

Connections Week 2023

Hamilton City, New Zealand

6-7 September 2023

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, we found **34 people** sleeping rough or in cars. This compares to 25 people in 2022. Car dweller numbers had almost doubled compared to last year. No families or youths were found.

The overall increase was not unexpected, with restrictions tightening on Emergency Housing and the high cost of living affecting many New Zealanders.

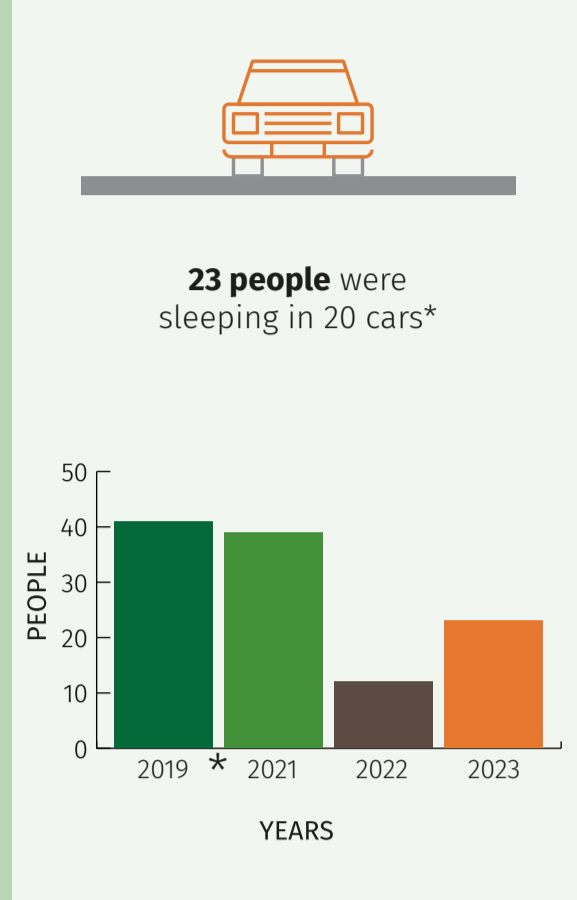
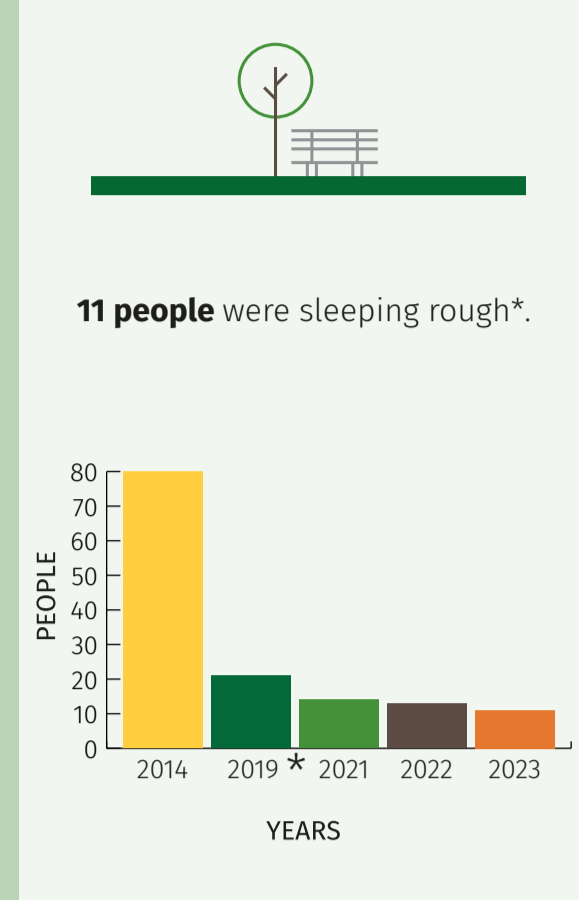
Some of the people sleeping rough or in cars were already known to The People's Project and City Safe teams.

