

Homelessness Briefing June 2026

National Homelessness Data Project

I. Introduction

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an updated overview of homelessness trends, drawing on interviews with frontline service providers, client entry point survey data, quantitative recent data insights and qualitative observations. This is the fourth Homelessness Briefing prepared by The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora and Community Housing Aotearoa following briefings in December 2024, July 2025 and December 2025.

II. Background – National Homelessness Data Project

1. The National Homelessness Data Project (NHDP) steering group includes The Salvation Army, Kāhui Tū Kaha, Christchurch Methodist Mission, University of Otago, Wellington City Mission, Downtown Community Ministry, Community Housing Aotearoa and the Housing First Backbone, and has progressed the following workstreams:
 - Regular **Homelessness briefing papers to Ministers** that include the results of interviews undertaken with managers of services supporting those experiencing homelessness across the country and highlighting data, insights, and trends that demonstrate the changes in homelessness.
 - **Entry Point Survey Research**, involving providers across Aotearoa to collect consistent 'entry point' data from clients, with oversight and guidance from University of Otago
 - A coordinated set of **Official Information Act (OIA) requests** to local and central government agencies, aimed at capturing broader homelessness-related trends and identifying gaps in key data across sectors including health, education, employment, child protection, justice, social support, and local government.

III. Summary of Findings

Interviews with managers of service providers were conducted between April - June 2026 based on questions consistent with the previous three surveys:

- Homelessness continues to increase. All but one of the 19 respondents said the levels of homelessness have increased in the past six months.
- The profile of homelessness appears to be changing with more people becoming homeless for the first time alongside an entrenched pattern of repeat homelessness.
- **Increasing complexity:** Alongside increasing demand, providers are seeing increasing complexity across areas such as food insecurity, mental health, trauma, and addiction
- Our respondents noted systemic pressures including insufficient housing supply, fragmented pathways into housing and support, and unmet demand for appropriate housing options.

The **Entry Point Survey** work continued with a third phase of 10 weeks' data collection during February-April 2026. This involved a group of providers collecting consistent 'entry point' data from people seeking assistance relating to homelessness with oversight and analysis from University of Otago. Eight agencies participated in Phase Three: Comcare Trust, Christchurch Methodist Mission, Te Tāpui Atawhai Auckland City Mission, DCM, De Paul House, Link People, Lifewise, and Visionwest.

Key findings from interviews with 758 people seeking support include (full Phase Three report is online¹):

- 84% of those seeking support were adults aged 25-64 years, consistent with the previous two surveys.
- Māori made up almost half (46.3%) of participants
- One third (31%) were sleeping rough or in cars/tents and another fifth (21%) were staying with family or friends and very few (6.6%) were in government-funded temporary housing
- Previous homelessness was the strongest predictor of current homelessness, with those who had experienced homelessness before more than 10 times more likely to be homeless again.
- The high number of people contacting a small number of providers in a short period indicates a high level of housing need
- Persistent and potentially cumulative effect of prior homelessness on future housing security
- Declining access to formal housing supports indicating a deepening crisis needing urgent intervention.

A second round of OIAs was undertaken in late 2025 and responses received in the following months. The full findings are not yet published but three key findings were:

1. Significant data gaps remain:
 - Housing need is often hidden in case notes and administrative systems.
 - No agency holds a complete picture of homelessness.
2. Multiple indicators point to growing unmet housing need:
 - Transitional housing is operating at 91% capacity.
 - Hospital discharges linked to homelessness have more than doubled
 - More people are leaving prison without stable housing
 - Numbers of people living in care while on the housing register have increased.
3. Māori are disproportionately affected:
 - Consistent over-representation across the housing, health and justice indicators
 - Māori are 60% of people released from prison with no confirmed address
 - Māori make up 45% of households in transitional housing

Other data and findings

¹ <https://www.housingfirst.co.nz/whats-happening/entry-point-survey-research-report-june-2026/>

- Citizens Advice Bureau data shows an **11 percent increase in homelessness-related enquiries** to their services in the year to May 2026.
- Coalition to End Women's Homelessness **analysis of life outcomes the 33,000 children living in severe housing deprivation** identifies much higher rates of harm and poorer life outcomes they experience.
- Funding available through the **Government Budget 2026/27** allocations for homelessness support has **reduced by \$16million** compared to the 2025/26 year and is **\$75 million less than in 2024/25**.
- The **growth in the number of social housing units is rapidly decreasing**. An average of 900 units per year is planned between 2026 – 2028 compared to the average of 3,500 per year in three prior years 2022- 2025.

