

Housing Pathways of Housing New Zealand Tenants and Applicants

**Findings from wave one of the
longitudinal study undertaken in
South Auckland in November 2009**

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Contents

- Executive summary..... 1**
 - Participants in the study from South Auckland 1
 - Key points..... 1
 - Findings..... 2

- Introduction..... 4**
 - Goals and objectives of the housing pathways research..... 4
 - South Auckland..... 5
 - Participants..... 8

- Housing pathways from current property into state houses..... 15**
 - Motivations for applying for a Housing New Zealand property..... 15
 - Applicants’ housing expectations and aspirations 22
 - Knowing what is possible..... 24
 - Meeting requirements 25
 - Finding the right house 27
 - Making the move into a Housing New Zealand property 28

- Living with a Housing New Zealand Property 30**
 - Settling into a Housing New Zealand property 30
 - Attachment to house 30
 - Suitability and match..... 31
 - House design..... 35
 - Exterior and outdoor spaces 38
 - House Condition 39
 - Maintenance and Property Improvements..... 47

- Reflections on being a Housing New Zealand tenant..... 53**
 - Housing New Zealand as a landlord 53
 - The impact of being a Housing New Zealand tenant on households..... 57
 - Living in the neighbourhood and community 62

- Housing pathways from Housing New Zealand properties to housing independence 71**
 - Housing expectations and aspirations..... 71
 - Knowing what is possible..... 73

- Appendix A: Statistics describing reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties in South Auckland 77**
 - Location..... 77
 - Ethnicity..... 77
 - Duration of tenancy..... 78

Appendix B: Likert rating scales summarising people’s feelings about being a Housing New Zealand tenant..... 79

Tables

Table 1 Ethnicity of Manukau City compared with National data, as at June 2006 5

Table 2 Comparative indicators, comparing South Auckland with National data 6

Table 3 Ethnicity of tenant and applicant compared with total South Auckland tenants and applicants, and with regional and national ethnicity data 9

Table 4 Age profile of Tenant and Applicant participants compared with total South Auckland tenants and applicants, and with regional and national population age profiles, for those aged 18 years or older.10

Table 5 Household composition of tenant and applicant participants11

Table 6 Tenure of applicants’ current accommodation11

Table 7 Waiting list priority rating by tenure in November 2009.....25

Table 8 Reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties in South Auckland 77

Table 9 Applicants’ reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties by ethnicity (n = 32*).....77

Table 10 Tenants’ reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties by ethnicity (n = 58*).....78

Table 11 Tenants’ reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties by duration of tenancy78

Table 12 Thinking about the house you are living in, which of the following statements best describes your overall feelings about living in this house?.....79

Table 13 Overall, how happy are you with the number of bedrooms?.....79

Table 14 Overall, how happy are you with the inside/interior of your house?.....79

Table 15 Overall, how happy are you with the bathroom facilities such as shower, bath, toilet? 79

Table 16 Overall, how happy are you with kitchen facilities such as the stove?80

Table 17 Overall how happy are you with the outside/exterior of your house?.....80

Table 18 Overall, how happy are you with the condition of your house?.....80

Table 19 How happy are you with the warmth of your house?.....80

Table 20 Overall, how happy are you being a Housing New Zealand tenant?81

Table 21 Overall, how happy are you with the service you get from Housing New Zealand? 81

Table 22 How do you feel about the neighbourhood you’re living in?81

Table 23 Do you have supportive neighbours?.....81

Table 24 How important is it to you, to have supportive neighbours?82

Table 25 How safe do you feel in this neighbourhood?.....82

Table 26 How important is it to you, to live near family?82

Table 27 How important is it to you, to live near friends?.....82

Table 28 Overall, how easy is it for you to get to places that are important to you - like work, schools, public transport, shops or the doctor?.....83

Figures

Figure 1 Housing pathways from current house to state house12

Figure 2 Housing pathways from state house to housing independence12

Figure 3 Applicants’ current housing, and their expectations and aspirations (November 2009) 23
.....71

Figure 4 Housing pathways from state house to housing independence71

Figure 5 Tenants' housing expectations and aspirations by duration of tenure in
Housing New Zealand properties 72

Executive summary

- 1 This document reports on the findings from wave one research undertaken in South Auckland for the Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study in November 2009. The overall goal of the research is to develop an evidence base about how housing pathways and life circumstances influence outcomes for Housing New Zealand Corporation applicants and tenants.

Participants in the study from South Auckland

- 2 Sixty-two tenants and 33 applicants who had been confirmed on the waiting list, were enrolled to participate in the study.
- 3 Of the 62 tenants, 26 were Pacific, 22 were Māori, ten were European and four combined two or more of these ethnicities. The majority of households were living with children (43 households). Sole parent households were the most common type (29 households), making up nearly half of tenant households participating in the research. Households headed by couples were the next most prevalent household type (24 households) followed by single person households (9 households).
- 4 Of the 33 applicants, 12 were Māori, 12 were Pacific, eight were European and one was Māori and Pacific. Sole parent households were the majority among applicant households (17 households).

Key points

- 5 Most tenants and applicants had multiple reasons for applying for a Housing New Zealand property. Financial stress, family reasons, and overcrowding were the most common reasons.
- 6 The majority of tenants were positive about their houses. Thirty three out of 62 tenants either 'loved' or 'liked' their houses, and the same number 'loved' or 'liked' their neighbourhoods.
- 7 Twelve of the 62 tenants were unhappy or very unhappy with the condition of their houses. The 16 tenants who were neutral often pointed to both good and bad aspects of the house condition.
- 8 Problems with house condition included damp and cold, recurring pest infestations, and uncompleted maintenance.
- 9 Even among tenants who reported problems with their houses, many felt lucky to have a state house, and thought that they had a duty, in return, to look after it well. They hoped that Housing New Zealand would recognise that they were good tenants and treat them well in return.
- 10 While most tenants were happy with their neighbourhoods, problems were reported with noisy parties, trespassing, property crime, and intimidation.
- 11 The affordable rent and secure tenure had significant benefits for tenants, in providing a stable home environment for children, and in allowing tenants to be independent and to escape bad situations.

- 12 Tenants and applicants predominantly aspired to home ownership, while about a third of the tenants aspired to live in a state house long-term. Only two tenants aspired to live in private rental accommodation.

Findings

Housing pathways from current into state houses

- 13 The most common reasons for applying for a state house were financial and family reasons, and overcrowding. A desire for security (both personal security, and security of tenure) was also identified by a number of applicants. The main financial motivations were debt and the unaffordability of private sector rents. Family reasons included the arrival of additional children, relationship breakups, and seeking a home that was safe for children to stay in. Overcrowding was often a consequence of financial- and family-related factors, and most participants had multiple reasons for applying.
- 14 The current tenure of applicants included private rental, staying with family or friends, emergency housing, boarding, or living in a caravan. All applicants aspired either to live in a state house, or to purchase their own home. In the shorter term, two expected to live in private rental as a stepping stone to home ownership, but none aspired to rent privately long term.
- 15 While all of the applicants had been confirmed on the Housing New Zealand waiting list, many struggled to stay on it, experiencing difficulties in meeting the deadlines for providing the required information.
- 16 Most of the tenants had accepted the first house they had been offered by Housing New Zealand, while several of the applicants had turned down offers. When deciding to accept a property, applicants considered the needs of their children (including the safety of the neighbourhood and the warmth of the house), proximity to family and facilities, and the match of the house type to their needs. Often they needed a house badly, and made trade-offs, for example choosing a better house in a less safe neighbourhood.

Living with a Housing New Zealand property

- 17 Most tenants were happy with their houses, and compared them favourably to past housing. Tenants who were unhappy generally pointed to problems with dampness and cold (causing ill-health), or maintenance. Some tenants reported recurring problems with pests, such as cockroaches. In terms of house design and suitability, tenants tended to be happy if their house was of appropriate size, and if it had the modifications tenants with disabilities needed. Most tenants preferred single level houses, and there was a marked preference for stand-alone houses over units, as units were noisier and less private.
- 18 In terms of outdoor spaces, most tenants were happy with the outside of their houses, and enjoyed having a space to relax in, or for children to play in. Some tenants had put considerable work into creating gardens. The upkeep of large sections was a problem for some tenants with mobility limitations. Many tenants wanted a fully fenced section to increase privacy, to keep children safe, and to keep trespassers out.

Reflections on being a Housing New Zealand tenant

- 19 Tenants had mixed views about the service they received from Housing New Zealand, although it compared favourably with their experiences of private sector renting. Some tenants were very happy with the responsive and friendly service, while others had experienced slow service, mistakes, and poor feedback about progress. Perceptions tended to be shaped by tenants' variable experiences with their tenancy managers. The principles of reciprocity and fairness were often referred to; tenants felt that being in a state home was a privilege that conferred upon them a duty to look after the property. They felt that good tenant behaviour should confer a duty upon Housing New Zealand to make good progress on maintenance requests.
- 20 The affordable rent and stability of tenure had significant impacts on tenants. It had allowed them to escape bad situations and had provided freedom and independence. The stability had improved the wellbeing of tenants and their children, and for some, having a stable home-base had allowed them to care for sick or disabled family members or friends.
- 21 Most tenants were happy with their neighbourhoods, with their happiness affected by good and bad relationships with neighbours, proximity to family (which could be a good or a bad thing), witnessing or being victims of crime, intimidation, or antisocial behaviour, and the ease of access to places such as shops, doctors and schools.

Housing pathways from state housing to housing independence

- 22 More than half of tenants aspired to home ownership, while just under a third aspired to continue their tenure with Housing New Zealand. Only two tenants aspired to live in private rental accommodation. The questions about housing aspirations had no time frame. Tenants' expectations for where they would live in ten years' time were similar to their aspirations, but more expected still to be in a state home, and fewer expected to achieve home ownership within that time.
- 23 There was no clear relationship between tenants' past experiences of state housing and home ownership, and their future aspirations to live in state housing or own a home.
- 24 Overcrowding was a key motivator for tenants who were thinking about moving house. Some tenants were on the waiting list for a transfer, while two tenants who were overcrowded but had been told that they were not eligible for a transfer, were thinking of buying a home. Other motivators for moving included escaping bad neighbourhoods, and wanting a smaller property.
- 25 In terms of their progress in moving to housing independence, while some tenants knew what was possible, none had actually met the requirements for a move. Saving for a deposit to buy a house was a significant barrier, although some were working very hard on it.

Introduction

- 26 This document reports the findings from Wave One of the South Auckland component of the longitudinal study of applicant's and tenants' housing pathways. Tenants living in Housing New Zealand properties and applicants in South Auckland (Mangere, Otara, and Manurewa) were interviewed in November 2009.

Goals and objectives of the housing pathways research

- 27 The overall goal of the study is to develop a longitudinal evidence base about how housing pathways and life circumstances influence outcomes for Housing New Zealand applicants and tenants.
- 28 The objectives of the study are to identify and analyse:
- a) the relationship between housing tenure and life circumstances of Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants
 - b) positive and negative outcomes from interactions between housing tenure and life circumstances over time experienced by Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants
 - c) life course and transition points effecting changes in housing tenure and life circumstances experienced by Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants
 - d) the housing tenure and life circumstances of Housing New Zealand tenants once households exit Housing New Zealand tenancies, and applicant households once they exit the waiting list
 - e) resources and interventions that assisted or prevented Housing New Zealand applicants and tenants achieving positive outcomes.
- 29 The study is based on the analysis of qualitative interviews with applicant and tenant households undertaken in three waves over a five year period, and quantitative data drawn from RENTEL (Housing New Zealand's administrative data base up until 1 August 2012). The applicant and tenant participants live in high concentrations of Housing New Zealand properties in Porirua, South Auckland and Christchurch.
- 30 The voices of the participants are heard in verbatim extracts from the face to face interviews which are interspersed throughout the report. Brief biographical details about participants are provided at the end of each quotation, as follows: household composition type, ethnicity, age range and length of tenure in the Housing New Zealand property. Household composition is indicated using the following shorthand:

Shorthand	Definition
Single	Person living alone
SolewC	Sole parent with child or children
Coup	Couple
CoupwC	Couple with child or children
SolewE	Adult with elder

South Auckland

31 This section compares descriptive statistics for South Auckland with national data, to provide context to the current research. Table one provides an overview of the ethnic composition of people living in Manukau City at the time of the 2006 Census, compared with the national population at this time.

Table 1 Ethnicity of Manukau City compared with National data, as at June 2006¹

	Manukau City	National
New Zealand European/Pākehā	40.5%	67.6%
Māori	15.3%	14.6%
Pacific peoples	27.9%	6.9%
Asian	21.5%	9.2%
Other ethnicity	7.0%	12.1%

32 Compared with national figures, the South Auckland population has a greater proportion of Pacific peoples, and Asian people; and less New Zealand European/Pākehā. At the time of the 2006 Census, Pacific peoples make up slightly more than one quarter (27.9 percent) of Manukau City, compared with 6.9 percent nationally.

33 Table 2 compares South Auckland economic, housing, crime, and education statistics to the equivalent statistics for New Zealand. Some data was unavailable at the level of detail required to report figures for South Auckland. Where this is the case figures are reported for the wider Auckland region.

¹ Census (June 2006)

Table 2 Comparative indicators, comparing South Auckland with National data

	Indicator	South Auckland / Manukau City	National
Economic	<u>Unemployment:</u> Manukau City, 2006	7.1%	5.1%
	Auckland City, December 2009 ²	8.0% (figure for Auckland City)	7.3%
	<u>Median Income:</u> per annum ³	\$24,200 per annum (2006)	\$24,400 per annum (2006)
	per week ⁴	\$533 per week (2009, figure for Auckland City)	\$538 per week (2009)
Housing	% of Corporation properties ⁵		
	Otara North	47%	3%
	Otara West	61%	
	Mangere South	41%	
	Mangere Station	79%	
	% of households in owner-occupied private dwellings ⁶	51.8%	66.9%
Crime	Total offences per 10,000 people ⁷	1,117.8 (year ending December 2009)	1,045.9 (year ending December 2009)

² Household Labour Force Survey, December 2009. HLFS data was unavailable for South Auckland / Manukau City, data for the wider Auckland region is provided for comparison.

³ Census (June 2006)

⁴ Statistics New Zealand Table Builder (2009, accessed February 2013). Data unavailable for South Auckland / Manukau City, data for the wider Auckland region is provided for comparison.

⁵ Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study Terms of Reference (2008)

⁶ Census (June 2006)

⁷ Police Crime Statistics (Year ending June 2010)

Education	% over 15 without a formal qualification ⁶	26.8%	25.0%
	% of students leaving school during 2009 with no formal qualification ⁸	16.8% (figure for Auckland City) 21.1% (figure for Mangere Otahuhu) 25.8% (figure for Otara Papatoetoe) 35.1% (figure for Manurewa)	20.1%
	% of students leaving school during 2009 with an NCEA level 2 qualification or higher ⁷	71.9% (figure for Auckland City) 67.3% (figure for Mangere Otahuhu) 58.3% (figure for Otara Papatoetoe) 47.0% (figure for Manurewa)	66.4%
	Early childhood education prior participation rate, for children starting school during the year ending June 2010 ⁹	92.4% (figure for Auckland City) 83.9% (figure for Manukau City)	94.4%
Health	Avoidable hospitalisations per 10,000 people (age standardised) ¹⁰	416.3 (2005-2007)	348.8 (2005-2007)
	Childhood asthma hospitalisations per 100,000 people (0-14 years) ⁹	547.4 (2005-2007)	465.0 (2005-2007)
	Infant mortality per 1,000 live births ⁹	7.8 (2003-2005)	5.4 (2003-2007)

34 For the indicators where data is available for South Auckland/Manukau City, it is clear that the area faces multiple disadvantages, notably in employment, education and health statistics. Table 2 also illustrates the high concentration of Housing New Zealand properties in this area, with the concentrations in four Census Area Units included as examples.

⁸ Ministry of Education – school leavers’ dataset (Education Counts)

⁹ Ministry of Education – prior participation dataset (Education Counts)

¹⁰ Health and Disability Intelligence Unit. (2008) *Counties Manukau DHB Health Needs Assessment September 2008*. Manukau: Counties Manukau District Health Board.

Participants

- 35 In South Auckland a total of 62 tenants and 33 applicants, who had been confirmed on the waiting list, were recruited into the study. All of the applicant participants had been confirmed on the Housing New Zealand waiting list.

Representativeness of sample

- 36 The initial purposive sample was selected to ensure sufficient numbers of Māori, Pacific peoples, and New Zealand European / Pākehā were included in the study. Other ethnicities were excluded from the sample due to the constraints of the maximum sample size, and low representation in the wider population of Housing New Zealand tenants.
- 37 In order to ensure the safety of participants and interviewers, two groups of tenants were removed from the initial sample: tenants or applicants who could be confrontational or pose a risk to interviewers, and tenants or applicants who were particularly vulnerable or likely to find the interview process problematic (for example individuals with significant mental health concerns, or who were recovering from a recent traumatic event). It is important to note the omission of these two groups when considering the findings in this report.
- 38 The resulting sample is likely to be a good approximation for the wider population of primary tenants. However, due to the size of the sample and exclusion of specific groups of tenants, findings should be considered broad indications of population trends rather than statistically representative estimates for the wider population.

Ethnicity of tenant and applicant participants

39 Table 3 compares the ethnicity profile of tenant and applicant participants with that of South Auckland and national tenant populations.

Table 3 Ethnicity of tenant and applicant compared with total South Auckland tenants and applicants, and with regional and national ethnicity data

Ethnicity	Tenant sample (2009)	Applicant sample (2009)	Sth A. HNZC tenants (2010)	Sth. A HNZC applicants (2010)	National tenant population (2009)	Manukau City (2006)*
European	22.6%	28.1%	9.8%	9.7%	37.3%	40.5%
Māori	38.7%	37.5%	33.0%	31.2%	34.4%	15.3%
Pacific people	43.5%	34.4%	57.0%	52.7%	25.6%	27.9%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	3.9%	3.4%	21.5%
Other	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	3.1%	3.2%	7.0%

Notes: Individuals were able to indicate more than one ethnicity. As a result some columns sum to greater than 100%.

* The ethnicity profile for Manukau City based on 2006 Statistics New Zealand Census data.

40 Compared with data for Manukau City (as at 2006) the tenant and applicant samples include a greater proportionate number of Māori and Pacific people. However, comparison with the total Housing New Zealand tenant and applicant population (as at 2010) indicates the Housing Pathways sample was a good approximation of the ethnicity of Housing New Zealand tenants at the time of the interviews.

41 As noted above, Asian and other ethnicities were excluded from the sample due to the constraints of the maximum sample size, and low representation in the wider population of Housing New Zealand tenants.

Age of tenant and applicant participants

42 Table 4 compares the age profile of tenants and applicants in the South Auckland sample with that of wider Manukau City and national tenant populations, for those aged 18 years and over.

43 The age profile of Manukau City is younger than the overall National age profile. At the time of the 2006 Census, 55 percent of Manukau City were aged between 20 and 39 years, compared with 38 percent of New Zealand.

44 The age profile of tenants is similar to the wider population of Manukau City from which they were selected. However, the age profile of applicants is significantly younger, with 79 percent aged between 18 and 40 years. The age profile of applicants is younger than tenants as tenants may have been living in their house for some time.

Table 4 Age profile of Tenant and Applicant participants compared with total South Auckland tenants and applicants, and with regional and national population age profiles, for those aged 18 years or older.

Age group * 2009 / 2006	Tenants (2009)	Applicants (2009)	Sth A. HNZC tenants (2009)	Sth. A HNZC applicants (2009)	National tenant population (2009)	Manukau City (2006)**
18-30 years / 20-29 years	25.8%	57.6%	9.6%	23.5%	11.1%	28.3%
31-40 years / 30-39 years	25.8%	21.2%	22.2%	26.6%	20.5%	26.9%
41-50 years / 40-49 years	15.4%	12.1%	30.5%	27.7%	25.4%	21.9%
51-64 years / 50-64 years	21.0%	9.1%	24.2%	14.5%	23.8%	17.4%
65 years +	12.9%	0.0%	13.4%	7.6%	18.4%	5.4%

Note: This table does not include people aged under the age of 18.

* The age groups for the three data sources don't align perfectly, however they are similar enough to provide a good comparison.

** Age profiles for Housing New Zealand tenants and applicants is based on 2009 data, while Manukau City and New Zealand age profiles is based on 2006 Census data.

