



FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

MEN ON THEIR OWN



SOCIAL POLICY AND
PARLIAMENTARY UNIT

Working for the eradication of poverty in NZ

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The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit
August 2006

FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

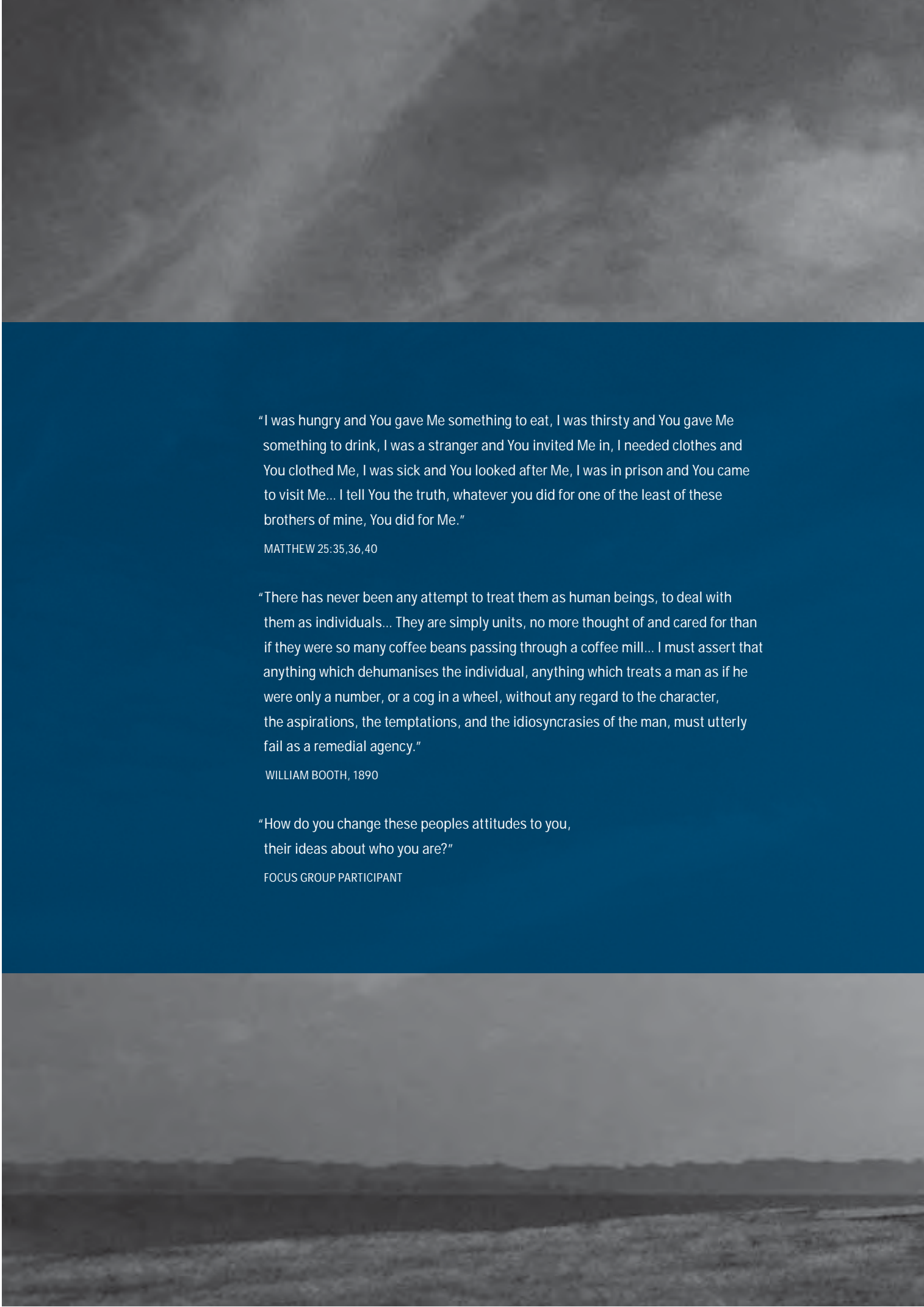
MEN ON THEIR OWN

A report outlining the circumstances of men who use social services who live outside of a defacto/marriage relationship or family household.

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"I was hungry and You gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and You gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and You invited Me in, I needed clothes and You clothed Me, I was sick and You looked after Me, I was in prison and You came to visit Me... I tell You the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, You did for Me."

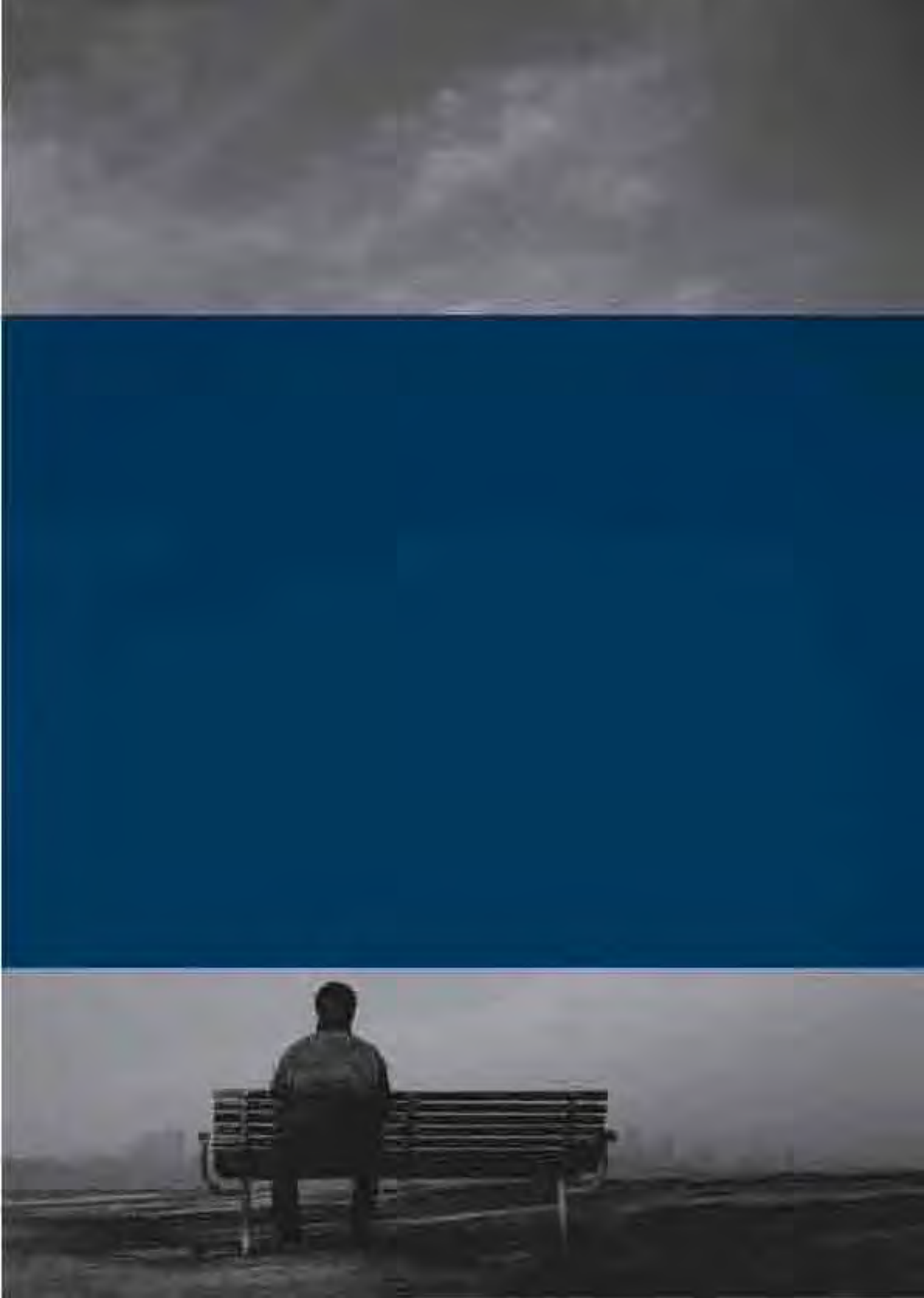
MATTHEW 25:35,36,40

"There has never been any attempt to treat them as human beings, to deal with them as individuals... They are simply units, no more thought of and cared for than if they were so many coffee beans passing through a coffee mill... I must assert that anything which dehumanises the individual, anything which treats a man as if he were only a number, or a cog in a wheel, without any regard to the character, the aspirations, the temptations, and the idiosyncrasies of the man, must utterly fail as a remedial agency."

WILLIAM BOOTH, 1890

"How do you change these peoples attitudes to you, their ideas about who you are?"

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the circumstances and experiences of a group of men who use social services, and who live outside of a defacto/marriage relationship or family household. Current social policy and social services largely focus on the needs of parents with children. It is important to ask what might be happening to people who are outside of this type of household.

For this report, men who attend (or have attended) Salvation Army men's hostels, addiction or drop in centres in Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Invercargill, and who attend Downtown Community Ministry and the Anglican City Mission in Christchurch were asked to complete a survey and participate in a series of focus groups.

There were 168 respondents to the survey and 77 men attended the focus groups. Most of the men in the survey were aged over 40 years (70%), and were European (74%). Twenty percent of the men were Maori.

This research identified three key drivers of social need amongst this group of men and three particular service/policy problems areas.

Key drivers of social need:

1. Mental health and/or addictions – often precipitated or made worse by a relationship break up.

More than half of the men who completed the survey self-reported suffering from a physical or mental health condition and 61% indicated that they had, or were still, attending an addiction treatment programme. In the focus groups the men commented that for many of them their socio-economic problems had arisen after a mental health or addiction incident, and that for many this coincided with, or was related, to the break up of a relationship. Mental health problems and/or addictions impacted negatively on many areas of the men's lives.

Despite their addictions, mental and physical health problems, 40% of the men visited a doctor only once or twice a year. The men commented on the cost of doctors and of prescriptions. Those on the Sickness Benefit had to see a doctor more often to renew paperwork but this did not necessarily mean a regular health check up. Overall the men appeared to have low levels of access to health care, and did not usually access a GP or mental health service until they were in significant need. In terms of addictions the men complained of the lack of services for young people, commenting that they were addicted long before they were adults.

2. Low income – precipitated or compounded by Work and Income debt and unemployment.

The majority (87%) of the men were not in employment and were on a benefit. Many of the men were paying back a combination of Work and Income debt (41%) Court fines (20%) or child support (15%) from their income. After paying rent, debts, fines, and other bills, the men's median residual income was \$60 per week. The men reported a restricted lifestyle, with inadequate income for basics such as food, health-care, clothing and transport.

The fact that most of the additional assistance from Work and Income is by way of repayable grant almost guaranteed that many of the men would be in debt. Many of the men felt that they were trapped in a "money go round" whereby one arm of government (such as IRD for child support or Courts for fines) took money that must then be replaced by debt to another government agency (Work and Income).

The benefit abatement system, combined with the fact that when they gained employment their debt, fine and child support payments automatically went up, was a significant disincentive for the men to gain employment as they found they were no better and sometimes worse off, if they did. Because they do not have children living with them, these men do not benefit from Working for Families.

Child support payments came in for considerable comment. Over 40 percent of the men surveyed had children. For 46 percent their children were adults. For the remainder their children ranged in age from pre-school to high school. Over 56 percent of the men had access to their children and of these 20 percent had weekly contact. However 31 percent had no contact at all. All the men with children under the age of 18 years were paying child support, and while they wanted to support their children they felt that the way it was calculated was unfair and left them with inadequate incomes. If their ex-partner was also on a benefit they felt their children received no advantage from their payments. They would have preferred at least some of the money to be put in an account for their child to access when they turned 18.

3. Difficulties re-establishing after criminal convictions/imprisonment.

A majority of the men (63%) had been convicted of a criminal offence, with slightly more than a quarter (28%) being sent to prison. Of those who had been to prison nearly half (49%) had only been once, and for short periods (one year or less) but 35 percent had been imprisoned 4 or more times, and for 5 percent they were imprisoned for more than 6 years.

This contact with the criminal justice system, and in particular prison, made it very difficult for these men to reintegrate into society and in particular gain employment. The men considered that there was a lack of real support, with the lack of financial assistance, and benefit stand-down upon release from prison driving some back into crime in order to survive. The men also felt there was a lack of assistance in prison to deal with underlying drivers of offending such as mental health problems, addictions, unemployment and low skill levels.

Service/policy problem areas

1. Work and Income practice

Nearly all the men in this study cited Work and Income's systems and processes as a particular problem. The men found it difficult to deal with Work and Income, they felt that Work and Income did not volunteer information about all entitlements, that some staff had negative attitudes to them, and that the benefit system was complex and difficult to understand, especially for people with low levels of education. Many of the men found that they were only able to obtain their benefit entitlements when they took an advocate from a community organisation with them, and that Work and Income were quick to ban them if they expressed their frustration or got angry.

2. Housing availability

The majority of the men (70%) represented in this study were living in a Salvation Army hostel, with the remainder living in a combination of Housing New Zealand, Council, private rental and night shelter accommodation. A few of the men (15%) moved frequently, stating that they had lived in 6 or more places in the past two years. The majority moved once or twice a year before living in their current accommodation.

The men noted that it was relatively straightforward to obtain hostel accommodation but getting established in their own flat or house was difficult, both in terms of affordability and locating a house that suited their circumstances. The men complained of long waiting lists at Housing New Zealand or for Council housing. Many felt they needed the assistance of a community organisation to obtain housing.

