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Going Straight Home? Post-prison housing experiences and the role of stable housing in reducing reoffending in Aotearoa New Zealand

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RECEIVED
Waitangi Tribunal
21 Sep 23
Ministry of Justice
WELLINGTON

2022

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Fund.

The Going Straight Home team would like to thank the Research and Analysis team from Ara Poutama Aotearoa, particularly Paula Pope, Anna Duncan and Paula Thomson for all their assistance in providing data and facilitating the research process, and for responding to our many queries with patience and grace. We would also like to thank the managers and staff of the prisons where the pre-release interviews took place.

We extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all the participants in the study for sharing their stories and experiences with us.

We also offer heartfelt thanks to the Māori external reference group: Sir Kim Workman, Professor Tracey McIntosh, Tui Gallagher, Shane White, Elaine Ngamu, Karen Ngamu. Thanks also must go to Bryce Lyall, Georgina Clark and Dr. Shiloh Groot for their assistance in developing our thoughts on the many matters contained in this report.

Citation: Mills, A., Terry, A., Lindsay Latimer, C. & Milne, B. (2022). Going Straight Home? Post-prison housing experiences and the role of stable housing in reducing reoffending in Aotearoa New Zealand. COMPASS: University of Auckland

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Executive Summary

Introduction and context

Recidivism is a problem of substantial human and economic cost in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within two years, around 60% of those leaving prison will likely be re-sentenced and many will end up back in prison. Recent attempts to reduce recidivism rates such as the 2012 Better Public Services Goal have had only very limited success.

International research has suggested that post-release stable housing can reduce the risk of recidivism and conversely, being homeless after release is likely to increase the risk of reoffending. Stable housing is widely regarded as crucial in the reintegration process, as it allows people leaving prison to re-establish various aspects of their lives in the community, including seeking and maintaining employment, accessing health, welfare and treatment services and re-establishing whānau/family and other personal relationships.

Those leaving prison can face substantial barriers to obtaining stable housing after release. Department of Corrections' figures suggest that less than half the people leaving prison are able to settle into long-term accommodation. Corrections and its governmental, iwi and community partners now provide over 1200 housing places each year for people leaving prison. However, this provision remains patchy, fragmented and difficult to navigate, and relies on individualised approaches to housing that do not prioritise whānau and whanaungatanga (building relationships).

Aims and method

This research aims to explore the housing experiences of people leaving prison in Aotearoa New Zealand and to examine whether stable housing is associated with reduced recidivism in a potential causative relationship.

The study followed a consecutive sample of 201 people from six prisons through the period of release from prison and beyond. Quantitative interviews were held with participants while they were in prison just prior to their release and approximately six months and 12 months after their release. These interviews were either held in participants homes or prison, depending on where they were at the 6-month and 12-month periods.

The interviews collected data on participants' past and present housing situations, any housing support received and on a number of factors predictive of stable housing including mental health and substance use, employment/education and whānau/family support. Participants also made additional comments about housing, release expectations and reintegration, which were recorded verbatim.

Measures of housing stability

Two measures of housing stability are used. Firstly, 'residential mobility', the number of moves made within a six-month period, with those who had moved more than once being classified as having high residential mobility. Secondly, participants' housing situations were categorised into 'stable' or 'unstable'. 'Stable' included housing owned by participants or rented from the state, a private landlord or a non-governmental organisation (NGO)/Housing First scheme. 'Unstable' included living with whānau/family or friends, motel/hotel, hostel/boarding house/campground, or being homeless on the street.

Data analysis

Interview data were analysed to explore participants' post-release housing experiences and assess associations between stable housing/residential mobility and two measures of recidivism: 'resentencing' and 'reimprisonment', with recidivism data being provided by Corrections. Statistical techniques, including averaging of covariate adjusted models and inverse probability of treatment weighting, were used to control for suspected confounding variables to try and estimate the average causal effect of stable housing/residential mobility on recidivism.

Results

As the sample was biased by the 12-month post-release interviews, the analyses used data from the 6-month post-release interview (n=80) to examine experiences of post-release housing and whether stable housing at this time point was associated with recidivism in the first year after release.

Seventeen percent of the sample identified as women and three-quarters as Māori. Most participants were short-term prisoners with just 14% serving over two years. Twenty-two percent had a current partner and just over three-quarters had children. Nearly 50% were in paid employment prior to prison.

Housing prior to prison

Prior to prison, 56% lived in an unstable housing situation, and 45% of participants had moved two or more times prior to prison. Some participants had moved so often they could not say how many times they have moved. Māori were slightly more likely to be living in unstable housing prior to prison (58% compared to 51% of non-Māori). The women in the sample tended to fare slightly better than the men with 53% living in stable housing in comparison to 42% of men, and 35% moving twice or more compared to 47% of men.

Pre-release housing expectations and support

Twenty-two percent of the total sample did not know where they were going to live on release and expected to be homeless. Thirteen percent of the sample lived either on the street or in motels/hotels, hostels or campgrounds prior to imprisonment, suggesting that many lose their housing as a result of being imprisoned.

Women were more likely than men to know where they were going to live after prison. Several women living in state housing prior to prison were able to keep their tenancy when imprisoned for only a short time.

Just 31% of participants reported receiving any support to find housing prior to their release. Ten percent did not need support, leaving just under 60% who needed it but did not receive it. Any support needs to be provided some time before release, to reduce anxiety and ensure that prisoners can feel better prepared for their transition into the community.

No-one who owned their housing prior to prison reported receiving any assistance to keep this and, according to Corrections, preventing the loss of housing is not currently deemed to be within the scope of Corrections case management roles.

Post-release housing

Two-thirds of participants in the post-release sample lived in unstable housing situations in the six months after prison, whilst 44% moved twice or more during this time. Once again, the living situations of women tended to be more stable with 46% living in stable housing and 77% moving no more than once in comparison to 30% and 52% respectively for men.

Māori were 1.7 times more likely to live in unstable housing in the six months after release and 2.4 times more likely to have moved twice or more in the six months after release than non-Māori, suggesting that Māori would benefit from targeted, culturally appropriate services and support to help them find and keep stable housing after prison.

Just over half of those who expected to go to stable accommodation on release found themselves in unstable accommodation six months after prison, demonstrating a 'halo' effect where participants were overly optimistic about their housing prospects. There were a number of reasons why housing did not work out as planned, including relationship/family breakdown, having to move to take up employment, but also having to leave accommodation due to restrictions on the length of time they could stay or breaking the house rules.

In total, 68% of participants felt their whānau had been either very supportive or supportive after their release from prison. These participants had lower levels of residential mobility, suggesting a link between strong whānau/family support and greater housing stability, even if that housing was not directly provided by whānau/family. Those who lived alone were more vulnerable to experiencing high residential mobility and many were living on the street or in highly unstable temporary accommodation such as hostels or motels.

Fifty-six percent of the post-release sample had been in paid employment or education/training in the six months after release. Employment was often seasonal, low-paid manual labour. Those who had not engaged in paid employment or education/training in the six months after release were 1.4 times more likely to be in living in unstable housing than those who had.

Housing and other challenges after release

Over half of the participants found it very hard to find housing after release, with Māori being 2.4 times more likely to have found it very hard than non-Māori. This is likely to reflect the difficulties faced by Māori in wider society, including racism and discrimination in rental housing markets, and demonstrates the need for specialist housing support and provision for Māori leaving prison.

The most cited difficulty in finding housing after release was the shortage of housing, as participants struggled to compete with other potential tenants. In many cases, the housing

participants had at the time of interview was undesirable or unsuitable; however, it was all they had managed to obtain in this competitive environment. Many, even those in employment, struggled with the funds needed to afford private rented accommodation and other basic necessities. Participants also found it difficult to obtain housing without suitable references, identification documents or an established credit record.

Concerns were also expressed about living in emergency accommodation such as motels, which were deemed to be unsafe and unstable, and hostel accommodation, which was seen as highly problematic, unsafe, unsuitable for children, and unlikely to lead to any positive changes in participants' lives. Many expressed a desire to find a place of 'their own' where they could exercise control over the space and begin to re-establish their lives after prison.

Stable, paid employment was difficult to find for many participants and some experienced substantial financial difficulties after release and found it difficult to obtain benefits. These participants felt as though they were being set up to fail and were likely to end up back in prison. For others, the difficulties they faced were emotional and included the challenges of adjusting to life outside prison, avoiding old associates, and dealing with social isolation.

Post-release housing support

Only 29% of participants reported receiving any support to find housing after release, with 53% reporting that they needed help but did not receive any. Participants who reported not receiving support were 1.3 times more likely to be re-imprisoned than those who received support, reinforcing the urgent need for more housing assistance.

Housing stability and recidivism

In general, those experiencing stable housing/low residential mobility were less likely to have reoffended within a year than those who had experienced unstable housing or high residential mobility. Those living in unstable housing six months after prison were 4.6 times more likely to be re-imprisoned, a statistically significant association (p-value = 0.020). However, associations between stable housing/low residential mobility and resentencing, and between low residential mobility and reimprisonment were not statistically significant, most likely due to the small size of the post-release sample.

The strong bivariate relationship between stable/unstable housing and reimprisonment and the high proportion of prisoners experiencing unstable housing and residential instability after release, suggests it remains highly worthwhile taking measures to assist those leaving prison into long-term stable housing.

Housing and ontological security

A sense of being 'at home' is highly related to notions of ontological security. Just over half of participants (53%) reported that the place they were currently living felt like a 'home', with 46% stating that it did not and 1% being unsure. Surprisingly, those who moved two or more times and those who lived in unstable housing situations in the six months after prison were both more likely to describe their current accommodation as a home than those who moved no more than once or who lived in stable housing. Reasons why stable housing did not feel like a home included the poor physical quality of the housing, social isolation of the current housing situation and a lack of safety and security which, for women, was related to past experiences of domestic violence. This lack of ontological security felt by those in stable housing is likely to affect their long-term chances of desistance from crime.

A causal effect of stable housing and residential mobility on recidivism?

To estimate the causal effect of stable housing/residential mobility in the six months post-release and recidivism, we undertook four sets of analyses which took different approaches to confounder adjustment: (i) standard *covariate adjustment*; (ii) *model averaging*: averaging of models accounting for different sets of covariates; (iii) *non-response weighting*: covariate adjustment with weights to account for non-response; and (iv) inverse probability of treatment weighting (*IPTW*), which 'balance' the exposed and unexposed groups across covariates. The confounding variables adjusted for were: ethnicity, age, gender, criminal history, social support, pre-prison housing stability, substance use, and support given to find housing. No significant effects of either stable housing or residential mobility on recidivism were found from the data after adjustment for confounding variables.

Rather than having a direct causal effect on recidivism, housing stability may support other factors related to successful reintegration and reduced risks of reoffending, including the development of social capital. For example, stable housing may help people find and engage in employment, education or training or provide people leaving prison with a space to maintain or re-establish whānau/family ties, or the opportunity to access health and treatment services.

Conversely, housing instability may weaken or inhibit social bonds and potential involvement in conventional activities, thus hindering the development of social capital.

Summary of recommendations/implications for practice

1. Housing assessment and release planning processes should ensure that no-one should leave prison with an unmet housing need. Every person who enters prison, regardless of remand or sentenced status, should be given a comprehensive and detailed assessment of housing need when first entering prison, which should then be maintained and updated throughout their stay.

2. In line with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan's emphasis on preventing homelessness, those with stable housing prior to their imprisonment should be supported to keep this where possible and desirable.

3. Post-release housing should be long-term and sustainable, in line with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. It should also be good quality, safe, culturally appropriate and account for the needs not only of those who have left prison but also their whānau/family, especially tamariki/children.

4. Housing First models, as used by the Creating Positive Pathways programme, should be further explored for their suitability for those leaving prison and their whānau and, if appropriate, their use extended.

5. A more diverse array of post-release housing should be provided, which is open to a wider group of people (including those on short prison sentences or on remand) and available throughout the country.

6. Clear, accessible information about specialist housing provision and how to access it should be available and communicated to prisoners (and their whānau) in sufficient time before their release.

7. State benefits, including the Steps to Freedom grant, should be increased immediately to ensure they provide income sufficient for an adequate standard of living. Those who have been in prison should be assisted to access these benefits through the provision of appropriate identification documents.

8. Those leaving prison who are ready to seek employment should be assisted into better paid, more specialised employment opportunities through the provision of appropriate training.

9. Those in prison and their whānau should be enabled to obtain state housing and other forms of housing with Income-Related Rent Subsidies, and the provision of this social

housing should be expanded. Consideration should be given to making those who have been in prison a priority group for such housing, as is the case in other jurisdictions globally.

10. Any post-release housing provision should enhance feelings of ontological security amongst those who have left prison. This is likely to involve providing long-term, affordable, safe, good quality housing in the correct location where people can maintain and/or develop strong, positive, supportive relationships and social bonds. This is particularly important for Māori, for whom whānau is a crucial component of wellbeing, support, cultural knowledge, positive identity and flourishing.

11. For wāhine/women, who have often experienced abuse within the home, post-release housing should be safe, secure and supported, and provide a place for them to re-build their relationships with children.

12. Assistance to strengthen or maintain whānau/family ties should be provided to ensure those leaving prison experience more stable housing situations. This should include more resources to prepare and enable whānau to help those leaving prison, including improved communication with agencies supporting those leaving prison and financial support to cover the increased costs of supporting and accommodating a whānau member.

13. Reintegration support should adopt holistic, whānau-centred approaches that enable entire whānau to build supportive relationships, access opportunities and foster wider whānau and community wellbeing and promote genuine social reintegration. This may mean providing homes for the whānau of those who have left prison rather than just housing the individual.

14. In situations where living with whānau is not in the best interests of the former prisoner or their whānau, emotional and practical support should be given to both parties to promote safe re-connection.

15. Any form of support provided should be culturally appropriate with services provided by Māori for Māori.

16. The provision of housing for Māori should be Māori-led and designed to account for diverse Māori realities and historical experiences. Māori should be enthusiastically supported in their practice of Tino Rangatiratanga and Mana Motuhake to develop their own housing provision and support.

1. Introduction to the study

1.1. Background and context

Annually over 7000 sentenced prisoners are released from prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within two years, around 60% will be re-sentenced and many will end up back in prison. High reoffending rates suggest that many leaving prison are not rehabilitated or integrated into society after their release (Baldry et al. 2003a). Recidivism is a problem of substantial human and economic cost and attempts to reduce the rates of reoffending have had only very limited success. For example, the 2012 Better Public Services Goal to reduce the rate of reoffending by 25% by 2017, went unmet and was abolished in 2017 (Mills & Lindsay Latimer 2021a; Ministry of Justice, 2012).

International research has suggested that post-release stable housing can reduce the risk of recidivism, and conversely being homeless after release from prison is likely to increase the risk of reoffending. Having stable housing is widely regarded as being necessary to obtain employment, reconnect with family and obtain access to health, welfare and other services. However, research on the relationship between post-prison stable housing and recidivism in Aotearoa New Zealand is lacking and existing international research has largely demonstrated only correlations between housing stability and reduced recidivism, rather than investigating any potential causative relationship. The mechanism as to how stable housing might reduce reoffending is unclear and its relationship to other aspects of the post-release experience including whānau/family support, employment, and physical and mental health therefore remains somewhat unexplored. Stable housing may simply be indicative of broader stability post-release or may be linked with the creation or strengthening of social capital and the motivation to resist crime.

1.2. Project aims

This research seeks to shed light on the housing experiences of people leaving prison and to explore the relationship between housing and recidivism in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Specifically, it has two aims:

1) To examine whether stable housing is associated with reduced recidivism in New Zealand in a potential causative relationship.

2) To evaluate the role of stable housing in contributing to desistance from crime**.**

This report will address the first of these aims and will explore the housing and reintegration experiences of those leaving prison, whilst the second aim will be explored in later publications.

1.3. Method

To explore post-release housing experiences and the relationship between stable housing and reduced recidivism in New Zealand, a cohort of prisoners was followed up through the period of release from prison and beyond. Quantitative interviews were held with 201 prisoners just prior to their release and approximately six months and 12 months after their release. The sample was drawn from six prisons chosen in consultation with the Department of Corrections; Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility, Waikeria prison, Christchurch Men's prison, Northland Region Corrections Facility, Hawke's Bay Regional Prison and Spring Hill Corrections Facility. The pre-release interviews collected data on a range of demographic factors, criminal justice history, mental health and substance use factors, housing and employment prior to prison, family support and expected housing and employment/training on release. The post-release interviews asked participants about their post-release housing situation and experiences, the number of times they had moved since the last interview, mental health and substance misuse issues and their experiences of employment/training. It is often highly challenging to find those who have been released from prison in the community. A number of strategies were employed to keep in touch with research participants and overall, around 51% of the sample were interviewed in the post-release interviews.

Two measures of housing stability were used in this study. Firstly, 'residential mobility' – the number of moves made within a six-month period – was used, with those who had moved more than once in this period being classified as having high residential mobility. Secondly, the housing situations of participants were categorised into 'stable' or 'unstable'. The 'stable' category included living in their own house or renting from the state, a private landlord or a non-governmental organisation (NGO)/Housing First scheme. The 'unstable' category included living with whānau/family or friends, motel/hotel, hostel/boarding house/campground, or street homeless. Further details of these definitions are given in chapter 4.

The data were then analysed to explore participants' post-release housing experiences and assess associations between stable housing/residential mobility and two measures of

recidivism: resentencing and reimprisonment. Statistical techniques, including averaging of covariate adjusted models and inverse probability of treatment weighting, were used to control for suspected confounding variables to try and estimate the average causal effect of stable housing/residential mobility on recidivism.

1.4. Contents of this report

The following section provides background context to the study and includes discussion of the people released from prison in Aotearoa New Zealand, the barriers they face in accessing housing post-prison and current specialist housing provision. The existing literature on the relationship between stable housing and reoffending, which is mostly from US, UK and Australia, is then briefly reviewed and the methods of data collection and analysis used in this study are then set out. We then discuss the main findings of this research and examine the potential policy implications emerging from this research and provide a list of recommendations for policy and practice.

2. Context and background

2.1. The prison population, release and recidivism

In June 2021, 8,397 people were incarcerated in New Zealand prisons, with 6% identifying as women.[1] Māori are substantially over-represented in prisons, making up 53% of the prison population in comparison to 17% of the general population (Corrections, 2021a; Stats, NZ, 2020), and Māori women are even more over-represented, comprising 69% of the women's remand and 55% of women's sentenced population (Corrections, 2020a). In 2019-20, 15% of the overall sentenced prison population were short-termers (serving under two years), 71% were long-termers (serving over two years) and a further 14% were on indeterminate sentences (including life sentences and preventive detention). Women are more likely to be serving short sentences with 27% of the women's sentenced population serving under two years, 65% serving over two years and 8% on indeterminate sentences (Corrections, 2020a).

In 2019, just under 7,500 sentenced prisoners were released from prison in Aotearoa New Zealand (Corrections Research & Analysis, personal communication, July 13, 2021), 58% of whom identified as Māori (Corrections, 2020b). Many returned to prison within a short space of time. Of those released in 2018/19, 58.1% were re-sentenced[2] and 40% were re-imprisoned within two years. Recidivism rates for Māori were higher with 64% re-sentenced and 45% re-imprisoned within two years (Corrections, 2021c). Both re-sentencing and reimprisonment rates for those released from prison have declined slightly in the last three years (Cheng, 2022).

The over-representation of Māori in the prison population and recidivism figures can only fully be understood when contextualised by the ongoing and intergenerational trauma and legacies of colonisation. These include dislocation from ancestral lands, land theft, loss of economic bases, Māori urbanisation, cultural assimilation and the undermining of tikanga Māori (Andrae et al., 2017; Jackson, 1988; McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Quince, 2007; Webb, 2017). The ongoing consequences of the structural violence of colonisation on Māori communities and institutionally racist social and political policies include long-term social and economic marginalisation, violence, abuse, imprisonment, mental health and addiction issues and disconnection from whānau (George et al., 2014; Jackson, 1988; Mihaere, 2015; Pihama et al.,

[1] Neither Corrections nor Stats NZ provide figures on the proportion of gender diverse people in prison.

[2] Re-sentenced refers to those who have been reconvicted and received a Corrections-administered sentence. It excludes those who are reconvicted and receive a fine or a discharge (Corrections, 2021c).

2014; Webb, 2017). Furthermore, Māori have been subjected to extensive criminalisation and social control by the neo-colonial state (Webb, 2017), including mass incarceration, which has created the conditions for cumulative, enduring and intergenerational disadvantage on Māori whānau and communities (George et al., 2014; McIntosh & Workman, 2017).

