

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).

***Household crowding is measured by the Canadian Household Crowding standard, which states:**

There should be no more than two people per bedroom.
Parents or couples share a bedroom.
Children under 5 years, either of same or opposite sex, may share a bedroom.
Children under 18 years, of same sex, may share a bedroom.
Children aged 5-17 years should not share a bedroom with children under 5 years of opposite sex.
Single adults 18 years and over and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom.

Source: 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 1: Percentage of population living in crowded or severely crowded households, 2013

Definition		% of population	Population
In need of one or more bedrooms	Crowded	9.7%	366.000
In need of two or more bedrooms	Severely crowded	3.1%	116.000

Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2013

Proportion of population living in crowded housing

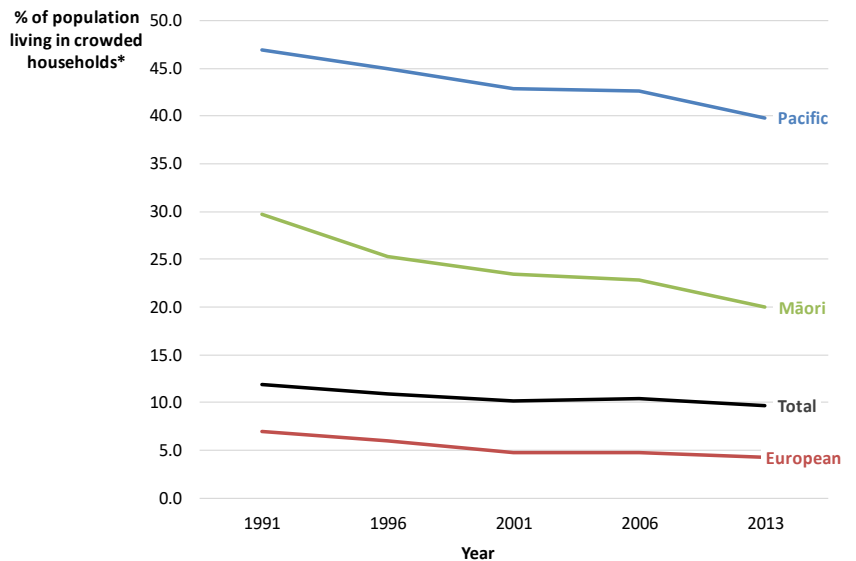
Māori and Pacific are more affected

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.

Figure 1: Percentage of population living in crowded households, by ethnic group, 1991-2013



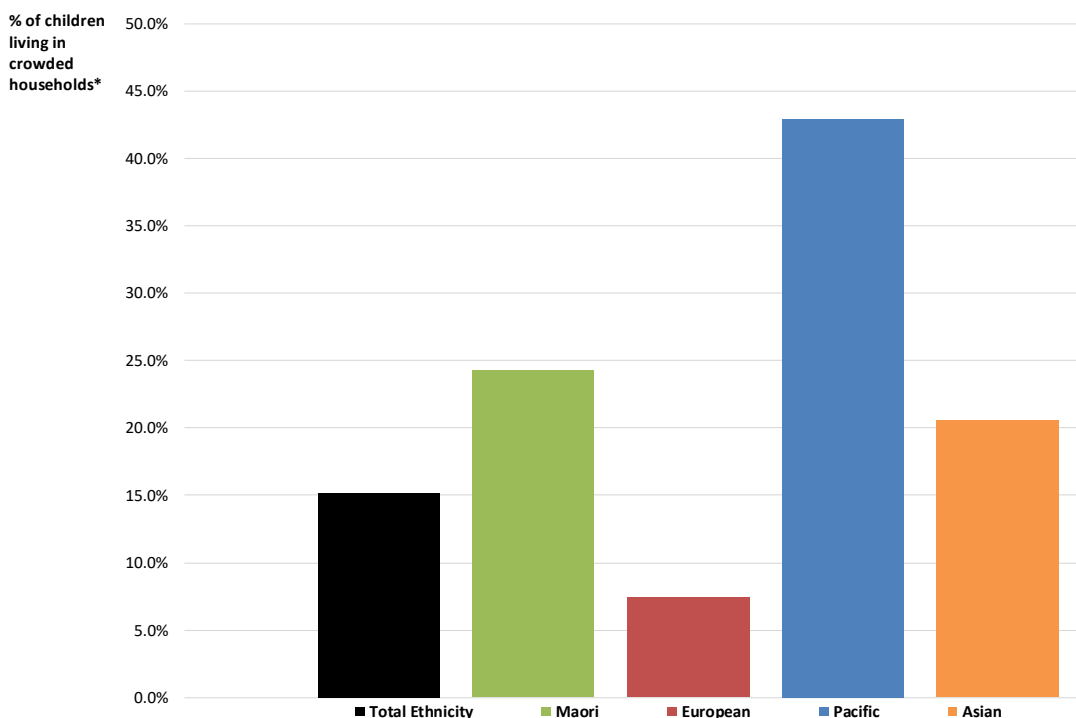
Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2013

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.