Men with a history of addiction or mental health problems required support to sustain housing. Some men found being in their own place lonely and isolating, as neighbours changed often, or complained about having men such as themselves living next door.

3. Employment assistance

The majority of men in this study (78%) left school early and did not go on to tertiary or other education. Only 7% of the men surveyed were currently in employment and most of these were in part-time employment. Most of those who were employed had low skilled jobs.

Although the majority of the men were on a benefit, many of them wanted to work and some were actively seeking employment. They faced a number of barriers to employment however including; age discrimination, the impact of mental health conditions and addiction, and low levels of education/qualifications. Men with a criminal or prison record found it very difficult to obtain employment, noting that employers either would not employ them at all, or if they failed to tell them about the criminal record in order to get a job, would sack them once they found out.

Many of the men felt that Work and Income's employment assistance did not take account of their personal circumstances and either pushed them into inappropriate jobs or did not put them forward for jobs because of assumptions about who they were and what they could do.

Mental health and addiction issues meant many of the men did not cope with full time work, but they found it hard to find suitable part time work, or found that the benefit abatement system, combined with Work and Income debt, made working uneconomic.

Solutions and Recommendations

The men put forward a number of ideas regarding solutions to the problems they had raised. These are incorporated in the following recommendations:

1. All service providers, government and non-government, who interact with men on their own, undertake an assessment of how well their services cope with and meet the needs of men with addiction or mental health conditions.



2. Further work is undertaken by the appropriate government and community sector agencies to educate men about mental health issues including when, how and where to access help.

3. That the Ministry of Social Development develop a programme of policy work to address the following issues related to the benefit system:

- The adequacy of basic benefits, particularly for those not eligible for Working for Families assistance.
- The impact of the system of repayable grants for basic needs on income and debt levels amongst beneficiary households.
- A review of the efficacy, and the transfer costs involved in the relationship between Child Support, Court fines and reparations, Work and Income repayable grants, benefits and Work and Income debt repayment.
- A review of the impact and efficacy of debt to Work and Income, with a particular focus on a system to limit or freeze debt to encourage and enable single beneficiaries to gain financially from employment.
- An examination of how the benefit system for single working people can be improved to ensure incentives and encouragement to obtain and sustain employment while retaining benefit adequacy for those unable to do so.

4. That the Department of Corrections undertake a programme of work to examine and develop policy and services around the following issues:

- The availability of assessment and treatment for addiction and mental health conditions while offenders are in prison.
- The availability of work experience and vocational training while in prison.
- The availability and effectiveness of post-release support services.
- Assisting released inmates into employment.

5. That Work and Income examine the effectiveness of the case management system for the clients represented in this study, and in particular focus attention on:

- Staff training, particularly in the needs of men with addiction or mental health conditions.
- The allocation of trained, experienced staff to deal with particular groups of clients.
- A review of how safety and security are dealt with, especially the criteria used to ban a client from Work and Income premises.
- A review of the appointment system, the availability of emergency appointments and access to Work and Income for clients without phones.

6. That Housing New Zealand:

- Undertake a review of the availability of housing suitable for single men.
- In response to this review develop plans to improve the availability of housing for single men in areas where there is a shortage.
- Initiate community development projects to build acceptance of men on their own within local communities.

7. That in terms of employment for men on their own, Work and Income undertake the following:

- Ensure that employment assistance is tailored to the individual.
- Ensure that men with addiction or mental health conditions are referred to the services that are already available to assist people with these disabilities into employment.
- Work with the Department of Corrections to improve employment assistance to released inmates.

9. That all service delivery arms of Government develop pro-active partnerships with community organisations with a focus on more effective delivery of services to men on their own.



CONTENTS

Introduction	page 12
Background	page 13
Methodology	page 14
The nature and scope of this report	page 15
Placing these men on their own in context	page 16
Survey Findings.....	page 19
Focus Group Findings.....	page 31
Discussion	page 60
Conclusion	page 69
Recommendations	page 69
Appendix One: Census Data 2001	page 71
Appendix Two: Benefit Income Information	page 73
Appendix Three: Questionnaire.....	page 75
Appendix Four: Ethics Statement	page 80
Bibliography	page 82
About the Authors	page 84

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to identify the circumstances, and experiences of men who use social services, and who live outside of a defacto/marriage relationship or family household.

The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit report, *A New Zealand that Demands Attention*, identified three groups of people who might be falling outside current social policy and social service provision:

- Men on their own.
- People with low-level mental health issues.
- Older women living alone.

This report explores the first of these groups. We have chosen to deal with men on their own first, because people with low-level mental health issues and older women have several organisations and some government strategies, policies and services tasked with meeting at least some of their needs. However few organisations are tasked with identifying and meeting the social service needs of men living outside of a defacto/ marriage relationship or family household. In addition, current social policy and social assistance, such as the Working for Families package, is focused primarily on parents and children. It is important to ask what is happening to people who are outside of this type of household.

This report outlines the findings of a survey and focus groups of men on their own. The report is divided into the following sections:

- Background information regarding the Salvation Army's history of involvement with men on their own.
- Nature and scope of the study and methodology used.
- Placing the survey in the context of census data and secondary literature.
- Findings of the paper based survey.
- Findings of the focus groups.
- Discussion of the implications of the survey and focus group findings.
- Conclusion and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The Salvation Army – a history of working with men on their own

The Salvation Army has a long history of providing services to meet the socio-economic and health needs of men on their own. Currently the Salvation Army provides men's hostels in Auckland, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Invercargill,¹ it also operates night buses, offering hot drinks and food, and a listening ear to people on the streets, in Auckland and Christchurch. Drop-in centres, and the Bridge drug and alcohol and Oasis gambling addiction services also have contact with men on their own.

This practical care enabled us to make contact with at least some of what is, by their very nature, a difficult group of people to connect with.



1. The Salvation Army states that the purpose their supportive accommodation service is to provide a place of shelter, support and rehabilitation. The aim is to encourage those in the accommodation to reach "a personal potential level of independence and increased confidence in coping with life skills." Supportive Accommodation from The Salvation Army website: www.salvationarmy.org.nz

METHODOLOGY

A literature review examined New Zealand and international material from academic, Government, community group, and media sources. The literature survey informed the development of the paper-based survey.

Primary research was split into two phases, a paper-based survey of men living on their own and follow-up focus groups.

A paper-based survey of men on their own attending Salvation Army accommodation, drug and alcohol, and drop-in/day centres was undertaken in Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Invercargill. Downtown Community Ministry in Wellington and the Anglican City Mission in Christchurch also conducted the survey amongst men on their own in contact with their services. Men self-selected to complete the survey and not all men on their own attending these services completed the questionnaire. After analysis of the survey, focus groups were held to follow up the issues raised in the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is found at Appendix III.

Given the sensitive nature of some of the information provided in the focus groups the men were guaranteed complete anonymity. Quotations throughout this report are in the words of the men, taken from the verbatim record of the focus groups, but names and locations have not been included. A copy of the ethics statement appears in Appendix IV.



THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report provides a snapshot of the circumstances and experiences of some men on their own who are in contact with Salvation Army Hostel, Bridge and drop-in centres, and with Downtown Community Ministry in Wellington and the Anglican City Mission in Christchurch. This group is not a representative sample of all men on their own, or even of the men who use these services. Statistical comparisons with other data sets are therefore not possible. In addition self-selection for both the survey and the focus groups means that it is likely that those who participated represent the most articulate of the men using these services. There will be men on their own in need of social services who are not represented in this study. However, while it limits comparability with other data, a snapshot approach does provide some insight in to the possible circumstances and needs of these men and gives us a look into their lives, opinions, and perceptions. Given the paucity of information available about men in these circumstances this information is important. This study also gave at least some men on their own the opportunity to have their issues, concerns and ideas recorded, it gave them a voice.

It is important to note that this research was not able to obtain the 'back story' regarding the issues raised by the men. We do not get the other side of the story in terms of their relationships, or their interaction with government and community agencies. However, the research team's assessment is that in talking to us, the men were honest, from their own perspective. They had no reason to be dishonest, as the research team had no power or ability to either provide or take away anything that the men needed or wanted. The anonymity of the survey promoted honesty, and in the focus groups, the men kept each other honest, challenging each other when they felt they were exaggerating or giving extreme views and offering alternative perspectives and experiences.

The research team also noted that many of the men in the focus groups demonstrated clear thinking, offering thoughtful responses to questions. In every group there were men who demonstrated considerable skill in analysis and who were clearly highly intelligent, and articulate. The men were not just giving "off the top of the head" responses, but had thought carefully about their circumstances and the issues these give rise to. The voice that this research makes available may be subjective, but it is also thoughtful.

We hope that the information and experiences contained in this report will be the starting point for further research, discussion, policy and service development.

PLACING THESE MEN ON THEIR OWN IN CONTEXT

Although as we have noted above, the findings of this survey cannot be statistically compared with other survey samples, it is interesting to place this group of men on their own in the context of all men on their own in New Zealand and of what is already known about them through existing New Zealand and international research.

The Census Statistics

The 2001 Census² shows that in 2001 there were over 300,000 men living on their own. The largest age group (34% of men) were aged over 60 years, followed by the age groups 30-39 years and 40-49 years (both 19%). Less than ten percent of men between the ages of 21 to 29 lived on their own, and almost no men younger than 20 (1.6%) live alone.

The majority (over 83%) of men who lived on their own were European and this number was disproportionately high for their sector of the total population. The percentage of Maori men living on their own (at 8.6%) was less than their percentage in the general population. This is also the case for Pacific Island and Asian men.

The majority of men on their own in New Zealand had incomes of less than \$40,000 per annum. Over a third of men on their own had an income of \$15,000 or less, and 40% an income of \$40,000 or less. Only 12% of men on their own had incomes of \$50,000 or more. Given the age structure of men on their own it is likely that many of the men on incomes below \$15,000 were on national superannuation.

The literature – what is already known about men on their own.

Secondary sources provide very little information about men on their own because very little research has been carried out both in New Zealand and internationally. Horwitz and Tognoli (1982, p. 340) state, "individuals living alone or in non-traditional households have long been neglected in the research literature on adult development, life cycle and environment, and work on environmental design and household satisfaction." Where research has been done it has focused less on the circumstances of men on their own and more on homelessness, the links between marital status and mental illness, marital status and addiction, and marital status and well being.

The research that is available suggests that men in relationships have better health (both physical and mental), life expectancy, stability of housing, stability of income, overall well-being, than those who were in relationships that have now ended. The available research also finds that men outside of traditional households have some distinct characteristics and needs.

Research carried out in the United States by Burt and Cohen (1989) found that there were clear differences in health, crime (both as victim and offender), length and types of homelessness between men and women, with men faring worse than women.³

This finding is mirrored by work looking at relationships indicating that men who remain single or break from a relationship face higher rates of mortality than women. Much research has been done looking at the financial position of women after a relationship break-up, but one American study carried out in 2001 by McManus and DiPrete specifically examined the economic status of men after a relationship separation. They found that after separation or divorce the living standards of most men do not increase, in fact the majority suffer a decline in living standards. McManus and DiPrete (p. 266) also note “research on marriage and the family has paid scant attention to men’s reliance on women’s financial contributions to the household.”

A 2005 New Zealand study into homelessness, *Slipping Through the Cracks, A Study of Homelessness in Wellington*, found some common themes amongst those falling into homelessness:

- Alcohol.
- Debt burden.
- Drugs.
- Foster families.
- Gambling.
- Institutional care as a child/adolescent.
- Mental health issue.
- Prison as adult.
- Social isolation.
- Trouble communicating with others.
- Unemployment.
- Childhood abuse.
- Difficulty budgeting.
- Family breakdown/instability.
- Frequent moving/change in housing.
- Gang involvement.
- Lack of schooling/education.
- Negative beliefs about self/self-image.
- Relationship breakdowns.
- Traumatic parental death.
- Trouble with police.

These themes mirror an English study by Fitzpatrick, Kemp and Klinker (2000) who also indicated key trigger events, ‘crisis points’ that caused people to lose their home:

- Leaving the parental home after argument.
- Marital or relationship breakdown.
- Widowhood.
- Discharge from the armed forces.
- Leaving care.
- Leaving prison.
- A sharp deterioration in mental health or an increase in alcohol or drug misuse.
- A financial crisis of mounting debts.
- Eviction from a rented or owned house.

The secondary material that is available therefore suggests that men living outside of a relationship or family household may have higher risk of adverse socio-economic outcomes than men living with partners/spouses and/or families.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Total number of men surveyed.
168 men completed the survey.

Ages

The men who completed the survey ranged in age from 17 to over 65 years old. The majority of men were over the age of 40, representing over 70 percent of those who completed the survey. The largest age grouping was 50-59, representing nearly 27% of the respondents.

Table One: Age of the Men

Age	Total	Percent
Under 20	3	1.8
21-29	19	11.3
30-39	28	16.7
40-49	42	25.0
50-59	44	26.2
60 and over	32	19.1

Ethnicity

The majority of the men (74%) identified themselves as New Zealand European and 20 percent identified as Maori. Other ethnicities also represented, albeit in very small numbers, were Samoan, Cook Island Maori, English and Australian (the last two mentioned under 'Other').

Table Two: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Total	Percentage
NZ European	120	74.1
Maori	33	20.4
Samoan	1	0.7
Cook Island Maori	1	0.7
Tongan	0	-
Niuean	0	-
Chinese	0	-
Indian	0	-
Other	7	4.3

Martial Status

Slightly over three-quarters of the men in the survey indicated that they were single. Around 20 percent indicated that they had been in a relationship but were now divorced or separated. A small number regarded themselves as still in a relationship⁴ and two respondents were widowed.

