# Homelessness, Housing, and Discrimination amongst Sexual and Gender Minorities in New Zealand

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**Abstract**_ *Sexual and gender minorities are over-represented in homelessness statistics both internationally and in New Zealand (NZ). Despite this, the experiences of these groups remain under-researched. Using data from an online survey conducted with LGBTIQ+ people over the age of 16 in NZ, we investigate experiences of homelessness, discrimination, and involuntary mobility/eviction. Findings show that 37.5% of respondents had ever experienced homelessness, and that experience of homelessness was significantly associated with sexuality, income, disability, age, ethnicity, and intersex status. Respondents who had experienced homelessness had significantly higher rates of all forms of discrimination measured, as well as involuntary mobility/eviction. Results suggest intersecting vectors of discrimination contribute to the experiences of homelessness amongst LGBTIQ+ people in NZ, highlighting the need for inclusive, intersectional policy and programmes aimed at addressing homelessness.*

**Keywords**_ *LGBT, sexual and gender minorities, housing, homelessness, discrimination, New Zealand*

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## Introduction

This paper quantitatively investigates the experiences of homelessness amongst takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ people in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), exploring how this varies across different demographics. We also explore the relationship between different forms of homelessness and wider socio-cultural influences such as discrimination and involuntary mobility/eviction, to show ways forward for both national and international research on the phenomenon. We use LGBTIQ+ as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other sexual and gender minorities. Takatāpui is used among LGBTIQ+ identifying Māori as both an identity in and of itself, to describe their sexuality and/or gender in culturally appropriate ways, and as an umbrella term (Kerekere, 2017).

The precise definition and measurement of homelessness varies internationally. Historically, much literature has equated homelessness with rough sleeping (Amore et al., 2011, 2013; Bretherton, 2017; Edgar, 2012). In NZ, the official definition of homelessness expands the ETHOS typology (Edgar, 2012), to define homelessness as "living situations where people with no other options to acquire safe and secure housing are without shelter, in temporary accommodation, sharing accommodation with a household or living in uninhabitable housing" (Statistics New Zealand, 2009, p. 6). We use this official definition both because that is the context this research is situated in, and because it is an expansive definition which includes "concealed" or "hidden" forms of homelessness. Homelessness thus includes situations such as rough sleeping, couch surfing, living in shelters and women's refuges, living in severely crowded dwellings, and living in cars, amongst others (Amore et al., 2013). Additionally, we choose to use the term "involuntary mobility" to refer to both eviction and informal eviction-like situations; those where a person is forced to move before they are ready. This includes situations such as a landlord abruptly notifying a person to end the tenancy agreement, and relationship breakdowns that resulted in a person either being asked to move, or feeling like they had no other choice but to move (Fraser et al., 2022; Fraser & Buchanan, 2025). We choose not to refer to these experiences as "eviction" due to there being a specific legal definition of eviction in NZ, which requires going through the Tenancy Tribunal (a court which holds hearings to settle disputes between tenants and landlords), and is enforceable through District Courts and carried out by bailiffs (Toy-Cronin & Bierre, 2022).

LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing and homelessness constitute a growing field of research. Internationally, LGBTIQ+ people are estimated to comprise 5-10% of the overall population, but 20-40% of homeless populations (Ecker, 2016; Ecker et al., 2019; Fraser et al., 2019; McCann & Brown, 2019). Members of the LGBTIQ+ community face disproportionately high rates of the structural, social, and biographical factors that are known to cause and exacerbate homelessness, such

as poverty, relationship breakdowns, sexual abuse, childhood adversity, harassment and victimisation, and poor physical and mental health (Baams et al., 2019; Castellanos, 2016; Dempsey et al., 2020; Hail-Jares et al., 2023; Hao et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2025; Loschiavo et al., 2020; McCarthy & Parr, 2025; Quilty & Norris, 2025; Robinson, 2018; Siconolfi et al., 2019; Whitbeck et al., 2004). However, much of this literature focuses specifically on the experiences and outcomes of those who are rough sleeping, and/or young people under the age of 25.

In the international literature, many quantitative studies focus on individual factors that contribute to homelessness (such as poor mental health), with less emphasis given to the broader upstream determinants and areas of prevention. This could be, in part, due to the majority of this quantitative literature coming from North America, where much of the broader homelessness literature has focused on individual-level contributors, with less emphasis given to the structural and political factors that contribute to homelessness, as in the European literature (Manoni-Millar & Racine, 2026). In the general homelessness literature, research finds that eviction, discrimination, and disability are all factors that contribute to homelessness risk (Beer et al., 2019; Fowle, 2022; Mackie, 2023; Stone et al., 2019; van Laere et al., 2009; Zivanovic et al., 2016). The international LGBTIQ+ homelessness literature also shows considerable evidence of discrimination contributing to homelessness (Downes et al., 2025; Ecker et al., 2020; Nugent et al., 2022; Quilty & Norris, 2025)—particularly amongst young people, many of whom enter homelessness due to negative reactions from family members when disclosing their LGBTIQ+ identity/ies (Abramovich et al., 2022; DeChants et al., 2022; Dempsey et al., 2020; Han, 2024; McCarthy & Parr, 2025; Robinson, 2018; Shelton & Bond, 2017; Tunåker, 2015). Other upstream research begins to link experiences of eviction with LGBTIQ+ homelessness (Downes et al., 2025; Giménez-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Yılmaz & Göçmen, 2016).

In NZ, rates of homelessness are currently captured during national censuses. The most recent, Census 2023, also included LGBTIQ+ demographic questions—meaning for the first time both nationally and internationally, we have whole-of-population data on the prevalence of LGBTIQ+ homelessness. On the night of Census 2023, 112 496 people (2.3% of the population) were estimated to be experiencing homelessness, though this is suspected to be an undercount (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). Of this, living in uninhabitable housing (i.e., housing that lacks one or more basic amenities) was the most common form of homelessness (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). Demographically, LGBTIQ+ people had higher rates of homelessness than non-LGBTIQ+ people, with a prevalence rate of 260.9 per 10 000 LGBTIQ+ people over the age of 15, compared to a rate of 212.1 per 10 000 for non-LGBTIQ+ people over 15 (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). This prevalence was consistently higher across most forms of homelessness, and the rate was even higher for people of another gender (287.2 per 10 000) and for those

who were transgender (315.0 per 10 000) (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). Māori and Pacific LGBTIQ+ people were also over-represented in these statistics (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a).

