
WELLINGTON REGIONAL HEALTHY HOUSING GROUP

Healthy Homes Narratives Survey Report: **How are People in Aotearoa New Zealand Talking About Healthy Homes?**

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1.0. Introduction to Research

The Healthy Homes Narratives Survey is part of an ongoing programme of work of the Wellington Regional Healthy Housing Group (WRHHG), aiming to develop and test new ways of talking about healthy homes in order to help people think more productively about the issue.

The purpose of the Survey was to gather data on how the general public of Aotearoa/New Zealand currently talk about healthy homes. The findings from this research will be used together with insights gathered via WRHHG membership into unhelpful and helpful narratives to inform development of messaging and communication approaches around healthy homes.

The research was carried out with financial and technical support from Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ), and advisory input from The Workshop particularly in regard to narrative analysis. Members of the WRHHG Communications Strategy Sub-Group provided input to survey question development and the preparation of this report.

1.1. Research Aim and Questions

This research seeks to understand the narratives underpinning how people are talking about healthy homes. We developed three more specific questions that encapsulate the survey's main foci. These are:

- How do people talk about the relationship between the physical home and health/wellbeing?
- How do people frame the responsibility for keeping/making homes healthy?
- How are people talking about healthy homes through lived experience and identity?

In addition, the research explores differences in people's access to information and resources that could support them to improve their home's warmth and dryness.

1.2. Structure of the Report

This report outlines the approach used for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data generated through the survey, and describes how the data was collected.

The results section is organised around the above research questions. We have provided a summary of the results to start with to give a sense of key patterns. Then, within the scope of each question, we discuss the main themes identified from the data. In addition to these three questions, we discuss the findings that pertain to survey respondents' civic access and engagement. This includes interpreting

their reported likelihood to access different forms of information and advice about improving their home's warmth and dryness, and respondents' awareness and use of existing sources of support.

Finally, the report provides a conclusion.

2.0. Methodology

This section clarifies the primary method used for analysis of the qualitative survey data - reflexive thematic analysis. It also describes who was recruited for the survey, and how the data was collected and refined, resulting in our final sample size (104 responses). Each participant had to give their consent before beginning the survey. Ethics approval for the Survey was sought and received from BRANZ Ethics Committee.

The survey was carried out during September 2022, at the end of winter, during a period of particularly rainy and windy weather over much of Aotearoa New Zealand. It was conducted online using Qualtrics survey software, supported by BRANZ staff. Market research company Dynata were contracted to recruit participants for the survey, seeking a survey of 100 people of the general public in New Zealand, with a spread across age, gender, region, ethnicity, and tenure type that broadly approximated these proportions in the wider population. In addition a further 4 responses were collected via WRHHG partner organisation Tū Kotahi Māori Asthma and Research Trust. The intent of this was to ensure representation from the Wainuiomata community which will be a focus of some of the message development work.

2.1. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was used for the analysis of the qualitative survey data. This is a theoretically flexible method for developing patterns of meaning (or themes) in data, allowing researchers to make sense of collective experiences across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis for this study was inductive. The primary aim is to give voice and meaning to the experiences of participants. An inductive approach to data analysis is bottom up, meaning that the results are driven by the data. This means that the themes that are identified come from the data. Themes are trends or patterns in the data. They capture something important that helps us answer our research questions. Points of interest relevant to the research questions are coded, and when codes appear repeatedly in the data, they form themes. This process was iterative, meaning the survey responses were read multiple times as themes evolved, and new patterns were identified.

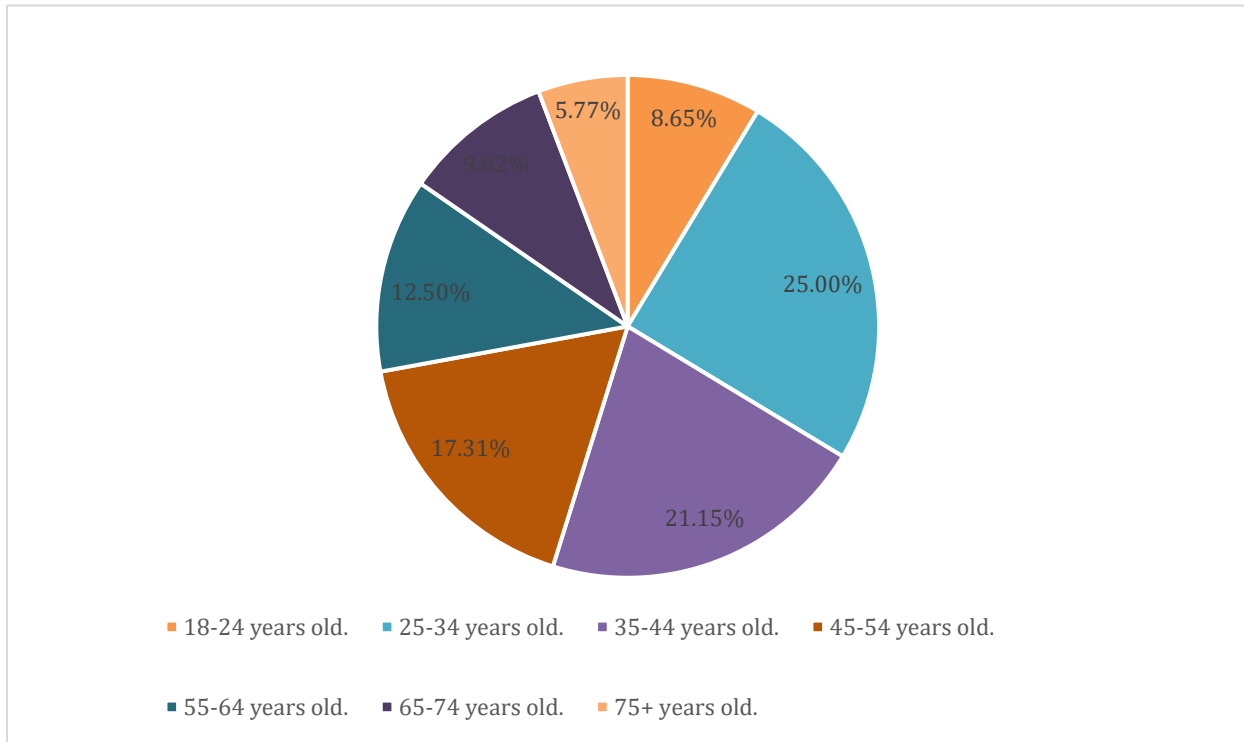
This kind of thematic analysis is known as reflexive thematic analysis to capture researchers' evolving relationship to the data they are working with. (see Braun & Clarke, 2020; 2021) It also means that

themes are not fixed, and that researchers must be explicit about recognising their own assumptions, positionings, and viewpoints which influence the development of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

For clarity: throughout the report, every phrase or word with quotation marks is a direct quote from survey respondents. The text that is unquoted should be read as our interpretation of the data, which has led us to create each theme. *Italicised text* refers to the wording of survey questions.