Table Three: Marital Status

Marital Status	Total	Percentage
Single	124	76.6
Married/living with a partner	4	2.5
Divorced	18	11.2
Separated	14	8.7
A widower (your spouse or partner has died)	2	1.3

Education

The majority of men left school between the ages of 15 and 17 (78%). Over 14 percent left at 14 or under.

Table Four: Age Left School

School Leaving Age	Total	Percentage
12	1	0.7
13	2	1.4
14	19	12.5
15	51	33.6
16	46	30.3
17	22	14.5
18	6	4.0
19	3	2.0
20	0	-
21	0	-
22	1	0.7
23	1	0.7

4. The respondents who self-reported as still in a relationship are likely to have been receiving residential treatment for addictions. They may still have a relationship but do not live in the family home, either temporarily or permanently.

Highest Qualification

When asked about their highest educational qualification over half of the men (54%) had left school without any. Some (16%) had a school certificate qualification in one or more subjects, and nearly 9 percent had a trade or technical college qualification. Ten percent indicated that they had qualifications or had completed courses other than those included in the survey. The men identified a variety of other courses and qualifications they had such as diving, cookery, Te Reo Maori and NZ Army qualifications.

Table Five: Highest Educational Qualification

Highest educational qualification	Total	Percentage
None	85	54.1
NZ school certificate in one or more subjects	24	15.9
NZ sixth form certificate in one ore more subjects	10	6.4
NZ higher school Certificate or Higher Leaving Certificate or NZ university bursary	4	2.5
Trade Qualification/ poly-tech or technical College Qualification	14	8.9
University Qualification	3	1.9
Other	0	-

Children

Over 40 percent of the men stated they had children although for 46 percent of these men their children are now adults. This is in line with the fact that many of the respondents were older. There were, however, a number of men with children in each of the other age brackets, of pre-school age (14%), of primary school age (20%), and of high school age (20%).

Table Six: Age of Children

Age of children	Total	Percentage
Pre-school aged	10	14.3
Primary school aged	14	20.0
High school aged	14	20.0
Adult	32	45.7

Over 56 percent of the men stated that they had access to their children (aged under 18 years), and of these 20 percent said they had contact with their children at least once a week. It does need to be noted, however, that a large percentage (over 31%) of men never saw, or had contact with their children at all.

Table Seven: Access to their Children

Do you have access to your children aged under 18?	Total	Percentage
Yes	27	56.2
No	21	43.7
How often do you have contact?		
Once a week	11	20.4
A few times a month	5	9.3
Once a month	5	9.3
A few times a year	11	20.4
Once a year	5	9.3
Never	17	31.5



Housing –current type and tenure

Nearly 70 percent of the men were living in a Salvation Army hostel when they completed the survey, the remainder lived in a variety of places such as Council housing (nearly 10%), in a night shelter (over 4%), in private rental accommodation (over 3%), and Housing New Zealand housing (nearly 3%). Just over half (57%) of the men had been living in their current dwelling for less than two years. A small number of the respondents had been there for over 16 years. The median tenure time in the men's housing was one year. The range was one day to 37 years.

Table Eight: Tenure Length in Current Accommodation

Length of Stay	Total number of men	Percentage
1-4 days	11	6.5
1-3 weeks	17	10.1
1-6 months	31	18.4
7-10 months	4	2.4
1 year	10	5.9
2 years	23	13.7
3 years	7	4.2
4 years	10	5.9
5 years	8	4.8
6-10 years	19	11.3
11-15 years	4	2.4
16-20 years	4	2.4
21-25 years	4	2.4
25 years +	1	0.6
Range	1 day to 37 years	
Median	1 year	

When we split the men who completed the survey into two groups, those living in a Salvation Army hostel and the remainder, we see a change in the median tenure time of their current housing. For men in Salvation Army hostels the range is 1 day to 37 years with a median tenure of 20 months. For the other group of men the range is one day to 15 years, with a median tenure of between 4 and 5 months.

Tenure history

Before living in their current accommodation the men had lived in an assortment of different types of dwellings. Just over 28 percent of the men had been renting, 17 percent from a private landlord, 6 percent from Housing New Zealand, 4 percent from the City Council, and just over one percent from another provider. Other common places men previously lived were boarding houses (13%) or boarding with someone (10%). Just over 6 percent of men had come from prison and 7.5% of men said they had been homeless prior to moving into their current accommodation.

Table Nine: Previous Accommodation

Previous Accommodation	Total	Percentage
A Salvation Army hostel	12	7.5
A boarding house	21	13.1
A rented HNZ house/flat	9	5.6
A private landlord rental house/flat	27	16.9
A city council rental house/flat	7	4.4
A rental house/flat from another organisation	2	1.2
A house/flat – with a mortgage	2	1.2
A house/flat – without a mortgage	9	5.6
Boarding	17	10.6
Caravan or camping ground	5	3.1
Sharing a house/flat rented or owned by relatives or friends	12	7.5
Homeless-No place to live	12	7.5
Supported accommodation	11	6.9
Night shelter	4	2.5
Prison	10	6.2

Just over 15 percent of the men had lived in 6 or more different places in the last two years, with 3.5% saying that they had lived in more than 16 places. Fourteen percent said they had not moved in the past two years, with 60 percent moving once or twice over the period.

Table Ten: Number of Different Places the Men had Lived over the Previous Two Years

Number of different places lived in the last 2 years	Total	Percentage
0	16	14.0
1	45	39.5
2	24	21.0
3	21	18.4
4	7	6.1
5	2	1.7
6	3	2.6
7	3	2.6
8	2	1.7
9	0	-
10	2	1.7
11	1	0.9
12	0	-
13	0	-
14	0	-
15	0	-
16+	4	3.5

Income and Employment

The majority of the men (87%) received their income from Work and Income. A small number (8%) earned their income through some kind of employment or had other means of income (4%). Of those in paid employment, they were in part-time, rather than full-time, work. Those who were employed stated a wide variety of jobs from factory work to cleaning, with most of the employment involving manual labour.

Table Eleven: Income and Employment

Income	Total	Percentage
Wages	12	7.1
Work and Income	148	87.6
ACC	0	-
Self-employed	2	1.2
Other	7	4.1
Employment		
Yes- Part time	10	6.2
Yes- Full time	4	2.5
No	139	91.4

Fines, debt and child support

When asked what came out of their weekly income a large number (41%) of the men indicated that they were paying back Work and Income debt. Twenty percent were paying Court fines, 15 percent were paying child support, and another 15 percent were repaying debts other than to Work and Income.

Table Twelve: Deductions from Income

Deduction from Income	Total	Percentage
Child support	21	15.1
Court fines	28	20.1
Court required reparations payments	7	5.0
WINZ debt	57	41.0
Other debt repayments	22	15.8
Reparation	4	2.9

Accommodation costs

The men were asked how much they were paying for their accommodation. A range of figures was given from \$35.00 a week to \$420.00 per week. The median weekly accommodation cost was \$140.00 per week.

Table Thirteen: Accommodation Cost

What does your accommodation cost?	\$
Minimum	35.00
Maximum	420.00
Median	140.00

Residual income

The men were then asked how much they were left with after their accommodation and other bills had been paid. The median amount was \$60.00 per week, with a range of \$7.00 to \$300.00 per week.

Table Fourteen: Money after Bills are Paid

How much are you left with each week?	\$
Minimum	7.00
Maximum	300.00
Median	60.00

[Access to health care](#)

Forty percent of the men said they did not normally go to the doctor in a year, or went only once or twice a year. Those men receiving a Sickness or Invalids benefit did go to the doctor more often because they had to get their benefit documentation renewed.

Table Fifteen: Health, Doctors Visits

Number of Doctors Visits in a Year	Total	Percentage
Not normally ever	27	17.0
Once or twice	38	23.9
Between 3 and 6 times	67	42.1
Once a month	17	10.7
More than once a month	10	6.3

Self-reported health status

The men were more likely to say they had a physical health or mental health condition than state they had an addiction. When asked if they had an addiction 43 percent said yes, but in the following question 61 percent acknowledged they had (or were still) attending an addiction service. Over 32 percent of the men who said they attended addiction services said they had (or were still) attending counselling. Nearly 30 percent had gone through (or were in) a residential treatment programme, and 23 percent had attended (or did attend) a 12 Steps Programme. The men who stated they had attended (or were still attending) other programmes or did other things included in their responses programmes such as anger management courses, and informal treatment such as drying themselves out at home, and drying out in prison.

Table Sixteen: Health, Physical, Mental, Addiction

Are you currently suffering from any on-going physical or mental health condition?	Yes	Percent	No	Percent
Physical health condition	57	50.9	55	49.1
Mental health condition	62	52.5	56	47.5
Addiction	43	38.4	69	61.6

Table Seventeen: Health, Addiction Service

Have you ever attended an Addiction Service?	Total	Percentage
Yes	56	42.7
No	75	57.2
Addiction Service		
Residential Treatment	23	29.1
Counselling	25	31.6
Steps	18	22.8
Other	13	16.4

Contact with the justice system

A majority of men (over 63%) said they had been convicted of a criminal offence.

Penalties faced included being fined (36%), being imprisoned (28%) and community service (22%). Over 13 percent of the men convicted faced penalties such as reparation (nearly 10%), alternative sentencing (over 2%) or home detention (1.6%).

Table Eighteen: Criminal Conviction

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?	Total	Percentage
Yes	99	63.5
No	57	36.5
Penalties	Total	Percentage
Fine	67	36.4
Home detention	3	1.6
Community Service	41	22.3
Prison	51	27.7
Reparation	18	9.8
Diversion, alternative sentencing	4	2.2

Prison

Nearly half of the men (49%) who had been imprisoned had only been there once, but over 35 percent had been imprisoned 4 or more times. Three men (5.6%) had been to prison 10 times.

Table Nineteen: Number of Times in Prison

Number of times in Prison	Total	Percentage
1	26	49.1
2	4	7.4
3	4	7.4
4	5	9.4
5	3	5.7
6	3	5.7
7	2	3.8
8	1	1.9
9	2	3.8
10	3	5.7

The men said the length of prison time they served ranged from 10 days to 13 years. Nearly 60 percent of the men who had served time in prison were there for less than a year. Just over 5 percent of the men said their longest prison sentence was more than 6 years.

Table Twenty: Longest Prison Sentence

Sentence Length	Total	Percentage
1-3 months	13	22.4
3-6 months	11	19.0
7-12 months	10	17.2
1-2 years	5	8.6
2-3 years	10	17.2
4-5 years	6	10.3
6-10 years	2	3.4
11-15 years	1	1.7



FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Focus groups were held in Auckland (two groups), Palmerston North, Wellington (two groups), Christchurch (two groups) and Invercargill. Salvation Army addiction, accommodation and drop-in centres, and Downtown Community Ministry, made contact with men who use or had used their services and invited them to attend. In total seventy-seven (77) men participated in the focus groups.

An ethics statement was read at the beginning of each focus group and verbal assent given by the men participating. A semi-structured interview schedule, based on issues raised in the questionnaire, was used to guide the direction of the focus groups, however the facilitator also encouraged the men to discuss topics not on the schedule if these arose naturally out of the group. As far as was practical a verbatim record⁵ of the discussion was taken.

The men in the focus groups raised the following issues:

1. The impact of the end of a relationship.
2. Access to children.
3. Child support.
4. Experiences in dealing with Work and Income.
5. Access to employment.
6. The impact of low income and debt.
7. Access to health care.
8. Access to housing.
9. Reintegration on release from prison.

These issues are reported in depth below.

In addition to these main issues men in some of the focus groups discussed social isolation, knowledge of services, and attitudes to men such as themselves. The men also provided ideas regarding what would make their lives better, or 'solutions' to the problems they raised. These issues and the solutions are also reported below.

1. The impact of the end of a relationship

Most of the men in the focus groups indicated that they had been in a defacto or marriage relationship previously. Many of these men reflected that the break up of this relationship left them in negative circumstances, both economically and emotionally. The break up of a relationship often precipitated depression, alcohol and drug abuse (or more of this), and this often resulted in criminal offending, and in some cases imprisonment.

5. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the issues being discussed it was determined that it would be inappropriate to tape the focus groups. A member of the research team wrote a verbatim record.

“Drinking when break up – end up on the street, lose access to kids.”

“When you split you hide yourself away.”

“When you split that’s when the pressure comes, and depression... that’s when you turn to drugs and alcohol.”

Men in the focus groups also noted that when their relationship breaks up, they tend to walk away with nothing or very little. The men in the focus groups did not split the property evenly (if they were legally entitled to do so), or even take their own property with them. Rather they said they tended just to leave with some personal belongings. The main reason given for this was to leave property for their kids. They did not want the relationship split to effect what the kids had in terms of belongings. Other reasons for simply walking out with nothing, or with little, were avoidance of “hassle,” and ignorance about what they were entitled to take.



“She gets the house, furniture and I have to start again.”

“Walked away with nothing – didn’t want to interrupt the children, wanted them to have the stuff that they needed. I didn’t know I could do anything else.”

“If we split I walk away with nothing. I started with nothing I leave with nothing.”

“I left everything – I didn’t know I could do it any other way.”

“When a relationship splits you walk away with nothing. It saves hassles that way but you get sick and tired of starting again.”