Previous research using the same dataset as the present study has shown a significant relationship between homelessness and experiences of state care, involuntary mobility/eviction, and housing discrimination for respondents under the age of 25 (Fraser et al., 2022). Of the whole sample, 33.3% were flatting/house-sharing, with flatters more likely to have moved due to a relationship breakdown in the house, and have experienced housing discrimination (Fraser & Buchanan, 2025). Qualitative research on LGBTIQ+ homelessness in NZ explores systemic failures, pervasive instability, survival strategies, and the ongoing trauma of having experienced homelessness (Fraser, Chisholm, et al., 2021; Fraser et al., 2024a, 2024b). Upstream research on LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of housing instability identifies how experiences of instability are both political and relational, can influence a person's sense of self, and surviving such experiences requires nuanced approaches (Fraser, 2025). Finally, a study using data from the 2018 General Social Survey found that, after controlling for other variables, non-heterosexual respondents were more likely to have had their tenancy ended by a landlord than heterosexual respondents (Telfar-Barnard et al., 2026).

In terms of other quantitative surveys that capture the housing and homelessness experiences of the LGBTIQ+ community in NZ, Lavender Islands was the first national survey to ask LGBTIQ+ people about their housing experiences. The survey found that respondents did not report experiencing sexuality-based housing discrimination in the previous ten years (Henrickson et al., 2007). However, their sample population was overwhelmingly Pākehā (NZ European), highly educated, earning considerably over the median income, and included only three transgender respondents (0.1%) (Henrickson et al., 2007). The Counting Ourselves survey asked gender diverse people in NZ about homelessness and housing deprivation but did not collect information from the wider LGBTIQ+ and takatāpui community. The study found almost 15% of respondents reported some form of housing discrimination in the 2018 iteration, and in the 2022 iteration, 19% of respondents had experienced homelessness during their lifetime (Veale et al., 2019; Yee et al., 2025). The Youth19 survey found LGBTIQ+ respondents were more likely to experience housing deprivation, but only sampled from secondary school students in select regions of the North Island (Clark et al., 2021). The Identify survey of LGBTIQ+ young people found 10% of respondents had experienced homelessness at some point during their lifetime (Fenaughty et al., 2022). However, none of these surveys focused specifically on housing and homelessness amongst the entire LGBTIQ+ population of NZ.

To this end, we designed this survey—before Census data on LGBTIQ+ homelessness existed—to explore the housing experiences of people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and sex characteristics in NZ. This survey aimed to gain data on LGBTIQ+ homelessness as well as important broader experiences that contribute to homelessness, such as housing discrimination and involuntary mobility/eviction, and the impact this may have on wellbeing. In excavating these upstream conditions that contribute to the disproportionate rates of homelessness amongst LGBTIQ+ people, we are able to better understand the policy and service delivery needs of these communities. At present, there is very limited policy and programming aimed at addressing LGBTIQ+ homelessness in NZ; the now-expired Homelessness Action Plan mentioned LGBTIQ+ communities as a priority group, but limited actions were taken in this space (New Zealand Government, 2020; Smith et al., 2025). An evaluation of the Plan highlighted a lack of data on the scale and nature of homelessness amongst LGBTIQ+ communities (Smith et al., 2025), echoing findings from the UK whereby parliamentary discourses focus on the lack of data and research on the phenomenon, erasing the government's role in deciding what types of data are collected, and then positioning the collection of data as an action in preventing LGBTIQ+ homelessness (Spruce, 2024). Data is important, but policy and programming that actually addresses the issues are imperative. This paper serves to close some of these gaps in data, so that we can move towards action.

## Methods

### *Participants and ethics*

Participants were LGBTIQ+ people aged 16 years and over who were residing in NZ. The survey ran from 17 December 2021 to 24 January 2022, with 1040 responses, 894 of which were viable (i.e., were not empty), and 880 with valid responses. Ethics approval was granted by the Department of Public Health on behalf of the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, reference D21/356. The information sheet and consent form were provided on the opening page of the survey. Participants consented to take part by clicking a large button which read "By clicking through to continue to the survey questions I am indicating that I give my consent and agree to take part in this project." The opening and closing pages of the survey also contained information on freely available mental health hotlines and resources (including takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ specific ones) for participants should they have needed them. As part of our ethics approval, participants were able to leave blank any questions they did not wish to answer.

### *Recruitment*

Participants were recruited via 62 separate Facebook groups (including housing, regional, cultural, and LGBTIQ+ specific groups), housing and takatāpui and LGBTIQ+ related organisations, Instagram and TikTok accounts created specifically to advertise this project, and the first authors' professional and private networks as well as their personal social media accounts (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). Of this, the Instagram account we created (@rainbowhousingnz) was the most widely shared and engaged with. Participants were able to opt-in to enter a draw to win one of five $50 supermarket vouchers as a thank-you for their participation.