2.2. Homelessness, social exclusion and imprisonment

Homelessness and incarceration share a number of risk factors including social and economic marginalisation, mental and physical health problems, addiction issues, and prior physical and sexual abuse and trauma (Harris et al., 2015). Many prisoners in New Zealand come from highly marginalised communities shaped by poverty, exploitation and violence, low levels of literacy and employment, and high rates of addiction (McIntosh & Workman, 2017; Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021a; Ministry of Justice, 2012; National Health Committee, 2010; Workman, 2014). Those in prison are three times more likely to have a mental disorder than the general population and nearly five times more likely to have experienced psychological distress in the last 30 days (Indig et al., 2016). Furthermore, prisoners' whānau/families often face significant financial and relationship stress and such communities score poorly on a range of measures of mental and physical health (Gordon & MacGibbon, 2011; National Health Committee, 2010).

International research has identified a bi-directional relationship between homelessness or housing instability and incarceration (Gowan 2002; Harris et al., 2015). Those who are homeless are over-represented in prison populations (Williams et al., 2012), and imprisonment also increases the risk of homelessness, losing housing or returning to inferior housing situations (Baldry et al., 2003a; Carlisle 1996; Paylor, 1995; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Incarceration also exacerbates the social isolation of prisoners, weakening ties with whānau/family, friends and communities, and reducing access to conventional opportunities to be housed and employed which may otherwise have promoted social attachment (Baldry et al. 2003a; Hampton, 1993; Harris et al. 2015; Nilsson, 2003; Western, 2018). As Baldry et al. (2003a: 28) have noted, each time a person is imprisoned, 'Their already meagre social and economic resources are leeched away if there is no intervention to stop it'. Such marginalising effects can continue after imprisonment if parole and release conditions further isolate people from whānau/family, employment opportunities and other sources of support (Pogrebin et al., 2014). The stigmatising effects of imprisonment can also be long term. Using data from a longitudinal study of urban families in the US, Geller and Curtis (2011) found that fathers who

had been incarcerated at some stage in their lives had odds of insecure housing that were nearly twice as high as those who had not experienced incarceration, largely due to the limited employment options available to former prisoners.

Much of the discussion regarding homelessness and incarceration only discusses homelessness in terms of lack of access to a domestic dwelling. It does not include the experience of homelessness that encompasses the absence of a base that comfortably allows for social participation; the social exclusion, stigma, and criminalisation publicly prescribed to homeless people; and the existence of political, social and economic systems that deny rights, dignity and protections to those who are experiencing homelessness (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Nor does this conceptualisation of homelessness capture the 'spiritual homelessness' (Groot et al., 2017; Memmott et al., 2003) experienced by Māori who have been displaced from their ancestral lands, and disconnected from iwi, hapū, whānau and mātauranga Māori (Groot et al., 2011). Māori are over-represented in homeless populations, and for Māori, it is necessary 'to acknowledge the cultural, spiritual and experiential dimensions of homelessness' (Groot & Mace, 2016: 5). As Groot et al. (2017:150) argue, 'homelessness is rooted in historical experiences of colonisation' including urbanisation, displacement, land theft and disease, resulting in the degradation of Māori kinship networks, economic capacity, culture and spiritual connectedness which continues to affect the lives of Māori today (Groot et al., 2017).

2.3. Housing for those leaving prison

2.3.1. Introduction

According to Section 6.1(h) of the Corrections Act 2004, 'offenders must, so far as is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances within the resources available, be given access to activities that may contribute to their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community'. However, many people in Aotearoa New Zealand leave prison without stable accommodation. Definitive information on the housing needs of those leaving prison is lacking but an Internal Memorandum from the Department of Corrections in 2013 estimated that around 700 people are released annually with an acute and unmet housing need (Johnston, 2018). Homelessness has been considered 'a standard state post-release' (Johnston, 2016) and Department of Corrections' figures for the month ending 30 November 2016 suggest that less than half the people leaving prison were settled into long-term accommodation (Johnston, 2018), although it is not known what is meant by long-term in this context.

2.3.2. Barriers to post-release housing

Those leaving prison face many barriers and challenges to obtaining or maintaining stable housing. Such barriers are particularly likely to impact Māori, for whom reintegration after prison involves (re)integration into a colonial society (Mills & Lindsay, 2021a), where they experience racism and compounding stigma and discrimination, including substantial discrimination in housing markets (Harris et al. 2006, 2012), in addition to the prejudice and intolerance targeted at those who have been incarcerated.

Many of those entering prison in Aotearoa New Zealand will lose the accommodation they had prior to prison. Unlike in other jurisdictions, such as Germany and England and Wales, they usually cannot access any kind of welfare benefit whilst in custody to keep up rent or mortgage repayments (Social Security Act 2018, s218; UK Department of Work and Pensions, 2021; Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2019). Currently prisoners in Aotearoa New Zealand do not receive any routine help to prevent the loss of housing when imprisoned (Corrections, 2020b), although some people in state housing may be able to retain their homes if family members are able to take over the lease temporarily (Mills & Lindsay Latimer 2021b; Morrison & Bowman, 2017).

Staying with whānau/family members or friends is the main source of housing for a majority of people leaving prison (Baldry et al., 2003a, 2006; Herbert et al., 2015; Keene et al., 2008; Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Roman & Travis, 2004; 2006; Visher, 2007; Visher & Travis, 2011; Yahner & Visher, 2008). Accommodation with whānau/family can offer substantial amounts of practical and social support on release, but such housing is often temporary or at least perceived to be temporary, especially where relationships are strained (Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Keene et al,. 2018; Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015; Roman & Travis, 2004; Visher, 2007; Visher & Courtney 2007). In their study of housing and reintegration in Australia, Baldry et al. (2003a) found that 60% of those in New South Wales who expected or hoped to be living with their parents after imprisonment were not doing so at nine months post-release, with many indicating that their parents had been unwilling to tolerate their substance use or there had been substantial conflict with parents. Whānau/family may also struggle to support someone financially post-release (Baldry et al., 2003a; Desmond, 2016; Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015). Staying with whānau/family or friends may act as a 'landing spot' immediately on release and for a short time thereafter which demonstrates the level of available social support (Fontaine & Biess, 2012). US researchers

have found that many staying with family and friends are keen to move to their own independent accommodation to allow them greater autonomy and control over their lives (Keene et al., 2018), and in some cases, access to physical and social space in which to re-establish a relationship with their children (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015).

Many people leaving prison will be unable to return to living with whānau/family or partners due to conflict or whānau/relationship breakdown (Bevan & Wehipeihana, 2015; Geller & Curtis, 2011; Harris et al., 2015; Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Roman & Travis, 2004; 2006), the whānau/family's unwillingness to live with someone with a prison record (Bradley et al., 2001; Roman & Travis, 2004) or having limited whānau/family living in the area (McKernan, n.d). Some groups may be less likely to have a family home to return to. For example, Baldry et al. (2003a, 2006) found that none of the Indigenous Australians in their study lived in a stable family home post-release and by nine months post-release, half of the Indigenous participants were homeless. Protection Orders or parole/release conditions can also forbid people from living with a partner/ex-partner or other whānau members (Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Petersilia, 2005; Roman & Travis, 2004), and for some former prisoners, there may also be great feelings of shame and embarrassment, meaning they do not seek out family support (Cid & Martí, 2012).

Those who cannot stay with whānau/family or friends may turn to social or private rental housing, both of which are in short supply in many parts of Aotearoa. These shortages are more likely to affect Māori and Pacific Peoples who experience substantial socioeconomic disadvantage (Groot et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2020; Stubbs et al., 2017), are over-represented on the rapidly growing waitlist for social/public housing (Ministry of Social Development, 2021) and face racism in the private rental market (Cram, 2020; Groot et al., 2017; Lewis et al., 2020). Those released from prison are not excluded from public housing but cannot access the public housing register unless their release is both scheduled and imminent (Faure, 2019), yet exact release dates for those on parole or remand are frequently unknown (Mills et al., 2021). In Aotearoa New Zealand there is a growing shortage of affordable private rental property and an increasing demand for emergency housing (Isogai, 2018), usually motel accommodation. Assessments for emergency housing are not permitted prior to release from prison (Conlon & Devlin, 2019) and access to these services and other forms of assistance from Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) is especially difficult for those without identification documents, phones, contact addresses or email addresses which many people leaving prison

do not have (Conlon & Devlin, 2019; Johnston, 2016; Mills et al., 2021). Emergency and social housing provided by community or non-governmental organisations can have extremely high 'turn away rates' indicating that demand for this housing far outstrips supply (Johnson et al., 2018). Many people leaving prison are also unwilling to live in hostel accommodation, which they perceive to be unsafe, stigmatising, associated with drug use and reoffending and reminiscent of prison due to its strict rules (Baldry et al., 2002, 2003b; Carlisle, 1996; Keene et al., 2018).

Competition for affordable private rented housing means that landlords and property managers can be selective about who they rent to, often discriminating against those with a criminal record (Decoteau, 2019; Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Geller & Curtis, 2011; Gordon & Mills, 2016; Herbert et al., 2015; Johnston, 2016; Keene et al., 2018; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015; Roman & Travis, 2004). Many leaving prison will not have the financial and other resources to secure private rentals, including references, evidence of tenancy history, a bank account, bond and advance rent payments (Decoteau, 2019; Johnston, 2016; Roman & Travis, 2006). The Steps to Freedom grant (up to $350) is the only financial support available in Aotearoa New Zealand immediately on release. This amount was set in the early 1990s (Taylor & Giles, 2016), and does not meet the full costs of living and accommodation for the first two weeks post-release (Conlon & Devlin, 2019; Faure, 2019; Johnston, 2016), particularly as rents have risen in many parts of Aotearoa New Zealand (McDowell & Gibson, 2021), making private accommodation unaffordable, particularly for those relying on state benefits (Conlon & Devlin, 2019; Perry, 2019).

Difficulties finding accommodation can also be exacerbated by parole or release conditions which place restrictions on where and with whom people can live (Faure, 2019; Roman & Travis, 2006), particularly for those convicted of child sex offences who are prohibited from living within a certain proximity of schools, parks, and early childhood centres (Hallot & Patterson, 2017).

Specific groups of prisoners

Existing international research has found that accessing stable accommodation post-release is more difficult for women, particularly single women with children, partly due to a lack of dedicated service providers (Baldry et al., 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Gojkovic et al., 2012; McKernan, n.d). Women may be less likely to live with a partner, parents or close family post-

release (Baldry et al., 2003a, 2006), and some are forced to return to domestic violence situations in order to avoid homelessness (Ogilvie, 2001; Wilkinson 1988). In Aotearoa New Zealand, women are less likely to be employed on release as they tend to have more limited work histories, a narrower range of vocational skills, and smaller existing employment networks (Morrison et al., 2018), potentially limiting their access to financial resources for housing. Ninety percent of women in prison in New Zealand have children (Gordon, 2009) and stable housing is often a prerequisite for reunification with children post-release (Keene et al., 2018). This leaves women at risk of a 'Catch 22' situation of being unable to regain custody of their children without stable accommodation, but also unable to access to housing support and provision without having custody of their children (Carlisle, 1996; Gojkovic et al., 2012; Maguire & Nolan, 2007). Such challenges are likely to be further complicated for Indigenous women, women of colour and trans women as they must additionally contend with interpersonal and institutional discrimination (Baldry & Cunneen, 2014; Greene, 2018; Walsh et al., 2013). For example, Baldry et al. (2003a) found that Indigenous women were the most severely disadvantaged group, experiencing the highest levels of homelessness and reincarceration.

Existing research is overwhelmingly focused on prison releasees returning to urban areas, but in Aotearoa New Zealand certain groups of prisoners may be more likely to return to rural areas. The majority of whenua Māori is located in rural areas and a higher proportion of the Māori population live in rural areas or small urban areas compared with the total population (Environmental Health Intelligence New Zealand, 2021). People returning to rural areas face unique barriers in finding affordable and accessible housing options, are less likely to have access to support services and may be forced to accept poor quality housing (Groot & Mace 2016), or accommodation away from their home base, distancing them from social support and connection to their communities (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b). Research by Wodahl (2006) has found that those people who have been incarcerated may turn to living in abandoned structures that lack living necessities such as power and water.

2.3.3. Post-release housing provision

Unlike other jurisdictions such as the US, UK and Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand does not have an extensive network of 'halfway houses' for people released from prison (Goldfinch, 2018; Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b) which offer opportunities for employment, vocational training or treatment under close supervision in the community (Clark, 2016; Growns et al.,

2018). ‘Habilitation Centres’, possibly the closest provision to halfway houses, were introduced to New Zealand in the Criminal Justice Amendment Act 1993 but were not well used and abolished in 2002 (Hough, 2003). In 2019, accommodation and support services comprised just under 3% of the Corrections’ budget for rehabilitative and reintegration activities (Grigg, 2019). Corrections and its governmental, iwi and community partners now provide over 1200 housing places each year for people leaving prison (Corrections, 2021c). Although this provision appears to have increased and diversified in recent years, it remains patchy, fragmented and difficult to navigate (Johnston, 2016; Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b), inadequate to fully meet the needs of this population, and is hampered the shortage of suitable, affordable housing in Aotearoa.

Most of the housing schemes funded by Corrections provide transitional, supported accommodation for those with high and complex needs, often of around three months’ duration, with wraparound support and assistance to find further long-term accommodation (Corrections, 2021b). An example of this is Manaaki Atu in Hamilton run by Anglican Action which provides transitional housing from three to six months, with support and access to wider Anglican Action services, including life skills courses and help with employment (Corrections, 2020c). Some housing schemes, such as Te Whare Manaaki in Otago, are for those deemed to be high risk such as those who have offended sexually against children who can have very strict residential restrictions and monitoring conditions (Corrections, 2021b). However, much of this supported accommodation is only available in certain parts of the country and/or is reserved for certain groups of prisoners (Corrections, 2021b), usually those sentenced to over two years in prison, leaving little available for those on remand or shorter term prisoners, who are more likely to reoffend (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b). Such schemes have also had limited success in securing long-term accommodation (The Treasury, 2017) and it has been suggested that those leaving prison require greater support to transition to more stable, medium-term housing (Morrison & Bowman, 2017).

Currently more permanent, longer term housing schemes are somewhat limited. Creating Positive Pathways is a trial initiative between Corrections, MSD, HUD and local iwi and community groups to provide permanent housing and support in Auckland, Wellington and Northland for those who have served a long sentence or more than one short prison sentence and are eligible for public housing. Accessing independent stable accommodation through this scheme has provided clients with a sense of ownership and pride and decreased social isolation,

whilst many have appreciated the assistance of the support workers in tough situations. However, the number of people housed through this scheme remains low due to the difficulties in finding suitable private rental properties (Malatest International, 2020). Similarly, Out of Gate Services, which aim to help short-sentenced prisoners and those on remand to find their own housing after release, have reported insufficient accommodation options, leaving releasees to stay in temporary accommodation for long periods or with whānau/family members in the absence of other, more suitable options (Corter et al., 2014).

Furthermore, existing post-release accommodation initiatives have been criticised for relying on individualised approaches to housing that do not prioritise whānau and whanaungatanga (building relationships) (Mills et al., 2021), and therefore being unsuitable for Māori. For Māori, "whānau is the basic foundation that supports all other aspects of Māori society" (Groot et al., 2017: 154). Yet much of the accommodation available for people leaving prison is individual flats or shared housing with others, rather than with their whānau. This does little to maintain or develop whānau relations or to build the capacity of whānau to provide their own solutions to the challenges of leaving prison (Mills et al., 2021). Existing housing and support services that adopt kaupapa Māori approaches are limited. Te Whare Oranga Ake units provide kaupapa Māori environments and assistance in obtaining accommodation, reconnecting with Māori culture and forming supportive networks with iwi and hapū (Corrections, 2021b), but offer just 40 places for men in two prisons (Waitangi Tribunal, 2019), and do not provide post-release accommodation. Tiaki Tangata is a whānau-centric, tikanga-based case management service for Māori men run by four Māori organisations, which provide short-term transitional accommodation and assistance to re-establish and/or develop strong whānau relationships (Faure, 2019; Sullivan et al., 2018). Two further schemes to provide housing and support in a Kaupapa Māori context for wāhine Māori on bail or after imprisonment (Corrections, 2021b; Faure, 2019;) are planned under Corrections' Housing and Support Service Programme.

A small number of iwi, hapū and community organisations provide other housing and support services for people leaving prison, some with no or little government funding. These include Prison Care Ministries (Hamilton); Fellowship House (Palmerston North); the Grace Foundation (Auckland and Wanganui); Moana House (Dunedin); and the Ahikaa Trust (Auckland) (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b). Such organisations emphasise the importance of building relationships with residents to ensure that they genuinely feel part of a community (Gordon & Mills, 2016) and have strong connections to other services (Mills & Lindsay

Latimer, 2021b). However, without adequate, permanent funding, these services may be at risk of collapse.

Those leaving prison clearly face many substantial barriers to obtaining stable accommodation in the community. Despite the provision of various specialist housing schemes for those leaving prison, more suitable, long-term housing is clearly needed. If less than half of releasees are settled into long-term accommodation, around 3,700 to 4,000 people leaving prison each year do not have stable housing, meaning that current provision is inadequate to meet demand, even with an additional 300 planned places from Corrections' Housing and Support Services programme (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b). With so many leaving prison without stable housing in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is timely to investigate their housing experiences and the impact of stable housing on the risk of recidivism.

3. Existing literature on the relationship between stable housing, reintegration and reoffending

This section examines the existing, predominantly international, literature regarding the relationship between stable housing, reintegration and recidivism. It begins by examining the role of stable housing and other associated factors, such as whānau/family support, in the process of reintegration and the development of post-release social capital. It then examines how, if seen as a 'home', stable housing may provide a sense of ontological security which can assist with desistance from crime, before evaluating existing statistical studies which explore the link between stable housing and recidivism.

3.1. Reintegration, stable housing and social capital

Social reintegration after prison has been defined by Baldry et al. (2002:2) as the introduction or return of a former prisoner to 'functional, personally fulfilling and responsible participation in wider society. It comprises factors such as secure housing, adequate income, supportive interpersonal relationships'. Existing international research has been emphatic about the value of stable housing in the process of reintegration after prison, variously describing it as the 'lynchpin that holds the reintegration process together' (Bradley et al., 2001:1), 'central to any attempt at re-integrating newly released prisoners' (Ogilvie, 2001:2), and the literal and figurative foundation for successful reintegration (Fontaine & Biess, 2012). A New Zealand Corrections study, which followed a cohort of prisoners from just before release to four to six months post-release, found those deemed to be 'struggling' post-release were three times more likely than those 'doing well' to lack substantive accommodation plans, with many turning to old associates for accommodation which could lead to involvement in substance use and reoffending (Morrison & Bowman, 2017; see also Conlon & Devlin, 2019). This led the researchers to conclude, that 'More than any other factor, a lack of stable accommodation was the most critical contributor to negative post-release outcomes' (Morrison & Bowman, 2017).

Suitable, stable housing has been seen as essential in reintegration as it allows people leaving prison to re-establish various aspects of their lives in the community, including seeking and maintaining employment or training (Bradley et al., 2001; Lutze et al., 2014) and accessing welfare benefits, health, treatment and other services (Bradley et al., 2001; Growns et al., 2018; Keene et al., 2018; Lutze et al., 2014; Metraux & Culhane, 2004; Mills et al., 2013; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015). It can provide space for people to readjust to being back in the

community after the institutionalisation and enforced dependency of imprisonment (Johnston, 2016), and may allow those who have been incarcerated to construct a new sense of economic independence and control, helping to distance themselves from the stigma of imprisonment (Keene, 2018). Stable housing can also help people to (re)connect with their whānau/family and other personal relationships and may provide space for them to parent their children (Keene et al., 2018; Morrison & Bowman, 2017). It can therefore help people who have been in prison to create, develop and/or maintain social networks and social capital[3] (Bradley et al., 2001; Metraux & Culhane, 2004; Mills et al., 2021). The development of social capital is widely regarded as necessary to sustain long term social integration into the community (Lutze et al., 2014), and enhance the chances of desisting from crime (Fox, 2016).

Whānau/family support and its attendant social capital can play a potentially substantial role in the reintegration of those who have been in prison. Supportive whānau/families can enable people who have been in prison to access a greater range of practical resources and social and emotional support to help with life after prison (Mills & Codd, 2008; Visher, 2007; Visher & Courtney, 2007). Whānau/family members may, for example, enable those who have been in prison to keep their own housing whilst incarcerated, for example, by organising rent or mortgage payments (Carlisle, 1996; Morrison & Bowman, 2017), or may draw upon their sources of social capital outside whānau/family networks to help them find other accommodation (Flavin, 2004; Gaetz & O'Grady, 2006; Mills & Codd, 2008) and employment (Baldry et al., 2003a; Flavin, 2004; Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Morrison & Bowman, 2017). It should, however, be noted that not all of those leaving prison have access to such support networks, and not all whānau/families will be in a position to offer such assistance to those leaving prison, particularly as the process of acquiring social capital is constrained by social structures, including racism and poverty (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021a). Family and other close relationships may also be a potential contributing factor in re-offending (Baldry et al., 2003b; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015). For example, relationship stress and trauma resulting from domestic abuse and/or family estrangement can be precipitators to women's reoffending (Bevan, 2015).

[3] Social capital can be seen as the resources available to members of social networks (such as whānau/families, communities or places of employment) through their social connections (Bourdieu, 1986).

