

Media Release



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New report shows New Zealanders are locked into hardship by failing systems

Findings from the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) latest report show more New Zealanders are being trapped in poverty.

The report released by NZCCSS today '[Kua Mahue | Left Behind](#)' brings to light the persistent and pervasive nature of poverty in Aotearoa. The report draws together a range of data from government and other sources, alongside input from frontline organisations.

“New Zealanders everywhere are feeling the impact of the rising cost of living, with too many families struggling to get ahead. This report provides the data behind that experience. Food costs have risen by 24% to feed a family of four since 2021, power costs increased by 12% this year alone and for more than a quarter of New Zealanders in rental accommodation, housing is costing them 40% of their take home pay every week,” says NZCCSS Chief Executive Officer Alicia Sudden.

As a result, over 100,000 people are unable to pay utility bills on time, costs are preventing people from looking after their health by visiting their GP and one in three New Zealanders now live in a state of food insecurity.

The Salvation Army’s Research and Justice Director, Dr. Bonnie Robinson, says their workers see food insecurity every day at their 66 centres nationwide.

“Demand for food support is still 50% higher than pre-Covid 19 and last year we gave out 90,000 food parcels – up 7% from the previous year. Around 10% of those needing food support are in employment. Benefits and wages are just not enough for people to consistently feed their families. Cost of living and fuel crises have made this worse, with no relief in sight for many families,” says Robinson.

New Zealand is no longer a place where people can pull themselves up out of hard times, says Sudden, “Our systems are failing to provide a safety net for unexpected life events or economic shifts. Our welfare system puts people in hardship, making it more difficult for them to enter the workforce again, while the level of young people out of employment and education is at a 10 year high reflecting a challenging job market and difficulty accessing training and support.”

Jill Hawkey, Director of the Christchurch Methodist Mission, says many people are not successfully accessing the supports that could improve their situation.

"People are missing out on basic welfare entitlements because of increasingly complex and restrictive requirements. For example, half of the homeless people contacted through our Outreach team believed they were on the Housing Register but, in fact, were not. It's becoming more

important than ever to offer advocacy and support to people to help them navigate the system,” says Hawkey.

“This report reveals the stark reality of life in New Zealand. 1 in 10 people are living in poverty, and a population greater than the size of Christchurch, an estimated 473,000 people, are living in hardship. These numbers represent whānau making impossible choices every day, about food, housing, health, and dignity,” adds Sudden.

“The whānau walking through our doors are carrying pressures that stack on top of each other: housing insecurity, debt, food costs, and the toll these take on mental health. These pressures significantly impact our tamariki, rangatahi, tangata whaikaha and our kaumatua and kuia”, says Rāwiri Auty, Director of Whānau Services, Visionwest Waka Whakakitenga.

“We're hearing from whānau who are working and still can't cover rent, from mothers choosing to forgo heating so they can feed their children. Whānau are showing up with incredible strength and determination, but it is important that incomes and benefits reflect the true cost of living, that there is further investment in affordable housing, and that community organisations holding people through these challenging times are properly resourced,” says Auty.

“The findings from NZCCSS released today challenge us to confront the reality of hardship in New Zealand. It is more than temporary economic conditions or personal choices—it is an entrenched part of our country. But we can make Aotearoa a place where people can once again get support when they need it most. We are calling for sustained structural level change to create a just and compassionate Aotearoa that is free from poverty,” concludes Sudden.

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[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE](#)

Ingoa whakapā | Contact Names

The following representatives from our member organisations are available for further comment:

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For more information on NZCCSS' *Free From Poverty* Election 2026 policy asks:

<https://nzccss.org.nz/resource/free-from-poverty-election-2026/>

Ko wai tātou | Who we are

NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.

Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 100 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. Our mission is to call forth a just and compassionate society for Aotearoa, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website - www.nzccss.org.nz