

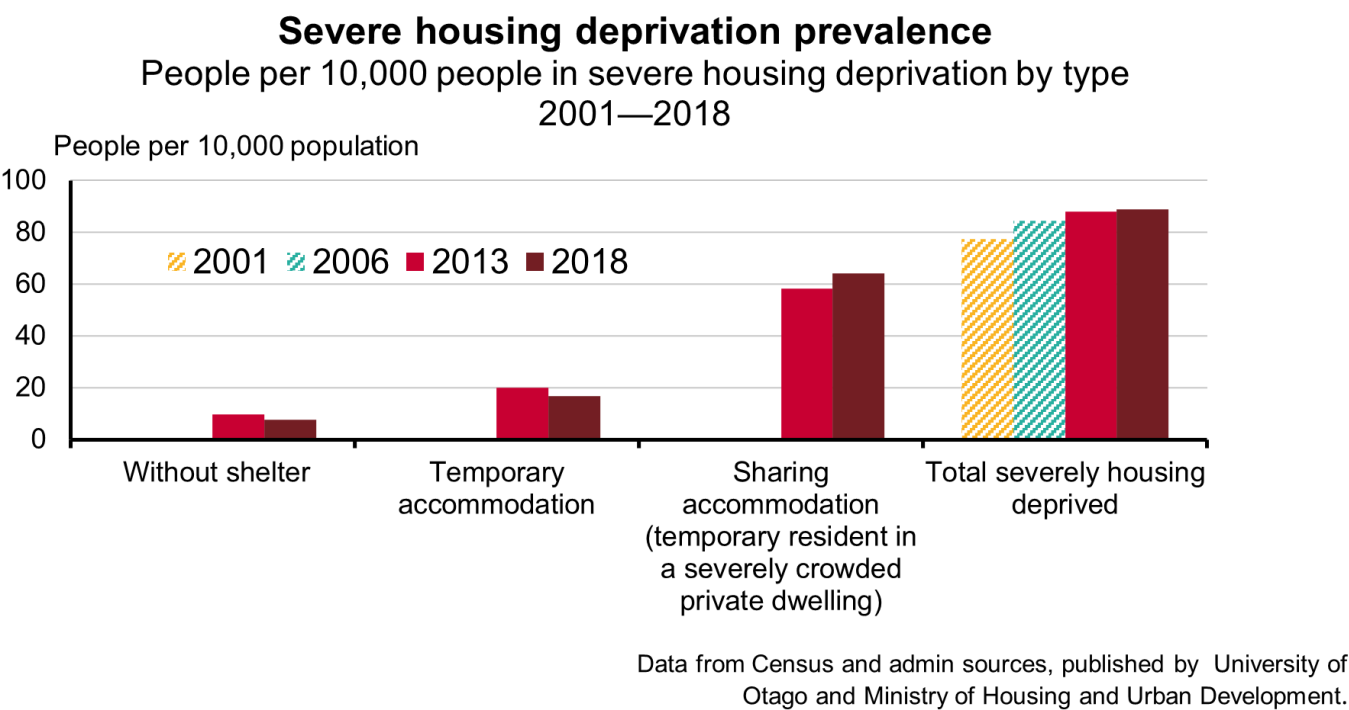
# Over 100,000 people in severe housing deprivation and struggling to access a home

A decent home should be accessible to everyone, but data shows that New Zealand is struggling to deliver due to decades of undersupply, low state and social housing stock, and increasing unaffordability. As of 2018, over 100,000 people face severe housing deprivation, while 17 per cent of people with a physical impairment reported unmet housing modification needs the last time this was measured in 2013.

The accessibility dimension of the right to a decent home means that homelessness should be reducing as access to housing improves, and people’s homes should meet physical accessibility requirements. These aspects of housing accessibility are difficult to track. Data available is limited and infrequent, especially for physical housing accessibility, which makes it difficult to measure progressive realisation for this dimension. The data we do have shows little to no improvement, meaning the right to an accessible home in Aotearoa is not being fully realised.

Otago University researchers have used a combination of census and administrative data to estimate the number of people experiencing severe housing deprivation.<sup>1</sup>

Severe housing deprivation, often referred to as homelessness, covers four types of deprivation: those without shelter (including rough sleepers), people in temporary accommodation (e.g. night shelters and motels), people who are sharing accommodation (temporary residents in a severely crowded private dwelling), and people living in uninhabitable housing (2018 only). Severe housing deprivation excluding uninhabitable housing appears to have increased incrementally from 2001, however due to data limitations some caution should be used when comparing with estimates prior to 2013. Overall, those severely housing deprived (excluding the uninhabitable housing category) increased slightly from 88 people per 10,000 people in 2013 to 89 people per 10,000 people in 2018.

