

# Being Child-Centred: Fad or Foundation?

Social Services Providers Association Conference  
Te Papa, Wellington, 4 September 2017

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



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# New Zealand's children (under 18 years old)



*New Zealand  
has 1,122,000 children  
- that's **24%** of the  
population*



**70 20 10**



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# Who's being left behind???

WE ARE BETTER THAN THIS

I KEEP THINKING WE'VE  
LEFT SOMETHING  
BEHIND...

DON'T WORRY,  
I PACKED THE  
CHILLY BIN



**LET THE LORD  
JUDGE THE  
CRIMINAL**



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# Tupac Shakur..

## “I wonder if Heaven got a Ghetto”

...It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact  
The penitentiary's packed and it's filled with blacks  
I wake up in the morning and I ask myself  
Is life worth living, should I blast myself  
I'm tired of being poor and even worse I'm black  
My stomach hurts so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch  
Cops give a damn about a negro  
Pull a trigger, kill a n\*gga, he's a hero  
Mo' n\*gga, mo' n\*gga, mo' n\*ggas  
I'd rather be dead than a po' n\*gga  
**Let the Lord judge the criminals**  
If I die, I wonder if Heaven got a ghetto...





The small  
picture and  
the big  
picture

**“micro”**  
and  
**“macro”**



***“If I cannot do great things,  
I can do small things, in a great way.”***

***- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.***



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Power at its best is Love  
Implementing the demands  
of Justice. Justice at its  
best is Power correcting  
everything that stands against  
Love."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.  
August 16, 1967



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**Starting point: being truly child-centred  
and hearing children's voices...**



**#EQUALFUTURE**



# The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



## Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

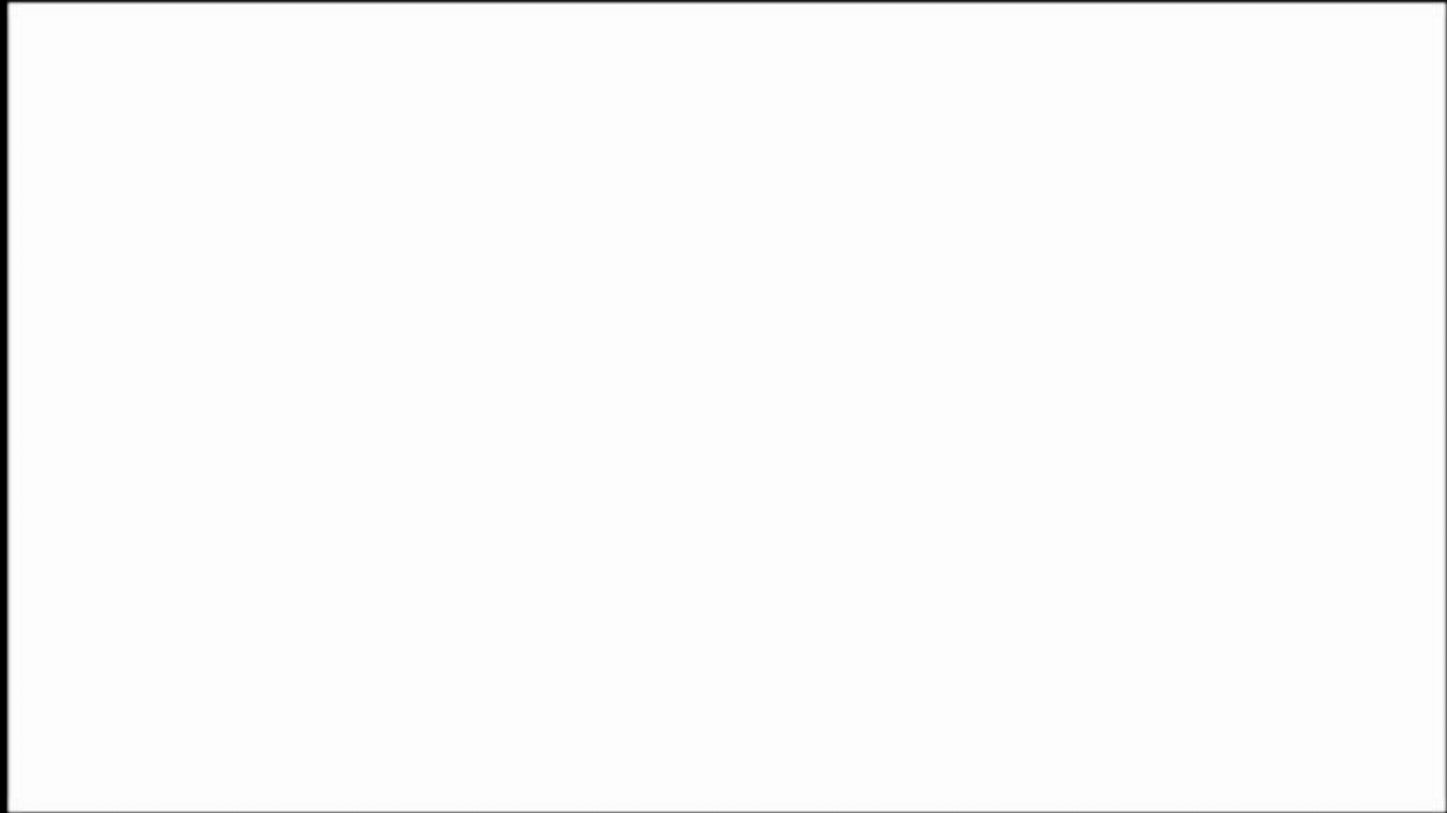
# An example: What some schools are doing to include student voices:

- Leadership development programmes for students
- Ensuring truly *representative* student council in terms of age
- Student Reps on Board (having two or more and ensuring they are actively encouraged to have a voice)
- An “ideas box” for student’s concerns
- Allocated agenda time in weekly/fortnightly staff management meetings to discuss concerns raised by the children. Sometimes having students present for a part of those meetings
- Different aged student leaders – get students’ voices from every year groups and share with management and the Board
- Peer mentoring
- Pupils separately interviewing prospective Principals, DP’s, AP’s, middle leaders and then reporting to the Board.