IV. Interviews with managers of service providers

The survey of homelessness services providers undertaken for this Briefing is based on insights gathered through a combination of a Teams table talk discussion, one-on-one kōrero and online survey questions during April and May 2026. Participants were from community housing providers and services, Housing First Providers, Transitional Housing (short-term safe housing with support into long-term accommodation), councils, Homelessness Outreach services, a night shelter, community ministries and drop-in hubs. Feedback was received from a total of 19 services in twelve centres: Northland, Auckland (5), Tauranga, Hamilton (2), Rotorua, Napier, New Plymouth, Taranaki (2), Wellington (2), Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin plus a national youth homelessness organisation.

Homelessness continues to increase

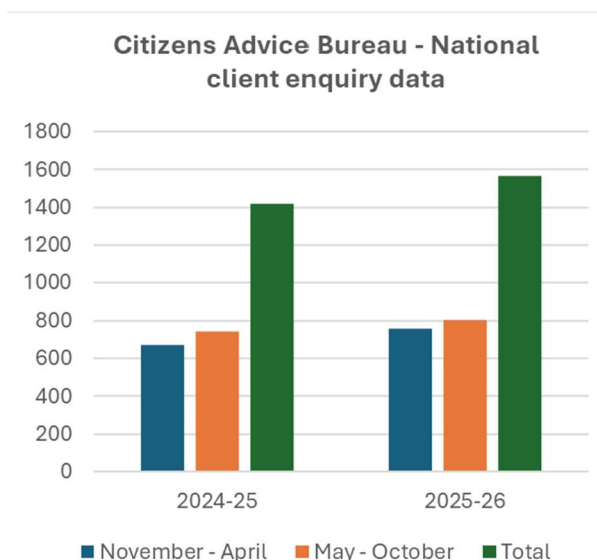
- All but one of the 19 respondents said the **levels of homelessness have increased** in the past six months.
- **Housing supply is not keeping pace with need:** Providers we had conversations with described pressure points across the housing continuum. They noted shortage of emergency, transitional, community, and permanent housing. Particular emphasis was placed on the lack of both one-to-two-bedroom homes for older adults, as well as larger homes for families.
- **Increasing complexity:** Alongside increasing demand, providers are seeing increasing complexity across areas such as food insecurity, mental health, trauma, and addiction.
 - **Rangatahi, hapū mā mā, whānau with children, women, and older people face specific gaps:** There are limited age-appropriate, gender-responsive, whānau-appropriate, and accessible housing options for these groups.
 - **People are becoming homeless for the first time as well as cycling through chronic repeat homelessness:** Job loss, relationship breakdown, cost of living and health are pushing more people into severe housing insecurity.
- **Transition points are creating homelessness:** People are leaving correction facilities, hospital, or mental health services without secure accommodation or adequate wraparound support plans,

increasing the risk of immediate homelessness. Research has shown² that people experiencing unstable housing after release from prison are significantly more likely to return to custody within a year.

- **Pathways into housing are fragmented and hard to navigate** Eligibility rules, documentation requirements, challenge to gain appointments, and repeated referrals between agencies can ‘ping-pong’ people across the system. This can cause delays in access to housing and support. Providers are stepping in to fill this ‘navigator role’ but, alongside their other service demands, this is putting them under strain.
- **Hidden homelessness is still present but not fully visible in the data:** Situations such as couch surfing, overcrowding, staying with whānau, living in vehicles, and people being turned away from services are not consistently captured in official data. Despite this, our providers reported that hidden homelessness is prevalent in their communities and regularly encountered through outreach services.

V. Analysis from other Organisations:

Citizens Advice Bureau data shows continued growth in homelessness-related enquiries through their national client data records. The graph below shows the number of CAB enquires referring to emergency accommodation or homelessness over a two-year period from May 2024. This data shows the number of enquiries for each six-monthly period, as well as representing the total number of enquiries for each year. The data shows an 11% increase in CAB enquiries from people needing help regarding their housing insecurity in the year to May 2026.



The **Coalition to End Women’s Homelessness** has released analysis of the 2023 Census data on the experience of children and young people living in severe housing deprivation. It looks at the life experiences of the 33,000 children and young people identified through the Census data and identifies the much higher rates of harm they face: more likely to experience abuse, to disengage from education, have poor health outcomes and interact with the justice system, compared to other children and young people.

