

Small improvements can make big differences for tenants, study finds

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Even minor improvements to new buildings can make a significant difference to tenants' comfort, new research from the University of Otago, Wellington, has found.

The researchers found that eliminating draughts in newly built houses increases the indoor temperature by more than one degree Celsius on average, and say it is a worthwhile step to undertake when looking to improve [housing](#) warmth.

"We looked at the impact of eliminating draughts using simple measures such as sealing strips on doors and baffles in range hoods, and found these measures could increase [indoor temperatures](#) by 1.36oC on average," says lead researcher Lara Rangiwhetu from the Department of Public Health at the University of Otago, Wellington.

The research was commissioned by the Wellington City Council in response to tenants' concerns about draughts in newly constructed Council buildings in Miramar. The Council approached the He Kainga Oranga Healthy Housing team at the university to look at the temperatures and relative humidity of the housing.

Following on from He Kainga Oranga's previous work showing that insulation and heating increase indoor temperature, this new study showed that even in new builds, draughts can lower temperatures to unhealthy levels.

"This is of particular concern given that Statistics New Zealand has shown that 29 per cent of kiwi households suffer some form of energy hardship and New Zealand continues to have high rates of excess winter mortality and morbidity," says Ms Rangiwhetu.

Other temperate countries, such as the UK, have seen a documented increase in indoor [temperature](#) with average temperatures now above recommended levels.

"Policies should be enacted to ensure indoor house temperatures in New Zealand reach at least similar levels. Eliminating draughts with simple improvements is a very worthwhile step to undertake when looking to improve housing warmth," Ms Rangiwhetu says.

The study 'Effects of minor household interventions to block draughts on social housing temperatures: A before and after study', was published recently in *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*.

More information: Lara Rangiwhetu et al. Effects of minor household interventions to block draughts on social housing temperatures: a before and after study, *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/1177083X.2017.1372787](https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2017.1372787)

Provided by University of Otago

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