Paid, stable employment is often intertwined with housing and reintegration. Like whānau/family support, stable employment can help to develop people's social networks and the associated social capital (Mills & Codd, 2008; Uggen et al., 2005), and may provide a source of motivation to desist from crime, particularly if those in stable employment do not wish to risk losing their jobs by reoffending. Having stable employment may assist people to afford stable accommodation and it is highly recognised that stable housing can provide a secure base from which to look for such employment (Bradley et al., 2001; Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Growns et al., 2018; Lutze et al., 2014; Morrison & Bowman, 2017). Stable employment has also long been associated with reduced reoffending (Baldry et al., 2003a, 2006; Nilsson, 2003; Steiner et al., 2015; Uggen et al., 2005; Visher & Courtney, 2007; Yahner & Visher, 2008) and desistance from crime (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Morrison & Bowman, 2017; Rocque, 2017). For example, Makarios et al. (2010) found that those who maintained stable employment throughout the first year after release were significant less likely to reoffend than those who did not hold a job at all. In their study of parolees in Georgia, Meredith et al. (2007) found that each day of employment during parole led to a 1% reduction in the likelihood of arrest.

3.2. Housing, 'home' and ontological security

In addition to a roof over someone's head, housing can also provide a home; a place that provides emotional and psychological support, a source of identity and a sense of belonging (Moore, 2007). A sense of being 'at home' is highly related to notions of ontological security (Rosenberg, 2021), which has been described as 'a sense of confidence and trust in the world as it appears to be. It is a security of being' (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998: 27). Indicators that housing provides ontological security include constancy in the social and material environment; the performance of the daily routines of human existence; a feeling of control and autonomy within the environment; privacy and freedom from surveillance and supervision; and the space and security to embark on self-reflection, and construction and development of one's identity (Cram, 2020; Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Padgett, 2007; Rosenberg, 2021; Stonehouse et al., 2021). A home can provide a space to build a social network, establish an identity of personal worth (Shaw, 2004), and actualise goals after prison (Rosenberg, 2021), including those related to desistance from crime.

Stable housing has been seen as critical for the material security necessary for the creation and development of ontological security (Stonehouse et al., 2021) and has been associated with

home ownership (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998), public housing (Stonehouse et al., 2021) and Housing First accommodation (Padgett, 2007). Conversely, unstable housing such as hostels/halfway houses, living in other people's homes and homeless shelters are likely to lead to a sense of ontological insecurity due to their impermanence, lack of privacy and control over the living environment, and strict rules and surveillance which can contribute to a sense of confinement and preclude people from being able to manage their own priorities and goals (Rosenberg et al., 2021). However, stable housing alone is unlikely to be sufficient to provide ontological security (McNaughton & Sanders, 2007), and it cannot erase the impact of trauma and marginalisation experienced by so many in prison (Stonehouse et al., 2021). Moving to stable housing in order to transition away from previous 'disordered' lifestyles can lead to intense isolation, boredom and loneliness, leaving people vulnerable to returning to supportive but potentially dangerous 'networks of familiarity' (McNaughton & Sanders, 2007). Such transitions will therefore only be successful 'if individuals develop ontological security alongside material resources' (McNaughton & Sanders, 2007: 897).

3.3. Stable housing and recidivism

Existing research examining the statistical relationship between stable housing and recidivism in Aotearoa New Zealand is lacking, with most of the existing research coming from the US, UK and Australia. This literature broadly examines the influence of four different measures of housing: residential instability and mobility, different living situations, pre-release housing intentions, and post-release homelessness. These four groups of research are discussed below.

3.3.1. Residential instability and mobility

This group of research studies examines the effect of moves between housing places or in and out of homelessness on the risks of recidivism. The potential relationship between residential instability (moving around often) and recidivism is often explained in relation to social control theory. Social control theory suggests that the strength of attachments or social bonds to others, often partners and family members, affects the likelihood of recidivism (Laub et al., 1998; Laub & Sampson, 2003). Those who have strong emotional attachments to prosocial others or networks are less likely to offend as they are less willing to risk those relationships. Residential instability may weaken or inhibit these social bonds and potential involvement in conventional activities (La Vigne & Parthsarathy, 2005; Sampson, 1991; Steiner et al., 2015; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2002), and those who fail to find stable housing may be more likely to establish or rely on antisocial peer networks (Haynie & South 2005). A number of studies have

considered the relationship between residential instability/mobility and recidivism, often as part of larger studies investigating predictive factors for recidivism. Most use sizeable US administrative datasets of those under parole or some other form of post-release supervision obtained from correctional authorities and other state agencies. For example, Makarios et al. (2010) examined the extent to which various barriers to reintegration (e.g. housing, employment, lack of rehabilitative treatment etc) are associated with re-arrest and felony re-arrest, amongst sample of nearly 2,000 people placed under the jurisdiction of the Adult Parole Authority in Ohio in 2003 and 2005. The parolees lived in an average of two residences in the first year after release, with 30% living in three or more. The number of residence changes was found to be one of the most consistent predictors of recidivism across both measures, with every change in residence in the one-year post-release period increasing the odds of recidivism by at least 70% (Makarios et al., 2010).

Using the same Ohio dataset, Steiner et al. (2015) followed parolees for one-year after release or until the date they reoffended if earlier, and found that each move to a new residence was associated with a 125% increase in the odds of rearrest and a 196% increase in the odds of being rearrested for a felony. Similarly, using a sample of over 6,000 parolees in Georgia, Meredith et al. (2007) found a 25% increase in the likelihood of arrest for a new offence amongst each time a parolee changed address. Moving three times (having four residences) whilst on parole doubled the odds of arrest.

Both Baldry (2003a, 2006) and La Vigne and Parthsarathy (2005) used pre- and post-release interviews with those who have been incarcerated to investigate the influence of residential mobility in reducing reoffending. Baldry et al. (2003a, 2006) interviewed over 300 prisoners in New South Wales and Victoria just prior to their release and then again at 3-, 6-, and 9-months post-release. Half the sample had moved two or more times between interviews, often moving in and out of homelessness, a situation which Baldry et al. (2006:30) term a ‘state of homelessness’. Of these 59% were re-imprisoned within nine months post-release in comparison to just 22% who had not moved or moved just once. Not moving at all or moving only once in the three months between interviews, living with parents, a partner, close family or dependent children, and engaging in employment or education were all significantly associated with staying out of prison. A logistic regression analysis revealed that, controlling for factors such as sex, co-inhabitants, the type of housing, worsening heroin use, and debt, those who moved more than once were two to eight times more likely to be reincarcerated.

In contrast to Baldry et al., La Vigne and Parthsarathy (2005) found the residential experiences of male prisoners returning to Chicago were surprisingly stable with 88% residing in only one place and just over 10.4% moving more than once in the one-to-two-year period after release. There were no significant differences in post-release convictions between those who had moved and those who had stayed in their original accommodation, as those who moved often did so to avoid family conflict or be more independent with many changing residence to live with an intimate partner (La Vigne & Parthasarthy, 2005:5). Support for this finding that housing mobility is not always associated with recidivism comes from Jacobs and Gottlieb's (2020) study of people on probation in San Francisco. This found that the effect of residential instability on recidivism (12%) was smaller than that for homelessness alone (almost 50%), possibly because residential moves may represent moves out of homelessness and into a new residence which may have a stabilising effect (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2020).

3.3.2. Different residential situations and cohabitants

Other researchers have compared the relationship between different housing situations (type of housing and/or co-habitants) experienced by those leaving prison and various measures of recidivism. Most of these studies find that living in private residential addresses (whether with family or alone) is associated with reduced rates of recidivism in comparison to living in transitional housing and/or homeless shelters. Once again, this is often explained through the lens of a social control perspective (Nilsson, 2003: Steiner et al., 2015). Avoiding recidivism is seen as more important for those with strong attachments to others, notably partners and family members, who may provide access to higher levels of emotional and practical resources, including housing, that releasees are unwilling to lose by continuing to offend (Laub et al., 1998; Mills & Codd, 2008; Steiner et al., 2015; Visher & Courtney, 2007). Co-habiting partners or family members may also exert a degree of control and supervision over those released from prison or help them to alter or expand their social networks (Steiner et al., 2015). Steiner et al. (2015) examined the effect of six different residential situations on the odds of recidivism in the year after release from prison, and found that those who lived with a spouse, parent, other relative or in a residential programme were at lower risk of rearrest, whereas those living with a boyfriend/girlfriend or were homeless had higher odds of being rearrested.

Clark (2016) examined the effects of different post-release housing placements on re-arrest and returns to prison for supervision revocations for over 4,300 prisoners newly released from

Minnesota state prisons in 2009. Using administrative records of each prisoner's first valid address, five different housing types (private residential addresses, transitional accommodation, work-release centres, homeless shelters and inpatient treatment facilities) and their relationship to rearrest and supervision revocation rates were compared. Being released to transitional housing, a work release centre or treatment centre all increased the odds of revocation relative to being released to a private residential address, although this could be attributed to the close monitoring experienced by those living in these situations, meaning that infractions of release conditions are more likely to be detected (Clark, 2016).

Nilsson (2003) used pre-release surveys with prisoners in Sweden to examine the significance of various living conditions on being re-sentenced to imprisonment or probation. Those without a home of their own (either rented or owned) prior to prison were significantly more likely to reoffend. However, in a logistic regression model, only education and employment problems were associated with a substantial and significant increase in the risk of recidivism.

In England and Wales, Brunton-Smith and Hopkins (2013) utilised data from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction longitudinal cohort study of over 3,800 adults to examine a number of risk and protective factors associated with reconviction. Those who were homeless or living in temporary accommodation prior to prison were more likely to reoffend within one year (66%) than those living in stable accommodation (51%), although precisely what is meant by stable accommodation is unclear. Those who were living with their family were less likely to reoffend than those who did not (48% compared with 61%), although it is unclear which family members they lived with. A logistic regression analysis found that prisoners who were homeless or living in temporary accommodation prior to prison had nearly twice as high odds of being reconvicted within one year (odds ratio= 1.86), when all other factors were controlled for.

However, living with family members is not associated with a reduced risk of recidivism in all studies. Using the same Minnesota dataset as Clark (2016), McNeeley (2018) examined whether neighbourhood effects on rearrest varied according to race, gender or housing situations, in this case, private residential housing and community-programme housing. McNeeley (2018) found that neighbourhood disadvantage was related to the risk of rearrest amongst those who lived in private residential housing and concluded that this may be because those who live in private residential accommodation may be more influenced by the broader

community as many live with partners, family and friends who may be well established in the neighbourhood's social networks. In comparison to those in community programme housing, they may have fewer constraints on their activities and peer associations. Yahner and Visher (2008) have also found that released prisoners in Illinois who lived with family or friends were more likely to be reincarcerated three years after release than those living in their own residence (62% in comparison to 35%).

3.3.3. Pre-release housing intentions and recidivism

Studies from the UK Home Office have relied on longitudinal survey data to examine the relationship between the housing intentions of those about to be released from prison and recidivism. Using multiple logistic regression analysis, May et al. (2008) analysed data from three pre-release surveys conducted in 2001, 2003 and 2004 and found that the odds of reoffending within the first year after release were increased by 43% if prisoners did not have both a job and accommodation arranged on release, but the stability of this accommodation did not affect reoffending rates. Similarly, Williams et al. (2012) analysed data from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction Study in England and Wales and found that a lack of accommodation both prior to and after imprisonment was associated with increased rates of reoffending. Prisoners who stated they would need help finding a place to live on release were more likely to be reconvicted within a year of leaving prison compared with those who did not (65% compared to 45%).

3.3.4. Post-release homelessness

Other studies have examined the relationships between post-release homelessness and reincarceration. For example, Metraux and Culhane (2004) analysed administrative data on a cohort of over 48,000 prisoners released from New York state prisons to New York City between 1995 and 1998. Using multivariate event history analysis, the authors found that shelter use in the two-year post-release period was associated with a slightly increased risk of reincarceration (hazard ratio = 1.17).

Lutze et al. (2014) used a quasi-experimental design to compare the recidivism of former prisoners in the year-long Reentry Housing Pilot Programme (RHPP) in Washington state, with a group of people under the supervision of community corrections who were at risk of homelessness. Participants were tracked through administrative data for up to three years post-release and propensity score matching was used to balance the differences between the two

groups on all theoretically relevant preintervention characteristics. The programme was found to be successful in significantly reducing new convictions and re-admissions to prison for new crimes but not revocations. However, periods of homelessness across both the RHPP and community corrections groups also significantly increased the risk of all three forms of recidivism (Lutze et al., 2014).

3.4. Limitations of the existing research on stable housing and recidivism

In general, existing research suggests some evidence for an association between various forms of stable housing and reduced recidivism. However, all the studies discussed have various limitations which will now be examined.

3.4.1. Datasets and data collection

Using administrative datasets of samples of parolees may provide a large number of cases for analysis, but the information within these datasets may be inaccurate, incomplete, or missing key risk factors. Administrative datasets often draw on data from risk assessments (Clark, 2016; McNeely, 2016; Meredith et al., 2007) which rely on parolees to be truthful and accurate about their various criminogenic risk factors. Although parole officers should keep up-to-date details of address changes (Steiner et al., 2015), these records may still be incomplete (Meredith et al., 2007), and supervisees may give fake or incorrect addresses to meet the conditions of release while actually residing elsewhere (Clark, 2016). Such samples also exclude those who are not subject to parole supervision, including those who have served their time in prison having refused or been rejected for parole.

Longitudinal studies involving a series of interviews with research participants pre- and post-release can allow researchers to collect information that is not available in official datasets and on those who are not subject to parole supervision, but following this group in the community and persuading them to continue with the research is highly challenging (Baldry et al., 2002, 2003b). As a result, longitudinal studies often have low response rates, with just 36% of La Vigne and Parthasarthy's (2005) sample completing all three post-release interviews. Impressively, Baldry et al. (2003a, 2006) managed to interview or collect information on the post-release experiences of 70% of their original sample by the end of the nine-month follow-up period. However, the nature and source of this information remains unclear and it is not known how many participants were interviewed at each time point and how this was incorporated into their analysis. Some researchers have instead relied on data pertaining to

living conditions prior to imprisonment, seeing these as having a decisive effect on experiences after release from prison (Brunton-Smith & Hopkins, 2013; Nilsson, 2003). However, this ignores the potential effects of imprisonment in stripping away housing, employment and important social connections, which are likely to be experienced unevenly across the prisoner population.

3.4.2. Measures of recidivism

All measures of recidivism have limitations, especially as they rely on official records from criminal justice agencies. Not only do they underestimate the extent to which individuals have reoffended (McNeeley, 2018) but they may also be affected by the data collection practices of criminal justice agencies and the biases and priorities that these may entail. Using rearrest as a measure of recidivism risks including those who are not eventually reconvicted of the offence (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2020). Re-conviction measures avoid this pitfall but may require longer follow-up periods due to the time it takes for offences to travel through the court system. Whilst reimprisonment may indicate that someone is not managing socially and economically in the community, it excludes those who may have reoffended in a smaller way resulting in a fine or community-based penalty and may include those who have breached the terms of their parole/release conditions rather than committing a new offence (Baldry et al., 2003a, 2006). Most of the studies discussed above use a one year follow up period. Although this is quite short, its use has been justified as most reoffending takes place within the first year after release (Langan & Levin, 2002; Makarios et al., 2010; May et al., 2008; Steiner et al., 2015). Furthermore, most parolees are only under supervision for a short period of time so a one year follow up period can still provide correctional agencies with practical information of how to support change in behaviour on a day-to-day basis (Steiner et al., 2015).

3.4.3. Lack of control factors and causality

Perhaps most importantly, most existing studies only provide evidence of associations between stable housing and reduced recidivism and do not attempt to identify a causal relationship between the two, though quasi-experimental designs, such as that employed by Lutze et al. (2014), do their best to account for most relevant factors in an effort to permit a causal interpretation. As such, the nature of this relationship and the causal mechanisms underlying it are not clear from the existing literature (O'Leary, 2013).

To avoid the pitfalls associated with official datasets, particularly their exclusion of those without post-release conditions, this study examines post-release housing experiences and the relationship between stable housing and recidivism in Aotearoa New Zealand by following a cohort of participants from just before their release from prison to approximately one year after release. It provides a thorough examination of this relationship by employing measures of both stable housing and residential mobility and two measures of recidivism, whilst also investigating its potentially causal nature through the use of inverse probability weighting.

4. Study Methods

4.1. Research design

To examine the relationship between stable housing and recidivism in Aotearoa New Zealand, this study used a consecutive sample of people released from six prisons from March to October 2019, who were interviewed just before their release and then approximately six months and one year after their initial release. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee and permission to conduct the study was then secured from the Department of Corrections. The selection of the six prisons was made with the assistance of Corrections staff who advised the researchers of which prisons released the highest number of sentenced prisoners. The prisons were then contacted and arrangements were made with each establishment for the researchers to attend the prison to approach those who were due to be released in the next four weeks and invite them to participate in the study. Remand prisoners were not included in the sample due to the difficulties of predicting their exact release date. Participation was voluntary. All participants received a comprehensive Participant Information Sheet, had the study verbally explained to them and were required to sign a consent form, which also gave permission for the researchers to request their contact information from Corrections and other organisations such as reintegration agencies. Once consent had been given, the pre-release interview was carried out.

4.2. Pre-release interviews

In total, 203 people were interviewed prior to their release from prison, two of whom later withdrew from the study, making a total sample of 201. Seventeen per cent of the sample were female and 75% identified as Māori. Pre-release interviews collected data on demographic factors, criminal justice history, previous mental health and addictions treatment, rehabilitation programmes completed in prison, supervision/release conditions, expected housing post-release and whether they received any housing support whilst in prison. Information was also gathered on factors predictive of stable housing, including pre-prison housing/ employment/ education, and expected employment/education on release. In relation to housing, participants were asked not only about the type of housing they lived in or expected to live in, but also about who they lived with and how many times they had moved in the six months before coming into prison. Like other researchers in this area, we also collected data on visits from whānau/family members as a proxy measure of family support (Brunton-Smith & Hopkins, 2013; Clark, 2016; May et al., 2008; McNeeley, 2018), but we also included a Likert scale of

perceived family supportiveness due to concerns that whānau/families may be unable to make visits due to distance, the costs of travelling and other factors. The ASSIST (World Health Organisation, 2010) and PHQ-9 (Kroneke et al., 2001) screening tools were also used to measure addiction and mental health issues respectively.

Although most of the interview schedule was made up of closed questions, at the end of the interview participants were invited to make any further comments about housing, release expectations or reintegration. Some gave extensive information about their housing experiences after previous imprisonments, their post-release expectations and the help they felt they needed. These qualitative comments were recorded as close to verbatim as possible, analysed using thematic analysis, and are used in this report to illuminate some of the quantitative findings. At the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their participation and asked for contact phone numbers, postal addresses and/or email addresses to allow them to be contacted by the researchers after release.

4.3. Post-release interviews

Post-release interviews were then held with participants at approximately six months and 12 months after release, either over the telephone or in person. If participants were back in prison, permission was sought to interview them there. During these interviews, participants were asked about their current housing situation (or if interviewed in prison, their housing prior to imprisonment), including type of housing and co-habitants, how many times they moved in the period between interviews, and any barriers they have faced to obtaining stable housing. Once again, data regarding current employment, education/training, family support, mental health and addiction issues and rehabilitative programmes were collected, and participants were also invited to share any other information about their post-release experiences that they felt the researchers should know. Participants were given a koha of $40 in supermarket or phone credit vouchers for each post-release interview completed, although this koha could not be given if the post-release interview took place in prison.

As Baldry et al. (2002) have noted, keeping in touch with people who have been imprisoned once they are in the community and keeping them engaged in the research over a period of time is not easy. Many will not have fixed addresses or phone numbers, ensuring that contact details given prior to release become obsolete very quickly (Baldry et al., 2002) and very few participants either used email or could remember their email address. Some participants may

not wish to be reminded of their time in prison, whilst others may feel institutionalised and will find it hard to maintain appointments (Baldry et al., 2002, 2003b). The post-release interviews were designed to capture the transient and unstable nature of housing that many people leaving prison experience but it is this transience that also makes it harder to find people and keep them engaged in the research post-release.

We used a variety of strategies to minimise sample attrition and engage participants in the post-release interviews, including postcard and text message reminders and a cell phone number for participants to register any changes in contact details. If we could not find a participant, we requested up to date contact details from Corrections. In some cases, this was successful, and we were able to find participants through this information. In others, alternative contact details were not available because participants were not under any form of post-release supervision, or such information was out of date. We also attempted to find participants through community reintegration agencies, particularly those working with short-sentence prisoners, to see if participants were known to them. However, this also proved unsuccessful.

The availability of participants for post-release interviews and the timing of these interviews were also undoubtedly affected by the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020. New Zealand entered Level 4 towards the end of March 2020 and did not enter Level 2, until mid-May 2020. This coincided with the final tranche of the first post-release interviews (six months after release) and the beginning of the second post-release interviews (one year after release). Whilst we were able to conduct some interviews over the telephone during this time, we were unable to re-enter prisons to meet with participants who had been reincarcerated.

