

AGEING
WELL

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talkaumatanga

Hidden homelessness among older renters

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International research on 'first time' homelessness among older people

We looked at 108 interviews with older tenants, to find out whether homelessness is part of their renting experience

Older people forced to sleep in car as housing crisis bites

Sara Meij · 17:00, Aug 09 2018



STUFF

NZ definition of homelessness

- Statistics NZ measures ‘severe housing deprivation’
- Four categories representing homelessness:
 - without shelter
 - temporary accommodation
 - sharing accommodation
 - uninhabitable housing

Official homelessness data (2013)

- Total (all ages) severely housing deprived = 40,658 (1% of total NZ population)
- Total severely housing deprived aged 55+ = 5,971 - almost 15% of severely housing deprived population
- People identifying as Pacific, Māori or Asian are over-represented in the homeless population

Experiencing homelessness

- 19 of 108 reported one or more episodes of homelessness within the five years before their interview (17.5%)
- Age homelessness occurred:
 - 55-59 (3)
 - 60-64 years (8)
 - 65-69 (5)
 - 70+ (3)
- 11 women and 8 men
- Two had more than one stint of homelessness within the previous five years
- Six were homeless at the time of interview – they were also paying rent

Types of homelessness

Type of homelessness	Men	Women	Total
Without shelter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle • Shed • Garage • Sleepout • Rough sleeping 	4	4	8
Temporary accommodation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping ground • Emergency accom 	4	1	6
Sharing accommodation	2	2	4
Uninhabitable housing	0	2	2
Non-residential building e.g. farm, commercial, industrial	0	4	4

Key Drivers of homelessness

- Unaffordable rents
- Tenancy termination
- Other factors:
 - Divorce/separation (5)
 - One returned to NZ
 - One released from prison
 - One lost their rental due to earthquake

It was very difficult to find something. I hesitated taking it because of the bath. But if I didn't take it, there was nothing. I was staying in a motel and needed to move out (woman, 76 years).

[Landlord] sold the house, he was in his 70s, and then the new people wanted to increase the rent by 66%. Trying to get a flatmate was one option, couldn't find anybody and couldn't afford to pay that myself (woman, 62 years).

Conventional housing histories

- 14 of 19 had owned a home in the past
- Most did not have a history of on-going housing disruption
- Most did not have a history of transience, although one was used to moving due to their occupation
- Two had intermittent homeless experiences from childhood
- All except one were first time homeless in their late 50s or older

Conclusions

- This study suggests hidden homelessness among older people
- Most in this study have had conventional housing histories and experience ‘first time’ homelessness in later life, usually due to a crisis or ‘shock’
- Layers of housing insecurity – unaffordable rents, sudden termination, poor condition and unsafe housing
- Need for robust data about older people's experiences of homelessness