



Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit

Working for the eradication of poverty in New Zealand

Te Ope Whakaora

STATE of our COMMUNITIES 2023

**Manukau
Thames
Nelson
Motueka**

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November 2023*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Our Communities 2023 (SOOC23) marks the sixth such report published by the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU) of The Salvation Army (TSA). The origins of the SOOC23 initiative trace back to community surveys initiated in the early 1900s, where church members conducted comprehensive surveys to identify both social and spiritual needs within their communities. Many of our current social services have their roots in these early surveys. Over 150 years later, our core mission remains unchanged: to care for people, transform lives and reform society through God, in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit's power. SOOC23 serves as a snapshot of this mission, offering a platform to document and share the narratives, obstacles, solutions and aspirations of local communities.

Manukau, at the heart of South Auckland, serves as a thriving retail and economic hub for the wider South Auckland region. South Auckland is also notable for having one of the country's fastest growing and most diverse communities. Thames, a historic gold mining town and the gateway to the Coromandel, boasts a vibrant community deeply rooted in its rich heritage. Meanwhile, Nelson and Motueka, both located at the top of the South Island, are renowned for their stunning natural beauty and picturesque landscapes. Despite the significant differences among these communities in terms of demographics, size, location and history, there is a common thread of commitment to address the social and economic challenges locals are facing. This report does not aim to compare the four communities, rather it is written as individual reports for each location.

SOOC23 conducted both in-person and online surveys, involving 396 participants in public surveys and 11 key informant interviews across these communities. The collected data was subsequently analysed to highlight key themes. There were four key themes that resonated across all four communities—cost of living, housing, crime and youth. Locals in Manukau and Nelson discussed the challenges around housing affordability, while Motueka and Thames highlighted not only affordability challenges but also availability. All these communities also discussed the increasing levels of homelessness and rough sleepers in their community. The housing challenges exacerbated the cost of living, with all communities facing difficulties in affording essentials like food, power and petrol. In Nelson, Thames and Motueka, low wages are more prevalent compared to Manukau, yet the increasing

costs of living, particularly in food and housing, are exceeding wage levels.

The wellbeing and future of young people are a top concern in all these communities. Manukau and Thames aim to divert youth from antisocial behaviours and crime through youth development programmes, education and employment, while Motueka and Nelson focus on providing education and job opportunities to encourage young people to stay and flourish.

Despite the challenges these communities shared, they also proposed viable solutions. Additional key solutions included enhancing support for law enforcement to improve safety in Manukau, focusing on addressing child poverty in Thames during the first 1000 days of a child's life, boosting the number of healthcare workers in Nelson to tackle healthcare challenges, and allocating resources to community-based mental health and addiction services in Motueka to meet the growing demand for these services.

In addition to attributes, challenges and solutions, we asked locals if their communities support their wellbeing—physical, mental and emotional, spiritual and social, as outlined in Te Whare Tapa Whā model.¹ The majority of respondents agreed that their communities supported their wellbeing, but housing emerged as a consistent issue affecting overall wellbeing. Mental and emotional wellbeing support faced challenges, particularly in terms of accessibility to mental health services. Social wellbeing, especially for those living alone or seniors, posed challenges, with community leaders stressing the need for better information on available support resources.

While these communities face diverse issues such as housing affordability, cost of living, safety concerns and education gaps, there is a fundamental spirit of collaboration and a shared vision for improvement. Ultimately these locals aim to create a safer, more inclusive and prosperous community, encouraging wellbeing and opportunity for all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to express our gratitude to all those who dedicated their time to participate in our surveys, whether by engaging with our staff or volunteers in person, or by completing the online survey. Our commitment remains steadfast in ensuring that the unique characteristics, challenges, solutions and hopes of local communities are consistently acknowledged and heard.

Furthermore, we extend our appreciation to our community key informants. Your invaluable perspectives on your community have enriched the voices of your communities.

- Valerie Teraitua—Papatuanuku Kokiri Marae
- Sio Laumatia—Blue Light
- Efeso Collins—Former Auckland Councillor, Green Party MP
- Pastor Chris Lee—Thames Baptist Church
- Rev Brendon Wilkinson—Thames Anglican Church
- Adrian Catran—Thames Community Board
- Rohan O’Neill—Deputy Mayor, Nelson City Council
- Chris Ward—Nelson Anglican Church
- Maluz Moreno—Women Support Motueka
- Nina Jefferies—Golden Bay Workcentre Trust Youth Service
- Joy Shorrocks—Te Āwhina Marae

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SALVATION ARMY CENTRES AND CORPS WHO PARTNERED WITH US IN THIS PROJECT:

- Manukau
- Thames
- Nelson Tasman Bays

METHODOLOGY

Every year, SPPU publishes the State of the Nation report, a comprehensive overview tracking our nation's social progress. The 16th edition, titled 'Costs... of Living—Nga Rourou Whakaiti', recognises the challenges people face due to rising inflation, making it difficult for them to provide for their families, find secure employment and access affordable housing. Now, SOOC23, a micro-level report, delves into the real-life experiences and social progress of a select group of local communities.

The core objectives of SOOC23 are:

- gathering and providing a platform for local communities to share their challenges, solutions and aspirations
- cultivating opportunities for The Salvation Army to engage more deeply with the broader communities we serve
- identifying unmet needs within these communities
- advocating nationally for the unique challenges faced by these local communities.

Our approach for SOOC23 was straightforward: we aimed to collect stories from local communities through quick and simple surveys, while keeping interviews concise and uncomplicated. For the purpose of this study, we defined local communities as individuals residing, working or utilising facilities and amenities in Manukau, Thames, Nelson and Motueka. Furthermore, SOOC23 highlights the primary themes expressed by survey participants and supplements them with public data to portray the challenges faced by these local communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question that frames SOOC23 is: **'What are the key challenges, solutions and aspirations held by local communities in New Zealand this election year?'** To answer this question, the SOOC23 survey was composed of five key questions:

Experiential: *What do you like about your local community? What are some of the challenges your community faces?*

Reality: *My community supports my wellbeing.*

*I can find support for my **physical wellbeing** in my community, eg, health, food, housing.*

*I can find support for my **mental and emotional wellbeing** in my community, eg, anxiety, happiness, stress.*

*I can find support for my **spiritual wellbeing** in my community, eg, faith, meditation.*

*I can find support for my **social wellbeing** in my community, eg, friends, family, community.*

Elections/ Solutions: *If you were elected prime minister, what issues in your community would you focus on in your first 100 days of power?*

Aspirations: *In five years' time, what changes would you like to see in your community?*

SELECTION OF COMMUNITIES

SOOC is based in locations where there are established Salvation Army corps (churches), Family Stores or social services. SOOC23 aimed to provide a platform for local communities to voice their challenges and aspirations. The communities for SOOC23 are Manukau,² Thames,³ Nelson⁴ and Motueka.⁵

DATA COLLECTION

26 June–1 August, 2023

FACE TO FACE

Surveys were carried out by TSA staff and volunteers.