### *Survey Design*

Our survey was comprised of 45 questions covering demographics, housing quality, household composition, wellbeing, homelessness, involuntary mobility, and discrimination. The survey questions were primarily adapted from existing Statistics New Zealand (SNZ) surveys such as the 2018 New Zealand Census (Statistics New Zealand, 2018a, 2018b), the 2018 General Social Survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2018c), and the 2018 Te Kūpenga Māori Social Survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2018d). We wrote several of our own questions where there were no SNZ questions that met our needs, mirroring the structures and wording used in SNZ surveys as appropriate. To measure lifetime experiences of homelessness, we provided a multiple choice question asking "Have you ever experienced any of the following situations for a week or more?" with the following options: living rough (e.g., sleeping on the street); living in a night shelter; living in a women's refuge; living in emergency and/or transitional housing; living in a camping ground or motor camp due to having nowhere else to live; living in other commercial accommodation due to having nowhere else to live (e.g., hotels, boarding houses, guest accommodation); and living as a temporary resident in a private dwelling due to having nowhere else to live (e.g., couch surfing, staying with friends). This allows us to operationalise the SNZ categories of severe housing deprivation, although we chose to report each option separately rather than combining them into broader categories, in order to retain nuance. We did not ask about uninhabitable housing, which is part of the national homelessness definition, as it was a lengthy question and we were wary of the survey being overly long. For involuntary mobility, we provided a multiple choice question asking if participants had ever moved because: the landlord ended the tenancy (e.g., the landlord sold the house or flat, expiry of lease agreement); had a poor relationship with the landlord (this can include moving out of your own choice, or being asked to leave); and/or had a poor relationship with other people in the house (e.g., parents, flatmates. [1] This can include moving out of your own

[1] NZ term for a housemate/roommate.

choice, or being asked to move), and an open-text "other" option. For discrimination, we asked questions about where they experienced discrimination, by whom, and the reason they were discriminated against.

We used SNZ's 2021 standards to assess sexual orientation and gender identity. We asked separate questions on gender (options included female, male, and another gender, which included an open-text box), whether participants considered themselves to be transgender, sexual orientation (we added asexual and takatāpui to the standard SNZ options, which includes an open-text option), and if participants have a variation of sex characteristics (i.e., are intersex) (Statistics New Zealand, 2021). These standards recommend that when deriving transgender status from gender and transgender questions, those who respond to gender questions with "another gender" be placed into the output category "transgender and non-binary" (Statistics New Zealand, 2021). We decided against this, as 39% of our non-binary respondents did not consider themselves to be transgender, so we wish to respect the ways they have identified and thus have not grouped them with transgender respondents.

### *Data handling and analysis*

Survey data were collected and managed using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap) tools hosted at the University of Otago. REDCap is a secure, web-based software platform designed to support data capture for research studies. The survey data were analysed through RStudio (R Core Team, 2023). Descriptive statistics were used and presented as frequencies and percentages. We conducted bivariate analyses to check the association between categorical variables using the Chi-squared and Fisher's exact tests, and the Mann-Whitney U test for continuous data. We used a binary logistic regression model with the dependent variable (homelessness), coded 1 if an individual had ever experienced homelessness and 0 otherwise. The logistic regression model was designed to estimate the probability of experiencing homelessness based on key demographic and socioeconomic factors. Variables were selected for their strong theoretical and empirical links to housing insecurity, as well as their significance in the bivariate analysis. This approach ensures the model remains parsimonious, avoids overfitting, and provides results that are both robust and interpretable. The logistic regression model estimates the likelihood of experiencing homelessness as a function of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Categorical variables were entered into the regression model with reference category specified before model fitting. Odds ratios (OR) greater than 1 indicate higher odds of homelessness relative to the reference group, while values below 1 suggest lower odds. Statistical significance is determined by p-values and whether the 95% confidence intervals (CI) exclude 1.

## Results

The main objective of this study is to assess the association between homelessness and health and demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as their experiences of both discrimination and housing instability. The dataset has 880 observations in total. The descriptive statistics show a diverse sample across demographic categories. Age distribution was concentrated among younger groups, with 42.2% less than 30 years and 28.8% aged 30–49, while only 0.8% were 65 years or older. This age distribution is close to the NZ LGBTIQ+ population, where 47.1% are less than 30 years and 32.7% are aged 30–49, but dissimilar to the 7.4% aged 65 years or older (Statistics New Zealand, 2026). Ethnically, the majority of participants identified as New Zealand European (80.9%), followed by Māori (18.6%), Asian (6.9%), and smaller proportions of Pacific peoples, Other European, and Other ethnicities. Similar to the NZ LGBTIQ+ population, New Zealand European make up the majority (75.5%), followed by Māori (17.6%). However, the proportion of Asian (14.9%) and Pacific Peoples (5.9%) in the LGBTIQ+ population in NZ is higher than that reported in our sample (Statistics New Zealand, 2026). The respondents identified more with Another gender/Other (39.0%), and about half of the respondents (51.4%) earned $50 000 or lower annually. Most respondents were from the North Island, with 33.2% of respondents from Auckland, NZ's largest city. Regarding sexuality, the largest group identified as gay or lesbian (40.1%), followed by bisexual or pansexual (32.6%), with smaller shares identifying as queer, takatāpui, asexual, or other. In terms of forms of homelessness experienced, staying in temporary accommodation (such as couch-surfing) was the most common at 30.6%. The overall rate of homelessness amongst the sample was 37.5%.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics**

| Variable | N | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| **Age group (years)** | | |
| 16-24 | 305 | 34.7 |
| 25-44 | 396 | 45.0 |
| 45-64 | 80 | 9.1 |
| 65+ | 7 | 0.8 |
| Missing | 92 | 10.5 |
| Mean±SD | | 29.7±11.1 |
| **Gender** | | |
| Female | 333 | 37.8 |
| Male | 204 | 23.2 |
| Another gender/Other | 343 | 39.0 |
| Transgender (Yes) | 234 | 26.6 |
| Intersex (Yes) | 15 | 1.7 |
| **Ethnicity*** | | |
| NZ European | 712 | 80.9 |
| Māori | 164 | 18.6 |
| Pacific Peoples | 30 | 3.4 |
| Asian | 61 | 6.9 |
| Other European | 57 | 6.5 |
| Other | 19 | 2.2 |
| **Annual income (NZ$)**** | | |
| Under 20001 | 277 | 31.5 |
| 20001 – 50000 | 175 | 19.9 |
| 50001 – 100000 | 268 | 30.4 |
| Above 100000 | 91 | 10.3 |
| Don't know/refuse to answer | 69 | 7.8 |
| **Sexuality** | | |
| Asexual | 50 | 5.7 |
| Bi/Pan sexual | 287 | 32.6 |
| Gay/Lesbian | 353 | 40.1 |
| Queer | 84 | 9.6 |
| Takatāpui | 54 | 6.1 |
| Other | 52 | 5.9 |
| **Homelessness** | | |
| Sharing/temporary | 269 | 30.6 |
| Commercial | 116 | 13.2 |
| Camping | 76 | 8.6 |
| Emergency | 40 | 4.5 |
| Refuge | 19 | 2.2 |
| Shelter | 12 | 1.4 |
| Rough | 64 | 7.3 |
| Overall | 330 | 37.5 |