To **genuinely empower** student councils, reps, leaders, to channel the voices of all students to the school leadership, and to consider their concerns in your decision making.



# An example: Regenerate Christchurch



# Being child-centred



Child  
AND  
Youth  
VOICES

# The fundamental importance of being child-centred

## Being child-centred - what does it mean for your organisation?

Decision Tool



Children's Commissioner



Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft represents the 2.1 million children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand under the age of 18, who make up 34% of the total population.

He advocates for their interests, ensures their rights are upheld, and helps them have a say on issues that affect them.

Children are a core part of society. They depend on, and are major users of, many services, but they often have little say in the policies and services that affect them.

Being child-centred is about recognising the needs, rights and views of children in the work of our organisations. It also means seeing children in the context of their families, whānau and community, and working to enhance their mana.

Children are affected directly and indirectly by practically all decisions, but are often limited in how they can influence these affect them. While children have a right to have a say on issues that affect them, they can't vote and are rarely included in consultation processes such as calls for submissions or attending public meetings.

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**How to make child-centred decisions**  
For organisations working directly for or with children, or wanting to better consider how their work affects children.

**ASK YOURSELVES/OTHERS**

**1. How will your decision affect children?**

Applies to policy, legislation, programmes, services or products.

**2. What are the different impacts or on children from different groups, groups in society?**

**3. What do children say? Find out children's views and voices on a subject +**

Advice and info on how to do this: [www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz)

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More information: [www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz)

Contact: [children@occ.org.nz](mailto:children@occ.org.nz)

1 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12. Children have the right to have a say in matters that affect them. Review August 2017



# A child-centred approach: five questions

1. *How will the decision affect children?*
2. *Will it affect some children differently?*
3. *What do children say? And how do we hear them?*
4. *How will you make a decision? Factoring in children voices along with the views of others.*
5. *How will you report back to children?*

# A child-centred approach: five questions

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5. *How will you report back to children?*

## Question 3: [www.occ.org.nz /listening2kids /how-you-engage / engagement-methods/](http://www.occ.org.nz/listening2kids/how-you-engage/engagement-methods/)

Surveys

Focus groups

In-depth interviews

Child-led tours

Art and creativity

Advisory groups

Advisory groups are groups of children (around 8-12 participants) who provide information, advice or recommendations to an organisation. Advisory groups work well when you require on-going feedback from children and young people.

Advisory groups work best when meeting in person, but can also be facilitated online or via video/telephone conference.

Advisory groups are appropriate for children and young people aged from 12–18 years.



# Question 3: Hearing children's voices in practice...



*When we got to the residence the first thing I noticed was the high fences. I didn't know where I was – I was scared.*



*There are keys and heavy doors everywhere at a residence. It is a reminder to me that I am locked up.*



*I can tell my youth worker anything. He always keeps me updated and doesn't hide anything.*

# **Office of the Children's Commissioner Child and Youth Voices**

**Schools and organisations can register to participate:**

**[www.surveymonkey.com / r / occ - schools](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/occ-schools)**

- **Children can influence decision-makers**
- **2 surveys a year**
- **Variety of topics**
- **Results given to each school or organisation**

# A child-centred approach: five questions

1. *How will the decision affect children?*
2. *Will it affect some children differently?*
3. *What do children say? And how do we hear them?*
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# Some positive new additions to the legislation

## Section 11 amended (Child's or young person's participation and views)

- (1) **(aa)** except where section 10 (relating to proceedings) applies, the child or young person must be given reasonable assistance to understand the reasons for the proceedings or process, the options available to the decision-maker, and how these options could affect them:
- (2) **(d)** any views that the child or young person expresses (either directly or through a representative) must be taken into account; and
  - (e)** any written decision must set out the child's or young person's views and, if those views were not followed, include the reasons for not doing so; and
  - (f)** the decision, the reasons for it, and how it will affect them must be explained to the child or young person.



# A child-centred approach: five questions

1. *How will the decision affect children?*
2. *Will it affect some children differently?*
3. *What do children say? And how do we hear them?*
4. *How will you make a decision? Factoring in children voices along with the views of others.*
5. ***How will you report back to children?***

# Never give up!





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# A challenge

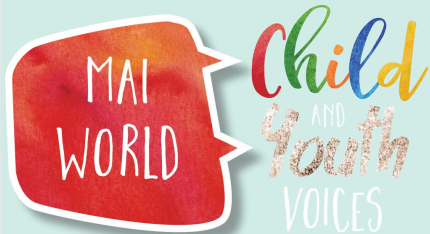
What will you do?

# an invitation

How can we help you?

# and a thank you

for all that you do in our communities.





