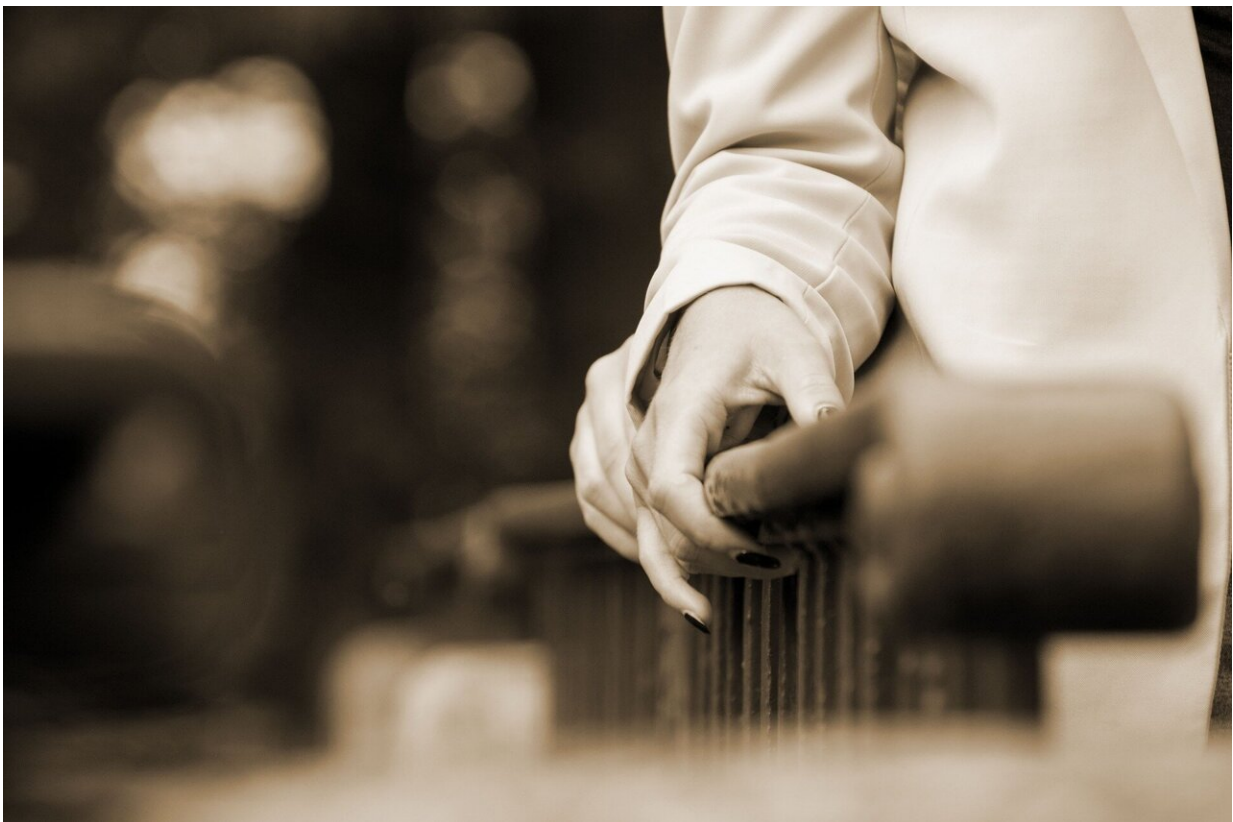


Better regulation of private rental properties could reduce deaths, injuries at home, researchers say

March 6 2024



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New regulations for private rental properties are needed to reduce injuries from slips, trips and falls at home, researchers at the University

of Otago, Wellington, say.

The call comes after the Accident Compensation Corporation reported 390,000 injuries from falls in New Zealand homes in 2022.

In a newly published [paper](#) in the journal *Housing Studies*, public health researchers Dr. Sarah Bierre and Professors Michael Keall and Philippa Howden-Chapman analyze the latest findings on injuries in the home. The findings are summarized in a Public Health Communication Center [Briefing](#) made available today.

Dr. Bierre says our homes can present multiple hazards, with New Zealanders regularly suffering falls, burns, piercing, and puncture wounds. Those in lower income households and Māori tenants are more likely to be injured than others.

A 2021 study of housing conditions found 68 deaths a year in New Zealand could be attributed to fall hazards.

Dr. Bierre says this toll could be significantly reduced if property owners were required to make safety modifications to private rental homes and if current laws were better known and enforced.

"Simple and inexpensive changes, such as the installation of handrails on stairs, grab rails in bathrooms, outside lighting, edging for outside stairs, and slip resistant surfacing for decks have been shown to reduce falls in the home by 26%, and injuries by 39%."

Dr. Bierre says home modifications have a conservative cost-benefit ratio of 6:1, with at least double the benefits for the elderly and those who previously had a fall.

She says the idea that avoiding accidents around the home is the

individual's responsibility has hindered the introduction of better housing standards.

"A good example of this is the recent ACC campaign 'have a hmmm' which focuses on the poor choices of those who have accidents. This kind of framing removes any culpability on the part of landlords for injury hazards in the home."

She says the health and safety requirements for [rental housing](#) that do exist are spread across multiple acts and regulations, including individual local council bylaws, and are not always appropriately applied.

"Introducing a comprehensive set of rental standards, which include mandatory home safety requirements, would go a long way towards reducing our accident and [injury](#) toll. It's also crucial that we begin properly enforcing the standards we do have. These include requirements for handrails, safety on stairs and adequate lighting."

More information: Sarah Bierre et al, Framing home injury: opportunities and barriers to regulating for safer rental housing in Aotearoa/New Zealand, *Housing Studies* (2023). [DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2023.2224242](#)

Provided by University of Otago

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