Manukau: TSA Community Ministries

Thames: TSA Community Ministries

Nelson: Countdown

Motueka: Countdown

ONLINE SURVEYS

An online survey link (hosted on SurveyMonkey) was shared via the SPPU Facebook page, with four separate posts tailored to the four different locations. An advertising campaign was designed to promote these Facebook posts related to the survey, running from 26 June to 1 August, 2023. These advertisements were specifically directed to geographic areas of interest through Facebook’s location targeting feature. The surveys were also shared to wider networks and posted on community Facebook pages.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

These were conducted with individuals who work, live or support the targeted communities. These interviews took place either over the phone or via video conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. We identified key informants through local community connections or recommendations provided by Salvation Army staff members working in those areas. These interviews aimed to provide key informants with an extended platform to delve into critical issues in greater depth than what public face-to-face surveys allowed.

PUBLIC DATA

Public data for SOOC23 was taken from DOT Loves Data and other government public databases.

ANALYSIS

The surveys were thematically analysed using Excel. Community survey responses and insights gathered from key informant interviews were manually entered into SurveyMonkey. Subsequently, survey results were exported from SurveyMonkey into Microsoft Excel. Within Excel, colour-coding and thematic analysis techniques were employed. The resulting analysis revealed key themes for each question.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

There were a total of 396 surveys carried out with the public for SOOC23 across all four locations and 11 key informant interviews. While we strive to gather as many respondents as possible, our minimum target typically ranges from 80 to 100 surveys. While our Nelson Tasman Bays team, covering both Nelson and Motueka, couldn’t meet our usual target despite online efforts and our presence at Countdown, we advise readers that the numbers of participants are low and should be considered in the context of our findings.

Table 1: Survey participants

	Participants	Key informants
Manukau	182	3
Thames	111	3
Nelson	69	2
Motueka	34	3
Total	396	11

Figure 1: Age of survey participants

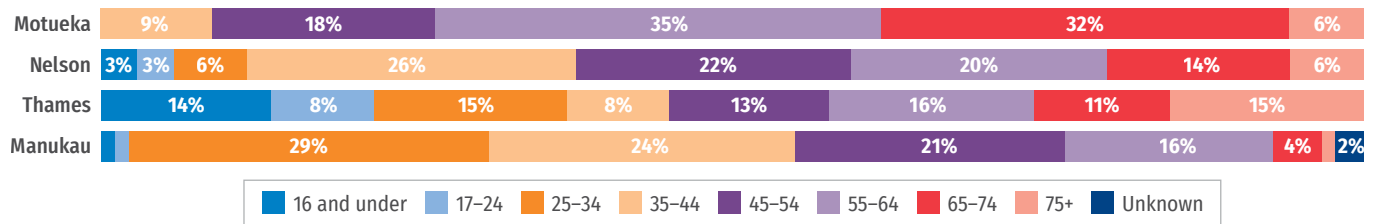


Figure 2: Ethnicity of survey participants

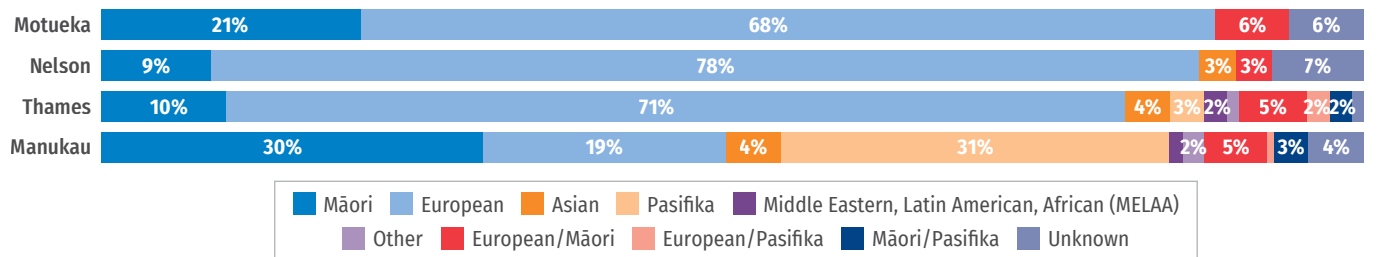
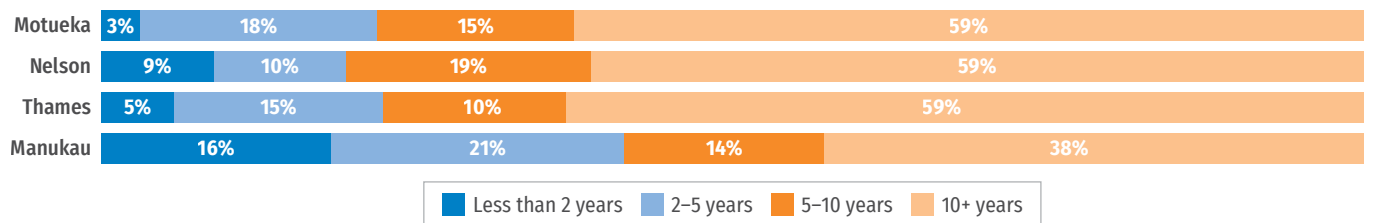


Figure 3: Length of stay in their community



PUBLIC DATA

SOOC23 incorporates publicly available data related to the topics highlighted in the survey results.

The public data in each chapter covers four key challenges that locals have discussed. Table 2 outlines the different sources of data and geographic areas reviewed.

