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**Wellbeing and social housing: using linked survey and administrative data to evaluate the impact of social housing on individual wellbeing**

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**Abstract**

Evidence based policy requires government to be able to identify the impact of interventions. Without robust evaluation of the impacts of interventions on New Zealanders’ wellbeing it is difficult to know if interventions are actually making a difference in their lives. This paper examines how wellbeing outcomes change before and after placement in social housing. It uses a novel approach that combines longitudinal administrative data with a cross-sectional survey data to quantify the impact of social housing on wellbeing using a form of the OECD How’s Life wellbeing framework adapted to New Zealand circumstances.

Information from Housing New Zealand – the primary state provider of social housing in New Zealand – is used to identify a cohort that both applied for and received social housing. This cohort is linked to four waves of the New Zealand General Social Survey, which provides information across a wide range of different wellbeing outcomes. Variation in when the respondent applied for social housing and when they were interviewed means that some of the sample interviews occur before they are placed in social housing, while some are interviewed afterwards. This allows us to observe wellbeing outcomes before and after placement in social housing, while the fact that all respondents are drawn from the same cohort that both applied for and received social housing over the same period controls for selection bias associated with receipt of social housing.