NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS DATA PROJECT

Joining the Dots

Homelessness data across Aotearoa's government systems

November 2026

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Introduction

Background

The National Homelessness Data Project (NHDP) is a collaborative initiative bringing together community organisations, researchers and sector partners to build a more complete understanding of homelessness across Aotearoa New Zealand. It was set up to respond to calls for better evidence on homelessness, data gaps and system impacts.

This project collects, analyses and shares evidence from frontline services, research, administrative data and the lived experience of people who have been homeless. The project helps build towards trend data, strengthen system learning, and support better decision-making to improve outcomes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The NHDP is led and coordinated by the Housing First Auckland Backbone. A Steering Group guides it, with representatives from The Salvation Army, Kāhui Tū Kaha, Christchurch Methodist Mission, University of Otago, Wellington City Mission, Downtown Community Ministry, the Coalition to End Women's Homelessness and Community Housing Aotearoa. The Steering Group agrees on priorities and supports collaboration across the partnership.

Work to date includes:

1. Entry Point Survey research: regular snapshots of the people and whānau seeking housing support from participating services.
2. System-wide scans of data gaps and pressures using administrative data, census information and other evidence.
3. Sector research and briefing papers on homelessness.

Homelessness and housing instability intersect with health, justice, education, welfare, and many other systems. Local research has found that people experiencing homelessness had many interactions with government agencies before and while they were homeless (Pierse et al., 2019). Each of these interactions was an opportunity to prevent or end their homelessness, but the research suggests these opportunities were often missed because systems did not recognise that people needed help with housing. This second system-wide scan explores how visible homelessness and housing instability are across different government systems and where the important gaps are. The information in this report can help improve how Aotearoa responds to homelessness and identify opportunities for prevention and early intervention.

Approach

The first system-wide scan, in 2024, gathered data from:

- 45 Official Information Act (OIA) requests to government ministries
- 14 requests to city councils
- The 2023 Census
- Women's Refuge
- Other research and reports on homelessness

The Housing First Auckland Backbone reviewed this data to identify national patterns and data gaps. The scan found gaps and inconsistencies in how agencies record homelessness. In late 2025, a second round of OIA requests to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD, now part of the Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport, MCERT), Ministry of Social Development (MSD), Health NZ, Oranga Tamariki, Department of Corrections, NZ Police, Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) was undertaken. In this round, we asked for data to be broken down by age, gender, ethnicity and region. Online requests for data on student housing insecurity were made to eight tertiary organisations, of which seven responded.

This second scan also drew on Women's Refuge data, and enquiries by the Office of the Auditor-General into the Ministry of Social Development and Corrections. Information from an OIA request to Kāinga Ora, made by the University of Otago, was shared with the project. Most of the data in this report is from 2025 or earlier.

Findings

This second scan shows that data on homelessness in Aotearoa New Zealand is still collected unevenly across government and community systems, and no single integrated source gives a complete national picture. The 2023 Census remains the most comprehensive measure, but it is a point-in-time estimate, which means it becomes out of date quickly. Data availability varies across other systems. This fragmentation makes it harder to track and respond effectively to housing instability as people move between systems.

The Waitangi Tribunal found that:

> *the Crown's prolonged failure to adequately collect data on homelessness in New Zealand constitutes breaches of both the principles of good government and active protection (2024: 192).*

The lack of data limits the ability to identify the extent of housing instability among people interacting with different services or to clearly understand housing need within or across systems. The partial visibility of housing instability limits the information available to policy and decisionmakers.

Work is now underway to address some of these gaps. Stats NZ is working closely with MCERT to develop a plan for measuring homelessness. The multi-year plan proposes the use of survey data, administrative data and more tailored solutions such as point-in-time counts. From November 2026, the work will be informed by a Homeless and Transient Populations Data Advisory Group. While this work progresses, the six-monthly Homelessness Insights report, published by MCERT, continues to draw on multiple types and sources of data to identify potential trends.

In Aotearoa, homelessness is defined as:

> *a living situation 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 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015: 5).*

The 2023 Census estimates 112,496 people were experiencing homelessness in Aotearoa, compared with 99,462 in 2018 (StatsNZ, 2024).

Between 2018 and 2023, the estimated number of people in temporary accommodation increased by 73.5%. The number living without shelter increased by 37%, and the number living in uninhabitable housing increased by 14%.