2. Access to children

Some men in each of the focus groups acknowledged that they had dependent children. Of those who did have children, few had contact with them, and several noted that they did not even know where their children were. Some knew where their children lived, but had no access, either legally or in practical terms. The men stated that lack of access was the result of a poor relationship with the mother, or the fact that the children lived in a different place within New Zealand or in Australia. Men in the groups who had older or adult children were more likely to either have access or know where their children were than men whose children were young.

"Don't know where kids are, have not seen them in years..."

"Bad relationship with the mother so I don't get to see the kids."

"Don't know where the kids are – have not seen them in 16 years..."

Men who indicated that they did not have legal access to their children were not always sure why this was, although some acknowledged inappropriate behaviour at the time of the relationship break up (most commonly alcohol and drug abuse).

"Allegations of abuse, that I hit them, but I don't remember any of it."

Men with children expressed some confusion and concern over the Family Court and the whole process of getting custody and access agreements. They felt in general that you needed a lawyer if you wanted to try and get access or custody changed through the Family Court, but that they could not afford this, so they did not try.

Some of the men with children stated that they had stopped trying to get access or custody long ago because the stress of trying was too much for them to cope with. Some indicated that the stress had in the past caused them to abuse (or further abuse) alcohol, and drugs or be violent (verbal and/or physical). Typical comments around attempts to get access or custody were:

"I will fight an army for my children, [but] for peace sake left it [access] because otherwise I might hurt someone."

"Don't want to go through the hurt again – so don't want to try."

"Broke my heart, broke my mind, broke my body so don't want to go there again."

Men who had tried to get access or change custody through the Family Court found the cost of doing so prohibitive, and the emotional cost significant. Some of the men felt there is little support either financially or emotionally for men trying to gain access or custody.

"\$12k costs to Family Court only to get access but not custody. Found could have done it cheaper if hadn't gone to court. The debt is like paying a mortgage."

"Hard slog to try for custody, got knocked back all the time, had to have the desire to keep going, needed legal aid and a solicitor, difficult to pay the cost and keep a house going for the kids to come to..."

"Proving that the problem is the mother is hard because it's assumed that it's the man's fault."

"In Family Court feel like the man is guilty until proved innocent."

Despite not having much contact with their children, the fathers in the groups generally expressed a desire to have a relationship with their children and thought that fathers were important for children. Some wanted assistance to trace, access and build a relationship with their children.

"Families are about having a father too."

"Not enough help for fathers to be fathers."

"Both parents should be involved in kids lives but that's hard when they won't let you or you don't know where they are."

3. Child Support

Related to the issue of having access to their children was the issue of the payment of child support. All the men who participated in the focus groups and who had children under the age of 18 years stated that they were paying child support out of their income, predominantly benefit income.

Most of the men who paid child support agreed that they had a financial responsibility to their children. Those who objected to child support did so not because they did not want to financially support their children, but because they felt that the mother had broken up the relationship. The men felt it unjust that they had to pay for a situation that they did not want to occur.

"Wife and kids disappeared and sent me crashing, onto the streets, but I still have to pay."

"[Child support] is like a fine when I didn't do anything wrong."

"Kids gave me a reason for living – settled down and got a job, got out of gangs, but wife left me and now I have to pay child support."

Although they recognised the need to pay child support, all those who paid it expressed some concerns or dissatisfaction about it. The issues raised related to:

- The way in which child support is calculated.
- The fact that the money does not go to the children if the mother is on a benefit.
- The low income they are left with after paying child support.
- Child support as a disincentive to getting a job or more pay.

The way in which child support is calculated

The men in the focus groups who were paying child support expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which child support is calculated. They felt that having their payments assessed against their gross income was unfair, as this did not take account of how much they needed to live on, or their out-goings. They felt that it would be more equitable if it was calculated against net income or against a budget for their living costs, including costs associated with having children come and stay for access visits.

"Child maintenance is based on gross income –not what you actually get and what you need to live on – including what you need for when your kids are with you."

The men also found the fact that child support payments are calculated on last year's income unfair, as those that had work often had a fluctuating wages. They felt child support should be calculated on current income.

"Child support based on earnings last year – but wages are not stable, should be based on this months wages."

The money does not go to the children if the mother is on a benefit

While most of the men with children in the focus groups saw the need for child support they resented the fact that if the mother of their children was on a benefit, their money went straight to the government, and the children did not benefit directly from their payments. Men who were also on a benefit (which was the majority) also felt this "money-go-round" of taking money from one benefit to pay it to another was pointless. The men suggested that they would feel better about paying the money if at least some of it went directly to the children. Several men at different focus groups suggested some kind of savings account for the children, into which at least some of the child support payment went, and which the children could access when they turned 18.



"Rather see it go straight to the children not just to the government."

"Resent paying when mother on a benefit and its not going to the kids. Would rather at least some of it went into a bank account for the child that they get when they turn 18."

Some noted that because the money went to the government and did not increase the mother's income, the mother asked them for more money, on top of the child support payment.

"Because [ex] partner is on a benefit the child support is not making a difference to her so she is always saying I need to pay for things for the kids."

The low income men are left with after paying child support
Nearly all the men who paid child support commented that this made it difficult for them to 'make ends meet'. Most of the men were on benefits, or if in employment only part-time, were low-paid or had variable wages, and they felt they were left with an inadequate income after they had paid child support. This was often the result of multiple payments coming out of their benefit or wages, however (see section on debt), rather than just child support.

"One guy gets fines, child maintenance, WINZ⁶ debt taken out – gets \$1 a week after that [and board], he can't even buy shampoo."

"Pay three quarters of wages in child support. Find it hard to live."

The low income level was particularly felt by men who did have access to their children as they felt their low income made it difficult to afford the costs associated with access, such as food and accommodation.

"Child support can ruin you – leave you without enough money to keep a place for the kids."

Child support is a disincentive to getting a job or more pay
Men in the focus groups who were paying child support considered the fact that when you earn more you pay more was a disincentive to get a job or a better job. Men thought this disincentive effect was compounded by the fact that the money went to the government (if the mother was on a benefit), rather than to the children. The men also considered the automatic increase in child support payments made it difficult for them to get out of debt, save, or generally improve their circumstances.

"The more money I have the more money I pay so I don't want to make more money."

"If I work my child support goes up."

"Can't keep on top of it if they keep sucking money out of you."

4. Experience of dealing with Work and Income New Zealand

The experience of dealing with Work and Income generated considerable discussion in all of the focus groups. Three areas of concern were raised relating to Work and Income:

- Work and Income does not proactively inform the men of their entitlements.
- Difficulties dealing with Work and Income.
- Difficulties inherent in the benefit system.

Work and Income does not proactively inform men of their entitlements

Although a number of the men complained about the level of the benefit and thought it inadequate, the main complaint, repeated by nearly all the men in every focus group, was that Work and Income did not proactively tell them what benefits they were entitled to. Accessing a basic benefit was reasonably straight forward, but the men noted that they did not find it easy to get information about whether they were on the correct benefit. The men also found that Work and Income did not proactively tell them what other assistance, such as Special Benefit, Disability Allowance, and grants for things like food, clothing, dentistry, is available.



"WINZ don't tell you what you are entitled to – no information."

"Don't want to be seen to be a whinger or money grabber so I don't complain but if you don't ask they don't tell."

"Not in WINZ job description to tell you."

"It's their policy not to tell you."

"You are supposed to be a mind reader."

"I didn't know enough to know what to ask."

"They don't let you know what you can get."

"It's very confusing at WINZ, the pamphlets are very confusing."

"Dentistry, clothing – people don't know they can get it."

Men noted that they got their information about benefit entitlements not from Work and Income but from community social service agencies and other beneficiaries. Those men who had once or currently lived in some kind of institution (including prison), found it easier to find information in these institutions than when they were living independently or were on the streets.

"You get to know what you are entitled to through talking to other people."

*"City Mission or other organisations can tell you about benefits.
They can hurry it up for you."*

"When I was in prison a WINZ worker came in and told us about entitlements – had not know about them before that."

*"WINZ not helping with the extras – bond, rent, grant – Lodge
[Salvation Army Hostel] sorts it out."*

"At the Lodge WINZ visits once a week and the Lodge accountant sorts it out."

The men considered that having information about entitlements was essential, as if you did not know this, dealing with Work and Income was very difficult.

"If you know what you are entitled to it goes a lot smoother."

*"You need to know what you are entitled to, if you know its OK,
but if you don't its very slow."*

Difficulties dealing with Work and Income

Related to the issue of the men feeling Work and Income was not proactive in supplying information, was the fact that many of the men found dealing with Work and Income very difficult. They felt that Work and Income staff had a negative attitude towards them and did not make it easy for them to access their entitlements.

"It feels like a fight all the time to get anything."

*"WINZ attitude is stand-offish – not "what can we do for you", but
what you have to do for us."*

*"You get the feeling that they are reaching into their own pocket to pay
you the benefit."*

"Better we don't deal with them."

"... they just talk in catch phrases, they don't really know anything."

The men found that if they took an advocate from a community social service or beneficiaries organisation with them, that they were much more likely to be able to sort out problems and get access to their entitlements.

"Need an advocate to get anywhere with them."

"OK if you have an advocate but tougher on your own."

"If you ain't got a million dollars they don't want to know you, you are just shit to them. But if you have an advocate they listen. Bring the same papers with an advocate and they listen."

"If you go to an organisation that really knows about WINZ that really helps."

The men felt that Work and Income offered them a poor level of service. A particular complaint was the appointment system. Men complained about the length of time it took to get an appointment and the fact that even when you had an appointment staff were sometimes running late or not there when you arrived. Some of the men had also found that there were no emergency appointments available when they had an urgent matter to attend to. The men felt that some of the Work and Income staff lacked experience or skills to deal with people such as them.



"You have to have an appointment but they are always late anyway."

"They cancel appointments and don't tell you but if you don't go to an appointment you are in trouble."

"They don't keep the appointment time anyway."

"If you point out that they are meant to have emergency appointments they see you as a trouble maker."

"WINZ staff lack people skills."

"Can be very frustrating dealing with WINZ."

Difficulties inherent in the benefit system

In addition to difficulties dealing with Work and Income, the men expressed frustration about aspects of the benefit system itself. They felt the criteria around benefit entitlements were complex, often inflexible and did not take account of their circumstances.

"They don't tell you the consequences [for benefit] of getting work."

"Minute you come off a training course that they suggested you get a stand down."

"They assume that part-time work is exactly the same each week. Doesn't work if hours change weekly."

"Jury service is a problem because you can earn a little or nothing but WINZ want to cancel the benefit for a week."

"A lot of people who live on the streets don't have benefit at all because they live on the street – no address. WINZ stop benefit if no fixed abode – so people go back to crime."

"They put stumbling blocks like paperwork that cost money to get, but you don't have the money."

"The paper work is really confusing – especially if you don't have much education."

Stand-downs were of particular concern and many of the men had experienced considerable hardship when they had been stood down after completing a prison sentence, or finishing a period of employment.

"Bills don't wait, empty stomachs don't wait – so guys do crime, go to jail, come out and start all over again."

"You lose weight while you wait."

"Stand downs – how do you pay the bills meanwhile?"

"Can take 3 or 4 weeks to get on a benefit – they don't worry what you're living on in the mean time."

"Not human beings when they give you a stand-down."

As a result of difficulties dealing with Work and Income and inherent problems with the benefit system, some of the men reported that they got very frustrated and angry and consequently were banned from Work and Income, which exacerbated their difficulties regarding access to entitlements. Some of the men felt Work and Income was quick to call security or ban them, and suggested that this was because they were men on their own, and who looked rough.

"A lot of guys get trespassed from WINZ because frustrated and raise voices so get banned."

"If you get angry at WINZ they black list you. Its always the front desk. Guy's not trying to be offensive but just trying to get what he needs."

"The hole gets deeper and deeper the more you are black listed."

"If you raise your voice they call security."

A few men felt that Work and Income's service was acceptable, especially if you had a good caseworker.

"Depends on the caseworker. Get a good one get the works, get a bad one get peanuts."

"Lodge has a special person at WINZ that deals with our benefits. She is older and very experienced."

"If you are prepared and have all the info they are very helpful."

5. Access to Employment

Most of the men in the focus group indicated that they had been employed in the past but the majority were not currently in employment. Many stated that they would like employment, as being unemployed was boring, lonely and frustrating. Some of the men had actively tried to obtain employment but had not yet had success.

"Would like some work so not so bored."

"Need to feel needed."

"Send off 50 CVs – be lucky to get 5 of them to reply."

"Spent three weeks trying to get work and nothing."

"Lots of paper to fill out and no one ever gets back to you."

[Despite qualifications] "Couldn't even get a job pumping petrol."

Many of the men cited qualifications or the right qualifications for the modern workplace as a barrier to employment. Some men had gone on courses but this had not resulted in them locating suitable employment. Other men were concerned about the cost of obtaining qualifications.

"Have to have courses, they cost, and you have to pay it back."

"Have to have qualifications."

"Do a course at WINZ but it comes to nothing."

"Every course just tells me what I can't do or don't want to do or gives me the same qualifications as I've got."

"Need computer qualifications these days."

Although they did not state their ages, many of the men felt that they were discriminated against because they were 'older'. They felt employers did not want to employ older workers, either because they were too experienced and therefore cost too much, or because they did not want to invest in training an older unqualified worker.

"Either too old or not qualified."

"Hard to get a job if you are older – they want a younger person – they don't want to invest in an older person."

"Have to get past the age thing."

"All I want is a good job but I can't get one because of my age."

"They don't want to pay for experienced older workers."