Forty percent of the participants were interviewed in the first wave of post-release interviews and 33% in the second wave. In total, 51% of participants took part in at least one post-release interview and as can be seen from Table 1 below, a similar proportion of participants from different genders and ethnicities completed at least one post-release interview. Although this is not as high as the 70% of participants that Baldry et al. (2003a, 2006) managed to interview or collect information on, it is broadly comparable with other studies in this area, particularly as the current study followed participants for a longer time period than most. For example, Carlisle (1996) kept just 34% of the sample in the study at the post-release stage (four to eight months after release), whilst Brunton-Smith and Hopkins (2013) achieved a response rate of 57% (two months after release).

Table 1: Participants taking part in at least one post-release interview by gender and ethnicity

	Number participating in pre-release interview	Number participating in at least one post-release interview	Percentage participating in at least one post-release interview
Gender			
Female	34	17	50
Gender diverse	2	2	100
Male	165	83	50
Ethnicity			
New Zealand Māori	150	74	49
NZ European & Other	75	41	55
Pacific	11	5	45

4.4. Measures of housing stability

In this study, we use two measures of housing stability. Firstly, we use a measure of 'residential mobility' - the number of moves made within a six-month period - with those who have moved more than once in this period being classified as having high residential mobility and therefore unstable housing. Measuring residential mobility can capture the highly transitory and volatile nature of the post-release journeys of some research participants (Baldry et al., 2003a), and movements in and out of accommodation and periods of homelessness (Lutze et al., 2014). Where people were living in situations which were not designed to be long term accommodation, such as in a tent or car or on the street, these cases were counted as two or more moves to capture the highly unstable nature of these living arrangements

Secondly, we examined the different housing situations and categorised them as 'stable' or 'unstable'. We asked participants to choose from several options for where they had been living in the six months before the interview (or before prison). These options included: owned, rented from private landlord, state/public housing, Housing First or NGO, with

whānau/family/friends, hotel/motel, hostel/boarding house/backpackers/campground, on the street and somewhere else. Where participants answered with 'somewhere else', they were placed in one of the categories based upon their answers. These participants were often living in temporary structures such as a car or tent. Most participants choose only one type of housing, but for those who lived in more than one type of housing over the six-month period, the least stable of the options they chose was assigned as their housing type. The housing types were then grouped into 'stable' or 'unstable', with the 'stable' category including living in their own house, private rented accommodation, Housing First or NGO homes[4] or state/public housing. The 'unstable' category included living with family/whānau/friends, hotel/motel, hostel/boarding house/backpackers/campground/holiday park or street homeless. This measure enables us to capture more than just primary homelessness (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 1992) and to understand the temporary, unstable and often unsuitable living situations experienced by participants.[5]

The inclusion of 'whānau/family or friends' in the 'unstable' category may seem unusual[6], however, many research participants indicated to us that they did not see this as stable accommodation and in many cases, they did not wish to continue living in this situation. Existing literature has also found that whilst such accommodation can offer substantial amounts of practical and social support, it is often temporary or perceived to be temporary

[4] When participants stated they were living in accomodation provided by NGOs/Housing First, we classed this as stable unless it was emergency accommodation. Although some NGOs provide short-term transitional accommodation, many participants were able to stay there longer than the stated time limit. Furthermore, in many parts of Aotearoa such as Auckland and Hamilton, NGO have adopted Housing First models which provide permanent accommodation and measures of residential mobility suggest this accommodation was not as transitional as might be expected. In the six-months prior to prison, 78% of those in Housing First/NGO moved no more than once and just 22% moved twice or more (see Table 2).

[5] The 'unstable' category is close to the Statistics New Zealand (2014) definition of homelessness which defines homelessness as 'a living situation 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'. We did not assess whether participants' housing was uninhabitable, largely because we were often unable to view this housing.

[6] None of the participants were living in permanent collectivist forms of accommodation such as papakāinga housing. The inclusion of living with 'whānau/family or friends' in the unstable category ensures that this reflects gendered experiences of homelessness as whilst single men often experience rough sleeping, women tend to experience homelessness as staying temporarily with friends and family (Fraser et al., 2021).

(Baldry et al., 2003a; Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Keene et al., 2018; Mills & Lindsay Latimer 2021b; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2015; Roman & Travis, 2004; Visher, 2007) or may be a last resort in the face of no other options (Harris et al. 2015). Additionally, more than half of the people who had lived with whānau/family or friends prior to prison had moved at least twice in the six months prior to prison before prison (see Table 2 below). We therefore decided to include this sub-category with the unstable housing types.

4.5. Measures of recidivism

Data on recidivism by all participants within one year after the initial release from prison were provided by New Zealand Corrections. Recidivism was measured using two different measures: 're-sentenced' and 're-imprisoned'. Re-sentenced refers to those who were re-convicted and received any Corrections-administered sentence. This therefore excludes those who were re-convicted and received a fine or discharge. Re-imprisoned refers to those who received a prison sentence.

4.6. Analytic methods

The focus of analysis was on the effect[7] of stable housing in the 6 months after release on reoffending. Key biases this study could be prone to are attrition bias, confounding, response bias and selection bias if the prisons chosen were not representative of the whole (Sedgwick, 2014). The sample size available for analysis should also be considered a limitation for enabling definitive conclusions to be drawn about associations, especially regarding causal effects of stable housing on recidivism.

All analyses were carried out using R statistical software. For our smaller sample size, a p-value of $p < 0.1$ was considered significant. Bivariate analysis was used to indicate whether there were significant associations between variables in the data. As all variables of interest are categorical variables, chi-squared test has been used except when the expected cell sizes were smaller than 5, in which case Fisher's exact t-test was used.

[7] When using the term 'effects' it will refer to average causal effects, we have tried to estimate by adjusting for suspected confounding.

Analysis sought to estimate causal effects of stable housing on recidivism by adjusting for confounding throughout our analyses. Confounding variables were identified by expert opinion (PI; Mills). These consisted of:

- Ethnicity (where multiple ethnicities could be chosen and Māori, NZ European & Other, and Pasifika ethnicities were included in modelling)
- Age group
- Gender (male/female; nb, the n=1 gender-diverse participant in the post-release sample was removed from analysis as it is not possible to covariate adjust or balance across a group containing n=1)
- Criminal history (as measured by the number of previous imprisonments)
- Social support (as measured by perceived family supportiveness in prison, whether they planned to live with family, and whether they had caring responsibilities)
- Housing before prison (as measured by number of moves and least stable type of housing in the 6 months prior to prison sentence)
- Substance use
- Support (whether they received any support to find housing)
- Employment (whether they had paid employment)

The outcome of interest was recidivism as measured by two separate binary measures: (i) at least one reimprisonment within 12 months; and (ii) at least one resentencing within 12 months. Binomial (or quasibinomial where the dispersion parameter had a value above 1.2, as over-dispersion was suspected) regression models were conducted under four different approaches that attempt to isolate the causal effect of stable housing and residential mobility on recidivism and reoffending.

- **Covariate adjustment,** using complete case data keeping only full information of research participants who responded to the interviews six months after release. For this analysis to be representative of the sample it is assumed those lost in the interviews six months after release were 'missing completely at random' (Mack et al., 2018) to give valid estimates for all interviewees and extend to the larger population of ex-prisoners. The glm() function was used to fit binomial or quasi-binomial models with adjustment by the identified confounding variables.
- **Model averaging,** which averages the effects of stable housing across subsets of the covariate adjusted models. This allows the effects of stable housing across many

models with different subsets of covariates to be accounted for rather than choosing any one model. This aims to minimise issues that could arise from many covariates and limited sample size by averaging estimated effects over the full model and its subsets. The base model used for model averaging still included adjustment for ethnicity, age group, and gender. The model.sel() and model.avg() functions from the MuMIn package in R were used to create averaged models using equal weights.

- **Covariate adjustment with non-response weighted data (Seaman & White, 2013)**, which assumes observed variables affected retention in the first wave of follow-up interviews resulting in research participants being 'missing at random' (Mack et al., 2018). Responders are re-weighted to represent the non-responders, so the approach assumes there is no unknown information that would identify a reason for non-response. The weights used were the inverse of the propensity score for participation in the interviews 6 months after release, based on a logistic regression including variables found to be significantly[8] predictive. In cases where the weights were large, weight truncation was used to limit the amount of people one research participant could represent to 5. Then binomial or quasi-binomial models were fitted with adjustment by the identified confounding variables.
- **Inverse probability treatment weighting (IPTW**) uses the inverse of the propensity score to endeavour to re-weight the data with an even spread in those who were exposed (to unstable housing/high residential mobility) and those not across confounding variable values. The weighted data set aims to create a distribution of confounders that represents what might be expected from a randomised trial. Weights were estimated as $\frac{1}{PropensityScore}$ if exposed and $\frac{1}{1-PropensityScore}$ if not. In cases where the weights were large, weight truncation was used to limit the amount of people one research participant could represent to 5. Due to the small sample size and relatively large number of confounding variables, Standard Mean Differences (SMDs) between exposed and unexposed individuals across confounding variables of 0.2 or below will be considered a good balance (Moik et al. 2019). As this balance was not achieved across some covariates, propensity scores were restricted to the overlapping propensity scores in both the exposed and unexposed groups. This retains only individuals who, given the

[8] At the 0.5 significance threshold.

confounding variables adjusted for, were predicted to have similar likelihoods of being exposed. This approach aims to create pseudo-randomised trial data.

The “survey” package in R was used to apply weights to the data using the svydesign() function and incorporate weights in analysis. The svyglm() function was used for logistic regression using weighted data. Log links were used for inverse proportional treatment weighted models. For all other models logistic links were used as these converged more consistently. Separate models were created for each of the combinations of recidivism and stable housing measures.

5. Results

This chapter presents the key findings of the study. It firstly briefly details the key demographics of the full pre-release sample and participants' pre-prison housing experiences to provide the context for a discussion of their post-release housing experiences. The relationship between residential mobility and stable/unstable housing and recidivism is then explored and the role of potential confounding factors is examined through the inverse probability treatment model.

5.1. Basic demographic and other features

Table 2 below shows the basic demographic and other features of the sample of 201 participants who were interviewed prior to their release from prison.

Table 2: Demographic and other features of the sample

Demographic/other variable	**Percentage[9]**
Gender	
Female	17
Gender Diverse/Transgender[10]	1
Male	82
Ethnicity[11]	
New Zealand Māori	75
NZ European & Other	37
Pacific	5
Age	
Under 30	37
30–39	32
40–49	19
50 or over	12
Length of current sentence	
Less than a year	44

[9] Does not total 100% in each category due to rounding

[10] Due to the low number of gender diverse participants, their responses are not reported separately in order to protect their anonymity.

[11] This category does not total 100% as more than one response could be given.

One to two years	42
Over two years[12]	14
Whānau/family factors	
Currently in a relationship with a partner	22
Has children[13]	76
Caring for someone (including children) before prison	36
Employment & education/training	
In paid employment prior to prison	47
In education/training prior to prison	16
Mental health (PHQ-9 scores)	
Experiencing severe or moderately severe depression at time of interview	9
Substance use prior to prison[14]	
Alcohol	
Moderate risk	27
High risk	10
Drugs	
Moderate risk	56
High risk	23
Any substance	
Moderate risk	56
High risk	30
Treatment and programmes	
Ever received alcohol treatment prior to this imprisonment	31

[12] Of those release from prison in 2019, 32% had a sentence of over two years (Corrections 2021, personal communication), suggesting that these longer-term prisoners are therefore underrepresented in the current sample.

[13] The number of children participants had ranged from 0 to 22, with a median of two.

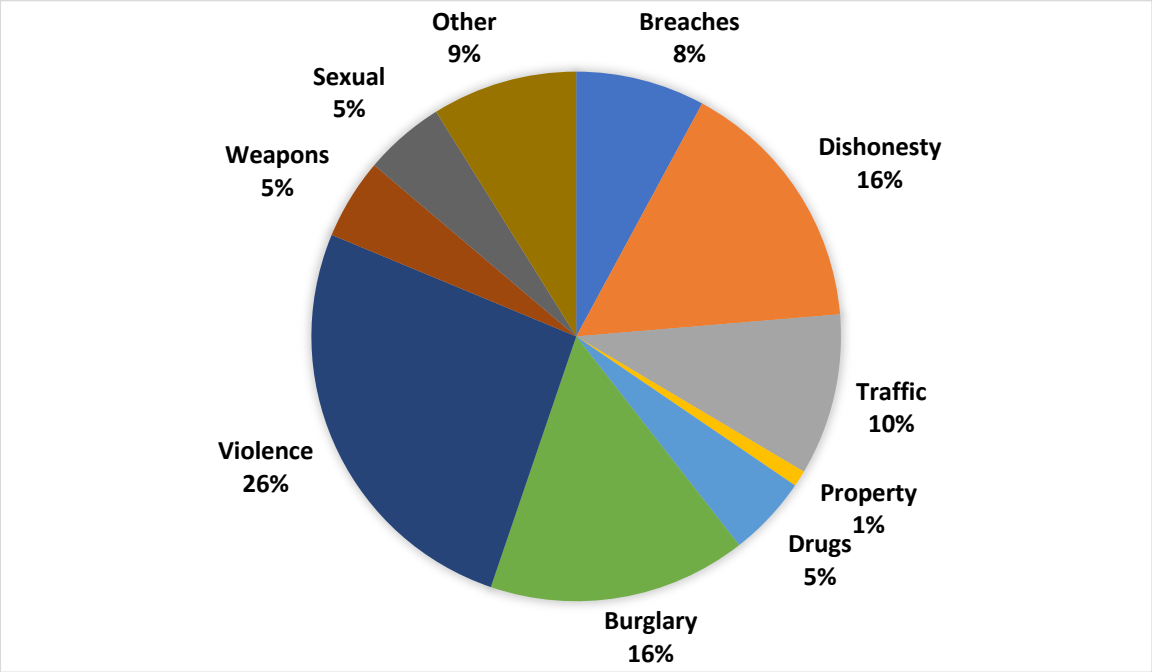
[14] Risk in this context refers to the risk of problems related to substance misuse. Moderate risk entails substance use causing health and other problems, and high risk refers to a high risk of dependency and experiencing health, social, financial, legal and relationship problems as a result of substance use (Humeniuk et al., 2010).

Ever received drug treatment prior to this imprisonment	35
Ever completed a programme in prison (including offending behaviour and drug and alcohol awareness courses)	55
Whānau/family factors	
Received at least one visit whilst in prison	26
Had some form of contact whilst in prison	80
Rate their whānau/family as supportive or very supportive whilst in prison	73
Recidivism	
Re-sentenced within 12 months of release	46
Re-imprisoned within 12 months of release	25

The number of previous convictions amongst the sample ranged from zero to 250, with a median of 39. The number of previous imprisonments ranged from zero to 59, with a median of two. As over 60% of the prison population have been found to have a 12-month diagnosis of any mental disorder, and 24% a 12-month diagnosis of any mood disorder (Indig et al., 2016), the prevalence of mental health problems amongst sample is likely to be a substantial underestimate. This is most likely because the interview questions only measured depression (through the PHQ-9) and because participants were understandably reluctant to speak of mental health problems in a short interview with an unknown researcher.

Figure 1 shows the main offence for which participants were imprisoned on the current sentence. Breaches refers to breaches of probation, parole, or supervision conditions.

Figure 1: Current offence among the pre-release sample



5.2. Housing experiences prior to prison

5.2.1. Housing and living situations prior to prison

Figure 2 shows where participants were living before they came into prison.[15] Over 40% lived with whānau/family or friends, with just under a quarter living in private rented accommodation rented by themselves or a partner. Just under 10% were street homeless but a further 5% were living in other highly precarious situations, including motels, hostels, and campgrounds. Only 7% owned their accommodation, in comparison to 65% of the general population of Aotearoa New Zealand (Stats NZ, 2020).

[15] In cases where participants lived in more than one type of housing, the least stable was recorded.

Figure 2: Living situations prior to prison

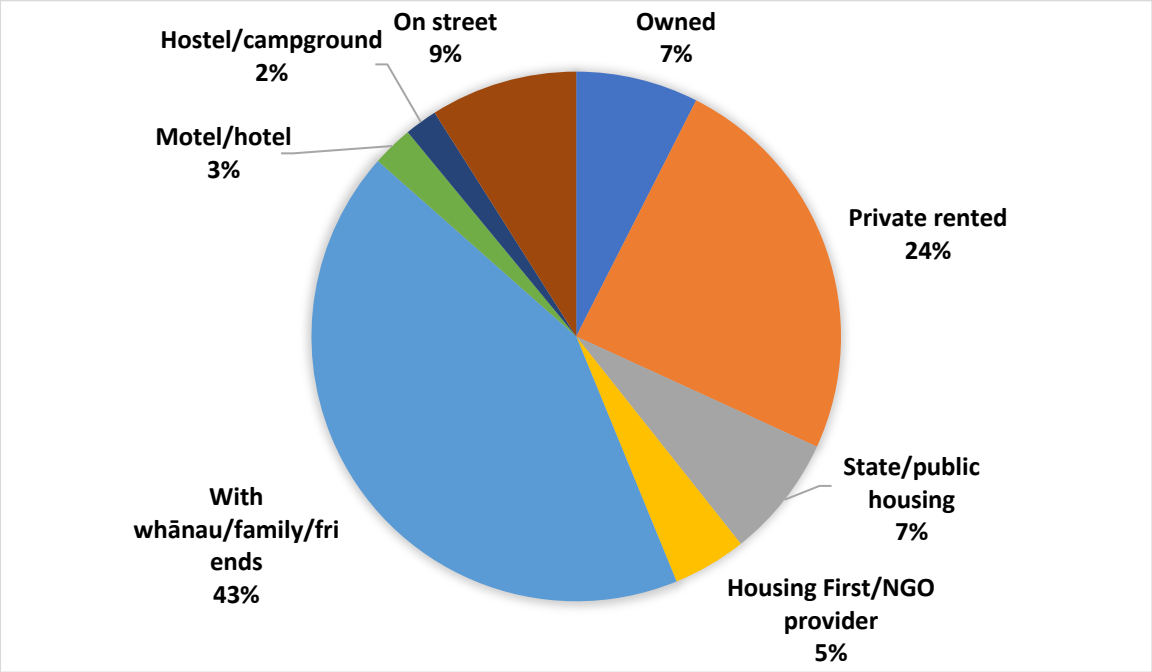
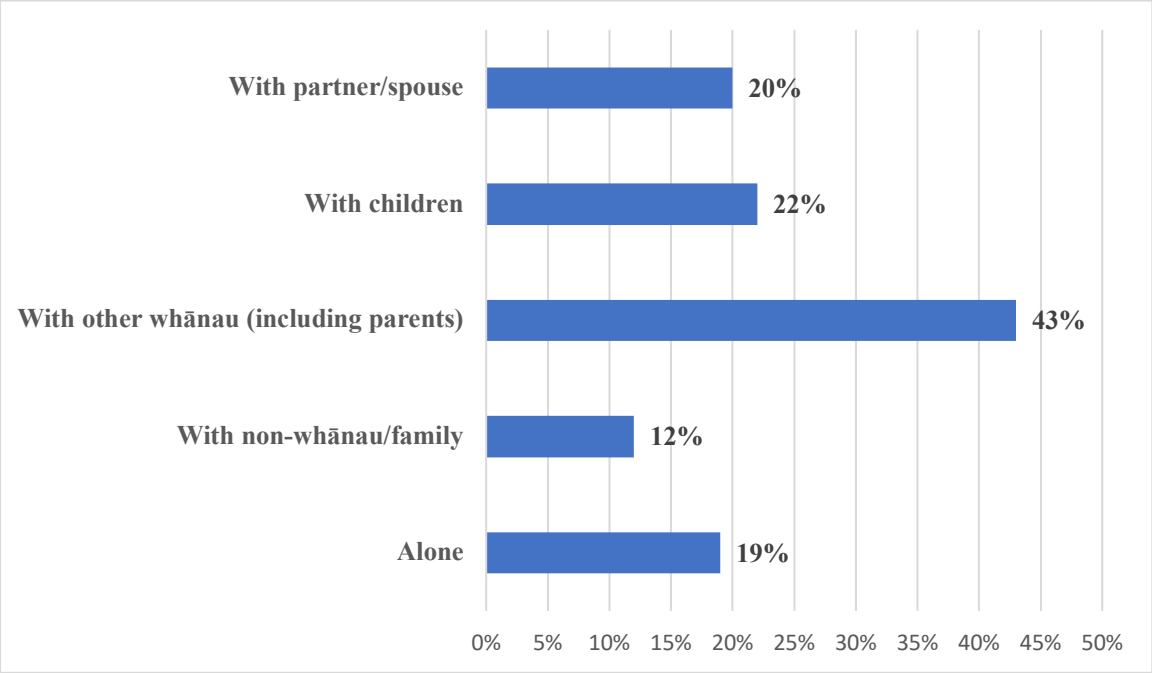


Figure 3 shows who participants were living with prior to prison. Participants could choose more than one option, for example, they could be living with their children and other whānau members.