VI. Homelessness Funding Reduced in Government Budget 2026

² <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/assets/arts/our-research/research-institutes-centres-groups/compass/social-research-projects/docs/GSH%20final%20report%20final%20and%20complete.pdf>

Overall funding for homelessness responses was reduced again in the Government's 2026 Budget. No specific announcements were made in relation to homelessness but the Estimates for Vote Housing and Development³ are used to update figures from 2025 Budget supplied in an OIA from HUD in 2025:

- Funding for homelessness responses continued the trend of the past three years with a \$16million reduction in funding overall for the 2026/27 year (2024/25 \$619million, 2025/26 \$560million, 2026/27 \$544 million).
- Transitional Housing funding has increased \$7.1million and the number of places funded increased to 6,100 (from 5,879 in 2026).
- Housing First has had no further places announced, despite demand spiking across the country.
- A post-Budget announcement in June⁴ allocated additional funding of \$14.5 million to continue funding for support services for rough sleepers in four main centres initiated in September 2025 and extend this to an additional six locations.

Fewer new social housing units are being funded. The Government Budget 2026/27 announced further funding for up to **2,250** extra social houses over the three years 2028/29 – 2030/31, an average of 750 per year. This compares with the **2,700** additional homes being funded in the three years 2025/26 – 2027/28 (an average of 900 per year) and the **10,450** homes added over the three years 2022/23 – 2024/25 (an average of nearly 3,500 per year).

VII. Solutions

Previous Briefings have outlined solutions that will work and these recommendations echo this.

1. **Housing with support is crucial.** A significant increase in social and affordable housing must be matched with the right support. People are presenting with more severe, intense, and complex circumstances. While there has been some investment in additional support, there is still a need for more wraparound services including mental health, addiction, and tenancy sustainment support, alongside access to affordable homes.
2. **Strategic approach** - there are encouraging signs of more coordinated and cross-agency work in some regions, but it is not consistent. Regional coordination and action plans need to be linked to national strategy focused on reducing homelessness. A focus on planning to increase affordable housing supply in each region is still needed. This needs to be supported by robust and more timely data collection to measure change in homelessness and housing deprivation.
3. **Kaupapa Māori-Led Housing Solutions** are needed to address the hugely disproportionate impact of homelessness on Māori. There is a need for proven Māori-led service delivery to be embedded into all provider contracting to uphold mana and achieve better outcomes for whānau Māori. Scaling successful models that integrate Māori-led responses and prevention-based strategies is a pragmatic way to ensure effective use of resources.
4. **Tailored solutions supported by flexible and sustained funding** are needed to reflect the diverse and often complex needs of different groups. The lack of appropriate housing and support for rangatahi who are facing homelessness, dedicated wāhine-only housing options with integrated

³ <https://budget.govt.nz/budget/2026/by/vote/houudev.htm>

⁴ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/additional-145-million-support-rough-sleepers>

support models, rainbow communities, and people with disability all face multiple barriers to find stable housing.

5. **MSD practice needs to be shaped by the discretion to prevent homelessness.** In midst of sustained high homelessness MSD practice is not able to provide timely access to assessment, and flexibility in access to support. After-hours accommodation and crisis support are crucial and represent a continuing support gap.

VIII. Other links and references

- *Entry Point Survey Report - Phase Three Research Report June 2026*, [Entry Point Survey Research Report June 2026 - Housing First Auckland](#)
- *Homelessness Insights*, Community Housing Aotearoa, June 2026 <https://chahub.org.nz/>
- *Children and young people experiencing homelessness*, May 2026, Coalition to End Women's Homelessness <https://www.coalitiontoendwomenshomelessness.org/waka-huia/research-release-children-and-young-people-experiencing-homelessness>
- Kim Workman, *Vagrancy, Homelessness and Policing by Consent*, May 2026, Policy Quarterly Volume 22 Issue 2 <https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/pq/article/view/10720>
- *Supporting people in immediate housing need*, Controller-Auditor-General, March 2026 <https://ao.parliament.nz/2026/housing-need>
- *6 Pillars of Reintegration. Pillar One: Accommodation*, The Salvation Army, May 2026 <https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/sppu/6-pillars-of-reintegration/>
- *Delivering Value. The Economic Impact of Social Housing*, May 2026, Te Toi Mahama <https://www.tetoimahana.org.nz/social-housing-delivers-threefold-return-on-investment/>
- *Homelessness Insights Report for March 2026*, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development <https://www.hud.govt.nz/stats-and-insights/homelessness-insights-reports>
- *State of the Nation 2026 Report – Housing*, Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, The Salvation Army <https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/sppu/state-nation-2026/>