Table 2: Public data

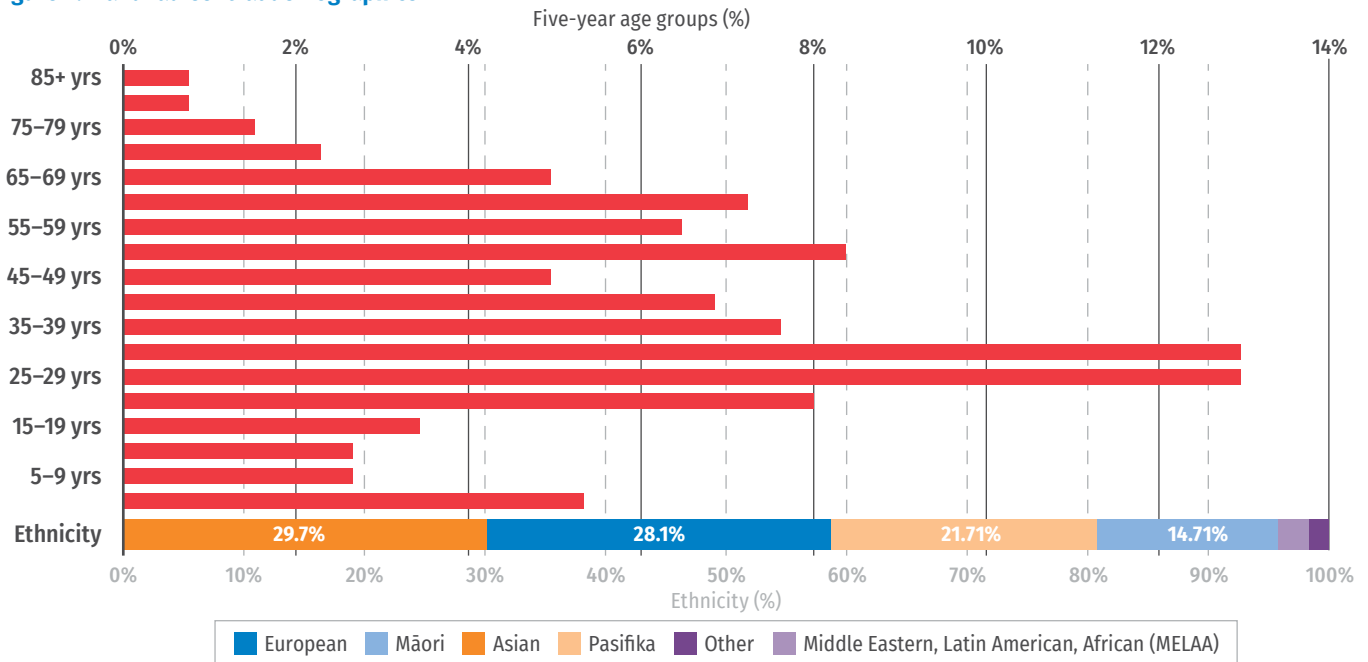
	Source	Geographical Area
Demographic Profile	Dot Loves Data—People and Places Dashboard—Dot Loves Data is a paid service and therefore only available to those with subscriptions ⁶	Statistical Area Unit 2 (2018) Territorial Authority (Nelson City)
Poverty and Cost of Living		
Socio-Economic Indicators (See Appendix 1)	Dot Loves Data—Dynamic Deprivation Dashboard ⁷	Statistical Area Unit 2 (2017) Territorial Authority (Nelson City)
Supermarket Consumption	Dot Loves Data—Bizmomento Dashboard ⁸	Auckland Local Board Territorial Authority
Food Price Index	Stats NZ—Infoshare Consumers Price Index—CPI Food Price Index Regional (Separate Regions) (Monthly) ⁹	Nationally; Auckland; Nelson
Welfare Assistance	Internal Data	Motueka
Housing		
Housing Indicators	Dot Loves Data—Community Compass	Statistical Area Unit 2 (2018)
Consents Approved	New dwellings consented by Statistical Area Unit 2: July 2023 ¹⁰	
Dwelling Estimates	2018 Census—Housing: Occupied dwellings, unoccupied dwellings and dwellings under construction, for private and non-private dwellings, 2006, 2013 and 2018 Censuses ¹¹	Statistical Area Unit 2 (2018) Territorial Authority (Nelson City)
Subnational Population	Population estimates—subnational population estimates (TA, SA2), by age and sex, at 30 June 1996 ¹²	
Rental Bond Data	By territorial authority, January 1993 to July 2023 updated quarterly Detailed quarterly report January 1993 to July 2023 ¹³	
Airbnb Listings	Inside Airbnb—listings ¹⁴	Region—Wards Territorial Authority
Housing Register	Housing Register ¹⁵	Auckland Local Board
Kainga Ora Housing Stock	Housing statistics—managed stock ¹⁶	Territorial Authority
Crime		
Crime Rate	Dot Loves Data—Community Compass	Statistical Area Unit 2 (2022) Territorial Authority (Nelson City)
Ram Raids	Police Publications: Retail crime and ram raids ¹⁷	Police District
Crime Incidences	Police Data—Demand and Activity Dashboard ¹⁸	Statistical Area Unit 2 (2017) Territorial Authority (Nelson City)
Drug Use	Police National Wastewater Testing Programme ¹⁹	Police District
Youth		
NEET Rates	Household Labour Force Survey—HLF Youth NEET by regional council by age (Annual–June) ²⁰	Regional Council
Jobseeker Support	Benefit Fact Sheets ²¹	Auckland Local Board Territorial Authority
School Leavers' Highest Achievement	School leaver's attainment ²²	Territorial Authority
Regular Attendance	Student attendance by Territorial Authority 2011–2023 ²³	Territorial Authority

MANUKAU, AUCKLAND

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Manukau serves as a crucial economic and commercial centre for South Auckland in the North Island, supporting nearby suburbs like Papatoetoe, Manurewa, Mangere and Otara. Manukau Central has around 1030 residents (as of June 2022), but its importance as a retail and central hub means it serves a much larger population. Approximately 28.1 percent of residents of Manukau Central identify as European, 14.7 percent as Māori, 21.7 percent as Pasifika and 29.8 percent as Asian, as shown in Figure 4.⁶

Figure 4: Manukau Central demographics



The median age in Manukau Central stands at 29 years, showing a youthful demographic. This demographic profile aligns with the type of housing in Manukau Central, predominantly composed of apartment complexes that cater to the needs and preferences of young families, young adults and working professionals. Interestingly, only 46.2 percent of residents have called Manukau Central home for more than a decade, suggesting a degree of mobility within the community.