Figure 3: Co-inhabitants prior to prison[16]



[16] Does not total 100% as more than one option could be chosen.

Children includes any children, not just those cared for by participants. Women were more likely to be living with other whānau (including parents) (59% as compared to 40% for men), substantially less likely to be living with a partner or spouse (9% compared to 22% for men) and slightly more likely to be living with children (29% compared to 21% for men). Men were slightly more likely to be living alone (19% compared to 15% for women). There were few substantial differences between ethnic groups and who they lived with, but Māori were around half as likely to live with non-whānau such as residents or guests as other ethnicities (11% compared to 20% for NZ European/other and 18% for Pasifika participants). Pasifika were also less likely to live alone (9% compared to 17% for both Māori and NZ European/other). Younger participants (under 30) were more likely to live with other whānau (including parents) or a partner, and the older the participant the more likely they were to live alone.

5.2.2. Stable housing prior to prison

As noted above, stable housing was measured in two different ways. Firstly, the number of moves made within a six-month period was used, with two or more moves indicating high residential mobility. In the six months prior to their imprisonment, 55% participants had not moved or had moved only once, and 45% had moved two or more times, indicating that a substantial portion of the sample experienced high residential mobility and precarious pre-prison housing. Whilst most participants did have a roof over their heads, many moved frequently from one friend or family member's accommodation to another. In some cases, when asked how many times they had moved in the six months prior to prison, these participants could not give a definitive answer as they simply could no longer count how often they had moved.

Women tended to be less mobile than men with 35% moving twice or more, compared to 47% of men. Pasifika participants were less likely to move twice or more (27%) than Māori (45%) and NZ European/other (47%). Those over 50 were the least likely to have moved more than once (28% compared to an average of 48% for the other age groups).

Secondly, different housing situations were categorised as stable or unstable, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Pre-prison stable housing and residential mobility

	Housing situation prior to prison	Percentage of each category's moves prior to prison	
		0-1	2+
Stable	Owned	80	20
	Rented from private landlord	76	25
	State housing	80	20
	Housing First/NGO Provider	78	22
Unstable	With whānau/family or friends	47	54
	Motel/hotel	0	100
	In a hostel/boarding house/backpackers/campground /holiday park	50	50
	On street	0	100

Measured in this way, 44% of participants were deemed to be living in stable housing and 56% in unstable housing prior to prison. Once again women were more likely than men to be living in stable housing prior to prison (53% in comparison to 42% of men). Both those under 50 years old and those who identify as Māori were more likely to be living in unstable housing (58% compared to 51% of non-Māori), though this is likely to be a reflection of the high number of Māori in the sample living with whānau.

5.3. Pre-release housing expectations and support

In order to gauge expected levels of post-release homelessness and the degree to which participants were prepared for their release, all research participants were asked if they knew where they were going to live on release. Sixty-eight percent reported knowing where they were going to live. Of these, 55% expected to live with friends and family, with a further 15% expecting to live in private rented accommodation and 11% expecting to live in Housing First/NGO accommodation. Thirty-two percent of the total sample did not know where they

were going to live on release, a figure which compares with the quarter of participants in Bowman and Morrison's (2017) study who had no accommodation organised for their release. In contrast to international studies which suggest that women have greater difficulty finding housing after prison (Baldry et al. 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Gojkovic et al. 2012; McKernan, n.d.), more women in the sample reported knowing where they were going to live than men. The reasons for this are not clear and it is possible that the women were simply more optimistic about obtaining housing on release. Several of the women living in state (public) housing prior to prison were able to negotiate to keep their tenancy as they knew they would only be in prison for a short time. In these cases, their older children were able to take over the lease and look after the younger children whilst the mother was in prison, ensuring that the whānau/family was able to stay in the whānau/family home. These figures should also be interpreted cautiously as even firm plans for post-release housing could fall through (see section 5.4.2 of this report). As Baldry et al. (2003a:19) note, 'Pre-release there is the well-known halo effect whereby people about to be released are more optimistic about their capacities and future than is warranted'.

Of the 64 participants who did not know where they were going to live, four had arranged accommodation with a community housing provider, but did not yet know the details of that accommodation. A further eleven expected to ask to live with whānau/family or friends and four intended to try and rent accommodation from a private landlord. This left 45 participants (22% of the total sample) who expected to be homeless on release or had no idea where they were going to live, even though they were less than four weeks away from being released. When compared with the 13% who lived either on the street or in motels/hotels, hostels or campgrounds etc prior to imprisonment, this suggests that many lose their housing as a result of being imprisoned. Furthermore, many of those who had housing to go to on release revealed that they considered this to be a temporary and sometimes undesirable option, particularly if they anticipated tension with whānau/family members, their planned accommodation was unsuitable for children or they were moving into shared accommodation such as hostels with strict rules and expectations, which felt like an extension of jail (Mills et al., 2020). Such accommodation was often a last resort and/or the only place that probation would approve for them to go rather than somewhere participants felt was safe or appropriate.

When comparing pre-prison housing with expected housing on release, those who were in unstable housing prior to prison were more likely to expect to live in unstable housing on release, as shown by Table 4.

Table 4: Actual housing before prison and expected housing after prison

	Expecting stable housing after prison	Expecting unstable housing after prison	Sum
Stable housing before prison	51 (58%)	37 (42%)	88 (100%)
Unstable housing before prison	10 (9%)	103 (91%)	113 (100%)

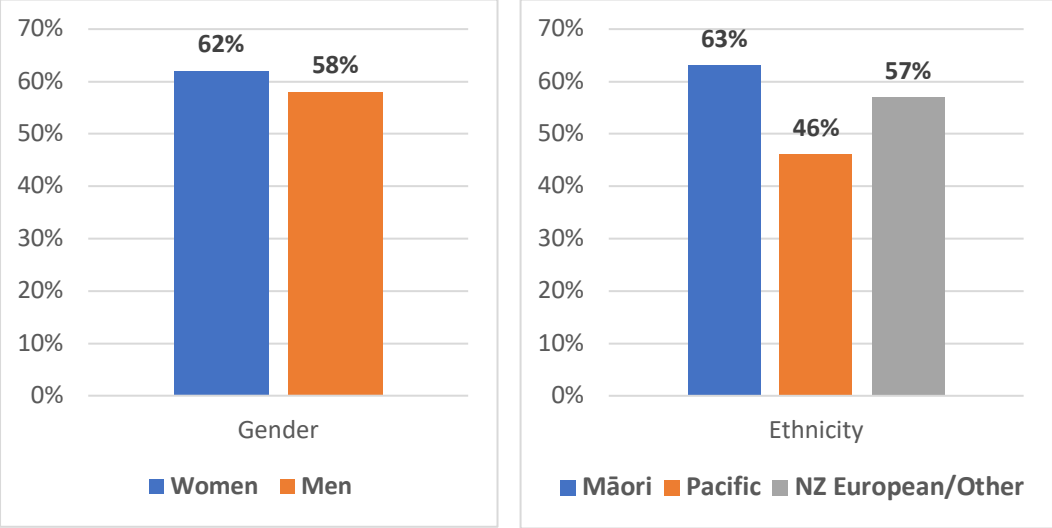
This was a statistically significant relationship (p-value = <0.001). There was also a strong relationship between homelessness[17] before prison and expected homelessness on release (p-value = <0.001). Unsurprisingly, these results indicate that those who are homeless or in unstable housing prior to prison would benefit from targeted support to find stable housing for them to live in after release.

Just 31% of the pre-release sample reported receiving or being offered some form of support[18] to find housing prior to their release, with a further 10% stating that they did not need any such support, leaving just under 60% with a perceived need for support that they had not been offered. Figure 4 shows the percentage of participants in different groups who did not receive an offer of housing support, with women and Māori were slightly less likely to have received this support.

[17] Homelessness in this instance refers to street homelessness or rooflessness.

[18] From Corrections, another state agency or iwi/community organisation.

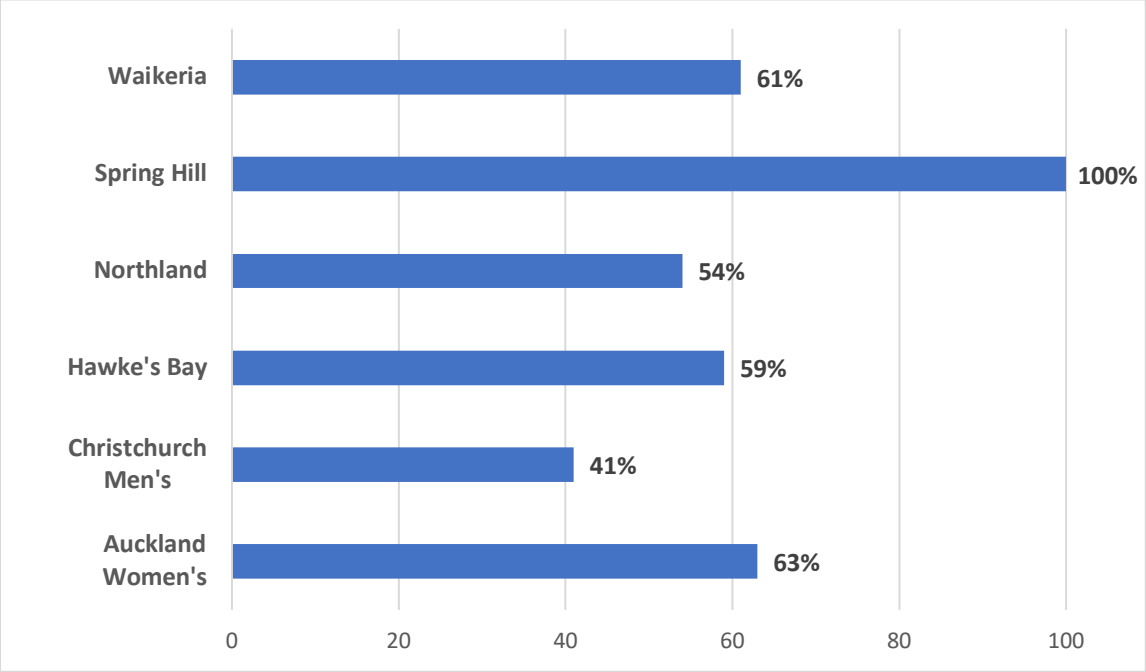
Figure 4: Participants who reported not receiving an offer of support to find housing prior to release by gender and ethnicity



As most study participants were serving a sentence of less than two years, the main support available to them would be Out of Gate services, funded by Corrections and provided by iwi/community organisations. An evaluation of this scheme in 2014 found that navigators frequently did not have enough time to plan for people's release and faced substantial difficulties securing housing for this group of people due to insufficient accommodation options (Corter et al. 2014). Several study participants also noted that Out of Gate services could not help them find accommodation until they were released, leading to substantial anxieties for these participants who did not know what to expect when they walked out of the prison gate and did not have anywhere else to go. Participants also reported wanting help to claim benefits and obtain correct identification documents but felt that all this needed to happen long before release (Mills et al. 2020), so they could feel better prepared for their transition into the community and for dealing with state agencies and other services on release. However, Ministry of Social Development rules currently do not permit those in prison to sign up for welfare benefits prior to their release.

The level of support offered reported by participants also varied amongst different prisons in the sample, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Participants who reported not receiving an offer of support to find housing prior to release by prison[19]



Participants in Christchurch Men's prison were the most likely to have been offered support and this may be a reflection of the prevalence of community housing provision and support in the Christchurch area. None of the participants in Spring Hill reported being offered a form of support to find housing, though this finding should be treated with some caution due to the small number of study participants held in this prison (n=10), all of whom were all short-term prisoners.

None of the participants who owned their own property prior to prison reported receiving any help to ensure they could keep this. Several were at considerable risk of losing their home and only managed to save it at the last minute by finding tenants with the help of whānau members. At least one participant lost their property whilst in prison because they could not keep up with the mortgage repayments.

5.4. Post-release housing

Across the two post-release interview stages, the overall variables of interest, including key demographic variables, sentence length, criminal justice history, educational qualifications,

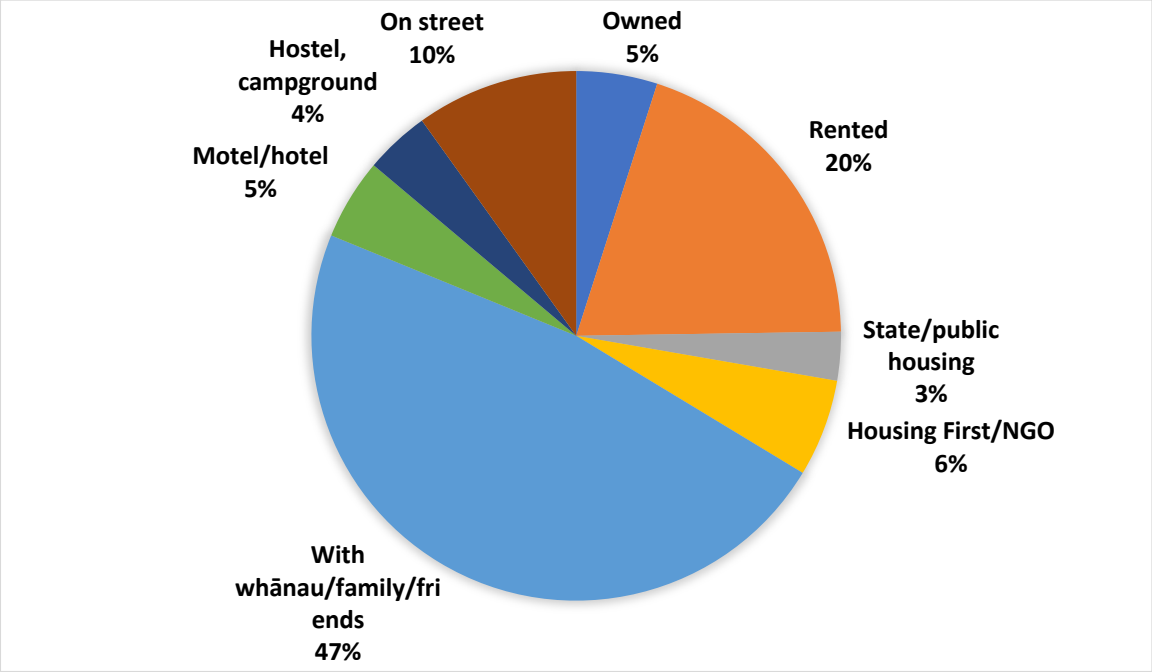
[19] The proportion of participants in Auckland Women's prison who reported not receiving help is slighly higher than the proportion of women who reported not receiving help due to the inclusion of gender diverse participants.

employment were generally retained in very similar proportions, although under 40-year-olds were present in far fewer numbers. In the second wave of post-release interviews (approximately 12 months after release), those in the initial sample who were re-sentenced or re-imprisoned within one year were under-represented, leading the sample to become biased. The following analyses therefore use data from the first post-release interview (approximately six months after release) to examine experiences of post-release housing and whether stable housing at this time point was associated with recidivism in the first year after release.

5.4.1. Housing and living situations after prison

Figure 6 shows the living situations of the post-release sample (n=80).

Figure 6: Living situations after release



This is broadly similar to the living situations experienced by participants prior to prison, with slightly more participants living with whānau/family or friends (48% compared to 43% pre-prison) and small decreases in participants living in accommodation they owned, private rented accommodation and state/public housing.

Figure 7: Co-inhabitants after release[20]

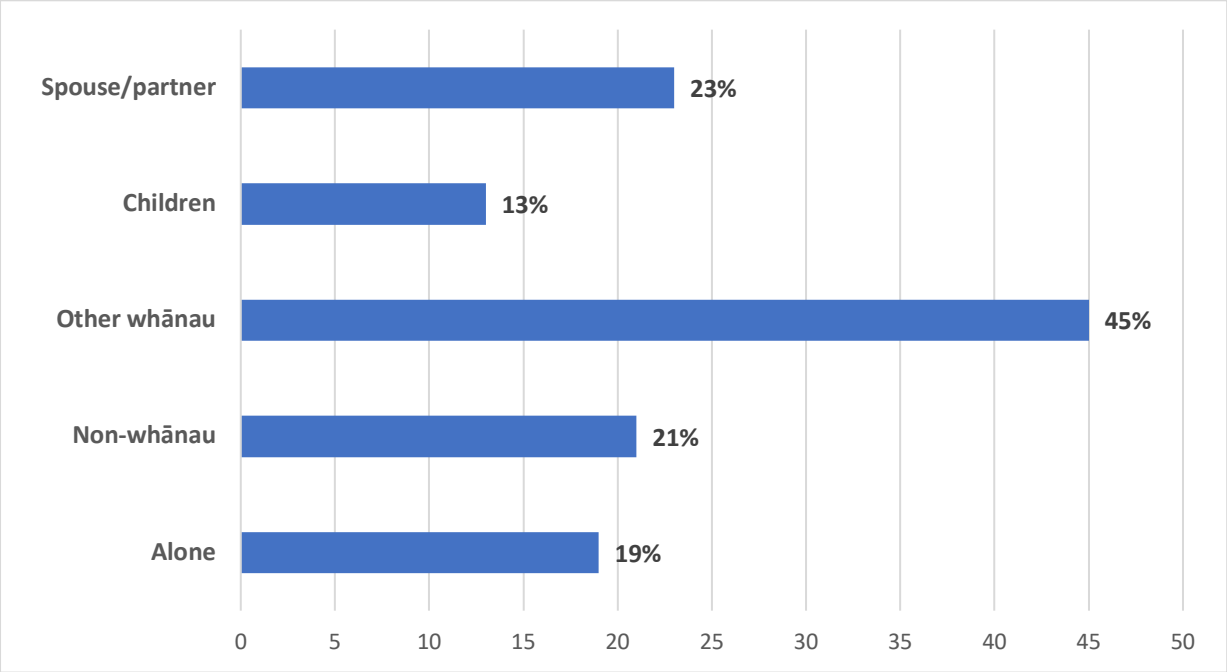


Figure 7 shows who participants lived with in the first six months after release. Again, this broadly follows the same pattern as before prison although fewer participants lived with children (either their own or someone else's) after prison (13% compared to 22% prior to prison) and a larger percentage of the post-prison sample lived with non-whānau (21% compared to just 12% prior to prison), suggesting that the rise in people living with whānau/family or friends has been driven by more people living with friends or associates after release. Eighteen percent of participants were caring for their own children in the first six months after release, but not all lived with them.

5.4.2. Stable housing and residential mobility after prison

Two-thirds of participants in the post-release sample lived in unstable housing in the six months after prison, whilst 44% moved more twice or more during this time. The living situations of women tended to be more stable with 46% living in stable housing and 77% moving no more than once in comparison to 30% and 52% respectively for men, although these differences were not statistically significant. Once again, some participants were highly transient during this time, moving from one motel to another, or from emergency to rented accommodation to the streets, and could not tell us the precise number of times they had moved. In rural areas, finding somewhere warm and dry to sleep could be highly challenging, leading to participants without

[20] Does not total 100% as more than one option could be chosen.

housing moving on a day-to-day basis in these areas. A small number of participants also lost their accommodation (and possessions) as a result of the Covid-19 lockdowns because they had gone to visit whānau members elsewhere in the country and had to stay in place during lockdown.

Māori were 1.7 times more likely to live in unstable housing in the six months after release than non-Māori (Table 5). This was a statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.013), which is likely to have been affected by the high number of Māori in the post-release sample who lived with whānau or friends (n=30).

Table 5: Māori and post-release stable housing

	Living in stable housing after release	Living in unstable housing after release	Sum
Māori	14 (25%)	43 (75%)	57 (100%)
Non-Māori	13 (57%)	10 (44%)	23 (100%)

Māori also experienced higher levels of residential mobility than non-Māori and were 2.4 times more likely to have moved twice or more in the six months after release (Table 6). This relationship was statistically significant (p-value = 0.023).

Table 6: Māori and post-release residential mobility

	0-1 moves after release	2+ moves after release	Sum
Māori	27 (48%)	30 (53%)	57 (100%)
Non-Māori	18 (78%)	5 (22%)	23 (100%)

The high levels of unstable housing and residential mobility amongst Māori in the sample suggests that this population would benefit from targeted, culturally appropriate services and support to help them find and keep stable housing after prison.

5.4.3. Expected and actual stable housing after release

Both homelessness prior to prison and expected homelessness after prison were correlated with actual homelessness after prison in a statistically significant relationship (p-value=0.00026 and

p-value=0.012 respectively), indicating a portion of the sample suffered from entrenched homelessness during this time which was not disrupted by support to find stable housing.