Income source of tenant and applicant participants

- 45 The most common income source for tenant participants was an income tested benefit (52 percent), followed by wages/salary (32 percent), and New Zealand Superannuation (16 percent). Of the 52 percent of tenants on an income tested benefit, most were receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit (31 percent), followed by Invalid's Benefit (10 percent).
- 46 The most common income source for applicant participants was also income tested benefits (76 percent), followed by wages/salary (24 percent). Of the 76 percent of applicants on an income tested benefit, most were receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit (52 percent), followed by the Unemployment Benefit (15 percent).

Tenure length of tenant participants in Housing New Zealand houses

- 47 The longitudinal study aimed to recruit similar numbers of participants from each tenure length category (less than 1.5 years, around five years, and more than ten years). However, 28 tenants (45 percent) had a tenure length of 'less than 1.5 years', 22 tenants (36 percent) 'around five years', and far fewer had tenure lengths 'greater than 10 years' (19 percent).

Household composition of tenants and applicants

- 48 Table 5 presents the high-level household composition of tenants and applicants in the sample.
- 49 The majority of tenants and applicants were living with children (69 percent and 88 percent respectively). Among both tenants and applicants the most common household type was sole parent families with children (47 percent and 52 percent respectively). For applicants, this household composition was what they applied for a Housing New Zealand tenancy for. A number of the applicants were, at the time of the interview, actually living in much larger, multi-generational or multi-family households while they waited for an offer from Housing New Zealand.

Table 5 Household composition of tenant and applicant participants

Household	Tenant	Applicant
Couple with child(ren)	23%	36%
Couple no children	16%	0%
Single adult with child(ren)	47%	51%
Single adult with no children	15%	12%

Tenure type of applicants' current accommodation

- 50 Table 6 shows the tenure type of applicants' current accommodation by household type. The applicants include a range of household and tenure types, and combinations thereof. As noted above, the majority of applicant households had one or more children (29 of the 33 households). The most common tenure type among applicants was to be staying with friends and/or family, followed by private rental accommodation.

Table 6 Tenure of applicants' current accommodation

Applicant household type	Private rental	Friends and family	Other	Total
Couple with children	6	6	0	12
Single adult with one+ children	5	10	2	17
Single adult with no children	2	0	2	4
Total households	13	16	4	33

Housing pathways framework for analysis

- 51 The overall goal of this research is to develop an evidence base to explain how housing pathways and life circumstances influence outcomes for applicants and tenants. The results of the research in South Auckland for Wave One are presented using a housing pathways approach. This described the steps that people take firstly, to enter state housing, and following entry into state housing, to go on to housing independence.
- 52 The steps on the pathway resulted from an analysis of tenants' stories shared as part of the Assistance to Housing Independence research. The tenants participating in the Assistance to Housing Independence research were followed up at 12 months to see how they were progressing. At this time they were shown the pathway and asked to comment on its relevance to their experience. The general view was that it rang true to their experience. The researchers were comfortable, therefore, about using it as a framework for understanding the experience of the applicants and tenants that we interviewed for this research.
- 53 The steps from the current house into a state house, and from a state house to housing independence are the same (see figures 1 and 2):
- settling in
 - the motivation to start the journey
 - knowing what is possible and how to get there
 - meeting requirements
 - finding the right house
 - making the move.

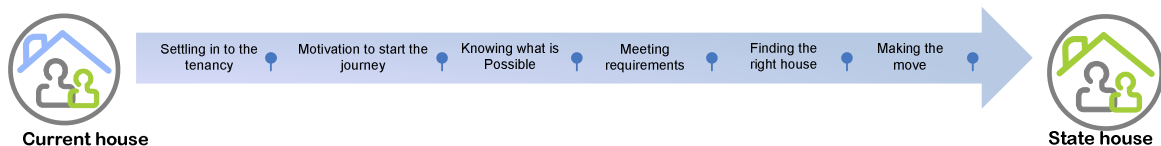


Figure 1 Housing pathways from current house to state house

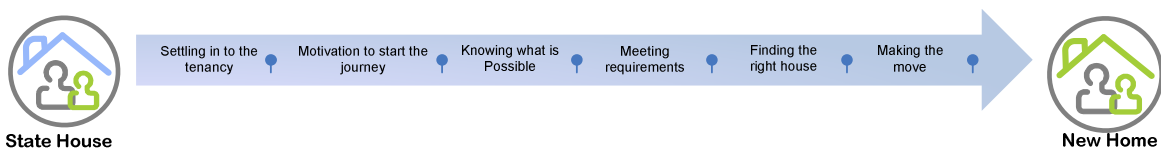


Figure 2 Housing pathways from state house to housing independence

- 54 The term 'housing independence' refers to people who exit state housing into private rental or home ownership, and to people who downsize from their current state house to another smaller one that matches the needs of the household¹¹.

Housing expectations and aspirations

- 55 This research covers people's housing expectations and aspirations because these influence how people approach their housing pathways. All of the applicants aspired to be in Housing New Zealand properties, but for different periods of time and with different expectations in mind. Some aspired to be in Housing New Zealand properties for 5 - 10 years during which time they hoped to get back on their feet. In some cases they hoped it would help them towards their goal of purchasing a home.

Settling in

- 56 Settling in was about making a home out of a Housing New Zealand property. Tenants were making sure the house was fully operational - doors and windows locked, and plumbing and electrical outlets worked, and there were no leaks. It was also about the house being clean, the paint work being finished and the garden being neat and tidy with no rubbish lying about.

The motivation to start the journey

- 57 The motivation to start the journey is the next step after settling in. For applicants, this step was about why they applied for state housing and why they needed a state house. For tenants who had settled into their Housing New Zealand tenancies, there were many factors that influenced their motivations to start working towards housing independence. The factors could include things that people benefit from as Housing New Zealand tenants (such as: Income Related Rent, security of tenure, the management of maintenance, and links to the local area), or things that motivated tenants to leave state housing (such as: being able to choose an area in which to live that is better for the children, being able to decorate or renovate their house, building an asset for the benefit for their family, or giving up the Housing New Zealand house to people more in need).

Knowing what is possible and how to get there

- 58 Knowing what is possible and how to get there was about ensuring that people were aware of the housing options available to them. It was also about the products and services within Housing New Zealand and elsewhere available to help them into state housing and to plan for their housing independence. The help identified included: knowing how the waiting list worked, budget advice, and the steps set out in the Welcome Home First Steps Education guide and training which covers purchasing a house and maintaining it.

¹¹ People who were downsizing were seen as gaining housing independence in the sense that the house and section were easier to manage and did not put pressure on their resources.

Meeting requirements

- 59 For applicants, meeting requirements was about demonstrating their eligibility for a state house. For tenants, meeting requirements was about expectations – whether they could meet the requirements for achieving and sustaining their housing aspiration. It was about the steps tenants took to overcome barriers that they identified, and how they identified and used enablers to support their progress.

Finding the right house

- 60 For applicants, finding the right house involves accepting one of up to three offers from Housing New Zealand. Policy dictates that tenants be offered three houses and if none of these are acceptable then their name is put at the end of the list of the applicants with the same waiting list priority. For tenants, finding the right house is about having the confidence to implement the knowledge of what is possible, and looking for and finding a house. People may experience discrimination in the private rental market, or they may have difficulty finding a house at an affordable price in the area where they want to live.

Making the move

- 61 For applicants making the move is about accepting a house that Housing New Zealand has offered, signing the tenancy agreement, and arranging for their household members and belongings to be moved in. For tenants who are downsizing, making the move is similar to the experience of applicants. For tenants who are exiting state housing to the private rental market or into their own home, making the move refers to completing all the required processes and then moving in.
- 62 While the housing pathway is represented as steps that logically follow one after the other, applicants and tenants move back and forth between motivation to start the journey and finding the right house before they make the move.

Housing pathways from current property into state houses

- 63 This chapter describes the housing pathways from people's current houses into state houses. It begins with a section describing applicants' (33 people) and tenants' (62 people) motivations for applying for a Housing New Zealand property.

Motivations for applying for a Housing New Zealand property

- 64 The motivations of applicants (33 people) and tenants (62 people) in applying for Housing New Zealand properties were categorised into five groups of reasons for applying, namely: financial, family, overcrowded living situations, security, and health and disability reasons.¹² The reasons are not mutually exclusive. Most participants identified multiple reasons for applying rather than only one reason. This section concludes with a discussion of the common combinations of multiple reasons.

Financial

- 65 For both applicants and tenants, around half identified financial reasons for applying for a Housing New Zealand property. The most common financial reason identified was the need for affordable rent. Debt was also identified as a financial reason.

Private rentals unaffordable

- 66 Applicants and tenants in South Auckland said that they could not afford private rentals. When describing why they couldn't make ends meet, several applicants and tenants mentioned the water rates on top of rent and electricity. A tenant said: *[W]e don't pay anymore the water bill... So we don't mind if we waste the water, do the laundry everyday (noise made)... we just pay rent only, not pay the water just pay only power, that's all.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 10+ years tenure length)
- 67 More than half of the applicants were in private rental properties they could no longer afford, and had explored cheaper options in the private rental market. Some of this group were on benefits, others were on low income, or were large families with a single income or had been laid off work as the result of the recession. One applicant wanted the cheap rent that would come with a Housing New Zealand property so that there would be *"more money to spend on my children"*. (SolewC, Māori, 31-40 years, Priority B)
- 68 Another applicant had thought of *"going private"* but was concerned about the cost of the bond, and since they had come off the benefit they had not returned to Work and Income (CoupwC, Māori, 31-40 years, Priority B). They did not know whether or not they would be eligible for support with a bond or the Accommodation Supplement. Work and Income had told one applicant who was on the Invalid's Benefit *"to find somewhere cheaper"*, even though the tenant thought Work and Income knew the place was ideal because *"it's*

¹² These reasons are based on an analysis of interview responses and not the SAS information available in RENTEL.

flat and accessible to public transport". (Single, European, 41-50 years, Priority D)

Applicant and tenant debt

- 69 Applicant and tenant participants talked about having debts, such as unpaid bills, recovering from bankruptcy, and paying off the debts of other family members.

Family

- 70 The life stage of families and their changing circumstances underpinned applicant and tenant participants' stories about how they came to apply for Housing New Zealand properties. A higher proportion of applicants (25 out of 33) than tenants (42 out of 62) identified family reasons for applying for a Housing New Zealand property. Family reasons included:

- births and deaths
- relationship break-ups
- needing a place of one's own, particularly for bringing up children
- family reunification and support
- living close to work and school.

Births and deaths

- 71 Some tenant participants applied for Housing New Zealand properties when they became pregnant with their first child or when additional children came along.

Relationship break-ups

- 72 A common reason for applying for a Housing New Zealand property was the break-up of a relationship. Sometimes this resulted in people who had previously owned a home applying for Housing New Zealand properties. One tenant said:

I was forced through divorce, forced to sell a house that we'd actually built and bought. So it was a forced sale there...the tenancy manager that Mum had, knew that I was struggling here, and I'd applied for one. And when they built these, she rung me, and wanted to know if I wanted one, because I'd be closer to Mum. (Single, European, 51-64 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Needing a place of one's own

- 73 Applicants and tenants often said that they applied for a Housing New Zealand property because they were seeking to put a roof over their children, and to re-establish their and their children's daily routines. One tenant described this need as "*breathing space to help my children grow.*" She explained this further saying:

Well you know, like, if you're in cramped conditions with children it becomes overpowering and annoying, and everyone gets in one another's

faces. And whereas here there's a lot of space for everyone to actually just chill out and do their own thing and there's not so much pressure. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 74 An applicant described the need to be separate from other family members and the pressures of living with a lot of people, saying:

They will listen, yeah routine, get them back into their routine. They're not in a routine now. They are all over the place 'cause Mummy's all over the place. Once we get settled the ears will turn back on. "Oh I can do what my cousins do, I can do this, see?" They are offline, they're off track, gone off track. If I get myself set up then they'll be fine, and they'll find themselves again. (SolewC, Māori and Pacific, 18-30 years, SAS Priority A)

- 75 One applicant (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, SAS Priority C) was living with her parents and then her father died. Since then, she and her mother had been fighting, and her mother had asked her to leave. But she also thought it would be better for her and her children to have a place of their own.

- 76 One applicant family (CoupwC, Pacific, 30 - 41 years, SAS Priority A) had arrived from an independent life in an Asian country to live with their extended family in South Auckland and were having difficulty settling in. They said their family was very nice but that there was tension resulting from different cultural expectations about the service provided by young people in the family, money management in the extended household, and sleeping routines. They had never unpacked properly.

- 77 Some women in later life wanted a quiet place of their own where they could relax. One applicant said:

Well I've been living with people most of my life, with bringing up kids [including those of brothers and sisters] since the age of sixteen... 'cause I'm the oldest. So yes I think I'm at the stage now where I just need a place I can call home. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, SAS Priority A)

Family reunification and support

- 78 One woman (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority B) had applied for a Housing New Zealand property as part of the process of getting her son back. Several male applicants were living in caravan parks where it was unsafe to have their children visit and particularly to stay overnight. They had applied to Housing New Zealand seeking a safe place for their children to visit them.

- 79 Accommodating visits from members of the extended family was given as a reason for applying for a Housing New Zealand property:

[M]y mother-in-law who comes and she's always here for at least six to nine months with us... when extended family come and stay we need the space, ... 'cause my daughters need their own space as well. So just have a two bedroom house, with everyone here (laughter) it don't work ... We put the two girls with us, we have them in our room and then the mother, yeah she has their room. (CoupwC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, SAS Priority C)

Living close to work or school

- 80 Being close to work was a reason that applicants applied for a Housing New Zealand property. One couple (CoupwC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority B) moved out of a Housing New Zealand property that they thought was in a poor condition in one suburb, and into private rental in another suburb where they thought it would be easier to find work and where transport costs would be lower. It took two months to find work. Now they are applying for another Housing New Zealand property in the area to which they had moved.
- 81 Several applicants applied for Housing New Zealand properties to be near to their children's schools. One applicant (CoupwC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, SAS Priority A) had not let his five year old go to school because he didn't want his child to have to move schools if Housing New Zealand offered them a house in another area.

Overcrowding

- 82 Around two thirds of both tenants (41 out of 62) and applicants (21 out of 33) identified overcrowding as a motivation for applying to Housing New Zealand. Overcrowding intersected with other reasons that applicants and tenants applied. Many of the applicants and tenants mentioned feeling unsettled, frustrated and unhappy when they were describing their overcrowded circumstances.

Overcrowding and family

- 83 Overcrowding could result from natural increases in family size. A few families said that the alternative to applying for a Housing New Zealand property was living in a caravan. One family (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length) had been living in a caravan. When the mother became pregnant with twins and a step son joined the family the caravan was no longer big enough so the family applied to Housing New Zealand for a property.
- 84 Other applicants were overcrowding private rental accommodation. Mothers and grandmothers were sleeping with sons, daughters, or grandchildren. As one mother said: *My daughter sleeps on the bed and my son and I sleep on the floor.* (SolewC, Pacific, 51 - 64 years, SAS Priority A)
- 85 Overcrowding gave advantages to some families. One applicant (SolewC, Māori, 41 - 50 years, SAS Priority B), who had been waiting for a couple of months, had moved to Auckland to be nearer Starship hospital. When some hospital equipment got broken the family were not allowed to get a replacement until they had a place of their own that was not overcrowded.
- 86 Overcrowding also had an impact on house condition. Tenants who had moved out of their parents' homes because of overcrowding also tended to comment on the poor condition of the overcrowded house, including its lack of maintenance, tidiness and cleanliness.
- 87 Overcrowding resulted in unstable tenure for some applicants. One applicant told of how they had been with their parents in a Housing New Zealand house, but Housing New Zealand had told the parents that they could be prosecuted because of the overcrowding. The applicant moved out so that their parents

would not be prosecuted. The overcrowded household in which another applicant was living was evicted.

88 Other applicants told of the impact of overcrowding on health. One wanted to move out of her overcrowded situation because her kids kept getting sick and she attributed this to the overcrowding.

89 A number of tenants were motivated by overcrowding to transfer to a bigger Housing New Zealand house. One tenant described how their transfer came about:

What happened was the leak, the roof started leaking and it was coming out of my daughters wardrobes in the front and I got Housing New Zealand in for that and at the same time they also saw that I had a bed in my lounge. And they said to me, "Why have you got a bed in there?" And I said, "Cause one of my other children are back." And they said to me, "Why didn't you apply for a bigger home?" And a week later we were here. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

90 One family (CoupwC, Māori, 31 -40 years, SAS Priority B) of eleven had been placed, by Housing New Zealand, in a three-bedroom house and at the time they were told "Oh, We'll let you know about a house that'll be coming up" and at the time of the interview they had been waiting for 18 months.

Security

91 Both applicants (22 out of 33) and tenants (39 out of 62) identified security as a motivation for applying for Housing New Zealand properties. Some tenants and applicants described Housing New Zealand as a better landlord than private rental landlords because Housing New Zealand is less likely to evict tenants unless there is good reason. One tenant said: *At least with New Zealand Housing you don't get put out. We'll be safe then. Cause you get sick of moving things you know especially when you get older. You think, "Oh no not again."* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

92 Another tenant wanted the stability of a Housing New Zealand tenancy to give their children stability at school: *It would have been quite easy you know just to lug the kids from primary school to primary school but I didn't want that for them. I wanted them to be established and for their study to be done.*

93 The need for security included escaping from violence or conflict. This sometimes included escaping an abusive family or a Housing New Zealand neighbourhood where there was a predominance of gang-related intimidation.

94 Properties in the private rental sector can be sold, creating uncertainty and instability. One applicant (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority D) moved from the Housing New Zealand property her parents were living in to private rental, so as to prevent her parents being prosecuted for overcrowding, only to have the landlord put the house on the market leaving the applicant in an uncertain situation. Evictions from private rental properties were another common reason for applying.

95 The condition of the property influenced people's feeling of security. One applicant (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority B) lived in a private rental property the condition of which the family described as "shocking". They

tried to repair some of the holes in the walls, and they cleaned the inside of the house as well as the section.

Health and disability

96 A higher proportion of applicant (12 out of 33) than tenant (8 out of 62) participants identified health and disability issues as a motivation for applying for a Housing New Zealand property.

97 Children's health was a reason for applicants and tenants to apply for transfers between Housing New Zealand properties. Several applicants said that their children got sick a lot in the winter and ended up in hospital because the private rental house they were living was "*really cold*". (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority A). They thought that Housing New Zealand houses would be less cold. Another applicant, with a new baby, who was living in an overcrowded property, received a home visit and was advised: *You have to move out because it's dangerous for you. You're all living with adults and then the baby's susceptible to all kinds of diseases.*

98 An anticipated reduction in mobility triggered some people to apply for a Housing New Zealand property. One applicant who had arthritis said:

I won't get better, I'll get worse, and you can modify a Housing New Zealand house to put in rails in the bathroom and things like that, whereas private rents, they don't like you doing that (laughter)... There's 400 people like me in Auckland waiting for houses that don't exist but I'm on it so that when I get worse or if I turn fifty or fifty-five I can get a pensioner flat. (Single, European, 41 - 50 years, SAS Priority D)

99 Most of the tenants who talked about health or disability had been assisted to apply for their Housing New Zealand properties by health professionals:

They (the health professionals) said that I was better to be here [in Auckland rather than a provincial centre] because of my illness. (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Well I applied because he can't. I applied for the place ...[the health professionals] said "We should be thinking of getting a place seeing I'm looking after him. (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Combinations of reasons

100 Most participants had multiple reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties. Only two out of 33 applicants and two out of 62 tenants identified a single reason for applying. Around half of the applicants, and a third of the tenants gave four or more reasons for applying for a Housing New Zealand property. Prevalent among these reasons were family, and financial. A minority of applicants (4 out of 33) and about a third of tenants (22 out of 62) gave fewer than three reasons for applying.