Join us via:

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@childrenscommnz

Or search for *Children's Commissioner NZ*

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@OCCNZ

*Children's CommNZ*

**Children's Commissioner's  
E-newsletter**

Sign up on the homepage of our website

**[www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz)**



**Thank You**



**Extra slides that  
have been  
removed from  
presentation**

Most children are European, with Maori, Pacific and Asian being other major ethnicities

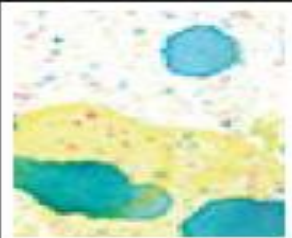
**71%**



European or other including NZer

*Note: ethnicities add to over 100% because some children have more than one ethnicity*

**25%**



Maori

**13%**



Pacific peoples

**12%**



Asian

**1%**

Middle East, Latin, American or African



## **2. The first challenge: Income inequality and socio-economic disadvantage - child poverty**

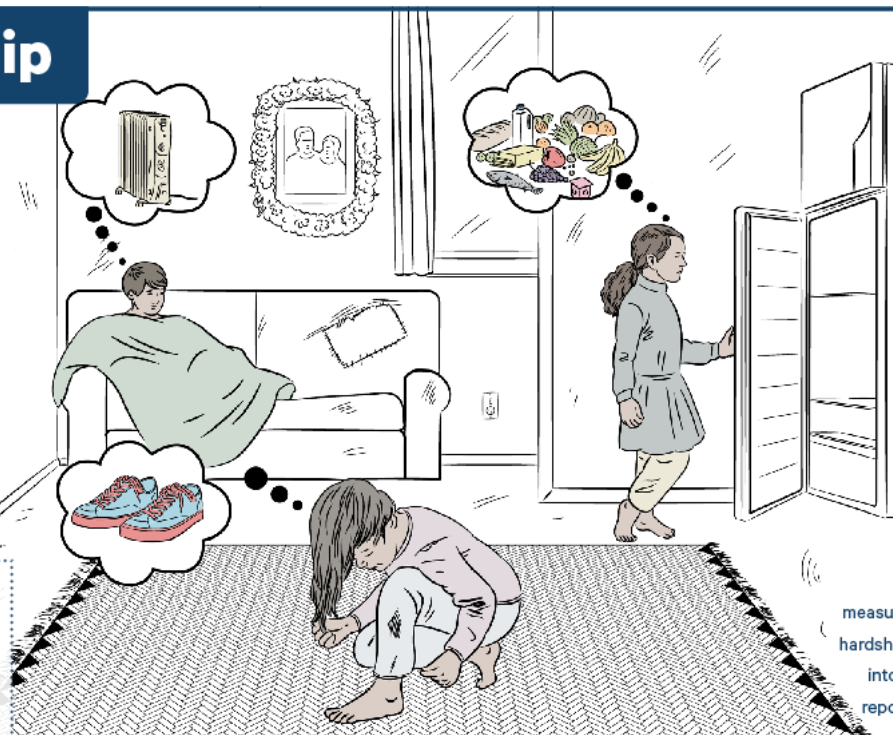


## Material Hardship

**155,000**  
**NZ KIDS**  
LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS  
THAT GO WITHOUT **7**  
OR MORE THINGS  
THEY NEED

**14%**  
OF KIWI KIDS

LESSER  
HARDSHIP



**85,000**  
**NZ KIDS**  
LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS  
THAT GO WITHOUT **9**  
OR MORE THINGS  
THEY NEED

**8%**  
OF KIWI KIDS

This is a new  
measure of material  
hardship introduced  
into government  
reporting in 2015.

LIST OF 17 THINGS THAT HOUSEHOLDS ARE GOING WITHOUT:

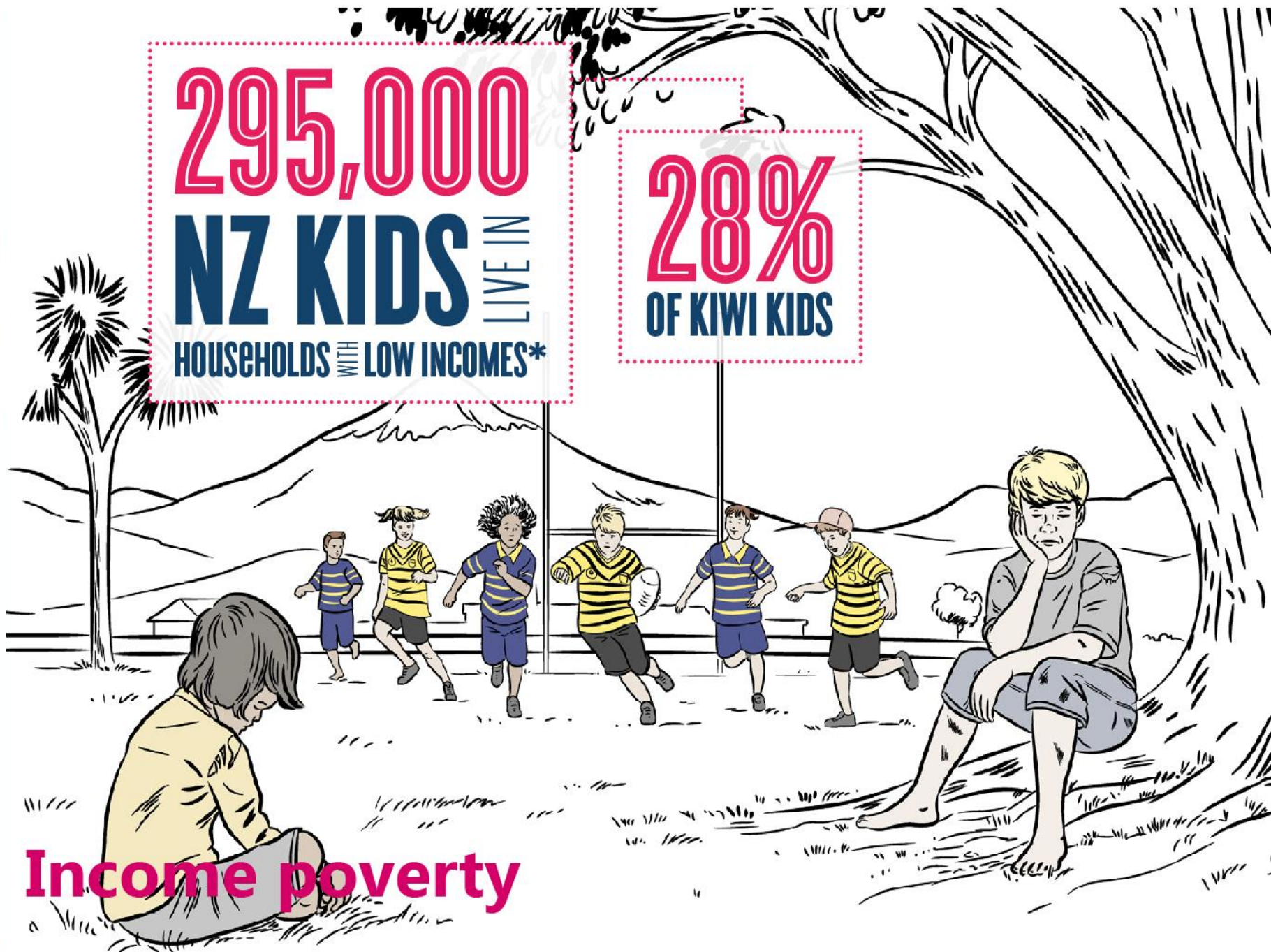
GREATER  
HARDSHIP

0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | **7** | 8 | **9** | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17

**295,000**  
**NZ KIDS** LIVE IN  
**HOUSEHOLDS WITH LOW INCOMES\***

**28%**  
**OF KIWI KIDS**

**Income poverty**



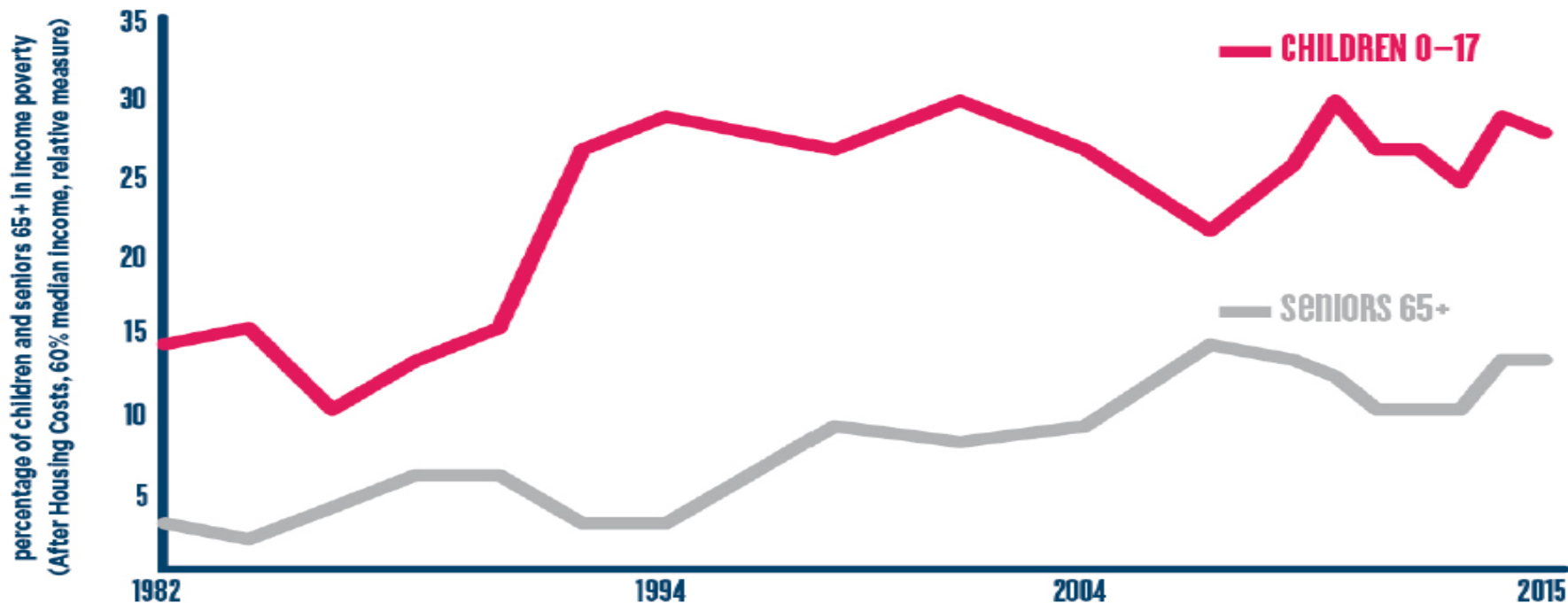


2016

## Child Poverty Trends Over Time

INCOME-RELATED CHILD POVERTY RATES ARE MUCH HIGHER NOW THAN IN THE 1980S

**KIWI CHILDREN** LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS experiencing **INCOME POVERTY** OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES compared to seniors