Just 27% of those who expected to live in unstable housing managed to find stable housing in the six months after prison, indicating that for many unstable housing is an enduring issue rather than a short-term one experienced directly on release. Furthermore, 52% of those who expected to go to stable accommodation on release found themselves in unstable accommodation six months after prison, perhaps demonstrating the halo effect mentioned above in relation to overly optimistic housing expectations. There were a number of reasons why housing did not work out as participants had planned, including relationship/family breakdown, having to move to take up employment or because the current housing felt unsafe. Participants were also evicted from private rented accommodation and in a small number of cases had to leave accommodation provided by non-government organisations either due to restrictions on the length of time they could stay or being asked to leave due to breaking the rules:

I was living at Salisbury Street [Foundation] for three days, but I ran away and lived on the street for three weeks before I got arrested. I left because I got a warning that they would kick me out so I ran away.

5.4.4. The influence of other factors on stable housing and residential mobility

Relationships between stable/unstable housing, residential mobility and a number of other variables were explored to discern their impact on participants' experiences of post-release housing. Many of these factors such as caring responsibilities, post-release conditions, or completing a rehabilitation programme in prison showed no statistically significant relationship with either stable housing or residential mobility. Despite nearly half the sample having moderate or high scores on the ASSIST scale, there was no relationship between substance use and either stable housing or residential mobility. At some stage in their lives, 38% of the post-release sample had received treatment for alcohol addiction, 43% for drug addiction and 31% had received mental health treatment. In each case, they were more likely to end up in an unstable housing situation after release,[21] but these relationships were not

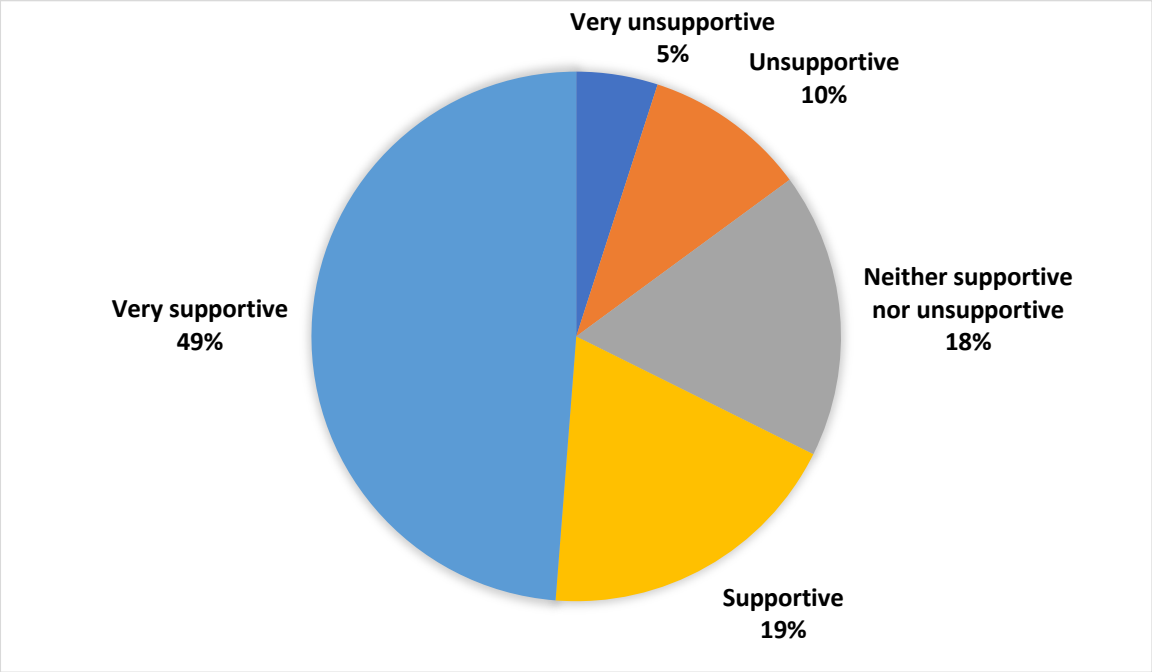
[21] Although they were no more likely to have moved twice or more than those who had not received such treatment.

statistically significant. The relationship between mental health as measured by the PHQ-9 and the two measures of housing was also inconclusive. This is somewhat surprising given that those with addictions and mental health issues are generally over-represented in the homeless population (Tsemberis et al., 2004) and may be the result of the specific group of participants we interviewed. Furthermore, participants may not have disclosed mental health or substance use issues due to memory error, social desirability concerns or because they were fearful that such information might reach their probation officer, especially if their post-release conditions prohibited the consumption of drugs and alcohol.

As discussed above, existing research has found that both whānau/family support and stable employment are associated with successful reintegration and reduced recidivism. However, much of the existing research has used visits in prison as a proxy measure of whānau/family support when examining the relationship between whānau/family ties and recidivism (Clark, 2016; May et al., 2008; McNeeley, 2018). For example, in England and Wales, Brunton-Smith and Hopkins (2013) found that 47% of those who reported receiving visits reoffended after one year, compared with 68% who did not report receiving visits. Yet imprisonment frequently serves to undermine or weaken whānau/family relationships (Flavin, 2004; Harris et al., 2015) and prison visits may not be reflective of the support offered by whānau/family members on release if they are unable to visit loved ones in prison due to cost, time and other constraints (Flavin, 2004; Gordon, 2009; Mills & Codd, 2008). Study participants were therefore asked to complete a Likert scale on their perceptions of whānau/family supportiveness, in addition to answering a question on whether they received any visits. Seventy-four percent of the pre-release sample had not received a visit from their whānau/family whilst they were in prison, but two-thirds of these (66%) still felt they had been supportive or very supportive whilst they were in prison, demonstrating that visits should not be used as the sole measure of whānau/family support.

A slightly higher proportion of the post-release sample had received visits whilst they were in prison (29%), but there was no statistically significant relationship between receiving visits and either stable housing or residential mobility. Figure 8 shows the perceptions of family supportiveness amongst the post-release sample. In total, 68% of participants felt their whānau had been either very supportive or supportive after their release from prison.

Figure 8: Perceptions of whānau/family supportiveness after release



As can be seen from Table 7, having whānau/family perceived to be supportive or very supportive was associated with lower levels of residential mobility. Participants with whānau/family they perceived to be supportive or very supportive were almost twice as likely to have moved no more than once, and this relationship was statistically significant (p-value = 0.014).

Table 7: Perceptions of family supportiveness and residential mobility

	0-1 moves after release	2+ moves after release	Sum
Not supportive	9 (35%)	17 (65%)	26 (100%)
Supportive	36 (67%)	18 (33%)	54 (100%)

This aligns with La Vigne and Parthasarthy's (2005) finding that 'movers' have lower perceived levels of family support than 'stayers', with a higher share of movers relocating to live on their own. Certainly, in the current study, those who lived alone were more vulnerable to experiencing high residential mobility during the post-release period than those who lived with others (p-value=0.090), as can be seen in Table 8. This is likely to be because many of

those living alone were living on the street or in highly unstable temporary accommodation such as hostels or motels.

Table 8: Living alone and residential mobility

	0-1 moves after release	2+ moves after release	Sum
Living alone	5 (33%)	10 (67%)	15 (100%)
Not living alone	40 (62%)	25 (39%)	65 (100%)

Fifty-six percent of the post-release sample had been in paid employment or education/training in the six months after release. Employment was often manual labour, and some were able to return to the same employer they had worked for prior to prison. Seasonal, low paid work such as fruit picking or farm labouring was also common, but was often short-term and unstable. Although being in paid employment or education/training did not show a relationship with residential mobility after prison, those who had not engaged in these activities in the six months after release were 1.4 times more likely to be in living in unstable housing than those who had (Table 9), and this was a statistically significant relationship (p-value= 0.040).

Table 9: Employment, education/training and stable housing

	Stable housing after release	Unstable housing after release	Sum
Engaged in employment, education or training	20 (44%)	25 (56%)	45 (100%)
Not engaged in employment, education or training	7 (20%)	28 (80%)	35 (100%)

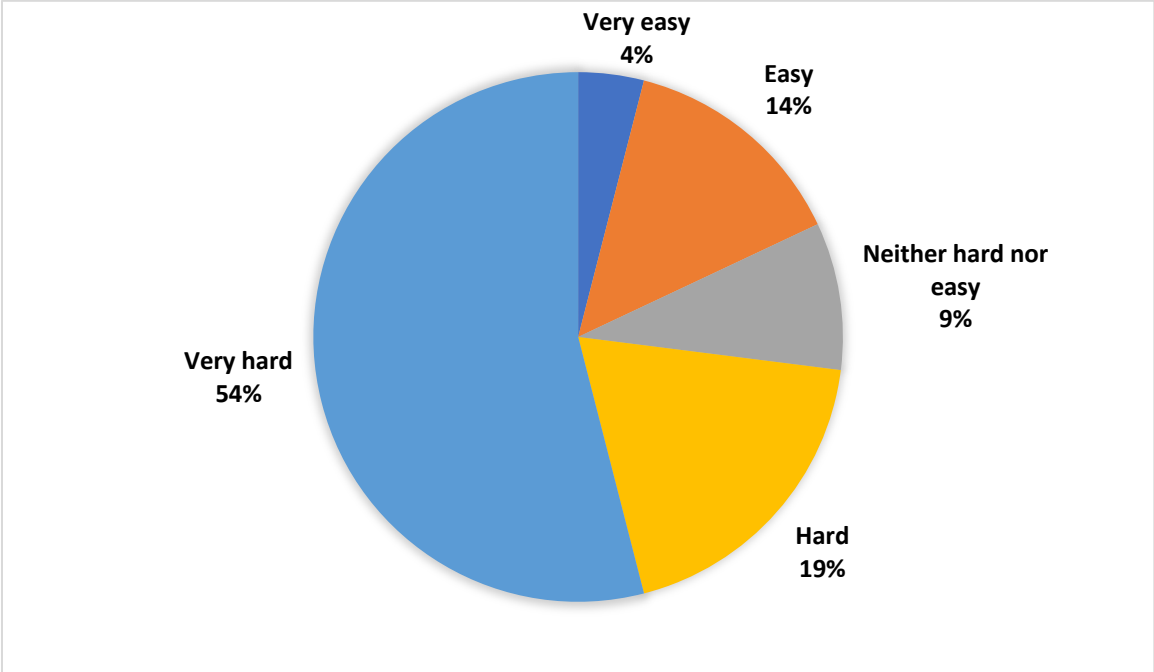
What is not known, however, is the direction of this relationship. Engaging in employment, education/training may allow some people leaving prison to live in stable accommodation as it can provide the resources to pay for this, but post-prison stable housing may also enable people to find employment or engage in education/training

5.5. Difficulties finding post-release housing, housing support and other reintegration issues

5.5.1. Finding housing after release

A Likert scale was used to measure how hard it was for participants to find housing on release from prison. As can be seen from Figure 9, a majority of participants found it very hard, with few finding it easy or very easy.

Figure 9: How hard was it to find housing on release from prison?



Although there were no differences in terms of gender or age, Māori were 2.4 times more likely to have found it very hard to find housing than non-Māori (Table 10). This was a statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.0098).

Table 10: Māori and how hard it was to find housing

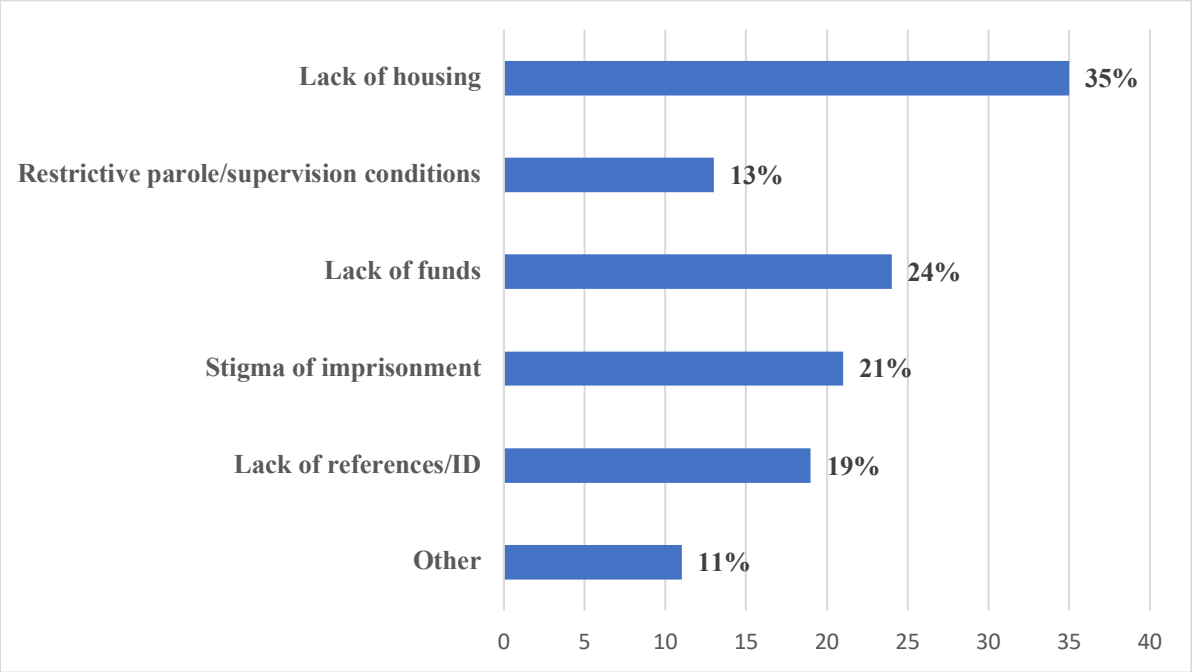
How hard it was to find housing?							
	Very easy	Easy	Neither hard nor easy	Hard	Very hard	Did not answer	Sum
New Zealand Maori	1 (2%)	7 (12%)	4 (7%)	7 (12%)	36 (63%)	2 (4%)	57 (100%)
Non- Maori	2 (9%)	4 (17%)	3 (13%)	8 (35%)	6 (26%)	0 (0%)	23 (100%)

The difficulties faced by Māori in finding housing on release is likely to be due to a combination of factors reflective of the difficulties faced by Māori in wider society, including the ongoing intergenerational trauma caused by colonisation, racism in the private rental market and the high demand for social housing. This is likely to be compounded by the stigma of a criminal record, and once again clearly demonstrates the need for specialist housing support and provision for Māori leaving prison.

5.5.2. Problems finding housing after release

All participants were asked what problems they had faced in finding housing in the six months after leaving prison. The results can be seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Problems encountered in finding post-release housing [22]



The 'other' category included issues such as poor quality housing, a record of evictions, and uncertainty about how to go about organising housing, suggesting once again that those leaving prison would benefit from more support in this area. The lack of available housing was deemed to be the biggest problem faced by this cohort of participants who commented on the substantial competition they faced for housing and how this was likely to be affected by the stigma of contact with the criminal justice system. Whilst many participants were housed in some way at the time of the post-release interview, in many cases, this was not desirable or suitable housing but simply what they had managed to obtain in this competitive environment. Moreover, many, even those in employment, struggled with the funds needed to afford private rented accommodation and commented that after paying rent, they had little left to pay bills, let alone buy furniture:

'After food and rent, I am left with nothing to survive on… it has been a complete struggling all the time… it has been really hard to buy normal things for the house. I just got a bed but am still trying to save for a microwave.'

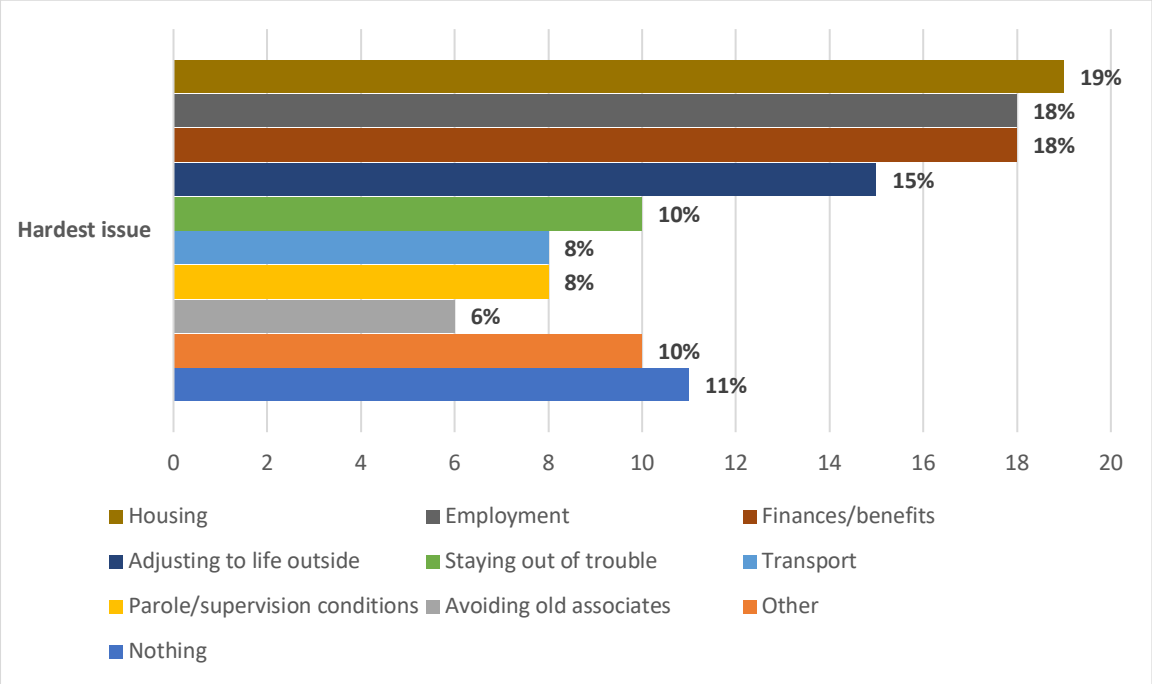
[22] Does not total 100% as some participants selected more than one option.

Lack of references/ID included situations where participants were unable to rent from private landlords because they did not have suitable references or identification documents or an established credit record to allow them to rent a property. This was seen as a substantial hindrance to housing by nearly a fifth of participants. Although the proportion of participants who mentioned restrictive parole/supervision conditions as one of the problems they faced was small, those who encountered such difficulties were more likely to be re-sentenced and re-imprisoned than those who mentioned other problems. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution because the offending of those on parole/post-release supervision may be more likely to come to the attention of criminal justice agencies than the offending of those who are not.

5.5.3. The hardest thing after release

All participants were asked an open question about what they had found was the hardest issue to deal with since leaving prison. Their responses were then coded into categories and the results are shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: The hardest issue since leaving prison[23]



[23] Does not total 100% as some participants gave more than one answer.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, housing-related issues were the most commonly reported. Participants raised a number of concerns, including the lack of suitable housing in certain areas of the country, difficulties finding time to search for housing in amongst other commitments, a lack of housing stability among participants who moved around between whānau and friends, and poor quality housing, including temporary structures such as buses, caravans and abandoned buildings and private rented accommodation. Several participants expressed concerns about living in emergency accommodation such as motels, finding it unsafe and unstable. For example, one participant and her mother not only had to move from motel to motel, but at one motel also had to move from room to room, packing up their belongings before or after work every day. As one participant noted such accommodation gave people 'a roof over their head but people deserve a home'. Hostel or halfway house accommodation was also seen a highly problematic, unsafe and unlikely to lead to any positive changes in their lives:

'I don't want to stay in halfway houses with ten other guys who have been in prison… they [probation] just say 'we'll put you with these other losers', negativity begets negativity, and there's f-all positivity to be found.'

Another participant agreed that hostels could be a negative environment, particularly as such accommodation tended to entail more intensive police surveillance:

'... agencies like the Red Cross/Salvation Army that offer accommodation to prisoners are creating an unsafe environment in that area. No one is going to make any steps forward if you are surrounded by bad company 24/7, gangs show up, there's a constant police presence... if you have all that in your life consistently and surrounded by it, how are you meant to make productive decisions?'

It might be assumed that those who own a property are less likely to face housing difficulties on release. However, homeowners still experienced substantial issues. For example, one participant lost their house whilst in prison as they could not find any tenants and another almost lost their property but was able to find tenants. Neither reported receiving any support with housing whilst in prison.

In relation to employment, many participants commented on how hard it was to find stable, paid employment due to having a criminal record. Work found through WINZ was often

seasonal or casual which paid little more than minimum wage and some participants lost this employment as a result of the Covid-19 lockdowns of March to May 2020. Parole/supervision conditions could also prevent participants from getting jobs within certain areas or limit their ability to work due to the need to attend programmes and report to their probation officer. In some cases, probation officers helped by attending the participant's place of work to ensure they could report in or rearranging appointments to minimise the paid work they had to forego. Transport issues also meant that those who lived rurally or in small/medium sized towns struggled to attend courses or find work if they did not have a driving licence and/or vehicle.

