

Child Poverty in Aotearoa NZ

What's really going on?

Child Poverty Action Group
Summit
18 November 2019

Judge Andrew Becroft
Children's Commissioner for New Zealand
Te Kaikomihana mō ngā Tamariki o Aotearoa



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's
Commissioner**

**“What’s your vision for
NZ children/young people ...?”**



**“Take care of
our children.
Take care of
what they hear,
take care of
what they see,
take care of
what they
feel.”**

**- Dame Whina
Cooper**



New Zealand's children (under 18 years old)



New Zealand has 1,123,000 children – that's 23% of the population

(Stats NZ estimate as at 30 June 2017)



Aotearoa/NZ's children: an overview

70


10

20

All roads lead back to??



- 1. Child/youth poverty and material disadvantage** (elevated risk factor for, not cause of ...)
- 2. Early interventions/assistance.** The challenge for Oranga Tamariki. Parenting assistance and the importance of retention in ECE and mainstream school. Joined up government responses.
- 3. Enduring legacy of colonisation and modern day systemic bias:** addressing our enduring shame of indigenous over-representation. Partnership with, and devolution of resources to, Iwi and Maori services

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a floral shirt and denim overalls, is watering a plant in a garden. She is holding a blue watering can. The background is filled with various plants and trees, creating a lush, green environment. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting during the day.

“When a flower doesn’t
bloom, you fix the
environment in which
it grows. Not the flower.”

- Alexander Den Heijer

Who is most affected by poverty in NZ?

Age	% of individuals in low-income households* 2018
Children 0-17 years	21%
18-24 years	20%
25-44 years	14%
45-64 years	14%
65+ years	11%
Overall	16%

* Using the "CV-18" 50% of median "relative" (not anchored) threshold after housing costs

Source: *Household incomes in New Zealand: Trends in indicators of inequality and hardship 1982 to 2018*, MSD, 2019, p151

GAMES THAT STILL SUCK: THE 1-IN-EVERY-4 POVERTY GAME



MURDOCH 5/4/19

S. Murdoch 2019

We do much better for seniors than children!

“Material Deprivation Rates by country and selected age groups”

Country	Overall	65+	<18	Ratio of <18 : 65
Belgium	11%	8%	15%	1.9
Denmark	5%	3%	5%	1.7
France	14%	11%	17%	1.5
Germany	16%	10%	21%	2.1
Ireland	12%	5%	17%	3.4
Netherlands	5%	4%	6%	1.5
New Zealand	11%	3%	18%	6.0
Spain	11%	9%	13%	1.4
Sweden	3%	2%	3%	1.5
United Kingdom	11%	6%	16%	2.7



Based on 2008 data. EU 13 scale; NZ Dep 5+ lacks
 B Perry, The Material Wellbeing of NZ Households. Ministry of Social Development, 2017 P18-20.

Where we've come from

- Child Poverty Solutions Report
- Annual Child Poverty Monitor
- Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018
- Acknowledging the tireless advocacy of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

What children say

**CAN'T PAY THE BILLS.
NO POWER, CAN'T COOK,
NO HEATING**

Kiwi children talk about poverty
- from 'Our views matter' (www.occ.org.nz)

**FAMILIES TURN TO CHEAP
FOOD LIKE TAKEAWAYS.
CAN'T AFFORD DOCTORS.
CAN'T AFFORD A NICE HOUSE**

Kiwi children talk about poverty
- from 'Our views matter' (www.occ.org.nz)

**HOW CAN PEOPLE EXPECT
US TO LOOK AFTER
THIS PLACE, NEW ZEALAND,
IN THE FUTURE IF THEY
ARE LOOKING DOWN ON US**

Kiwi children talk about poverty
- from 'Our views matter' (www.occ.org.nz)

**CAN'T AFFORD TO PLAY
SPORT OR GO TO
THE POOLS AND LEARN
TO SWIM**

Kiwi children talk about poverty
- from 'Our views matter' (www.occ.org.nz)

IF YOU LIVE IN A ST HOUSE
YOU HAVE A S**T
CHILDHOOD BECAUSE YOU
ARE LIMITED IN EVERYTHING**

Kiwi children talk about poverty
- from 'Our views matter' (www.occ.org.nz)

**WHEN HOUSING IS
STABLE MY FUTURE
IS STABLE**

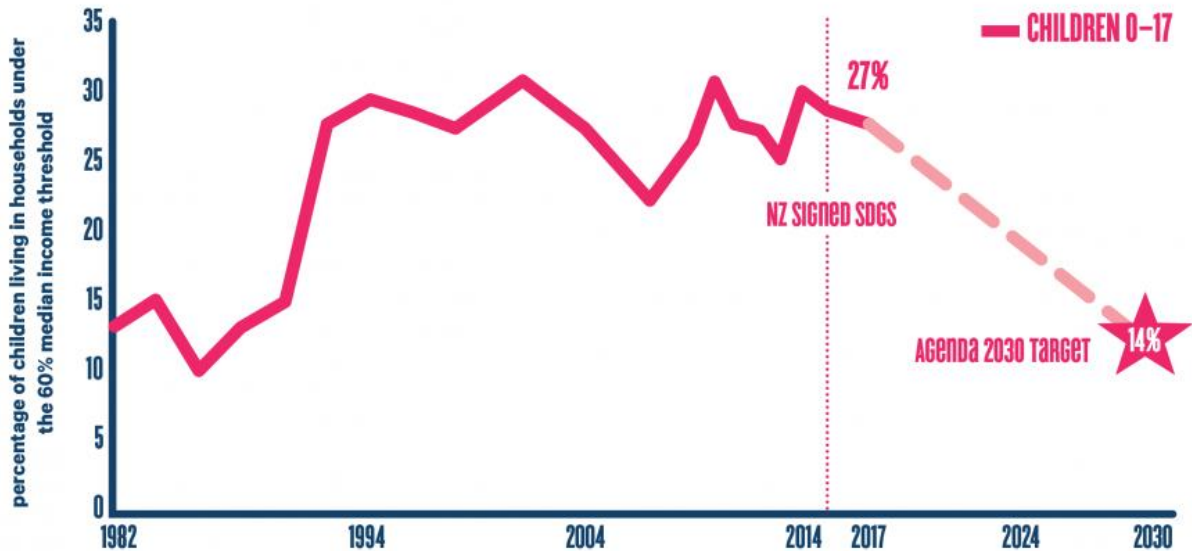
Kiwi children talk about poverty
- from 'Our views matter' (www.occ.org.nz)

Where we're aiming

NEW ZEALAND SIGNED UP TO THE UN'S 'AGENDA 2030' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS. ONE OF THE GOALS IS:
"By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions."

HALVING CHILD POVERTY WOULD SEE RATES RETURN TO LEVELS SEEN IN THE **1980S**

HALVING POVERTY BY 2030 – CHILDREN IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS



What's been done so far

- Minister for Child Poverty Reduction
- Child Poverty Unit in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC)
- Acknowledgement for necessity for systemic change
- Package of targeted assistance for low-middle income families
- Free doctors visits for children under 14
- Mandatory insulation standards

BUT no significant improvement in child poverty rates

What needs to change

- Implement Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) recommendations
- Specifically, big increase in benefits that involve children
- Index benefit rates to wage growth
- More “in-kind” assistance for children eg. Free school lunches for all primary and secondary school students
- Massive increase in social and community housing
- Pass on child support payments to receiving parent

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Thank you

www.occ.org.nz

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