NOTE: Out of the survey respondents, 43 percent were not residents of Manukau Central. Instead, they either worked in the area or were present to access its amenities and facilities. We recognise that there is a substantial influx of individuals into Manukau for work and various services, surpassing the number of actual residents. In our survey, we tried to include the perspectives of all these individuals to provide a comprehensive representation of the voices shaping Manukau.

MANUKAU'S ATTRIBUTES: What do you like about your local community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The key attribute from respondents is Manukau's **community (30%)** which many described as being unified and close, with many praising the **friendliness (10%)**, kindness and **supportive (17%)** nature of the locals. **Cultural diversity (20%)** also stood out as a key attribute of the community, celebrated for its mixed demographic and cultural richness. **Accessibility (12%)** and proximity to **amenities (28%)** were noted as advantages, with respondents appreciating the convenience of having essential services, shops and transportation within close reach. Some locals described Manukau as a **safe and peaceful (10%)** community. Lastly, a sense of familiarity and belonging, with **families (7%)** and familiar places contributing to a feeling of **home (7%)**.

25–34 years old: *'Very friendly and a great place to raise your family.'*

35–44 years old: *'Community spirit. The people here are always willing to assist. Low social economic status of the people in this community means empathy and compassion through mutual situations and understanding.'*

45–54 years old: *'It's real and it has an ethnic mix of people, cultures ...'*

55–64 years old: *'Everything is in close proximity and the parks are good for walking. I also feel safe.'*

65–74 years old: *'Community events in the area; close to primary schools; the people; groups helping those in need.'*

KEY INFORMANTS

The defining quality of Manukau lies in its resilience. Despite facing challenges such as limited resources and economic hardships, Manukau draws its strength from a spirit of collaboration, mutual support and unity. Manukau has many organisations and community groups dedicated to help. Additionally, the community thrives on its cultural richness and diversity.

MANUKAU'S CHALLENGES: What are some of the challenges your community faces?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The biggest challenge for locals is **housing (42%)**. This includes high **rent costs (21%)**, poor **housing conditions (5%)**, **homelessness (14%)** and not enough **affordable housing (28%)**. The **cost of living (27%)** is also a big issue, with expenses like rent, fuel, power and basic needs making it hard for many locals to manage. Other challenges related to this include **food insecurity (18%)**, where people struggle with high food prices and rely on food banks. **Financial hardship (10%)** is also a problem, with many facing low wages, **unemployment (10%)** and **poverty (11%)**. **Safety (15%)** and **crime (25%)** challenges include concerns about assaults, gangs, domestic violence, ram raids and an increase in **beggars (6%)** on the streets. There are also health and **wellbeing (8%)** challenges, like **drug (10%)** and **alcohol addiction (10%)**, **mental health (7%)** and limited access to healthcare. Additionally, there are **youth-related issues (12%)** like youth crime and disturbances related to motorbikes that concern respondents. **Social support (8%)** is seen as crucial, emphasising the need for accessible help for those in need.

Been in the community for <2 years:

'Window washers. Being intimidating, a hazard and sometimes aggressive.'

'Alcohol, homeless, people spending their money on alcohol and drugs and then asking total strangers for money.'

Been in the community for 2–5 years:

'... too many establishments that cause harm such as liquor stores, vape shops, takeaways, pokies/gambling.'

'I don't feel safe driving or walking around or when shopping. There are many beggars on the roads, walking between the cars and outside of shops. Must always drive with our doors locked due to the muggings that happen at traffic lights.'

Been in the community for 5–10 years:

'Homelessness—food shortage is a big thing, even people with jobs are finding it hard and have nowhere to turn to as they work and don't have the same privileges as others. Counselling services have extremely long waiting lists.'

'High rentals, influence of gangs, rough sleepers are increasing and there's an increase in antisocial behaviour.'

Been in the community for 10+ years:

'Cost of living, it is hard for everyone to eat well, let alone use a heater.'

KEY INFORMANTS

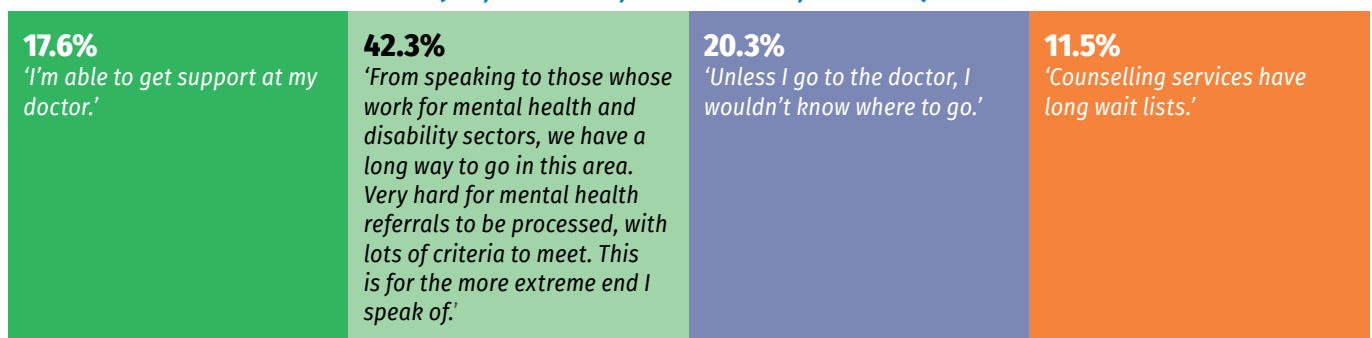
There are challenges in the community around accessing basics such as food, appropriate housing, education, healthcare and mental health support. Many of these challenges are interlinked, as housing affordability and insecurity lead to the transient nature of families and disruptions in schooling. Support for family breakdowns, especially for men, is insufficient. The financial stress and its impact on people's health and mental wellbeing are not adequately addressed.

Table 3: The Manukau community and my wellbeing



KEY INFORMANTS: Programmes like school lunches help to address the challenges around access to food, but comprehensive support systems are needed to ensure basic needs are met long-term.

'I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY, (EG, ANXIETY, HAPPINESS, STRESS).'



