

"Better outcomes for NZ's under 18 year olds: Some nip and tuck, or is radical surgery required?"

University of the Third Age Wellington
Embassy Theatre
11 June 2019

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



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Children's
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**“A vision to formulate for
NZ children/young people ...?”**





BEHIND
THE
DREAM

THE MAKING OF
THE SPEECH
THAT TRANSFORMED
A NATION

CLARENCE B.
JONES

AND
STUART CONNELLY

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

20

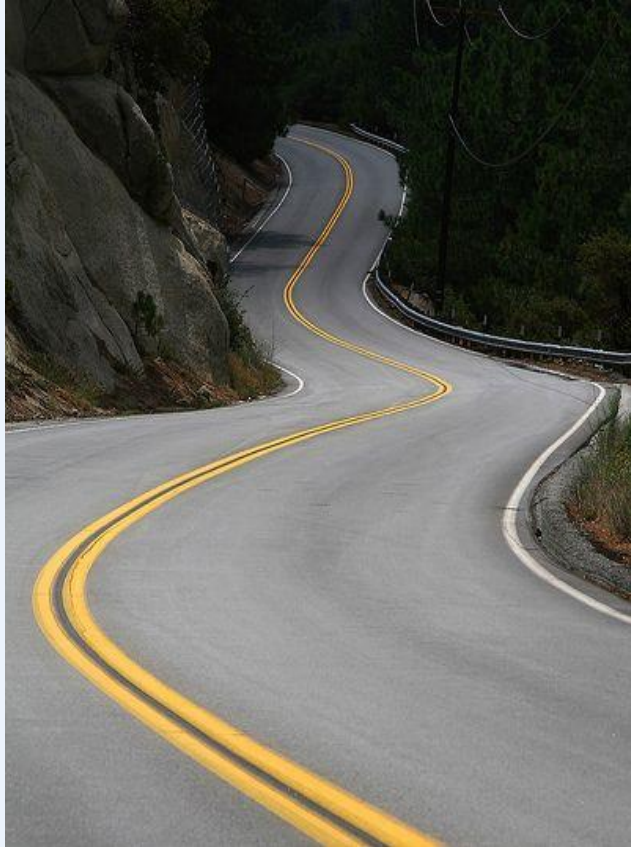
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Who's being left behind???


WE ARE BETTER THAN THIS



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



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

- ALEXANDER DEN HEIJER



Outline – three challenges

Introduction and Context

1. Understanding the impact of “child poverty”
2. The pressing need to do better for some tamariki Māori and Pasifika children and young people
3. Being truly “child-centred”. What does it mean? Is it fad or foundation?



**LET THE LORD
JUDGE THE
CRIMINAL**

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...



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First challenge: Understanding child poverty



Measuring Child Poverty

1. Income related measures. Children living in families receiving 40/50/60% below the median (middle) income level in NZ
2. Actual material deprivation – lack of 17 specific items. Eg 2 pairs of shoes, raincoat etc.



Who is most affected by poverty in NZ?

Age	% of individuals in low-income households* 2016
Children 0-17 years	26%
18-24 years	24%
25-44 years	19%
45-64 years	17%
65+ years	14%
Overall	20%

* Using the 60% of median “relative” (not anchored) threshold after housing costs

Source: *Household incomes in New Zealand: Trends in indicators of inequality and hardship 1982 to 2016*, MSD, 2017, p130