101 The following two case studies illustrate how combinations of reasons for applying interact.

South Auckland applicant who applied for four or more reasons

- 102 This case study describes the circumstances that led a sole mother who identified as Māori and Pacific, aged between 18 and 30 years with two or more children to apply for a Housing New Zealand property. This applicant was confirmed on the waiting list in August 2009 with an A priority. The reasons that she identified for applying were family, overcrowding, security, and health and disability.
- 103 This single mother with five children moved out of a Housing New Zealand property in which she had lived for three years because:
- there were holes in the wall that had been there since she had moved in
 - the house was cold and damp, and her young children kept getting sick and having to be hospitalised
 - the house was too small
 - the layout of the house made it difficult to supervise the children
 - there were cockroaches that she had tried unsuccessfully to eradicate.
- 104 She moved into her mother's Housing New Zealand property that was smaller, and overcrowded it with her other sisters, so that there were four adults and 11 children in a two and a half bedroom house. Housing New Zealand presented her mother with an eviction notice for overcrowding her house.
- 105 This applicant said she was receiving enough financial support and that the reasons she was applying for a Housing New Zealand property were because of her mother's eviction notice, and as she said:
- Overcrowded, and my children getting sick, more sick, 'cause it's too damp in the room with the changing over, things might change, but saying there is six of us in a room, my five children and myself. It can get a bit smelly with four babies, different smells. And where my room is based I've got the front door and the toilet, everything comes into my room, the outside smell and the toilet smell.*
- 106 She needed a place of her own where she could bring up her family that was still close to her mother and sisters so they could support one another. She wanted a house that had enough bedrooms, was warm, where the layout enabled her to supervise her children easily, and where there were no cockroaches.
- 107 Housing New Zealand staff had shown her a number of houses and she had accepted one, but a few days before she was interviewed she had handed back the keys because no stove had been installed (she couldn't afford to pay for takeaways until a stove was installed), and there were cockroaches.

South Auckland tenant who applied for four or more reasons

- 108 This case study describes the circumstances that led a Pacific couple aged between 18 and 30 years to apply for a Housing New Zealand property before having their first child. The start date of this couple's tenancy was December 2008. The reasons that they identified for applying were financial, family, overcrowding and security.

- 109 The tenant we interviewed was a Tongan woman who lived with her husband and a child who was nine months old. She had migrated from Tonga in 2006 because the unemployment in Tonga was high and she could not find a job. When she arrived in Auckland she stayed with her parents. Seventeen people lived in this three bedroom house which was a private rental property. Next she moved to an aunt's place and lived in another private rental property which housed 13 people in a four bedroom house. She was concerned about security because: *Back at my parents' house there is someone who stole something from our house. Just taking our own blanket from wire outside... But we are afraid if that person would suddenly come inside to our house sometime.*
- 110 She and her partner applied for a Housing New Zealand property because they wanted a place of their own in which to bring up the family they planned that was not overcrowded. They could not afford a private rental property. They thought it would be safe but sometimes this young mother feels unsafe left alone without the company of her family.

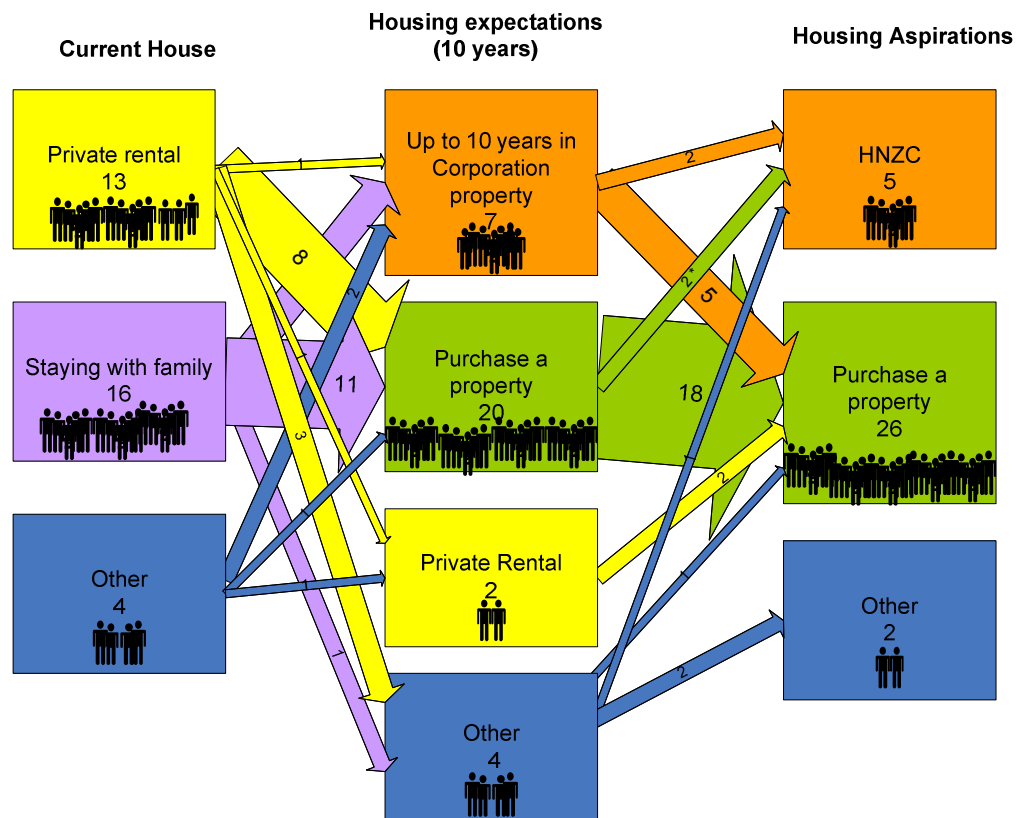
Applicants' housing expectations and aspirations

- 111 The approaches people took to their housing pathways depended on their housing expectations and aspirations. This section presents the housing expectations and aspirations of the 33 applicants.
- 112 The applicants were asked about where they were living and how this was different from their housing expectations and aspirations. Housing expectations referred to where people expected to be living in five and ten years. Housing aspirations referred to where people would live if they could. Some applicants prefaced their housing aspirations with "If I won lotto..."

Current house

- 113 Analysis of applicants' housing tenures at the time of the interview, in November 2009, indicated that:
- thirteen applicant households were living in private rental accommodation
 - sixteen applicant households were living with family or friends, and of these households, eight were living in Housing New Zealand properties, six in properties owned by family members, and two in private rental properties
 - four applicant households were living in other situations including emergency housing, boarding, or in a caravan.
- 114 Figure 3 compares applicants' current tenure with their housing expectations and aspirations.

Figure 3 Applicants' current housing, and their expectations and aspirations (November 2009)



* Note that the two applicants who are shown as expecting to purchase a property, but aspiring to live in a Housing New Zealand property, actually aspired either to return to their country of origin and build their own house, or to stay in New Zealand and live in a Housing New Zealand property.

Housing expectations

115 Seven applicants expected to live in a Housing New Zealand property for up to 10 years (Figure 3). Two of these applicants had no prior experience of living in a Housing New Zealand property as a child or adult. All seven applicants had a Social Allocation System (SAS) priority rating of A or B.

116 Twenty applicants expected to have purchased a property within 10 years (see Figure 3). Six of these applicants had no prior experience of living in a Housing New Zealand property. Half had a SAS priority of A or B, and the other half had a SAS priority of C or D.

Housing aspirations

117 Of the seven applicants who expected to live in a Housing New Zealand property for up to 10 years, five aspired to buy their own house and two aspired to continue in state rental. Of the five applicants who aspired to rent a Housing New Zealand property, three applicants had prior experience of living in a Housing New Zealand property and four had a SAS priority rating of A or B.

- 118 Two of the applicants who said that they expected to purchase a property also talked about an alternative option of staying in New Zealand and living in a Housing New Zealand property. Neither tenant was sure, at the time of the interview, which option they would pursue. The remaining 18 applicants who expected to purchase a property also listed this as their aspiration.
- 119 Two of the applicants who expected to be in private rental in 10 years aspired to purchase a property as did one applicant with 'other' expectations.
- 120 Of the 26 applicants who aspired to purchase a property, 19 had prior experience of living in a home owned by their parents and/or owning a house as an adult. Seven of these applicants had no prior experience of living in a Housing New Zealand property.

Knowing what is possible

- 121 This section explores what the 33 applicants knew about their housing options and what they saw as possible given their life circumstances. It covers comparative cost of rentals, and attitudes towards Housing New Zealand as a stepping stone to get back on your feet.

Comparative costs of rentals

- 122 Thirty-one applicants knew from experience that the private rental sector was unaffordable for them even with the Accommodation Supplement. This experience had led to 'financial stress' and applications for Housing New Zealand properties¹³. One applicant said: *And that's what I tried to duck, is going private ... and I hated going to Social Welfare to help me to, it was just annoying and cost heaps to get into this place, it's ridiculous you know.* (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority B)
- 123 Another applicant said:
- Well I have been looking private, on the Internet. I did ring up WINZ to see how much they could give me, Accommodation Supplement. And they couldn't give me that much. So I've just been stuck, just waiting for Housing New Zealand.* (SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years, SAS Priority B)
- 124 One applicant had been thinking about her options and had accepted the assistance of a Housing New Zealand advisor who assisted some people on the waiting list into private rental. This applicant said:
- Yeah 'cause there's actually a lady that does the private rental... But that's pending at the moment 'cause I actually just, 'cause I got a letter from the lady that did the Housing Corp houses seeing if I still wanted it... Yep, I'd have to go private rental, yeah. I would just have to suffer the consequences of being separated and being alone and single, or whatever it is that I need to do to be able to get by and have my three kids and be happy, yeah I'll do it... And there's also a plan C and if it doesn't work out, I'm gonna move into my sister's house (laughter).* (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)

¹³ See the section on motivation for applying for a Housing New Zealand property for a definition of 'financial stress', and its prevalence as a motivation.

- 125 Another applicant had come to the conclusion that the only way private rental accommodation would be affordable was if she shared with her sister's family. She thought this would be better than continuing to overcrowd the Housing New Zealand property in which her parents lived. She said:

I have been looking at renting privately but the only way that I'm going to afford it is if my sister and brother-in-law move in... and there's a whole lot of us get together which is, it's okay but it's not my ideal thing because I still, I've not, I don't have my independence I'm still living with other people and with my three kids... (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)

Housing New Zealand properties as a stepping stone to get back on your feet

- 126 Five applicants saw living in a Housing New Zealand property as a stepping stone to housing independence. Two of these applicants had no prior experience of living in a Housing New Zealand property. Two applicants were exploring the home ownership as an alternative to renting from Housing New Zealand and had applied to Habitat for Humanity. Another applicant had access to whānau land on which to build a house and she and her husband hoped to get a Housing New Zealand property, as the cheap rent would allow them to save the money for building materials more quickly.

Meeting requirements

- 127 Part of meeting requirements to move into a Housing New Zealand property was being confirmed on the waiting list. Once a person was confirmed on the waiting list they were referred to as an applicant. Applicants were then under an obligation to keep Housing New Zealand up to date with any changes to their life circumstances.

Confirmation on the waiting list

- 128 In November 2009 Housing New Zealand had four levels of priority which were assigned to people who were confirmed on the waiting list (applicants) – A, B, C, D. Table 7 shows applicants' waiting list priority ratings by the tenure in which they were residing when they were interviewed.

Table 7 Waiting list priority rating by tenure in November 2009

Tenure in March 2009	Priority A	Priority B	Priority C	Priority D	Total
Staying with family	5	7	4	0	16
Private rental	3	3	4	3	13
Other	3	0	0	1	4
Total	11	10	8	4	33

- 129 The four applicants whose tenure was 'Other' were living in:

- a boarding house (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, SAS Priority A)

- a Women's Refuge (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)
- an emergency house (SolewC, European, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)
- a caravan (Single, Pacific, 41 - 50 years, SAS Priority D).

Keeping Housing New Zealand up to date about circumstances

130 Once applicants were confirmed on the waiting list they had an obligation to keep Housing New Zealand up to date with any changes in their circumstances. One applicant said: *Well I applied like six months ago like I said and I didn't get accepted to go on the waiting list till like four months ago...And they kept asking me to get more and more information.* (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, SAS Priority C)

131 Housing New Zealand regularly sends applicants a letter to check whether they still need a house. Despite this many applicants struggled to stay on the waiting list. One applicant accepted a private rental property that was unsuitable because it was in an area close to her children's schools. The couple and their six children are living in a small three bedroom house. She said:

[T]hey were going to give me a house in Manurewa and I said no, okay. Now she knows that I came to this house so she told me, "Send me the tenancy agreement of this house by the 31st of October." And I faxed it for her from my work and I think she didn't receive it, this lady, she send me a letter back she told me Housing New Zealand is closed for you now. I have the paper if you want to see it, she wanted me to send the tenancy agreement by the 31st of October, last month, and I fax it for her sometimes the fax doesn't go through or it will go later. Then I received a letter and then I posted it as well, but I think it went after the 31st perhaps two days after the, it would be the 2nd of November. Now she sent me a letter she said, "We close your application." (CoupwC, European, 41 - 50 years, SAS Priority A)

132 Some applicants ring Housing New Zealand repeatedly out of their desire to be offered a house. One applicant said:

Well you've just got to keep on ringing and ringing, and ringing, and ringing, and ringing, and ringing, ringing, ringing, and, for I don't know how long, 'cause they take you all the list if you don't keep on ringing them. About every week, or every second week I normally ring, and just see if anything's changed, no its still the same, and nothing's changed, and they say to me there is a long waiting list. Very, very long waiting list. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, SAS Priority B)

133 Some applicants visited the Neighbourhood Housing Unit repeatedly. One applicant said: *They'd just say, 'Take a rental list.' 'Cause they used to have them on the side.* (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority D) Another applicant who visited repeatedly received a letter saying she *"wouldn't get a Housing New Zealand house anyway"*. (Single, Pacific, 41 - 50 years, SAS Priority D)

134 Other applicants received visits from their tenancy managers. One applicant who had turned down two offers said:

We came here [NHU] twice and then nothing happened here, we didn't hear anything from here. And then when Housing check the house there the lady saw that, Oh you have a baby and then you should apply for housing," and I told her, "We went to Housing twice already but we haven't heard anything from them." (CoupwC, Pacific, 30 - 41 years, SAS Priority A)

They then completed a needs assessment and were offered a house three months later.

Exiting instead of transferring

- 135 One applicant who had been a tenant for 12 years described how she “got a growling from one of the ladies”. The applicant had given her notice in one area and applied in another area when she could have asked for a transfer. The applicant had informed Housing New Zealand of the household’s intentions to move to be closer to work and thought they had done everything correctly. The applicant said, *I don’t know the processes...I think we were probable supposed to ask for a transfer or something.* (CoupwC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, SAS Priority B)

Finding the right house

- 136 Housing New Zealand offered properties that were suitable for the applicant’s household. Applicants had preferred locations where they wanted to live. They also had views about the house they required. Some applicants turned down properties Housing New Zealand offered.

Preferred locations

- 137 At the time of their needs assessments, applicants were asked questions to help Housing New Zealand match their household to a house. One of these questions asked them to identify areas where they would like to live. In some instances, applicants were then confused when Housing New Zealand offered them a house that did not match their requirements. One applicant who had been offered two houses said: *Yeah, so they actually were trying to find a house in the east side area, but she actually came back with Mangere and Otara which was totally off the mark.* (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)

- 138 Some applicants had the needs of their children in mind when they considered the houses they were offered. One applicant had been offered more than three houses but turned them down because they were in bad streets and she knew the local communities. She wanted a safe place for her and her children. Another applicant, describing the process her sister went through, said:

They’ve been... offering them homes that are not realistic, there’s either no gate or its just a main road... And I went, Oh far,out, if you go there, the kids could get run over.” They’re not thinking of the benefit of kids and their parents... (SolewC, Māori and Pacific, 18-30 years, SAS Priority A)

- 139 Some applicants thought that if they refused the offer of three houses, they would go to the back of the waiting list or would have to reapply. Some applicants were so concerned about getting any kind of housing for them and their children that they accepted the offer of a house that was unsuitable.

Preferred house type

- 140 Some applicants were more concerned about the house type than the location. As one applicant said: *I don't mind where it is really... but my friends are in Auckland... I'd like a one bed place with a bit of a yard.* (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, SAS Priority A)
- 141 Applicants with children are often looking for warm houses. One applicant said: *I think it was a three bedroom home but it actually I just judging from the outside it looked really, really cold and that was sort of why I didn't, I don't care what the house looks like just as long as it's warm.* (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)
- 142 When accepting offers of houses some applicants based their acceptance on comparisons with other Housing New Zealand properties they knew. One applicant who had become a tenant by the time of the interview said:
- And the manager had Housing NZ on the phone. "She goes, 'Oh we'll process your application ...and then if there's a house available we'll let you know" And then somebody else rung me on last Wednesday...and said, Oh we've got a house for you to go and look at". ...We said, Yes... 'cause this is way better than my mother-inlaw's old house.* (SolewC, European, 18 - 31 years, SAS Priority A)
- 143 One applicant (SolewC, Māori, 18-30 years, SAS Priority B) was offered two houses in November. One house the applicant described as a “dump”. The applicant took the second house, but it was a house modified for a wheelchair. When the applicant went into the office to complete the paperwork the offer was withdrawn. The applicant asked, what if they could find a vacant Housing New Zealand property. The staff member responded saying, “Go into the nearest Housing New Zealand office and ask for it”. The applicant followed this advice but was told “You can't just have any house you like.” At this time the staff member looked up the applicants' file and discovered that they were not currently on the waiting list.¹⁴

Making the move into a Housing New Zealand property

- 144 This section analyses the experience of 28 tenants who moved into state houses during the 18 months prior to being interviewed in November 2009. This group of 28 tenants is a subset of the 62 tenants whose pathways towards housing independence are analysed in the section, Housing pathways from state housing to housing independence.
- 145 The experiences of the 28 tenants were analysed to understand how they came to accept the offer of a particular property. Housing New Zealand had a policy of offering people three properties and if they refused all three offers, down-grading their priority on the waiting list. As has been reported in the section above some people were still on the waiting list because they had refused properties. However, the great majority (24 out of 28) of these tenants had accepted the first Housing New Zealand house that they were offered.

¹⁴ Participants in the longitudinal study were applicants when they were enrolled but between that time and the time of the interview they had not kept Housing New Zealand up to date with their changes of circumstances and therefore were no longer on the waiting list.

- 146 One of these tenants, who had been living with her husband's in-laws in an overcrowded situation, said:

I'm not just like other Island people, they like to do things together and just live in one room, too crowded for me. So that's another reason we were so pleased to get an answer from the Housing to get this place really fast... Yeah this is the first house we seen and then I said, "Let's go for it." I'm dying to have my own place. (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 147 One of the tenants who had been in private rental accommodation, and was offered three properties to choose from, described her decision making process saying:

They gave me a choice of three places and out of the three places this was the best of the three. One of them was in ...Manurewa... and that's another gang, that I knew... stay the hell away from there, right? And another one was down Weymouth and when I went and had a look at it, they were doing the place up and they'd ripped all the wallpaper off. Now my ex is a house interior, he paints and wall papers and I used to do it with him. ...all the walls were just covered in mould underneath the wallpaper and he goes, "It'll be different when we're finished," and I went, "yeah I know, but it'll come back. And there is no way I am placing my child in here." My kid suffers from asthma, that would kill her, that would be the death of her all that dampness. So I didn't take that place, and I come and saw this place and I thought, "Oh not too bad, a lot of potential, I can see the potential in the ground," and things like that...It wasn't until I'd signed up and took the place and moved in that my neighbour told me, "Gang related area..." and I went "Oh my god." (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 148 One tenant, who had stayed at the Women's Refuge for nearly three months, said: *They help a lot to get a house, finding me and the kids a house, and I reckon it's fast to get a house. (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)*

Living with a Housing New Zealand Property

- 149 This chapter focuses on tenant's experiences of living with their Housing New Zealand properties. It includes their experiences of settling into their properties, their attachment to their houses, the suitability and match between households and houses, tenants' views on house designs and experiences of the condition of their houses, and house maintenance and property improvement.