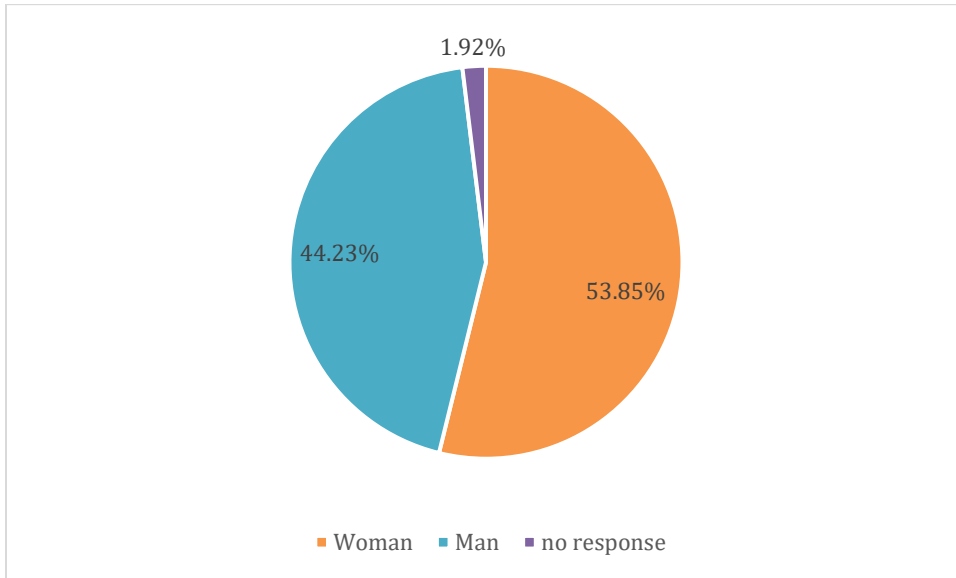
2.2 Data Collection

Age



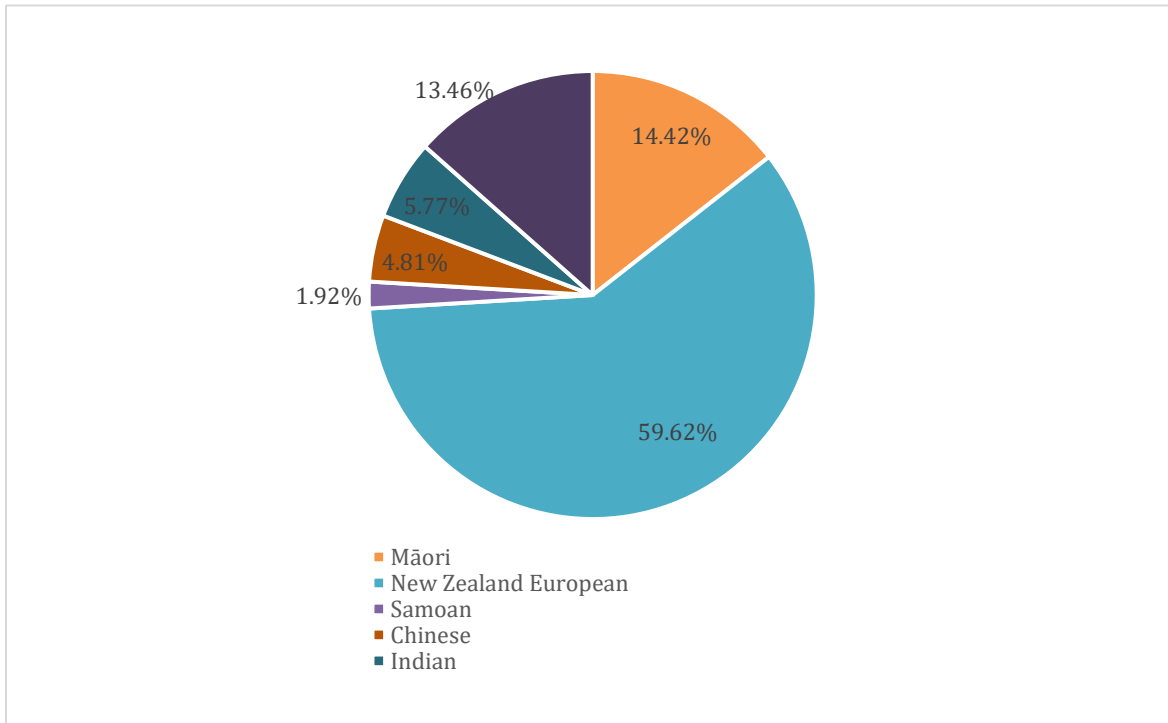
The age of respondents was spread across all categories. The highest percentage of respondents were the 25-34 year old bracket (25%) followed by the 35-44 year old bracket (21.5%).

Gender



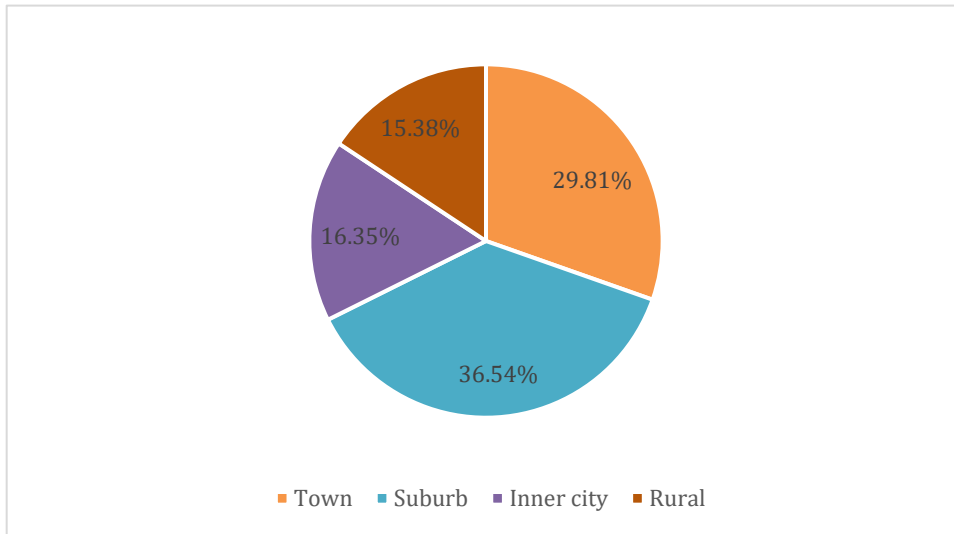
When we asked the respondents about gender, 46.6% identified as a woman, while 47.4% identified as a man. 1.92% did not respond.

Which ethnic group do you belong to?



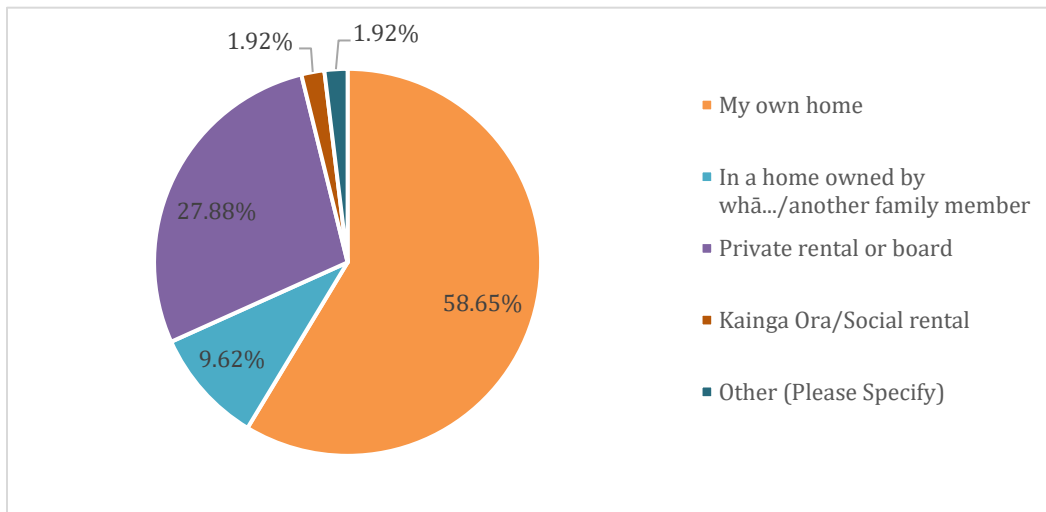
The majority of the sample identified as New Zealand European (59.62%), 14.42% identified as Māori, and 13.46% identified as other (eg. Dutch, Japanese, Tokelauan etc.) When compared to the 2018 census, the survey had a smaller percentage of those who identified as European (67.6% in 2018 Census), and similar percentage who identified as Māori (14.6% in 2018 census)

The place I live in is...



The majority of respondents lived in either a town (29.81%) or a suburb (36.54%) with 16.35% living in the Inner city, and the remaining living rurally (15.38%). A third of the respondents were situated in Auckland, with the remaining two thirds evenly split across the other territorial authorities across Aotearoa.

The place I live most of the time is:



When we asked respondents about their housing tenure status, the majority of our sample said they lived in their own home (58.65%) with the next closest group of respondents either renting or boarding privately (27.88%), while 9.62% lived in a home owned by whānau or another family member and 1.92% lived in a Kainga Ora property (state-owned housing) or a non-state social rental.

3.0. Results

In this section, we share the main themes derived from analysis of the survey responses. These results draw on interpretative analysis of the text answers and place them in relationship to the other sections of the survey. Where relevant, we also provide quantitative overviews of general trends across the sample through graphs.

The section is introduced with a quick summary of key findings, followed by discussion of the data and our analysis in more detail.

Summary of Key Findings

Warm, dry homes are a key determinant of individual and collective health, understood in a multidimensional way

Because the relationship between home and health is described holistically across respondents' answers, **warm and dry homes stand out as a key determinant of both individual and collective wellbeing**

Most respondents use more than one frame to talk about housing. For example, health/wellbeing and (lack of) choice/agency, are generally talked about together because they are co-constitutive of respondents' lived experiences. The co-constitutive nature of health/wellbeing, and barriers, like affordability, provide further reasoning for responsibility to be taken on at a governmental level, as captured through this response.

There is broad agreement that there is a problem with unhealthy housing, and support for government responsibility to ensure healthy homes including via legislation.

A majority of respondents agree that there are problems with cold, damp homes in New Zealand. The majority also attribute at least some responsibility to the government for fixing these problems, which indicates a sense of collective responsibility. Responses indicate support across diverse demographics for legislation as a viable or acceptable tool in ensuring comfortable, warm and dry homes. The prominence of this perspective could also be interpreted as demonstrating widespread acceptance of housing as a social good.

Strong narratives appear associating older homes and outdated building standards with poor performance

In respondents' explanations for why homes are damp and cold, the perspective that the age of homes and, (to a lesser extent), that outdated building standards and practices were primary causes of unhealthy homes was a strong theme. Reference to older homes and poor building quality were often linked with the specific New Zealand weather conditions (see below re 'exceptionalist' narratives). Although individualist narratives to explain why homes are damp and cold also appeared, these were much less prevalent than narratives focused on old and poorly built homes.

There was some indication that Māori experience different access to healthy housing resources and support than non-Māori, and that people whose primary ethnic identity is non-Māori and other than NZ European may also have a different experience.

Further research with bigger sample sizes of these different cohorts could provide more understanding of differential experience across ethnic identities and in particularly Māori and non-Māori

Affordability is a barrier across tenures, but lack of power and agency in relation to landlords is a significant factor for renters

Affordability and poverty come up as key barriers for both homeowners and renters to do repairs on their own home, or to choose a better rental home. However, for respondents who are renters, affordability is strongly interconnected with a lack of agency or power in the tenant-landlord relationship.

Unhelpful narratives are present in the way people talk about healthy homes, but we also observed some more helpful narratives on which to build

‘Unhelpful narratives’ are defined as narratives that constrain people’s ability to take collective action and work toward change, (in this case, healthier homes). We identified several unhelpful narratives in this analysis: exceptionalism (our situation is different from any other, therefore solutions that have worked elsewhere are unlikely to work here); fatalism (the problem is too big or unique and therefore can’t be fixed); and individualism (assigning all responsibility for problem to individuals’ action, and obscuring systemic causes).

Looking to language in responses which moves beyond these unhelpful framings provides some possibilities for alternative, more helpful narratives. Respondents referred to a belief in collective responsibility (reflected in a broad attribution of responsibility to government), argued that those who are less financially advantaged should be helped by government, and talked about housing in terms of human rights. Based on respondents’ discussion of chronic health conditions and disability, we also saw scope for emphasising that the building and renovation of all homes should account for varying comfort and wellbeing needs, and varying capabilities in terms of individual action.