KEY INFORMANTS: Community groups, including those rooted in faith, provide help around mental and emotional wellbeing but need more funding to work well. Trust and local ties are crucial in supporting locals and people want funding to go to these community groups with strong local connections but sometimes bureaucracy gets in the way, leading to gaps in supporting our community.

**‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SPIRITUAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’
(EG, FAITH, MEDITATION).**



KEY INFORMANTS: Churches and community groups are vital for taking care of people’s spiritual wellbeing. However, sometimes churches face difficulties in a society that’s supposed to be secular. There can be biases and worries about funding, especially for organisations linked to particular religions like Christianity.

**‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SOCIAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’
(EG, FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY).**



KEY INFORMANTS: People often find social support in sports clubs and informal groups. But it’s important to improve how these services are organised and made known because they can be hard to find unless you’re from the area. Churches and community groups also help with social connections, but cuts in budgets and higher costs for community facilities make it tough for people to engage.

THE STATE OF MANUKAU

The following section provides an overview of data from public sources to illustrate some of the challenges that respondents discussed. Since 43 percent of respondents were from neighbouring suburbs, the following sections will not only focus on Manukau Central but will also include surrounding suburbs: Wiri East, Papatoetoe South, Mangere Southeast and Goodwood Heights. These areas are defined by Statistical Area 2 (2022).

Manukau Central, with a lower median income, also has low welfare rates, which is likely due to its younger, working demographic. Conversely, Wiri exhibits both low median income and higher welfare rates, indicating deprivation. Papatoetoe and Mangere have higher incomes but also elevated welfare rates, which suggest the presence of income inequality and disparities in the area. Goodwood Heights, with its low deprivation index as expected, performs better than the national average.

POVERTY AND COST OF LIVING

Table 4⁷ offers a comprehensive overview of socio-economic indicators for Manukau Central and surrounding areas^a compared to the national average. The Deprivation Index scores highlight socio-economic disadvantage, evident in limited internet access, reduced vehicle access, lower educational attainment and higher consumption and purchasing scores compared to national averages.

^a The Dynamic Deprivation Index uses Statistical Area Unit 2 (2017) as the equivalent of the areas in Statistical Area Unit 2 (2022) which we will use in the rest of this section.

Table 4: Socio-economic indicators for Manukau Central and surrounding areas

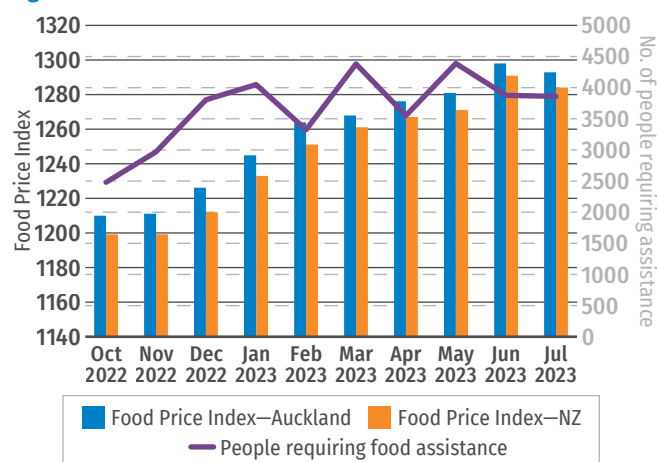
	National Rate	Manukau Central	Wiri East	Goodwood Heights	Mangere Southeast	Papatoetoe South
Deprivation Index		10	10	4	9	9
Median household income (\$)	\$92,354	\$71,817	\$65,936	\$136,795	\$111,834	\$97,110
Adult with no qualifications (%)	18.20%	21%	27.30%	15.80%	22%	21.90%
Child education score	100	115	120	100	104	101
Consumption and purchasing score	100	94	114	109	112	110
Households with no vehicle access (%)	6.61%	12.50%	13.70%	3%	1.90%	7.10%
Households with no internet access (%)	14%	17%	30%	6%	15%	18%
Sole Parent Support rate (%)	2.36%	1.47%	7.08%	1.85%	3.45%	3.92%
Jobseeker Support rate (%)	5.51%	4.47%	11.38%	5.37%	8.75%	8.07%
Means-tested benefit rate (%)	3.24%	1.64%	3.88%	1.52%	2.90%	3.07%
Not in home ownership (%)	35.50%	71.20%	76%	29.50%	54%	53.90%
Rent affordability (%)	30%	32.40%	49.60%	24.73%	25.84%	31.22%
Households with damp and mould (%)	3.30%	2.31%	11.97%	2.83%	6.83%	7.86%
Household overcrowding (Equivalentised Crowding Index)	0.632	1	1	0.709	0.967	0.899

KEY: Worse than National Rate

Figure 5⁹ presents data on the Food Price Index (FPI) which measures the change in food prices and the number of people accessing our Salvation Army Community Ministries in Manukau for food assistance. Since 2019, the FPI has increased by 26.4 percent in Auckland and 26.1 percent nationally, indicating a notable rise in food prices over this

period. **Figure 5** also shows the number of people who have accessed our services in Manukau for food assistance each month which has increased by 56 percent in July 2023, compared to October 2022. These figures illustrate the increasing costs of living that families are facing in the community.

