June 2023 (1.51 per 10,000). Of the 1,037 people in June 2025:

- 190, or 18.3 percent were young people aged 15 to 29 years
- 408, or 39.3 percent were Māori

These figures do not represent all people who are no fixed abode across the country. People using the health service often need to provide a valid address where they can receive mail - for example for appointment information, this does not mean they are living there.

Hospitalisations and emergency department visits

While hospitalisations can fluctuate month to month, the latest provisional data indicates a very slightly decreasing trend over the year to the end of December 2025 in hospitalisations where homelessness²⁴ has been recorded as a factor in influencing health status and contact with health services (see Figure 9 – moving averages can be used to smooth out fluctuations in data). From July to December 2025, there were 884 hospitalisations, down from 1,003 hospitalisations for the same period in 2024.

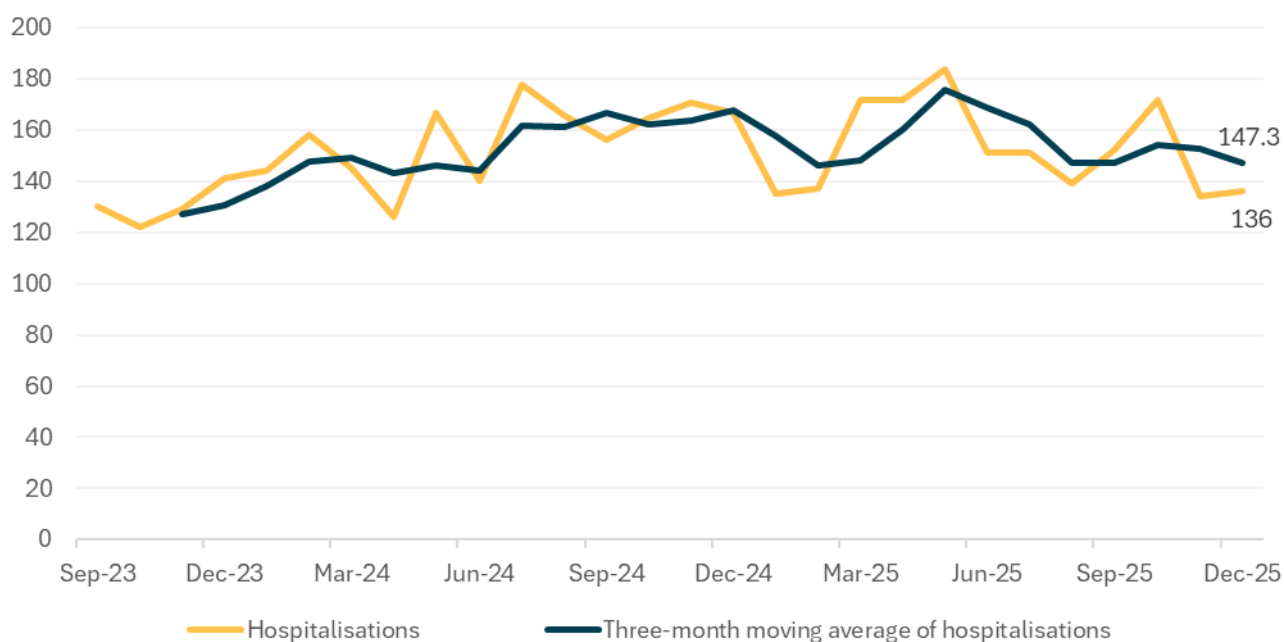


Figure 9: Number and three-month moving average of hospitalisations that included a 'homeless' diagnosis code, September 2023 to December 2025

Provisional data from hospital emergency departments²⁴ indicates that the number of presentations without a recorded address fluctuates with slightly higher numbers over the summer months and lower numbers through the middle of the year. The average number of presentations from October to December 2025 was 54.7, similar to the figure for the same months in 2024 (53.7).