New Zealanders experiencing homelessness

(Census 2023 estimated count)

NZ definition of homelessness category	2018 Census	2023 Census
Without shelter *(includes rough sleeping and living in improvised and mobile dwellings, i.e. in a vehicle, tent or shack)*	3,624	4,965
Temporary accommodation *(includes NGO run emergency and transitional accommodation, Women's Refuge, night shelters and camping grounds, boarding houses, hostels, motels)*	7,950	13,796
Sharing someone else's private dwelling *(temporary resident in a severely crowded private dwelling)*	27,426	24,768
Uninhabitable housing *(housing that lacks one or more basic amenities)*	60,462	68,967
Total New Zealanders experiencing homelessness	99,462	112,496

Source: Adapted from StatsNZ, 2023 Census severe housing deprivation (homelessness) estimates, December 2024.

Temporary accommodation increased from 7,950 people in 2018 to 13,796 in 2023. This category includes emergency and transitional accommodation, boarding houses, motels, camping grounds and Women's Refuge (StatsNZ, 2024).

The 2023 Census estimates 4,965 people were living without shelter, or 10.1 per 10,000 people. This includes people rough sleeping, living in improvised dwellings and mobile dwellings. The prevalence rate increased from 7.8 per 10,000 in 2018 to 10.1 in 2023, a 29.5% increase (StatsNZ, 2024).

New Zealanders living without shelter

(Census 2023 estimated count)

NZ definition of homelessness category	Living situation	No. of people	Prevalence rate per 10,000 people
Without shelter	Roofless / rough sleeping	333	0.7
	Improvised dwelling	1,116	2.3
	Mobile dwelling	3,516	7.1
	Subtotal	4,965	10.1

Source: Adapted from StatsNZ, 2023 Census severe housing deprivation (homelessness) estimates, December 2024.

The largest group of people (61.3%) living in severe housing deprivation were in uninhabitable housing, a rate of 14 in every 1,000 people in 2023. The rate of people living in uninhabitable housing increased by 7.4% between the 2018 and 2023 Censuses. In Gisborne, the rate of people living in uninhabitable housing increased from 191.8 per 10,000 people in 2018 to 354.4 per 10,000 in 2023 following Cyclone Gabrielle (StatsNZ, 2024).

New Zealanders living in uninhabitable housing

(Census 2023 estimated count)

Living situation	No. of people	Prevalence rate per 10,000 people
Uninhabitable housing[1]	68,967	140.0

1. *Housing that lacks one or more basic amenities (cooking facilities, safe drinking water, a kitchen sink, a bath or shower, a toilet, and electricity).*

Source: Adapted from StatsNZ, 2023 Census severe housing deprivation (homelessness) estimates, December 2024.

Māori over-representation

Māori are consistently over-represented in homelessness statistics across government and non-government systems. This pattern is linked to structural factors including the ongoing effects of colonisation, historical land loss, socioeconomic disadvantage and discrimination in housing markets (Lawson-Te Aho et al., 2019).

The Waitangi Tribunal's Stage One report on the Kaupapa Inquiry into Māori Homelessness (2009–2021) found the Crown breached the principles of good government and active protection in several ways including: inadequate consultation with Māori on the official homelessness definition, ongoing data collection shortfalls, inadequate housing, worsening inequity in unmet Māori housing need, failure to implement or monitor He Whare Āhuru, limited consultation on the Homelessness Action Plan and MAIHI Framework, a fragmented housing system, and inadequate protection for rangatahi experiencing homelessness (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024).

The 2023 Census estimated that 34,557 people of Māori ethnicity (394.0 per 10,000 Māori compared with 228.3 for the total population in 2023) were severely housing deprived, up from 28,086 people (365.5 per 10,000 Māori) in 2018. Of those affected in 2023, the majority (57.3%) were living in uninhabitable housing, over one-quarter (27.6%) were sharing another person's private dwelling, 11.3% were in temporary accommodation, and 3.8% were without shelter (StatsNZ, 2024).