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

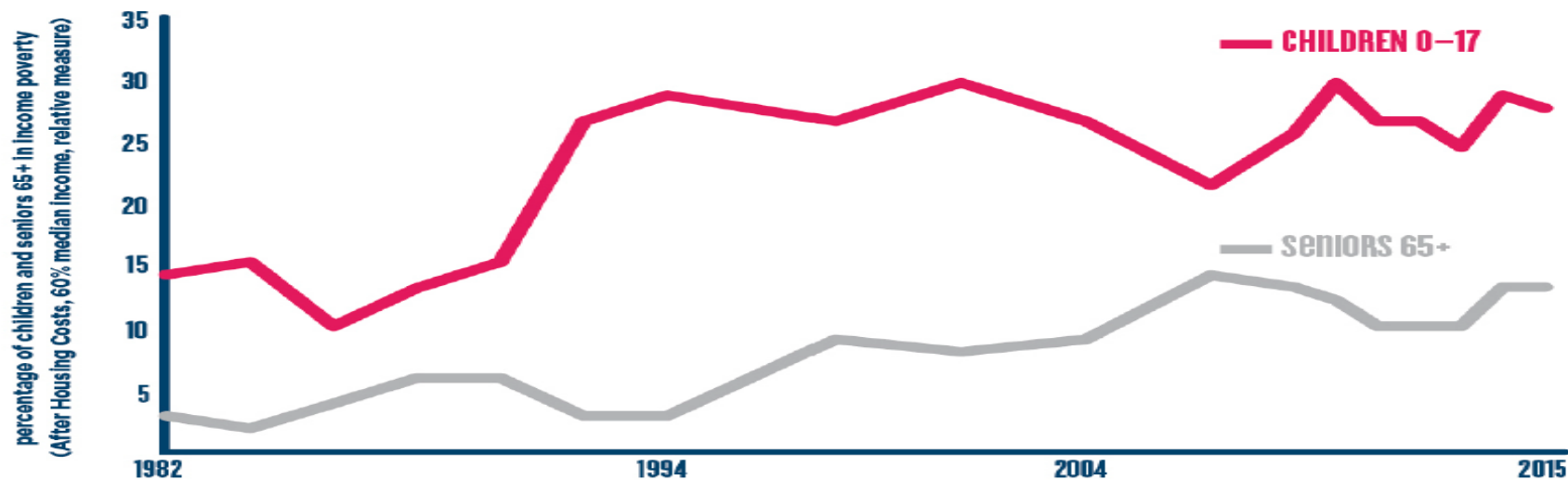
B Perry, The Material Wellbeing of NZ Households. Ministry of Social Development, 2017 P18-20.

2016

Child Poverty Trends Over Time

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

KIWI CHILDREN EXPERIENCING **INCOME POVERTY** OVER THE **LAST 30** THREE **DECADES** COMPARED TO SENIORS



CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF INCOME POVERTY **In 1982 = 14%** → **CHILDREN'S** LEVEL OF INCOME POVERTY **Today = 28%**

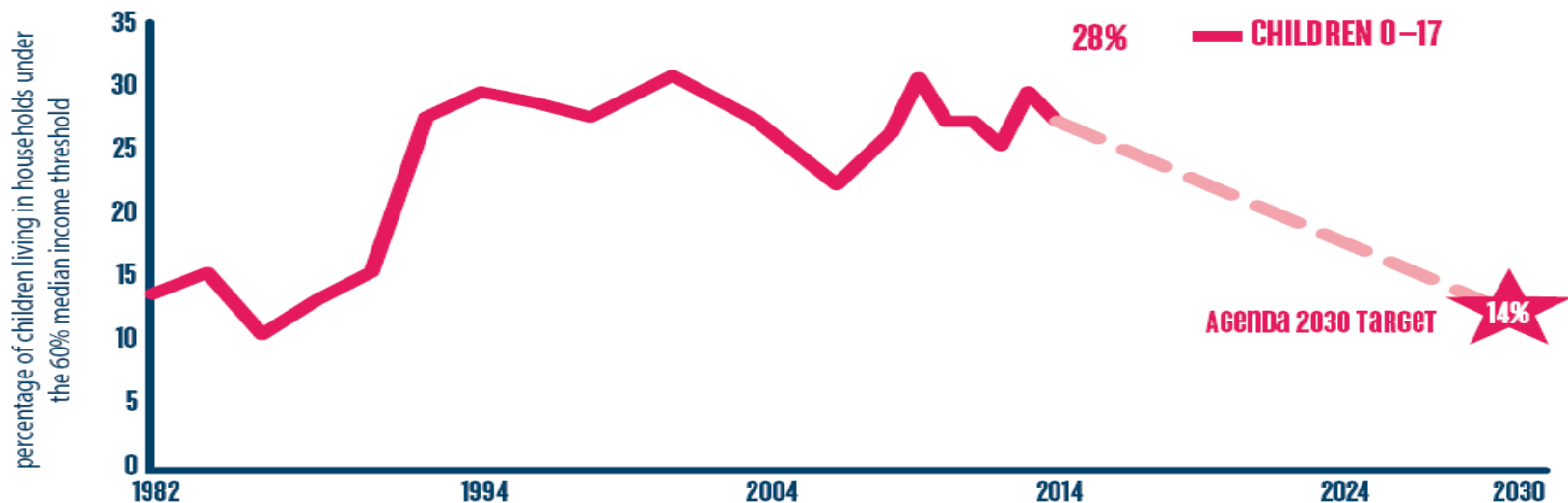
Reaching our Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)