**CHILDREN'S** LEVEL OF INCOME POVERTY **IN 1982 = 14%** → **CHILDREN'S** LEVEL OF INCOME POVERTY **TODAY = 28%**



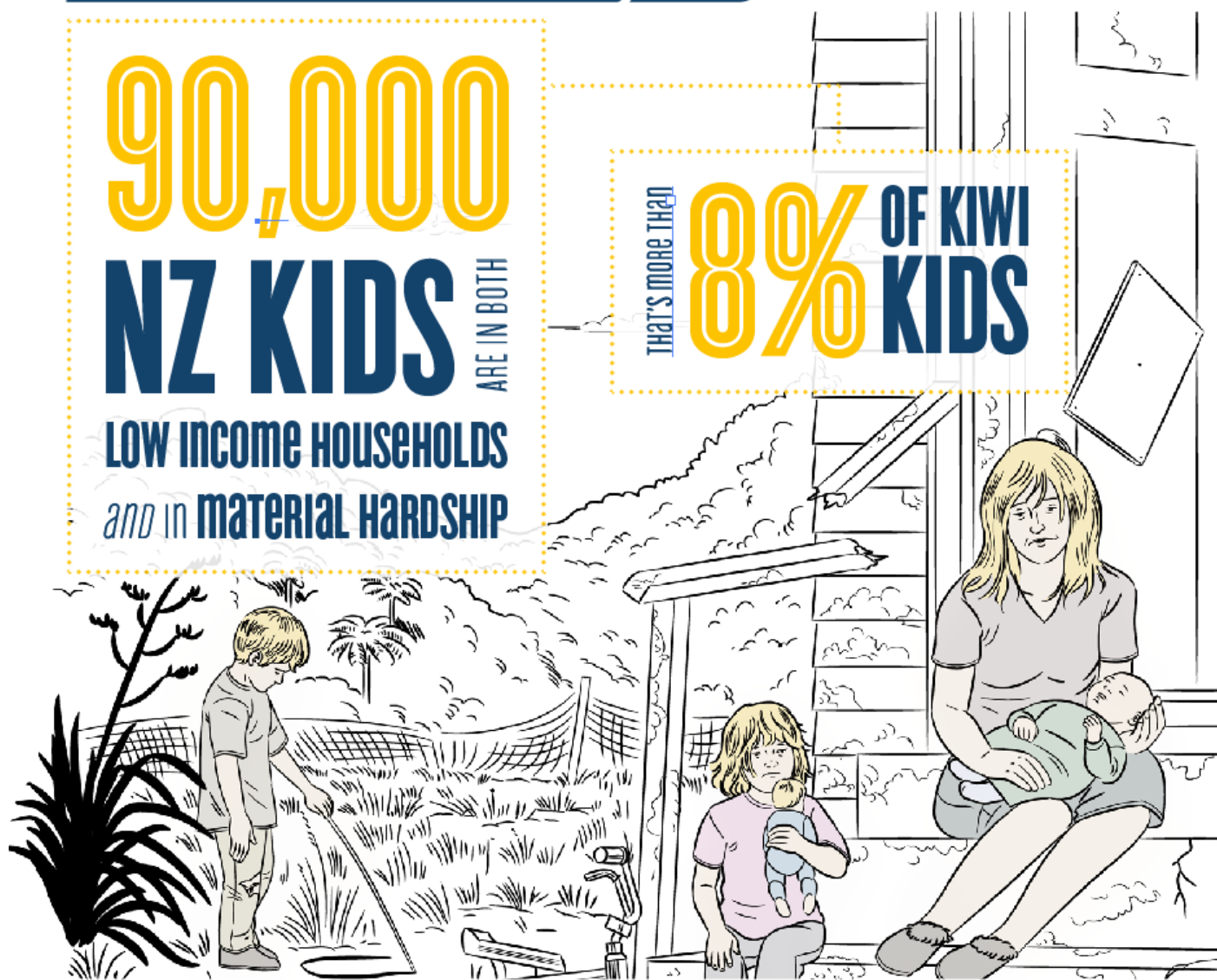
# Severe Poverty

90,000

NZ KIDS ARE IN BOTH

LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS  
and in MATERIAL HARDSHIP

THAT'S MORE THAN  
8% OF KIWI  
KIDS



**These families  
and children  
are doing it  
hard**

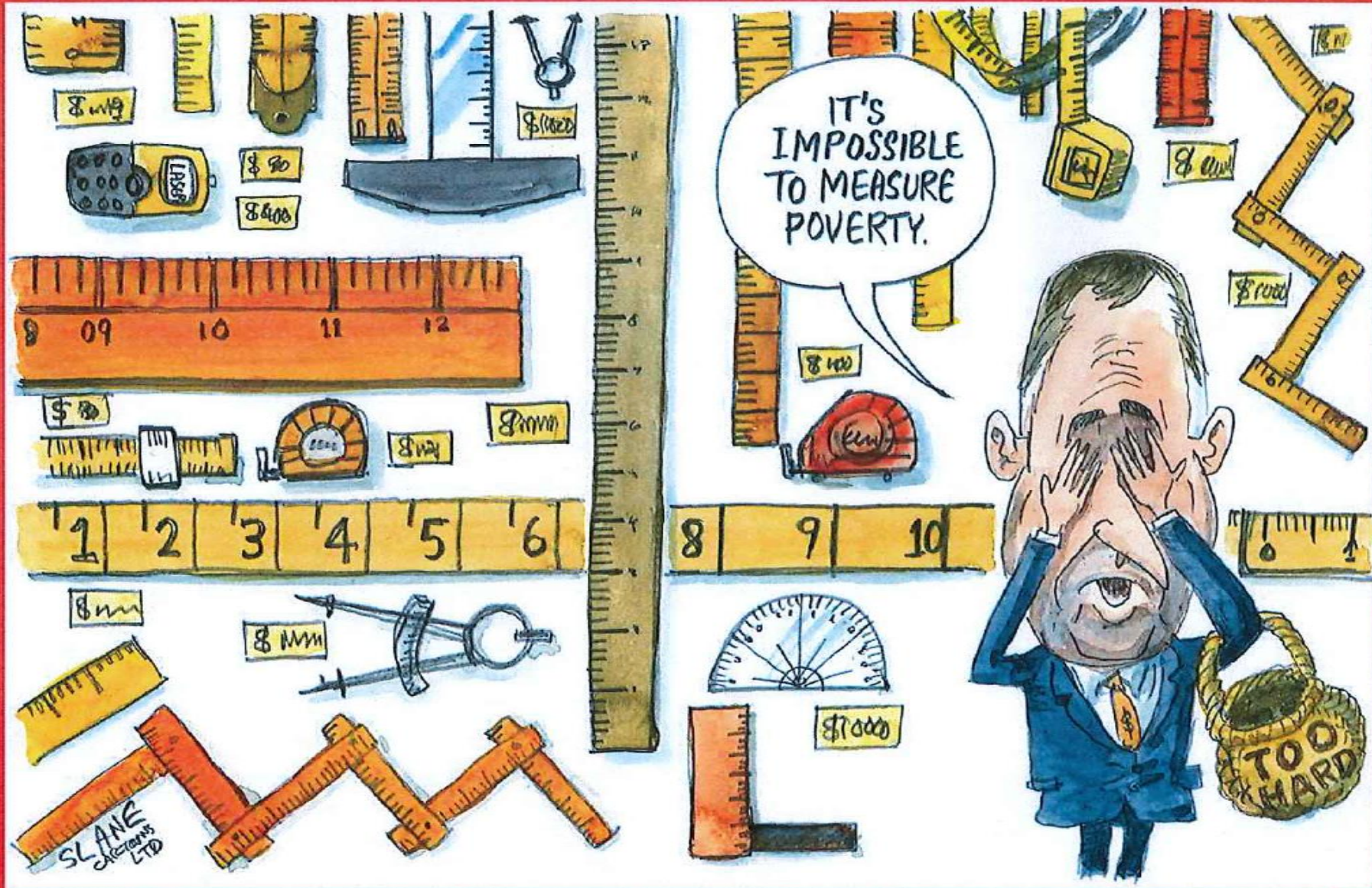
8% of children  
are both in low  
income  
households and  
in material  
hardship – that's  
90,000 children