3.1. How do people talk about the relationship between the physical home and health/wellbeing?

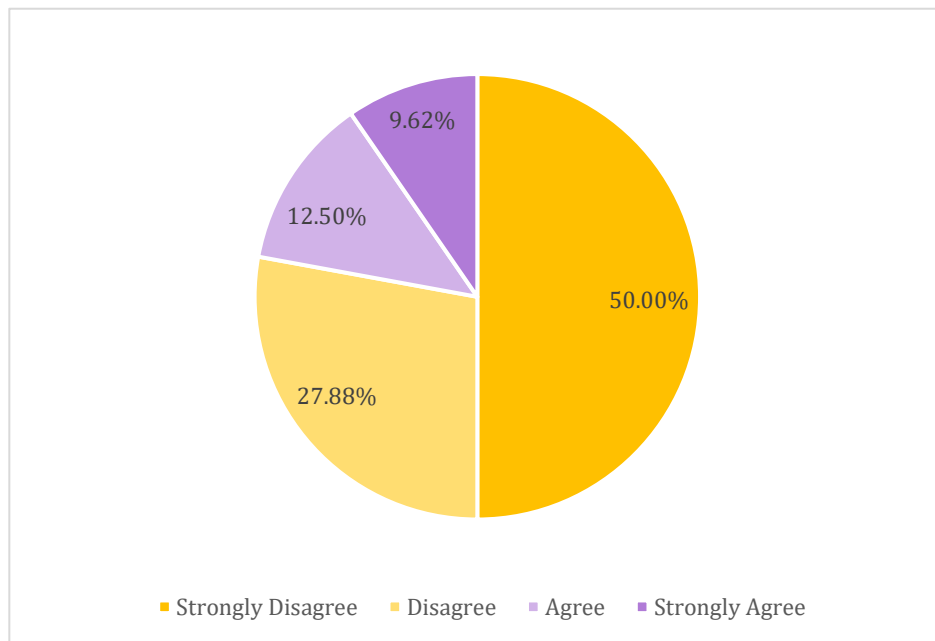
Respondents were asked to respond to the question: *How do you think our homes affect our health and wellbeing (mental, physical, emotional, social)?*

Throughout their text answers, respondents described the relationship between their home and their health/wellbeing in multifaceted and multidimensional ways that extended beyond physical health indicators (eg. likelihood of respiratory illness). Respondents spoke about their homes as central to a

wide range of facets of their health and wellbeing in their day to day lives, for example: “**our homes are our stability for our families**...which contributes to our mental and physical health”.

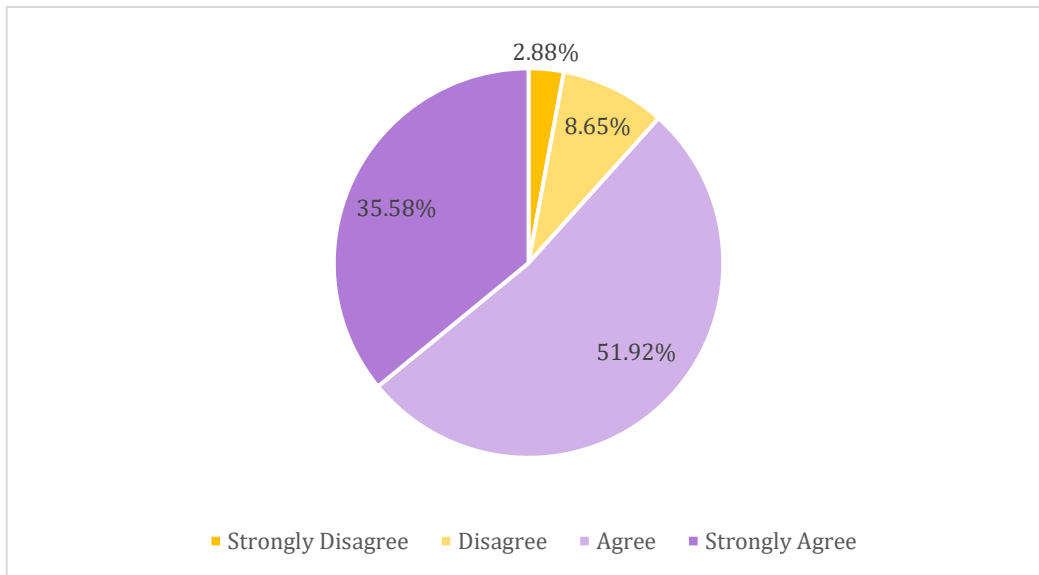
Below, we share results relating to of respondents’ multifaceted and holistic descriptions of the relationship between their home’s warmth and dryness and their wellbeing. Secondly, we share respondents’ perspectives on the state of housing in New Zealand and its suitability for our local conditions. We share these findings side by side to demonstrate how people are understanding the ‘physical home’ itself, which in turn affects their health and wellbeing.

3.1.a. Warmth and dryness and holistic aspects of health



Graph: ‘Temperature and dampness in a home are not big factors affecting the health of the people who live there.’

When we asked respondents about the importance of temperature and dampness on health in housing, the majority of 75.6% either strongly disagreed (50%) or disagreed (27.88%) with this statement. 22.1% either agreed or strongly agreed that temperature and dampness do not have a huge effect on the health of the people who live there.



Graph: ‘If someone in the household has asthma or another respiratory illness, increasing the ventilation and temperature inside the home is likely to help.’

When we asked more specifically about asthma and other respiratory illnesses, the large majority of the sample (87.5%) agreed that ventilation and temperature inside the home is likely to help.

Comparing these two graphs, we find that 22.1% of respondents (23 out of 104) believe a home’s temperature and dampness do not have a big effect on the health of those who live there, yet only 11.53% (12 out of 104) disagree that increasing the ventilation and temperature inside the home is likely to help with asthma and other respiratory illnesses. This suggests that even amongst those who do not believe that the temperature and dampness of a home have a big effect on its occupants’ health, there is agreement that improving warmth and dryness will help those with respiratory illnesses such as asthma. One explanation for this could be that respondents have interpreted the first question as being about causation of illness, and the second as being about treatment or mitigation of illness – and the results then would be consistent with some respondents believing that cold and damp don’t cause illness but that warmth and dryness can reduce its impact or help people get better. This juxtaposition is interesting, and could be explored in further research.

Healthy homes create “a flow on effect to our wellbeing in all areas of our existence”

Most respondents’ text answers provided deeper context to how they understood their home’s warmth and dryness as impacting on their health and wellbeing holistically. For example, “if it’s a warm and dry home you won’t get sick as much and you will feel better mentally”, whereas a lack of warmth and dryness is experienced as “emotional[ly] draining” and “[doesn’t] feel like home”.

Respondents often used emotive language to describe how they perceived the relationship between the physical home and their health and wellbeing: “cold damp homes make us ill as well as feel down and depressed”. The interconnection described here between physical, emotional and mental health and a

home was echoed by many respondents: “if the body isn’t feeling great the mind gets sick and vice versa”, “[dampness, leaks and non-insulation] not only impacts our physical health... it can also affect our mental and emotional wellbeing through stress about our living conditions”.

The flipside is that a warm and dry home is beneficial to people’s overall health and wellbeing in their day to day lives: “If we are happy in our accommodation, it has a flow on effect to our wellbeing in all areas of our existence”. **A warm and dry home can be perceived as restorative of good health, “as it is our safe haven” and “sanctuary”. If a home is warm and dry, the “flow on effect” will reduce stress about living conditions.** For example, one participant describes that a warm and dry home “calm[s] my thoughts”.

Respondents’ insights about the impact of the physical home on their holistic health and wellbeing resonate with recent Aotearoa New Zealand research analysing the connection between home performance and mental health. The study, drawing together data from multiple New Zealand datasets relating to wellbeing and (independently and self-assessed) measures of home performance, found that “occupants of houses in poor interior and exterior condition had lower life satisfaction and scored lower on the mental wellbeing index.”¹

Warm Dry Homes & Hauora

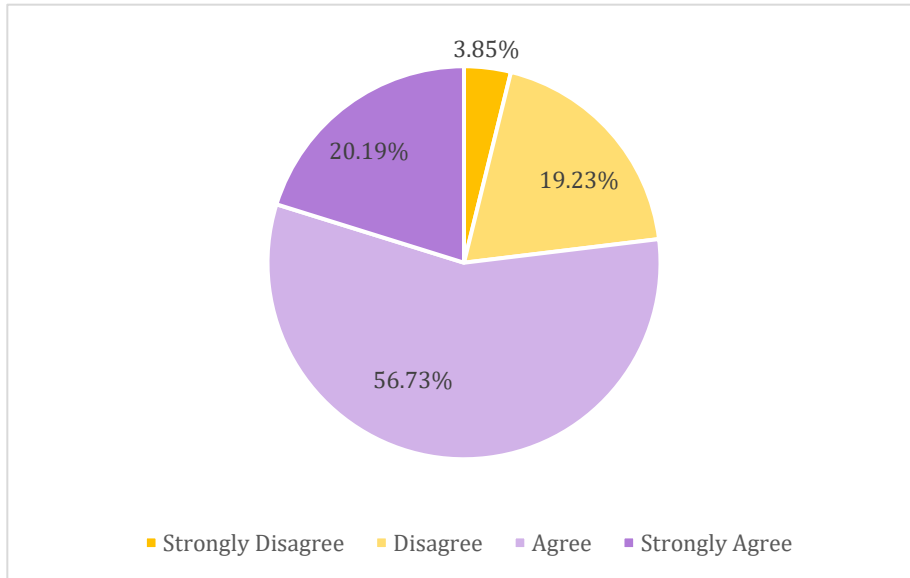
Because there are interconnections between the holistic elements of health, the physical home, and barriers to improving the warmth and dryness of homes, we suggest that hauora, a Māori perspective of health, is an appropriate and compelling framework, both for understanding these interconnections, and for informing communication accordingly with helpful narratives (Durie, 1985). Hauora is made up of four dimensions: te taha wairua (a spiritual dimension), te taha hinengaro (a psychic dimension), te taha tinana (a bodily dimension), te taha whanau (a family dimension) (Durie, 1985). If one or more of these dimensions are negatively impacted, this has an adverse effect on the others too. Hauora captures how health and wellbeing is collective because each of our personal health and wellbeing influences our relationships and the quality of life that we all share. The warmth and dryness of a physical home is central to all facets of health and wellbeing, as captured in this respondent’s description: **“our home is where we center ourselves**, and the environment that we live in has big potential to affect our behaviour, our mood, our actions”. Accordingly, the relationship between the physical home and health and wellbeing is constrained and influenced by barriers such as affordability, tenure, positionality, and civic engagement.