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 UNLESS SEEN **RETURN TO LEVELS IN THE 1980S**

HALVING POVERTY BY 2030 – CHILDREN IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

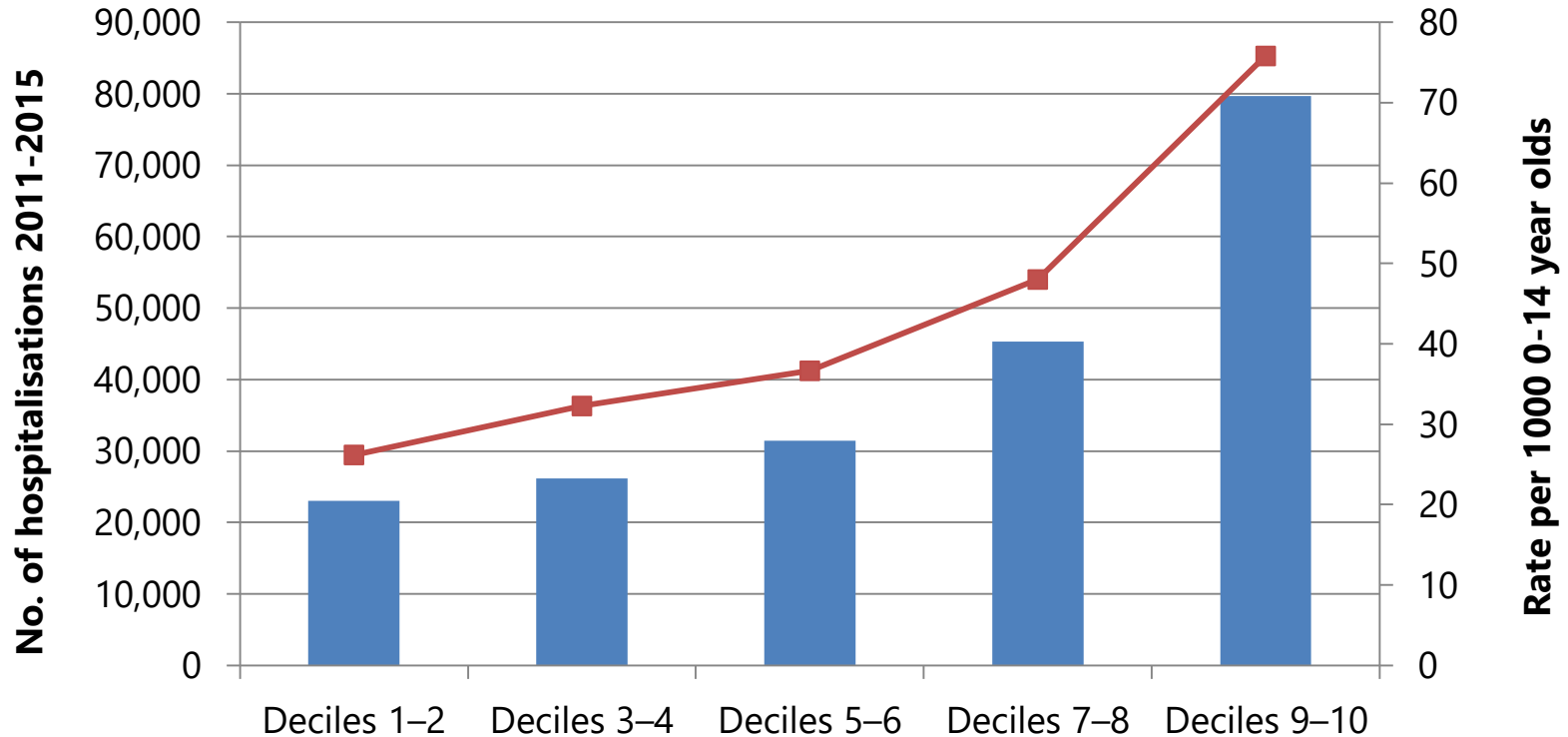


Does child “poverty” CAUSE “adverse life outcomes”?

