

AGEING WELL IN NEW ZEALAND — IS THE HEALTH OF OLDER PEOPLE RELATED TO THEIR HOUSING TENURE?



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THE PROBLEM

New Zealand is facing two challenges: structural population ageing and a tenure revolution from home ownership to rental housing. Older populations are just beginning to feel the impact of the latter and older people of the future will be increasingly dependent on rental housing. What are the implications of these intersecting trends for the health of older people and their health service needs?

BACKGROUND

International research has found an association between housing tenure and health, with home owners generally having better health and lower mortality than renters e.g.^{1,3}. Home ownership rates for New Zealanders are declining, including among older people^{4,5}.

This research analyses data from New Zealand Health Surveys to explore the relationship between tenure and health of older people.

DATA AND METHODS

- New Zealand Health Survey (NZHS): an annual survey with a nationally-representative sample of the adult population (aged 15+)
- Data from NZHS 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 were pooled (total 15,626 respondents aged 55+)
- Analysis compared three types of tenure (home owners/family trust, private renters and public renters) for three age groups (55-64, 65-74 and 75+, and the combined age group 55+).

KEY RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHY

- Tenure: Across the total sample aged 55+, 83% were home owners/family trust, 12% were private renters and 5% public renters
- Gender: Higher proportion of women in the 75+ age group, reflecting longer life expectancy (figure 1)
- Prioritised ethnicity: New Zealand Europeans have the highest proportion of home owners; Māori & Pacific people have higher proportions of private and public renters than NZ Europeans (figure 2)
- Income: Home owners had the highest average personal income and public renters the lowest

RISK FACTORS AND HEALTH BEHAVIOURS

- For all ages combined, public renters were most likely to be **obese** (BMI > 30) (49%), have **high blood pressure** (45%), be **daily smokers** (25%) and be **physically inactive** (35%)
- Public renters were least likely to eat **2+ servings of fruit** (46%) and **3+ servings of vegetables** (53%) per day
- Public renters were least likely to **drink alcohol**, but among those who did drink, public and private renters had higher rates of **hazardous drinking** (19%) than home owners (10%)

PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

Table 1 shows physical and mental health by tenure for the combined group aged 55+.

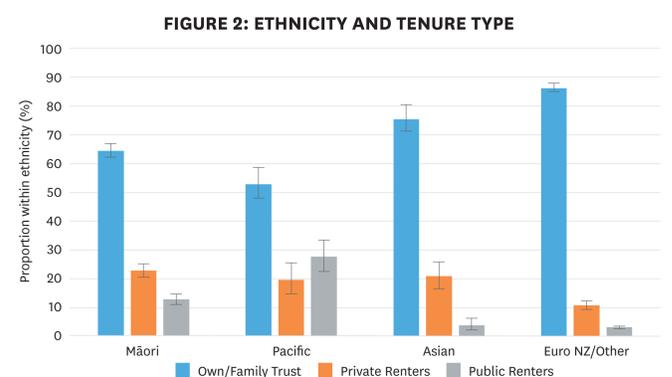
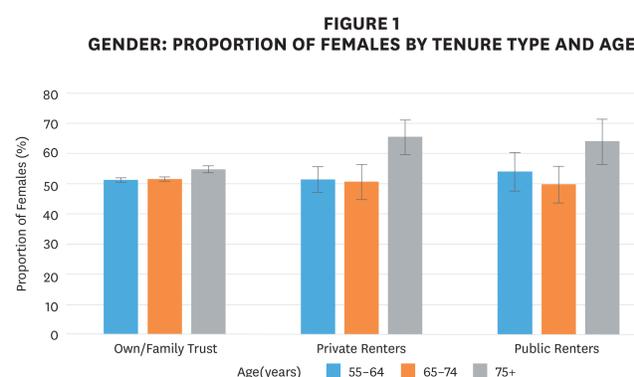
- Public renters were most likely to report long-term conditions and home owners least likely
- The reported ill health among public renters was notably high for a number of conditions, including **arthritis** (43%), **chronic pain** (41%), **asthma** (29%), **diabetes** (27%) and **depression** (24%)

HEALTH SERVICES UTILISATION

- Home owners aged 55+ averaged 3.9 **GP visits** in the past year compared with 4.7 for private renters and 5.7 for public renters
- Although public renters visited their GP most often on average, they were also most likely to report they had **not visited their GP because of cost** (25%) or **not collected a prescription item because of cost** (20%)
- Home owners aged 55+ averaged 1.4 **ED visits** in the past year compared with 1.8 for private renters and 2.2 for public renters
- Use of hospital services or hospital admission** in the past year was reported by 35% of home owners aged 55+, 40% of private renters and 49% of public renters

IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH POLICY AND SERVICES

Public renters in particular, and also private renters, showed a pattern of higher risk factors and poorer physical and mental health compared with home owners. Higher health need was reflected in higher health service use by renters. Tenure may therefore be an important identifier of health need. At present, most New Zealanders aged 55+ are home owners, but the proportion of renters is rising at the same time as numbers of older people are also increasing. Targeting and addressing the health needs of older renters will be important if likely increases in health service demands are to be addressed.



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TABLE 1: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH BY TENURE FOR PEOPLE AGED 55+ (REPORT HAVING BEEN TOLD BY A DOCTOR THEY HAVE THE CONDITION)

	HOUSING TENURE						P-VALUE: PRIVATE AND PUBLIC RENTERS	P-VALUE: PRIVATE RENTERS AND HO/FTS
	Public renters		Private renters		Homeowners/family trust (HO/FT)			
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI		
Had a heart attack	16.1	(13.6, 19.0)	9.4	(8.0, 11.0)	7.5	(7.0, 8.1)	0.0000	0.0187
Angina	14.7	(12.2, 17.5)	10.3	(8.8, 12.0)	7.4	(6.9, 8.0)	0.0052	0.0013
Heart failure	9.2	(7.5, 11.2)	5.5	(4.5, 6.8)	4.3	(3.9, 4.8)	0.0008	0.0545
Any other heart disease	20.8	(17.6, 24.4)	15.0	(12.8, 17.6)	14.3	(13.5, 15.2)	0.0094	0.5730
Stroke	10.3	(8.2, 12.9)	5.6	(4.3, 7.3)	3.5	(3.1, 3.9)	0.0017	0.0063
Diabetes	27.1	(23.5, 30.9)	14.5	(12.2, 17.1)	11.4	(10.7, 12.1)	0.0000	0.0170
Asthma	28.4	(25.2, 31.9)	18.1	(16.0, 20.4)	14.5	(13.6, 15.4)	0.0000	0.0023
Arthritis	43.4	(39.7, 47.2)	37.5	(34.9, 40.1)	36.8	(35.7, 37.9)	0.0131	0.6619
Chronic pain	41.0	(37.1, 45.0)	33.2	(30.5, 36.2)	29.1	(28.0, 30.2)	0.0016	0.0060
Depression	24.4	(21.1, 28.0)	19.9	(17.9, 21.9)	14.4	(13.6, 15.3)	0.0234	0.0000
Anxiety disorder	14.2	(11.7, 17.2)	10.1	(8.6, 11.8)	7.1	(6.5, 7.8)	0.0094	0.0007