



# Downsizing in New Zealand: meaning and experiences

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# Talking with Older Residents

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- Part of *Finding the Best Fit* research programme
- Aged 55+
- Mostly owner-occupiers
- Located in Nelson, Tasman, Marlborough, Tauranga, Kawerau
- Mix of those who have and have not downsized
- 58 interviewed
- 80+ in focus groups (one FG in Auckland)

# Meaning of Downsizing

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- Moving from larger to smaller dwelling and/or section
- Having less to worry about
- Reducing consumption
- Divesting possessions
- Changing lifestyle

# Reasons for Downsizing

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- Less house and section maintenance
- Cheaper house running costs
- Lifestyle improvement
- Health and mobility concerns
- Financial concerns
- Closer to services
- Closer to family
- Moving back home

# Looking for Improved Quality of Life

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- Warmth
- Independence
- Maintenance-free home and section
- Cheaper running costs – utilities, rates, insurance, maintenance, transport
- Handy to services
- Some space
- An outlook



# Information Needs

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- Strong reliance on own knowledge, family and friends
- Almost no use of professionals for advice
- It's hard to find information
- Internet use – either nil or a lot
- Reluctance to seek advice
- Planning vs 'spur of the moment' vs lack of control

# Very Few Housing Options

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- Dominance of larger homes in the market – limitations on building/ buying /renting smaller homes
- Price differentials may inhibit move
- Financial constraints on changing housing
- Houses not designed for older people's needs and preferences

# Impacts of Downsizing

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- Often moving is concurrent with other life changes, so impacts are difficult to separate
- Improved dwelling performance and condition
- Improved physical and mental health
- Releasing capital to deal with mortgage, debt
- Improved house running costs
- Maintain or improve connections



# Impacts of Downsizing

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- Downsizing can increase costs; and there are some unexpected costs
- Divesting possessions – both good and bad experiences
- Adjusting to new life, new environment

# Staying Put & Making Changes

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- Improving house performance, warmth and safety
- Additions and renovations
- Modifications to improve accessibility
- Reducing the size of the garden; easy care garden
- Living in part of the house
- Provision for live-in carer

# Older People's Tips

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- Talk about it with family and friends
- Make lists – priorities, wants, needs
- Make a plan
- Inspect properties and get technical advice
- Use older people's support organisations
- Don't move in haste

# Policy Implications

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- Does downsizing result in releasing equity to spend on health and care?
  - Harvesting equity does not appear to be a widespread reason for downsizing
  - Mitigating financial stress is a major factor for some
  - 'Downsizing' may not result in a reduction in size and value

# Policy Implications

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- Housing stock inadequate:
  - Existing stock inadequate
  - Limited supply of small homes
  - Limited assistance for modifications
- Limited and inadequate information is a barrier to both downsizing and ageing in place – who is taking the lead?