Māori experiencing homelessness
(Census 2023 estimated count)

Living situation	No. of people	Prevalence rate per 10,000 people
Without shelter	1,308	14.9
Temporary accommodation	3,903	44.5
Sharing someone else's private dwelling	9,555	108.9
Uninhabitable housing	19,791	225.6
Total Māori experiencing homelessness	34,557	394.0

Māori who also identified as LGBTIQ+ showed particularly high rates of living in temporary accommodation or without shelter (100.6 per 10,000 compared with 38.1 per 10,000 for the total population). Tamariki under 15 years made up over one-third (36.6%) of all Māori experiencing severe housing deprivation, with most of this group living in uninhabitable housing (StatsNZ, 2024).

Gender differences across public systems

Gender-disaggregated data obtained across the public systems show differences in the experiences of women, men and gender diverse people across housing, income support, health and justice systems.

Men experiencing homelessness account for a higher proportion in the justice and health systems, whereas women experiencing homelessness make up a higher proportion of people accessing support from emergency and social support systems.

Women consistently make up a higher proportion of people in transitional housing (53% women to 47% men) (MHUD now MCERT Transitional housing data, 2026). More women applicants enter the Social Housing register each year, but their share has fallen steadily, from 69% in 2017 to 61% in 2025. Over the same period the male share rose from 30% to 39% (MSD Social Housing Register and Accommodation Supplement data, 2026).

Gender diverse people made up less than 1% of primary applicants to the Social Housing Register. As there are a small number of applicants in each area, much of the gender diversity data is suppressed, making it difficult to identify patterns (MSD Social Housing Register and Accommodation Supplement data, 2026).

Women received a modest majority of Accommodation Supplement grants from 2017 to 2023, peaking at 55%. From 2024, slightly more men than women received an Accommodation Supplement grant. Gender diverse people received around 0.7% of Accommodation Supplement grants from 2022 (MSD Social Housing Register and Accommodation Supplement data, 2026).

A higher proportion of men's applications for Emergency Housing were declined compared with women, although decline rates increased for both groups in 2025. From January to September 2025, 38% of men's and 32% of women's applications for Emergency Housing were declined. Women account for the majority of Emergency Housing and Housing Support Product grants, receiving approximately 61–64% of grants (MSD Emergency Housing and Housing Supports data, 2026).

Men are about twice as likely as women to leave prison without a confirmed address (from 2017-2025: 9% women compared with 18% men). Because men are the majority of people released (men n=49001 and women n=4702), they made up 95% of releases to no fixed abode between 2017 to 2025 (men n=8,831, women n=441, gender unknown n=7) (Department of Corrections data, 2026).

In 2025, 82% of offenders recorded with no fixed abode were men. The proportion of women who were recorded as victims with no fixed abode has increased from 37% in 2017 to 44% in 2025 (Police data, 2026).

More hospital discharges involving homelessness were for men (65% compared with 35% for women) (Health NZ ICD code Z59.0 data, 2026).

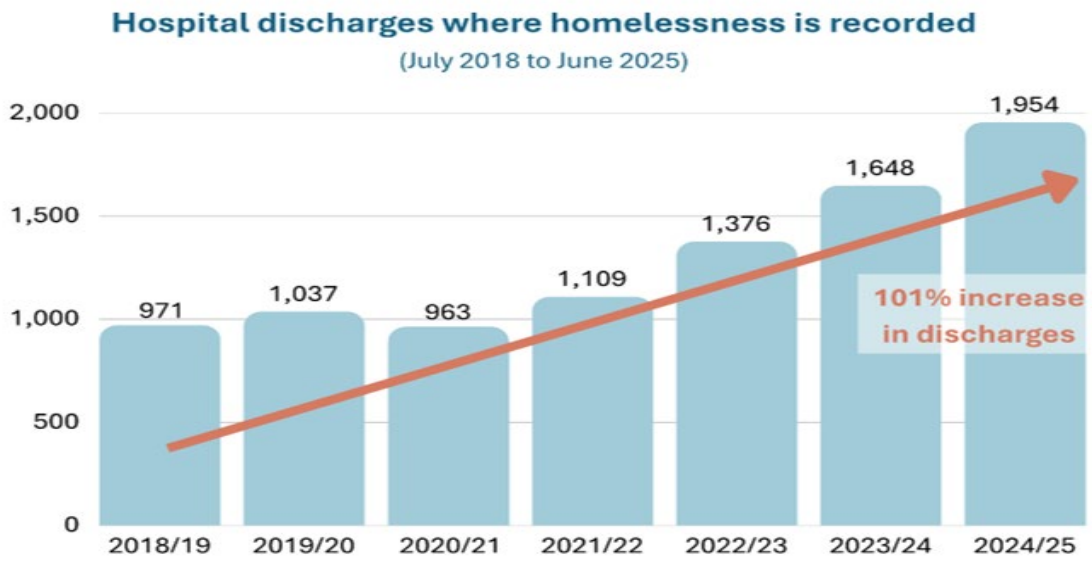
Recorded hospital discharges of people experiencing homelessness more than doubled.