*Multiple ethnic groups allowed; **Annual gross income from all sources before taxes, expenses or deductions.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of homelessness experienced by LGBTIQ+ identity. Overall, each group had a high rate of lifetime exposure to homelessness. Two-thirds of intersex respondents reported having experienced homelessness, the highest rate by LGBTIQ+ identity amongst the sample. In terms of sexuality, just over half of queer respondents reported homelessness exposure, followed by 44.4% of takatāpui participants. Results were similarly high for those who were transgender, and those who reported a gender outside of the binary. The lowest in-group rate of homelessness was amongst those who reported their sexuality as "other."

**Figure 1: Percentage of homelessness experience by LGBTIQ+ identity**

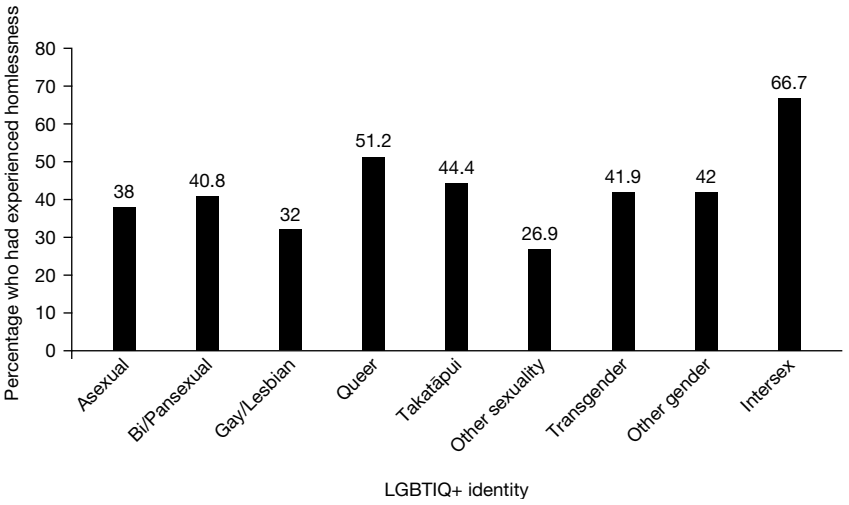



Table 2 shows that there was a statistically significant association between age and homelessness. Examination of the cell proportions showed that lifetime experience of homelessness was higher among adults (25-44 years) and young adults (16-24 years). Of the 880 respondents, 330 (37.5%) had ever experienced homelessness. Those aged 16-24 years were disproportionately represented in the ever-homeless group. We also found a statistically significant association between homelessness and gender, income, sexuality, and disability. Our findings show that disability was a common experience amongst participants, with difficulties remembering being the most common (35.7% of all respondents). Other responses showed that 13.9% had difficulties seeing, 9.9% had difficulties hearing, 11.1% had difficulties walking, and 17.3% had difficulties communicating. These findings are concerning in that more than half of those who reported a disability had ever experienced homelessness. Several studies have established strong relationships between disability and homelessness amongst the general population (Baker Collins & Fudge Schormans,

2023; Beer et al., 2019). A cross-sectional survey of 6 418 LGBTIQ+ young people in Australia found higher odds of lifetime, recent, and ongoing homelessness among those with disabilities compared to those without disabilities (Lim et al., 2025). Our findings point to the fact that, although disabled people often face housing discrimination (Jarwala & Singh, 2019), being disabled *and* having an LGBTIQ+ identity may increase the likelihood of experiencing housing discrimination, which can lead to homelessness. We found that about one-fifth and more than half of those who had ever experienced homelessness faced housing discrimination because of their disability and sexual orientation, respectively.

In terms of gender, both the bivariate analysis and regression analysis reported that gender was significantly associated with homelessness; women in the sample were more likely to experience homelessness. This mirrors national statistics. NZ is an outlier internationally with a slightly greater proportion of women experiencing homelessness than men, due in part to our comprehensive measurement of homelessness that captures so-called "hidden" forms of homelessness, and due to a welfare state that does not adequately support sole parents (Fraser, Jiang, et al., 2026; Fraser, White, et al., 2021). At Census 2023, there were more women than men experiencing homelessness, and both women and people of another gender outside the binary had higher prevalence rates of homelessness per 10 000 compared to men (232.2 and 312.5 cf. 221.5) (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). Census 2023 also reported that amongst LGBTIQ+ people, transgender and non-binary people (specifically those aged 30 and above) were most likely to be experiencing homelessness on Census night (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). However, our findings showed no significant association between identifying as trans and/or another gender and homelessness. We are unsure as to exactly why these differences exist, but anticipate some might be due to differences in sample size. Future research is needed to conduct similar analyses as those presented in this paper on a whole-of-population scale where possible.