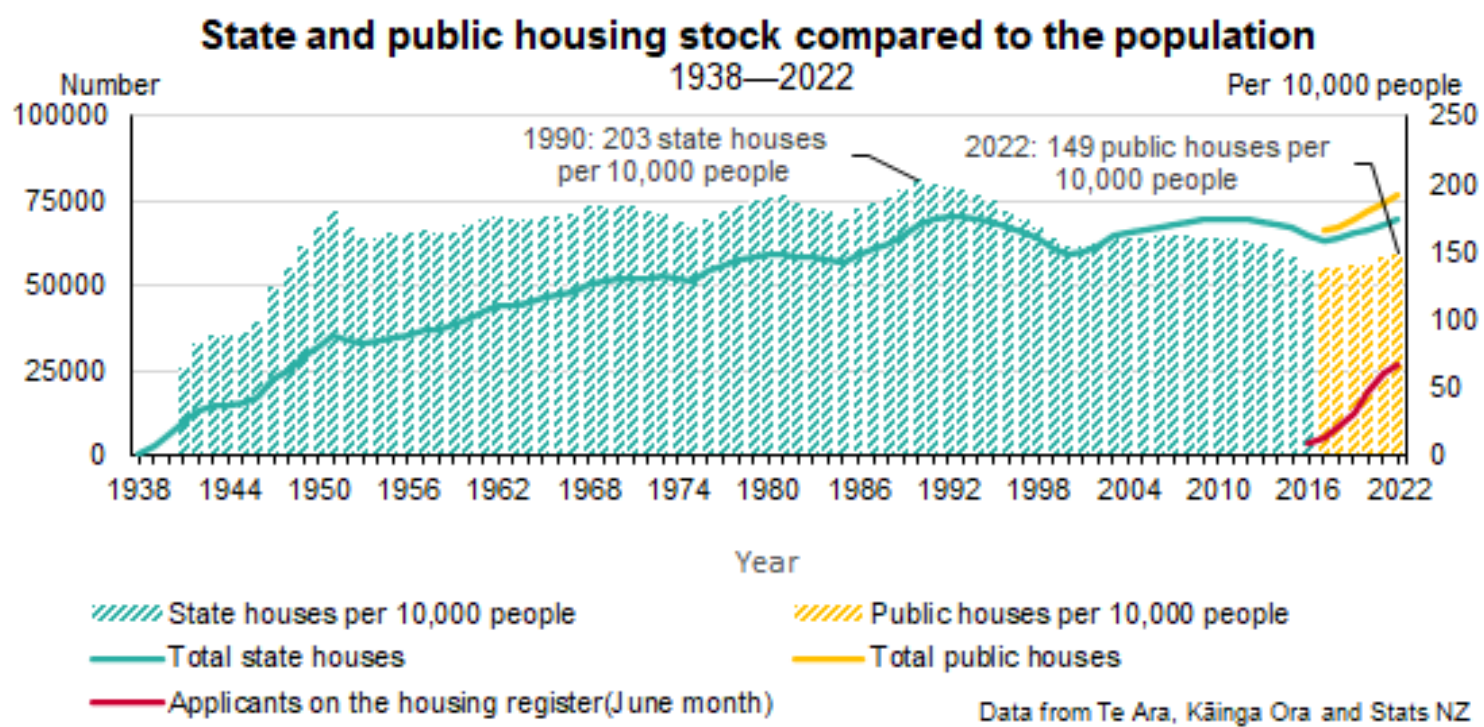


In 2018 a further 129 people for every 10,000 in the population were found to be living in uninhabitable housing, adding to the total number of people experiencing severe housing deprivation. This data is only available in 2018 and so comparisons with earlier years are not possible. Overall, at least 102,100 people were severely housing deprived at the time of the 2018 census, equating to 217 people per 10,000. Severe housing deprivation may have worsened since then, in line with worsening affordability, inflation and limited supply of housing. Updated severe housing deprivation estimates won’t be available till after the 2023 census.