Some of the men had spent time in prison and they found a prison record made it very difficult to obtain employment. Some of the men reported being in a 'double bind.' If they did not tell the employer about their prison record they could get a job, but would lose it once the employer found out. However if they were honest about their prison record, they did not get the job. Some of the men who had been in prison expressed extreme discouragement and did not believe they would ever be "given a break" and that it was less stressful not to look for work but just to stay on a benefit.

"If you are honest about your prison record they don't get back to you."

"Not a lot of people willing to take a chance with you."

*"If you come out of prison its impossible to get a permanent job
– only Labour Hire places and that's not enough money to live on."*

"Problem is its difficult to get rid of the bad stuff, so they don't take the risk."

*"Prison record makes it hard, even if it was a long time ago. Sometimes start
a job and they say you are doing OK, but when they find out about the
prison record they sack you."*

"No use looking, may as well stay on the dole."

Many of the men who had found employment had done so through daily labour hire firms. All the men in the focus groups who talked about these firms had negative experiences of them. The men felt these firms exploited them because they knew that they found it difficult to obtain work elsewhere. The men found the terms and conditions of employment poor. Often other men working with them were active drug and alcohol users or gamblers, and this did not assist those men in the focus groups who were trying to beat their addictions.



*"Labour only jobs – no sick leave
or holiday pay."*

*"Labour hire places – they rip you off but that's who will take you on
– but its slave labour."*

*"Labour hire places – exploit guys, low wage, plus other guys on drugs
and alcohol, not good for recovery."*

Some men had found employment in jobs subsidised through Work and Income. Some men employed in this way felt that their employers were 'ripping of the system,' as they had experienced being employed only as long as the subsidy lasted.

*"Employers exploit you [on subsidised work] because you are cheap labour,
but if you don't take the job WINZ cut your benefit."*

*"Companies exploit the employment subsidy – take you on while it lasts and
then sack you. But when you go back to WINZ they blame you for losing
the job."*

The balance between finding employment, and maintaining recovery from mental health conditions, and/or addictions was a difficult one for some of the men in the focus groups. Some of the men indicated that they wanted to work, but that the employment needed to be able to fit in with what they needed to do in terms of their recovery.

“Hard to get one day a week work – all I can handle.”

“Can’t work full time and make it to enough meetings [AA meetings].”

“Recovery has to come first so better off on benefit.”

Other barriers to finding employment cited by men in the focus groups included:

- Difficulties with Work and Income’s attitude to employment for men with prison or addictions in their background.
- Lack of resources needed to obtain employment, such as housing and clothing.
- The cost of transport on low wage or benefit/wage.
- General prejudice against men who look “rough.”

“WINZ don’t take your background into account. Its harder to get a job with that background but WINZ just say ‘you have to get a job.’”

“WINZ said because I’d been in prison I’d be better off on the Sickness Benefit.”

“WINZ tell you to check the boards for jobs, but they don’t put all the jobs on the board and they decide who is going to get interviewed for a job. WINZ don’t contact you when a job comes up, they wait for you to come in.”

“WINZ staff get a bonus if they get you into work so they push you into things that aren’t right.”

“You need a home to be employed but need a job to get a home.”

“Need decent clothes to go to interview.”

“They don’t like the way I dress.”

“Bus fare was \$35 a week – can’t afford to take the job.”

“Not much low skilled work around. Not much factory work.”

“How do you change these people’s attitudes to you, their ideas about who you are?”

Some men who lived in Salvation Army hostels had a more positive experience of looking for employment. Staff at the hostel assisted with the search process, including

making contact with possible employers and taking the men to, and supporting them during, interviews.

"Hostel supervisors help with employment. They have links with employers and take you to the interview and explain your situation to the boss."

6. The impact of low income and debt

Most of the men in the focus groups had a benefit as their main source of income. A few were in employment, but it was generally part-time, casual and low-wage. Nearly all the men talked about finding it difficult to 'make ends meet' on their income, and the men felt they had a very restricted lifestyle. This impacted on the men's daily lives in a variety of ways. At one extreme there were men who slept rough, or lived at the night shelter, and fed themselves from foodbanks, feeding programmes and sometimes rubbish bins. At the other end, men living in Salvation Army hostels had accommodation and food taken care of, but reported that they had very little left after their board, and debts/fines, were taken out of their benefit. These men found it difficult to afford basic necessities, such as toiletries. In the middle of this spectrum were men living in other accommodation (most commonly Council flats). These men also stated that they had little left after paying rent and power. Some of them said that they struggled to eat well, clothe themselves or afford transport.

For many of the men, smoking was one of their few 'pleasures' and while the cost of this was a problem, some of the men felt smoking was better than their other addictions and they did not want to have to give it up because of cost. One man however had given up smoking and was very pleased with how much money this saved.



"\$39 in the hand to live on each week. Haven't had more than \$50 a week to live on for years."

"Lucky to get a packet of cigarettes at the end of the week."

"[After debts] \$30 a week left and have to manage a car and medical costs."

"Debt comes off, power, rent, phone – left with \$5 per week to live on so live off foodbanks."

"Hard to afford toiletries like shaving stuff, can't catch a bus to anywhere."

"Want an extra \$10 a week – need it for smokes."

"Getting different clothes difficult to afford."

"Stopped buying tobacco and saved \$80 a month that way."

Most of the men in the focus groups were paying off debt, fines, reparations and child support, or (in many cases) a combination, and they saw this as one of the reasons they could not make ends meet. For all but a couple of the men, the debt they were paying was to Work and Income for repayable grants or overpayment of benefit. Many of the men thought the benefit system set them up to be in debt because nearly all extra assistance was by way of a repayable grant.

"Each time you sign up for the benefit you get debt because of food grants etc."

"Hundred's of dollars in debt to WINZ – for things like washing machine or fridge."

"Debt is not loans to banks but to WINZ."

"WINZ fines and debt – doesn't leave enough to live on at the end of the week."

"Always paying WINZ back, like you need a bed but you have to pay it back and you don't have enough to live on."

Some of the men also felt that the system was unfair, because Work and Income (or in the case of Child Support, IRD), might make the mistake of either over paying or under charging, but the men ended up with the debt and the problem of repaying it. At times Work and Income mistakes put the men in debt to the bank, because if a benefit was late being paid, or a wrong payment was reversed, but the men had already spent the money, the bank charged a penalty fee.

"They make the mistake but you get into debt."

"Bank dishonour fee of \$25 because WINZ made a mistake and then another dishonour fee because of a negative balance so when the benefit goes in I'm already \$50 behind. The Bank lady said I could have phoned but I don't have a phone."

The combination of a low income, Work and Income debt, fines, reparations, and child support, plus for a few men, private sector debt, left many of the men feeling that they would never be able to get out of debt.

"Get fines etc cut down but then they get raised again. Never ending battle."

"Just pay off one and have to start paying off another."

"Realistically not going to pay off debt – it just builds and builds."

"Makes you tear your hair out."

"Always playing catch up."

The level of debt the men had, combined with what they perceived to be the difficulties or injustices of the benefit system, also deterred them from seeking employment or better/more employment. Some of the men had experienced being no better off when they took on work due to Work and Income debt repayments, fines, and child support all being automatically increased when their income went up.



"When working WINZ expected me to double my repayments so end up worse off than when on benefit."

"After the first \$100 really end up earning 9 cents in the dollar after that."

"If I take on work I have to start paying my student loan off as well [as other debts]."

Some of the men were aware that they could apply to Work and Income or the Court to have the level of their repayments reduced and some of the men had done so, but many found this system very difficult to work their way through unaided. One man had sought protection through bankruptcy but found that this did not stop him having to repay some of his debts.

"Still paying court reparations and WINZ debt despite being bankrupt."

"Paperwork to get the amount you are paying back in fines or repayments cut is too complex."

7. Access to Health Care

Most of the men in the focus groups commented that they found the cost of going to the doctor and of prescriptions prohibitive, despite most (and probably all) being on a Community Services Card.

"Dollars have to pay to the Doctor too much out of what I have left."

"Doctor is still \$40 on Community Services Card and then have to pay for prescription."

"Can't afford \$38 a pop plus prescription."

"Prescriptions are as dear as going to the Doctor."

"Prescriptions really difficult to afford."

"Too bloody expensive."



As a result of their experience or perception of medical treatment as too expensive, many of the men reported that they did not go to the doctor unless they really had to. Some did not go at all, if they got really sick they went to accident and emergency at the hospital. Some men noted that as addicts (either currently or in the past) they 'self medicated' with drugs or alcohol when they were sick. Many of the men were on a Sickness Benefit, and had to present to a doctor every three months to have their form renewed. Some men felt this provided them with a good regular health check, but others said that it was just routine and that the doctor did not really check them out.

"Don't go unless have the money."

"You don't go to the Doctor basically."

"Only go when dragged there..."

"Try to avoid it."

"Either eat or go to the Doctor."

"Too expensive so go to hospital instead."

"When I was an addict I didn't worry about going to the Doctor – I'd self medicate with drugs and booze. I'd rather spend my money on drugs and booze than Doctor."

"Can't afford to go to the Doctor except for 3 monthly signing of SB form – that is not a check up its just 'tick tick scrawl.'"

Men in the focus groups noted that they were likely to get sick because their low income meant they did not eat well and prevented them being pro-active about their health. The men also recognised that aspects of their lifestyle or history of addiction negatively impacted on their health.

"Hard to afford a good diet."

"We have more chance of getting sick because we can't afford to eat well."

"Alcoholics more likely to get sick because of what it does to your body."

"Get food poisoning because eat out of rubbish bins."

"Never have things like a flu shot."

Some of the men were aware that additional assistance with health costs is available through Work and Income, however some did not know this or had found it difficult to access. Some men who did receive additional assistance found it inadequate to meet the actual cost of the required health care.

"Dentist – is available through WINZ but lots of guys don't know about this."

"Dentist had signed a form saying I needed the treatment and the person at WINZ questioned whether I needed it. Why don't they accept their word?"

"Glasses are really expensive. WINZ gives a loan, by the time you've paid that off you need another pair of glasses."

"Disability Allowance is only \$3 per week, medical expenses are \$15 per week, so Disability Allowance doesn't cover them."

A small number of men felt they had good access to health care. In most cases this was because the hostel where they were living had an arrangement with a local doctor for a low cost on-site clinic. One man felt that the cost of health care was much easier to meet when on a benefit than when working, and another was grateful that the benefit system allowed him to pursue full-time addiction treatment.

"At Lodge it is good as Doctor comes every week. Outside of Lodge try and avoid it."

"Easier to go when on benefit than when working [in terms of cost]."

"Glad the government acknowledges that addiction is an illness and lets me be on sickness benefit while getting treatment."

Many of the men in the focus groups were in recovery from, or in treatment for an addiction. Most of the men in the focus groups with experience of drug and alcohol problems/treatment and many of them had found it easier to access treatment services than other kinds of health service. Those men who had used an addiction service were generally satisfied with the service they received.

"If you need addiction services you can get it easier than many other services."

"Easy to get into drug and alcohol treatment."

"Easy to get into social detox, medical detox has waiting list."

"Bridge is OK. Getting to meetings can be hard because of the cost of transport."

Concerns about treatment services that the men discussed were mainly around the decline in the number of residential services. Some of the men felt that they or other men they knew really needed a residential service because they did not have safe (in terms of drugs and alcohol) accommodation. Some concern was also expressed about a lack of services for young men, with many treatment providers only taking people over the age of 18. Some men noted that they were addicted and in need of treatment long before they were 18 years old. Some men also had mental health conditions as well as addictions, and had found it hard to find a treatment centre that coped with both.

"Government closed residential rehab places and people are on the streets because of no residential places."

"Need residential service."

"No places for young people."

"If you have seizures, depression or tried suicide some services won't take you so you lie to the provider to get in."

8. Access to housing

Most of the men in the focus groups were currently housed. This housing included; residential drug and alcohol programmes, men's hostels, Council housing, Housing New Zealand housing, and private sector rental housing. A few of the men were sleeping rough and/or making use of night shelters.

When the men discussed their past and current housing, many stated that they had found it difficult to access housing. Some of the men felt that this was partly due to the fact that they were a man on their own. They thought that families with kids got higher priority from Council and Housing New Zealand and/or that there was simply not much housing around for a single man.

"Families get house first, but I need a house to get custody of my son."

"Families get priority."

"Families have more kick."

"Housing is easier for couples or families to find."

"Council lady said I was low priority because I didn't have kids."

"Trying to get a flat difficult, not around for single guy, especially if you're young."



The men also commented on the difficulty of finding affordable housing, especially if they wanted to get a place suitable for their children to come and stay for access visits. The men noted that a suitable house in a good area was too expensive. They found the cost of setting up and maintaining a flat or house on their own extremely difficult. A few of the men commented that they had resorted to illegal activity to get the money required to set up a house suitable for their children to come to.

"Single person can't rent a house in Auckland."

"To go to a boarding house is easy but to get into a flat is hard."

"If rent is cheap it is a bad area. A decent area means a lot of rent."

"Rent so expensive, and to get bond and rent in advance, hard to survive in your own flat."

"Trying to set up a place is expensive."

"Accommodation Supplement isn't enough if you are a single person, especially if you need a house for a child to visit."

"\$247 benefit plus Accommodation Supplement, but rent of flat is \$200, doesn't leave much."

"If you have kids you need at least 2 bedrooms if they are to come and stay."

"Need a two bed-roomed house to have kids but you can't afford it."

"I had to sell drugs to get the money together to set up a house so the kids could stay."