What do you think?

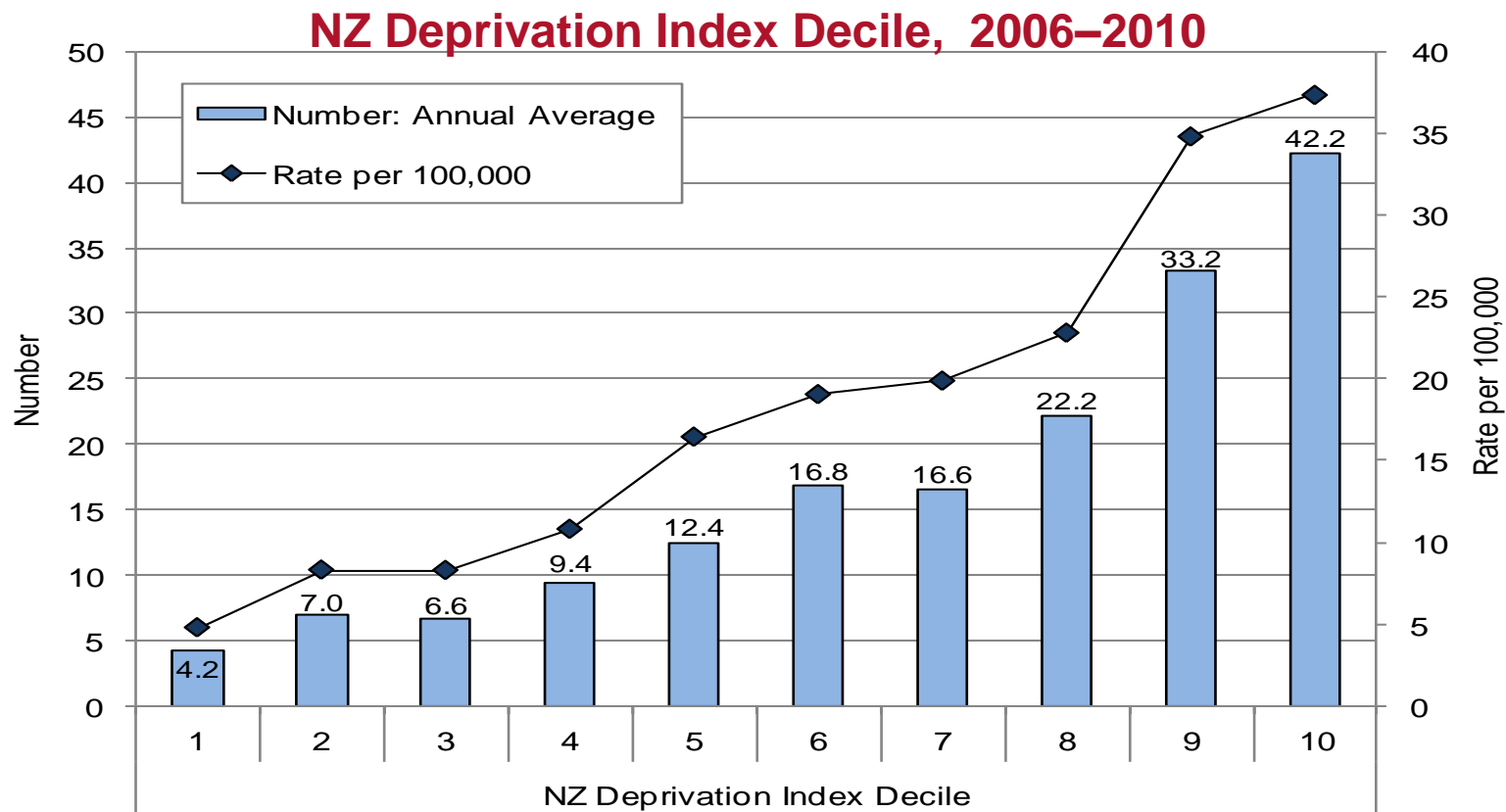


Hospitalisation of children for illness & accidental injury

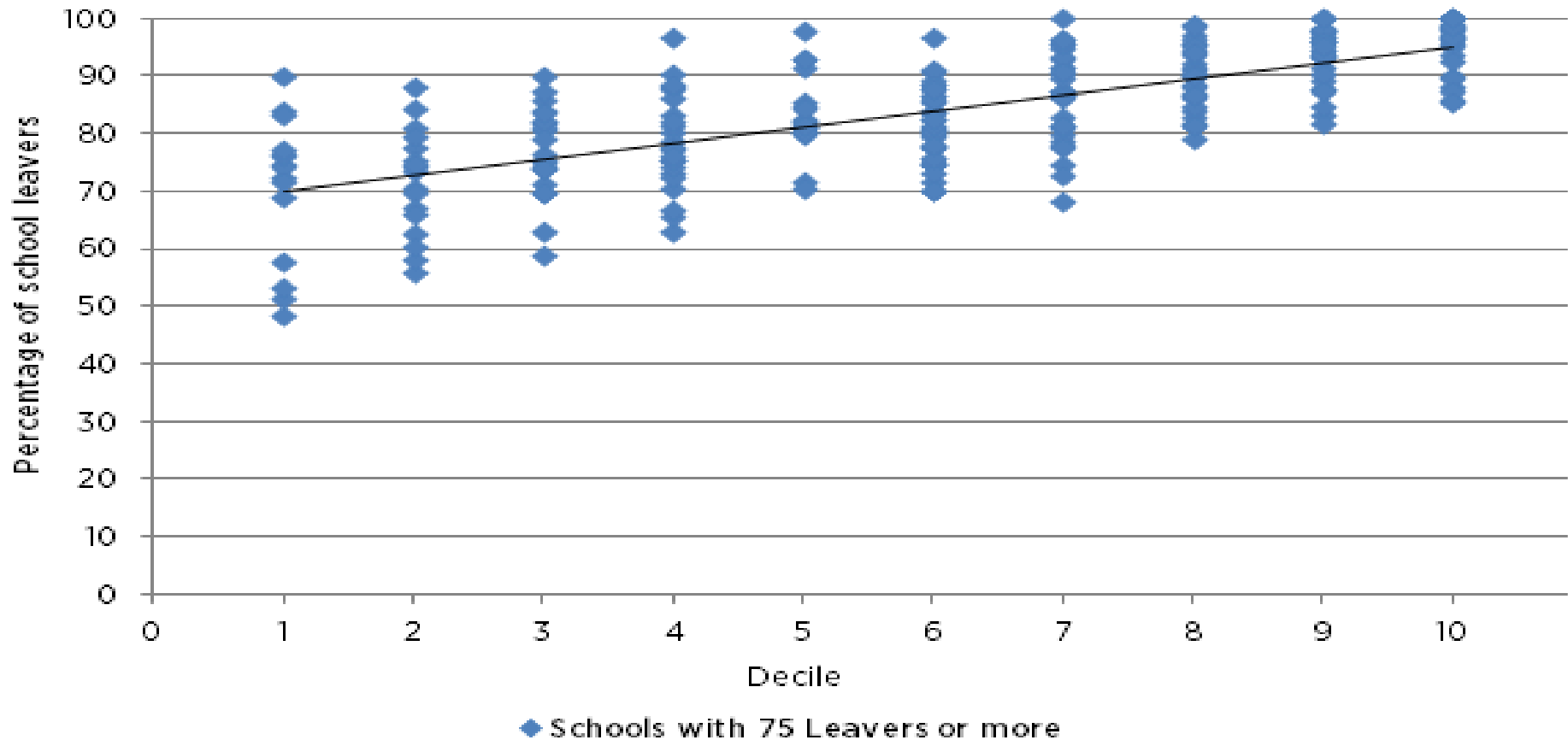


(Source: 2016 Child Poverty Monitor)

Hospital admissions for injuries arising from assault, neglect or maltreatment of children 0–14 years