Figure 5: Food Price Index and Food Assistance



HOUSING

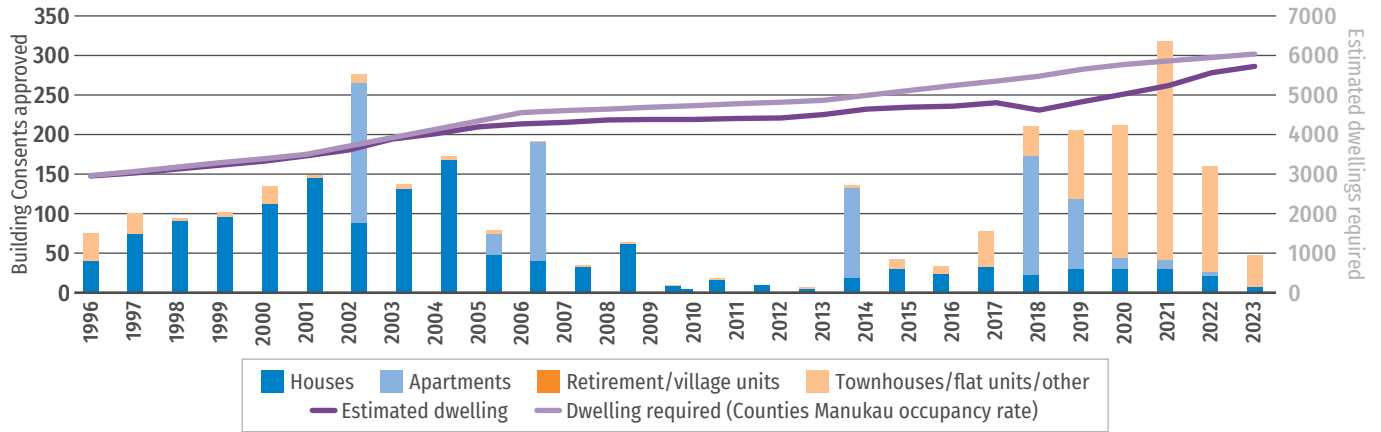
In 2018, there were approximately 4617 private residential dwellings in Manukau Central and the surrounding suburbs.²⁴ Since then there have been 1154 consents granted for new residential construction. **Figure 6** illustrates the number of consents approved since 1996, with a noticeable shift towards building more apartments and townhouses rather than houses.¹⁰

The estimated average occupancy rate for Counties Manukau is approximately 3.31 people per household.²⁵ Using this rate and the estimated population, **Figure 6** compares the required number of dwellings to meet the population’s needs.

According to this model, there is a deficit of 316 dwellings. However, it's important to note that this model doesn't account for factors like vacant houses, holiday homes, demolished dwellings, or properties used for Airbnb-type rentals. Consequently, the

actual deficit is likely to be considerably larger—this can also be seen in [Table 4](#) which shows that household overcrowding is significantly higher in Manukau Central and the surrounding suburbs than the national rate.

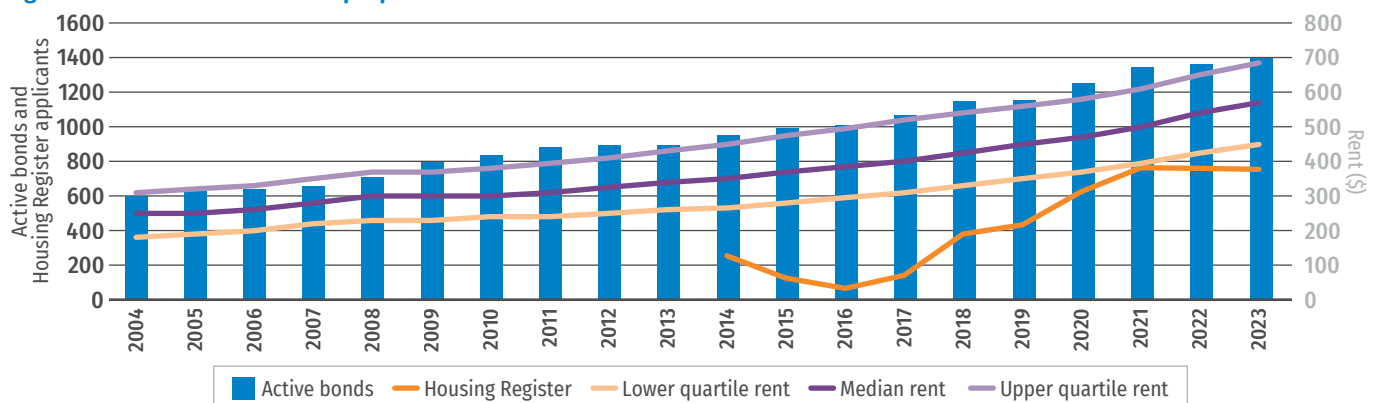
Figure 6: Dwellings and Consents approved in Manukau



The demand for housing and particularly rental properties is strongly evident, given that home ownership rates are low as seen in [Table 4](#). [Figure 7](#) shows active bonds for rental properties and the rent in Manukau Central and its surrounding suburbs over the past 20 years.¹³ The number of active bonds for rental properties has notably risen to 1398—a 134 percent increase since 2004. The rent for lower-income households in the lower quartile has risen

by 150 percent to \$450, which is a higher increase compared to the 128 percent rise in median rent (\$570) and the 121 percent increase in higher quartile rent (\$685). [Figure 7](#) also provides information about the number of applicants on the Housing Register for the Otara-Papatoetoe Local Board.¹⁵ Over the past decade there has been a 195 percent increase in the number of applicants waiting for social housing, now totalling 753.

Figure 7: Active bonds for rental properties in Manukau



CRIME

In July 2023, Manukau Central and surrounding suburbs had a crime rate^b of 174.78 incidents per 10,000 people, representing a significant 70.5 percent increase since September 2020 as shown in **Figure 8**.²⁶ Notably, this crime rate is three times higher than the Auckland rate. The primary types

of crime in this area include theft, burglary and assault. In addition, **Figure 8** also shows the number of incidents that police have attended that they have deemed as a crime—this has increased by 49.6 percent over the same period.