National hospital data captures homelessness through International Classification of Diseases (ICD) code Z59.0 when homelessness is relevant to a hospitalisation. It does not capture every hospital patient experiencing homelessness, and specific address information is not reported to the National Collections team (Health NZ ICD code Z59.0 data, 2026).

Recorded hospital discharges involving homelessness increased by 101% between 2018/19 and 2024/25 (Health NZ ICD code Z59.0 data, 2026).

Māori discharges from hospitals where homelessness was relevant increased from 414 in 2018/19 to 992 in 2024/25, a 140% increase (Health NZ ICD code Z59.0 data, 2026).

The former Auckland DHB recorded nearly 2,000 discharges, compared with 968 in the Bay of Plenty DHB area. These are counts rather than population-adjusted rates and should not be used alone to compare the prevalence of homelessness between regions (Health NZ ICD code Z59.0 data, 2026).



Source: Health New Zealand, Number of publicly funded hospital discharges with any diagnosis of Homelessness (ICD-10-AM-VIII code Z59.0), February 2026

Data on prisoners' housing situations and needs is not routinely gathered or centrally collated by Corrections

Across the available Corrections data for 2017–2025, 17% of prison releases had no confirmed place to live[1]. The number of people released to "no fixed abode" or "address to be confirmed" increased by 82% over this period (Department of Corrections data, 2026).

Corrections does not centrally record whether a person was homeless before entering prison. Housing information may appear in individual file notes when self-reported, but disclosure is not required at entry (Department of Corrections data, 2026).

Research found that those living in unstable housing had a greater likelihood of re-imprisonment and those living in stable housing six months after release were 4.6 times less likely to be re-imprisoned than those with unstable housing (7% vs 34%) (Mills et al. 2024).

The Office of the Auditor-General (2026a) found Corrections needs better information about case-management support and housing outcomes after release.

[1] This data relates only to people released from prison who were subsequently managed on a post-release order by Community Corrections, as those released with no conditions or who end a remand period with no subsequent sentence are not required to provide any address details. Therefore, these people are not required to provide a suitable address to the New Zealand Parole Board or New Zealand Courts for them to be released from prison (Department of Corrections, 2026).

Recorded victims and offenders with no fixed abode have both increased

Between 2017 and 2025, Police data recorded a 91% increase in victims and a 30% increase in offenders whose primary address was listed as no fixed abode (Police National Intelligence Application data, 2026)[2].

Access to stable housing and whānau-centred support helps reduce offending by people experiencing homelessness. In line with international research, the evaluation of The People's Project found significant reductions in police offences, criminal charges and Corrections events among people supported by Housing First (Ombler et al., 2024).