The availability of Council housing varied across the country, with men in the Christchurch, and Invercargill focus groups more likely to say that this housing was available and/or to be in this type of housing. In Wellington, Downtown Community Ministry has a specific project to address homelessness, and many men in the focus group arranged by Downtown Community Ministry were housed in Council flats. Even where Council housing was available, many men felt that it was not easy to access. Men commented on long waiting lists.

"Hard to get. Long waiting list."

"Only got a Council flat because was in the office when someone dropped off the keys to an empty flat."

"Council housing is hard to get into."

"Waiting list is long."

"On the streets for 3 months last winter – HNZ didn't have anywhere for me, so I was 'using' to keep warm."

Many of the men also stated that they needed the help of a social service organisation to access Council and Housing New Zealand housing.

"Hard to find information about places to stay unless you are at another organisation."

"Council and Housing NZ housing is available – but you need help to get into it."

"Council housing is around but need help to push this along."

"Have to jump through a lot of hoops, make sure get the right points to get it."

Some men felt that the Council did not want to house them because they were viewed as difficult (which some of the men admitted was sometimes true) and because other tenants complained about their behaviour.

"Council doesn't want alcoholics and drug addicts because we don't live well with others most of us."

"No tolerance from neighbours."

"Neighbours always complain about noise, even just talking too loud."

Some men who were in treatment for addiction (including gambling addiction) or in recovery from addiction had specific requirements of their housing. It was important for them that they live in an environment that was safe, in terms of drugs, alcohol and gambling, and also that they felt good about, to aid their mental health. However some of these men found it difficult to find such housing.

"In treatment and they helped me to go to HNZ, but the place they showed me grotty – rotten carpet, depressing place, not good for an addict. Now in HNZ place that is OK, and pay \$51 week rent."

"Council house is OK, but live next to a gambler and alcoholic and trying to stay in recovery."

Moving from rough sleeping or hostel accommodation to their own flat was not always a positive experience. Some men reported that they found being in their own place very lonely and socially isolating. A few men had moved back into a hostel because of loneliness and boredom. Some men also found that with neighbours changing regularly it was difficult to make friends or even get to know them.

"Got a flat but got bored and lonely."

"Lonely – no one saw me for a month on end, the phone never rang."

"Council housing, neighbours change regularly so hard to get to know them."

9. Reintegration on release from prison

Some of the men in the focus groups had been in prison, sometimes multiple times. They felt there was very little assistance to help them reintegrate into society on release from prison, and some felt that this resulted in them re-offending. The main concern expressed by the men who had been in prison was the fact that they were stood down by Work and Income for two weeks after release, and that the \$350 'Steps to Freedom' grant was not enough to provide safe accommodation and food for two weeks. As a result some of the men went back to offending immediately upon release.



" No support coming out of jail, the \$350 is not enough to get accommodation and food for two weeks."

" WINZ has weeks stand-down and then a week back pay so effectively two weeks stand-down."

" You have no money so re-offend."

" End up resorting to crime because of money problems."

" And the government wonders why there is re-offending."

" What reintegration?"

Some of the men who had been in prison recognised that their own behaviour contributed to their difficulties but they felt the benefit system and how they were treated by Work and Income and other social agencies also played a part in their re-offending.

"Commit crime, go to jail, lose all your possessions because they don't let you sort that out before you go to jail, so you come out and have to start all over again."

"You get \$300, go get drunk, and then go and do a crime and are straight back inside."

"Some of the problems are self-inflicted but made worse by the agencies."

"If you were on remand you don't get the \$350, but still get stood down by WINZ, and can't survive so go back and do crime."

"You are in long enough to get off the benefit but not long enough to get 'Steps to Freedom' so go into some kind of black hole."

Men who had been in prison also found society's attitude to them was negative and this made it hard to start again and stay away from crime.

"When a person has been in prison and come out they are still punished by society. They want to re-start their lives but society won't let them do that."

Other issues

The major themes noted above were discussed in all of the focus groups. In addition to these issues men in some of the groups discussed the issues of social isolation, knowledge of services, and attitudes to men such as themselves.

Social Isolation

Men in some of the groups talked about their social connectedness. Some of the men who lived on the street, or spent time on the street, felt that people who lived on the street were a kind of community. They looked out for each other, told each other about where to get services and assistance, and looked out for new guys to town. Other men indicated that loneliness was a problem, and that it was hard to get to know people. As noted in the housing section above, some of the men living in the Salvation Army hostels stated that one of the reasons they lived there was the companionship, some had tried living in their own flat but found it too lonely. Some of the men indicated that they did not get on well with other people, or found being with other people difficult. Mental illness also resulted in isolation according to some of the men. All the men who talked about this issue felt that having some kind of social link was important, even if they preferred to be on their own most of the time.

"Isolation is sometimes a choice."

"It's [social links] important, even if you are on your own."

"Rejection and depression can isolate you."

"AA meetings is all the socialisation I get, sometimes all I want."

Knowledge of services

In some of the focus groups the men talked about how they got to know about services that could assist them, and whether men on their own were able to obtain this information. Men who lived on the streets or partly on the streets felt that they had good access to information, from their own networks and the community social service organisations, such as Downtown Community Ministry that they had access to. Other men felt that men did not talk about their problems or where to get help as much as women did and therefore it was harder for men to find out what services were available and to get assistance.

"A man is less likely to go and look for help than a woman – it's a pride thing."

"Women know about services more than men. Women talk about what's around but men don't."

"Guys don't tend to talk about what's wrong with them."

"Guys on the street tell each other about stuff that's available."

Attitudes to men like them

In some of the focus groups some men talked about what they perceived to be the negative attitudes people or agencies had to single men or men with addictions, or mental health issues, or who lived on the streets. Some of the men had experienced negative attitudes to them from other people and from staff in places like Work and Income and felt that these attitudes arose partly from the fact that they were a man on their own without partner and children. Some of the men felt themselves to be very much at the edge of society, and felt disregarded by society. They felt that women with children in similar situations to themselves got more assistance and a better attitude, but they also recognised that life was tough for many women as well. A few men felt that people did not have much sympathy for men with addictions as they perceived it to be a personal problem, whereas the men felt there were also societal and structural drivers of addiction.

"Males get treated like dogs. Feel we get nothing. But women are doing it hard too."

"We are just a number to them [government], not a person."

"We are on the fringe because something went wrong."

"On TV it is all around families – you never see anything about single people."

"People see us as a bit of rubbish."

"Alcohol and drug and gambling addictions – they see it as tough luck but everyone else is OK."

Suggested Solutions

The men made a number of suggestions regarding services, or changes in policy or practice of current services, that they felt would assist them with the issues/problems they had raised. Solutions offered clustered around the following issues:

- Benefits and dealing with Work and Income.
- Child support.
- Debt.
- Housing.
- Employment.

Benefits and dealing with Work and Income

The suggestions for change that would improve the men's circumstances were mainly around increasing the level of income, either through an increased benefit or being able to earn more while on the benefit, and Work and Income improving its ability to inform the men of their entitlements:

"Increase the benefit."

"Decent benefit."

"WINZ just give us decent money to live on."

"Increase the amount you can earn before the benefit is cut."

"Better abatement so that it's worth working the second day."

"WINZ have to tell you everything you are entitled to."

"WINZ have their own doctors you can go to that are free so you don't have to pay every three months."

"Information packs at WINZ that are more honest- tell you everything you can get."



Child Support

Men paying child support suggested changes to the way it was calculated to take into account expenditure, not just income. The men also really supported the idea of at least some of the child support money going into a bank account for the child that they could access when they turned 18 years.

"Assessment for child support should be on spending not just income."

"Some of the child support to go into an account for the kids to get when they turn 18."

Debt

When the men talked about solutions to their debt problems the most common request was for some way of limiting, freezing or wiping their debt so that they had the opportunity to start again or get back on their feet. Some men also wanted other ways to pay off debt, especially Work and Income debt, such as community work or temporary/part-time paid employment. The men also felt there should be incentives for paying off debt, such as starting with a brand new credit rating if you do.

"Debts wiped after 10 years – or get a new credit rating when you pay them off."

"Incentives to get straight and out of debt, like job with good pay and being able to keep more of the money, not have benefit cut so much."

"Not having fines and debt repayments go up automatically when you get a job or make more money."

"Debts be able to put on hold for a while to get a break, or limit the amount taken so can get ahead when earn more."

"Be able to do community work to pay off WINZ debt as well as fines."

"Because when you are young you make mistakes but when you mature you should be able to move on."

"Council give us work a couple of days a week to pay off fines."

Housing

The men felt there was a shortage of housing suitable for single men. They also felt that men with addiction or mental health issues, or a history of living rough, needed some support to stay in housing. Support such as having a support worker who could visit them, budgeting advice, or having appliances available for loan, (for example vacuum cleaners), to cut the cost of setting up in a flat. The men also felt that the grant available from Work and Income for getting established in a flat needed to increase. Some of the men who had children wanted to be able to have a two bed-roomed place so that the children could visit.

"Housing needs to have support with it – e.g. vacuum cleaners that you can borrow."

"More HNZ housing for single people."

"Give us two bedroomed place so kids can stay."

"Low cost housing with power managers so don't over spend."

"More accessible quality housing for single people –not being put in some divey place that no one else wants."

"Housing with a support worker."

"People who keep an eye on you when you are in a flat."

"Once a week or fortnight visit."

"Know that people haven't forgotten about you."

"Help with budgeting when you go into a flat."

"WINZ subsidy for setting up a house should be more."

Employment

The main suggestion made by the men around employment was the need for policies or systems that could get them a start in employment. Some of the men suggested subsidies or the ability for an employer to take them on trial, as a way for them to break into employment. Some men who had addiction or mental health problems and who found working in normal employment situations difficult, wanted some kind of supported employment. More training or assistance with the skills required to obtain a job, and a more individual approach from Work and Income to placing the men in work were also suggested.

"WINZ needs to look at you as an individual, take into account your background."

"Subsidised employment for released inmates."

"Be able to be taken on trial – be given a chance."

"Subsidised employment to get started."

"Some kind of employment with support."

"Training for how to do job interviews."

Other suggestions

The men in the focus groups also made suggestions about a range of other issues including:

- Health care – the need for cheaper doctors visits and flu shots.
- Services for men on the streets such as a 24-hour drop-in centre.
- A refuge/emergency house for men with children.
- The need to get at the source of problems by discouraging gambling and drinking.

"Flu shots free for people on low incomes."

"Make it cheaper to go to the Doctor."

"Need a fence at the top – help when people first come in asking for help, rather than throwing benefit at them."

"Need a men's refuge – for men who have kids."

"Need a 24 hour place with showers, washing machines and kitchen to cook basic food in."

"Alcohol advertising banned, gambling advertising banned."

DISCUSSION – IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR SERVICES AND POLICY

The circumstances and issues of the men on their own identified in this study point to three major drivers of social need and three particular service or policy areas that are problematic. These are discussed below, along with suggestions regarding what needs to change, or what further work is required, to improve the circumstances of men such as those represented by this report.

Three drivers of social need amongst men on their own

The findings suggest that there are three major drivers of social need amongst the men on their own represented in this study:

1. Mental health and/or addiction – often precipitated or made worse by a relationship break-up.
2. Low income – precipitated or compounded by Work and Income debt and unemployment.
3. Difficulties re-establishing after criminal convictions/imprisonment.

These three drivers are strongly inter-related.

1. Mental health and/or addiction

Mental health and/or addiction issues were common amongst the men involved in this study. Just over half the men in the survey self-reported a mental health condition, 38 percent self-reported an addiction and 61% indicated that they had or were attending an addiction treatment service. Men in the focus groups also talked about addiction or mental health issues (although usually in the context of discussing other issues). The men noted that their problems had arisen after they had “crashed”, or commenting on depression, or stress, or shutting themselves away from other people.

Mental health, addiction and a relationship breakup are often linked

For many of the men in the focus groups, there appeared to be a link between their mental health condition, and/or addiction, and the break-up of a relationship. For some men, the break-up of a relationship seemed to precipitate depression and/or drug and alcohol abuse, for others it appears that they were already suffering from a mental health condition and/or addiction and that this contributed to the relationship break-up.

Mental health and addiction problems affect all aspects of life

The survey and focus group findings suggest that for the majority of men in this study, a mental health condition, and/or an addiction has been, and continues to be, a significant factor behind their relatively poor socio-economic circumstances. Mental health conditions and/or addiction, even if in recovery, make most other aspects of life, such as relationships, social connectedness, employment, managing income, obtaining and sustaining housing, more difficult for these men.

Lack of early access to mental health and addiction services

It appears from what the men report that they do not or are unable to access mental health services at an early stage. Many of the men did not access assistance through a GP or a mental health service until they were in crisis and/or their total circumstances had significantly deteriorated. In the area of addiction, there appears to be a shortage of addiction treatment options for youth, resulting in men having to wait until they have a serious or long history of addiction before they can access treatment.

All services need to take account of the impact of mental health and addiction

These findings indicate that in developing services for men on their own who have socio-economic needs, the impact of mental health conditions and addiction needs to be understood and taken into account. Service providers who deal with men such as those represented in this study, need to have knowledge of the impact of mental health and addiction and adapt services, programmes and policies accordingly if they want men in these circumstances to be able to access services and have successful outcomes.

These findings also suggest that further work is required to improve the level of knowledge amongst men, about mental health issues such as depression, and when and how to access help.

2. Low income and Work and Income Debt

All the men in this research were on a low income, predominately benefit income, with a small number of men engaged in low wage, casual or part-time employment. The men self-reported a restricted lifestyle, with inadequate income for basics such as food, health-care, clothing, and transport.