Settling into a Housing New Zealand property

- 150 Tenants' experiences of settling into their Housing New Zealand homes were mixed. Some had very positive first impressions of the property, and were very happy with its condition and suitability. One tenant who moved into a freshly renovated house said: *[I]t was really nice and clean...the carpet was new, the oven was renovated, the whole place was renovated before we got here, painted, cleaned, walls were done, carpets were changed, yeah, no it was excellent.* (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 151 Another tenant, whose house was not in perfect condition, said that they were happy because the house was clean, and that as soon as they saw it, they imagined living there:

I'm very happy even though you can see the peel of the paint but I'm still happy on how the house is 'cause I moved in it was nice and clean. ... I came and had a look, I stood from out there I look right in here and I walked around, went to the back, right away, straightaway before I even said to her I want the house I was picturing between the shed and the house, my vegetable garden. (Single, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 152 Other tenants were not as happy, saying that they hadn't liked any of the houses they had been shown, but that they had been compelled to choose one. One tenant who found it difficult living in a two storey house with a toddler said: *When I applied for the house I got told this was the only house, and if I didn't take it I'd be like bottom of the list again, so I had no other choice but to take this one. ... I just couldn't afford to wait for another house to come up for us.* (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 153 Some tenants had been told, when they agreed to their tenancy, that some defects with the house would be fixed, either before, or soon after they moved in, but found that the promised work had not happened. One tenant said: *I'd ring heaps like when we moved in the house was boarded up and they said they would take it down before we moved in, they didn't even for ages and we had to get someone to come in and do it.* (SolewE, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Attachment to house

- 154 When asked how they felt about living in Housing New Zealand properties, tenants' responses were very positive. Forty-three out of 62 tenants responded that they either loved, or liked their houses. On average, tenants gave higher ratings in response to this question than in response to questions about specific aspects of the house. Several tenants explained this, saying that while they were unhappy with certain aspects, overall, it worked as a

home, and they were grateful to have it. One tenant said: *I must be one of the happiest persons. ... 'Cause I've got a place to live* (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length).

- 155 Some tenants talked about how they felt lucky to be in their houses, and how it felt like a safe haven in comparison to their past living experiences. One tenant said:

I'm happy with it, I think my son is, but because of what I've been through in my past, this is like... a little bit of heaven I suppose, and most people say, "Eh? You know, you're living in this area?" To be honest, I think this is quite a good part of South Auckland (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 156 Other tenants were not happy with their houses, but were resigned to living there, as they had few, or no other options. One tenant said: *I lived here since 2004, five years now so, I accept it it's not to my liking really to be honest but I shall have to put up with it, live with it.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 157 Tenants who had been in their homes for a long time were often very attached to them. One tenant had a strong attachment to the house despite being unhappy about crime in the neighbourhood. Another tenant and their family had a strong attachment to the neighbourhood and wanted to stay in the house despite it being cold, and despite having problems getting up and down the stairs.

- 158 Tenants who were unhappy or very unhappy about their houses tended to point to problems with dampness, cold, and maintenance. These issues are described in more detail below. Tenants who were neutral usually pointed to aspects of the house that they liked and other aspects that they disliked.

Suitability and match

- 159 Tenants talked about the suitability of their houses for their households. Comments focused on whether the house was of an appropriate size, and on features that made the house suitable, or unsuitable for tenants with mobility and health issues.

Size

- 160 With regards to size, 39 out of 62 tenants were happy, or very happy with the number of bedrooms in their Housing New Zealand properties. While most were satisfied, 19 tenants were either unhappy or very unhappy. Comments on the appropriateness of size tended to focus on whether there was enough space for the household. The criteria for enough space included four factors:
- whether there were enough bedrooms of adequate size
 - whether the living areas were of adequate size in relation to the number of bedrooms in the house
 - whether there was enough space for family to stay.

Enough bedrooms of adequate size

- 161 Commonly, tenants wanted older children, and adults who were not spouses, each to have their own rooms, while younger children could share. A tenant in a four-bedroom house said:

I'm really, really happy with the bedrooms. ... Yeah 'cause we only had a two and a half bedroom house the last time and trying to fit eight of us in it's a bit hard... [Now] the boys have their own [bedroom] and the two girls have got one and I've got one. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 162 Some tenants thought that the bedrooms were 'a good size' but others thought the rooms were a bit small. Of small bedrooms one tenant said:

Yeah. It's a bit small, 'cause by the time you get two single beds in, and you get a big cabinet for the TV, and... cabinets for your clothes... it sticks out, he's got a bed end on the end of it, and to try and get through there it's not easy. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Space for family to stay

- 163 Some tenants with grandchildren who they care for would like space for grandchildren to stay. As one tenant said: *Only two bedrooms ... Because I've got ten mokopuna, and four great... and get them all here, well you have to go and look for some mattresses here one night. (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)* Another tenant was grateful that she had extra space for family. She said: *Yeah, I've got my twenty one year old son who lives here, and I've got a grandson who I quite often look after overnight and I've got the spare room for him. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)*

Growing households wanting more space

- 164 Some tenants said that they wanted more bedrooms. Reasons for tenants wanting more bedrooms included overcrowding, and health problems that necessitated 24 hour carer support.

Overcrowding

- 165 A few instances of overcrowding were found among the interviewed tenants. Most of these tenants said that they were on the waiting list for a transfer to a bigger house. In a number of cases, this overcrowding had occurred as a result of natural increases in family size.
- 166 As children grew older they no longer wanted to share rooms, in some cases creating friction within the family. One tenant said: *And my kid, my girl she needs her own room, yeah. ... Sometime she hate my boy (laughter), yeah. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)*. A tenant in a three bedroom house said: *[T]here's eight of us in the house. ... Yeah, and I guess it's alright because my kids are still small but... (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)*
- 167 Family reunification could also result in overcrowding. One tenant said:

So one more, is going to be back home in the end of this month, my sixteen years old, been a naughty boy, a naughty kid, so he's up in Kopapa, and the plan is he's going to be back home. The people, the health people came around, had interview with me, they ask me to apply for a new house, another house. (SolewC, Pacific, 41 - 50 years, 10+ tenure length)

Health problems that necessitated 24-hour carer support.

- 168 A few tenants had developed health problems that necessitated 24-hour carer support, and a place for the carer to stay overnight. Tenants said:

I need one for my home help ... she's got to stay on the couch and that's not right is it? ... If my son goes out, I've got to have somebody 24/7 most times. (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

[M]y doctor has said I should have someone with me and occasionally my son comes and stays to help out with the washing and the heavy stuff and opening things and that, and because I've only got one bedroom it's a bit of an issue because he sleeps out here when he comes. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 169 For one tenant, issues with health problems, children getting older, and more children entering the household, had converged to create a difficult living situation in a two-bedroom house:

I've asked for a bigger house because my daughter sleeps in the room with my eldest son ... I need a warm house, and an extra room for my daughter 'cause she sleeps in the same room as my son, because I have the two chronic asthmatics in my room, so I can pump them up with their medication and keep an eye on them and make sure they'll always got their blankets on. ... My daughter's reached that stage where she's becoming a teenager and... Yeah and she needs her own space instead of getting cramped up with her brother. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 170 A tenant who was paying market rent¹⁵ wanted to transfer to a bigger home, but was not eligible. This tenant was planning to move out of Housing New Zealand housing within a year.

Yeah it's very small rooms, very, very small. ... Oh I have two kids, a boy and a girl. The boy is five and the girl is eight, so they share their room, and the room is very small. Yeah and the problem is we applied for transfer two times and they still declined because we are both work so they said we are not qualified anymore for New Zealand house. The option they give us is to go and buy a house or to private rent. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Shrinking households and extra space

- 171 Some tenants had extra bedrooms as a result of their children growing up and leaving home. Most were very happy with this situation and had found uses for the extra bedrooms, including:

- taking in boarders

¹⁵ Tenants whose income has increased to the point where their income related rent equals the market rent in the local area pay market rent.

- providing the remaining children with their own bedrooms
- providing a place for family to stay
- other purposes.

172 A tenant, who had some good friends move in once her son left, said:

They have the main bedroom and the little fella sleeps in the little room and I sleep in the back room, there's plenty of room.... They only just moved in when my son went down to Christchurch, seeing as they didn't want to leave me on my own. (Single, European, 65-74 years, 10+ years tenure length)

173 One tenant, who had provided the remaining children with their own bedrooms said: *But now that they've moved out both boys have got their own room. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length). Another tenant now had room for a grandson. She said: I've got a grandson who I quite often look after overnight and I've got the spare room for him. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)*

174 Extra bedrooms had been used as computer rooms and offices. One tenant used the extra bedroom as an office. She was on a waiting list to transfer to a smaller home, as she had developed a health condition that made upkeep of the home difficult. She said:

I'm out for a smaller home, I've got pleurisy which is killing the linings of my lungs and I'm finding it really, really hard to maintain this home as in keeping it tidy, keeping it clean 'cause I also work from here as well, I work for a courier company. So I've been finding that quite hard to actually keep up and I use one of the rooms as my office anyway so it's better if it goes to a family who can actually use the rooms as rooms. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

Aging, mobility, and health-related factors

175 Modifications to the house were an important factor in determining the suitability of the house for tenants with disabilities. Several tenants talked about the modifications that had been done, or were about to be done to their houses, to make them more suitable for them. Modifications included changes such as making bathrooms and toilets more accessible, changing door and cupboard latches, and reconfiguring kitchen storage so that it can be reached. Some of these tenants were involved in the Healthy Housing Programme at the time of the interview, and modifications for them had been recommended by the programme, but had not yet been done.

176 Tenants who had modified houses were generally happy with the modifications and found them helpful. In one case some of the modification had been done poorly, and further modifications was needed. One tenant said:

I've got a bath board which I can sit on, but they've actually put rails in for me to use the bath. ... it's meant to be one, one long one which goes along one wall. They couldn't actually get it and they stuck two in and I still can't have a bath, because I can't grip... it's just the way they've positioned them I still can't use it. ... the cupboards for example no, the latches I can't open them and shut them so I have to leave everything open and the drawers I can't, the drawers are terrible and you know the bathroom, it's the ease of it. It's

not easy living here and the taps too. I mean they've got those old taps which you can't, there's no way of turning them, they need those ones that you can just move back and forth. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 177 One tenant, with a disabled family member, described how the funding criteria for modifications had meant that they had declined to transfer to more suitable Housing New Zealand housing, as they wanted to preserve access to that funding until a later date when they could buy their own house:

[W]e had been selected to move to a bigger house, but we sort of declined that because of our future intentions. 'Cause we intended to buy our own house so because they wanted to put us in a house where they were doing some modifications for like, bathroom and stuff and we thought if we use that fund and buy our own house, then that fund we won't access it again. So that's why we declined. (CoupwC, European, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

House design

Units versus standalone houses

- 178 Tenants showed a marked preference for standalone houses over units. Tenants who had transferred from units to standalone houses commented on this as a positive aspect of the transfer, while some tenants who were living in units said that they would prefer to be in a standalone house. Aspects of living in units that tenants were unhappy about included access to the back yard via a path alongside the neighbouring unit, and noise from the tenants in the neighbouring unit.

Access to the back yard

- 179 One tenant, who had to walk past the neighbouring unit to access the back yard, said: *'[C]ause outside, if I wanted to mow my lawn I have to go around... and come in back of my back yard. ... That they don't like us walking around and me too, I don't like kids running around coming over the fence. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)*

Noise

- 180 A few tenants described how noise and privacy were compromised by the actions of tenants in the neighbouring unit. One tenant said: *Well if you open this door, their window's just right there. ... Yeah they're banging on the walls, like I dunno if they're know if they getting cheeky but yeah, they bang on the concrete and upstairs. (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)*
- 181 Two factors could somewhat, but not completely, mitigate the unpopular aspects of living in a unit. One factor was if the unit was *really nice*. (SolewE, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length) The other factor was if tenants in neighbouring units got on well: *I've never actually liked being joined to anyone, like in this situation where there's two joined units. I've always... but it's only good because we get on fine and I'm willing to put up with it because we do get on. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

182 When asked about their overall happiness with the interior of their houses, 28 out of 62 tenants were happy or very happy. Fifteen out of 62 tenants were neutral (often describing both good things and bad things as their reasons for choosing the middle score), while 19 out of 62 tenants said that they were unhappy or very unhappy. In explaining why they were happy or unhappy with the interior of their houses, tenants talked about internal décor (see section on house condition), and the configuration of their houses, often focusing on stairs. Tenants were also specifically asked about their bathrooms and kitchens.

Bathrooms

183 Thirty-one out of 60 tenants were happy or very happy with their bathrooms. A few said that they were neutral, while 20 out of 60 tenants were unhappy or very unhappy.

184 If appropriate modifications had been made for tenants with disabilities they were happy. One tenant said: *Yes I'm happy now because I've got my own things to sit on, and my to get up on the bath ... 'Cause I use my wheelchair a lot, my frame.* (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

185 Tenants' satisfaction with their bathrooms was influenced by whether the configuration of the shower and bath matched their preferences. For older tenants and tenants with mobility problems, having a shower separate to the bath was important. One tenant said: *Well I have difficulty getting into the bath, we have a shower over the bath... If they could take the bath out just have the shower it would have been okay.* (Coup, European, 64 - 75 years, 10+years tenure length)

186 However, an able-bodied tenant said that they would prefer their shower and bath to be combined: *I'd like a shower over my bath, but I've got a bathroom, a shower room and a toilet, all separate.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length) And, another tenant said that they would prefer to have more space and no bathtub: *[I]t's very pokey and small which isn't a major issue, but I'd be quite happy if they ripped the bath out and just put a shower in there... I prefer showers, it's so much easier.* (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

187 Combining the bathroom and toilet was unpopular. As one tenant said: *Yeah the toilet and bath is together now. But I want to, need to separate. Because of the kids. Sometimes the old people want to go inside but the kids are inside.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

188 One tenant said that their hot water was too cold, and did not know that the temperature could be adjusted. The interviewer showed them how to adjust the temperature.

Kitchens

189 Thirty-four out of 61 tenants were happy or very happy with their kitchens. This is slightly higher than the proportion of tenants who were happy with their bathrooms, and fewer tenants were unhappy or very unhappy (one fifth, as compared to one third of tenants who were unhappy with their bathrooms).

- 190 Tenants with newer kitchens tended to be happier; a tenant in a newly built home said that she was *very happy about the kitchen, just small enough for us and the stove works well.* (Single, Pacific, 75+ years, 1.5 years tenure length) Other tenants were looking forward to their kitchen upgrades. One tenant said: *[I]t's small kitchen and things like that, cupboards are so high, but I mean now I'm getting it done it's good.* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 191 Some tenants were happy with the size of the kitchen relative to the number of people in the household. One tenant said: *It's alright, it doesn't get overloaded or anything, so really nothing to complain about, we're not banging in to one another or anything.* (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length) A less happy tenant said: *It's a very small kitchen for a four bedroom house, I think. ... two was hard fitting in the kitchen at once.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)
- 192 For some tenants having no extraction in their kitchens was not a problem. One tenant said: *Yeah otherwise I just leave the windows open.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length) But for other tenants this caused problems with condensation, fire alarms being tripped, and having to open doors and windows. One tenant said:

You haven't got a thing up on the roof which sucks in the hot air from the stove. ... And when you're on gas it builds up a lot of steam and my darn alarms keep going off and I have to actually shut the kitchen door to do any cooking because all my alarms go off because there's nowhere for the moisture to escape and they're sensitive to moisture as well as smoke which people don't seem to realise. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Stairs

- 193 Several tenants talked about problems with stairs, or expressed a preference for a single level house. Problems with stairs unprotected by a safety barrier arose for a tenant with small children:
- I wasn't quite happy with the stairs. ... 'Cause my girl's had a couple of tumbles down the stairs. ... Yeah, and I asked if we could be kind of like, you know those board things? ... But I got told I had to do that myself, so. Being on the benefit I couldn't, can't afford that, so, yeah.* (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 194 Most of the problems with stairs existed in relation to the positioning of the toilet or the lack of a toilet both upstairs and downstairs. One tenant said about their children: *[O]ther rooms are upstairs and they gotta come down to the toilet so they feel a little scared to just come down sometimes. I'll get up, so it's been a little stressful coming down with them.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 195 For another tenant, problems with the lack of a downstairs toilet were compounded by her asthma:

I've got asthma and my two girls they've got asthma too and when it's time like when we had asthma it's hard for me to climb up. Like if I want to go to

the toilet and I was busy down here doing some work down here hard for me to run upstairs. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 196 One tenant said that they were very happy with the bathroom facilities in their house because *there was a toilet upstairs and downstairs, a bathroom upstairs.* (SolewE, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Exterior and outdoor spaces

- 197 Thirty-two out of 61 tenants were happy or very happy with the outside spaces and exterior of their houses. Tenants commented on how they appreciated having outdoor space to relax in, to garden in, and for the children to play in:

[I]t's like I'm in a, like that's heaven out there on the balcony, sitting in the sun, got a bit of view (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

We love the one at the front there, it's big enough for sometime, for the kids to play. Yeah. And the back there, we just love to plant vegetables and things like that. (Coup, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Upkeep of sections

- 198 Tenants spoke about looking after their sections. In relation to upkeep, the size of the section was important. Tenants with children tended to be happy with larger sections as it gave their children room to play, while tenants without children, older tenants, and tenants with mobility issues sometimes expressed a preference for smaller sections that were less work to maintain. One tenant said:

I would prefer a smaller, just a bit smaller, that's just too big for me. ... Yeah, it's just when I do get it mowed the grass grows fast, and I want a little thing that I can make a garden or something and teach the little one how to do a garden. (SolewC, Māori and European, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 199 A number of tenants enjoyed gardening, and had put considerable work into their gardens, some growing vegetables that supplemented the family's food supply. One tenant said: *Everything that's planted out there and out the front I've done myself, 'cause it was just dirt when I came in here.* (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 200 Two tenants spoke about finding rubbish buried, or half-buried in their gardens, making mowing and gardening difficult. One of the tenants said: *[W]hoever lived here must have dug it up and just put rubbish there and covered it over 'cause I can't mow in that corner ... I only go up to that part and then I've got to weed eat all there 'cause there's too much rubbish.* (CoupwC, European and Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 201 One tenant suggested that Housing New Zealand should plant edible trees on properties:

I don't know why they plant non edible trees, when you're providing for a family I thought well they could provide maybe a mandarin tree or an apple tree or something 'cause then it helps with the budget too. ... they should

have maybe put in a feijoa or a lemon or something you know and so when the tenants change the trees are still there and the next family moves in and they've got something to look forward to every spring or summer. (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Fences

202 Many tenants talked about the fencing on their properties. Fencing was valued by tenants for privacy, for keeping children safe, and for keeping intruders out. Of privacy one tenant said: *I'm very happy about my new fence because give me and my children my privacy with my children (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)*. One tenant said of keeping children safe: *We'd like to have a fence you know? Because we got our grandchildren come in, my wife look after them and you have to be very careful not to let them go outside. (CoupwC, European, 51-64 years, 10+years tenure length)*

203 A number of tenants preferred high fencing, and wanted the fences around their properties to be higher. Most of these tenants were experiencing problems with unwelcome people using their properties as a thoroughfare, intruding on privacy, and in some cases damaging property. Tenants said:

[T]he fence is so low at the back so how close to the homes are to each other it's like we have a shared back yard (laughter), but just I don't know, the kids and that around here just think that they can just come on to any property they feel like. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

[T]hey jump my fences and they jump from over here. ... They kicked all my soil, my vege plants to pieces. They keep jumping the fence and using my section as a walk way to get to the dairy and all that. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

204 On the other hand, one tenant reported that they had been burgled after a high fence had been erected, and linked the burglary to the loss of line of sight between them and their neighbours. The tenant said: *Yeah, we didn't ask for the high fence... I came back from work my mum said, "Oh they've put up the high fence now." And that same weekend the place got broken into, and then the following weekend the same thing. (SolewC, Māori, 31 -40 years, 10+ years tenure length)*

House Condition

205 Overall, thirty-three out of 61 tenants were happy with the condition of their houses, around a quarter were neutral, and a fifth were unhappy or very unhappy.