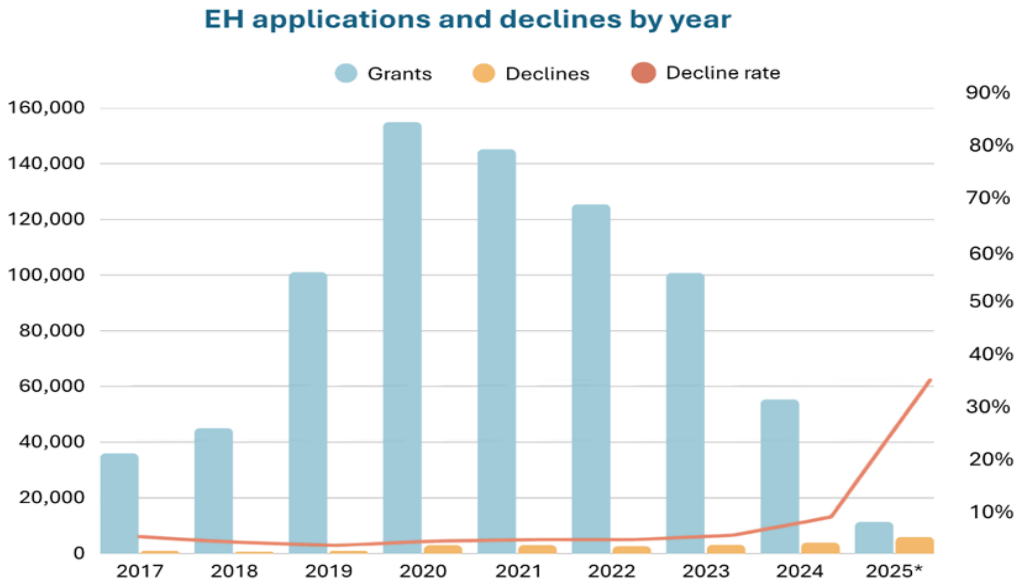


Source: New Zealand Police, People linked to occurrences whose primary address in National Intelligence Application listed as no fixed abode, March 2026

Emergency housing applications fell as declines rose

Recorded applications for emergency housing have fallen, while the proportion of declines has increased (MSD Emergency Housing and Housing Supports data, 2026).

[2] A record of no fixed abode does not necessarily mean that the person is homeless. If Police finds someone's address information to be outdated or there is no address, and it cannot be updated with a legitimate address, then the address may be recorded as no fixed abode. This categorisation is also used for individuals considered to be transient, that is, people who are staying or working in a place for a short time only. It is also used if someone is travelling and lives in a motorhome or campervan.



** 2025 data covers January to September only.*

Source: Ministry of Social Development, Emergency Housing Applications and Declines 1 Jan 2017 to 30 Sept 2025 , March 2026.

MSD data shows emergency housing applications fell after access criteria were tightened in August 2024, while the proportion of applications that were declined increased. The Office of the Auditor-General (2026b) also reported sector feedback that some people in housing need may not apply because they expect to be declined (MSD Emergency Housing and Housing Supports data, 2026).

The number of Social Housing Register applicants recorded as living in cars at month end increased from around 100–130 per month in early 2017 to around 460–650 during 2022–2024, before easing slightly in late 2024 (MSD Social Housing Register and Accommodation Supplement data, 2026).

The Office of the Auditor-General (2026b) identified a gap in information about people in immediate housing need who do not receive MSD support, including people who are declined and people who do not apply.

Transitional housing ran at about 91% occupancy

Transitional housing had an average occupancy rate of 91% between April 2024 and November 2025. Around 20–23% of occupied places were used by households that had been in transitional housing for more than one year (MHUD now MCERT Transitional housing data, 2026).

Between April 2024 and November 2025, 11% of transitional housing exits (n=8,050) were recorded as “Removed from Service by Provider”. The data reviewed does not show the subsequent housing outcomes for this group (MHUD now MCERT Transitional housing data, 2026).

Māori represented around 45% of households in transitional housing and Pacific Peoples represented around 20% of households (MHUD now MCERT Transitional housing data, 2026).

People aged under 25 accounted for around 60% of people in transitional housing. This includes children recorded within households, so the data does not separately identify how many are young people experiencing homelessness independently (MHUD now MCERT Transitional housing data, 2026).

Kāinga Ora tenancy terminations impact over 780 young people

In July 2024, Kāinga Ora replaced the Sustaining Tenancies Framework with a new Tenancy Management Framework and strengthened its response to managing tenant behaviour. Between 1 March 2024 and 31 July 2026, Kāinga Ora terminated 852 tenancies potentially impacting the 1,774 people who lived in these homes. Of this group, 784 were under the age of 25 years, including 601 children under the age of 18 years. There were 39 main tenants under 25 and 67 main tenants were over 65 (Kāinga Ora Tenancy terminations, 2026).

Reasons for tenancy termination included nonoccupation or abandonment, rent debt and disruptive behaviour (Kāinga Ora Tenancy terminations, 2026).