Debt to Work and Income a driver of low income

Debt to government agencies appears to be a significant driver of inadequate income. The men start with a low income, but its adequacy is further reduced by fines, reparations, child support and Work and Income debt. Work and Income debt appears to be a particular problem, with 41% of the men surveyed and the majority of men in the focus groups stating that they were paying back Work and Income debt.

It is important to note that the men's low income results in debt, rather than the other way around. The men were not on a low income because they had borrowed excessively from finance companies or banks and therefore got into debt, but were in debt because they were on a benefit. The fact that most of the additional assistance that is available through the benefit system is by way of a repayable grant, effectively forces many of the men into debt. Their low income means it is difficult to save for items such as glasses, or household items, but accessing a repayable grant simply puts them into greater debt and further reduces their income.

Government 'money go round' counter-productive

The combination of debts accumulated by the men (including Child Support payments) results in a sort of "money- go-round" whereby one arm of government (such as IRD for child support, or the Courts for fines), takes money which must then be replaced through debt to another government agency, Work and Income.

The complex interaction between base benefits, add-ons, repayable grants, Court fines and child support means that often the system negates itself with additional assistance given by one agency being effectively taken away by another.

Employment does not improve income levels

Gaining employment does not significantly improve the men's financial circumstances. This is partly because the men have few qualifications and are usually only able to obtain and sustain low skilled, low-wage, part-time or casual employment. This employment does not pay them much above the benefit, and partly because when they earn more, debt repayments, and child support increase. This is hugely de-motivating for the men, as they feel there is little point trying to get back into employment and that they are just going backwards financially. As single men they do not benefit from the Working for Families package if they move into employment.

Low income is a barrier to employment

The men's low income in and of itself is a barrier to employment, even if employment is available, suitable, and would improve their circumstances. The men commented on difficulties purchasing suitable clothing to attend interviews and/or start employment, the cost of printing CVs, bus fares to interviews, even the cost of purchasing a newspaper to look for jobs is significant for some of the men. Combined with issues arising from mental health or addictions, their low income makes it difficult for the men represented in this study to move into sustainable employment.

Employment not possible for some

For some of the men their mental health or addiction and/or other health problems mean they are unlikely to ever be able to move into employment, and they face a lifetime on inadequate benefit income and spiralling Work and Income debt.

Changes required to improve the incomes of men on their own

These findings suggest that for the circumstances of this group of men to improve the following issues relating to the benefit system need to be addressed:

- The adequacy of the basic benefits.
- The system of repayable grants for basic needs.

- An urgent review of the efficacy, and the transfer costs, of the “money-go-round” system which sees men such as these gain income from one government agency and pay it to another.
- Consideration of a system of limiting debt, or freezing debt, to encourage and enable these men to get ahead when they gain employment or a pay rise.
- Examination of how the benefit system for single working age people can be improved to ensure that there is an incentive and encouragement for men to obtain and sustain employment where their health and other circumstances make this possible, while retaining adequacy of benefits for those unable to work.

3. Difficulties re-establishing after a criminal conviction or period of imprisonment ⁷

Criminal offending and its long-term consequences is the third significant driver of the low socio-economic status of the men in this study. A majority (63%) of the men surveyed said they had been convicted of a criminal offence and of these 28 percent had been in prison. Half of the men who had been to prison had been there more than once, although sentence lengths were usually less than a year. This contact with the criminal justice system, and in particular a prison record, makes it very difficult for the affected men to reintegrate into society, and in particular, gain employment.

Lack of real support for reintegration after a prison sentence

The men considered that the lack of real support for their reintegration pushed them back into crime. The \$350 “Steps to Freedom” payment provided upon release from prison is not sufficient to provide accommodation, food and other essentials during the two-week stand-down from benefit receipt. Men reported having to return to live in unsafe accommodation (in terms of drugs, alcohol and crime), or returning to criminal offending in order to survive.

Discrimination against men with a criminal record

Discrimination against men with a prison record is also a significant barrier for the men in this study. Most of the men in this study did not receive long prison sentences, but the effect of even a short sentence was discrimination and difficulty reintegrating. The men reported that employers are very reluctant to take on anyone with a criminal conviction, let alone a prison record, with some companies having active policies that do not allow a person with a criminal conviction to be employed, no matter their circumstances or willingness to reform.

Changes required to reintegration support

The short nature of the terms of imprisonment for most of the men meant that they were unlikely to receive any rehabilitation while in prison, and therefore emerged with

7. For a detailed discussion of reintegration issues from a Salvation Army perspective see: Smith L and Robinson B, Beyond the Holding Tank; Pathways to rehabilitative and restorative prison policy, The Salvation Army, February 2006.



the causes of their offending, (self-reported as addictions, or mental health issues) un-addressed. A predictable cycle of unemployment, marginalisation and re-offending resulted.

Improvements in the following areas of policy and practice are required to assist men such as those represented in this study to reintegrate after release and stay away from criminal offending:

- Treatment, particularly for addiction and mental health conditions.
- Work experience and vocational training while in prison.
- Post-release support.
- Assisting released inmates into employment.

Three particular service/policy problem areas for men on their own

In addition to the three major drivers of low socio-economic status amongst the men in this study, this research also identified three areas where current policy and/or services appear not to be meeting their needs:

1. Work and Income practice.
2. Housing availability.
3. Employment assistance.

1. Work and Income Practice

Nearly all the men in this study cited Work and Income's systems and processes as a particular problem. This is not surprising because as the majority of men are on a benefit, their interaction with Work and Income and the benefit system is critical to their well being. According to the men, Work and Income often does not meet their needs for information, income, or assistance with employment. The men found the benefit system complex and difficult, and Work and Income unhelpful in working their way through it. They often needed advocates or third parties to obtain the assistance they required. If they could not access or did not ask for this assistance, they missed out.

Negative attitudes to men on their own

A major difficulty appears to be the inability of some Work and Income staff to deal appropriately with some of the men represented in this study. The men perceive some staff to have a negative attitude to them, and feel that they are quick to call security or have them banned for expressing what the men consider to be reasonable frustration at delays, mistakes, inaction or other barriers to obtaining the help they require. This impacts negatively on the men, who do not receive the benefits they are entitled to and need to live. It also places costs on community organisations, who need to spend time advocating for and sorting out the men's benefits.

While Work and Income staff are obviously entitled to feel safe, the men interviewed for this study felt they were quick to be judged as trouble makers, and that with a little more patience, some signs of respect, and some understanding of how desperate and frustrated they can feel, many situations considered conflictual could be defused.

Where the relationship with Work and Income is positive, it appears that this is due largely to a particular case manager who has the skills to deal with the men in a patient and appropriate manner or who is experienced in dealing with men in their particular situation.

Changes required to the case management of men on their own

These findings suggest that for this group of men, the case management system is not working. Work and Income needs to explore ways in which its system can be made more user friendly to this group of clients. In particular Work and Income needs to explore:

- Staff training, particularly in the needs of men with addiction and/or mental health conditions.
- The allocation of trained, experienced staff to deal with particular groups of clients.
- A review of how safety and security are dealt with.
- A review of the appointment system, the availability of emergency appointments and access to Work and Income for clients without phones.

2. Housing

Obtaining suitable, affordable housing was problematic for most of the men involved in this study. Getting into a boarding house or lodge was relatively straightforward for many, but getting established in their own flat or house was difficult, both in terms of affordability and locating a house that is suitable for their personal circumstances. The men experienced a shortage of low cost accommodation for single people, and the housing that was available was often of low quality. If they could locate housing, the men often experienced difficulty supplying the required furnishings, and found the Work and Income grant available to be inadequate. Most of the men required assistance from community organisations to obtain housing.

Support and community required as well as housing

Some of the men with addiction or mental health conditions, or who had spent considerable time sleeping rough, also needed support in order to stay housed. This support was required to help them with budgeting, cleaning, loneliness, getting on with neighbours, dealing with any problems. Supplying housing on its own is therefore inadequate for some men. They require a system of ongoing support tailored to their individual needs.

The men's experience of housing also suggests that it is not enough to provide a physical house. The development of communities that are accepting of men on their own, and that are positive for the men, is also important if some men on their own are to be sustainably housed.

Housing critical to single men as well as families

Appropriate housing is critical to these men's well being. Without appropriate housing it is difficult for the men to find and sustain employment, stay in recovery from addiction, maintain good physical and mental health, and if fathers, maintain access to their children. Although the men perceive themselves to come "bottom of the list" in terms of public housing, their need for housing, in terms of its impact on their lives, is as great as that of other types of households.

Changes required to improve housing for men on their own

This research also suggests that a wide range of housing is required. Not all the men in this study wanted their own flat or house, but preferred a boarding type situation. Other men wanted their own flat or house, and for some it was important to have two bedrooms so children could stay. Although a small population group in terms of public housing, men on their own have diverse housing needs. One size does not fit all, and a variety of housing types is required to meet the needs of men on their own. Planning by Housing New Zealand and City Councils must include the needs of men on their own. Including not just the physical provision of housing, but the development of communities that are positive and accepting places for men on their own.

3. Employment assistance

Nearly all (91%) of the men in the survey were unemployed. In the focus groups however many of the men expressed a desire to be in paid work and some had been or were actively looking for employment. They faced a number of barriers in their search for paid employment including; discrimination, the impact of mental health issues and addiction, low levels of education/qualifications, and a lack of individual attention by Work and Income in the job search.

Discrimination

Discrimination was a major barrier for some of the men. The men felt themselves to be discriminated against because of their criminal convictions and prison records, and their age. They found it very difficult to overcome this discrimination and in some cases had given up on employment. These men really wanted some system of subsidised employment or to be given a trial, so that they could "get a foot in the door."

The impact of a mental health condition

Mental health issues and/or addiction also negatively impacted on the ability of some of the men to find and sustain employment. Those with active addictions were obviously unlikely to obtain employment, but even those in recovery found it difficult. Often they could not cope with the stress of full time work, but had difficulty locating suitable part-time work, or if they did, the pay they received, combined with the benefit abatement system, made it uneconomic to work. Coping with stress was a commonly mentioned issue, and many of the men felt that if they did not make much extra income from working, it was not worth the stress, and the risk of slipping out of recovery.

Some men in the focus groups indicated that they had fluctuating mental health conditions/addiction, and that what they needed was some kind of supported employment that they could work at when they were well.

Lack of qualifications

Over half the men in the survey had no formal qualifications, and very few men had any kind of tertiary level (including trades) qualification. This severely limited the men's employment options. The men were aware of the need for qualifications, but were concerned about the costs, and further debt associated with obtaining them. Some men had been sent on courses by Work and Income, but this had not resulted in employment.



Employment assistance needs to be individualised

Men in this study did not find Work and Income's approach to employment or training particularly helpful. They felt that Work and Income did not look carefully enough at their individual circumstances and that they were pushed into courses or jobs that were unsuitable or alternatively not put forward for some jobs because of assumptions about who they were and what they could do. In particular they felt there was a lack of understanding about the constraints of age, a criminal conviction, and a history of addiction.

Changes required to assist men into employment

These findings suggest that a more individualised approach to employment is required for men such as those represented in this study. Many of these men will not be easy to place into employment, but they still have the desire to work. This research also suggests that some men are missing out on the employment search assistance that is available, such as subsidised work programmes, and the services of agencies tasked with assisting people with disabilities or health problems. As noted above, there is a significant gap in the services available to assist released inmates. Work and Income needs to ensure that these men are appropriately linked with services and programmes designed to assist them. There is also more work to be done in terms of eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment.

The men's own solutions

As reported in the findings from the focus groups, the men made their own suggestions regarding policies or services that would assist them and improve their circumstances. Most of their suggestions clustered around the three drivers and three service problems noted above, and their suggestions have been incorporated in our analysis.

It is interesting to note that some of the men's suggested services, such as a free flu shot are already available (at least to some⁸), but the men do not appear to be aware of these services or able to access them. Issues of access, or more specifically, difficulties in gaining access to services, are important for these men.

The men also made recommendations about a range of other issues, and we suggest that of these ideas the following also merit consideration:

- Encouragement of the payment of child support through the opening of an account for each dependent child, available at 18 years, into which a proportion of the child support is paid. This suggestion is in line with recent research on New Zealand's poor saving record and how to reverse this.⁹
- Increased resources for services for men who are living on the street or in night shelters, in particular more places that they can go during the day.
- Free flu shots for all beneficiaries.



The role of the community sector in working with men on their own

A feature of the experience of the men in this study is that where and when they had contact with a community organisation, such as The Salvation Army, Downtown Community Ministry, The Anglican City Mission or beneficiaries organisations, they were much more likely to be successful in obtaining the services or assistance they required, and to have sustained improved outcomes. It appears that the government sector, both local and central, is not always able to interact effectively with this group of men, and because of this, is not always meeting their needs. This suggests that in addition to looking at their own practice, government agencies need to consider whether it is appropriate to resource

community organisations who can successfully connect with men on their own. It may be that government agencies, no matter how well intentioned or trained, will never be the best agencies to meet the needs of the group of men represented in this study. Government agencies might consider a creative partnership with the community, with the focus on meeting the need of these men for assistance.

8. Free flu shots are available to people over 65 years and people with chronic health conditions. Some of the men in this study would qualify for free flu shots on the grounds of their health status.

9. See Skilling, (July 2004) "The Wealth of a Nation: the level and distribution of wealth in New Zealand," Discussion Paper 2004/1; Skilling, (October 2004) "It's Not Just About the Money: the benefits of asset ownership," Discussion Paper 2004/2; Skilling, (February 2005) "Home is Where the Money Is: the economic importance of savings," Discussion Paper 2005/1; Skilling, (April 2005) "Opportunity of a Lifetime: creating an ownership society in New Zealand," Discussion Paper 2005/2.