206 Tenants who were happy or very happy commented on the cleanliness of the house when they moved in, and the way that things just worked. Tenants who had moved into new or refurbished properties were especially happy. Several tenants said that they were not completely satisfied with the condition of their houses, but that it was good enough. One tenant said: *But apart from these little things you know I mean the main things of the home do the job and that's what counts. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)*

- 207 Some tenants talked about the work that they had done to maintain the condition of their homes. One said:

Well I've been here thirteen years and say hello to my wallpaper. (laughter) They've done this room and I think that room and that's it, the hallway and that are all thirteen years old, but I've maintained it myself with Handy Andy and sugar soap and I used to go through once a year so it's average condition really, for thirteen years old. (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Draughts, damp and mould

- 208 Seventeen tenants described problems with draughts, damp or mould. Where they existed, these problems caused significant discomfort and stress for tenants. Draughts due to poorly fitting windows and doors were described by several tenants. One tenant said: *The windows, even if the windows are shut you still have breeze (laughter) coming in. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

- 209 Two tenants had problems with draughts coming in through their internal garages. One tenant said: *And the garage, you should have at least backing board in there it's just all open where all the wind can come through and there's a roller door and all wind goes through there. (SolewC, Māori and European, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)*

- 210 Several tenants reported problems with dampness and mildew. For at least two tenants, the problems were severe; one tenant reported that the wall in a bedroom was so warped and mouldy that they were afraid to touch it. The other tenant said:

Well for one the bedroom. I can't stick my bed on the wall because the outside walls are wet in winter, and you put your hand on them and you just get water, so my bed's actually up against that main wall there so it doesn't touch any of the outside walls. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 211 One tenant reported that their house was so cold in winter that the whole family slept in one room. This created problems with condensation, but was preferable to the cold:

I try and clean it off, but that's just 'cause we all stay in the one room usually. In the winter time it's the worst time, the walls get wet and stuff, the bed gets wet. ... Just with all of us in the one room. We try and keep each other warm and it's probably because of that heat (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 212 Tenants reported that they had been advised to open windows to ventilate the house, and Housing New Zealand had installed extra ventilation in some homes. These tenants said that they were aware of the need to ventilate their homes, and did their best to do so, but said that it was not always possible to keep windows and ventilation open as this made the house even colder. In some houses, installed ventilation had also contributed to problems with draughts. One tenant said: *[T]hey put these mushroom things on the roof, like vents, and they put one in shower room, they put it right over the shower, so if*

there's a draught it comes in, you're in the shower and you're like, "Oh my gosh". (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Leaks

- 213 Some tenants reported that they had experienced problems in the past with their houses leaking in the rain, and most of them said that Housing New Zealand had fixed the problem within a reasonable timeframe. Two tenants described leaky windows that had not been fixed, and frustration with waiting. One tenant said:

Yeah, we've had maybe four visits from Housing New Zealand team to seal the windows, but they'll come back and say, "Oh, it's a builder's job." And then they'll go away, and then some other guy will come back and say, "Oh no, that's a window man's job." (CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 214 Several tenants described leaking bathroom or kitchen fixtures, and had experienced long delays waiting for Housing New Zealand to fix the problem, or had experienced recurring problems after attempts to fix the leak. A tenant with a leaking shower rose over their bath said:

I just touched the wall, and it was like raining for how many days, and my hand just went through the wall, and I was like, "Holy shit what the hell?" And I got up, I moved the bed, and the wall where I sleep, it was soft-as, and the bath was on the other side, and it was leaking. I think there ...was a leak inside the wall. ... It always leaks, they always, I always ring them, they come and fix it, but it's like, say two weeks later, it leaks again. (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 215 Some tenants were worried about damage to walls, floors, and structural components, while they waited for the leak to be fixed. One tenant said:

And it's like this bathroom going to fall down if I, if we have a bath inside I'm scared of having a shower sometimes because before, not before it's two years before there's a leaking from the bath down there and there's a thing on the ceiling but they didn't come and fix it, they just come and look why that thing come down, leaking. But I report them for two years... They fixed the leaking last year, or this year. But they still the ceiling still thing but I'm scared maybe sometimes that the bath going to come, fall down. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Warmth and heating

- 216 Twenty-five out of 62 tenants were happy or very happy with the warmth of their houses, and the same number was unhappy or very unhappy. Of the eight house-related rating scales, this was the lowest average score, and comments from tenants underscored this as a poorly performing area, with some describing very cold conditions that had severe affects on health and happiness.
- 217 Several tenants described their houses as warm, holding the heat in, even in winter, and not requiring too much heating. These tenants were happy or very happy with the warmth of their houses. One tenant said: *Beautiful. ... even in winter.* (Coup, Māori, 75+ years, 1.5 years tenure length) Another tenant said:

I think it's warm, 'cause we hardly use the heater throughout the winter ... like at the beginning of winter it was on for about, probably about once a week, if you're lucky at that, if we needed it only for him though. My big kids are okay, they're young they're fit and healthy and they're quite happy, like the house is warm, their rooms are warm. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

218 Other tenants described their houses as *cold, freezing, or like an ice box* in winter. They were very unhappy in the cold, and some described poor health outcomes (covered in the section below on cold-related illnesses). One tenant said: *Even the freezer's warmer than this house, I reckon. (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)*

219 Some of these tenants also said their houses overheated in summer. One tenant said: *Probably very unhappy 'cause in winter it's freezing it's like an ice box, summer time it's like an oven, total opposite in the summer time. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

Carpets and insulation

220 At the time of the interviews, a number of the houses had just been, or were about to be retrofitted with insulation. Tenants whose houses had just been, or were about to be insulated, were very happy about that, but as it was not yet winter, they were not able to assess the full effects of the insulation on the warmth of their houses. Some tenants who had received insulation before winter thought it had been very effective. One tenant said: *It's good yeah, wonderful since they put the stuff in the roof and underneath the house. (Single, European, 65-74 years, 10+ years tenure length)* While other tenants could not detect a difference: *Housing New Zealand has put insulation, extra insulation in the roof and underneath but it doesn't really make a difference. (Single, European, 65-74 years, 10+ years tenure length)*

221 We do not have enough information on the nature of the insulation retrofits, the characteristics of the houses, and tenant behaviours to identify factors that might account for the differences in the perceived effectiveness of insulation. It was, however, apparent that tenants living in new houses (rather than old houses with retrofitted insulation) reported high levels of happiness with the warmth of their houses. In the words of one tenant:

Well it seems to hold the warmth. ... Yeah I've got the Batts up in the roof and underneath on the concrete they've got that Expol I think it's called, yeah we actually saw them building a lot of homes around here so we know we had Batts underneath. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

222 Some tenants said that their houses were not insulated, and attributed the cold temperatures, in part, or in full, to this lack of insulation (draughts were identified as another culprit). One tenant said:

This place is freezing cold. And winter was terrible this year, it really was, it was our first winter in this place, and oh man we felt it. I do not believe there's any batts in it, that it's insulated, I really find it hard to believe this place is insulated because I put this carpet down and it's still cold, it takes some of the coldness but not. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 223 In relation to carpets, there were mixed views. Several tenants said that they were happy with their carpets, or that they wanted to have carpet laid over floorboards, because they believed it added to the warmth of the house. In the words of one tenant: *Well, we're fortunate to have carpet, 'cause that's another thing to keep the heat in* (CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 224 Other tenants said that they were happy with floorboards, or wanted to have a polished floor instead of carpets because floorboards were easier to clean, or were less susceptible to harbouring pests and allergens.

Heat sources

Fires

- 225 Several tenants used fireplaces or wood burners to heat their houses. Accounts of the fireplaces' effectiveness varied, but a consistent comment was that, while the fireplace was effective in heating the living room, the heat did not reach the bedrooms. One tenant said: *But the trouble is it only heats up in here, it doesn't heat up in the bedroom. ... 'Cause they said to us, "Oh, it'll go in the bedroom." And I said, "Well it doesn't go round corners."* (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 226 Several tenants talked about their fireplaces becoming unusable, either because of its condition, or because the tenant could no longer carry fire wood. In most cases, an alternative heat source had been installed, but the chimney had not always been boarded up, causing heat loss. Tenants said:
- And we had this wood burner box in the fireplace and they wanted to get rid of that, we didn't really mind because we were having trouble with it. ... And I thought they'd board up the fireplace but they haven't so we've put a scotch chest in front of it.* (Coup, European, 64 - 75 years, 10+years tenure length)
- I used to use the fireplace but I can't carry the wood in... I'm going to put a cardboard up there, they've told me I could stick a cardboard up there 'cause they actually won't do it, and the wind just whistles down there and it's like an ice box in here so, that's why that's up there at the moment to stop the wind from coming in.* (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Electric heaters

- 227 Some tenants had wall-mounted electric wall heaters in their houses. None of those tenants were happy with their heaters, and there were many complaints they were ineffective at heating and too expensive to run. One tenant said: *I won't on the heater 'cause it's just too expensive. ... my power went up to what, two hundred and eighty just for one month.* (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 228 A few tenants supplied their own freestanding electric heaters as an alternative or supplement to heat sources provided by Housing New Zealand, but a greater number simply described putting up with the cold (see section below on keeping warm without heating). One tenant used their own fan heater instead of the electric wall heater supplied by Housing New Zealand, and found that it was a more efficient heat source than the wall heater as it only needed to run for about 10 minutes to warm the room.

Gas heaters

- 229 Some tenants lived in houses with gas heating. As for other heat sources, there were concerns about running expenses, although one tenant said that they used the gas heater in their bedroom instead of the heat pump in the living area, as the gas was less expensive. One tenant did not use their gas heaters *because: it dries the air out and... they're asthmatics.* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 230 Similar to other heat sources, gas heating was inadequate when the house was draughty and did not retain the heat. One tenant said: *I have a gas heater and it doesn't even warm up, you're sitting on top of it and you're still freezing cold with blankets. The wind roars through here.*(SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Heat pumps

- 231 One tenant had a newly-installed heat pump in the living area, but used the gas heater in their bedroom in preference as it was less expensive, and provided heat in the bedroom: *Well, it doesn't actually heat up the whole house. Although he did say that the heat would enter down into the back bedroom. But it's why you need the gas as well. ... the guy that installed it did say, the heat from that should work itself down the hallway. Which, of course, it doesn't. Or not in this house anyway.* ((Single, Māori, 65 - 74 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Sun

- 232 Several tenants commented on the layout of their houses relative to the sun. One tenant said: *Very happy 'cause the sun comes through here in the mornings on this side.* (Single, European, 65-74 years, 10+ years tenure length) In another instance, the layout relative to the sun meant that more heating was needed: *It's freezing in the morning right up to about two in the afternoon, two to three it warms up, the place warm up and the sun is on this side, on that side, when the sun is on that side the place is cold. So we use the gas heater.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Using the stove for heating

- 233 Some tenants described current or past practices of using the stove for heating. For one tenant this was incidental to cooking for the family (CoupwC, Māori, 41 - 50 years, 5 years tenure length), but another tenant talked about using the stove specifically as a heat source: *[I]t was sometimes warm but only because we had to turn the heater on, or the oven and leave it on for hours to the point where the power bill was going up high. But we had to because baby was little and I was carrying.* (SolewC, Māori and European, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Multiple heat sources

- 234 Ten tenants talked about needing more heat sources in the living area than just the one provided by Housing New Zealand. In relation to all types of heat sources, tenants commented that the heat from the source did not travel through the house, leaving the bedrooms cold. Some of tenants had provided additional heaters of their own, while others simply put up with the cold, or huddled in one room to keep warm. One tenant said:

I think they should give us other options other than just that heating, 'cause it doesn't heat the rooms up it just does the main room. ... rather than just the one in, or if they had a smaller heater and then maybe one in the rooms, just given more options. (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Keeping warm without heating

- 235 Some tenants did not use, or only very rarely used heating (due to the expense), and described their strategies for keeping warm without heating. The most common method of keeping warm without heating was to wear more clothes or to use blankets. Tenants said:

Winter it is cold... to be honest I don't use the heating much, yeah, so me and my son just handle it. But you just use blankets, just do what we need to and that. (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

Yeah we lose the heat so fast, so that's why we have to put more clothes on our children at nights, especially with winter, always winter putting a lot of clothes on them, and socks and of course (CoupwC, Māori, 41 - 50 years, 5 years tenure length)

[I]t gets that cold in this house that we sleep with all our blankets on and all our clothes and socks, but it's still cold. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 236 Another strategy, described by a few tenants, was for the family to sleep in the one room with the heater, on cold winter nights. Tenants tended to be aware that this was unhealthy, but described it as preferable to the alternative of sleeping apart in extremely cold rooms.

Cold-related illnesses

- 237 Ten of the tenants who described their houses as cold also talked about the way that the cold affected their, or their family members' health. Comments about the cold causing or exacerbating respiratory tract illnesses, including asthma, were frequent, with tenants describing coughing every winter, recurrent chest infections, and hospitalisations for pneumonia and asthma. Tenants said:

[T]he dampness, the heat 'cause in winter it's terrible. Every winter, I actually get a very bad cough every winter, because of it. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Yeah ,they went in and out of hospital almost all through winter, going back to doctors just to get medicines and... Just chest infections. They get sick all the time, not during the summer and stuff it's just the winter. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 238 One tenant, who described their house as *really cold*, and *draughty* developed asthma for the first time since moving into the house, and found that her children's asthma had worsened since moving in. She said:

This is the most sickly I've been. ... when we moved in about a week later, we noticed that it started to get cold, and the coldness, and it gets really, really cold, really cold, it's colder in here than what it is outside... My

daughter, my eldest daughter didn't actually get it that bad and neither did my son, they didn't get it that bad until we moved in here (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

239 Two elderly tenants described exacerbation of arthritis or osteoporosis symptoms by the cold, and a consequent need to stay warm.

240 One tenant who described their house as *warm*, and hardly requiring any heating, talked about the improvement in the health of family members since moving into their Housing New Zealand house:

None of my kids have been sick in this house. ... normally I used to suffer with rheumatics, and I would probably pick that up in this house straightaway being inside, and I haven't had rheumatics for years and I still haven't had it even living here. Yeah, no my kids are quite happy here, and you know their breathing, their health wise has been excellent. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Interaction between heating, finance and health

241 Inherent in the examples of cold-related illness above, are financial issues. Many tenants were using no, or minimal heating, so as to meet tight budgets, and some were suffering adverse consequences to their health as a result. While some heat sources (in particular electric heaters), were felt to be less affordable than others, budgetary constraints on heating were described in relation to all types of heat sources.

242 Several tenants with ill and asthmatic children did not use heating despite knowing that a warmer house would be better for their children, because it was unaffordable. A tenant with severely asthmatic children said of the cost that the electric heater added to their power bill: *we're talking about a hundred, but still that's a lot to me on my budget. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)*

243 Tenants who described no difficulties in meeting their heating costs either lived in very warm houses that needed minimal heating, or had the financial means to run heaters frequently and in multiple rooms. A market renter said: *Each room has a heater so when we get cold we turn our heater on. For me I use my heater quite often plus my electric blankets. (CoupwC, Pacific, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

Internal refurbishment or redecoration

244 When asked about the condition of their houses, a number of tenants said that they would like some refurbishment or redecoration of the interior. Suggestions included replacing carpet that was becoming threadbare, repainting peeling paint, and replacing old, ripped, or mismatched wallpaper.

245 Tenants often raised these issues in relation to difficulties with keeping their houses clean and tidy. One tenant said:

[T]he lino's not very good they need to change the colour of the lino they put in the houses. 'Cause the lino actually shows, it's hard to clean the type of lino they actually put down ... unless you actually get down and scrub it tends to hold dirt which is hard to get off, and not so bad if I'm able bodied,

but with me being a bit more unable to do things it's quite, and I'm fussy too. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 246 One tenant said of their bathroom: *[E]verything is peeling. ... The more we try and wipe it, try and get it clean, the more it comes up like that. It just chips, chip away.* (Single, Māori, 65 - 74 years, 10+ years tenure length)
- 247 In a number of cases, these tenants had asked Housing New Zealand for upgrades, but their requests were declined. One tenant said: *And the next thing is we apply for the carpet eh and they just told us the Housing New Zealand have not enough budget to make the carpet.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Pests

- 248 Some tenants talked about problems with pests, including rats, mice, slugs, ants, fleas, and most commonly, cockroaches. Housing New Zealand had been responsive in organising pest control treatments, but except in instances where tenants had detected the problem before they moved in, tenants had been required to pay for those treatments. Some tenants thought this was unfair, as the problem had been present in the house before they moved into the property. One tenant said:

Yep, no it's all good in here just besides the cockroaches (laughter). ... Does Housing Corp assist with that? 'Cause I asked and they said that it's the tenants' ... there's thousands here and there was thousands here before we moved here. ... we saw them before we brought our stuff in because they were going up the walls and... we told them there was cockroaches, but they just said they really couldn't do anything 'cause we would a taken some from our last place too. ...so we probably joined with these ones and just made it worse. (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 249 Some tenants had experienced fewer pest problems after treatment, while others described recurring difficulties despite multiple pest control treatments. One tenant said: *when I first moved in there were rats and cockroaches in here, or little mices underneath. And they came out and took care of that, and I haven't had any mice or cockroaches for about over a year now.* (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length) But another tenant said: *Yeah, the house is prone to cockroaches... Yeah about 3 or 4 times a year they come to spray ... Yeah it still doesn't work. I don't know what to do to get rid of them. We keep trying.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Maintenance and Property Improvements

Maintenance by the Housing New Zealand

- 250 Many tenants were very happy with the repairs and maintenance that had been done on their houses. Some tenants said that this compared favourably to renting in the private sector, in terms of responsiveness, and other aspects such as repairing broken windows at no charge. One tenant said: *Yeah especially when the window is broken, they just come and fix eh and you don't pay for it.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length) Another tenant was happy because:

They came out and repainted all of that, they done a good job on that. ...they've got so many contractors working with them, you can ring up and have them come out and do your home anytime. ... they're only small jobs, all these people that come out and do it, but to us it's a big job ...Anything that I've needed done has been done properly you know straightaway.
(SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 251 Yet tenants also reported mixed experiences with Housing New Zealand's responsiveness in completing maintenance and repairs. Some tenants reported very fast service, which they were very happy with, and which was something they valued highly. Others reported long waiting times and repairs that they were still waiting for, months later and after many phone calls. Some tenants had experienced both fast and slow service, and were not sure why it had been inconsistent. As one tenant said:

[W]hen you ring up for a repair they'll say, "Oh it'll be a couple of days because it's a twenty four to forty eight hours or you'll go on to the seven day if it's non-urgent." Well sometimes I've waited for months for something and I've rung them back and they've said, "Oh haven't they done that yet?" And it hasn't even been gone out, they haven't even put it out or something, so the service is not really that brilliant as far as I'm concerned. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 252 From tenants' accounts, it was not always clear why there were differences in the speed of Housing New Zealand response. The following factors emerged as associated with the speed of response in some instances:

- urgent repairs were mostly done within 48 hours
- non-urgent repairs took a lot longer
- coordination between staff and differences between tenancy managers
- unavailability of budget for some types of maintenance
- the perseverance of the tenants in following up a report
- the needs of tenant households
- contractor responsiveness.

Urgent repairs were mostly done within 48 hours

- 253 The response to urgent repairs was often very fast. One tenant said:

Well the 0800 number if you get something really urgent like the hot water cylinder going as an example, or somebody's tried to have a go at breaking into your house or something like that and you've got broken windows, they're pretty prompt. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 254 However, there were also instances in which urgent repairs had taken a very long time to fix, or had not been fixed:

I report it to him, but it doesn't work, change it. ... 'Cause we really need to use the oven. ... there is, at the back room there, I keep reporting, we just move up, there is a window, it's broken. It was broken before we move in

here. ... *It's about nine months.* (Coup, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Non-urgent repairs took a lot longer

- 255 Action on non-urgent repairs could take a lot longer than for urgent repairs, even in cases, such as leaking bathroom fixtures, where inaction could cause damage to the house. One tenant said: *[T]he water is leaking down the sink. ... They said they're still going the list for the person come to fix it, but there's a lot of customers ... must be two years or... he's already come and have a look but we're still waiting.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Coordination between staff and differences between tenancy managers

- 256 Some tenants thought that there had been a lack of communication or coordination between the different parties involved in their repair, leading to delays. One tenant said:

I've had a lot of mucking around and passing the buck. No one really there to take responsibility and make that decision I think, "What's so hard about making a decision about a cupboard door." ... then by the time I get on to them again, which I normally try to leave for at least a month or more, 'cause I understand they're busy, but by the time I get back to them normally I'm told, "Oh you've actually got a new housing officer now." So you end up ringing and having that same talk up with them. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 257 Some tenants attributed their experiences to the characteristics of the Housing New Zealand staff that they dealt with, and some reported different experiences with different tenancy managers. This is described in more detail in the chapter, Reflections on being a tenant.