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NEW ZEALAND **LISTENER**



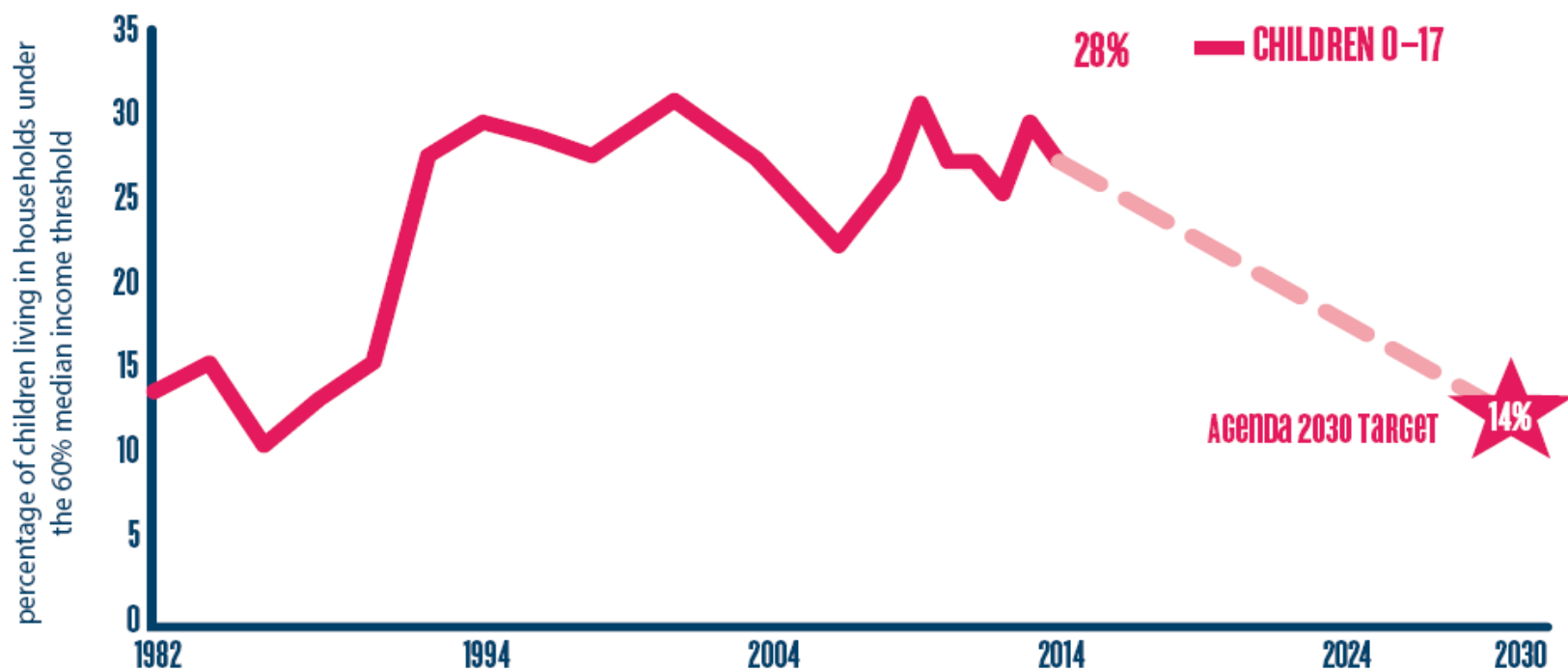
# Reaching our Sustainable Development Goals