**Table 2: Association between demographic characteristics and homelessness**

| | Never homeless (N = 550) | Ever homeless (N = 330) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | n (%) | n (%) | p value |
| **Age group (years)** | | | |
| 16-24 | 91 (31.4) | 214 (43.0) | **0.007** |
| 25-44 | 158 (54.5) | 238 (47.8) | |
| 45-64 | 38 (13.1) | 42 (8.4) | |
| 65+ | 3 (1.0) | 4 (0.8) | |
| Mean±SD | 28.8±10.9 | 31.2±11.3 | |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Female | 202 (36.7) | 131 (39.7) | **0.001** |
| Male | 149 (27.1) | 55 (16.7) | |
| Another gender/Other | 199 (36.2) | 144 (43.6) | |
| Transgender (Yes) | 136 (24.7) | 98 (29.7) | 0.124 |
| Intersex (Yes) | 5 (0.9) | 10 (3.0) | **0.008** |
| **Ethnicity*** | | | |
| NZ European | 450 (81.8) | 262 (79.4) | 0.425 |
| Māori | 93 (16.9) | 71 (21.5) | 0.108 |
| Pacific Peoples | 19 (3.5) | 11 (3.3) | 1.000 |
| Asian | 46 (8.4) | 15 (4.5) | **0.043** |
| Other European | 28 (5.1) | 29 (8.8) | **0.044** |
| Other | 8 (1.5) | 11 (3.3) | 0.106 |
| **Annual income (NZ$)** | | | |
| Under 20001 | 189 (34.4) | 88 (26.7) | **0.007** |
| 20001 – 50000 | 98 (17.8) | 77 (23.3) | |
| 50001 – 100000 | 160 (29.1) | 108 (32.7) | |
| Above 100000 | 66 (12.0) | 25 (7.6) | |
| Don't know/refuse to answer | 37 (6.7) | 32 (9.7) | |
| **Sexuality** | | | |
| Asexual | 31 (5.6) | 19 (5.8) | **0.006** |
| Bi/Pan sexual | 170 (30.9) | 117 (35.5) | |
| Gay/Lesbian | 240 (43.6) | 113 (34.2) | |
| Queer | 41 (7.5) | 43 (13.0) | |
| Takatāpui | 30 (5.5) | 24 (7.3) | |
| Other | 38 (6.9) | 14 (4.2) | |
| **Disability** | | | |
| Seeing (Yes) | 59 (10.7) | 63 (19.1) | **0.001** |
| Hearing (Yes) | 37 (6.7) | 50 (15.2) | **<0.001** |
| Walking (Yes) | 45 (8.2) | 53 (16.1) | **0.001** |
| Remembering (Yes) | 170 (30.9) | 144 (43.6) | **<0.001** |
| Communicating (Yes) | 82 (14.9) | 70 (21.2) | **0.021** |

*Multiple ethnicities are allowed.

Table 3 shows that while all respondents faced high rates of discrimination, it was particularly severe for those who had experienced homelessness at some stage in their lives, with statistically significant differences across all forms of discrimination measured. As expected, those who had experienced homelessness were signifi-

cantly more likely to have faced housing-related discrimination. About 31%, 21.5%, and 20.9% of those who ever experienced homelessness reported they faced housing discrimination from family members, landlords, and flatmates, respectively. In terms of where discrimination was experienced, more than half (57%) of those who had ever experienced homelessness experienced discrimination on the street or in a public place. The workplace (46.4%) and healthcare facilities (42.4%) were other likely places where those who had ever experienced homelessness faced discrimination. We found that sexual orientation (54.2%), gender (46.1%), and way of dressing or appearance (41.2%) were the most common reasons why those who had ever experienced homelessness were discriminated against; most other reasons for discrimination (such as ethnicity, age, disability, mental health, and religion) were significantly higher for this group. This suggests that intersectional marginalisation is at play here; it is not just LGBTIQ+ identities that are contributing to experiences of homelessness, but rather, that participants who are marginalised along multiple vectors of exclusion were particularly at-risk of being discriminated against, which is likely to be an important contributing factor to them experiencing homelessness. The international literature shows discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to be an important contributing factor for experiencing homelessness (Begun & Kattari, 2016; Côté et al., 2024; Ecker et al., 2020; Giménez-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Shelton & Bond, 2017). In particular, discrimination in the house search and from landlords, real estate agents, and flatmates during a tenancy are common experiences amongst LGBTIQ+ in the international research (Ecker, 2024; Fraser, Bierema, et al., 2026; Glick et al., 2020; Kattari et al., 2016). Additionally, research has begun to look at intersectional discrimination, showing that the more vectors of discrimination a person faces, the more likely they are to experience homelessness (Beltran et al., 2019; Otiniano Verissimo et al., 2023).

**Table 3: Association between experiences of discrimination and homelessness**

| | Never homeless (N = 550) | Ever homeless (N = 330) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | n (%) | n (%) | p value |
| **Discrimination** | | | |
| At work (Yes) | 162 (29.5) | 153 (46.4) | **<0.001** |
| At School/University/Polytech (Yes) | 127 (23.1) | 106 (32.1) | **0.004** |
| In a shop or restaurant (Yes) | 93 (16.9) | 95 (28.8) | **<0.001** |
| On the street or in a public place (Yes) | 186 (33.8) | 188 (57.0) | **<0.001** |
| Seeking medical care (Yes) | 101 (18.4) | 140 (42.4) | **<0.001** |
| Dealing with the police (Yes) | 16 (2.9) | 42 (12.7) | **<0.001** |
| Trying to get a job (Yes) | 62 (11.3) | 77 (23.3) | **<0.001** |
| By staff at a WINZ[#] office (Yes) | 28 (5.1) | 61 (18.5) | **<0.001** |
| By staff at an NGO[##] you were seeking support from (Yes) | 14 (2.5) | 43 (13.0) | **<0.001** |
| **Housing discrimination** | | | |
| By a family member you live with (Yes) | 104 (18.9) | 103 (31.2) | **<0.001** |
| By a flatmate you live with (Yes) | 50 (9.1) | 69 (20.9) | **<0.001** |
| By someone at a flat viewing (Yes) | 22 (4.0) | 53 (16.1) | **<0.001** |
| By a neighbour (Yes) | 29 (5.3) | 60 (18.2) | **<0.001** |
| By a property manager (Yes) | 25 (4.5) | 58 (17.6) | **<0.001** |
| By a landlord (Yes) | 26 (4.7) | 71 (21.5) | **<0.001** |
| By a real estate agent (Yes) | 13 (2.4) | 32 (9.7) | **<0.001** |
| By a homeowner when you were trying to buy a house (Yes) | 2 (0.4) | 8 (2.4) | **0.008*** |
| By a mortgage broker or banker when you were trying to buy a house (Yes) | 7 (1.3) | 15 (4.5) | **0.005** |
| **Reason for discrimination** | | | |
| Age (Yes) | 80 (14.5) | 75 (22.7) | **0.002** |
| Race or ethnic group (Yes) | 59 (10.7) | 52 (15.8) | **0.038** |
| Way of dressing or appearance (Yes) | 105 (19.1) | 136 (41.2) | **<0.001** |
| Accent or language (Yes) | 20 (3.6) | 18 (5.5) | 0.266 |
| Gender (Yes) | 158 (28.7) | 152 (46.1) | **<0.001** |
| Sexual orientation (Yes) | 201 (36.5) | 179 (54.2) | **<0.001** |
| Religious beliefs (Yes) | 15 (2.7) | 24 (7.3) | **0.003** |
| Physical disability or health issues (Yes) | 51 (9.3) | 64 (19.4) | **<0.001** |
| Mental health issues (Yes) | 98 (17.8) | 109 (33.0) | **<0.001** |
| Other (Yes) | 21 (3.8) | 21 (6.4) | 0.121 |