Specialist mental health and addictions

Preliminary data from Health New Zealand -Te Whatu Ora²⁴ on specialist mental health and addiction services shows quarterly updates on clients' accommodation situations. These indicate little change over the year to the end of December 2025.

- When comparing October to December 2025 with the same period in 2024, the number of clients²⁵ recorded as homeless remained unchanged at 1,631, while the number in supported accommodation increased by 7.4 percent (4,170 to 4,480) and the number living independently decreased by 3.3 percent (25,215 to 24,383).
- In December 2025, 521 people who were receiving mental health and addiction services were homeless, similar to 518 in December 2024. This included 234 Māori in December 2025, compared to 240 the year before.
- From September to December, the number of nights spent in mental health and addiction facilities by people reported as homeless were similar to the same period in 2024. In December 2025, homeless individuals stayed a total of 975 nights, compared with 1,012 nights in December 2024.

2025 Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey

Results from MSD's 2025 Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey of secondary school students indicate that while most students usually slept in their own bed at home (92.6 percent), 7.4 percent did not. Responses included sharing a bed, sleeping on floors or couches, couch surfing, and sleeping in a car.

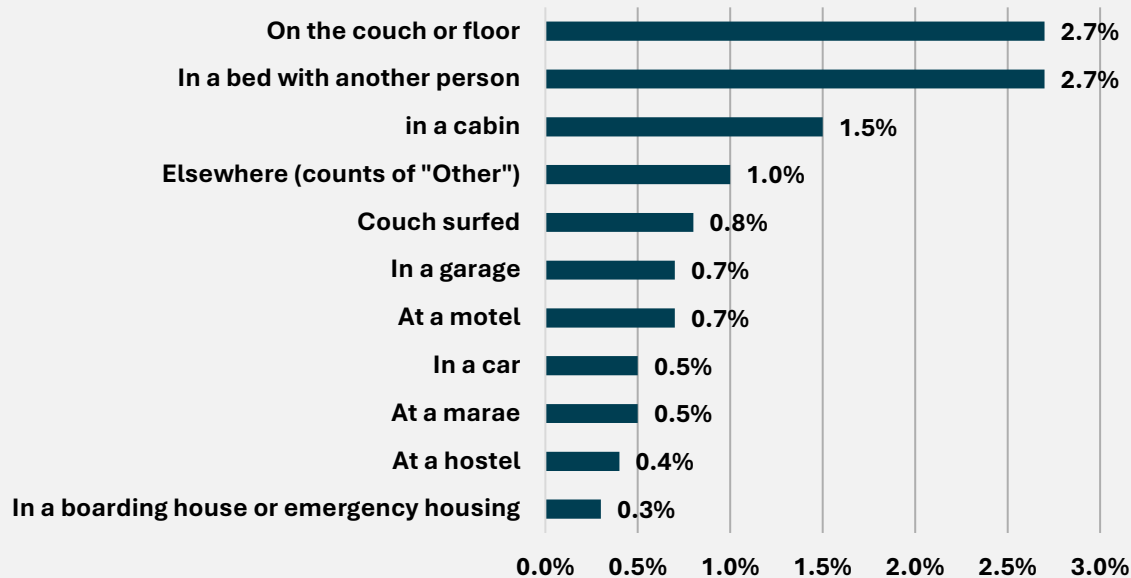


Figure 10: Where young people sleep, when it's not in their own bed, 2025 MSD Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey

Note: Young people could select more than one response

Source: Ministry of Social Development. (2026). Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey: 2025 Findings. From the 2025 Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/index.html>

Observations from around the country

This section summarises key themes and insights gathered from councils, service providers and community groups across New Zealand, highlighting the diverse experiences and challenges faced in addressing homelessness, including for those living without shelter, at a local level.