Figure 8: Crime rate for Manukau Central and surrounding suburbs

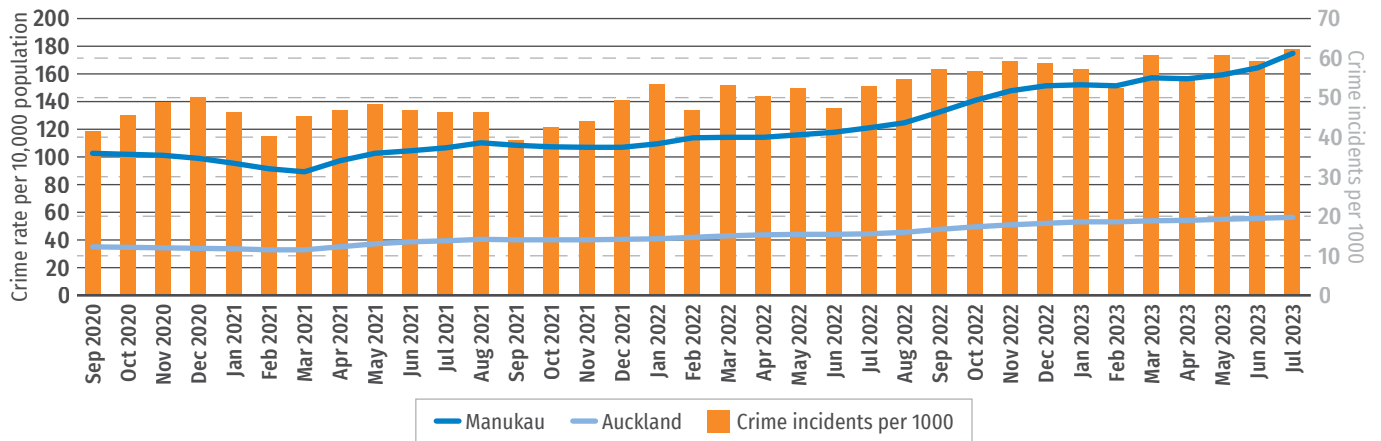
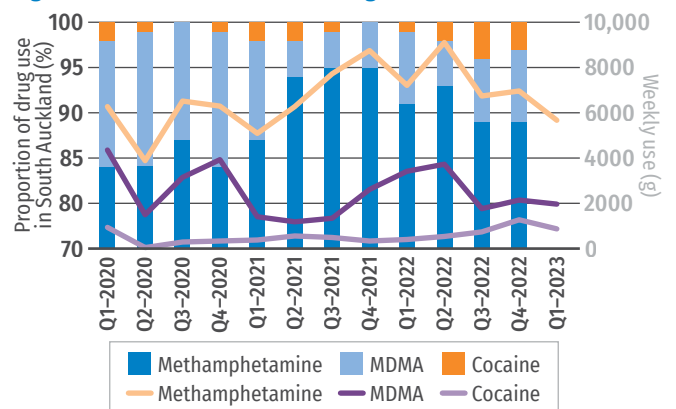


Figure 9 shows police wastewater tests, which looks at the detection of drugs in the wastewater for the Auckland region and the proportion of drug use in South Auckland. Methamphetamine (meth) remains the predominant drug of choice in South Auckland, with an average weekly consumption of nearly 5.6 kilograms in the wider Auckland area.¹⁹ This translates to a staggering weekly expenditure of \$2,304,456 on methamphetamine in Auckland. It’s worth highlighting that the crime rate in Manukau Central and its surrounding suburbs had remained relatively stable until the start of 2021, coinciding with a notable increase in both methamphetamine use in Auckland and the proportion of drug use compared to other substances, and its prevalence within South Auckland.

Figure 9: Police wastewater testing Auckland/South Auckland

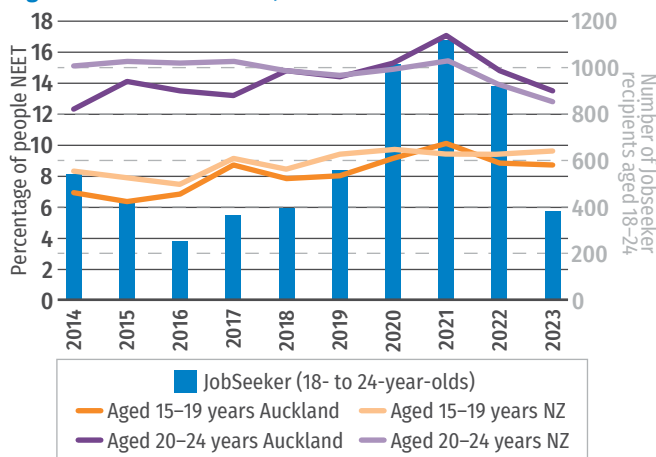


^b Crime rate is defined as the number of victimisations over the last 12 months per 10,000 people.

YOUTH

Figure 10 shows NEET (not in education, employment or training) rates for two age groups: 15–19 and 20–24, and overall rates for Auckland and nationally. It also provides data on Jobseeker recipients aged 18–24 in the Otara Papatoetoe Local Board. In Auckland, the NEET rate is 8.7 percent for 15–19-year-olds (below the national rate) and 12.5 percent for 20–24-year-olds (above the national rate).²⁰ There are now 378 Jobseeker recipients aged 18–24 in the Otara and Papatoetoe Local Board, reflecting a 59 percent drop from 918 in 2021. This decline in NEET and Jobseeker beneficiaries suggests that young people are increasingly engaging in employment following the disruptions caused by Covid-19.²¹ However, it’s important to note that overall, NEET rates have not yet returned to pre-Covid-19 levels in Auckland.

Figure 10: NEET rates and Jobseeker results



INVESTING IN MANUKAU: If you were elected prime minister, what issues in your community would you focus on in your first 100 days of power?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Locals would address the pressing **housing issue (45%)** with a focus on making housing affordable for everyone, including **building more homes (15%)**, supporting **renters (10%)** and tackling **homelessness (15%)**. **Cost of living (40%)** concerns, especially rising **food costs (24%)** and **fuel prices (10%)**, are at the top of their list. Locals suggest implementing **tax breaks (5%)** to ease the financial burden on individuals and families.

Youth (20%) and **crime (30%)** are key areas of concern, with a desire to enhance police efforts and reduce crime rates. Improving **community safety (12%)** and supporting local businesses are emphasised, along with implementing youth development programmes to address and reduce youth crime. **Education (28%)** is another priority, with locals advocating for improvements in the education system, particularly in early childhood education. They aim to allocate more resources and adjust the curriculum to enhance education for children and young people. Providing comprehensive support to improve **healthcare accessibility and affordability (16%)** is also a priority. Furthermore, locals would revamp the welfare system, address poverty and provide crucial support to vulnerable families.

‘Better home; safer community centre; better living for our children/family; no gangs, drugs and alcohol.’

‘Safer towns and suburbs. Crack onto the homeless and place them into homes.’

‘Initiate activities for the younger generation; tackle crime and restore law and order; tackle poverty.’

‘Make daycare free.’

‘Focus on crime prevention—invest money, resource and time in putting young offenders through training and mentoring programmes as a positive distraction.’

'Focus on reducing poverty, decreasing prices for healthy foods and lowering tax to ease financial burdens.'

'Initiate a housing programme for workers to take the stress out of everyday living.'

'Building strong economy, reducing cost of living and interest rates and addressing infrastructure.'

