

Regional Snapshot: Manawatū/Whanganui



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

40,400

people in Manawatū/Whanganui (15.9%)
experience poverty after housing costs are paid

5,000 adults over 65 years old in Manawatū/Whanganui (9.59%) experience poverty after housing costs

13,900 children in Manawatū/Whanganui (22.6%) live in households experiencing poverty after housing costs

24,100

people in Manawatū/Whanganui (9.5%)
are unable to afford essential items

1,000 adults over 65 years old in Manawatū/Whanganui (1.92%) are unable to afford the essentials

9,800 of children in Manawatū/Whanganui (15.9%) are living in households that are unable to afford the essentials



A population larger than Levin is unable to afford essential items

Employment

1 in 4 (24.8%) of 20-24 year olds are not taking part in employment, education or training (compared to 16.2% of this age group nationally)

Income adequacy

In the year to June 2026 22,299 special needs grants were approved in the Central region, for households unable to cover their everyday expenses such as food, medical costs and utilities

Two thirds of people in Whanganui live in the bottom third of income deciles (66.6%), more than twice the national average (30%)

Central had the greatest increase in benefit sanctions between 2025 and 2026 (72% increase compared to 23% nationally)

Housing

While average income has increased 67% in the past 10 years, average rental costs have increased 98%

In 2025 there were at least 143 in Palmerston North sleeping rough

32% of people in Manawatū/Whanganui experienced food insecurity in the past year

Health

50.8% people in Manawatū/Whanganui had unmet dental treatment due to costs, with this disproportionately impacting 25-34 year olds (65.7%) and 35-44 year olds (62.5%)

Visit our website for more information on steps we recommend to help free New Zealanders from poverty
nzccss.org.nz