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**



# Who is most affected by poverty in NZ?

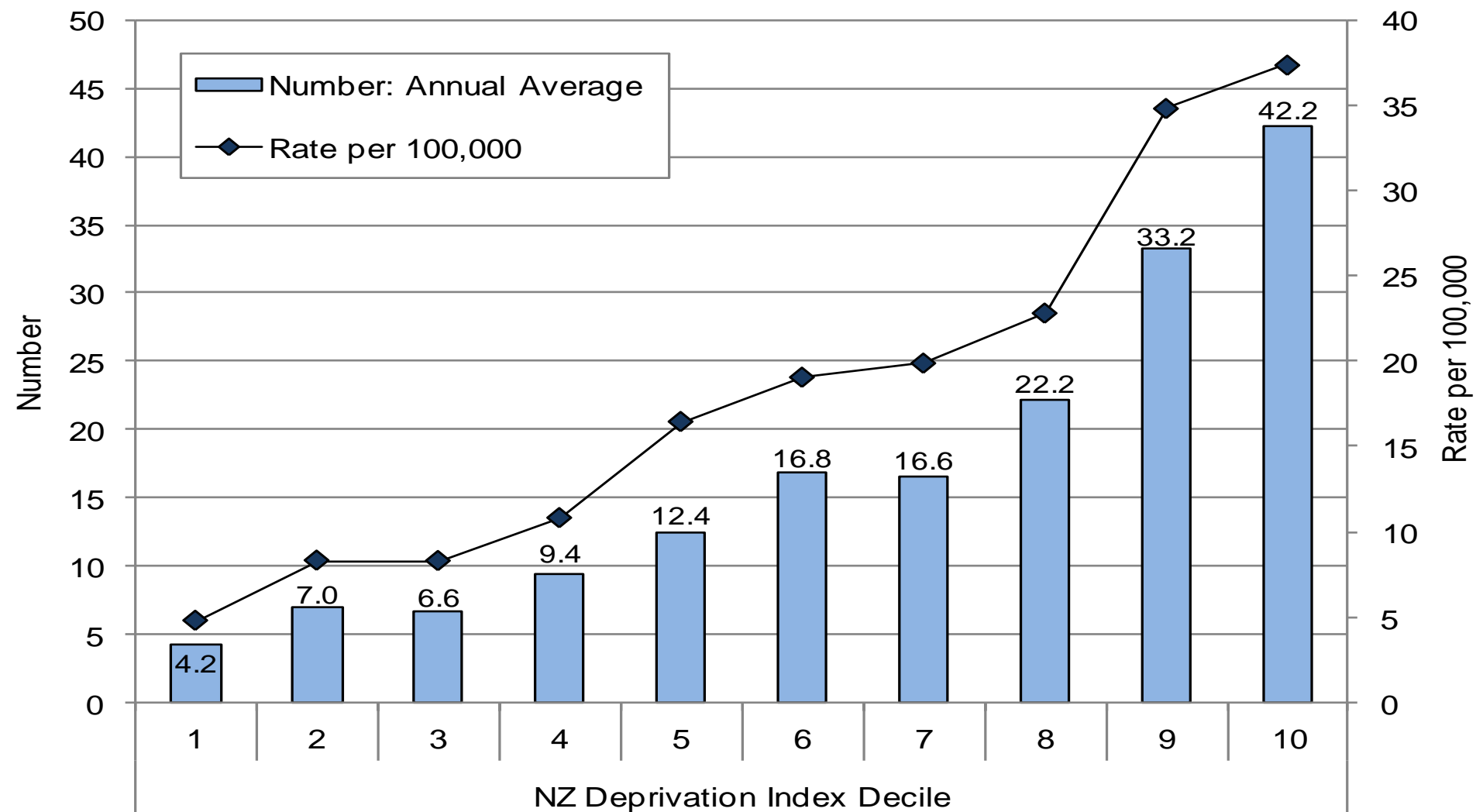
Age	% of individuals in low-income households* 2016
Children 0-17 years	19
18-24 years	20
25-44 years	14
45-64 years	14
65+ years	8
Overall	15

\*Using the 60% of median “anchored-2007” threshold after housing costs

Source: *Household incomes in New Zealand: Trends in indicators of inequality and hardship 1982 to 2016*, MSD, 2017, p 129.