[#] Work and Income New Zealand, the national social welfare provider; [##] Non-Governmental Organisation; *Fisher's test used due to small cell count.

Table 4 shows that there was a statistically significant association between homelessness and physical and mental health, and respondents' ease or difficulty of finding somewhere to stay in an emergency if their living situation changed. The mean number of times those who had experienced homelessness moved houses was significantly higher than that of those who had never experienced homelessness ($p<0.001$). All respondents reported high rates of involuntary mobility (with almost 30% of those who had never experienced homelessness reporting involun-

tary mobility due to a relationship breakdown, for example); however, those who had experienced homelessness reported significantly higher rates of involuntary mobility across all forms. Most noticeably, 63.6% of those who had ever experienced homelessness had been forced to move due to a relationship breakdown inside their homes.

**Table 4: Association between homelessness and both health and housing instability**

| | Never homeless | Ever homeless | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | n (%) | n (%) | p value |
| **Health** | n = 462 | n = 330 | |
| Excellent | 58 (12.6) | 25 (7.6) | **0.014** |
| Very good | 118 (25.5) | 62 (18.8) | |
| Good | 130 (28.1) | 112 (33.9) | |
| Fair | 108 (23.4) | 88 (26.7) | |
| Poor | 48 (10.4) | 43 (13.0) | |
| **Mental health** | n = 465 | n = 329 | |
| Excellent | 25 (5.4) | 7 (2.1) | **0.029** |
| Very good | 61 (13.1) | 39 (11.9) | |
| Good | 125 (26.9) | 73 (22.2) | |
| Fair | 137 (29.5) | 123 (37.4) | |
| Poor | 117 (25.1) | 87 (26.4) | |
| **Need a place to stay** | n = 465 | n = 329 | |
| Very easy | 146 (31.4) | 43 (13.1) | **<0.001** |
| Easy | 139 (29.9) | 73 (22.2) | |
| Sometimes easy, sometimes hard | 104 (22.4) | 110 (33.4) | |
| Hard | 52 (11.2) | 46 (14.0) | |
| Very hard | 24 (5.2) | 57 (17.3) | |
| **Move frequency in the last 5 years (mean ± SD)** | 2.5±2.4 | 3.8±3.0 | **<0.001**[#] |
| **Eviction/Involuntary mobility** | n = 550 | n = 330 | |
| Tenancy reasons (Yes) | 147 (26.7) | 167 (50.6) | **<0.001** |
| Poor landlord relationship (Yes) | 52 (9.5) | 122 (37.0) | **<0.001** |
| Poor household relationship (Yes) | 163 (29.6) | 210 (63.6) | **<0.001** |
| Other reason (Yes) | 13 (2.4) | 31 (9.4) | **<0.001** |

[#]Mann-Whitney U test was used because the data normality assumption was not met.

People who identified as queer had significantly higher odds of experiencing homelessness compared to gay/lesbian respondents (AOR = 2.16, 95% CI [1.22, 3.82], p =.008). Other sexuality categories were not statistically significant, indicating no clear evidence of increased or decreased risk. With the 65+ group as reference, age was not a significant predictor of homelessness. Respondents aged 16–24 (AOR = 0.36, *p* =.210) and 25–44 (AOR = 0.68, *p* =.633) had lower odds, while those aged 45–64 (AOR = 1.17, *p* =.852) had slightly higher odds, but none were statistically significant. Gender differences were evident in the model. Men were signifi-

cantly less likely to experience homelessness compared with women (AOR = 0.55, 95% CI [0.35, 0.87], p =.010). Respondents identifying as another gender did not differ significantly from women in their odds.

Income was strongly associated with homelessness. Compared to those in the highest income group (reference), respondents earning NZ$20 001–50 000 had more than double the odds of homelessness (AOR = 2.16, 95% CI [1.14, 4.09], p =.019). Those earning NZ$50 000–100 000 also faced elevated odds (AOR = 1.77, 95% CI [0.97, 3.20], p =.061). Ethnicity was not a strong predictor in this model once other variables were controlled for. Those identifying with "Other" ethnicities showed higher odds of homelessness, though these associations did not achieve statistical significance. In summary, the results highlight sexuality, gender, and income as significant predictors of homelessness. Queer respondents were at greater risk, while men were less likely than women to report homelessness. Lower or unknown income was associated with higher odds of homelessness. Ethnic differences were less clear once other factors were accounted for.