Figure 2: Percentage of children (0 - 14 years) living in crowded households, by ethnic group, 2013



Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2013

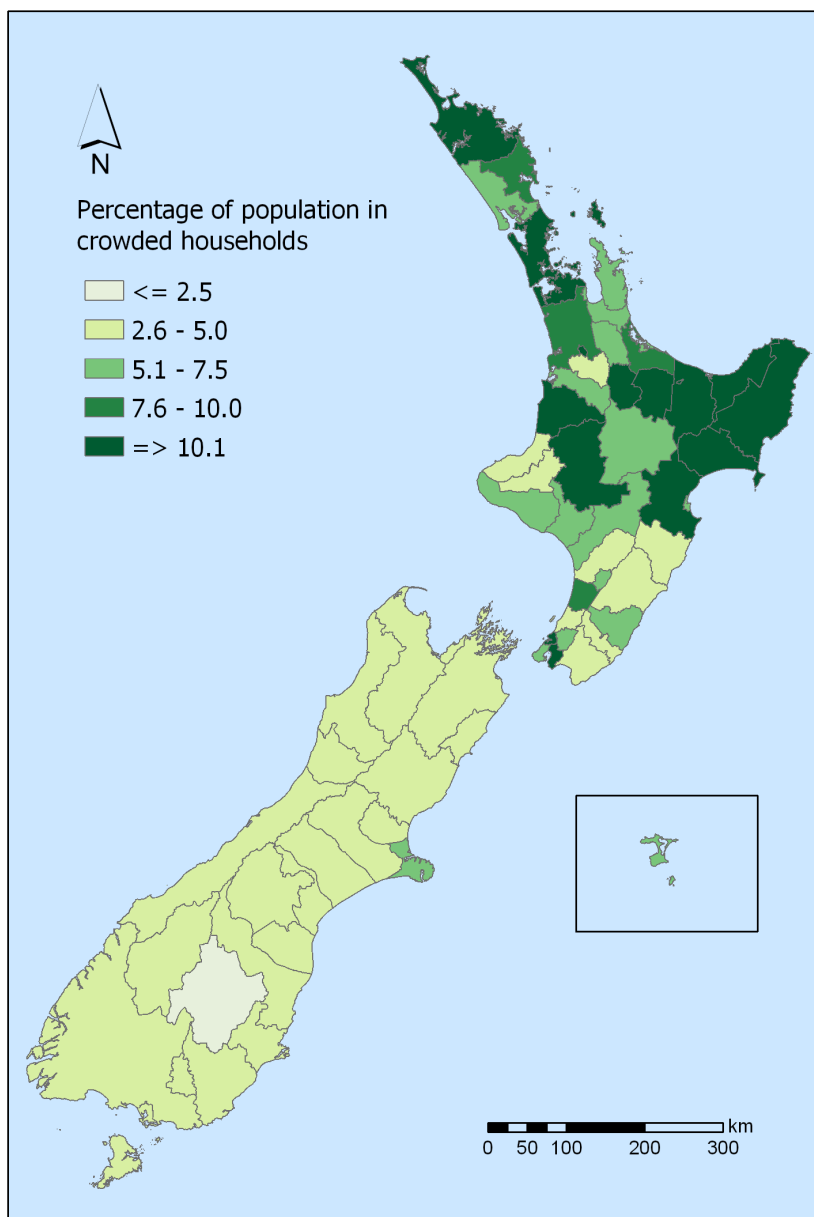
Proportion of population living in crowded housing

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



Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2013

REFERENCES

Baker, M.G., McDonald, A., Zhang, J. & Howden, -Chapman, P. (2013). Infectious diseases attributable to household crowding in New Zealand: A systematic review and burden of disease estimate. Wellington: He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago.

Goodyear, R.K., Fabian, A. & Hay, J. (2011). *Finding the crowding index that works best for New Zealand. Applying different crowding indexers to Census of Population and Dwellings data for 1986-2006.* Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.

McNicholas, A., Lennon, D., Crampton, P. & Howden-Chapman, P. (2000). *Overcrowding and infectious diseases - when will we learn the lessons of our past?* New Zealand Medical Journal, 113(1121), 453-454.

Statistics New Zealand. (2013). *2013 Census.* Available from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census.aspx> (accessed August 2017).

For more information, please contact Carolin Haenfling on ehnz@massey.ac.nz