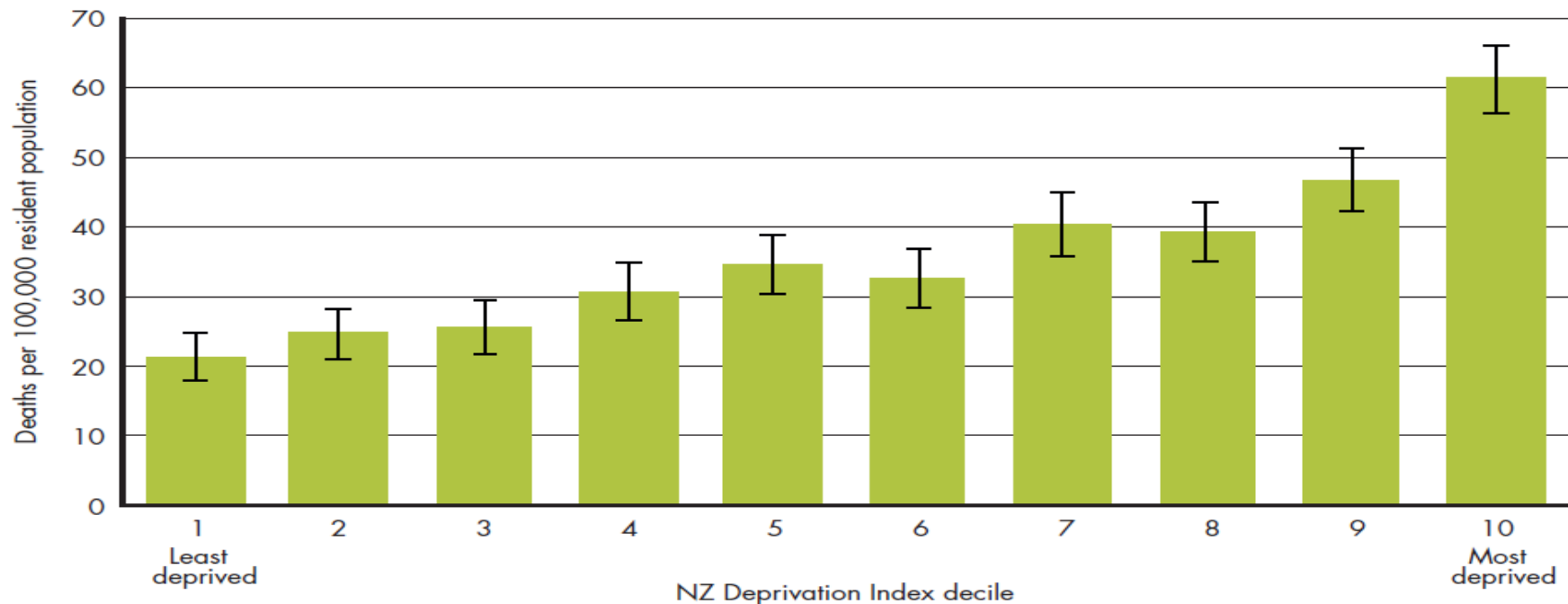


Percentage of school leavers with at least an NCEA Level 2 qualification or equivalent, by school decile (2016)



Child and youth mortality is related to poverty

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)

Second challenge: Disproportionate wellbeing for some tamariki Māori



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An inescapable and fundamental challenge

Disparity between Māori and NZ European child wellbeing rates



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:

	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%

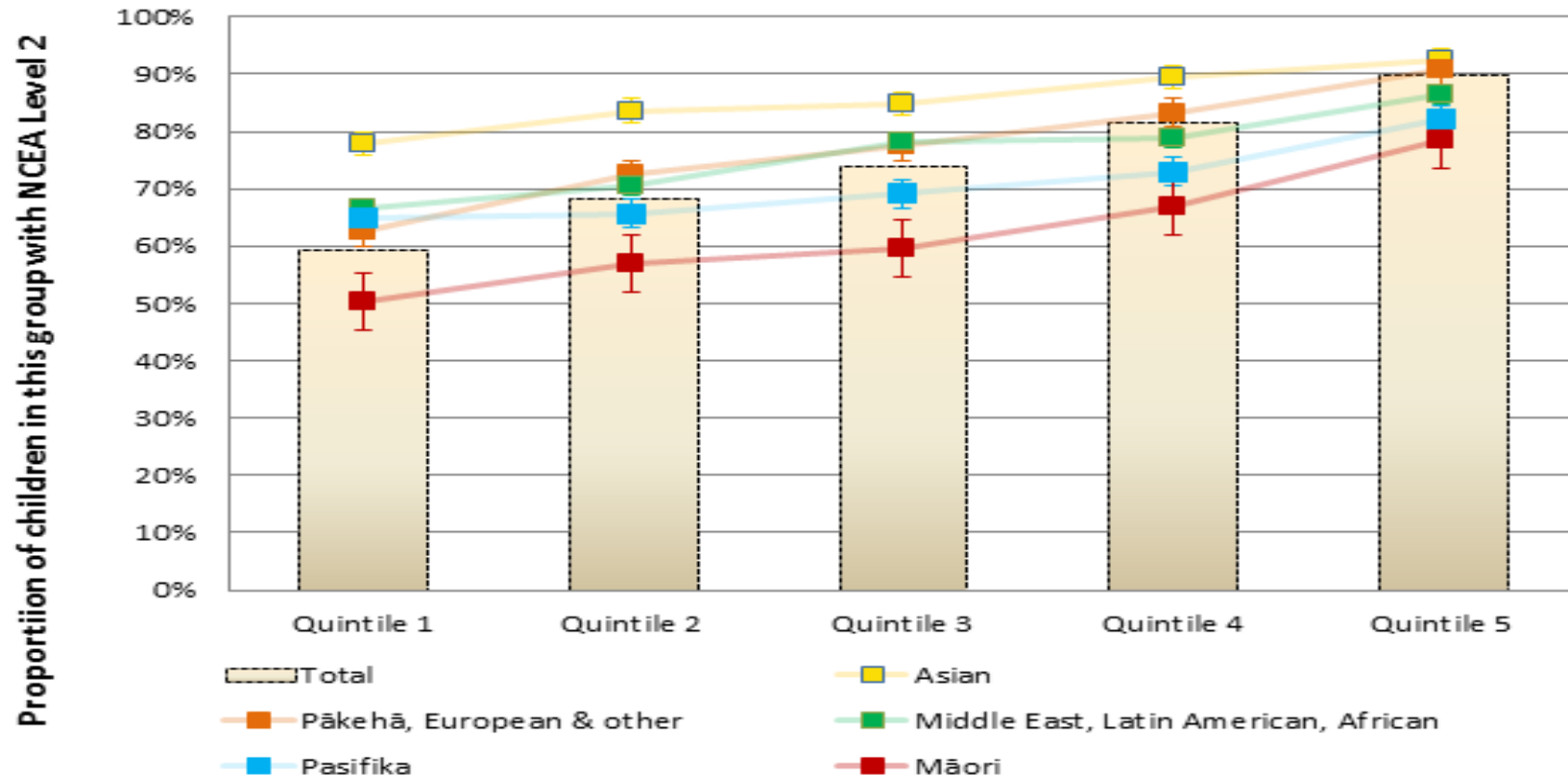
Health:		Māori	NZ European (unless specified as non-Māori or total NZ population)
Current smokers (aged 15 above, 2013-14)		40.6%	15.2%
Life expectancy at birth		Women: 77.1 yrs Men: 73 yrs	Women: 83.9 yrs Men: 80.3 yrs
Youth suicide (15-24 years)		48.0 per 100,000	17.3 per 100,000 (non-Māori)
Meningococcal infection (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
Rheumatic fever (all ages, per 100,000. 2012-2014)		13.3	4.2 (non-Māori)
Sudden Unexpected Death in Infants (SUDI) (per 1,000 deaths. 2010-2012)		1.8	0.4 (non-Māori)

Living standards:

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

The “tramline gap” faced by tamariki Māori

NCEA Level 2 achievement of school leavers, 2016



Third challenge: The starting point for us: being truly child-centred – hearing young people's voices



#EQUALFUTURE

Kids want us to listen to them

“Just talk to us, don’t see us as too hard.”

(Student in alternative education, Samoan)

“Try and get our tiny voice heard ... we have a right to be listened to on issues that affect us...” *(Secondary student, British)*

“Let us have a voice about things we care about (mental health) etc” *(Secondary student, NZ European)*

“I am a library, quiet but filled with knowledge - it’s dumb [that I’m not asked].” *(Student in alternative education unit)*



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child



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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.



Children and young people have not been a sufficient focus of public policy in New Zealand

- We have dropped the policy ball for New Zealand's children/young people over the last 30 years
- Neither have we been committed to seeking children's/young people's voices and views and factoring their perspectives into decision making



**The dawn of a new
policy era for
children/young
people?**

Some encouraging signs:

- **Legal obligation to consult**
- **Wellbeing Budget**



The real & most effective solution?



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