Common themes we've heard from council staff

In late March we connected with Te Kāuru²⁶ members from 14 different councils across the country. These are the main themes from what we heard:

- Across most areas, the number of people living without shelter was reported to be increasing over the last six months. For a small number of areas the numbers were noted as staying about the same.
- Changes reported include increases among women, older people, young people, and people sleeping in vehicles.
- Local outreach, practical wraparound supports and better coordination between agencies were reported to be helping services connect with people without shelter and reduce some immediate harm.
- It was noted that having the right local approaches could reduce people going to larger cities for support, and it was suggested this could be supported with greater funding flexibility.
- Te Kāuru members reported ongoing challenges included not enough suitable housing, limited mental health and addiction support and no nationally coordinated approach to homelessness.

Themes from the Māori housing sector

Te Matapihi He Tirohanga Mō Te Iwi Trust (Te Matapihi) shared insights from what they have seen and heard as the independent national peak body for Māori housing. Here are the key themes from what Te Matapihi shared:

- He Ara Hiki Mauri²⁷ prototypes are improving outcomes for whānau experiencing homelessness. Te Matapihi report that these are demonstrating that integrated, whānau-centred, Māori-led support, addressing housing alongside health, wellbeing, addiction, income, and social needs, can enable sustained housing when structural barriers are addressed.
- Key challenges noted by Te Matapihi include severe shortages of affordable, appropriate housing, especially larger whānau homes and under-resourced papakāinga, and short-term, limited funding that undermines workforce sustainability and long-term planning for Māori providers. These sit alongside whānau complexity, driven by intergenerational trauma, health inequities, and poverty that extend beyond housing solutions.
- Homelessness among whānau Māori is increasing, it remains high and is often hidden, occurring through couch surfing and unsafe housing.
- Te Matapihi note that sustainable progress requires more long-term investment in Māori led solutions, genuine partnership, and a shift from crisis response to prevention, supply, and whānau self-determination.

Broader system insights that may be affecting homelessness

Employment

Lack of employment can add to household and relationship stress, resulting in housing instability. Overall, we are seeing reduced numbers of people in paid employment, alongside sustained unemployment (5.3 percent in the March 2026 quarter, compared to 5.1 percent a year earlier). Unemployment also remains disproportionately high for Māori and Pacific peoples, increasing to 11.5 percent (up from 10.6 percent) and 11.9 percent (up from 10.9 percent), respectively, over the same period.

As well as this, in the three months to the end of March 2026 there were 143,600 underemployed people working reduced hours who wanted, and were available, to work more hours -16,600 more people than for the same period in 2025 (127,000).

[Labour market statistics: March 2026 quarter | Stats NZ](#)

Population growth

Population growth can put pressure on housing, including rentals. Net migration for the year ended March 2026 was 24,249, this was 14,009 for the year ended March 2025 and 100,024 for the same period in 2024.

[International migration: March 2026 | Stats NZ](#)

Rental price inflation

Rental price inflation for new tenancies has been declining since mid-2024 and remains well below the higher price inflation seen in 2023. In the year to the end of March 2026, there has been a 0.4 percent decrease in rent for new tenancies nationally. In Auckland this decrease was 1.3 percent and 2.4 percent in Wellington, while rents rose 0.4 percent in Canterbury.

[Selected price indexes: March 2026 | Stats NZ](#)

Rent arrears

Survey data from private market renters and landlords report that in October 2025 about 6 percent of tenants were behind on their rental payments with this figure being largely unchanged from May and December of 2023.

[Latest renters and landlords pulse surveys | Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development](#)

Residential construction

Residential construction increases the supply of housing. In the year ended March 2026, there were 37,813 new homes consented, the highest number of homes consented in more than two years, up 11.0 percent compared with the year ended March 2025.

[Building consents issued: March 2026 | Stats NZ](#)

Family violence

Family violence can lead to people needing to urgently seek safety elsewhere. In 2025, 1.4 percent of people (living in dwellings) were victims of family offences, an estimated 62,000 people. This is a statistically significant decrease from the 2.3 percent in 2024 (100,000) people.