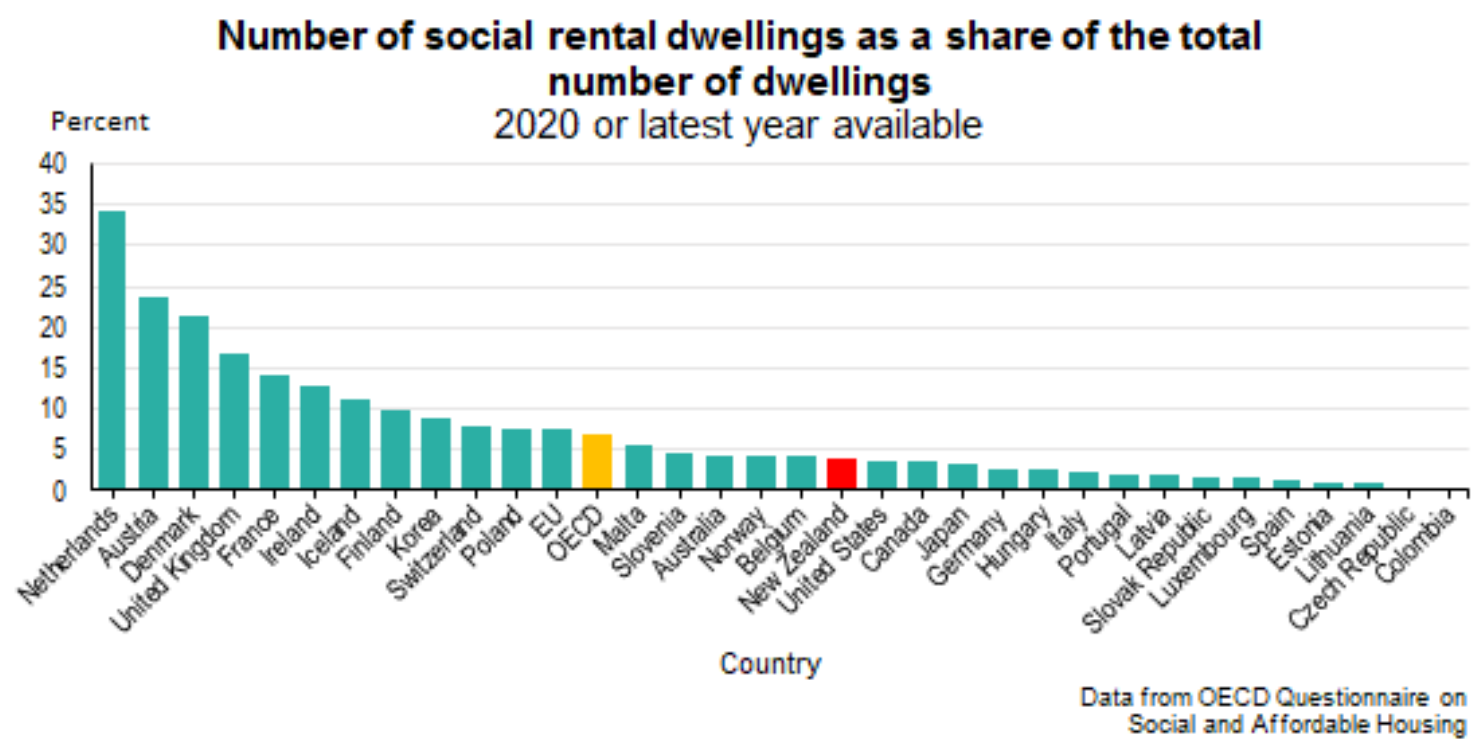
## State housing provision far below 1990s peak

One way governments can improve housing accessibility is by providing housing for people excluded from home ownership or who struggle to access housing in the private rental market. In Aotearoa New Zealand public housing makes up a relatively low proportion of the total housing stock. A 2022 OECD report found that in

Aotearoa New Zealand social rental housing makes up 3.8 percent of our total housing stock, compared to the OECD average of 7 percent. This is about the same as the United States’ 3.6 percent, but lagging behind the Netherlands’ 34 percent and the United Kingdom’s 17 percent. To reach the OECD average Aotearoa New Zealand would need around 61,000 additional social rental homes. To reach the same level as the Netherlands we’d need around 584,000 added to our current social housing stock.