Other participants experienced substantial financial difficulties after release. Many struggled to live on the benefit money left after rent payments, and others found it difficult to obtain benefits, due to complex and unwelcoming systems that are difficult to navigate, and lacked correct forms of identification or other documents. This was particularly challenging for Māori who are forced to negotiate Pākehā systems that may not understand or cater to their unique needs. In these scenarios, participants felt as though they were being set up to fail and end up back in prison. As one participant stated:

'The cost of living can be overwhelming, budgeting is difficult, especially when you get so little to buy groceries. It's not as easy as people think it is getting out of prison, I can see why a lot of people re-offend because they can't make ends meet and end up stealing out of necessity'.

Another noted:
'Nobody wants to help you if you've got out of prison… when you get out you have to start from scratch. Even things like clothes, you don't have. There's Steps to Freedom but you need to have a bank account to get it but you don't have a bank account. So you then need to find someone, write them down as an agent and then it takes a few days to go through so there are lots of barriers to access this money. It is easier to live in prison than it is on the outside'.

For some participants, the difficulties they faced related to their motivation to 'stay out of trouble'. This often involved avoiding old associates and, in some cases, whānau/family members, leading them to feel socially isolated. A small number of participants noted the difficulties of learning to live alone, with only their own company, whilst others struggled with institutionalisation, finding it difficult to adjust to life outside prison, being around large numbers of people, and dealing with the demands and responsibilities of everyday life:

'Readjusting, moving back into society and moving to a place where I am completely and utterly responsible... so if I don't cook, I don't eat. Doing grocery shopping and making sure bills are paid on time, basically being a nobody, getting on with things, being completely under the radar and doing what I have to do and getting on with my life.'

5.5.4. Support received after release

Some participants in the pre-release interviews reported not receiving any support finding housing at the time of the interviews, but had been informed that they would receive this on release from prison. All participants in the post-release interviews were therefore asked if they received any support finding housing after release. Only 29% of participants reported receiving any such support, whilst 18% stated that they did not need any help. This left 53% who reported needed help with housing but did not receive any, either from Corrections, another state agency or iwi/community organisation. Notably none of the women reported receiving any help after prison, although 25% said they did not need it. Of the men, just 33% reported received support, and the main source of support was iwi/community organisations rather than state agencies. People who reported not receiving support were 1.3 times more likely to be re-imprisoned than those who reported receiving support (see Table 11). The relationship between support and reimprisonment was statistically significant (Fisher's exact test p-value = 0.029). Notably, none of those who reported not requiring any help were imprisoned.

Table 11: Support after release and reimprisonment

		Re-imprisoned		
		No	Yes	Sum
Received support after release	Have not needed	14 (100%)	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
	No	28 (67%)	14 (33%)	42 (100%)
	Yes	17 (74%)	6 (26%)	23 (100%)

In both the pre- and post-release interviews, participants acknowledged the importance of and need for support to find housing and reintegrate into the community:

There should be more housing for people to be released to and then other places for them to move onto, because it is really overwhelming when you get out if you have nowhere to go.

People need help to go into a more stable environment. Corrections doesn't do enough to help people. A mate came out a couple of months before me and he felt stranded and just wanted to go back into straight away.

There needs to be more [support]. People are getting out to nothing and it leads them back to crime. Bond, furniture, it all adds up and we don't have enough financial support.

Others mentioned that support needed to be provided for certain groups such as young and single people, who, it was perceived, were rarely a priority for social housing. It was also important that any such support to find housing should be given in a timely manner, to avoid causing a substantial amount of anxiety about release which is unlikely to lead to a smooth reintegration process:

Right up until three days before my release I didn't know if I was going home or not. Then I was approved to go back into my own house but it was really stressful because I didn't know where I was going to be going.

It'd be best to work with inmates 5 to 6 weeks or 2 months before [release] to help them with housing, then visits every week and [provide] reassurance that housing is being organised.

Out of Gate were awesome. But it would be good if housing was planned before release rather than on the day you get out.

In the pre-release interviews, many participants noted their desire to avoid living in group settings such as hostels, although in some parts of the country this seemed to be the main accommodation provided by Out of Gate services for short-sentenced prisoners:

The last place Out of Gate put me wasn't suitable. It was a negative environment with drinking and drugs. It wasn't safe for me. The people in there were 'out the gate', drunk all the time or

high so it was too easy to get involved. I want a place of my own so I can have my kids over, a better environment for them.

Many other participants expressed this desire to find a place of 'their own' rather than staying with whānau/family or friends, or in temporary accommodation such as a motel. This was often justified by the need to have somewhere suitable and safe for children to visit, as well as their own space:

I want my kids to be able to visit. If they can't, it's not suitable… I don't want to go somewhere there will be rules. I've already done my lag, don't want to feel like I'm being controlled. I want a housing service that encourages independence.

Although there was some criticism of services such as Out of Gate, many participants recognised that this was not the fault of individual support workers but that such services are under-funded and under-staffed:

Out of Gate are good for help when you're first out but they take a step back after that.

Out of Gate should be further financed and have more employees. PARS is also underfunded.

5.6. Housing and recidivism

The quantitative interview data were analysed to examine any relationships between stable/unstable housing and residential mobility and the two measures of recidivism: resentencing and reimprisonment. As can be seen in the tables below, the strength of these relationships varied but, in each scenario, those experiencing stable housing or low levels of residential mobility were less likely to have reoffended within a year than those who experienced unstable housing or high levels of residential mobility.

5.6.1. Stable housing after prison and recidivism

Those living in unstable housing six months after prison were 1.5 times more likely than those living in stable housing to be re-sentenced (Table 11). However, this relationship was not statistically significant (p-value = 0.27).

Table 12: Stable housing and resentencing

	Re-sentenced		
	No	Yes	Sum
Stable	19 (70%)	8 (30%)	27 (100%)
Unstable	29 (55%)	24 (45%)	53 (100%)

Overall, 40% of the sample were re-sentenced. Similar patterns of association were found between specific housing situations and resentencing. Resentencing rates were 75% among those who were homeless, 60% among those living in Housing First/NGO accommodation, 50% among those who lived in motel/hotels, 50% among those who lived in state houses, 42% of those who lived with friends or family, 25% of those who lived in owned accommodation, 19% of those who rented, and none of those who lived in hostels/boarding houses/backpackers/ campgrounds/holiday parks. Once again, these figures should be interpreted with caution due to the very small numbers of people involved.

The strongest relationship was between living in stable housing six months after prison and reimprisonment within a year (Table 13), with those living in unstable housing being 4.6 times more likely to be re-imprisoned (p-value = 0.020).

Table 13: Stable housing and reimprisonment

	Re-imprisoned		
	No	Yes	Sum
Stable	25(93%)	2 (7%)	27 (100%)
Unstable	35 (66%)	18 (34%)	53 (100%)

Overall, 25% for all participants were re-imprisoned. An exploration of specific housing situations revealed that reimprisonment rates were 63% among those who were homeless, 50% among those who lived in motels/hotels, 50% among those who lived in state houses, 29% of those who lived with friends or family, 25% of those who lived in owned accommodation, and none of those who rented, were in housing first/NGO provided accommodation, or in hostels/boarding houses/backpackers/campgrounds/holiday parks. However, the differences

between rates of reimprisonment should be interpreted with substantial caution due to the small size of the post-release sample in general and very small numbers in many of the above categories.

5.6.2. Residential mobility after prison and recidivism

Those who had moved twice or more in the six months after prison were 1.7 times more likely to be re-sentenced than those who had moved no more than once (Table 14). However, this was just shy of providing statistical evidence of a relationship (p-value = 0.11).

Table 14: Residential mobility and resentencing

	Re-sentenced		
	No	Yes	Sum
0-1 moves	31 (69%)	14 (31%)	45 (100%)
2+ moves	17 (49%)	18 (51%)	35 (100%)

Those who moved twice or more within six months of release from prison were 1.6 times more likely to be re-imprisoned than those who moved no more than once (Table 15). However, once again, this was not a statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.36).

Table 15: Residential mobility and reimprisonment

	Re-imprisoned		
	No	Yes	Sum
0-1 moves	36 (80%)	9 (20%)	45 (100%)
2+ moves	24 (69%)	11 (31%)	35 (100%)

The lack of statistical significance in these relationships may be due to a sample size that is too small to accurately estimate the effects of stable housing as only 80 people were retained at the first post-release interview, although including those captured at the second post-release interview (approximately 12 months after release) did not improve the strengths of these relationships. Alternatively, other variables such as employment thought to have relationships

with both stable housing and recidivism measures may explain away the effects of stable housing.

5.7. Perceptions of home, stable housing and recidivism

The conceptualisations of stable housing and residential mobility discussed in this study so far only capture the physical aspects of housing. To gain a sense of whether they felt a degree of ontological security in their accommodation, participants in the post-release interviews were asked whether the place they were currently living felt like a 'home'. Just over half of participants (53%) reported that their current accommodation felt like a home, with 46% stating that it did not feel like a home and 1% being unsure.

Given that impermanence is associated with ontological insecurity (Rosenberg et al., 2021), there was a surprising relationship between residential mobility and whether participants felt their current accommodation was a home (Table 16). Those who moved two or more times in the six months after prison were 1.7 times more likely to see their current accommodation as a home than those that moved no more than once. This was a statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.0086).

Table 16: Perceptions of home and residential mobility[24]

		0-1 moves	2+ moves
Viewed the place they were living as a home	No	27 (60%)	10 (29%)
	Unsure	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
	Yes	18 (40%)	24 (69%)
	Sum	45 (100%)	35 (100%)

It should be noted that this question only asked about participants' current accommodation. They may have moved several times to finally end up in accommodation which they view as a home. For example, one participant was released to stay with a friend but then was told to move by probation due to co-habitants' substance use. He then slept in his car for three months, parking in friends' driveways, before finally getting a rental unit where he lived when interviewed. Other participants had moved around from one form of highly precarious

[24] Does not total 100% due to rounding.

accommodation to another before obtaining what they regarded as more secure and suitable housing.

A statistically significant relationship is also apparent between stable housing after prison and perceptions of the current accommodation as a home (Table 17), with those in unstable housing being 1.6 times more likely to describe their current accommodation as a home (p-value = 0.069).

Table 17: Perceptions of home and stable housing

		Stable	Unstable
Viewed the place they were living as a home	No	17 (63%)	20 (38%)
	Unsure	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
	Yes	10 (37%)	32 (60%)
	Sum	27 (100%)	53 (100%)

Given the apparent importance of stable housing for developing a sense of ontological security, we might expect those living in more stable housing situations to be more likely to view their accommodation as a home. However, the attainment and maintenance of ontological security will depend on the particular setting or context in which they occur (Dupuis & Thorns 1998), and participants' comments from the interviews demonstrated the variety of reasons why those living in stable housing did not feel 'at home'. Several participants who owned their accommodation or lived in private rental housing noted how its poor physical quality did not contribute to a sense of comfort or security, especially if this situation was largely out of their control:

'There are rats everywhere, I want to boot it down or sell it but I can't afford to go anywhere else'

'This house isn't somewhere I want to be living but it's a house… it's really difficult to get them [rental company] to do things around the house, like fix the damaged walls'.

Home has been defined as a place where one feels safe and secure (Tomas & Dittmar, 1995) and ontological security can be undermined by the emotional and psychological effects of living in situations which do not feel safe or supportive or where abuse occurs (Cram, 2020; McNaughton & Sanders, 2007). Two women participants with physically stable housing felt a lack of both physical and emotional safety and security as this was where they had experienced ongoing domestic violence. As many of those in the prison population have experienced child abuse and domestic violence, this is likely to be an issue which affects many others.

Other participants in stable housing had cut themselves off from their former associates/friends and in some cases even their whānau/family, in an attempt to change their lifestyles, but struggled with the consequent social isolation and loneliness:

I'm trying to find space on my own and be alone by myself… finding it difficult to be alone and have time to myself.

I've had to cut a lot of people out of my life…was a hard one for me because it was a lot of close people and family. I deleted Facebook and Messenger. I let them know that I still have love for them, but I still have to walk this path. It is really hard, I still miss everyone, but I don't want to get off track.

In a study of Indigenous women leaving prison, Baldry (2009:15) notes that those trying to stay away from negative relationships often found themselves ''isolated' emotionally and geographically and being unbearably lonely'. Those with stable housing and low levels of residential mobility after release may ostensibly be at a lower risk of reoffending but can clearly still require substantial social and emotional support to ensure they feel a sense of ontological security in this setting and assist with actualising their goals.

Conversely, what may appear to be unstable housing may still be perceived as home and provide a sense of ontological security. Some participants, for example, indicated that they did not mind being street homeless:

Where am I living? In an abandoned building, a warehouse. I don't mind it too much. It was abandoned after the earthquakes, and I've lived there ever since on and off.

Groot et al. (2017: 151) argue that for many Māori, 'life on the street in some ways offered a greater sense of stability and control than domestic alternatives ever had'. Some participants agreed that living on the street could allow them a degree of control and autonomy that living with others does not always provide:

I prefer to live on there [on streets]. I did stay with my daughter for a few days but it was it very difficult. There's no orders here, not like when I'm at my daughter's or mother's. It's just me and my shadow.

Finally, accommodation with whānau/family or friend could be temporary but might still be seen as a home due to the strong, loving relationships that participants had with others living there:

It feels like a home because that's where I looks [sic] after my nan.

This is particularly likely to be the case for Māori, for whom ontological security extends beyond walls of the dwelling to include the wider physical and cultural environment and connections to whānau, whakapapa and whenua (Cram, 2020). In Cram's (2020) study, a home was perceived as a place where people could count on the shelter, love, and support of their whānau, but also live Māori values and nurture and manaaki each other intergenerationally.

Whilst stable housing is associated with reduced recidivism, perceptions of 'home' and ontological security clearly do not provide a straightforward mechanism to explain this relationship. Those who viewed their current accommodation as home were not only more likely to be living in unstable housing or have experienced high residential mobility, but they were more likely to be both re-sentenced and re-imprisoned (Fisher's exact test p-value = 0.012 and 0.0052 respectively). Stage 2 of this study, which consists of narrative interviews with people who have desisted from crime for at least a year, seeks to further explore and explain the relationship between stable housing, perceptions of home and recidivism.

5.8. A causal effect of stable housing and residential mobility on recidivism? Accounting for confounding.

To estimate the causal effect of stable housing/residential mobility in the six months post-release and recidivism, we undertook four sets of analyses which took different approaches to

confounder adjustment: (i) standard *covariate adjustment*; (ii) *model averaging*: averaging of models accounting for different sets of covariates; (iii) *non-response weighting*: covariate adjustment with weights to account for non-response; and (iv) inverse probability of treatment weighting (*IPTW*), which 'balance' the exposed and unexposed groups across covariates. The confounders used are listed in the methods section (p24).

All interactions suggested to have relationships in bivariate tests were explored. However, they were either not significant with everything else in the model overall or resulted in models unable to converge. Therefore, interactions were not included.

For 'non-response' weighting, the variables significant to predicting participation in the first wave of post-release interviews were: age group, the prison they were interviewed in, and whether they had restrictions on where they could go after prison as part of their sentence. The inverse of the predicted value of the logistic regression (propensity score) was applied as the individual's weight. The survey package in R was used to account for weighted data. The svydesign() function was used to re-weight the data, as shown in the table below.

Table 18: Comparison of variables indicative of non-response to post-release interviews, the dataset before and after re-weighting for non-response

	Pre-release interview	Post-release	Post-release weighted
n	199[25]	79	188[26]
Age group			
Under 30	73	24	67
30–39	64	19	57
40–49	37	21	38
50 or Over	25	15	26
Restrictions on where they could go			
No	144	49	131
Yes	36	21	34

[25] In this analysis, the two gender diverse participants were excluded.
[26] This is 188 rather than 199 as weights were truncated, so one person would represent no more than 5 people

	Unknown	19	9	23
Prison				
	Auckland Women's	34	13	38
	Christchurch Men's	28	16	29
	Hawke's Bay	56	19	45
	Northland	35	8	31
	Spring Hill	10	6	9
	Waikeria	36	17	37

Four analyses were undertaken: (i) the effect of stable housing on resentencing; (ii) the effect of residential mobility on resentencing; (iii) the effect of stable housing on reimprisonment; and (iv) the effect of residential mobility on reimprisonment. These will be discussed in turn.

The covariate adjusted logistic regression, model averaged logistic regression, and non-response weighted logistic regression show the estimated effects of living in unstable housing after release on the log odds of recidivism. The IPTW shows estimated effects of living in unstable housing after release on the log relative risk of recidivism.

5.8.1. Effect of stable housing on resentencing

The confidence intervals for all estimates straddled 0, showing a lack of evidence for an effect of stable housing on resentencing when these confounding variables are adjusted for with a sample of this size.

Table 19: Estimated effect of living in unstable housing types within 6 months of release on resentencing

	Estimate	Standard error	t or z value	Pr(>|t|) or Pr(>|z|)	Lower CI	Upper CI
Covariate adjusted	0.19	1.04	0.18	0.86	-1.88	2.32
Model averaging	0.36	0.86	0.42	0.67	-1.32	2.05
Non-response weighting	-0.14	0.80	-0.17	0.87	-1.71	1.43
IPTW	0.21	0.43	0.49	0.63	-0.63	1.06

5.8.2. Effect of residential mobility on resentencing

Again, the confidence intervals for all estimates straddled 0, showing a lack of evidence for an effect of moved 2+ times in the six months on resentencing when these confounding variables are adjusted.

Table 20: Estimated effect of high residential mobility within 6 months of release on resentencing

	Estimate	Standard error	t or z value	Pr(>|t|) or Pr(>|z|)	Lower CI	Upper CI
Covariate adjusted	0.47	0.80	0.58	0.56	-1.15	2.06
Model averaging	0.62	0.68	0.91	0.36	-0.72	1.96
Non-response weighting	0.35	0.80	0.44	0.66	-1.22	1.93
IPTW	0.13	0.31	0.41	0.68	-0.49	0.75

5.8.3. Effect of stable housing on reimprisonment

Despite evidence of a relationship between stable housing and reimprisonment in bivariate analysis (fishers test p-value 0.020) there was no evidence of a significant relationship after

other suspected confounders were adjusted for. While there was no evidence of a significant relationship after suspected confounders were adjusted for as confidence intervals for all estimates straddled 0, encouragingly all the estimated effects of unstable housing were in the same direction.

Table 21: Estimated effect of living in unstable housing types within 6 months of release on reimprisonment

	Estimate	Standard error	t or z value	Pr(>|t|) or Pr(>|z|)	Lower CI	Upper CI
Covariate adjusted	0.13	1.31	0.10	0.92	-2.49	2.87
Model averaging	1.17	1.00	1.16	0.25	-0.80	3.13
Non-response weighting	0.13	1.34	0.10	0.92	-2.49	2.74
IPTW	0.53	0.83	0.64	0.52	-1.09	2.16

5.8.4. Effect of residential mobility on reimprisonment

There was also no evidence of a significant relationship between residential mobility and reimprisonment after adjusting for suspected confounders (Table 22), and in fact all estimated effects were negative – in the opposite direction to that expected.

Table 22: Estimated effect of high residential mobility within 6 months of release on reimprisonment

	Estimate	Standard error	t or z value	Pr(>|t|) or Pr(>|z|)	Lower CI	Upper CI
Covariate adjusted	-1.44	1.02	-1.41	0.16	-3.58	0.48
Model averaging	-0.46	0.86	0.54	0.59	-2.15	1.22
Non-response weighting	-0.83	0.82	-1.01	0.32	-2.44	0.78

IPTW	-0.37	0.54	-0.69	0.49	-1.43	0.69

No significant effects of either stable housing or residential mobility on recidivism were found from the data after adjustment for the confounding variables. Across the four analyses that were undertaken all confidence intervals for the estimated effect of stable housing on recidivism straddled zero, suggesting there was not sufficient evidence of an unconfounded casual association between stable housing or residential mobility on recidivism.

6.0. Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the key findings of the research and makes recommendations for changes to policy and practice to improve the housing experiences of those leaving prison in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also briefly discusses the limitations of this study and makes suggestions for future research.

6.1. Housing experiences and support

This research demonstrates that those in prison in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly those who identify as Māori, experience high levels of housing instability both prior to and after imprisonment. Fifty-six percent of the research participants lived in unstable housing and 45% moved twice or more in the six months prior to entering prison. Two-thirds lived in unstable housing and 44% moved twice or more in the six months after leaving prison. Difficulties in finding and keeping stable housing were particularly likely to affect Māori who were 1.7 times more likely to live in unstable housing and 2.4 times more likely to experience residential mobility in the six months after release, despite pre-prison levels of residential mobility amongst Māori being comparable to those who identified as NZ European/Other. Māori were significantly more likely to report finding it very hard to find post-release housing, suggesting that the impact and stigma of imprisonment in finding somewhere stable to live is heightened for Māori. For Māori, reintegration after prison involves (re)integration into a colonial society (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021a), and the difficulties faced by Māori in the sample are likely to be reflective of substantial discrimination they face in securing housing in wider society (Harris et al. 2006; 2012).