Language that emphasises the interconnection of warmth and dryness and hauora is powerful for capturing the multifaceted benefits of a warm and dry home: **“I work hard and want to be able to relax in my space. My health and wellness has improved since my whare was renovated. I’m also very proud my home is warm too”**. This response clearly highlights the connection between the respondent’s home’s increased warmth and dryness and their strengthened hauora. This connection

¹ Jones, S. & White, V. (2023). Housing condition and occupant wellbeing: Findings from the Pilot Housing Survey and General Social Survey 2018/19. BRANZ Study Report SR482. BRANZ Ltd. Pg 17.

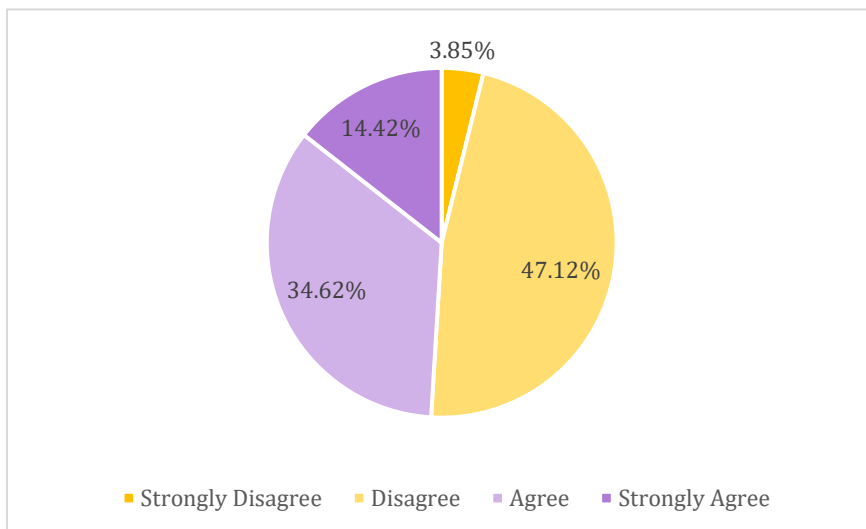
was also echoed throughout other responses using emotive words like “peaceful”, “happy”, “comfort”, “reliable”, “love”, “harmony”, “feel utterly comfortable” in response to the question: *Please tell us about what’s most important to you in a home?*

3.1.b. Standards, and home performance and suitability for local conditions



Graph: ‘On average, homes in New Zealand are not very warm and dry by international standards’

The majority of respondents (76.92) either strongly agreed or agreed that “on average homes in New Zealand are not very warm and dry by international standards”, indicating widespread public perception of poor housing performance for warmth and dryness in New Zealand.



Graph: ‘I believe the current standards for building homes in New Zealand are probably high in terms of international standards.’

In response to this question regarding beliefs about current standards for building homes in New Zealand respondents are fairly evenly split between agreement and disagreement with the proposition that our current building standards are high (50.97% disagree, 49.04% agree). When juxtaposed with the previous question about the warmth and dryness of average homes in New Zealand, some more insights emerge. Most but not all of those who disagreed that New Zealand standards are high also thought that New Zealand homes on average are not very warm and dry. Seven respondents disagreed that standards are high, but also thought that homes on average are warm and dry. 44% (46/104) of respondents believed both that homes on average are not warm and dry, AND that current building standards are not high by international standards. This may suggest these respondents perceive poor performance to be both a current and a future problem: that is, that they believe that existing homes perform poorly, and that homes currently being built are not built to a high standard, with future consequences for their performance.

Text answers provide further insight into the reasoning behind this link between home performance and building standards. Some indicated that inadequate building standards were an explanation for poor home performance: “insulation and home ventilation are not good enough”; “substandard housing”. Other respondents’ answers suggest that New Zealand’s weather conditions and poor building materials and practices present unique challenges to keeping homes warm and dry: “Houses were initially built with poor or no insulation for Kiwi winters”; “it is expensive to heat our homes and they're not built for the winter so houses are often cold”; “NZ houses are not built well...most are cold and some are also damp”. There are elements of exceptionalism in the way respondents talk about how weather conditions impact homes’ warmth and dryness, and about the predominance of poorly built homes. Several respondents referred to the predominance of wet and cold conditions in New Zealand: “we live in a cold damp country for 6 months of the year”, “**this country is cold and wet for over half the year and the houses are often not built for it**”. This type of exceptionalist narrative, in turn, could tend to encourage a fatalistic attitude about the capacity of New Zealanders to access warm, dry homes. One respondent reported feeling “grateful I have a home that is warm and dry”. This suggests that for this respondent a **warm and dry home is perceived as an exception to the norm**.

One respondent wrote that New Zealand homes are “not designed correctly. Places in England are much better insulated and heated”. Further research and testing would be needed to determine if this kind of comparison could be a useful approach for ‘showing the way’ (ie. If they can do it, we can also do it). Alternatively, this framing may feed further into an exceptionalism narrative by implying that change might be possible elsewhere, but that New Zealand remains a special case carrying its own complex set of issues (namely, the compounding nature of poor historical building practices and a damp climate).

One respondent identified climate change as part of the reason that people might be living in cold, damp homes: “the climate is changing but the way we built homes not so much”. Climate change challenges were otherwise not mentioned in responses overall.

A third – 33% (34/104) – of respondents believe that homes on average are **not** warm and dry, but that current standards for building **are** probably high in terms of international standards. Text answers for these respondents indicate that for some, there is a strong connection between the age of a home and its performance: that is, that they believe that old homes are likely not to be warm and dry. For example, respondents wrote: “yes [there is a problem] because a lot are dated houses” and “NZ older homes are not well insulated”. One respondent stated: “in the 1920's if you were cold you had to harden up or put on another bit of clothing”. **By situating such a narrative as commonplace “in the 1920's”, the respondent implies that this justification for poor quality housing is increasingly less accepted nowadays.** These responses suggest that these people may see poor performance resulting in cold and dampness is a problem of old buildings, but that new buildings are not likely to have the same problems. It is possible that these respondents don't believe that a comparatively high building standard necessarily results in warm, dry buildings, though this was not indicated in text answers. This is an area that could be investigated further in future research.

Another line of reasoning suggested by text responses is that building standards in New Zealand are high (in both the past and the present) but that homes deteriorate or don't perform as well as they could because of the behaviour of individuals. This comes through in statements attribute responsibility for poor home performance to individual behaviour and choices (or lack thereof). For example, respondents wrote: “too many rental properties that are unhealthy”; “tenant in rental property can't afford the expensive bills”; “I'm sure there is still a lot of rental properties that are not up to standard as the renters are too scared to report it”; “the homeowner/occupier has allowed the home to deteriorate to that level”. These type of responses are about as common in text answers (around 1/5 of the 33%) as responses highlighting age of homes as primary factor.

16.3% (17/104 respondents) believe that on average New Zealand homes are warm and dry and that New Zealand's building code is probably high by international standards. Interestingly, although this response indicates that this cohort don't believe that on average homes are damp or cold, in response to the earlier question ‘*Do you think there is a ‘problem’ with damp and/or cold homes in New Zealand? Why, or why not?*’, a majority of the cohort (12/17) responded ‘yes’. Explanations in about half these cases referred to occupier or landlord behaviour or capabilities: “people need to open windows each day to let condensation out”, “people are too lazy to fix or maybe re landlords getting greedy”, “people can't afford to put in the necessities like pink batts”. A couple of answers stated a belief that ‘recent legislation’ (not specified but could refer to Healthy Homes Standards) is leading to improvement: “there is definitely a problem but it is improving slowly with the new laws that have come in”. This indicates that more than half of respondents in this cohort see that there is a problem with damp and cold for some homes, but not ‘on average,’ and that they believe the cause of the problems is primarily related to occupant or landlord behaviour, which may or may not reflect a choice (eg. “can't afford” vs “too lazy/greedy”).

6.7 % (7 respondents) believe that on average New Zealand homes **are** warm and dry but that building standards are probably **low**. This may indicate that these respondents don't see a strong connection between high building standards and warm and dry homes. Interestingly, of these seven, four still

believed that there was a problem with damp, cold homes in New Zealand. Text answers indicated that this was attributed to old homes, overseas landlords, or just “cold” (weather/climate). In combination with a similar pattern for the cohort discussed above, this suggests that respondents disagreeing with the statement ‘on average homes in New Zealand are not warm and dry’ are disagreeing with the ‘on average’ part.

The responses to these questions show that there is a degree of complexity in public understanding of the warmth and dryness – and reasons for this – for existing homes and a distinction between existing and future homes. Further research in this area through more nuanced methods such as focus groups could provide more insight.

3.2. How are people talking about healthy homes through lived experience and identity?

Responses appear to obtain meaning through the lived experiences of respondents, including their positionality² and identity.

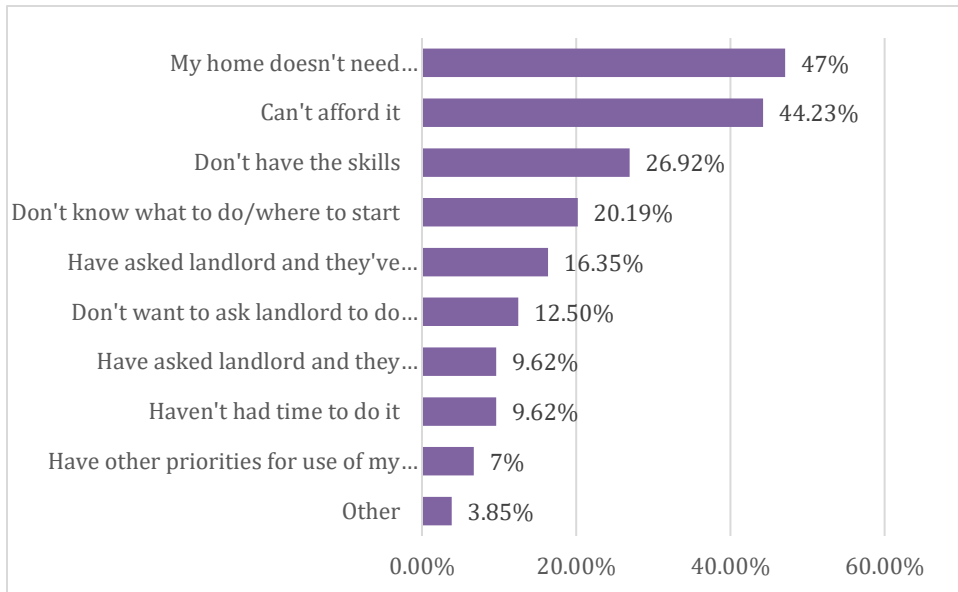
No demographic (i.e. by renter/homeowner status, gender, or ethnicity) has homogenous responses. However, there are patterns across the data, indicating that lived experiences cannot be separated from housing narratives. For example, renters are more likely to identify a wider range of problems with damp/cold houses and to emphasise the seriousness of the problems in their answers.

