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WHANGANUI CHRONICLE PREMIUM  
**Manawatū-Whanganui region one of worst for mouldy homes**



The Manawatū-Whanganui region has the third-highest number of homes in New Zealand where mould has been reported. Photo / File

By Staff Reporter  
 news@whanganuichronicle.co.nz WhangaChron

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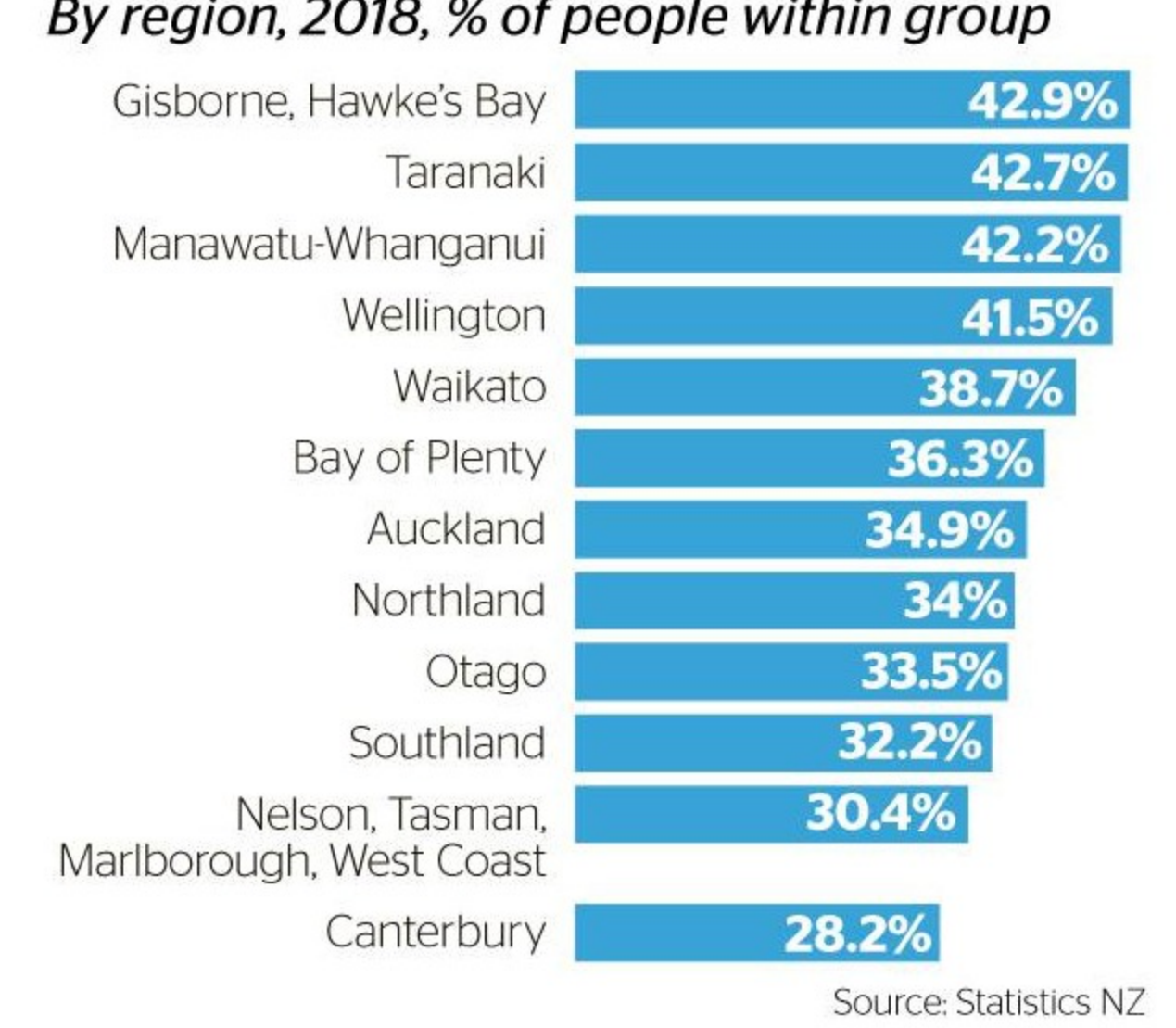
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"The state of one's home is generally accepted as being a significant determinant in whether one enjoys good or bad health," Simpson said in a statement.

"While there is no way of measuring the effect of sub-standard housing on hospital admissions, cold, damp homes (of which there are a disproportionate number in Whanganui) allows the growth of mould which can contribute to respiratory illness such as asthma, the rates for which are very high in Whanganui."

**Mouldy homes**  
**People in NZ who have mould growing in their home**  
 By region, 2018, % of people within group



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The DHB's Public Health Centre is active in the Safe Houses project run by Safer Whanganui which involves a number of community organisations.

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As part of the project, staff door-knock in various suburbs and conduct house surveys which include such issues as damp, mould, ventilation, insulation, curtains and smoke alarms. They can then refer families on to agencies which can help them.

The Whanganui Regional Health Network (WRHN) has been running Its Healthy Homes programme for a number of years, largely with funding from the DHB.

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This has mainly involved providing insulation for homes, but with Government legislation now putting that responsibility on to landlords, the Healthy Homes initiative has changed focus.

"We look to do a comprehensive home assessment, and educate people to know how to make their homes healthier, and support them to make changes," WRHN's Angela Weekly said.

"A lot of families we deal with move around a lot, so they might have got their home insulated but then they are moving on. So we show them what they can do to improve the health of any home they live in.

"Excess of moisture in a house will exacerbate respiratory illnesses; a lack of sunshine means a build-up of dust which leads to bugs and mould. We know there is a strong correlation between the state of your home and your health."

Weekly said overcrowding was another important factor that impacted on health.

"We aim to keep people healthier in their homes so they don't come in to hospital or the doctor."

Eco educator Dr Nelson Lebo has been giving support sessions to health staff working on the Healthy Homes programme.

On average, Kiwis make about 28,000 visits to the hospital each year as a result of living in cold and damp houses, University of Otago associate professor Nevil Piers said.

Children who went to hospital for these so-called housing-related illnesses returned for further treatment almost four times more often than those hospitalised for other conditions.

And while the illnesses – including asthma, pneumonia and bronchiolitis – were preventable, many children were dying.

"In the next 15 years, those kids are 10 times more likely to die than kids hospitalised from other causes," Piers said.

Mould flourishes in cold and damp homes, especially those poorly built, lacking insulation and adequate heating or with water leaking into or pooling around the house.

Action is being taken to combat the illnesses, yet it is not coming fast enough for some children, health experts say.

Homes that aren't ventilated by having their windows opened regularly were also mould-prone.

Renters suffered the most, with 33 per cent stating in Statistics NZ's 2018 General Social Survey their home was always or often cold, compared with 15 per cent of owner-occupiers.

To tackle this, the Government has introduced new healthy homes standards to make rentals warmer and drier, Housing and Urban Development's manager of housing quality Claire Leadbetter said.

All rental properties must now be insulated. By July 2021 they must also comply with the new healthy homes standards within 90 days of any new tenancy starting.

These set minimum standards for rentals in relation to heating, insulation, ventilation, draught-stopping, and "moisture ingress".

Some home owners can also secure financial grants to help buy heating and insulation for their family homes.

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