Post-release emergency accommodation, such as motels, and temporary/transitional accommodation, such as hostels, were strongly disliked by many research participants. These forms of accommodation were deemed to be highly unsuitable as they were often unstable, unsafe and inappropriate for children, making whānau/family reunification difficult, if not impossible. Many resented the other inhabitants and strict rules of hostels, seeing this accommodation as an extension of jail, which left them with little or no personal space and no control over their lives, and increased the stigma they faced on release, making it impossible to start their life in the community in a positive manner. Such rules and regulations, that limit a person's autonomy, can inhibit homemaking and the fostering of social relationships and push people away from contact with support services (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017).

Whilst imprisonment is likely to lead to the loss of housing for many, it also represents an opportunity for agencies both in and outside the criminal justice system to provide substantial support to help those incarcerated find and/or keep suitable, affordable stable housing. However, around 60% of research participants who needed support reported not receiving any by the time of the pre-release interviews, and over half reported not receiving any in the six months after their release. Although a small proportion received support at the point of release, the late provision of this assistance created substantial anxiety and a sense of instability prior to their release.

None of those who owned their housing prior to prison reported receiving any assistance from Corrections to ensure that they could keep this and preventing the loss of housing is not currently deemed to be within the scope of Corrections case management roles (Corrections, 2020b). The current Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan emphasises sustaining stable housing and preventing homelessness (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). For those in stable housing prior to prison, support should therefore be given to enable them to keep this where possible. This could include assistance to rearrange mortgages or find tenants for homeowners or help to liaise with landlords and access to the Accommodation Supplement for short-term prisoners (including those on remand) in various forms of rental housing. Housing assessment and release planning processes should also ensure that no-one should leave prison with an unmet housing need and any form of support provided should be culturally appropriate with services provided by Māori for Māori (see below).

The vast majority of participants wanted stable, long-term accommodation; a place they could call their own, where they could exercise control over the space and begin to re-establish their lives after prison. Rather than relying on the current model of short-term, transitional accommodation, any housing provided for those leaving prison should therefore aim to prevent residential mobility, and the unstable and sometimes chaotic nature of post-release life. Instead it should focus on long-term, sustainable housing, in line with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. This housing should be good quality, safe, culturally appropriate and account for the needs not only of those who have left prison but also their whānau/family, especially tamariki/children. Housing First models, as used by the Creating Positive Pathways programme, could be further explored for their suitability for those leaving prison and their whānau and, if appropriate, their use extended.

However, throughout the research interviews it became clear that no one size of post-release housing fits all and that a variety of long-term options need to be provided. Existing specialist post-prison housing provision does offer a variety of housing options, but these are often short-term and limited to certain populations and areas of the country. A more diverse array of housing provision is needed, which is open to a wider group of prisoners (including those on short prison sentences) and available through the country rather than the current piecemeal approach. Clear, accessible information about such housing and how to access it also needs to be available and communicated to prisoners and their whānau in sufficient time before their release.

Research participants revealed a number of other difficulties, such as finances and employment, which contributed to the difficulties of finding and/or keeping stable housing and prevented their social reintegration into the community. Participants reported finding it hard to negotiate the state benefits system, particularly if they did not have the correct form of identification or a bank account on release. The New Start scheme run by Corrections and Westpac, which was launched across prisons at the end of 2021 and enables prisoners to receive a valid ID and open a back account prior to release (Inside Government, 2022), will hopefully go some way towards alleviating these challenges.

Although private rented accommodation is often seen as a long-term solution to post-release housing needs, with those in Corrections-funded supported accommodation, for example, often being expected to move onto private rented accommodation, such housing is often unaffordable, leaving participants with little money after paying rent to meet other expenses. This was the case for both those on state benefits and in paid employment as such employment was often casual and low paid. In such circumstances, those attempting to re-establish their lives after prison may lose any stable housing by falling behind on rent and/or feel that they are being set up to fail and be tempted to commit crime to resolve this situation. State benefits, including the Steps to Freedom grant, should therefore be increased immediately to ensure they provide income sufficient for an adequate standard of living as recommended by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019). Those who have been in prison should be assisted to access these benefits through the provision of appropriate identification documents, including birth certificates and drivers' licences. Although not everyone leaving prison will be willing or able to take up employment on release for reasons such as caring responsibilities, physical and

mental illness, the need to fulfil post-release conditions and resolve other areas of their lives such as accommodation issues and relationship problems (Morrison and Bowman, 2017), those who are able and/or willing to seek paid employment could be assisted into better paid, more specialised employment opportunities through the provision of appropriate training.

A small number of participants lived in state housing, and many of these seemed to fare better after prison as they were able to keep it throughout their imprisonment and benefitted from the cheaper rent. Enabling those in prison and their whānau to keep or obtain state housing and other forms of housing with Income-Related Rent Subsidies[27] should also be explored, including the possibility of making those who have been in prison a priority group for such housing, as is the case in other jurisdictions such as England (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b).

Many of those in the sample lived with whānau/family or friends both prior to prison and on their release. Although whānau/family and friends can offer support to those who have left prison, these housing situations could be unstable, with some participants moving between whānau/family members and friends, and other forms of unstable housing. Nevertheless, those who perceived their whānau/family to be supportive or very supportive were almost twice as likely to have moved no more than once, suggesting a potential link between strong whānau/family support and greater housing stability, even if that housing was not directly provided by whānau/family. Help to strengthen or maintain whānau/family ties could therefore be useful in ensuring those leaving prison experience more stable housing situations. This should include better support for whānau/families to maintain contact with their loved ones inside prisons, but also more resources to enable and prepare whānau to help those leaving prison, such as improved communication with agencies supporting those leaving prison and financial support to cover the increased costs of supporting and accommodating a whānau member post-release.

6.2. Stable housing and the relationship with recidivism

In common with existing literature, this research provides somewhat mixed evidence regarding the relationship between stable housing and reduced reoffending. As can be seen in section

[27] Income-Related Rent Subsidies are paid to Kāinga Ora (state housing provider) and registered community housing providers to cover the difference between the rent paid by public housing tenants and the market rent (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2021).

5.6.1, those living in stable housing six months after release from prison were 4.6 times less likely to re-imprisoned than those with unstable housing. Although those living in stable housing and those who moved no more than once in the six months after prison were less likely to be re-sentenced, and those who moved no more than once were less likely to be re-imprisoned, these relationships were weaker and not statistically significant. The lack of stronger associations between these variables may be due to the small number of participants in the post-release sample (n=80). As discussed in chapter 4, attempts to interview participants in the post-release period were hampered by Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020 in addition to the usual difficulties of tracking participants down in the post-release period. Unlike other researchers such as Baldry et al. (2003b), we were unable to trace participants through community reintegration agencies, perhaps reflecting the low levels of post-release support apparently experienced by this group of participants. A larger sample may have enabled the clearer identification of the relationship between different forms of stable housing and groups of co-inhabitants, and recidivism. It may also have allowed for a more in-depth exploration of the experiences of different demographic groups such as women and younger people. Nevertheless, the strong relationship between unstable housing and reimprisonment, in addition to the high proportion of prisoners experiencing unstable housing and residential instability after release, suggests it remains highly worthwhile taking measures to assist those leaving prison into long-term stable housing.

Logistic regression with covariate adjustment, both with averaged models and non-response models as well as inverse probability of treatment weighted models revealed no evidence of an unconfounded casual association between either stable housing or residential mobility and either measure of recidivism. This suggests other factors are involved in explaining the bivariate relationship between unstable housing and increased recidivism. Quite how stable housing might contribute to, rather than cause, reduced recidivism in Aotearoa New Zealand remains open to discussion and will be further examined in the second part of this research study which explores the role of stable housing in promoting desistance from crime.

One possible explanation for this is that stable housing and/or residential stability support other factors related to successful reintegration and reduced risks of reoffending. Much existing research on desistance from crime has found that the chances of desisting from crime typically hinge ‘on the ability to develop social capital’ (Fox, 2016: 69), which is widely regarded as necessary to sustain long term social integration into the community (Lutze et al., 2014). Stable

housing may act as a scaffold which supports people leaving prison to develop and/or maintain social bonds/relationships and therefore also social capital through other mechanisms. For example, stable housing may provide a secure base from which to find and engage in employment, education or training. It may provide people leaving prison with a space to maintain or re-establish whānau/family ties or enable them to develop other forms of social support or connect with health and treatment services, fostering their overall wellbeing. Conversely residential instability may weaken or inhibit social bonds and potential involvement in conventional activities (La Vigne & Parthsarathy, 2005; Sampson, 1991; Steiner et al., 2015; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2002), thus hindering the development of social capital. Stable housing may also be indicative of a wider state of stability post-release which makes reoffending less likely. Many of those leaving prison with stable housing will also already have employment opportunities, strong whānau/relationships and good access to support services, making them less likely to reoffend. This is exemplified by the small group of participants who did not require any support to find housing after release, none of whom were re-imprisoned within a year.

6.3. Home, ontological security and social connection

In order to examine the role of stable housing in promoting desistance from crime and the development of social capital, the psycho-social aspects of housing require exploration. This research study has shown that, despite expectations, stable housing does not always equal a home, with just 37% of those who with stable housing stating that their current accommodation felt like a home in comparison to 60% of those living in unstable accommodation. Despite its relative permanence, stable housing did not automatically provide a sense of ontological security amongst those who had been incarcerated. For some, particularly wāhine/women who had had experienced past abuse in the home, stable housing could feel unsafe and insecure. Others in stable housing felt isolated from former support and social networks. This lack of ontological security may dissuade those who are homeless or in unstable accommodation from taking up stable housing opportunities, and is likely to affect their long-term chances of desistance from crime. McNaughton and Sanders (2007) have suggested that transitions out of any marginalised status will only be successful if individuals feel a sense of comfort in their new lives and develop ontological security alongside material resources. While stable, independent, housing may protect and support people after release from prison, it is unlikely to be sustainable and effective in promoting the reduction of recidivism if it relies on separating individuals from their whānau/family or other social relations or does not allow for ways of

forming new meaningful social connections. This is because the notion of going straight 'has meaning only in its emotional setting. It is the consequence of attachment to people. The condition of social isolation […] makes nonsense out of acceptable living because there is none to notice and approve of it'. (Haines, 1990:17).

Rather than simply providing a roof over someone's head, post-release support services therefore need to consider ways to ensure that post-prison stable housing feels like a home and enhances the feeling of ontological security amongst those who have left prison. This is likely to involve not only providing housing that is long-term, safe, affordable and good quality but also ensuring that it is in the correct location and that in taking up such accommodation, people leaving prison do not lose the social relations that are important to them and/or are able to develop new social relationships and sources of support. Such housing should not merely be provided in order to reduce recidivism, but to enhance the wellbeing of those who have left prison and their whānau/family and promote genuine social reintegration.

The ideal form of housing will differ between social populations according to their needs and aspirations. Providing housing which maintains and/or develops social connection is particularly important for Māori, for whom whānau is a crucial component of wellbeing, support, cultural knowledge, positive identity and flourishing (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b). Reintegration support after prison should therefore adopt a holistic, whānau-centred approach that enables entire whānau to build supportive relationships, access opportunities and foster wider whānau and community wellbeing (Workman, 2019). In practice, this may mean providing homes for the whānau of those who have left prison rather than just housing the individual. Such homes can be a space where whānau Māori can be Māori and are not under surveillance to assess their 'fit' within colonial society (Cram, 2020). In situations where this is not in the best interests of the former prisoner or their whānau, support should be given to both parties to promote safe re-connection. The provision of housing for Māori should therefore be 'Māori-led and designed to account for diverse Māori realities and historical experiences' (Mills & Lindsay Latimer, 2021b:41) and Māori should be enthusiastically supported in their practice of Tino Rangatiratanga and Mana Motuhake to develop their own housing provision and support (Mills & Lindsay Latimer 2021b).

For wāhine/women, who have often experienced abuse within the home, it is particularly important that post-release housing is safe, secure and supported. This may require supporting

wāhine/women to leave their current housing to enable them to escape negative and threatening relationships. Suitable housing may also be needed to regain custody of their children and provide a stable environment for them (Kingi, 1999). Such housing should also provide a place for wāhine/women to re-build their relationships with children and address matters such as mental health and addiction issues and reclaim or establish positive, supportive relationships (Baldry, 2010).

6.4. Suggestions for future research

The picture that has emerged from this research about the housing experiences of people in prison is part of several larger, more complex puzzles relating to homelessness, social exclusion and reintegration. Future research could examine the socio-economic characteristics of the main geographical areas to which former prisoners return, such as housing/rental affordability, rates of unemployment, levels of addiction and imprisonment and the preponderance of specialist housing options, and consider how these impact on experiences of post-prison housing and reintegration more broadly and how communities might be strengthened to better enable the social reintegration of those who have been in prison. The specific difficulties experienced by those returning to rural areas where rental housing can be in short supply and support services and employment may be difficult to access, should also be examined.

Further research is also needed to examine the impact of different forms of stable and unstable housing and security of tenure on reintegration, the development of ontological security and social capital, and recidivism in greater depth. For example, does state/social housing provide more opportunities to develop or maintain ontological security and social capital than private rented accommodation? Does the length of time an individual has lived in a place affect the degree to which it may assist with social reintegration? It would also be useful to examine the post-prison housing journeys of different groups, notably women and young people who may have different requirements for housing and housing support.

In the current study, the ability to make inferences regarding the relationship between stable housing and recidivism was hampered by the small size of the follow-up sample, despite the best efforts of the researchers to retain participants in the study. In future, research which follows a group of participants through the period prior to release to one year after release or longer, could make contact with participants much earlier and more frequently in the post-

release period. This should help to retain participants in the study in addition to obtaining a more detailed picture of their post-release lives and in particular, moves between different forms of accommodation. Unfortunately, it was not possible to do this in the current research due to funding limitations. Following participants up for longer than a year after release would also give a better picture of the potential role of housing stability in reducing recidivism and promoting long-term desistance from crime. This study has focused on sentenced prisoners only who may received more support than those on remand, as their release date is known. As the number of prisoners on remand is increasing, similar research could be conducted on those on remand who are released from court, i.e. those who are either acquitted, sentenced to time served or given a sentence other than imprisonment. This would give an indication not only of the unique challenges faced by those on remand and how they can be ameliorated, but could also demonstrate the damage to housing and social relations caused by a period of imprisonment even when this is not necessarily the result of a conviction.

It is important to recognise that the concepts of 'stable housing' and 'residential mobility' used in this study may not align with Māori concepts of desirable, stable housing. Living with whānau was categorised as unstable housing due to the residential mobility that this was associated with prior to prison and because many participants indicated that they did not see this as stable housing. However, whānau can provide substantial support for those leaving prison, housing with whānau may be perceived as a 'home' and much of this accommodation may be seen as stable by some of those who inhabit it. Similarly, those leaving prison may move around from one whānau member to another, but not perceive this as unstable per se. This is not to say that every effort should not be made to place Māori into independent, stable housing where this is desired, but rather that there is a diversity in how this is experienced and understood by different Māori. Furthermore, the current research placed whānau/family and friends in one category. Given the importance of whānau for Māori, future research should examine whether the experiences of those living with whānau differ from those living with friends. In addition, Māori wellbeing is premised on interconnectedness and whanaungatanga (with people and the wider environment). Housing provision that does not consider wider concepts of hauora, such as wairuatanga, will have limited utility in its ability to provide safe, stable housing within a Māori worldview.

6.5 Concluding remarks

Despite the mixed and somewhat unclear relationship between stable housing, residential mobility and recidivism, stable housing remains an essential part of the social reintegration process (Bradley et al., 2001), largely due to its role in helping those who have been in prison re-establish relationships, find and take up employment/training, access support services and therefore maintain or develop their social capital. Many study participants had considerable difficulties finding housing and after-release, yet only a small proportion of the research sample received any help from state and other agencies with finding housing either pre- or post-release. Hōkai Rangi, the Department of Corrections' current strategic plan, states that Corrections' systems and environments 'will not cause further unnecessary stress to people who are already experiencing hardship through having their liberty deprived and being separated from their whānau' (Corrections, 2019:16). The reported challenges faced by those leaving prisons in relation to inadequate housing provision and support suggests that the Department of Corrections has some way to go to meet its own aspirations, although it should be noted that post-prison housing should be under the remit of several other agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development. As Baldry et al. (2006) have cautioned, former prisoners will not be able to re-establish and integrate themselves in their community without better state infrastructure to provide frameworks of social, agency and whānau/family support. Given the current housing shortage and high demand for affordable social and private rented housing in Aotearoa New Zealand, consideration needs to be given to expanding the availability of state and other forms of social housing and to making former prisoners a priority group for this provision. However, the provision of merely a roof over someone's head is therefore unlikely to bring about the best possible outcomes in relation to rehabilitation and reintegration. Post-release housing provision should therefore be a place where people leaving prison can feel at home and begin to re-build their lives and independence whilst re-establishing or developing strong, positive, supportive relationships and social bonds.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the post-release housing and reintegration experiences of those leaving prison are contingent on the wider social inequalities inherent within society of Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, to address the challenges faced by those leaving prison, including the barriers to making a house a home, and promote the social reintegration of those leaving prison, there is a need to address and dismantle the structural barriers to effecting real changes, including income inequality, social exclusion, poverty, institutional racism, intergenerational trauma and economic exploitation.

6.6. Summary of key recommendations/implications for practice

In making these recommendations, we note that measures to improve the housing situations and related issues of those leaving prison should not solely be the responsibility of Corrections. Cross-agency working is needed to realise these improvements involving various government departments such as the Ministry of Social Development and Kāinga Ora, but also iwi, community and other organisations that support those leaving prison.

1. The housing assessment and release planning processes should ensure that no-one should leave prison with an unmet housing need. Every person who enters prison, regardless of remand or sentenced status should be given a comprehensive and detailed assessment of housing need when first entering prison, which should be maintained and updated throughout their stay.

2. In line with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan's emphasis on preventing homelessness, those with stable housing prior to their imprisonment should be supported to keep this where possible and desirable. This could include assistance to rearrange mortgages or find tenants for homeowners, or help to liaise with landlords, and access to the Accommodation Supplement for short-term prisoners (including those on remand) in various forms of rental housing.

3. Post-release housing should be long-term and sustainable, in line with the Aotearoa/New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. It should also be good quality, safe, culturally appropriate and account for the needs not only of those who have left prison but also their whānau/family, especially tamariki/children.

4. Housing First models, as used by the Creating Positive Pathways programme, should be further explored for their suitability for those leaving prison and their whānau and, if appropriate, their use extended.

5. A more diverse array of post-release housing should be provided, which is open to a wider group of people (including those on short prison sentences or on remand) and available throughout the country rather than the current piecemeal approach.

6. Clear, accessible information about specialist housing provision and how to access it should be available and communicated to prisoners and their whānau in sufficient time before their release.

7. State benefits, including the Steps to Freedom grant, should be increased immediately to ensure they provide income sufficient for an adequate standard of living as recommended by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (2019). Those who have been in prison should be

assisted to access these benefits through the provision of appropriate identification documents, including birth certificates and drivers' licences.

8. Those leaving prison who are able and/or willing to seek employment should be assisted into better paid, more specialised employment opportunities through the provision of appropriate training.

9. Those in prison and their whānau should be enabled to keep or obtain state housing and other forms of housing with Income-Related Rent Subsidies and the provision of this social housing should be expanded. The possibility of making those who have been in prison a priority group for such housing, as is the case in other jurisdictions such as England, should also be explored.

10. Any post-release housing provision should enhance feelings of ontological security amongst those who have left prison. This is likely to involve providing long-term, affordable, safe, good quality housing in the correct location where people can maintain and/or develop strong, positive, supportive relationships and social bonds. This is particularly important for Māori, for whom whānau is a crucial component of wellbeing, support, cultural knowledge, positive identity and flourishing.

11. For wāhine/women, who have often experienced abuse within the home, post-release housing should be safe, secure and supported, and provide a place for them to re-build their relationships with children. This may require supporting wāhine/women to leave their current housing to enable them to escape negative and threatening relationships.

12. Assistance to strengthen or maintain whānau/family ties should be provided to ensure those leaving prison experience more stable housing situations. This should include better support for whānau/families to maintain contact with their loved ones inside prisons, and more resources to prepare and enable whānau to help those leaving prison, including improved communication with agencies supporting those leaving prison and financial support to cover the increased costs of supporting and accommodating a whānau member after release.

13. Reintegration support should adopt holistic, whānau-centred approaches that enable entire whānau to build supportive relationships, access opportunities and foster wider whānau and community wellbeing and promote genuine social reintegration, as suggested by Kim Workman (2019). This may mean providing homes for the whānau of those who have left prison rather than just housing the individual.

14. In situations where living with whānau is not in the best interests of the former prisoner or their whānau, emotional and practical support should be given to both parties to promote safe re-connection.

15. Any form of support provided should be culturally appropriate with services provided by Māori for Māori.

16. The provision of housing for Māori should be Māori-led and designed to account for diverse Māori realities and historical experiences. Māori should be enthusiastically supported in their practice of Tino Rangatiratanga and Mana Motuhake to develop their own housing provision and support.

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