Proportion of population living in crowded housing

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Almost one in ten New Zealanders is living in crowded conditions.
- Between 1991 and 2013 the proportion of population living in crowded households was decreasing.
- Household crowding affects more Māori and Pacific.
- Children are disproportionately affected by household crowding.

Household crowding affects human health

Household crowding* has for a long time been of concern to policy makers seeking to reduce inequalities in health among deprived social groups. Historically, large public health gains have been made through improved housing conditions such as insulation, sanitation, and reducing overcrowding. Yet, it is difficult to separate the relationship between household crowding and health from the influence of other factors such as income, education, and occupation (McNicholas et al., 2000). Research has identified a strong association between household crowding and rates of infectious disease, including tuberculosis, meningococcal disease, acute rheumatic fever, haemophilus influenza, pneumonia, and middle ear infections (Baker et al., 2013).

Household crowding does not directly cause infectious disease. Rather, individuals living in crowded conditions are more likely to catch infections through increased exposure to pathogens. Families who live in crowded households are also a source of transmissible disease in their wider community (McNicholas et al., 2000).

Children living in crowded homes are at greater risk of developing infectious diseases than older household members (Goodyear et al., 2011).

Almost one in ten New Zealanders are living in crowded conditions

In 2013, almost 10% of New Zealanders were living in a crowded household, needing at least one more bedroom (Table 1). Out of these people, a third (116,000 people) were in need of two or more bedrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>% of population</th>
<th>Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In need of one or more bedrooms</td>
<td>Crowded</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In need of two or more bedrooms</td>
<td>Severely crowded</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2013
Māori and Pacific are more affected

In 2013, almost 10% of New Zealanders were living in a crowded household, needing at least one more bedroom. This had decreased by over 2% between 1991 and 2013, from 11.9% to 9.7%.

The proportion of people living in crowded houses decreased in all ethnic groups from 1991 to 2013. However, large ethnic differences still remained.

In 2013, 40% of Pacific, 20% of Māori and 18% of Asian people were living in a crowded household, in comparison only 4% of European people were.

Children are disproportionately affected by crowded conditions

Children are disproportionately affected by household crowding in New Zealand. In 2013, almost one in seven children (0-14 years) was living in crowded households (Figure 2). A third of these children lived in severely crowded households.

Māori, Pacific and Asian children were more likely to live in an overcrowded household than children of other ethnic groups. Over 40% of Pacific children were living in crowded households needing one or more bedrooms in 2013. One in four Māori children and one in five Asian children were living in crowded households.
Household crowding is not evenly distributed in New Zealand

The majority of population living in crowded households in New Zealand are located in the North Island. In the South Island under 5% of the population lives in crowded households, compared to over 11% in the North Island.

In the North Island, the Territorial Authorities (TA) with the highest percentage of people living in crowded households are Kawerau District (16.4%), Opotiki District (15.9%) and Porirua City (15.0%). In the South Island, the TAs with the highest percentage of population living in crowded households are Chatham Islands Territory (7.1%), Christchurch City (6.9%) and Nelson City (5.1%).

Figure 3: Percentage of population living in crowded households, by Territorial Authority, 2013

REFERENCE