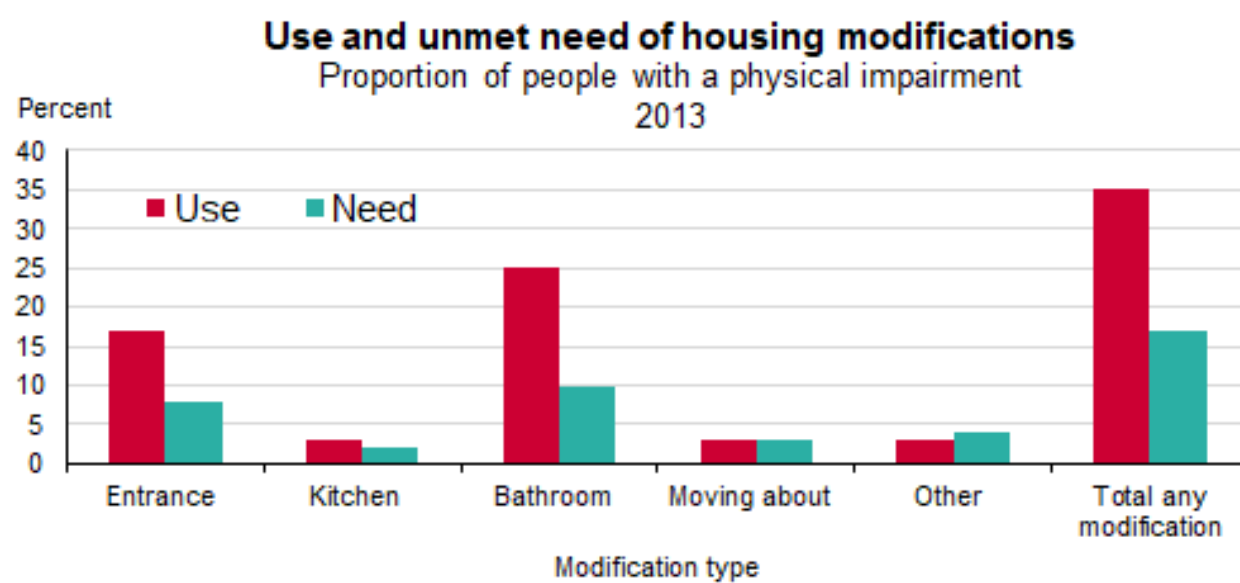
Public housing can play an important role in the housing eco system, providing immediate benefits for tenants such as access to affordable and safe housing and increased tenure security, as well as reducing competition in the private rental and property sectors, and financialisation of housing.



The supply of public housing compared to the population peaked in 1990 and hasn’t kept pace with population growth since. Government policies in the early 1990s and 2010s included reducing the numbers of state houses (see A State Housing Database: 1993-2009). Compared to the population, in 2022 there are only 149 public houses per 10,000 people compared to the peak of 203 state houses per 10,000 people in 1990. This doesn’t include local government housing, which has also decreased since the 1990’s

The numbers of state houses and public houses have improved since 2017, with the current Government’s state housing building programme adding over 10,000 new public homes. Increasing the available supply of state and social housing will help to address the number of people in severe housing deprivation.

Housing register data shows that there is significant demand for public housing. The number of applicants has grown from 5,300 in June 2016 to 27,000 in June 2022. This increase will reflect both real world demand and changes in policy that affect who is let on to the register.



Data from the 2013 Disability Survey, Stats NZ

Since the reduction in public housing in the early 1990s the private rental market has grown. While in 1991, 14 percent of households were living in private rentals, in 2018 this had increased to 27 percent. A higher proportion of people are also renting as home ownership rates have fallen from their peak of 74 percent in 1991 to 65 percent in 2018.

