

Maintenance insights

Independent assessors carrying out the 2015/16 BRANZ House Condition Survey rated one-fifth of our housing stock as poorly maintained. Where are the problems areas, and why is maintenance being deferred?

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THE LATEST BRANZ House Condition Survey (HCS), which surveyed 560 houses throughout New Zealand in 2015/16, assessed each property's condition and defects both inside and out.

Rental worse than owner-occupied

A lack of maintenance was more evident in rental housing. Nearly one-third of rental houses were assessed as poorly maintained compared to 14% of owner-occupied (see *Rentals need TLC*, *Build* 159 pages 66-67).

Conversely, and on a more positive note, nearly half of owner-occupied houses were considered well maintained (48%).

Are we doing maintenance and repairs?

Gathering data on the maintenance and repair of the New Zealand housing stock is a key component of the HCS. As part of the survey, householders were asked if there had been any painting, repairs or replacements to any parts of their house within the last 12 months.



Windows were the most common repaired or replaced external feature and a key feature needing attention in rental properties.

Windows repairs, fittings and painting most common

Results from the 2015/16 HCS showed that, in 70% of houses, none of these repair and maintenance activities had been carried out over the last 12 months. This applied to both the rental and owner-occupied sectors.

The 30% of households that had undertaken maintenance in the last year were asked about the nature of the work. This differentiated between painting, repairing or replacing a variety of external and interior property features.

Nearly half had done some maintenance to both exterior and interior features (see Figure 1). Windows were the most common external feature to have been given attention, while inside the house, attending to bathroom fittings and painting walls were the most common activities (see Figure 2).

30% had deferred maintenance

While 30% of houses had seen some repair or maintenance work undertaken in the last 12 months, 30% had deferred maintenance. That means, someone in the house or, in the case of rentals, someone else had decided to delay or defer some maintenance.

Cost was given as a reason for delaying work by half the households. For over one-quarter of houses, the required maintenance was not deemed serious and therefore could wait.

For tenants, the same reasons were often quoted but referring to their landlord or property manager. Someone else made the decision to defer work due to cost or it not being a priority. ➤

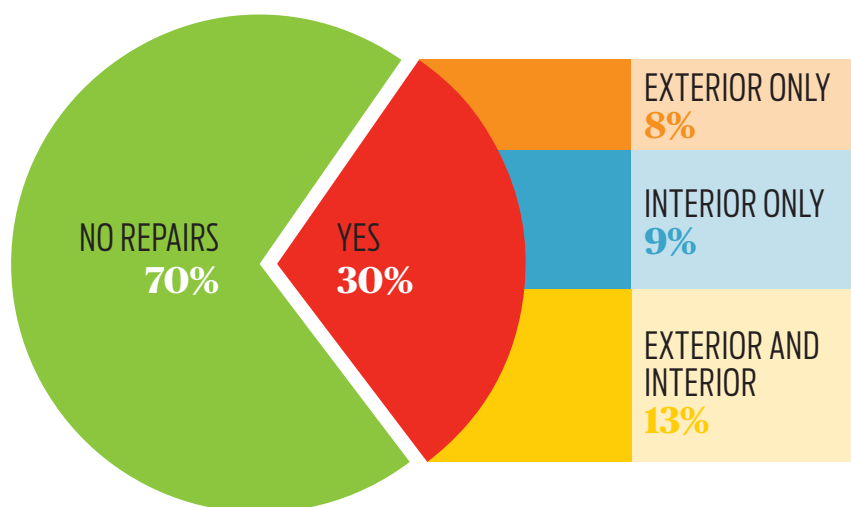


Figure 1: Houses that had some maintenance work done within the last 12 months.

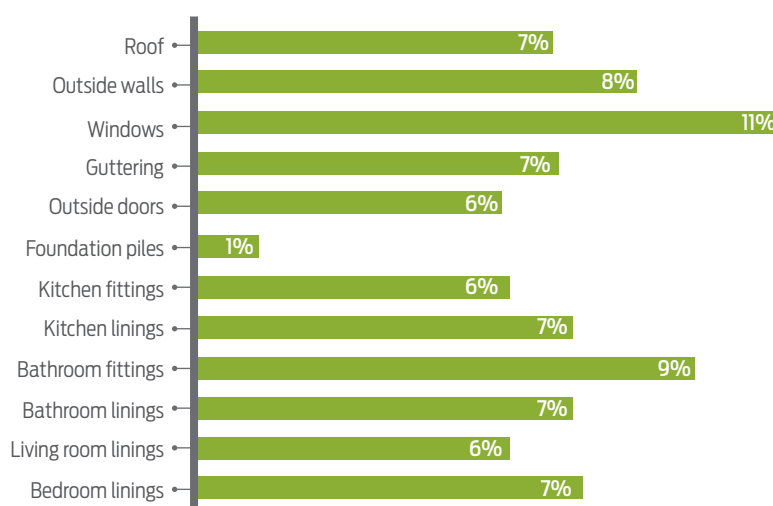


Figure 2: Proportion of houses with maintenance during the last 12 months to different parts of the house.

Leads to houses in poorer condition

A lack of maintenance will impact the overall condition of the property. Results from the HCS suggest houses that had deferred maintenance in the last 12 months were on average in poorer condition and overall less well maintained (see Figure 3).

While findings indicate deferred maintenance decisions are impacting negatively on the overall condition of the property, there will be many other factors also affecting these results.

Roofs and wall cladding most neglected

The condition rating scale used in the HCS to assess the condition of different property components is explicitly linked to the presence of defects and need for repair. A condition rating of serious or poor means the feature needs attention immediately (serious) or within the next 3 months (poor).

Results from the 2015/16 HCS showed 7% of dwellings had at least one feature in serious condition, and 39% had one or more components in poor condition.

Roofs and wall cladding were two of the most common features to be in these poorer states of repair, though this did vary between the owner-occupied and rental stock. Deferring maintenance on these, or indeed any feature that needs repair, has implications for the overall condition of the property and the longer-term costs to repair.

BRANZ also looked at the cost

Over time, minor defects can deteriorate and accumulate. Further analysis and modelling has been undertaken on the 2015/16 HCS to estimate the costs of repairs needed for houses in their assessed state and the costs of doing nothing (see page 50). ◀

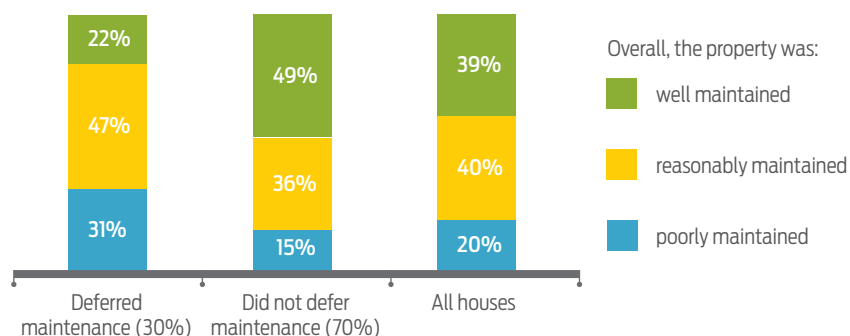


Figure 3: House Condition Survey assessor rating of overall level of maintenance for owner-occupied houses that had and had not deferred maintenance in the last 12 months.



Bathroom fittings and linings were among the most common internal features repaired over the last 12 months. In rentals, a high proportion remain in poor condition.