Further, respondents experiencing disability and chronic health issues described these as a central barrier to increasing their home’s warmth and dryness.

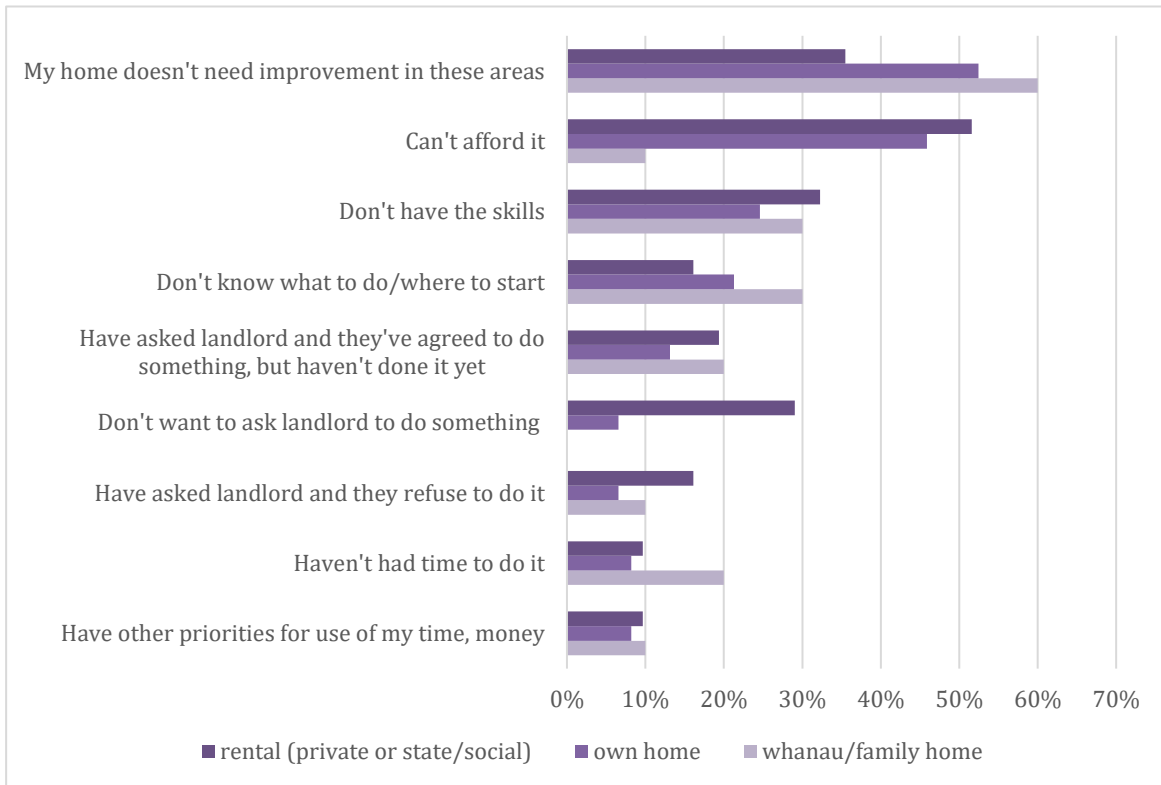
3.2.a. Renters, Homeowners, and Affordability

Affordability was highlighted as a barrier to either choosing a warm, dry home or doing the necessary upgrades to make a home warm and dry, by respondents across tenure categories. For renters, while affordability was a factor limiting agency, this combined with the more frequently identified experience of lack of agency and power in the relationship with landlords. Responses emphasised that ‘old homes’ were specifically perceived to be the ones that were damp and cold and unaffordable to improve.

² Positionality refers to the differences in access, power, and privileges which shape people’s identities and social positionings.



Graph: 'Which of these are the biggest barriers to you doing something to improve your home's warmth and dryness?' (total sample)



Graph: 'Which of these are the biggest barriers to you doing something to improve your home's warmth and dryness?' (disaggregated by responses to 'The place I live most of the time is...')

Overall, 44.23% of respondents identified affordability as a top barrier to improving home warmth and dryness. Disaggregation by tenure illustrates that this is a concern for both respondents who are in their 'own home' (45.9%) and - to a slightly higher degree - those in rental homes (51.6%). In text answers, renters highlighted that it is "hard to afford" or they "simply cannot afford" to choose a warmer and dryer home to rent, or pay for the level of heating needed. Affordability was tied to age of homes in relation to both the cost of operating a home: "[we have] older homes with poor ventilation and insulation and people can't afford to heat them", and to purchasing a higher-performing home: "first home buyers can only afford old homes". It can be inferred from this second response that because the homes being bought by many first home buyers are old, these are more likely to be cold and/or damp, which may be costly to fix.

The disaggregated graph highlights how renters' lack of agency in their relationships with landlords is a factor impacting on their ability to improve their home's warmth and dryness. Close to a half of renters either don't want to ask their landlord (29.3%) or have asked their landlord to do something and have been refused (16.1%). A further 19.4% of renters report that their landlord has agreed to do something, but has not done it yet. The significant proportion of renters who **report that they do not want to ask their landlord to do something in the first place, could be understood as an indication that they may feel powerless in that relationship.**

Renters' responses expressed limited options to increase their home's warmth and dryness, beyond cleaning, opening windows and using heating (if a heating source is available and if tenants can afford to use it). These limited options also did not address the root of the problems which are understood to be making their homes cold and damp in the first place: the perception that houses are built to an inadequate standard regarding warmth and dryness, and that not all landlords are taking responsibility to upkeep the quality of the homes they lease out. **"We have rented a house like this that also went mouldy. No matter how much cleaning and ventilation we tried. I am certain many people have experienced this."**

As renters may experience limited choices of where they can rent, their home's warmth and dryness is largely out of their control: "landlord hasn't upgraded the house" and "they are renting or poor or both" in response to the question '*From your point of view, if someone is living in a home that is not warm and dry, this is most likely because...*'. It is significant that **a lack of affordability is identified as barrier both from respondents who appeared to be speaking from experience, "poor affordability affects us mostly", and from those who expressed their perception of it as a widespread issue, rather than it necessarily affecting them personally: "They can't afford to either remedy the issues or rent a warmer drier home".**

Responses from both renters and homeowners describe that **experiencing poor quality housing is normal and expected.**

3.2.b. Ethnicity and Gender

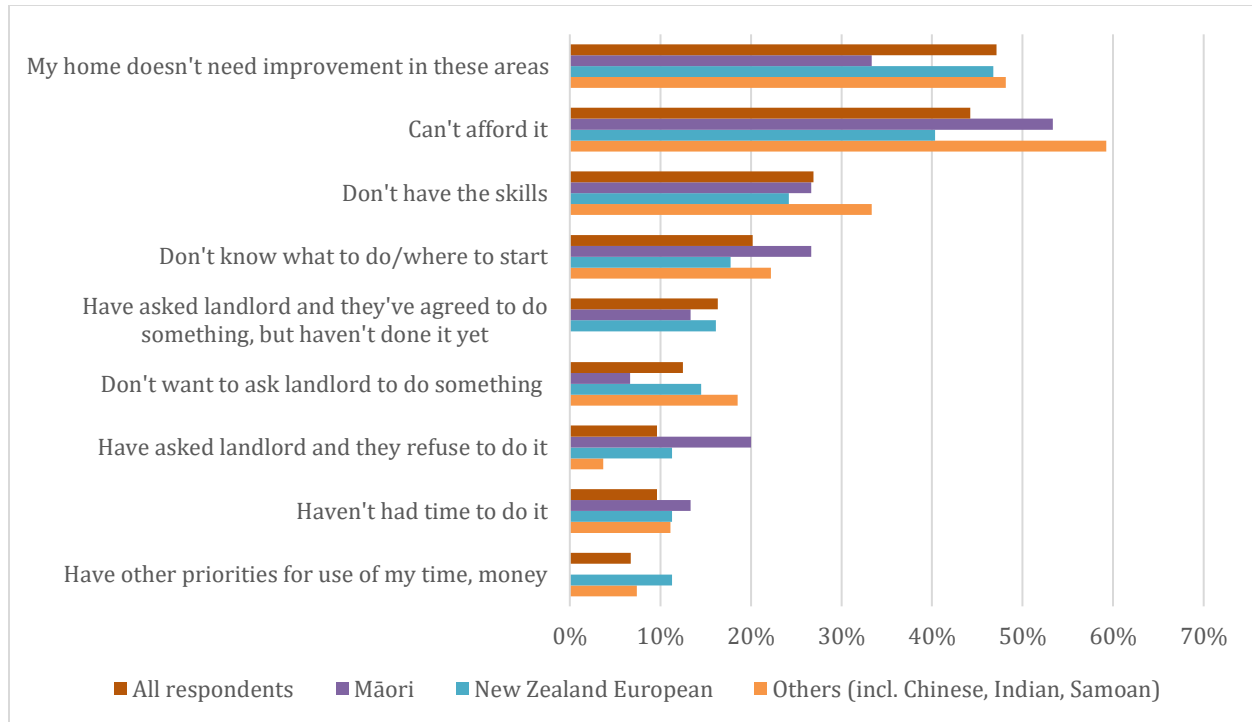
Gender

There was relative consistency across genders in response to the biggest barriers to doing something about respondents' homes' warmth and dryness. While not a top barrier, the one noticeable difference was that 56% of women reported that they haven't had the time to do it, compared to 31.5% of men. This finding is consistent with research which demonstrates women experience greater time poverty than men.³ This can be due to a range of factors, including having greater childcare responsibilities, working long hours both inside and outside the home, and being more likely to assume a role of pastoral care in their household. Our survey did not ask what respondents' household makeup was (eg. single parent, kaumatua, multi-generational) and it is possible gender is not the only factor influencing this difference. It is outside of the scope of this research to probe into this finding in more depth, but could be a question of interest for future housing research.