Number and percentage of household members aged 25 or under by termination reason
(1 March 2024 to 31 July 2026)

Termination reason	Count	Percent
Nonoccupation & Abandonment	349	44.5%
Rent Debt	239	30.5%
Disruptive behaviour	113	14%
Other	83	11%
Total	784	100%

Source: OIA Kianga Ora-Number household members aged 25 or under where there was a termination, by termination reason

When a household is facing termination, particularly those including children, Kāinga Ora tries to work closely with them to ensure they are aware of appropriate, alternative housing support. However, Kāinga Ora was unable to provide any detailed information on the referral support provided to households (Kāinga Ora Tenancy terminations, 2026).

The Tenancy Management Framework states that households with children do not have to secure alternative housing before Kāinga Ora ends the tenancy and the presence of a child does not change Kāinga Ora's decision to end a tenancy. In March 2026, Kāinga Ora carried out a deep dive into the impacts on children and recommended amending the Tenancy Management Framework to guide discretion on preventing distinct and significant harm to children (Kāinga Ora Tenancy terminations, 2026).

Little oversight of the impacts of unstable housing on school attendance

The Ministry of Education (MOE) reported no new processes for collecting housing instability or homelessness data in connection with school attendance (MOE decline, 2026).

Education Review Office (ERO) research found students living in social housing were 1.4 times more likely to be chronically absent, and those living in emergency housing were 1.5 times more likely (ERO, 2024).

ERO (2024) also found that, from ages 17 to 26, young adults who had been chronically absent were more likely to use social and emergency housing.

Research by the Coalition to End Women's Homelessness and Taylor Fry (2026) found young people experiencing severe housing deprivation had 2.3 times higher rates of suspensions than the comparison group (1.7% compared with 0.74%).

Children under five experiencing homelessness were 1.6 times more likely never to have been enrolled in early childhood education (Coalition to End Women's Homelessness and Taylor Fry, 2026).

Limited information on homelessness among tertiary students

Seven universities responded to the 2025 data requests. The responses show limited systematic data on student housing instability and homelessness.

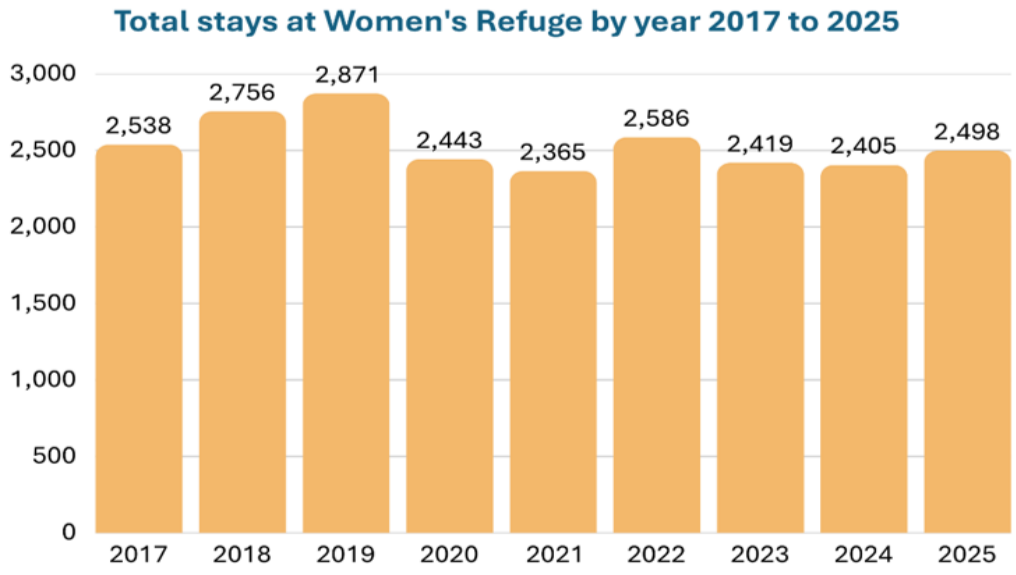
All seven reported some form of housing support, but only one systematically collected data about housing need. In several cases, support was provided through student associations rather than directly by the university.

None of the seven universities could provide a clear overall number of students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity from routinely collected data.

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) reported a 30% increase in presentations to its Student Counselling and Mental Health Service from 2020 to 2025. AUT also reported providing $1.2 million in housing or emergency-housing support to students over that period (AUT, 2026).