The largest number of volunteers yet joined The People's Project 2023 outreach.



Hamilton City Safe staff volunteered to help as well as staff from other parts of Wise Group.

Who we discovered



20 male
6 female
8 unknown

Ages: We believe that all the people we engaged with were between 18-65, from talking to them or because they are known to us. In some cases, we could not establish people's ages if they didn't wish to chat, or because we couldn't wake them

* There was no Connections Week in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. We did not collect car data in 2014.

Where were people sleeping?

Rough Sleepers
11 rough sleepers were primarily in the Hamilton CBD.

Car dwellers
23 people were sleeping in 20 cars; three of the vehicles each contained two people. They were mainly in public carparks, such as in Innes Common, Hamilton Gardens, Dinsdale Library, Porritt Stadium, the Rowing Club or supermarkets.



Several people were sleeping in their cars at Porritt Stadium



Someone had been sleeping under the stairs at the back of The Warehouse in central Hamilton. A friend had written a message on the cardboard suggesting where and when they could meet up.



Who has reached out for support?

It can take time to build relationships and trust: Three people have come into the TPP office to date as a result of 2023 Connections Week. In the past, some people have engaged with the service many months after connecting with TPP during our annual outreach.

We will keep showing up while there is still a need: Eight people approached during 2023 Connections Week were known to The People's Project and City Safe staff. This shows how effective The People's Project's regular outreach is at building a picture of who is homeless in Hamilton. This outreach team goes out every week, early in the morning, to make connections with people rough sleeping and living in their cars.

THE METHODOLOGY

- 2** consecutive days - 2 sweeps of each area
- 6 teams of 4-5 people
- 5.30am briefing at Manuka House and on street by 6am
- Regular radio check-ins on two-way radio
- Paper surveys are taken; people are observed and asked a few questions if they are happy to chat. If people are willing, TPP case managers fill in a VI-SPDAT form, or Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool, as an initial assessment
- Back in office by 8am for debrief
- Support from City Safe CCTV team and volunteers from other areas within the Wise Group
- Hot drinks and breakfast provided to volunteers



Briefings were held at Manuka House before and after teams went out onto the streets

WRAPAROUND SUPPORT WHEN AND WHERE PEOPLE NEED IT

The outreach team found a man rough sleeping in the entrance to a business. He was sleeping under a woollen blanket, on top of two layers of dismantled cardboard boxes. It was a cold morning, but he was nonetheless cheerful towards the team and took up the offer of a hot drink and biscuits in the TPP office, one street over. He was an existing client and then had been transient. He'd fallen out of residential housing and then from emergency housing after missing his swipe key. He has a diagnosed mental health issue and an erratic lifestyle, often taking to street living when situations became unmanageable for him. After re-engaging during Connections Week, he was again supported into permanent housing, and connected with Problematic Substance Use supports. He continues to be supported by TPP.

FINDING WORK TO FIND A HOME

One man and his dog were discovered by the Connections Week team living in a car in a park. The man was happy to talk to the team and said he'd come into the office to seek support sometime in the future. Two weeks later, he came in and registered for help. He estimated he'd been living in his car for six months. He'd first lived in his car when homeless as a 19-year-old. Now 45, he'd spent multiple periods homeless throughout New Zealand. After a few sessions getting to know each other, he relayed that he'd spent many years working on farms and that often these jobs came with accommodation. He was swiftly referred to an onsite Workwise representative. Together TPP and Workwise are supporting him to get connected back into farm work and farm accommodation.

HELP TO GET HOME

Another man was rough sleeping in the city; he was cold, disoriented, and frustrated. He'd been directed by service organisations in another region to come to Hamilton despite having nowhere to stay. He came into the office to warm up and to tell his story. After calming down, he concluded that he just wanted support to return to the region he had come from as that's where all his support networks were. TPP paid for his bus ticket to help him return to his home.



Teams kept in touch with Manuka House with two-way radios



Teams are careful when approaching cars where people may be fast asleep