**Table 5: Logistic Regression Predicting Homelessness**

| Term | Adjusted Odds Ratio (AOR) | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Intercept) | 0.21 | 0.09 | 0.52 | **0.001** |
| **Sexuality (ref: Gay/Lesbian)** | | | | |
| Asexual | 1.07 | 0.52 | 2.19 | 0.860 |
| Bi/Pan sexual | 1.35 | 0.92 | 2.00 | 0.130 |
| Other | 0.56 | 0.26 | 1.20 | 0.135 |
| Queer | 2.16 | 1.22 | 3.82 | **0.008** |
| Takatāpui | 1.24 | 0.58 | 2.62 | 0.580 |
| **Age group (ref: 65+)** | | | | |
| 16-24 | 0.36 | 0.07 | 1.78 | 0.210 |
| 25-44 | 0.68 | 0.14 | 3.32 | 0.633 |
| 45-64 | 1.17 | 0.23 | 5.95 | 0.852 |
| **Gender (ref: Female)** | | | | |
| Male | 0.55 | 0.35 | 0.87 | **0.010** |
| Other | 1.02 | 0.70 | 1.48 | 0.935 |
| **Income (ref: Above 100 000)** | | | | |
| Under 20 001 | 1.70 | 0.88 | 3.28 | 0.115 |
| 20 001-50 000 | 2.16 | 1.14 | 4.09 | **0.019** |
| 50 001-100 000 | 1.77 | 0.97 | 3.20 | 0.061 |
| Don't know/refuse | 2.79 | 1.26 | 6.19 | **0.012** |
| **Ethnicity (ref: NZ European)** | | | | |
| Māori | 1.42 | 0.90 | 2.25 | 0.131 |
| Pacific | 1.13 | 0.47 | 2.73 | 0.778 |
| Asian | 0.62 | 0.29 | 1.32 | 0.218 |
| Other European | 1.55 | 0.77 | 3.10 | 0.219 |
| Other | 2.67 | 0.97 | 7.36 | 0.057 |

## Discussion and conclusions

Our study has described the demographic characteristics of a sample of LGBTIQ+ people aged 16 years and over who were residing in NZ, and assessed the association between homelessness and health and demographic characteristics of the participants, and their experiences of both discrimination and housing instability. Such work is important in understanding the broader determinants that contribute to the elevated rates of homelessness amongst LGBTIQ+ populations, so that effective policy and programming can be implemented. In this study, we obtained valid responses from 880 respondents, who were mostly young people of NZ European ethnicity. About one-third of respondents had ever experienced homelessness during their lives. Many factors had a statistically significant association with homelessness. This included: age, gender identity, income, sexuality, disability, experiences of discrimination both in general and during their interactions with the housing sector, physical and mental health status, frequency of moving houses in the last five years, ease of having a place to stay during an emergency, and past eviction/involuntary mobility. In terms of our logistic regression results, queer respondents had significantly higher odds of experiencing homelessness compared with gay and lesbian respondents. In addition, men were less likely than women to report homelessness. No significant associations were observed for age groups or most ethnic categories, indicating that homelessness risk is not strongly predicted by these factors once other characteristics are controlled for. These findings highlight the importance of homelessness, housing, and discriminatory issues faced by sexual and gender minorities in New Zealand.

The majority of the international literature on LGBTIQ+ homelessness primarily focuses on rough sleeping, with a more limited amount of literature that is inclusive of other forms of homelessness. However, our data aligns with Census 2023 data in showing that rough sleeping is not the most common form of homelessness experienced by LGBTIQ+ people; living in uninhabitable housing was the most common, followed by sharing accommodation (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). Our results did not measure uninhabitable housing, but like these national data, sharing accommodation/staying temporarily in another household was the most common form of homelessness experienced by our respondents. If we were to operationalise the SNZ definition and combine responses into the broad categories of without shelter, temporary accommodation, and sharing accommodation (Amore et al., 2021), the without shelter group would be the least common form of homelessness amongst our respondents. Ultimately, whichever way the data is sliced, rough sleeping is one of the least common forms of homelessness that LGBTIQ+ people experience in NZ. We call on international researchers to use broader definitions of

homelessness, based on the ETHOS model (Amore et al., 2011; Edgar, 2012), as our national definition is, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of homelessness amongst LGBTIQ+ communities.

Research that focuses solely on rough sleeping is likely to undercount the real size and scale of the issue, and serves to continue the invisibilisation of "hidden" forms of homelessness. Internationally, there is a small amount of quantitative LGBTIQ+ homelessness research that shows when other forms of homelessness are measured, they are generally more common than rough sleeping itself (Downes et al., 2025; Hail-Jares et al., 2023; McKinnon et al., 2025; Prock & Kennedy, 2020), although few studies draw this out further. Some researchers have begun to address this limitation within the literature, looking specifically at LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of couch surfing (such as staying with friends and family); finding that couch-surfing is common amongst LGBTIQ+ people (Petry et al., 2022; Rhoades et al., 2024), and that those who are couch-surfing are unlikely to access homelessness support services as they did not view themselves as experiencing homelessness (Hail-Jares, 2023). Focusing on homelessness as solely comprising experiences of being "unhoused" or "houseless"—as is increasingly common in the broader international homelessness literature—serves to further invisibilise these other, common, forms of homelessness. In doing so, we limit our ability to accurately identify and address the issue. We welcome continued research on these so-called "hidden" forms of homelessness, so that policy and practice can develop evidence-based processes to better support the needs of LGBTIQ+ people experiencing homelessness across all the different forms it takes.