CONCLUSION

This study has given voice to a group of men who live on the margins of New Zealand society. Where they are able to access the services of a community social service provider, they are usually able to have basic needs met, but they live a restricted and often isolated life. The men in this research face multiple barriers to improving their circumstances. There appear to be few government services designed specifically to meet the needs of these men, and these men appear to have limited access to the government services that are available. Community based services are also limited. Services and policies focus predominately on the needs of families, and older adults, and working age single men appear to be largely ignored. Complex as some of the men in this study are, they are still citizens, and tax payers. Many of them are also fathers. They are in need of, and deserving of, focused policies and services to improve their circumstances and bring them out of the margins.

Recommendations

In light of the experiences, issues and ideas of the group of men on their own identified in this report, The Salvation Army recommends the following:

1. All service providers, government and non-government, who interact with men on their own, undertake an assessment of how well their services cope with and meet the needs of men with addiction or mental health conditions.
2. Further work is undertaken by the appropriate government and community sector agencies to educate men about mental health issues including when, how and where to access help.
3. That the Ministry of Social Development develop a programme of policy work to address the following issues related to the benefit system:
 - The adequacy of basic benefits, particularly for those not eligible for Working for Families assistance.
 - The impact of the system of repayable grants for basic needs on income and debt levels amongst beneficiary households.
 - A review of the efficacy, and the transfer costs involved in the relationship between Child Support, Court fines and reparations, Work and Income repayable grants, benefits and Work and Income debt repayment.
 - A review of the impact and efficacy of debt to Work and Income, with a particular focus on a system to limit or freeze debt to encourage and enable single beneficiaries to gain financially from employment.
 - An examination of how the benefit system for single working people can be improved to ensure incentives and encouragement to obtain and sustain employment while retaining benefit adequacy for those unable to do so.

4. That the Department of Corrections undertake a programme of work to examine and develop policy and services around the following issues:

- The availability of assessment and treatment for addiction and mental health conditions while offenders are in prison.
- The availability of work experience and vocational training while in prison.
- The availability and effectiveness of post-release support services.
- Assisting released inmates into employment.

5. That Work and Income examine the effectiveness of the case management system for the clients represented in this study, and in particular focus attention on:

- Staff training, particularly in the needs of men with addiction or mental health conditions.
- The allocation of trained, experienced staff to deal with particular groups of clients.
- A review of how safety and security are dealt with, especially the criteria used to ban a client from Work and Income premises.
- A review of the appointment system, the availability of emergency appointments and access to Work and Income for clients without phones.

6. That Housing New Zealand:

- Undertake a review of the availability of housing suitable for single men.
- In response to this review develop plans to improve the availability of housing for single men in areas where there is a shortage.
- Initiate community development projects to build acceptance of men on their own within local communities.

7. That in terms of employment for men on their own, Work and Income undertake the following:

- Ensure that employment assistance is tailored to the individual.
- Ensure that men with addiction or mental health conditions are referred to the services that are already available to assist people with these disabilities into employment.
- Work with the Department of Corrections to improve employment assistance to released inmates.

9. That all service delivery arms of Government develop pro-active partnerships with community organisations with a focus on more effective delivery of services to men on their own.

APPENDIX ONE

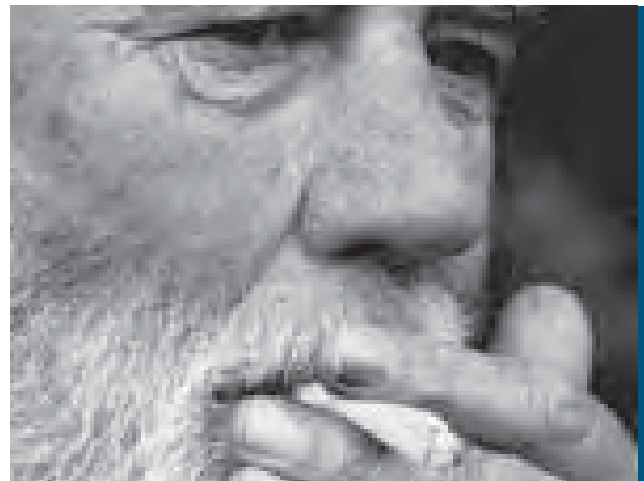
Appendix One: 2001 Census Information of Men Usually Living Alone

Age of Men Living on Their Own

Age	Auckland %	Palmerston North %	Wellington %	Christchurch %	Invercargill %	Total New Zealand %
15-20	1.1	1.8	0.8	1.2	2.1	1.6
21-29	9.9	10.6	10.1	9.6	10.8	9.8
30-39	21.3	19.0	22.6	20.2	17.6	18.9
40-49	19.4	19.0	20.9	19.5	19.0	18.9
50-59	16.7	16.9	17.2	16.3	17.0	16.7
60+	31.7	32.6	28.3	33.3	33.4	34.1

Ethnicity of Men Living on Their Own

Ethnicity	Auckland %	Palmerston North %	Wellington %	Christchurch %	Invercargill %	Total New Zealand %
European	79.5	84.5	81.6	88.9	84.5	83.5
Maori	6.4	6.9	7.5	4.9	10.2	8.6
Pacific Peoples	3.5	1.5	2.9	0.9	2.2	1.6
Asian	5.2	3.2	3.6	2.2	0.7	2.3
Other	5.4	3.8	4.4	3.2	2.4	4.0
60+	31.7	32.6	28.3	33.3	33.4	34.1



Annual Income of Men Living on Their Own

Income	Auckland %	Palmerston North %	Wellington %	Christchurch %	Invercargill %	Total New Zealand %
Loss	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6
Zero income	1.2	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.8
\$1-\$5,000	2.4	3.0	2.0	2.4	2.6	2.4
\$5,001-\$10,000	7.7	10.5	9.0	11.4	13.8	10.5
\$10,001-\$15,000	15.2	18.7	14.7	20.4	21.1	18.7
\$15,001-\$20,000	7.9	9.6	8.0	9.6	10.1	9.5
\$20,001-\$25,000	6.4	7.8	7.1	8.9	9.5	8.1
\$25,001-\$30,000	7.6	8.3	7.9	5.7	9.0	8.7
\$30,001-\$40,000	12.8	12.0	12.4	12.5	11.3	11.9
\$40,001-\$50,000	9.0	8.4	9.0	7.0	6.2	7.2
\$50,001-\$70,000	9.6	6.8	10.4	5.8	5.3	6.6
\$70,001-\$100,000	4.4	3.0	5.7	2.2	1.7	2.9
\$100,001 or more	4.2	1.7	4.4	1.7	1.2	2.5
Not stated	10.7	9.2	8.3	8.0	7.2	9.5

APPENDIX TWO

Appendix Two: Benefit Income

Information from Fact Sheets from the Ministry of Social Development www.msd.govt.nz

Unemployment Benefit

If you are...	Weekly payments (after tax)
Single under 20 at home	\$115.94
Single under 20 away from home	\$144.92
Single 20-24 years	\$144.92
Single 25 years or over	\$173.92
Couple each	\$144.92
Sole parent	\$249.10

Gender	Percentage receiving as of December 31st 2005 (%)
Male	64.4
Female	35.6

Invalids Benefit

If you are...	Weekly payments (after tax)
Single 16-17 old	\$175.91
Single 18 or over	\$217.38
Married or civil union couple each	\$181.16
Sole parent	\$285.57

Gender	Percentage receiving as of December 31st 2005 (%)
Male	53.2
Female	46.8

Sickness Benefit

If you are...	Weekly payments (after tax)
Single under 20 at home	\$115.94
Single under 20 away from home	\$144.92
Single 20-24 years	\$144.92
Single 25 years or over	\$173.92
Person who is married or in a civil union each	\$144.92
Sole parent	\$249.10

Gender	Percentage receiving as of December 31st 2005 (%)
Male	56.8
Female	43.2

Domestic Purposes Benefit

If you are...	Weekly payments (after tax)
Woman alone (single adult)	\$181.16
Sole parent	\$249.10
Caregivers	
Single 16-17 years	\$175.91
Single 18 years or over	\$217.38
Sole parent	\$285.57

Gender	Percentage receiving as of December 31st 2005 (%)
Male	9.7
Female	90.3

APPENDIX THREE

Appendix Three: Questionnaire

Single Men Living Alone Questionnaire

The Salvation Army is looking into the issue of men living alone. We want to know the circumstances and situation you are currently in and what your issues/problems might be. We need this information so we can think about what kinds of services would help men in your situation.

We will use the information from these questionnaires to help us write a report. This report will be used by The Salvation Army, other community organisations and Government to inform and plan services and programmes.

Everything you write on this form will remain confidential to The Salvation Army. The questions do not ask for your name, so no one will know who you are. If we quote any words or information in our report, it will be done in a way that will make sure no one knows who said what.

Once we have finished the report, all the questionnaires will be destroyed. No other organisation or person will be able to access the questionnaires.

If you have any questions please talk to a staff person. Thanks for your help.

1. Your age: Are you:

- Under 20 years
- 21 to 29 years
- 30 to 39 years
- 40 to 49 years
- 50 to 59 years
- 60 and over

2. Where are you currently living?

- A Salvation Army hostel
- A boarding house
- A rented Housing New Zealand house/flat
- A private landlord rental house/flat
- A City Council rental house/flat
- A rental house/flat from some other organisation
- A house/flat – with a mortgage
- A house/flat – without a mortgage
- Boarding
- Caravan or camping ground
- Sharing a house/flat rented or owned by relatives or friends
- Supported accommodation
- Night shelter
- No place to live right now

3. How long have you lived there/ how often do you stay there? _____

4. Where did you last live (that is, the place you lived before your current place)?

- A Salvation Army hostel
- A boarding house
- A rented Housing New Zealand house/flat
- A private landlord rental house/flat
- A City Council rental house/flat
- A rental house/flat from some other organisation
- A house/flat – with a mortgage
- A house/flat – without a mortgage
- Boarding
- Caravan or camping ground
- Sharing a house/flat rented or owned by relatives or friends
- Homeless – no place to live
- Supported accommodation
- Night shelter
- Prison

5. How many different places have you lived in during the past 2 years? _____

6. Are you?

- New Zealand European
- Maori
- Samoan
- Cook Island Maori
- Tongan
- Niuean
- Chinese
- Indian

Other _____

7. Are you?

- Single
- Married/ living with a partner
- Divorced
- Separated
- A widower (your spouse or partner has died)

8. If you have children, how many do you have? _____

9. If you have children what ages are they? – Tick all that apply

- Pre-school aged
- Primary school aged
- High school aged
- Adult

10. If you have children under the age of 18 years, do you have access to them?

YES NO

11. How often do you have contact (visits, phone calls) with your children?

- Once a week
- A few times a month
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Once a year
- Never

12. Where do you get your money (income) from? – Tick all that apply

- Wages/salaries
- WINZ/benefits
- ACC
- Self employed
- Other

13. Are you currently in paid employment?

- Yes – part time
- Yes – full time
- No – not in paid employment

14. If you are in paid employment what sort of work do you do?

15. What of the following comes out of your income? – Tick all that apply:

- Child support
- Court Fines
- Court required reparations payments
- Work and Income debt
- Other debt repayments (e.g. HPs)
- Reparation

16. What does your accommodation cost? _____

17. How much are you left with each week? _____

18. What age did you leave school? _____

19. What is your highest educational qualification?

- None
- NZ School Certificate in one or more subjects
- NZ Sixth Form Certificate in one or more subjects
- NZ Higher School Certificate or Higher Leaving Certificate or NZ University Bursary
- Trade qualification/Poly-Tech or Technical College qualification
- University qualification

Other certificates/courses/qualifications – Please describe:

20. How often do you normally see a Doctor in a year?

- Not normally ever
- Once or twice
- Between 3 and 6 times
- Once a month
- More than once a month

21. Are you currently suffering from any on-going physical or mental health condition?

- Physical health condition YES NO
- Mental health condition YES NO
- Addiction to alcohol or drugs YES NO

22. Have you ever attended an AOD service? YES NO

- Residential treatment
- Counselling
- 12 Steps

Other _____

23. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? YES NO

24. What penalties did you face? – Tick all that apply

- Fine
- Home detention
- Community service
- Prison
- Reparation
- Diversion/alternative sentencing (e.g. Marae-based)

25. If you have been in prison, how many times have you been in prison?

26. What is the longest sentence (length of time) you have been in prison?

Any other comments you would like to make?

Thanks for your help. Please give this back to a staff person.

APPENDIX FOUR

Appendix Four: Ethics Statement

Forgotten People Research Ethics Statement:

This focus group is being held as part of research that The Salvation Army Social Policy Unit is undertaking into the circumstances of men living on their own. We want to gain this information so we can think about what kind of services will help men in your situation.

The information will be used by The Salvation Army Social Policy Unit to write a report. This report will be used by The Salvation Army, other community organisations and Government to inform and plan services and programmes.

Everything you say in today's group discussion will remain confidential to The Salvation Army. If we quote words you have said in our report, it will be done in a way that means no one will know that you said it. No names are being recorded, so no one will be able to identify who participated or what you said.

Once we have finished our report, the records of this discussion group will be destroyed. No other organisation will have access to the records of this discussion group.

Copies of the report we write will be sent here so that you can have one if you would like to.

We ask you to sign this statement so that we can be sure everyone understands what the discussion group is about and how the information will be used.

If you have any questions please ask a staff person. Thank you.

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