



Reimagining rental housing for a changing population

The quarter-acre dream has long been part of Kiwi culture. But for a growing proportion of the population, private homeownership is no longer an affordable option. By investigating experiences and challenges in today's rental landscape, BRANZ is developing viable models for medium-term housing alternatives to better meet society's needs, now and in the future.

The way we live in Aotearoa New Zealand is changing. With the increasing cost of living and high demand for housing, the private rental sector is under enormous pressure.

Between 2018 and 2022, the number of households in rental accommodation increased by 36%. During that same period, the total number of all households increased by just 6%. More people were feeling financial pressure due to increased rental costs – the number of households in rental homes classified as being in need increased by 18%.

With a suite of research projects on housing affordability and the rental sector, BRANZ is investigating the medium-term housing market and developing alternative models for living.

The New Zealand Rental Sector Survey, published this year, is a cross-sectional study supported by BRANZ and led by Massey University. First conducted nationwide in 2015, the survey collects the experiences and attitudes of landlords and tenants to measure changing trends every 3–5 years.

The power imbalance between tenants and landlords is a well-known issue. Recent changes to rental regulations, informed by the 2015 survey results, aimed to increase tenant security, flexibility and wellbeing. This included the removal of no-cause tenancy terminations and the healthy homes initiative.

This year's survey suggests these regulatory changes have had variable effects. We found that, while the physical conditions of rental housing have improved, tenant insecurity is still a significant issue. There were also indications of hidden overcrowding, with 10% of tenants reporting a household member sleeping in a space other than a bedroom.

More intervention is needed to improve the rental system. Using the survey data, BRANZ commissioned research led by

Livingston and Associates investigating alternative options for affordable medium-term housing.

With an advisory group of government, non-government and iwi and Māori organisations, *Alternative housing tenures* explores many different models for living, including hybrid renting, collective ownership and cooperatives. For instance, the research team took an in-depth look at the collaborative lower-cost living model set up by the Peterborough Housing Cooperative in Ōtautahi Christchurch.

To understand opportunities and barriers, the researchers have also surveyed the perspectives of key stakeholders, including iwi and hapū, philanthropists, cooperative housing groups, community finance experts, developers and government entities.

Seven new research updates exploring alternative tenures have been published this year, with the final publication due in June 2023. BRANZ has also commissioned related research, including BRANZ Scholar Sam O'Brien's analysis of the inclusionary approach used by the Queenstown Lakes Community Housing Trust.

Housing affordability and availability remain an ongoing national issue. By using people-centred research, BRANZ is helping to imagine new ways to live in our homes, to reduce power imbalances and to increase security in New Zealand's medium-term housing.

READ MORE



BRANZ (2022). External Research Report 78 *The New Zealand rental sector*.

www.branz.co.nz/pubs/research-reports/er78

IN THEIR WORDS



Steph Pole, trustee and resident, Peterborough Housing Cooperative

Why is it important that we explore different ways of living in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Housing has become so expensive. We need to find better ways for people to live in warm and healthy homes. We also need to provide living situations that support emotional and physical wellbeing. Looking at different ways of living can allow us to develop the homes and community connection that everybody needs.

What is the Peterborough Housing Cooperative?

The Peterborough Housing Cooperative is a project of the Ōtākaro Land Trust, which is a not-for-profit charitable trust. It addresses the need for lower-cost housing and living in a sustainable way. Our residents all help with running the cooperative, which has a shared common space and amenities surrounded by clusters of independent housing units.

Why did you decide to be involved in this research?

It was an easy decision as we all like to talk about living here! We think it is important for people to learn about different ways of living. In the past, it was commonly believed that you had to own your own house, without connection to the people living around you. I hope this research will help people consider how to live more cooperatively and share resources. The climate and our society need this.

What impact has this cooperative had on the people who live there?

It has a huge impact. It gives people a sense of control, security and a voice in the way they live. Our community assists and supports people when they are unwell and provides childcare, friendship and socialisation for children. Children who have lived here have grown up to have incredible confidence and social skills due to being raised 'by a village' (we think so anyway!).



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