Our findings regarding residential mobility point to upstream factors that can lead one to experience homelessness. There was a high rate of involuntary mobility across the entire sample, but particularly so for those who had experienced homelessness. Having to move due to a relationship breakdown inside the home was especially common for those who had experienced homelessness. Previous research using this data has shown how such relationship breakdowns are more likely to be experienced by those who are flatting/house-sharing, positioning flatters in greater vulnerability to homelessness (Fraser & Buchanan, 2025). Such relationship breakdowns can also include the deterioration of family relationships, which is a common thread throughout the LGBTIQ+ homelessness literature (Castellanos, 2016; DeChants et al., 2022; Giménez-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Robinson, 2018; Schmitz & Tyler, 2018). While the international literature thus far has primarily focused on relationship breakdown within families, our findings highlight the need to expand this focus to all relationships within the home—particularly as flatting/house-sharing becomes more common in increasingly expensive housing markets across the world (Maalsen, 2019). The literature that does exist, however, has shown that experiencing discrimination within the

household is not an uncommon experience for LGBTIQ+ people. It can result in people either being forced to move by those in the home who are unaccepting of sexual and gender diversity (Fraser et al., 2024b), or having to exercise a degree of "micro-agency" (Fraser et al., 2023) and "choose" to leave due to safety and wellbeing concerns (Castellanos, 2016).

Furthermore, 50.6% of respondents who had experienced homelessness reported involuntary mobility due to tenancy reasons, such as their landlord selling the property, or their landlord choosing not to renew an expiring lease. This echoes findings of the national Household Disability Survey, which found that for both disabled and non-disabled respondents, the most common reason for renters to have moved was due to their landlord ending the tenancy (Statistics New Zealand, 2025a). Data from Census 2023 shows that compared to non-LGBTIQ+ people, those in the LGBTIQ+ community are more likely to be renters, have higher annual housing costs, and move more frequently (Statistics New Zealand, 2025b). Additional research has found that non-heterosexual renters have a higher rate of landlord-ended tenancy compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Telfar-Barnard et al., 2026). Security of tenure is minimal in NZ, with tenancy-related legislation making it easy for landlords to end a tenancy within a relatively short time period (James et al., 2022). As has been discussed elsewhere, improving security of tenure and regulation of the rental market, as well as providing clear paths of recourse for those who have experienced discrimination in the housing market, will likely improve the rates of residential mobility for LGBTIQ+ people (Fraser, 2025). Little focused attention has been paid to LGBTIQ+ people's experiences of eviction right across the international literature; at present, it is primarily mentioned as one facet of broader housing struggles (Downes et al., 2025; Giménez-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Yılmaz & Göçmen, 2016). Future research would do well to explore these experiences, including those who have used legislative processes (such as courts/tribunals) to hold discriminatory landlords accountable, in order to better understand how this can be prevented through policy and programming.

Those who had experienced homelessness also reported that they had greater difficulty finding someone they could stay with in an emergency, compared to those who had never experienced homelessness. International research has shown that limited social networks and social capital can negatively impact a person's capacity to maintain housing through reduced support during hardship, which can make people more reliant on formal support services (Batterham, 2019). However, previous research has shown that LGBTIQ+ people can be reluctant to engage with formal services for fear of discrimination based on their sexuality and/or gender (Fraser et al., 2019, 2022, 2024b). This then adds another layer of precarity for LGBTIQ+ people facing housing insecurity and homelessness. There is, however,

some emerging literature investigating the community care and mutual aid that the LGBTIQ+ community itself provides to those with housing need (England, 2025; Flood & Hochstenbach, 2025); however, more research is needed to explore the relevance of this in the NZ context, and to deepen the international literature on the phenomenon. Cues could be taken from broader international literature on informal peer support and care provided within the LGBTIQ+ community; in the context of mental health support, research has shown that such roles stretch and extend existing relationships, prompt the need for self-care and support to the care-giver, and are, despite their challenges, meaningful acts for those involved *and* the wider community (Worrell et al., 2024; Worrell, Waling, Anderson, Lyons, Fairchild, et al., 2022; Worrell, Waling, Anderson, Lyons, Pepping, et al., 2022).

The international LGBTIQ+ homelessness literature has rightfully paid considerable attention to the difficulties that LGBTIQ+ people face in accessing mainstream services (Abramovich, 2016; Begun & Kattari, 2016; Bowers et al., 2022; Coolhart & Brown, 2017; Cray et al., 2013; Ecker et al., 2021; England, 2022; Hunter, 2008). This has been an important starting point for a body of literature that seeks to improve the outcomes of a marginalised demographic, and the literature has built on this to look at targeted programming (Abramovich et al., 2026; Abramovich & Kimura, 2019; Brais & Malenfant, 2025; Gattis et al., 2023; Gutman et al., 2022; Prock & Kennedy, 2017; Tubertini et al., 2023) and broader experiences of homelessness (Côté et al., 2024; Ecker, 2024; Ecker et al., 2020; Eisenberg et al., 2019; Hail-Jares et al., 2023; McCann & Brown, 2019, 2021; McCarthy & Parr, 2025; Schmitz et al., 2022; Shelton et al., 2018). However, the literature is only just beginning to look at upstream factors and opportunities for prevention-related policy and programming. For example, some important new literature has looked at the role of welfare states in LGBTIQ+ people's lives, highlighting the importance of the link between welfare policy and homelessness (Di Feliciantonio & Dagkouly-Kyriakoglou, 2022; Hotchkiss et al., 2024; Matthews et al., 2024). As our findings have shown, there is a need to look upstream, at matters such as eviction, broader experiences of discrimination beyond those that occur within homelessness services, the role of social support, and the differing service needs that different forms of homelessness may necessitate. Overall, our findings show that LGBTIQ+ people in NZ have high rates of lifetime exposure to homelessness, as well as many of the upstream factors that contribute to experiencing homelessness. Health and wellbeing, income, discrimination, and involuntary mobility were all significantly associated with lifetime exposure to homelessness. Our findings indicate that improved policy is needed to prevent discrimination in the housing market and to provide greater security of tenure in order to reduce rates of involuntary mobility and eviction. Such policies would greatly contribute to efforts to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. Furthermore, this paper highlights important

areas of future research—both nationally and internationally—advocating for the need for those of us undertaking research in this space to look at the upstream, structural factors that contribute to the over-representation of LGBTIQ+ people in homelessness statistics globally.

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