Ethnicity

Māori (53.3%), Chinese (60%) and Samoan (56.3%) respondents were somewhat more likely than NZ European respondents (40.3%) to report affordability as one of the biggest barriers (vs 44.23% of all respondents), while Indian respondents were much less likely (16.7%). The pattern of response was similar for 'Don't know what to do/ where to start'. These results may indicate some interesting patterns but further research would be needed to ascertain this.

³ Rodgers, Yana. (2022). Time Poverty: Conceptualization, Gender Differences, and Policy Solutions. *Social Philosophy and Policy*. 10.2139/ssrn.4286895.



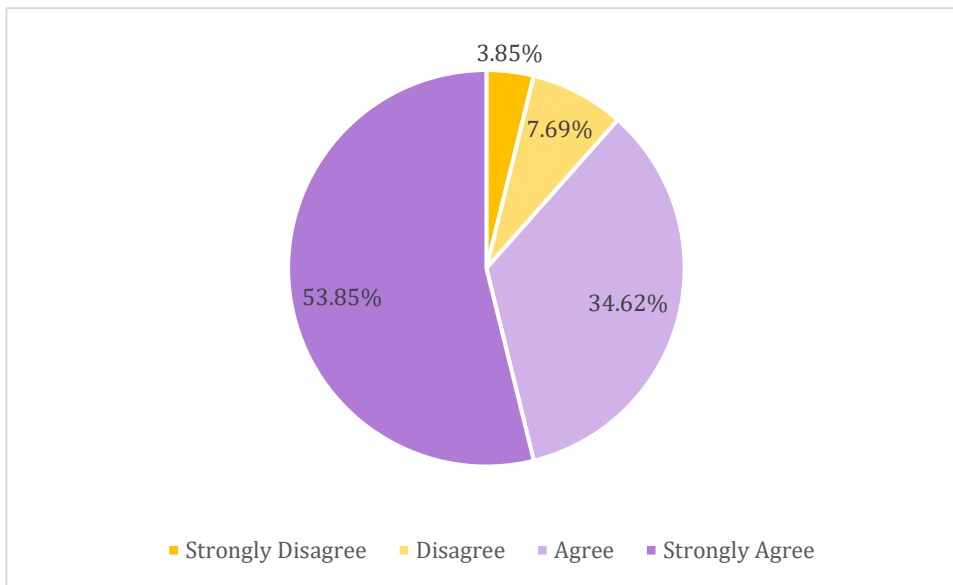
Graph: 'Which of these are the biggest barriers to you doing something to improve your home's warmth and dryness' (by Ethnicity)?

3.2.c. Disability and/or Chronic Illness

The survey questions did not specifically ask whether respondents experience disability or a chronic health condition, but two text answers detailing these as barriers stood out during analysis. The fundamental connection between health and wellbeing, and the physical home was captured in this respondent's answer to the question about what was most important to them in a home: "safe, clean, dry, warm but also not hot (this sounds silly but I have a health condition that makes me extremely temperature sensitive, both hot and cold)". They draw on their health needs directly to emphasise firstly, that a comfortable and controllable temperature is desirable in their home, and secondly, that their needs may not be the same as other people's. Another respondent, who is a homeowner, cited their disability, along with affordability, as the biggest barrier to being able to carry out work to improve their home's warmth and dryness: "due to my disability I can only do the work when my body allows me to". These responses draw attention to the fact that **because people's needs vary, homes need to be able to meet a range of needs.**

An 'individual responsibility' narrative, captured in statements such as "all of us kids were brought up in similar or worse homes than today and survived very well" is easily problematised when stacked up against the lived experiences of people who are limited by their health and/or disability situation.

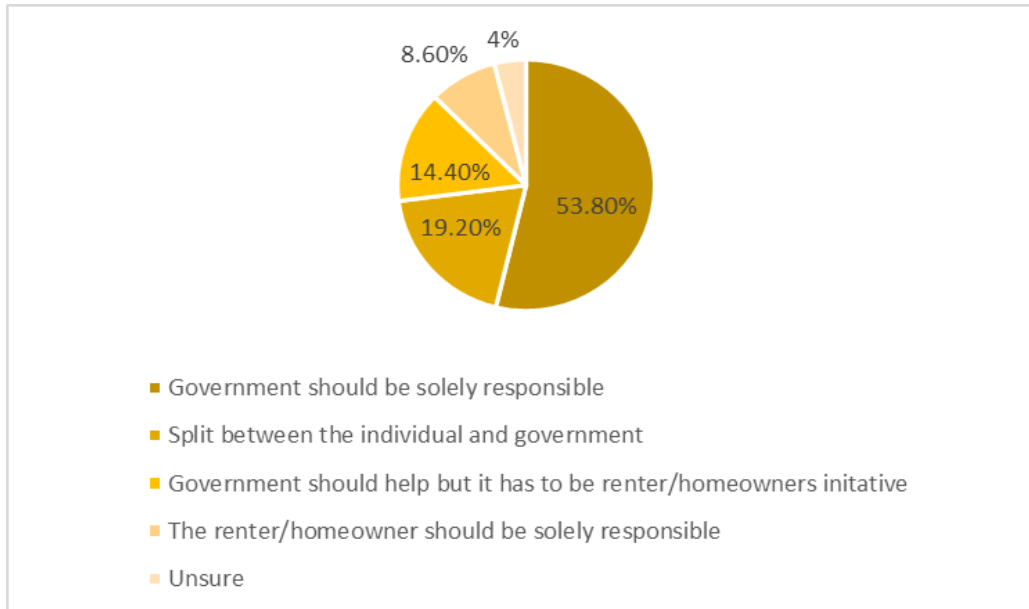
3.3. How do people frame the responsibility for keeping/making homes healthy?



Graph: ‘As a nation we need to make sure everyone in New Zealand has a comfortable, warm and dry home including by having appropriate legislation.’

The answers to the above question indicate a sense of collective responsibility, and a belief that legislation is a viable and acceptable tool in ensuring comfortable, warm and dry homes, with 88.47% agreeing (34.62%) or strongly agreeing (53.85%) with this statement.

We begin this section by looking at how respondents’ weight responsibility along governmental and/or individual lines. We identified and discussed above (*Section 3.2.a.*) the experienced power imbalance between renters and landlords as a contributing factor to renters’ overall lack of agency and choice. In this section we consider how landlords’ responses situate the responsibility for keeping/making homes healthy, contrasting this with how renters perceive landlords and their responsibilities.



Graph: 'Who should take responsibility for improving a home's warmth and dryness?'

3.3.a. Government responsibility

A majority - 53.8% - of respondents, said full responsibility for improving a home's warmth and dryness lies with the government: "[there] should be a law that requires all homes to be warm and dry". 19.2% of respondents also attributed responsibility as partially governmental and partially individual: "the govt can help but it is up to the renter or homeowner to speak up and get that help". 14.4% attributed responsibilities as lying with individual occupants, irrespective of whether they rent or own: "No it's a personal choice and responsibility". 8.6% specified that responsibility for a home's warmth and dryness should lie with landlords and homeowners (not renters): "It is up to the homeowner or landlord and not our taxes". 4% of responses were invalid/unsure, which refers to respondents who left their answer blank, did not answer the question, or stated "I don't know".

For those who ascribed full responsibility to government, in describing what this might look like in practice respondents referred to financing of home building, purchase or improvement: "funding for housing companies" and "building companies"; and regulation/legislation: "they set the regulations for housing requirements", "government should do frequent checks and introduce laws". Responses envisaged support for both renters and home buyers: "Yes, the government has a responsibility to support all New Zealanders to live in healthy homes. **They can help with making it easier to afford a nice home, either to buy or rent**". Warm and dry homes were described as a "basic human right", and that "we should be aiming to achieve this". "I think it is important that the Government adheres to a warm and dry home outcome for **all people** in New Zealand" and "yes - there should be funding to ensure **every home in NZ is warm and insulated** properly".

Some drew explicitly on their personal experiences of living in damp and cold homes to illustrate why they believed full government responsibility was needed: "**They could start with building regulations so**

that homes are built safely and well insulated to begin with and then work from there. They also need to consider infrastructure, it's no good living in a house that has sewage flooding into the back yard (yes, I am speaking from experience)."

Respondents who reasoned that government help should be provided to those who cannot afford to improve their homes identify substandard housing as a question of affordability: "I think the government should give struggling people help with their lives!" and "the Govt have a responsibility to the poor and those who haven't the money". This aligns with the finding that a lack of affordability was one of the most prevalent barriers people experienced and perceived for others in improving a home's warmth and dryness.

We noted above (*Section 3.1.b., pg13*) that there were responses that identified government action already taken in the form of recent legislation as already having a positive impact: "it is being resolved slowly with recent legislation".

3.3.b. Responsibility partially with government, partially individual

Nearly a fifth of respondents (19.2%) perceived the responsibility for warm and dry homes as lying partly with government, and partly with individuals. In their responses, they tended to clarify that government responsibility remained central and necessary to individuals' capabilities to ensure their home's warmth and dryness. For example, one respondent noted that "the govt can help but it is up to the renter or homeowner to speak up and get that help". Some responses were more specific in terms of what "help" might look like, in this sharing of responsibility: "they should support people who want to insulate their home", "it is up to the landlord or homeowner but **we need legislation** to make sure landlords are compliant", and "up to home owner but government could subsidy it".