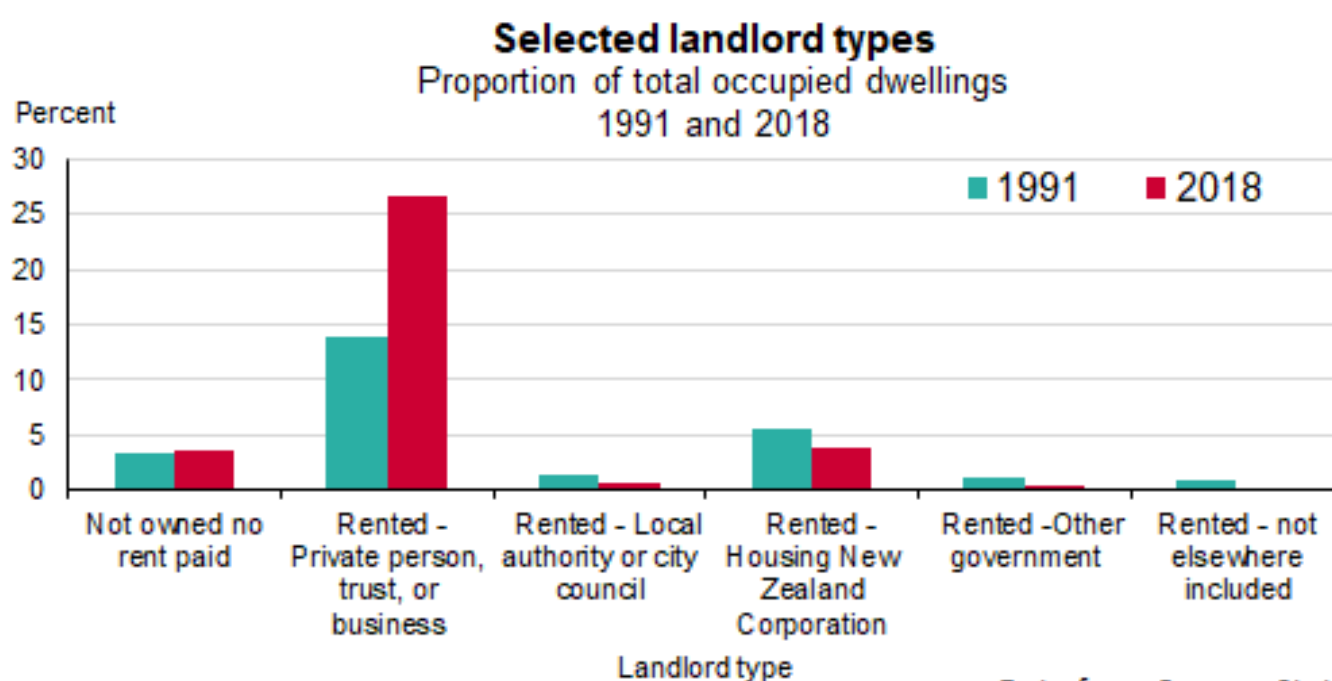
### **An aging population means if we don't act now, accessibility will get worse**

For disabled people accessible housing means more than just being about to get into a home. That home should meet their needs, with basic facilities such as accessible bathrooms. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities states that governments should “understand the impact of disability on housing needs and influence the social housing reform programme to meet the needs of disabled people.”

Given New Zealand's ageing population, with the population aged 65 and over expected to increase from 793,000 (16 percent of the population) in 2020 to around 2 million people in 2073 (28 percent of the population), physically accessible housing is an important issue to tackle. A need was identified in 2007 for accessibility standards to be included in the building code but nothing has happened since then (Saville Smith et al, 2007). If this change had been implemented by 2010, around 270,000 accessible homes would have been built (see experimental building indicators: March 2022 quarter)

The 2013 Disability Survey found that while around 24 percent of the population were disabled, disability rates rose with age. People aged 65 or over were much more likely to be disabled (59 percent) than adults under 65 years (21 percent). Physical disabilities were the most common with 18 percent of people aged 15 or over (64 percent of disabled adults) physically impaired.

We don't have a good understanding about how much of our housing stock is accessible to people with physical disabilities. Our best information was from the New Zealand Disability Survey, which was last held in 2013. One in six people with a physical impairment (17 percent,) said they had an unmet need for some kind of modification to their home. People with other impairments also benefit from universal design, which provides for example modifying sensory input such as sound or lighting. The next disability survey will be in 2023.



Data from Census, Stats NZ



Research on the experiences of disabled people and housing in 2020 (Donald Beasley Institute,2020) found that:

Disabled people report limited choices in accessible housing; difficulties in getting necessary housing modifications; a lack of control over their living situation; affordability barriers and discriminatory attitudes from people in power such as landlords, real estate agents and government housing support services. These barriers result in disabled people living in inaccessible and unsafe homes, young disabled people living in retirement homes, and forcing some disabled people into homelessness.

There is an urgent need to understand these experiences better and to determine what proportion of housing will meet the needs of disabled people.

We also don't know what proportion of our public rental housing stock meets the needs of people with a physical disability although Kāinga Ora included some questions in their 2019 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. This survey found that 73 percent of tenants believed their accessibility needs were being met. (Kāinga Ora, 2019). Kāinga Ora also plans to make sure that at least 15 percent of new housing builds meet full universal design standards.

A recent review by the UN Committee on the Rights of Disabled Peoples, recommended that the New Zealand government should commit to a target of 100% accessibility for new build public housing and introduce mandatory accessibility requirements for new housing constructed by the private sector (United Nations, 2022). This would mean using universal design principles to build for maximum population use and for ease of modifying to meet needs over time for those with diverse needs, including those with low vision, or people with sensory sensitivities.

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