[New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey](#)

Alcohol, drugs and other substances

Alcohol, drugs and other substance addiction and abuse can be a barrier to accessing and sustaining housing. Based on analysis of wastewater testing, methamphetamine consumption in New Zealand remains at the high levels first seen in the second half of 2024.²⁸ It's estimated that methamphetamine use across New Zealand's sample sites from October to December 2025 had a weekly social harm cost of \$36.4 million. Northland, Eastern (Hawke's Bay and Gisborne) and Waikato regions had the highest levels of use from October to December 2025.

[Wastewater Drug Testing Quarter Four Overview | NZ Police](#)

Research and reports of interest

Here's a selection of research and reports for further reading.

[Understanding Homelessness: Wāhine Māori Experiences of Rough Sleeping in Wellington City and their Safety Needs](#)

Published in July 2025 by Wellington City Council

This research explores the lived experiences of wāhine Māori who have been sleeping rough in Wellington City.

[He Whare, He Taonga: Hauraki Wāhine and the Fight for Housing Sovereignty](#)

Published in February 2026 in Indigenous Wellbeing journal

This article draws on the voices and experiences of wāhine Māori grandmothers and great-grandmothers who have witnessed current and historic housing struggles, and a vision to rebuild papakāinga and tino rangatiratanga.

[The Papatūānuku Paradigm: Gender Analysis Tool from a Te Ao Māori Lens](#)

Published in August 2025 by the Coalition to End Women's Homelessness.

This gender analysis with a Te Ao Māori lens toolkit has been designed to support and strengthen the efforts of those working in the sector in addressing the complex issue of women's homelessness.

[Te Mirumiru o Mahaki Rotorua Homelessness Count and By-name List Survey, 2025: Survey report](#)

To be published in mid-2026 by Te Taumata o Ngāti Whakaue Iho Ake

This report summarises the results of the Rotorua Homelessness Count and By-Name List initiative. The aim of this work was to determine the size and nature of homelessness experienced in Rotorua to inform responses to homelessness.

Footnotes

¹ Statistics New Zealand. (2015). New Zealand definition of homelessness: update. Retrieved from: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Retirement-of-archive-website-project-files/Methods/New-Zealand-definition-of-homelessness/nz-definition-homelessness-2015-update.pdf>.

² 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. Work with claimants has not yet commenced.

Ministry of Justice. (2024). Kāinga Kore: The Stage One Report of the Housing Policy and Services Kaupapa Inquiry on Māori Homelessness. Retrieved from: https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_211421672/Kainga%20Kore%20W.pdf.

³ See Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. (2026). Housing market update: March quarter 2026. Retrieved from: <https://www.hud.govt.nz/documents/housing-market-update-for-the-march-quarter-2026>

⁴ Auckland is also a main centre, reflected by the investment in South Auckland.

⁵ Auckland Council's providers say the numbers they report are likely lower than the actual number of homeless people, because many are living in cars, moving around often or staying out of sight.

⁶ Te Paetawhiti Ltd. (In press). Te Mirumiru o Mahaki Rotorua Homelessness Count and By-name List Survey, 2025 Survey report. Te Taumata o Ngāti Whakaue Iho Ake

⁷ October 2024 to March 2025 figures include those accessing an outreach service in Clive Square West which closed in August 2025. October 2025 to March 2026 figures include those accessing the Āhuru Mōwai night shelter which opened in July 2025.

⁸ Hastings District Council note that these figures only include people their City Assist Team regularly come into contact with and that the wider cohort is larger and less visible.

⁹ Te Whare o Tapatahi is a collaborative community initiative led by YMCA Taranaki to respond to rough sleeping, among other essential services, the overnight accommodation for men was opened on 24 September 2025.

¹⁰ This number doesn't include people who are staying in temporary accommodation such as hostels, boarding houses or couch surfing.

¹¹ These are people the Downtown Community Ministry saw or interacted with in that period who have indicated a certain accommodation status. There can be other people DCM have

interacted with that have not disclosed their accommodation status so will not be included in these numbers.

¹² To maintain data quality, DCM updates data as new information is gathered. This means that numbers reported here may differ slightly from those previously reported.