This partial weighting of responsibility also supported the insights we found across landlord, and non-landlord homeowner and renter responses below that central government should hold landlords accountable for ensuring their rental properties are warm and dry homes. For example, a respondent stated "if landlords aren't insulating their rental properties or mainten[ing] them, the government need[s] to come down heavy on them". Another respondent noted that the government needed to take responsibility for rental home quality by "**ensuring all rental homes are warm and dry**", and they "**should encourage homeowners to insulate via subsidies**". This was echoed by another respondent describing that they would like the government to provide more inclusive eligibility criteria for assistance:

"Absolutely, for the folks that cannot afford it, there should be assistance, clearly, if they are home owners, then there is a good incentive for the government to see that assistance should be provided and there is enough analysis available, to see if these respected home owners would qualify for a subsidy / assistance in any way."

One response indicated that government responsibility for ensuring homes are warm and dry is linked to 'clean and green' claims: "Our government, no matter who it is, proclaims to be clean and green in NZ, so from that point of view **they should have some responsibility to ensure the heating and dryness of the homes here to ensure they meet the clean green image.**" This could also be seen as a climate adaptation related argument for government responsibility for ensuring that homes are warm and dry.

3.3.c. Responsibility with homeowners (including landlords)

8.6% of respondents specified that responsibility for a home's warmth and dryness should lie with "landlords" and "homeowners", and (explicitly) not renters. In the process of analysis, their responses were coded as distinct from those who believed that responsibility lies with all individuals, because they were specific about not attributing the responsibility to renters: "No, I believe it is up to the owner to make these changes or in a new build it is already part of the regulations as well as the landlord's obligation to fix and make livable." Another respondent said: "It is up to the homeowner or landlord and not our taxes."

These respondents perceived the government needing to take responsibility only for state housing, as captured in this respondent's answer to the question: *Do you think the government has a responsibility or role in relation to whether people's homes are warm and dry?* "No. Only homes that they own. It should be each homeowner's responsibility to heat and insulate their own homes to their own needs".

These respondents often did not elaborate beyond stating that landlords and/or homeowners should be solely responsible for their home's warmth and dryness.

3.3.d. Responsibility with occupant, irrespective of housing tenure

14.4% of respondents believed that the individuals occupying the home were solely responsible for their home's warmth and dryness, irrespective of whether they rent or own: "people are responsible on their own for their properties" and "it is fully home owners and renters responsibility". However, this **personal responsibility narrative was statistically less prevalent than narratives suggesting some element of collective responsibility for healthy housing**, which seems consistent with the general trend of the survey responses.

3.3.e. Responsibility for rental home health

Landlords and Responsibility:

8 of 104 (7.7%) survey respondents identified themselves as landlords. This is a **small sample size so can be understood as possibly indicative but not representative**. Within this sample there was

considerable variety in how landlords perceived the responsibility for making and keeping homes warm and dry.

A discourse of **individual responsibility** came through across the answers of some landlord respondents. Responses viewed the individual occupant as solely responsible for the home's level of warmth and dryness, for example in these responses to the question: *If someone is living in a home that is not warm and dry, this is most likely because...* "they do not clean and maintain the environment" and "they have not bothered to prioritise comfort". Consistent with this was respondents' disagreement that the *government has a responsibility or role in relation to whether people's homes are warm and dry*: "it is fully homeowners and renters responsibility". Similarly, these respondents generally disagreed there is a 'problem' with damp and/or cold homes in NZ: "no, not at all. They need to care for their environment. They cannot blame the government for this", and "the problem is more that the homeowner/occupier has allowed the home to deteriorate to that level - it is not the fault of the home". This latter makes an interesting distinction between a 'problem' with the home itself as opposed to the way it has been looked after by the homeowner or occupier.

Other landlord respondents located responsibility for healthy homes with landlords or government actors. One agreed that the government had a responsibility to "support the poor to improve insulation / ventilation". Another expressed the view that landlords were responsible for rental homes and that there was a role for government and systems-level action to achieve healthy homes for everyone:

"If they are renting, then the **landlord should be held accountable to ensure that it is warm and dry**, if it their own home and just cannot afford to keep it to a **livable standard**, then the government should assist where it can and banks should provide favourable rates for a loan to bring these homes, to a standard that is healthy."

While the sample size of landlord respondents is very small, it indicates that landlords have varying mindsets around where responsibility lies. Further research with a bigger sample might help clarify dominant themes.

Renters' descriptions of responsibility:

Renters' perceptions of responsibility tended to emphasise the **power imbalance in the relationship between landlords and tenants**. **There is a theme of landlord greed/stinginess and lack of caring about tenant wellbeing in some responses**: "[houses are unhealthy] because some landlords only want money, [resulting in] not happy tenants" and "greedy landlords ignore [coldness and dampness in a home] and it creates health issues as well as increase bills too". Some renters also wrote that some landlords' neglect of their properties was not compliant with the law or not fulfilling their obligations to tenants: "the landlord isn't following the law", "landlord is saving money" and "the landlord is too tight to ensure [their rental properties are] up to a certain standard".

Renters' responses further illustrate their perception of landlords as negligent and disinterested in the health and wellbeing of tenants in their answers to the question: *Do you think there is a 'problem' with damp and/or cold homes in NZ? Why, or why not?*

- "Yes - landlords are not doing what they should be doing eg. providing heating & windows that open"
- "Yes too many cheap landlords"
- "Yes as landlords charge so much money...some people are living in unhealthy homes and it's really unfair and landlords some seem to get away with it"
- "some landlords do the bare minimum to comply with the law which can mean homes are left damp and cold"

Non-landlord homeowners' perceptions of landlords:

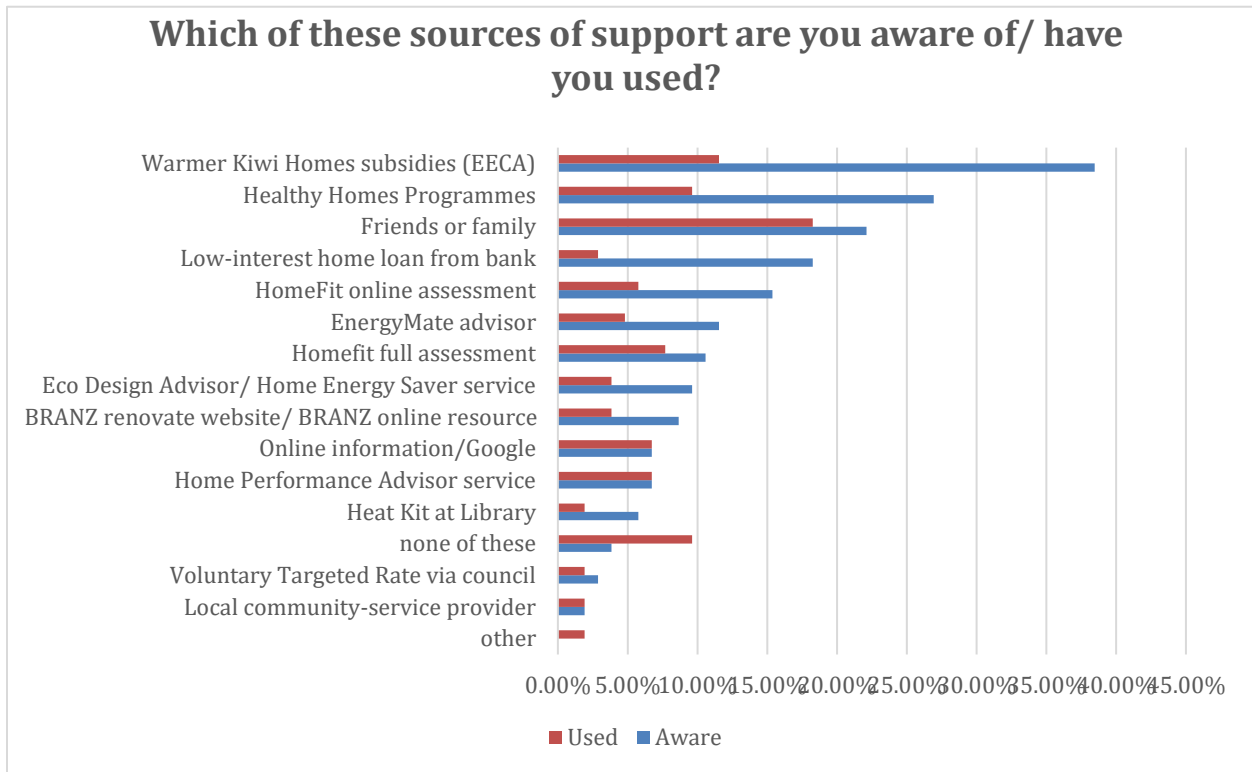
Homeowners who are not landlords often echoed similar sentiments to renters in their descriptions of landlords, often pointing out where landlords were lacking in fulfillment of their legal obligations: "landlord hasn't made the changes to the standards they need to be". They also demonstrated awareness of the power imbalance in the landlord-tenant relationship: "I'm sure there are still a lot of rental properties that are not up to standard as the renters are too scared to report it as they could be homeless if so".

Some of their responses also appeared to support a government role to ensure landlords fulfill responsibilities to improve their property's warmth and dryness: "people shouldn't be allowed to rent homes to other people that are not liveable" and "must be compulsory to **ensure that everyone will be living in healthy homes**".

3.4. Civic Engagement

This is connected to lived experiences, identity, affordability and agency. Civic engagement is assessed by how people rank their likelihood to access central and local government sources of information. It also might be indicated through their awareness of already-existing sources of support for warmer, dryer homes.