Unavailability of budget for some types of maintenance

- 258 Some tenants had been told that there was insufficient money in the budget to carry out larger scale repairs that they had requested. This was particularly prevalent in relation to repairs on driveways and paths, even in situations where the uneven concrete had already caused, or was at risk of causing a fall. Tenants said:

[S]omething like that, okay they come and fix straight away but something they still waiting for long years but especially the driveway but they said, but there's a lot of money to bring it, the budget to fix it but if you ask them to come to fix some little bit things in the house they come straight away but there's a lot of things out there that they just a lot of budget. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

And [my partner] asked her to get it done, 'cause I fell over on my walker, and I marked my head. "Well, we haven't got the funds. The money's all frozen up." And [my partner] said, "Well what's going to happen," he said, "seeing as she's had a fall?" "Oh, we'll look into it, but," she said, "don't expect it to be done." ... And I thought that's dangerous there, because sometimes I have to go out you see, if I go out for a walk, the wheels can actually get caught, and I can go over you see. And I did have a bang up

there. "Oh we, don't expect it to be done," she said, "well I'll put it down, but don't expect maintenance to do anything about it." ... We asked about two or three months ago. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

The perseverance of the tenants in following up a report

- 259 Some tenants attributed the eventual action on their repair to their persistence in following up. Tenants reported that this was fatiguing, and one tenant said: *Only thing like they have to ring, ring, ring some time I just feel like to give up. But I'm thinking no, I don't have to, just keep, keep going, keep ringing. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)*

Contractor responsiveness

- 260 Although it was difficult to ascertain exactly what had happened, in some instances it appeared that contractors may have been unreliable, not keeping appointments, or not completing the repairs that they were supposed to do. One tenant said: *[S]he said to me, my tenancy manager, "Look I would have gone and... sent the report through, it's just a matter of trying to get the contractor to come out and see you." (CoupwC, Māori, 41 - 50 years, 5 years tenure length)*

- 261 With reference to work on non-urgent maintenance, tenants said they were expected to be home for unrealistically long periods of time, with no information on when the contractor would arrive. One tenant said:

[Y]ou get ten day work period, if you're not home I got told they can charge you for not being home when the repair man turns up to do the maintenance, but no one lets you know what day they're coming, you're meant to sit home for that whole ten days and wait for them. ... That is absolutely ridiculous, they can't give you a courtesy phone call and say, "Look we're doing maintenance, we'd like to come around this afternoon or tomorrow or whatever." (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 262 While many tenants were very happy with the work of contractors, a few reported some distrust of contractors, or instances of unprofessional behaviour. Tenants said:

[H]e's going around asking questions about, "Oh who all stays with you," you know those sort of things and he goes away and he says, "I'll do the job another day." He hasn't even done the job but he's got a lot of information out of me, because I'm thinking he's working and he hasn't even done it. (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Yeah, well I've had a phone go missing and you know they don't drape everything over properly, so there's paint marks everywhere. (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 263 A few tenants pointed to repairs or maintenance that had been done poorly, or incompletely. Common complaints were about poor quality painting that had started to peel a short time later, and incomplete paint jobs, where the edges up to light fittings or skirting boards had not been painted.

DIY by tenants

- 264 A few tenants reported doing maintenance, improvements and repairs on their properties themselves. These activities included:
- putting up a temporary washing line
 - installing paving slabs
 - clearing guttering
 - small maintenance jobs such as fixing loose screws
 - extreme cleaning efforts when they moved in (such as scrubbing ingrained dirt out of the kitchen linoleum, water-blasting graffiti off, and clearing out piles of rubbish left by previous tenants).
- 265 Some of these tenants had initially asked Housing New Zealand to do the work, but had decided to do it themselves, when Housing New Zealand refused to do it, or took too long. Others had simply decided to do the work themselves without asking. Some tenants felt that a joint responsibility for maintenance between them and Housing New Zealand was appropriate. A tenant said: *The house, they've maintained and me, so it's been a 50/50 share with me and Housing sort of thing and it's in I'd say above average condition really considering the age of it yeah so they have done their part maintaining.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Property improvements

- 266 Some tenants said that their houses had received upgrades or refurbishment during their tenancies. These improvements had included renovated kitchens or new kitchen appliances, added ventilation, renovated bathrooms including modifications for disabled tenants, new water heating units, and insulation. Tenants were usually very happy with these changes, and commented on them when rating how happy they were with their kitchens, bathrooms, and overall house condition. Tenants said:

Very happy. ... We got a new kitchen couple of years I think. (CoupwC, European, 51-64 years, 10+years tenure length)

They made a good job of it actually, I'm quite happy with the bathroom system eh. (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 267 At the time of the interviews, Healthy Housing was active in the area, and at least five of the interviewed tenants were participating in it. Healthy Housing was addressing overcrowding issues for two families. For one family, Healthy Housing was encouraging a transfer, and for the other, a four bedroom house with 12 people living in it was having three bedrooms added.
- 268 Two tenants described how Healthy Housing was providing the advocacy they needed to get some action on longstanding issues, such as replacing a non-working fireplace, and installing kitchen fittings and fixtures that were usable for an elderly tenant who said:

I was supposed to have new locks on my cupboards, and they were going to get done. And then they said the heater should have been actually put in the house when the house was renovated. So they're putting that in as well. And

I've also asked for a pantry to go in, because I never had a pantry, and I've got nowhere, now I've lost my safe, that used to be my store cupboard for my food. And then I asked ... Housing Corp, "Oh we've got no money, the money's been frozen, go without." ... So the Healthy ladies, Healthy Home lady looked and she said, "No they need somewhere to put your food." So they're getting all that done. 'Cause the wee latches on the, as you can see up the top there, the latches, they're too small, because I've got osteoporosis, and they're too small for my hands, that's why we had to have new handles put on the doors. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 269 A few tenants described upgrades or maintenance that had been done, that they considered to be a retrograde step. One tenant felt that their newer wallpaper was of lower quality than the old wallpaper: *this here of course is not very nice, it rips very easy. ... It's certainly not the quality of the wallpaper that was in here when we arrived. (Coup, European, 64 - 75 years, 10+years tenure length)* Another tenant reported that the repainting of their front steps had made them slippery, causing a safety hazard: *I had my OT over here one day ... she said they shouldn't have been painted. 'Cause if I go out there in the wet I'm liable to slip down. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

- 270 Two other tenants had not been consulted about their upgrades, and would have preferred something different. For one tenant, a high fence had been installed, and the house had been burgled immediately afterwards. The other received a bathroom renovation, but would have preferred a shower instead of a shower head over a bathtub:

They just put a new tub in, and they renovated the thing but I think if they had asked me what I wanted I would have told them I prefer the shower than the tub yeah. ... I would have preferred just a shower yeah. ... because my children, it's because for my children's safety, sometimes they play in the tub, and it's a bit slippery inside yeah and so forth. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Reflections on being a Housing New Zealand tenant

271 This chapter describes tenants' reflections on what it is like to be a Housing New Zealand tenant. Forty nine out of 61 tenants were either happy or very happy to be a Housing New Zealand tenant. Only four were unhappy or very unhappy. This chapter is divided into three sections:

- tenants' experiences of Housing New Zealand as a landlord
- the impact of being a Housing New Zealand tenant on households
- tenants' experiences of living in their neighbourhood.

272 The earlier chapter, Living with a Housing New Zealand property, focuses specifically on the tenants' thoughts about their accommodation including the suitability and match, house condition and maintenance.

Housing New Zealand as a landlord

Communication and customer service

273 Tenants had mixed views about the service they received from Housing New Zealand. Half (31 out of 62) were happy or very happy with the overall service, while 21 were neutral, usually because they had experienced both good and poor customer service. Ten tenants were unhappy or very unhappy.

274 Things that tenants described as good or very good about communication and customer service included fast, responsive and friendly service in addressing maintenance or other issues, and being left alone. One tenant said: *I think the service is excellent. ... Yeah. They're really good. If I ring up and complain about something, that's how I got that new toilet cistern. ... Their service has been really on the ball.* (Single, Māori, 65 - 74 years, 10+ years tenure length). Another tenant was pleased that: *they don't bug me like most landlords.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

275 Tenants described three main issues that made them less happy with Housing New Zealand's service:

- slow service on requests
- poor feedback about progress on dealing with requests
- mistakes and perceptions of poor internal communication within Housing New Zealand.

Slow service on requests

276 Some tenants described very slow service, or no action at all, on dealing with maintenance requests or requests for property improvements such as fencing. One tenant said: *Oh, I'm not that happy, because, you know, they're very, very slow in getting on to things, or, maybe they've got a hundred and thousand other clients to, to do, so.* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

277 A number of tenants had requested transfers, and some were frustrated at waiting for years with no progress, and receiving little or no feedback on progress. Two tenants described situations where their questions about

transferring were effectively dodged by their tenancy managers. One tenant said:

I find them passing the buck too much, "We'll get back to you, we'll contact so and so we'll get back to you." I've had I think about three or four different Housing New Zealand officers since I've been here and I will like ask them about a transfer into a smaller home, and, "Oh we'll get back to you on that." (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

Poor feedback

278 Some tenants were unhappy about the lack of feedback, both generally, in terms of not having their calls returned, and more specifically in relation to information about when contractors would carry out maintenance. One tenant said:

You don't get no feedback.... I mean, I know each person's got whole streets to look after, but it would be nice to have a, I don't know, if you make a phone call saying, "They'll be here tomorrow." Or, "We'll do what we can and we'll get back to you." But they just don't get back to you. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Mistakes and perceptions of poor internal communication

279 Some tenants felt that there was poor communication between different sections of Housing New Zealand, resulting in mistakes. Some tenants described experiences where contractors had arrived to carry out maintenance that had already been completed, where maintenance jobs had been lodged in the system and then somehow lost, and where mistakes had been made in the calculation of their income-related rent (IRR). One struggled to deal with the requirement to write to Housing New Zealand to dispute their IRR assessment: *And they says, if you have your problems with that, you've got to write in. Which I can't write, and [my partner] can't write too well with her hands. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

Calling Housing New Zealand

280 Some tenants commented on their experiences in contacting Housing New Zealand, both using the 0800 number to contact the National Call Centre, and calling their Tenancy Managers direct. Among the tenants who commented on it, the National Call Centre was thought to be fast in taking calls and responsive to emergency issues. Tenants also described situations where their requests could not be dealt with by the National Call Centre, and at this point things could get more difficult. Sometimes tenants were passed between the National Call Centre and their neighbourhood unit, without getting an answer. One said: *you ring up the 0800 number, they're helpful. But then they switch you over to the unit, and you get no help. They say, "Oh, we don't know anything about that. The 0800 number should know about that." (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

281 Among the tenants who commented about tenancy managers, a common complaint was that some tenancy managers did not answer their phones or call tenants back, either when contacted directly by the tenant, or when contacted via the National Call Centre. One tenant said: *I have made numerous phone calls and complaints to Housing New Zealand and on the*

0800 number and get told, "We will email your property manager, she will be in touch with you within forty-eight hours" and I never hear from them. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length) Another tenant said:

I've rung [our Tenancy Manager], and they say she's not there. So I go up there. She was there one day. And somebody rung up on the phone, wanted to speak to her, she was right behind reception, she said, like this to the reception, she wasn't there. ... And I don't appreciate that. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 282 This experience was not universal. Other tenants were very happy with the responsiveness of their tenancy managers. One tenant said: *My tenancy manager is good, she returns my calls straight away and deals with the problems that I have ... Yeah so been happy about that.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Variability between Tenancy Managers

- 283 Some tenants were very happy with the service they received from their current tenancy managers, while others were very unhappy. Several of the tenants who had been in their properties for long enough to have had multiple tenancy managers talked about the differences in service that they had experienced. One tenant said: *I think I got a new tenancy manager and she was quite prompt whereas my last one just kind of palmed me off.* (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Privacy and inspections

- 284 One tenant described an unscheduled inspection of their property, which had been annoying:

I went, "What for?" He said, "Oh it's an inspection," ... and then I rang my case manager and I said, "You're not supposed to do surprise visits it's in the tenancy agreement you're supposed to get three weeks notice before you decide to drop by." And he said, "Oh I was in the area," I was like oh great you were in the area, thank you. (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 285 A more frequent comment was that this aspect of living in a Housing New Zealand property was better than in the private rental market. One tenant said: *[W]e don't have landlords coming around and saying, "Oh you're not doing this," or, "You're not doing that," every week you know sort of keeping an eye and make sure you don't break one of their light bulbs or something.* (Coup, European, 64 - 75 years, 10+years tenure length)

Going the extra mile

- 286 One tenant was impressed by a neighbourhood unit initiative that provided garden tools for tenants to use. She said:

And they've got a tool garden down there now where you can go and get a mower and register and... That's an excellent idea, it's excellent like for mums like myself that are in Housing New Zealand homes like this, to get them motivated and get a garden started, and spend quality time with your

children, out in the garden making us a garden, mowing the lawns. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Reciprocity and fairness

Reciprocity

287 A theme that emerged from many of the interviews was reciprocity. Tenants expressed the view that obtaining a Housing New Zealand home was a privilege that conferred upon them a duty to look after their home as well as they could. One tenant described her mother's view that: *[S]he treats it like her own house but she knows it's not her house, but she's got the respect to look after the house in the manner it should be looked after. So she's quite thankful that Housing is there to support. (CoupwC, European, 51-64 years, 10+years tenure length)*

288 Some tenants talked about reciprocity as a mutually understood agreement between themselves and Housing New Zealand, and attributed the good service they had received to their good behaviour as tenants. Some were quite proud of this good relationship. One tenant said: *I find them quite, very, very handy to me any ways. I think the word that I would use, you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. (laughter) I've done that with you Housing New Zealand. (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)*

289 Some tenants complained about actions by Housing New Zealand that they felt breached the principle of reciprocity. While Housing New Zealand had been very slow to provide maintenance services to some tenants, they were very demanding when they wanted something from tenants, especially when following up on late rent payments. One tenant said: *I didn't pay that what's you call it ... the rent, and they are fast to come and ask me "You pay your rent." (laughter) But if I ask them to come to that things damaged... they never send someone earlier. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)* Another tenant said:

[H]eaps of things we had to clean it up, and when we rang them they said they'll clean it up before we moved in but they didn't. It was shocking, and they never called about it ever, never ever until they said I owed them money then they rung me up that's the only time I heard from them. (SolewE, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

290 Consistent with the principle of reciprocity, one tenant pointed out that it seemed unfair that Housing New Zealand's response to a maintenance request had been slow, while the response when other tenants treated their houses irresponsibly was very fast. This tenant said:

I rung up about three or four, or maybe even five months ago eh, to have a couple of things done, and I'm still waiting and one of them my son ended up doing himself. ... But when you see a house with a party and you hear windows smashing and fences being, palings being used as weapons, within days, they're all fixed. (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Other issues of fairness

- 291 Several tenants described other aspects of Housing New Zealand's approach to maintenance and property improvements that they thought were unfair. Some tenants had been blamed for damages that had been done by previous tenants, and had needed to argue their cases not to have to pay for the damages
- 292 Some tenants did not agree with policies that required them to pay for damages and maintenance for which they felt they were not responsible. This included requirements to pay for pest control treatments, blocked laundry drains, and in one case, for a new stove.
- 293 One tenant said that it did not seem fair that Housing New Zealand would not fence part of their section, although they would have been prepared to repair fencing if it were already there, but damaged: *Yeah, I talked to them before and he said because it's not fenced, he can't put any fence. But if he fenced there and it had been broken, he can fix it.* (CoupwC, European, 51-64 years, 10+years tenure length)

The impact of being a Housing New Zealand tenant on households

Direct effects on tenants

- 294 Tenants spoke about the impacts that being a Housing New Zealand tenant had on them. Some impacts resulted primarily from aspects of house design and condition, and are covered in the chapter, Living with a Housing New Zealand property. Other impacts are described in this chapter, including effects on tenants' finances, stability of tenure, and feelings of stigma, and the ensuing effects of those factors on outcomes for families and their health.

Financial effects

- 295 When asked what one good thing was about being a tenant was, many tenants responded that the cheap rent was very good. Even in cases where tenants were unhappy with their houses or with the service from Housing New Zealand, they commented that they were still grateful to have housing that they could afford. One tenant said: *[I]t's been cold, but I don't complain, eh, because it's a roof over my kids' head and it's cheap it works within my budget so, instead of moaning I just put up with it.* (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

Rent and income

- 296 Many tenants commented that the rent they paid was much less than they would expect to pay in the private rental market, and that this made a big difference. Some tenants said that they were not sure how they would be able to afford other essential items, such as food and utilities, if they were paying private rental rates. One tenant said: *How the hell do they expect you to rent privately and still have food on the table. ... Are they stupid or something? They give three hundred dollar for a three bedroom house and then still have food and pay the power.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 297 A few tenants thought that, because they were eligible for the Accommodation Supplement, their housing costs in the private sector would be similar, but that private sector rental would not provide the benefits of stability of tenure and service on maintenance that Housing New Zealand provides. One tenant said: *If I was living in a private house, they would pay the difference... I think probably the same thing yeah. 'Cause I don't get accommodation supplement and so forth.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 298 Some tenants were disappointed that when their income increased, their Housing New Zealand rent increased as well, negating the benefit that they had expected to get from working or from benefit increases. One market renter felt that they were now being charged above market rates, and was planning to move out. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length) Another market renter said that they were still paying what they considered to be cheap rent. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Property running costs

- 299 A number of tenants said that they were happy that they did not have to pay water rates. For many tenants, however, winter heating costs were still an unaffordable burden and they went without heating and suffered health consequences as a result. This is described in detail, in the chapter, Living with a Housing New Zealand property.
- 300 When describing what they liked about being a Housing New Zealand tenant, several tenants said that having maintenance done, at no charge to them, was a key factor. One tenant said that it was helpful to not have to pay for damages immediately: *if there's something, damages I ring them and they never charge me straightaway that sort of thing.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

Stability of tenure and the cost of rent

- 301 For many tenants, the security of tenure was at least as important as cheap rent. Some tenants described recurrent experiences of losing their housing, while renting in the private sector. One tenant said:
- I had to leave my last place, I got evicted, the landlord wanted the house back. So I got given an eviction notice, he was moving in. And it's really hard, and that's what happens to me in most places, I get asked to leave because someone's moving in or he wants it for family ... Now I know and I can sit here 'till the day I die as long as I pay my rent and don't, they're not gonna tell me to get out because they wanna move in. So that's about the only thing, difference that it's made, it's made me feel a bit more secure about my home.* (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 302 There was also mention of the benefit of stable rent costs, relative to income. One tenant said: *Yeah, and I don't have to worry about being kicked out of places, yeah. And WINZ pays my rent.* (SolewC, Māori, 51 -64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Stigma

- 303 Only four tenants alluded to issues with stigmatisation of Housing New Zealand tenants. Two tenants said that this was not an issue, one tenant talked about the need for social housing:

We're lucky that we have Housing New Zealand in New Zealand you know ... because there's a lot of people who cannot afford to have their own homes or have or pay high rent. ... We're not ashamed to be in Housing New Zealand really. (Coup, European, 64 - 75 years, 10+years tenure length)

- 304 The other two tenants mentioned that they did feel there was some stigma associated with being a Housing New Zealand tenant. One tenant thought that this was influenced by the concentrations of Housing New Zealand houses: *The way the houses are arranged, you're inclined to get a certain type of socio-economic you know, stigma I suppose and then... those sort of people get all thrown into a certain area. (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)* The other tenant talked about her concern that her son could grow up with expectations of welfare dependency: *I could be like showing my six year old son... I don't want him to feel like, when he grows up, he's got to live in a Housing New Zealand home. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)*

Outcomes

- 305 Housing New Zealand exerted direct effects on tenants' financial situations, and stability of tenure. In turn, those direct effects influenced other facets of the tenants' and their families' lives.

Independence, freedom, and escaping bad situations

- 306 Fourteen tenants, talked about the way that living in Housing New Zealand housing had given them and their families *independence* and *freedom*. They talked about how they had lived with extended family, usually in overcrowded conditions, before moving in, and how this had been stressful for them and their children.
- 307 Tenants said that in their Housing New Zealand homes they and their families were now able to do their own thing, to have more control over their living environments, and to be free from abuse and other negative influences. One tenant said:

Because it's ours, you know it's mine and my kids it's nobody else's, we don't have to answer to anybody, or invite anybody in, you know we have the right to say no. ... I love where I am right now with my children, and home is how you make it, and my kids have seen me go through a lot. ... this is going to be one of the first homes ever, where we don't have the drunkards on our door, where we don't have people demanding on our door, bashing up our home and abusing us any more, because I had to put a stop to that. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Outcomes for families and children

- 308 Many tenants talked about how getting a Housing New Zealand tenancy has made them feel happier and more secure. Tenants felt that this security and stability was important for their children, as well as for themselves. One tenant

said that stability for the children was a primary outcome: *Cause it would have been quite easy you know just lug the kids from primary to school primary school but I didn't want that for them I wanted them to be established and for their study to be done and yeah.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 309 For some tenants, simply having a place to live and a place to call *home* was an important change for them and their children, and contributed significantly to feelings of wellbeing. One tenant said:

It feels homely, feels loving, feels I can just scream and nobody's going to say shut up you know but I don't do that you know.... Safe, I feel so good ... Even if I'm sick I can sort of feel that I can pick..., I've got to go to the doctors or the hospital but there is a lot of feelings in my home. (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 310 For a tenant who described how being in a Housing New Zealand home had helped her to escape abusive family members, there had been a marked change in her relationship with her children and her children's success at school:

My children have got more quality time, we spend more quality time together, we go out together, we eat together, we have our little meetings. You know, so that my kids don't fly off the handle at each other, and disagree, and start fighting. We've come a lot closer together me and my children more so now than ever. ... their school grades have picked up tremendously since we've been up here ... it's taken me this long to accept Auckland, a year and a half to accept it, but it's only because my kids are doing so well, they can communicate with me a lot better. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Nodal houses and providing support

- 311 Some tenants described how their homes acted as nodal houses, caring for sick and disadvantaged family members and friends, and providing a hub for their extended family. The stability of tenants' tenure, and in some cases, the spare rooms that they had, had enabled them to take on this role.