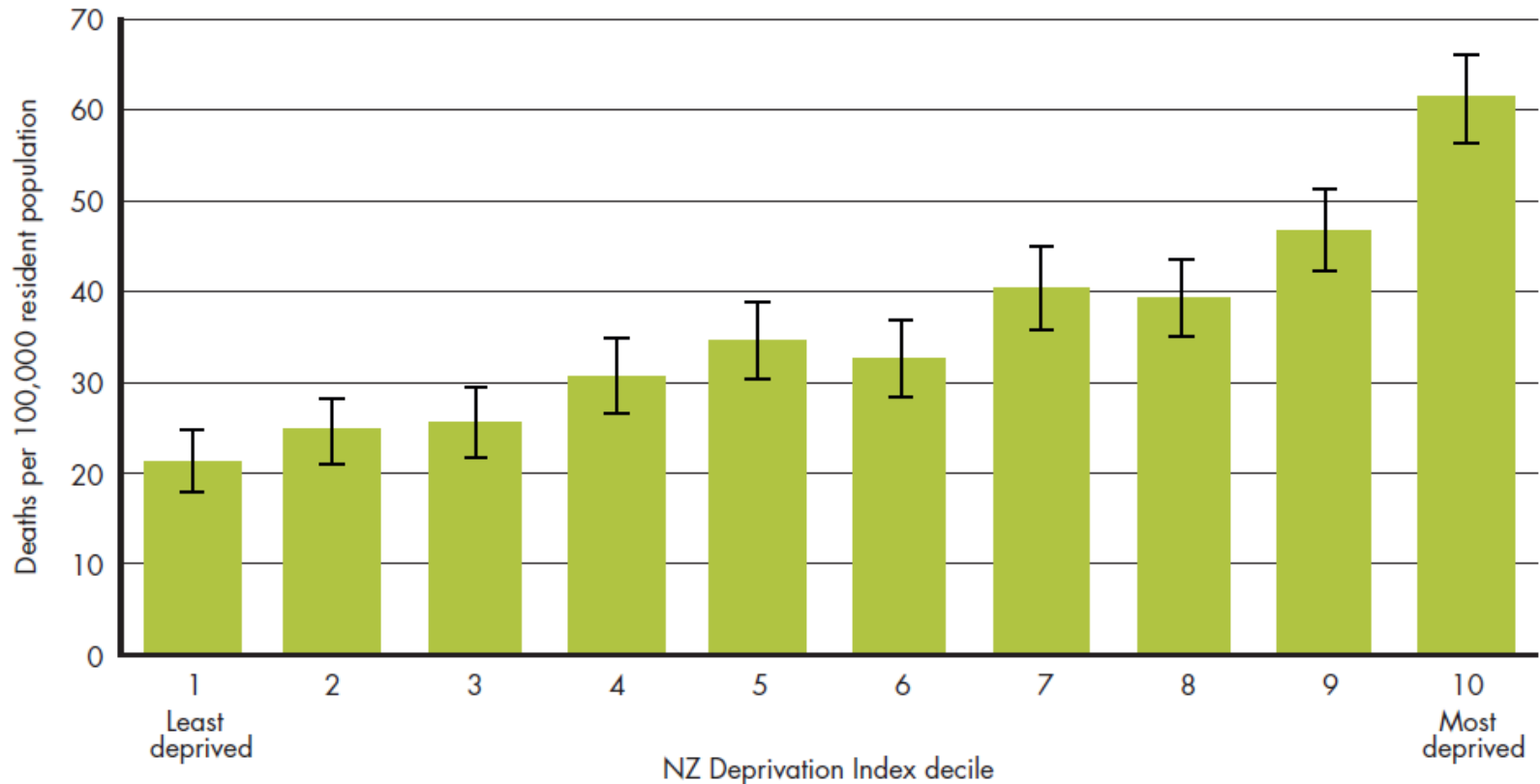
# Hospital Admissions for Injuries Arising from the Assault, Neglect or Maltreatment of Children 0–14 Years by NZ Deprivation Index Decile, New Zealand 2006–2010





# Poverty causes more than just hardship

Mortality rates in children and young people aged 28 days to 24 years by NZ Deprivation Index decile



Graph kindly provided by Health Quality & Safety Commissioner (HQSC)

# An accepted relationship between childhood poverty and greater likelihood of mental health problems

Child poverty - poor nutrition, inadequate housing, increased likelihood of adverse events and living in poor neighbourhoods all put children at higher risk of having mental health problems.

- The evidence strongly suggests that the incidence of mental health conditions among children and adolescents can be reduced by addressing severe and persistent poverty, particularly during the early years of a child's life.
- Intervention to address poverty and the effects of poverty on children is likely to prevent the perpetuation of inter-generational cycles of poverty and poor mental health.

# We do much better for seniors than children!

Deprivation rates comparing children with older people  
and the total population 2007

Country	Children 0-17	Aged 65+	Total population
Czech Republic	20	17	20
Italy	18	14	14
New Zealand	18	3	13
United Kingdom	15	5	10
Ireland	14	4	11
Germany	13	7	13
Sweden	7	3	6
Netherlands	6	3	6
Spain	9	11	11

### 3. The second challenge: disproportionate wellbeing for tamariki Māori



# An inescapable and fundamental challenge

Disparity between Māori and NZ European child wellbeing rates



**Child/youth policy and practice effects Māori and non-Māori equally – yeah right!**



# Comparison of selected measures of wellbeing between Māori and New Zealand European children

Targeting the root causes of inequity and improving outcomes for Māori children across the board will transform the New Zealand landscape for children and come closer to achieving the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Geneva, 2016)

## Education:

Measure	Māori	NZ European (unless specified as non-Māori or total NZ population)
18 year olds with NCEA L2 or above (2014)	67.1%	85.1%
Children in State care with NCEA Level2 or above	15%	25%
Early Childhood Education participation	92.3%	98.2%

# Health:

Measure	Māori	NZ European (unless specified as non-Māori or total NZ population)
<b>Current smokers</b> (aged 15 above, 2013-2014)	40.6%	15.2%
<b>Life expectancy at birth</b>	Women: 77.1 years Men: 73 years	Women: 83.9 years Men: 80.3 years
<b>Youth suicide</b> (15-24 years)	48.0 per 100,000	17.3 per 100,000 (non-Māori)
<b>Meningococcal infection</b> (per 100,000. 2013)	All ages: 3.4 <1 year: 32.3 1-4 years: 15.7	All ages: 1.5 (total NZ pop.) <1 year: 18.4 1-4 years: 5.2
<b>Rheumatic fever</b> (all ages, per 100,000. 2012-2014)	13.3	4.2 (non-Māori)
<b>Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants</b> (SUDI) (per 1,000 deaths. 2010-2012)	1.8	0.4 (non-Māori)

# Living standards:

Measure	Māori	NZ European <small>(unless specified as non-Māori or total NZ population)</small>
<b>Child poverty</b> <small>(0-17years, below 60% median household income, after housing costs, 2014)</small>	33%	16%
<b>Child material hardship</b> <small>(0-17years , 2014)</small>	24%	8%
<b>Children in crowded housing</b> <small>(2014)</small>	25%	5%
<b>Unemployment</b> <small>(all ages, 2014)</small>	12.1%	4.4%
<b>Not in Education, Employment or training</b> <small>(NEET) rate (15-24 years, 2015)</small>	20.9%	9.4%
<b>Youth justice:</b> <small>(number and percentage of children aged 10-16 charged in court, 2014/15)</small>	1,152 (59%)	489 (24%)

# Interruptions welcome