3.4.a. Likelihood to Access Information and Advice

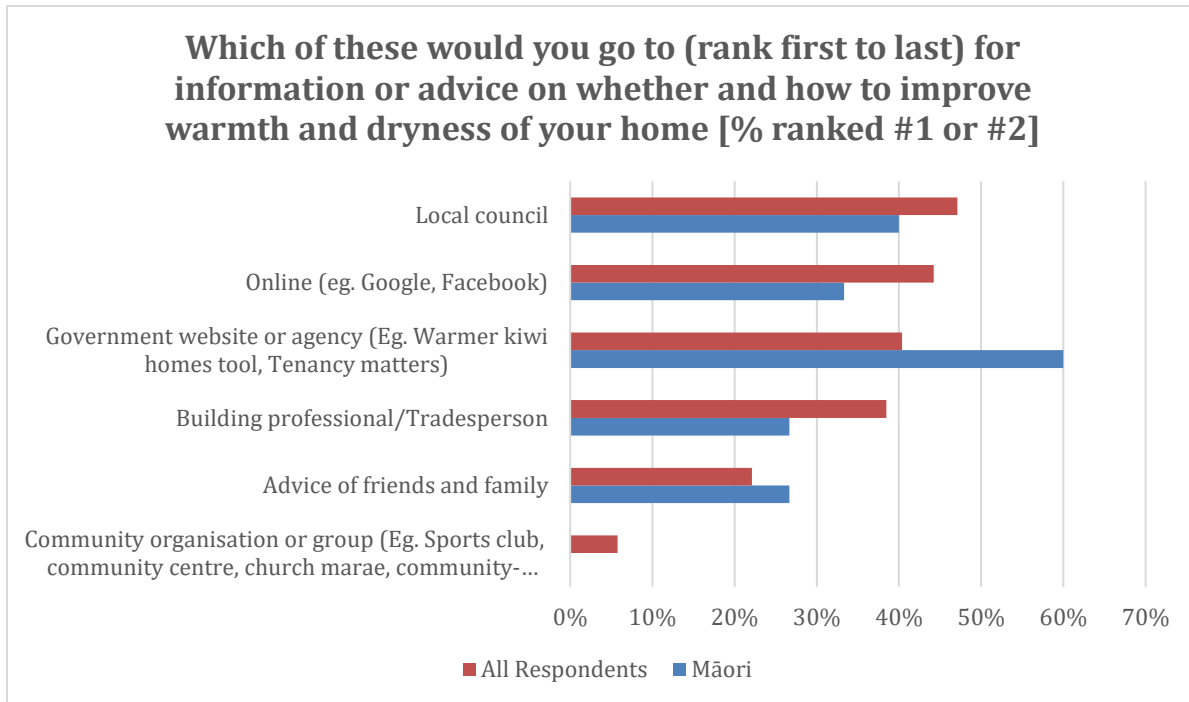


Graph: ‘Which of these sources of support for warmer, drier homes are you aware of/have used?’

Respondents demonstrated greater awareness of national programmes delivered via community-based organisations. It is also notable that these are programmes delivering tangible support (subsidies, material support such as curtains, beds as well as advice). Friends or family ranked highest for sources of support of which there was awareness and third after two large national programmes as the source of support used.

The juxtaposition of the responses to the question on sources of support used (graph above), against the responses to the question ‘Which of these would you go to first (rank from first to last) for information or advice if you were considering whether and how to improve the warmth and dryness of your home?’ (graph below) is interesting in that ‘friends and family’ is fifth (of six possible responses) in the latter, while the question relating to past behaviour indicates friends and family is used above other sources of support.

3.4.b. Awareness and Use of Sources of Support



Graph: ‘Which of these would you go to first (rank from first to last) for information or advice if you were considering whether and how to improve the warmth and dryness of your home?’ [% of respondents who ranked the choice #1 or #2]

Local councils were the most popular choice of respondents for information or advice - 47.1% of respondents had them as either first or second choice. Online (eg. Google, Facebook) followed closely as second most popular (44.2%). Government websites or agencies was the most polarised, with 40.4% ranking this either first or second, and 29.8% ranking it as low as their sixth chosen resource. Government websites or agencies was rated higher on average by Māori than by the total cohort.

5.0 Conclusion

The Survey gives insight into the language and narratives people amongst the Aotearoa/New Zealand general public use in relation to homes and health. Important findings are that there is widespread recognition of the impact of physical homes on holistic individual and collective wellbeing, and that there is recognition of and broad support for a central government role in addressing the issue of unhealthy homes.

‘Deep unhelpful narratives’ were apparent in people’s responses to the survey, in particular individualism (the responsibility and ability to effect change is on individual action), fatalism (the problem is too big and pervasive to be fixed), exceptionalism (New Zealand’s climate and particular

history of buildings inadequate for the conditions mean this problem is different here than it might be in other places). However, survey responses also offered insight into the more helpful narratives that may be strengthened to support a more productive discussion around homes and health, including a narrative of collective responsibility, support for those less well-off and recognition that differential power impacts on choice and agency.

Respondent answers illustrated understanding that healthy homes for all might be achieved in a process-oriented way and a recognition of a role multiple institutions and groups of people can work together to make this a reality.

Findings clearly indicated that positionality and lived experience impact on the experience of choice and agency in relation to living in a healthy home. In particular, choice and agency as a function of affordability, and of the renter-landlord power differential were a significant theme. Insight into shared narratives across groups that are often set in opposition in public discourse (for example renters and landlords) will be helpful in developing messaging that helps focus on shared values and vision.

Opportunities for further research

A few opportunities for further research are mentioned in the report. These include:

- Looking at a bigger sample of landlords to understand diversity of experiences and narratives, and key themes (pg. 23)
- Studying perceptions about homes' causal impact on health vs mitigating/treating impact (pg. 9)
- Assessing the usefulness of comparison with other places as a way of engaging people with solutions, or whether this would risk amplifying an exceptionalist/fatalist narrative (pg. 13)
- Further research to explore nuance of public perceptions of performance of current homes and reasons for this, and perceptions of current building standards and practice impacting new homes (pg. 14)
- Identifying gender differences in barriers to improving home performance (pg. 17)

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Appendix: Survey Questions

WRHHG Healthy Housing Narratives Survey (Jul-Oct 2022)

**The text in blue is for survey designer reference*

1. **Please answer the following, to help us understand something about the range of people taking part in this research**

Age [‘select-a-bracket’]

Gender [Gender: How do you identify? woman, non-binary, man, prefer to self-identify (allow space to specify)]

Ethnicity [use census categories]

The place I live in is: Urban/rural [Check Stats NZ’s urban/rural classifications at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/methods/functional-urban-areas-methodology-and-classification/> (scroll down to the bit “The FUA classifications” and Table 4)]

Location (for insight to climatic conditions) select one from drop-down – drop-down list is Territorial Authorities.

The place I live most of the time is: (drop-down: my own home, in a home owned by whānau/ another family member, private rental or board, Kainga Ora/social rental, other [please specify])

Which of these apply to you (please tick all that apply): [list order to be randomised in survey – changes with each time survey accessed]

- Landlord
- Renter
- Homeowner
- Central govt employee
- Work in building industry
- Health professional
- Social sector worker
- Parent / caregiver of child(ren)
- Student
- Property Manager

B. Please answer the following questions using your own words. We appreciate you answering as fully and honestly as you can.

1. Please tell us about what's most important to you in a home?

2. How do you think our homes affect our health and wellbeing (mental, physical, emotional, social)?
3. From your point of view, if someone is living in a home that is not warm and dry, this is most likely because...
4. Do you think the government has a responsibility or role in relation to whether people's homes are warm and dry? Please tellu?
5. Do you think there is a 'problem' with damp and/or cold homes in NZ? Why, or why not?

C. Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of these statements: [4-step Likert scale – strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree]

1. Temperature and dampness in a home are not big factors affecting the health of the people who live there
2. On average homes in New Zealand are not very warm and dry by international standards
3. I believe current standards for building homes in New Zealand are/ are probably high in terms of international standards
4. If someone in the household has asthma or another respiratory illness, increasing the ventilation and temperature inside the home is likely to help
5. If a child or young person is living in a cold or damp home for only a year or two, this is not likely to affect their long-term health
6. Everyone in New Zealand should have a comfortable, warm and dry home no matter if they own their home or rent.
7. As a nation we need to make sure everyone in New Zealand has a comfortable, warm and dry home including by having appropriate legislation.

8. Which of these are the biggest barriers to you doing something to improve your home's warmth and dryness? Choose the top 3 barriers from 1 (biggest) to 3.

- My home doesn't need improvement in these areas
- don't know what to do/ where to start
- don't have the skills
- haven't had time to do it
- Can't afford it
- Have other priorities for use of my time, money (if so, what?)
- Don't want to ask landlord to do something
- Have asked landlord and they've agreed to do something but haven't done it yet
- Have asked landlord and they refuse to do it

- Other (please specify)

9. Which of these would you go to first (prioritise 1-3) for information or advice if you were considering whether and how to improve warmth and dryness of your home? [randomise the order these appear in survey]

- Local council
- Online (eg. Google, Facebook)
- Building professional/ tradie
- Community organisation or group (eg. sports club, community centre, church, marae, community-based health or advice organisation) If so, which?
- Advice of friends and family
- Government website or agency – eg. Warmer Kiwi Homes Tool, Smarter Homes, Tenancy Matters (if so, which?)
- Other (please specify?)

D. Awareness of existing resources/ supports

Which of these sources of support for warmer, drier homes are you aware of/ have you accessed in the last 3 years, if any? (please tick all that apply):

- Heat Kit at Library
- Spoken to someone at local Council
- Eco Design Advisor/ Home Energy Saver service
- Home Performance Advisor service
- EnergyMate advisor
- BRANZ Renovate website or other BRANZ online resource
- HomeFit online assessment
- HomeFit full assessment
- Warmer Kiwi Homes subsidies for insulation or heating (EECA)
- Voluntary Targeted Rate through local council
- Low-interest home loan for home health improvements through bank
- Healthy Homes Programmes: Noho Ahuru (Auckland & Waitemata), AWHI (Auckland), Manawa Ora (Northland), Whare Ora (Waikato), WellHomes (Wellington), Healthy Homes Service (Lakes), Healthy Homes BOP, Child Healthy Housing Programme (Hawkes Bay), Turanga Health (Tairāwhiti), Ngati Porou Hauora (Tairāwhiti)
- Online information (if so, any particular websites/ organisations?)
- Advice or support from local community service-provider (if so, which?)
- Advice or support from friends or family
- Other (please specify)