- 312 Tenants described taking in sick family members while they were in need of housing and care. One tenant had taken in her ex-husband when he had gotten ill: *[W]ell then he had no one you see because... we lost our son at twenty nine, so then I thought, "Well he's got no one to look after him," so I took him in, so I looked after him and he's still here.* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 313 Several tenants had been able to take in and care for elderly parents with health problems. One tenant was about to house a daughter who was suffering from mental illness: *She's only come out of hospital, and she's staying with us. 'Cause she's got schizophrenia.* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length) Other tenants provided respite care for sick family members. One tenant said: *I've got a grandson who I quite often look after overnight and I've got the spare room for him. ... 'Cause he's got cerebral palsy.* (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 314 Some tenants regularly looked after other family members' children. One tenant said: *'[C]ause we get all the grandchildren on the weekend half of them just stay with us so we see them. ... and I mind one through the week* (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 315 Large family gatherings were hosted at some tenants' houses, because they felt that this was important for the cohesion of the extended family. In the words of one tenant:
- It just nice to have the whānau around and then there we share a lot of meals and they're there. Our kids are always amalgamating together which means as they get older they know who their family are, the whānau is definitely good there for support and likewise.* (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 316 One tenant explicitly described her role in the family as the network hub, saying: *[B]oth my parents have gone now, I've got five older brothers and I'm the baby and my mum passed on seven years ago and since then I've become mama, nana, counsellor, bank account, you know ... I'm a network for my family.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Health and disability outcomes

- 317 A number of the tenants had health problems or disabilities, or looked after family members or friends with health problems or disabilities. Issues with the house design, condition and modifications that affected how they lived in the house are covered in the chapter, Living with a Housing New Zealand property. As described above, the stability of tenure, and the presence of spare rooms in the house, was influential in allowing tenants to look after sick or disabled family members or friends.
- 318 Two tenants who were dealing with, or looking after family members with mental health issues said that having a place to call home was an important influence on their mental wellbeing. One tenant, whose son was suffering from mental illness said: *Since I've had him up here he's in my care, and... the first thing he was looking for was a home, was his family, was his mum.* (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 319 Another tenant with mental health problems said that she was very grateful for the support that Housing New Zealand had provided:
- I've got my own mental demons if I didn't have them I may have been able to strive for a lot more than where I am now and, but Housing Corp has accommodated me and my children over the time so it's been good. You know they're sort of like a support system for me in a lot of respects so yeah.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)
- 320 Some tenants described either experiencing, or (more rarely) finding relief from cold-related illnesses, in their Housing New Zealand homes. This depended on the condition and design of the home, and is described in the chapter, Living with a Housing New Zealand property.

Living in the neighbourhood and community

- 321 Most tenants (43 out of 62 people) said that they either liked or loved the neighbourhoods that they were living in. Eight out of 62 were indifferent, and 11 either didn't like it or hated it.
- 322 While some tenants loved their neighbourhoods and felt very much at home there, others said that the neighbourhood they were in was not what they would have chosen, but that they were given little choice when they applied for a home, and took the house because they were "desperate", or had no other options and this is described in the section on making the move into a Housing New Zealand property, in the chapter, Housing pathways from current property into state houses.
- 323 Factors that influenced tenants' happiness with the neighbourhood included:
- good and bad relationships with neighbours
 - proximity to family as a positive and negative experience
 - witnessing or being victims of crime, intimidation, or antisocial behaviour
 - access to places such as shops, doctors, and schools.

Relationships with neighbours

- 324 Around two thirds of tenants (42 out of 62 people) said that they had supportive neighbours. A similar proportion said that it was important or very important to have supportive neighbours. Around a quarter said that it was unimportant or that they were neutral about having supportive neighbours, or that they preferred to keep to themselves.

Support versus privacy

- 325 A number of tenants said that 'supportive' was not the word that they would use to describe what they wanted out of their relationships with their neighbours. For these tenants, it was more important that there was no antagonism in their relationships with their neighbours. One tenant described the ideal relationship as "reasonable" rather than supportive:

[S]upportive and reasonable are two different things because supportive means having a connection with them and when you get support from someone, you're experiencing something from them. You know, they're contributing to your life in some way ... it's just in this day and age it doesn't, you don't feel the opportunity arises that everyone just wants to stick to themselves, that's what people do, that's how they live their lives you know. So it's just, yeah so I don't know about that support part. (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 326 In accordance with this view of an ideal relationship, a number of tenants described their relationships with neighbours as peaceable, non-antagonistic, and somewhat distant, allowing them to maintain their privacy. One tenant said:

I know the lady that lives next door... But apart from that I just do my own thing, I come and go, and as long as the neighbours leave me alone I leave them alone. I don't, not out to cause any trouble with neighbours, I just

wanna live peacefully ... It makes life a bit easier if you get on with your neighbours. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 327 Some tenants said that they deliberately kept their distance as they felt that being too open with neighbours could lead to a loss of privacy, being taken advantage of by neighbours, or to having to take on other peoples' problems. One tenant said: I'm quite a snob and I don't say anything to anybody. ...I don't reach out to my neighbours 'cause then it's a cup of salt and then it's I tell you my worries, no thanks I've got my own. (SolewC, Pacific, 31-40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 328 Others thought that support was an important factor in their relationships with neighbours, and described ways in which they and their neighbours had actively helped each other out. For example, tenants shared garden equipment, allowed neighbours to use their phone, and looked after each other's children. Supportive relationships appeared to be more important for older tenants, who were, or felt that they could be in need of help. One tenant said: *[I]f anything happens to [my partner] I can get to my neighbours ... they'll support you see. And I can just call out to them and say, "Hey," and they always come up, everyday, and see us, and talk, "How are you?"* (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Characteristics of positive relationships with neighbours

- 329 The most frequently-mentioned type of neighbourhood support or assistance, was keeping an eye on neighbours' properties when they were out. Tenants appreciated this as a way of preventing crime. Not all tenants thought that this constituted 'support', as it was thought to impose little burden. Another commonly mentioned way that neighbours supported each other was by looking after, or keeping an eye on each others' children. In some instances, tenants' and their neighbours' children played together, and tenants felt happy that their neighbours would keep watch. One tenant said:

I'm not very close with my neighbours apart from us all saying, "Hi, bye," to one other you know and just looking out and watching one another's children. ... the kaumatua next door he's bringing up some of his children, so his grandchildren mix with mine and they just play out the front there for a little while. (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 330 There were instances of more formal childcare support in times of need. For example, one tenant had an ongoing arrangement for when they were late home from work: *So the taxi brings him around quarter to four or half past three. So sometimes if we are late we got an arrangement with them that they can pick him up and when we come we'll pick him from there.* (CoupwC, European, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

How tenants get to know their neighbours

- 331 A few tenants talked about how they got to know their neighbours. For one tenant, stability in the neighbourhood had naturally led to getting to know the neighbours: *[W]hen you've been with Housing New Zealand for quite some time... in the units you do get a couple of friends you know like neighbourhood support and all that.* (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length)

332 For several tenants, children were the initiators of neighbourhood relationships. One tenant said: *So it's mostly, our children they are the ones that start getting to know the neighbours before the parents even do.* (CoupwC, Māori, 41 - 50 years, 5 years tenure length)

Antisocial behaviour and feelings of safety

333 Three quarters of tenants (40 out of 62 people) said that they felt very or fairly safe in their neighbourhoods. While the remaining 22 tenants felt scared, or sometimes felt scared in their neighbourhoods, a greater number than that (32) described experiences where they had witnessed or been victims of antisocial behaviour. This apparent anomaly can be explained by several factors:

- Some antisocial behaviours, such as noise, were annoying, but did not, in and of themselves, make tenants feel unsafe.
- Some tenants felt safe because of mitigating factors, such as having supportive neighbours, high fencing, or owning a dog.
- Some tenants appeared to be resilient in the face of crime and antisocial behaviour. For example, one older tenant said that he felt *'very safe'*, but also said that there were gangs, gunfights and armed offender call-outs on the street, that he regularly experienced trespassing, theft and vandalism, and that the neighbour had killed the cat. (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

334 Things that made some tenants feel unsafe or scared for their own, or their family members' safety included:

- witnessing or knowing of violent crime in the neighbourhood
- being the victims of break-ins, theft and vandalism
- being intimidated, or having children bullied
- nearby parties that sometimes got *'out of hand'*
- feelings of isolation, for example from being alone in the house at night, or from not having a good relationship with the neighbours.

Noise, antisocial behaviour, and trespassing

335 Around half of the tenants described some type of antisocial behaviour that had happened, or was continuing to happen in their neighbourhoods. The most common complaints were about noise from parties, and trespassing through their properties.

336 Some tenants said that they had neighbours who partied noisily every night, or several nights a week, and that while they didn't mind occasionally, it happened too often. A few tenants regularly called noise control to deal with the problem, but others were afraid that if they did, their neighbours would know, and they would become a target: *If you turn around and ring up noise control and they go and visit their house, they turn around and retaliate back on you. ... I can't ring noise control and use my name because I'm scared.* (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 337 A number of tenants had experienced people trespassing onto their properties. In most instances, neighbourhood children or teenagers were responsible, and this was sometimes associated with vandalism. In other instances, tenants' properties were used as thoroughfares by people taking shortcuts or trying to escape the police. One tenant said: *[I]f they want to cross over like running away from the police, they use my backyard and they jump over the garage. Yeah they climb over it ... but they don't do it during day time, they do it while we're sleeping.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 338 Some tenants said that their problems with trespassing had been alleviated since high fences had been built around their properties, or since they had got a dog. Other tenants wanted to have more, or better fencing built, as a deterrent to trespassing.
- 339 Other antisocial behaviours that were reported less frequently, included car racing in the street, burning of rubbish, dogs barking, neighbouring children teasing the dog, and neighbours or their visitors parking their cars on the tenant's lawn without permission.
- 340 One tenant described how, when her family first moved into their Housing New Zealand home, they had been taken advantage of by family members, and their house had become a source of antisocial behaviour. She said:
- [T]hey wrecked my place. I had holes in walls, I had marks on the ceilings, I had my car wrecked, they were having fights, domestic stuff they were P'd off their face... coming down... all hours of the morning, giving my neighbours a hard time, giving us a hard time ...so I had the police here just about every week ... sort of like the home that I wanted to make home, that was warm and cosy, comfy and clean for just me and my three children, turned out to be everybody else's halfway home ... because I let them ride over me, dominate me.* (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 341 Eventually, the Police, Child Youth and Family, Family Start, and the church got involved. Their intervention had worked, the tenant was now living peacefully in the neighbourhood, the family was getting along much better, and her children were doing much better at school.

Tenants who witnessed or knew of nearby crime and violence

- 342 Ten tenants talked about how they had witnessed, or knew of property crime and violent crime that had happened in their neighbourhoods. Six tenants talked about street fighting or domestic violence that happened nearby, and most said that while they kept out of it, it made them feel less safe. One tenant said: *A mixed feeling, yeah, 'cause when they're partying like that I do get a bit wary and next door as I say, I called the cops to her once through their fighting and that, but I just try to stay out of it.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length)
- 343 Some tenants talked about violent crime that had happened nearby, that they had heard about through the newspapers or other sources, and that made them feel that their neighbourhood was dangerous. For example, one tenant said:

[I]f you read the paper last week there's an article in the paper talking about the alleyway here you know where some problem happen. Some naughty boys or men have been harassing some girls and women it's not safe now, it's not safe. The alleyway she goes through the alleyway to catch a bus and come back through the same way, I mean it's dangerous now. (CoupwC, Pacific, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 344 Four tenants described property crime that had happened nearby, and that had contributed to their feelings about the safety of the neighbourhood. In three instances, tenants described their neighbours being burgled, and in one instance the tenant said their local shop had been robbed four times. One tenant described defending their neighbour's property from theft:

[N]ext door did one time nearly had its hot water cylinder nicked out of it until me and her ran over and we saved it. 'Cause I was in the bedroom and I heard banging going on and I thought, there shouldn't be nobody over there and of course they broke in through the kitchen window. I took [my dog] over, not on a lead, just stood her at the gate. (CoupwC, Pacific, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Tenants who have been victims of crime

- 345 Just over a quarter of tenants had been victims of local crime while living in their Housing New Zealand houses. The most common problem (reported by eight tenants) was theft from, or vandalism of cars, sheds, garages, or other outdoor structures. Tenants reported that their cars had been broken into, stolen, tagged, had their windows smashed, that their shed or garage had been burgled from, or that small items had been taken from their gardens.

- 346 Six tenants said that their houses had been broken into and burgled, in some instances, multiple times. Some tenants felt scared as a result. One tenant said:

Fairly scared for my kids' sake and safety. With three of them I wouldn't, I'd wonder how am I going to keep them safe if someone ever broke in or anything. They've broken in before, we were home at the time when they broke into my garage so, and stole from in there. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 347 Three tenants said that their children had been victims of violent crime or sexual assault in their houses or in the neighbourhood. One tenant's daughters had moved elsewhere, to escape the crime, but their son was now being targeted. Another tenant described how her son was now too scared to go to school:

[T]his young ten year old came up to him with a knife and poked him on the side of his neck and says, "Do you want to die?" And the young girl that came across the road and said to me that my son was in a fight and his father was here at the time, he ran across and he broke up the fight. And my son wounded up with a massive black eye, the side of his face all swollen, and that's what threw his confidence off from going back to school. ... He won't go out of this house because he just doesn't feel safe unless I'm with him. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Tenants who had to deal with intimidation and bullying

- 348 Māori, European or Pacific ethnicities predominate in some neighbourhoods. Tenants in those neighbourhoods who described how they were not of the predominant ethnic group were more likely to report being the victims of intimidation and bullying. One tenant said:

So it's more or less a Māori Islander race thing ... I've already had meetings at the school to try and sort it out, but I don't know what's happening there. ... my boy goes to school, but oh just sometimes they get told that they're gonna get jumped so I just get them home. (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 349 Having gang activity in the area tended to be a problem for tenants with teenagers and older children, but it was not mentioned as a problem by tenants with no children or with only young children in their households. Tenants with teenagers or older children were worried either about the children being targeted by gang violence, or about the risk that their children would join one of the gangs. One tenant said:

[T]hey have stuck me smack in the middle of a gang related area and everyone around me is dark. And I am getting given a hard time. And I'm worried about my girl because she's a bit mouthy (laughter) and I'm really scared that she's gonna cause a bit of trouble with her mouth. (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 350 In relation to the safety of children, five tenants spoke of their neighbourhoods as being very safe for their children. There were no clear differences in tenant experience between suburbs; different tenants in the same suburb reported different experiences with gangs and children's safety, suggesting that the differences between neighbourhoods are either on a smaller scale than suburb, or that other factors (possibly tenant's ethnicity, and children's ages) affect outcomes. One tenant described their immediate neighbourhood as very safe for their children:

Yeah 'cause it's safe as for my children. I don't have to worry. If we were living on a main road, this kind of little village situation we have going on here, it's safe as I don't have to worry about my kids getting taken or somebody coming to run away with them, or anything like that. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 351 One Pākehā tenant described the difference between living in their current property, where the neighbourhood was ethnically mixed, and living in their previous property, in a neighbourhood where they were the only non-Pacific Islanders:

[I]n the other house there was my husband he was the only Māori ... all the rest were Islanders and there was just me and I used to feel it, you know what I mean? But you don't feel that here. ... because it's Indians, Tongans, there's Māori here, there's Asian over there you know they're sort of mixed, and me you know what I mean so yeah I feel better here that way ... You don't feel as though you stand out you know. (Coup, Māori, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Factors that help with security and feelings of safety

- 352 In response to being asked about how safe they felt, a number of tenants described actions that they had taken, or aspects of their neighbourhoods, that helped them to feel safe.
- 353 Having positive relationships with neighbours helped some tenants to feel safe, and to feel more secure that their properties would not be broken into. Relationships relating to security were usually informal, as described in the section above on characteristics of positive relationships with neighbours, but in a few cases, tenants talked about the possibility of developing a formal Neighbourhood Watch. One tenant said that the relative orientation of neighbouring houses made it easier for neighbours to keep an eye on one another's properties: *'[C]ause their porch faces this way, so they can see who comes around. (laughter) [our neighbour] actually writes notes of cars that pull up to our house and lets us know.* (CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 354 Two tenants described other ways they related to neighbours to maintain safety. Both tenants described avoiding interacting with their antisocial neighbours: *[T]hey drink, they party, no respect for nobody but themselves so yeah I just don't deal with them.* (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length) One tenant said that they had been able to establish their right to be respected by the neighbours: *'[C]ause I've established myself here in the sense that I've had a few run-ins with ... people testing your limits. I've had a few pushes and now I've earned my ability to stay here, you know* (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 355 Two tenants talked about how they felt more secure being located on a main road, as there was better lighting, or the police passed by regularly. Four tenants talked about how their dogs helped with security. One tenant said of their dog: *'Cause I've been out there and he's been out there, and somebody walks up to the gate, and they see him, and they back off.* (Coup, European, 51 - 64 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 356 In some instance tenants had security alarms and extra locks installed after burglaries. One tenant said their house had been robbed *six times in one year. And that's why you guys can see all those locks on, and my, the chap's put in the thing for nothing, the alarm.* (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

Proximity to family and friends

- 357 Most tenants (36 out of 62 people) felt that it was very important to live close to family, and a further nine thought that it was important. Not all tenants shared this view, however: eight tenants said that living close to family was unimportant, or that they actively preferred to live away from family. Tenants who did not want to live too close to family or friends talked about friction between family members, or compulsion to contribute to family events. One tenant said: *Too much fa'alavelave (laughter).* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 358 Fewer tenants considered it to be important to live near to friends, with several saying that friendships were unimportant, that they were too busy to have friends, that phone conversations were good enough. One tenant said: *'Cause*

friends they come and go, family they're tight forever. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 359 Tenants who felt that living close to family was important gave several reasons. A commonly mentioned advantage of having family close by was that family could be relied upon to help with looking after children or elderly family members in times of need. One tenant said: *very important to live close. ... Because like me, I have kids ...and they will support me like anything happen, yeah.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length) Another tenant said: *It's important for me to be near Mum ... she's seventy six, and lives on her own. ... Every morning before I go to work, I'll have a coffee, and then most afternoons I'll call in on the way out.* (Single, European, 51 - 64 years, 10+ years tenure length)
- 360 A smaller number of tenants talked about nearby friends in a similar way. For example, one tenant said: *[I]f I need help with anything, they're not too far away, or if I have problems with my car or if the kids are sick, they're not too far for me to.* (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)
- 361 Some tenants said that it was good to have family members close enough so that the extended family could get together regularly. One talked about how this was good for family bonding, and especially for the children:
- It just nice to have the whānau around and then we share a lot of meals and they're there. Our kids are always amalgamating together which means as they get older they know who their family are, the whānau is definitely good there for support and likewise.* (SolewC, Māori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 362 One tenant talked about proximity of family as part of their culture and tradition: *[I]t's the Island way. You know, have your family around you, that's how I was brought up.* (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)
- 363 Several tenants talked about the companionship provided by having family or friends nearby. One tenant said of friends: *I do really get down in the dumps, depressed and when their father's hardly around and that, you can't really talk to your kids about it. It's just having somebody there to talk to. ... 'cause I haven't got my mum any more.* (SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length)

Access to places

- 364 The great majority of tenants (52 out of 62 people) said that it was easy or very easy to get to important places such as work, schools, public transport, church, shops or the doctor. Only two tenants said that it was hard or very hard to get where they needed to go.
- 365 Shops were the most frequently mentioned place that tenants needed to access, followed by schools or preschools, and then medical care and public transport. Some tenants also talked about how it was important for them to get to work, tertiary education, church, and places for their children's recreation, such as parks.
- 366 A number of tenants didn't drive, and for them, it was important to be able to walk to places, to have easy public transport to those places, or to live close to

family members who could drive them to where they needed to go. Neither of the two tenants who found it very hard to access places were able to drive, and both expressed safety concerns about walking around their neighbourhoods. One tenant said: *Not good. ... Because of my heart, and because of my respiratory, and because I'm a bit thing, wary of about who's around you know?* (Single, Māori, 51-64 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 367 Some tenants lived close to a large shopping centre, and talked about the convenience of this. In the words of one tenant:

So we got the Manukau shopping centre, Westfield, Pak 'n' Save and all that, Foodtown, yeah. ...I've got no car, so it's easy access we just go through the reserve over here. The footpath that heads up over to the mall ... It's all Manukau centre there, for good so close to all amenities. (SolewC, Māori and European, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length)

Improvements in neighbourhoods

- 368 A small number of tenants who had been in their houses long enough to see overall change in the neighbourhood commented that things were improving. One longstanding tenant talked about the change in Mangere:

[W]hen we, we moved here in December '69, and, oh, we had a lot of ups and downs then. Like in the early '70s. You know, the young ones were getting into gangs. But, yeah, over the last ten, fifteen years Mangere has really quietened down. ... Yeah. Really safe. (Single, Māori, 65 - 74 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 369 Another tenant, in Manurewa, talked about some initiatives that were helping to develop a sense of community in the neighbourhood:

[A]bout six years ago if you asked me that, I'd hate this neighbourhood. This neighbourhood's like changed big time now. ... just the community coming together now. Having projects together up in the park, and the community house on the corner ... It's like really brought the neighbourhood together. Whereas six years ago, oh, it was just gangs, and just, oh, we still have them around, but not as bad now. (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Housing pathways from Housing New Zealand properties to housing independence

370 The second part of the housing pathway provides the framework for organising tenant information in this section (see Figure 4). The steps on the pathway presented in this section are from state house to housing independence. The experience of settling in to the tenancy is covered in the chapter, 'Living with a Housing New Zealand property' and is not revisited here.