¹³ Versus. (2026). Queenstown Lakes District Council: 2025 Quality of Life Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/community/community-research#quality-of-life>

¹⁴ Three categories have not been included in this graph: Migration or displacement (0.9%), Transition from care/other institutions (0.96%) and Other (81.1%).

¹⁵ Please note that data for Housing First is revised based on new reporting from providers, so the numbers provided are accurate as at the latest Mar-26 figures but may be revised with updated data.

¹⁶ Some providers of Housing First accept greater numbers of households into the programme than what is actually funded by HUD. The total number of people reported by providers to be in the programme is 3,630 as at the end of March 2026, which includes households already housed in stable and temporary housing, as well as those living without shelter. The total number of places funded by HUD as at the end of March 2026 is 2,735.

¹⁷ Be careful when using service data to understand homelessness. Data from things like emergency housing grants, the housing register, or transitional housing reflect the situation at the point in time the information is provided by the applicant and may not capture recent changes in their living situations. This type of data can be affected by changes in how services are run or managed. This data only shows how many people are using a service, it doesn't show the total number of people experiencing homelessness. Note service-use data is subject to change, the figures reported here reflect the best data we have available at the time we have prepared the report.

¹⁸ People in transitional housing are usually considered children if they're under 18. However, if they're 16 or 17 and living in youth-specific transitional housing, and they're the main person applying for housing (often living alone or as young parents), they're treated as independent youth and counted as adults.

¹⁹ Note, this is total response ethnic group. This means people are counted for each of the ethnic groups they select, this means that ethnic group totals will add to more than 100 percent.

²⁰ Random rounding has been applied to the figures in this section.

²¹ When a household goes on the register, MSD staff choose from 22 options to describe their living situation. To keep things simple, this report groups those into broader categories based on Stats NZ's definition of homelessness (without shelter, temporary accommodation, sharing someone else's private dwelling, private housing). A client's living situation could be outdated for some time before MSD are made aware of their change in circumstance and are able to update their Register application. As a result, the data may not fully represent the flow of applications on and off the Register or timely changes in individual circumstances. Most people in private housing are renting or boarding. There

may be mistakes because staff may interpret or record accommodation types differently (see Figure 8).

²² This figure is different from what was reported previously, because the method has been improved.

²³ An improved methodology has been used for this section, this is not comparable to what was provided in the previous report.

²⁴ The data from Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora doesn't show the actual number of people experiencing homelessness who use health services. It reflects only what can be identified through the National Collections. A recent audit of one inpatient mental health unit showed that the level of homelessness reported in the Programme for the Integration of Mental Health Data (PRIMHD) national data collection for those patients was significantly undercounted. Health NZ is now undertaking snapshot counts to determine the extent of this under-reporting.

²⁵ Counts are based on unique clients and do not represent the total number of screenings.

²⁶ Te Kāuru is a community of practice on homelessness for council staff around the country. Our notes are based upon responses from members from Whangārei District Council, Auckland Council, Tauranga City Council, Whakatāne District Council, Matamata-Piako District Council, New Plymouth District Council, Napier City Council, Palmerston North City Council, Whanganui District Council, Central Hawke's Bay District Council, Wellington City Council, Porirua City Council, Christchurch City Council, Dunedin City Council. The questions posed to members were: In general, over the last six months: Would you say that the number of people living without shelter in your area is decreasing, increasing, or remaining fairly stable? Any particular changes in terms of age groups, gender, families, etc? What would you say is working well in your area (or nationally)? What are any key challenges in your area (or nationally)?

²⁷ He Ara Hiki Mauri is a tangata whenua-led response to homelessness, it is a whānau-centred model grounded in tikanga, manaakitanga and long-term relationships with whānau.

²⁸ New Zealand Police. (2026). National Drugs in Wastewater Testing Programme – 2025 Annual Overview. Retrieved from: <https://www.police.govt.nz/about-us/publication/national-drugs-wastewater-testing-programme-2025-annual-overview>