Overall number of women staying at Women's Refuges remains steady

Women's Refuge recorded 2,498 stays in 2025. Annual stays peaked at 2,871 in 2019 and were lower in 2020 and 2021. In 2017, Māori accounted for 42% of all stays (Women's Refuge, 2026). By 2025 that had risen to 55% of all stays. The absolute number of Māori stays has grown — from 1,068 in 2017 to 1,379 in 2025 (Women's Refuge, 2026).



Source: Women's Refuge, Residential Referrals, 2017-2025

Housing instability is not readily visible across the child welfare system

Oranga Tamariki was unable to provide extractable data on the housing situations of children, young people, parents or caregivers during or after engagement. Housing information may be contained in individual case notes but cannot be reported without manual review. Oranga Tamariki data does not provide a national measure of housing instability among children, young people or whānau engaged with the agency (Oranga Tamariki, 2026).

Oranga Tamariki provides various forms of housing support to whānau and care leavers, including the Transition Support Service for the approximately 600 young people transitioning out of care each year, the Supported Accommodation Service, the new Public Housing Fast Track initiative and by connecting whānau with community organisations to assist with housing (Oranga Tamariki, 2026).

Visibility of homelessness at a local level

Real-time information about homelessness at a community level is limited. Local information about people living without shelter is collected through outreach services, local providers, surveys and homelessness counts. Methods and coverage differ between locations, limiting direct comparison and national aggregation.

Interviews with managers from 19 service providers conducted by The Salvation Army and Community Housing Aotearoa between April and June 2026 found that all but one reported homelessness had increased in the previous six months (NHDP, 2026).

Conclusion

Inadequate data collection about housing status and homelessness by the Crown continues to be a significant problem. The Waitangi Tribunal found the Crown has continued to breach the Treaty through the narrowness of its consultation, its ongoing failure to collect thorough homelessness data, the shortcomings in inter-agency coordination, its continued failure to reform the welfare system to improve outcomes for Māori, and its lack of support for rangatahi experiencing homelessness (Waitangi Tribunal, 2024).

Many government agencies meet people who experience homelessness and every contact is a chance to intervene early or help end it. Across the systems reviewed, housing need is often not recorded, so those chances may be missed, and people's housing need remains invisible.

Housing needs to be everybody's business. Access to stable housing creates benefits for whānau and reduces impacts across multiple government systems (particularly health and justice). A joined-up, whole-of-system response requires all of us to recognise and respond effectively to homelessness.

Recommendations

As first identified in the 2024 scan, the findings of this report highlight the continuing need for a more coordinated, whole-of-system approach to understanding, preventing and responding to homelessness across Aotearoa New Zealand.

1. Improve the consistency and coordination of homelessness data collection

Develop a more consistent and coordinated approach to collecting, sharing and reporting homelessness and housing instability data across government agencies. This should include common definitions, more regular reporting and better integration of administrative and community-level data to provide a more comprehensive and timely understanding of homelessness across Aotearoa New Zealand.

This should build on the national measurement work now being developed by Stats NZ and MCERT (see Findings), including the new Homeless and Transient Populations Data Advisory Group.

2. Strengthen a joined-up, whole-of-system approach to housing

Recognise housing as a shared responsibility across government systems, including health, justice, education, social development and housing. Agencies should work more closely together to identify housing needs, coordinate responses and ensure that opportunities to prevent and respond to homelessness are not missed.

3. Strengthen housing support at critical transition points

Improve planning and coordination of housing support for people transitioning out of prisons, hospitals, state care and other institutional settings, as well as those facing tenancy termination. Agencies should identify housing needs early and work collaboratively to secure appropriate housing and support, reducing the risk of people entering or returning to homelessness without creating unnecessary barriers to discharge or transition.

4. Address Māori housing inequities and uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Prioritise action to address the persistent over-representation of Māori experiencing homelessness and uphold the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This includes supporting Māori leadership and decision-making in homelessness policy, data collection and service responses, and ensuring approaches are grounded in kaupapa Māori and responsive to the needs and aspirations of Māori whānau, hapū and iwi.

5. Use evidence and data to inform and improve responses to homelessness

Ensure that homelessness data, research and lived experience inform policy development, investment decisions and service responses. Evidence should be used to identify emerging needs, strengthen prevention and early intervention, evaluate the effectiveness of existing approaches and support continuous improvement across government and community systems.

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