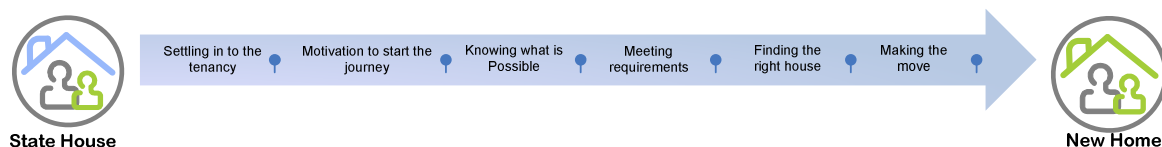


Figure 4 Housing pathways from state house to housing independence

Housing expectations and aspirations

371 Tenants were asked how long they expected to be living in their current Housing New Zealand properties and how this was similar to or different from their housing aspirations. Housing aspirations refer to where people would live if they could. Like the applicants, some tenants prefaced their replies to questions about their housing aspirations with "If I won lotto..."

Current duration of tenure in a Housing New Zealand property

372 Tenants were selected to be interviewed from three tenure duration segments: less than 1.5 years tenure length (28 tenants), five years tenure length (22 tenants), and 10+ years tenure length (12 tenants). Figure 5 compares tenants' current length of tenure with their housing expectation in ten years and their housing aspirations. In Figure 5 people who aspire to remain in their current or a different Housing New Zealand property are grouped together. Tenants who wished to purchase the Housing New Zealand property they are currently living in, and who wished to purchase a home that was not a Housing New Zealand property, have also been grouped together. 'Other' includes people who expected to be living overseas or with family, and people who felt unable to identify their expectations and aspirations.

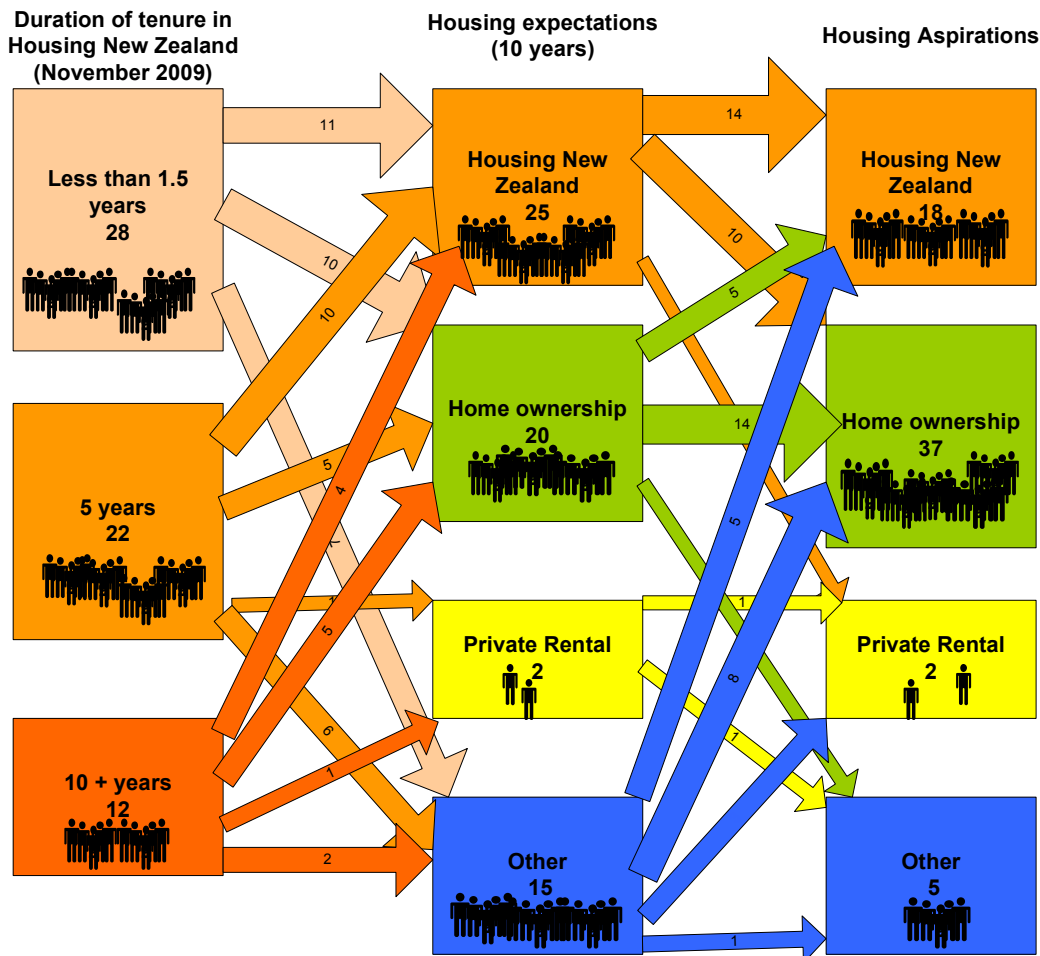


Figure 5 Tenants' housing expectations and aspirations by duration of tenure in Housing New Zealand properties

Housing expectations in 10 years and housing aspirations compared

373 Tenants were asked where they expected to be living, and where they aspired to live. Figure 5 summarises their answers. Most of the 62 expected to be in either a Housing New Zealand property (25 tenants) or home ownership (20 tenants). More tenants (37 people) aspired to home ownership than any other tenure. Only two tenants expected or aspired to be in private rental accommodation.

374 Many tenants had expected and aspired to live in tenures other than Housing New Zealand. If tenants' realised their expectations and aspirations 60 percent would vacate their properties within the next 10 years and possibly 71 percent in a longer time frame. The tenure of choice for 60 percent of tenants was home ownership but only about half of them expected to achieve this.

Tenure duration and age

375 Tenure duration and age were related, with longer durations associated with higher tenant ages. Age and tenure duration may influence tenants' expectations and aspirations:

- Nineteen tenants out of the 27 who had a tenure duration less than 1.5 years were aged 18-40 years compared to eight tenants over that age
- Nine tenants out of the 22 who had a tenure duration of five years were aged 18-40 years compared to 13 tenants over that age
- Four tenants out of the 12 who had a tenure duration of 10+ years were aged 18-40 years compared to eight tenants over that age.

Knowing what is possible

376 The tenants who participated in this research were not provided with any information about their housing options or what was required to achieve their housing aspirations.

Housing New Zealand properties consistent with tenants' housing needs

377 In terms of the number of bedrooms, 45 out of the 62 tenants were in properties consistent with their housing needs. Some families with smaller children would grow out of their houses once children needed rooms of their own.

378 A few tenants who had properties that were consistent with their need were thinking about moving, and a few others had plans to use their Housing New Zealand tenancies as a stepping stone to home ownership.

Housing New Zealand properties from which tenants were thinking about moving

379 Twelve tenants were living in overcrowded circumstances. A further two tenants had moved into private rental because they needed more space and had been unsuccessful in getting a transfer to a larger Housing New Zealand property. Only three were underutilising their houses and not all of them were thinking about downsizing. Some tenants were thinking about requesting transfers to be closer to family or returning to places which they called home such as papa kāinga or the Pacific islands.

380 Overcrowding was a key motivator for tenants who were thinking about moving, and its effects in motivating a move are described in more detail below.

Tenants living in overcrowded circumstances and wanting to move

381 The children of one tenant had commented on the fact that the family needed to move to a bigger house. Seven people were living in a three bedroom house. The tenant said: *[S]ometime my kids say, Oh we not fit here... Sometimes when it was winter my daughter she start coughing so I bring her into the lounge...it's alright if we can stay here and they can extend our house for one more bedroom, be nice.* (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

382 Three tenants had approached Housing New Zealand drawing attention to their overcrowded circumstances and had felt that they had not been taken

seriously enough. One tenant who had six people living in a three bedroom house said:

Oh they know we're overcrowded, but they were saying at the moment you're not at the top list, 'cause they're saying you have a Housing New Zealand home so you're way down the bottom. The ones that will be up, I says, "Yeah I already know about all that... are you saying that the only way I can get up that list is by having more children? I was even told..." "You should have more children, it's the only way you're going to get a [different] house." How ridiculous. (CoupwC, Māori, 41 - 50 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 383 Another tenant had five people living in a two bedroom house because she was caring for her sister's children following her sister's death in childbirth. She said:

I've asked for a bigger house" ... I have been pushing, and pushing to get an extra room you know but I just try and back off a bit because I don't want to sound, you know, ungrateful... Yeah, I don't wanna sound like that but when it comes to my kids' health I have to. (SolewC, Māori, 18 - 30 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 384 A tenant who had six people in a three bedroom house had spoken with Housing New Zealand in expectation of her need for more bedrooms. She said:

'Cause I told them when I went for my interview that I was going through court for my fourteen year old, that's what they said to me, "Oh well when your fourteen year old comes back, we will help you to get a bigger house," and then we rang them and told them, "I've got the court papers and everything," they just said, "Oh there's a long line, and you've got a long wait" (SolewC, Māori, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 385 One tenant was overcrowded with five people in a three bedroom house She was being assisted to gather the documentation in support of her need for a larger house by a social worker: *[A] social worker for my son...like how going to support my son, and one is for Oliver. She is the one going to help me to go to the doctors and that to get this and that, to get another house. (SolewC, Pacific, 41 - 50 years, 10+ tenure length)* Another tenant had sought help from their local member of parliament when Housing New Zealand was slow to find a place that would address the overcrowding that resulted in the ill health of her children (SolewC, European, 31 - 40 years, 10+ years tenure length).

- 386 Housing New Zealand was addressing the overcrowding of one tenant who had 12 people living in a four bedroom house. As participants in the Healthy Housing programme their current house was being extended. (CoupwC, Pacific, 41 - 50 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

- 387 One tenant had taken the situation in hand, and had moved from a one bedroom Housing New Zealand property into a three bedroom private rental property because the family needed more space. (SolewC, Pacific, 18 - 30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Other motivations for moving

- 388 One tenant was living in a private house leased to Housing New Zealand. She had requested a transfer into a smaller home. (SolewC, Maori, 41-50 years, 5 years tenure length) Another tenant was thinking of transferring to another area and downsizing at the same time. However her daughter said:

We own a lot of land down there....There is some talk and a lot of strength to the discussions as well around setting up our own papa kāinga back in Rotorua. And with the iwi development stuff ...we may come to Housing New Zealand to just have those discussions 'cause there's, we have a large family. But to build and own, as opposed to rent forever. (Single, Māori, 65 - 74 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 389 Several tenants sought transfers or were saving to move out of Housing New Zealand properties to protect the health and safety of their children. As one tenant said:

I've requested for a transfer because I've had a lot of bad things happening, like neighbours, or the neighbours' friends that have been coming around have been thieving from me and because they know it's just me and my three kids here, no one else, I just feel targeted. (SolewC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Home ownership and housing independence

- 390 Home ownership was an expectation for 20 out of the 62 tenants, and an aspiration for 37 tenants. One tenant had applied for transfers because the family needed a bigger house but discovered that this raised a question about their continued eligibility for a Housing New Zealand property. The tenant said:

The problem we applied for transfer two times and they still declined because we are both work so they said we are not qualified anymore for New Zealand house. The option they give us is to and buy a house or to Private rental. ...[W]e just join the KiwiSaver so they, that's our saving to buy a house. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 391 Another tenant in a similar predicament said:

We need to move to the other bigger house and house separate too because this space is a unit... I think its only one thing to help me to buy the house. It depends on work and also I'm helping to find a job for my wife so when the kids get old and need to go find some job to help me out to buy the house. So depend on the income, you know income, you can afford to buy it, yeah go and buy it. (CoupwC, Pacific, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 392 Finding money for the deposit was seen as a barrier to home ownership. As one tenant said:

[I]t's a real hard question to think, is getting more assets you know money wise so that I am eligible to buy one. 'Cause I know that you have to come up with 20 percent before you can actually get a mortgage loan. And, at the moment I'm only running at about two and a half I've saved up at the moment, which not really 20 percent...It's a start yeah, 'cause I've got supervised and I've been saving since I was in this house. Sometimes you

get in a state when you have to try and dig into it but I try not to touch it.
(SolewC, European, 41 - 50 years, 10+ years tenure length)

- 393 The parents of a son who has a disability declined the offer of a transfer to a more appropriate house because they were saving for home ownership. The tenant said:

Because of my son we wanted a bigger house. But we had been selected to move to a bigger house, but we sort of declined that because of our future intentions. 'Cause we intended to buy our own house so because they wanted to put us in a house where they were doing some modifications for like bathroom and stuff and we thought if we use that fund and to buy our own house, then that fund we wont access it again. (CoupwC, European, 31 - 40 years, 5 years tenure length)

- 394 A young tenant and his wife described their plans for home ownership:

We've got five year plan on the wall there...We have been saving. We've got the KiwiSaver thing and we're goona use what money we've got and what we've gained from the KiwiSaver as a deposit on a home...Working my arse off at the moment, so Teresa's at school and trying make something for herself, which is good and we try. (CoupwC, Māori, 18-30 years, 1.5 years tenure length)

Appendix A: Statistics describing reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties in South Auckland

The reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties are analysed by:

- participant group, namely applicants and tenants
- ethnicity, namely European, Māori and Pacific people
- tenure duration, namely pre 2000, and 2000 – June 2011

Location

Table 8 Reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties in South Auckland

Reasons	Applicants		Tenants	
	N = 33	%*	N = 62	%*
Financial	31	94	46	74
Family	25	76	42	68
Overcrowding	21	64	41	66
Security	22	67	39	63
Health and disability	12	36	8	13

* The percentages do not add up to 100 percent because research participants gave multiple responses.

Ethnicity

Applicants

Table 9 Applicants' reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties by ethnicity (n = 32*)

Reasons	European		Māori		Pacific	
	N = 8	%**	N = 12	%**	N = 12	%**
Financial	8	100	12	100	11	92
Family	2	25	11	92	11	92
Overcrowding	3	38	10	83	7	58
Security	7	88	9	75	5	42
Health and disability	5	63	3	25	3	25

* One applicant who identified as Māori Pacific is not included in this analysis

* The percentages do not add up to 100 percent because research participants gave multiple responses.

Tenants

Table 10 Tenants' reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties by ethnicity (n = 58*)

Reasons	European		Māori		Pacific	
	N = 10	%**	N = 22	%**	= 26	%**
Financial	7	70	14	64	22	85
Family	4	40	15	68	21	81
Overcrowding	5	50	12	55	21	81
Security	8	80	16	50	13	50
Health and disability	1	10	5	23	1	4

* Four tenants who identified as combinations of European, Māori and Pacific are included in this analysis

**The percentages do not add up to 100 percent because research participants gave multiple responses.

Duration of tenancy

Table 11 Tenants' reasons for applying for Housing New Zealand properties by duration of tenancy

Reasons	Pre 2001		2001- June 2011	
	N =12	%*	N = 50	%*
Financial	5	42	41	82
Family	7	58	35	70
Overcrowding	6	50	35	70
Security	6	50	33	66
Health and disability	1	8	7	14

* The percentages do not add up to 100 percent because research participants gave multiple responses.

Appendix B: Likert rating scales summarising people's feelings about being a Housing New Zealand tenant

Table 12 Thinking about the house you are living in, which of the following statements best describes your overall feelings about living in this house?

	I love this house		I like this house		Neutral		I don't like this house		I hate this house	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	19	31%	24	39%	8	13%	6	10%	5	8%

Table 13 Overall, how happy are you with the number of bedrooms?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	18	29%	21	34%	4	6%	11	18%	8	13%

Table 14 Overall, how happy are you with the inside/interior of your house?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	11	18%	17	27%	15	24%	15	24%	4	6%

Table 15 Overall, how happy are you with the bathroom facilities such as shower, bath, toilet?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=60)	10	17%	21	35%	9	15%	10	17%	10	17%

Table 16 Overall, how happy are you with kitchen facilities such as the stove?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=61)	12	20%	22	36%	15	25%	8	13%	4	7%

Table 17 Overall how happy are you with the outside/exterior of your house?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=61)	13	21%	19	31%	12	20%	10	16%	7	11%

Table 18 Overall, how happy are you with the condition of your house?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=61)	10	16%	23	38%	16	26%	8	13%	4	7%

Table 19 How happy are you with the warmth of your house?

	Very Happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	12	19%	13	21%	12	19%	11	18%	14	23%

Table 20 Overall, how happy are you being a Housing New Zealand tenant?

	Very happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=61)	22	36%	27	44%	8	13%	3	5%	1	2%

Table 21 Overall, how happy are you with the service you get from Housing New Zealand?

	Very happy		Happy		Neutral		Unhappy		Very unhappy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	13	21%	18	29%	21	34%	8	13%	2	3%

Table 22 How do you feel about the neighbourhood you're living in?

	Love it		Like it		Indifferent		Don't like it		Hate it	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	19	31%	24	39%	8	13%	6	10%	5	8%

Table 23 Do you have supportive neighbours?

	Yes		No		No answer	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	42	68%	15	24%	5	8%

Table 24 How important is it to you, to have supportive neighbours?

	Very important		Important		Neutral		Unimportant		Prefer to keep to myself	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=60)	28	45%	16	26%	9	15%	4	6%	3	5%

Table 25 How safe do you feel in this neighbourhood?

	Very safe		Fairly safe		Mixed		Fairly scared		Very scared	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	25	40%	15	24%	9	15%	9	15%	4	7%

Table 26 How important is it to you, to live near family?

	Very important		Important		Neutral		Unimportant		Prefer to live away from family	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	36	58%	9	15%	9	15%	6	10%	2	3%

Table 27 How important is it to you, to live near friends?

	Very important		Important		Neutral		Unimportant		Prefer to live away from friends	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	20	32%	11	18%	20	32%	10	16%	1	2%

Table 28 Overall, how easy is it for you to get to places that are important to you - like work, schools, public transport, shops or the doctor?

	Very easy		Easy		Neutral		Hard		Very hard	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
All (n=62)	32	38%	20	24%	8	9%	0	0%	2	2%