'Increase benefits, decrease petrol and food prices. Improve health, housing and hospitals.'

'Focus on children in school, families in need and creating a comfortable space for everyone to grow as one.'

KEY INFORMANTS

Key issues to address for our community are around ensuring that there is safe and warm housing accessible, increasing benefit levels, employment opportunities and education to ensure people are able to live dignified lives, and addressing the cost of living. Manukau needs practical solutions that can address these basic and fundamental needs of locals.

MANUKAU ASPIRATIONS: In five years' time, what changes would you like to see in your community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Locals in Manukau hope that in five years **cost of living (18%) would decrease** and living in New Zealand would be affordable, especially for **food (18%), housing (34%) and healthcare (18%)**. Locals want housing to be available and for homelessness to decrease. Locals have a strong desire for **safety (20%)**, reduced **crime (15%)** and a violence-free environment, where they can leave their homes and cars unlocked, reminiscent of earlier times. Locals hope for improvements in **education (14%)**, with better resources for schools and increased vocational opportunities for young people.

16 and under: *'Don't throw rubbish everywhere.'*
'Happiness.'

17-24 years old: *'Helping homeless into homes.'*

25-34 years old: *'More businesses.'*

'Better care of our environment. Better school environments, reduced homelessness and beggars. Affordable interest rates for buying homes.'

35-44 years old: *'More community activities. More advocacy for AOD [alcohol and other drugs] and mental health services, more ways people can access help for housing and kai.'*

45-54 years old: *'Safer surroundings so families can walk to the shops and drive without encountering violence, fights, drugs, or alcohol-related issues. We want to be able to leave our homes unlocked, just like in the old days.'*

'We need to bridge the gaps in mental health support for youth. People deserve a second chance in the community to find employment and build positive relationships with their colleagues, regardless of their past criminal history.'

55-64 years old: *'Free public transport.'*

'Decreased homelessness, more social housing built, improved justice systems and less youth crime, overhaul of social housing and welfare systems, as well as mental health systems.'

65-74 years old: *'Better housing and people homed.'*

KEY INFORMANTS

Collaboration within the community is essential for tackling future challenges, and we hope the community continues to come together and work collectively. Programmes and initiatives that are targeted towards engaging with men to work on

issues together would make a difference for our community. In the next five years, aspirations for community leaders include free public transport, reduced housing waitlists and guaranteed income for a fairer society.

SUMMARY

In the heart of South Auckland, Manukau thrives as a vibrant economic hub, serving the greater South Auckland area. Despite its strengths, locals in Manukau and the wider suburbs face many challenges, including housing affordability, the rising cost of living, food insecurity and financial hardship. Safety concerns, crime rates, health disparities and youth-related challenges are among the struggles faced by locals.

The challenges the community faces were reiterated when looking at available public data, and socio-economic indicators reveal disparities and deprivation. Food prices continue to increase, and housing affordability continues to compound the cost of living. All of this economic hardship exists with a backdrop of increasing crime rates.

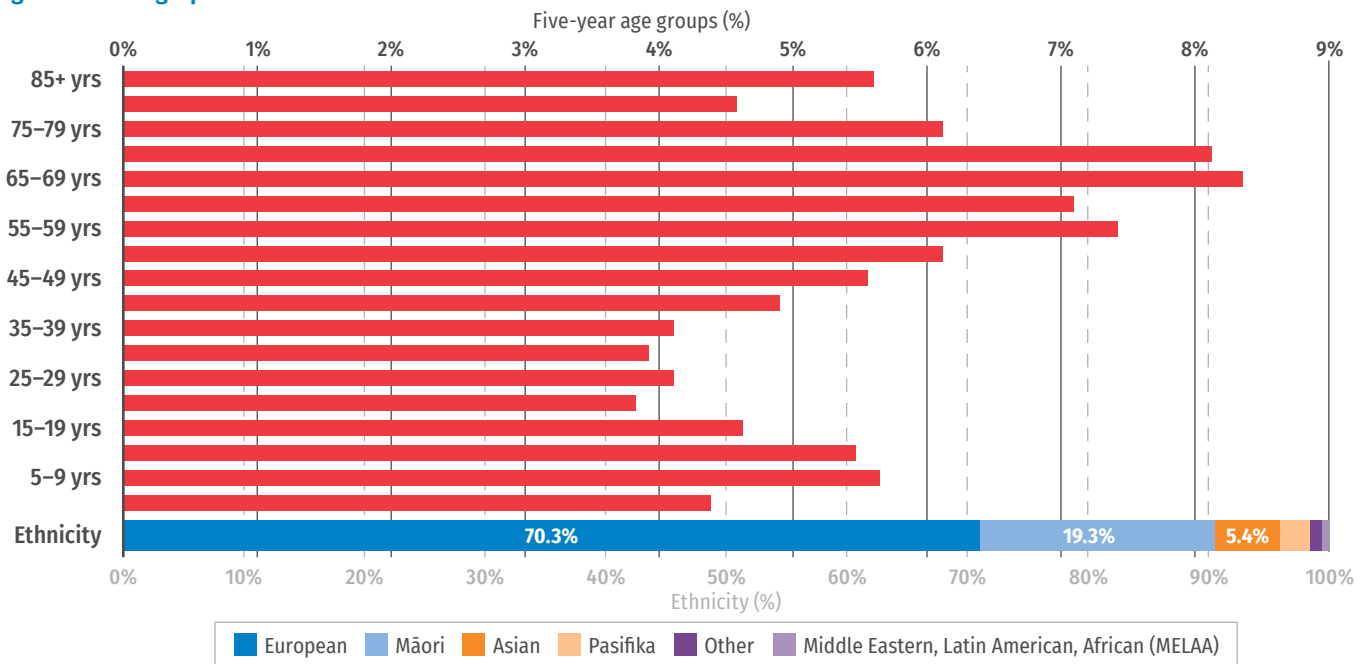
Despite these challenges, locals discussed solutions such as affordable early childhood education, addressing homelessness, addressing food insecurity and solutions towards crime prevention. The hope is that in five years, Manukau would be violence-free where education thrives, living costs are reasonable and housing is accessible for all.

THAMES

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Thames, known as the gateway to the Coromandel, is a historic gold mining town with a rich heritage in the North Island. Thames has retained much of its history in its buildings and continues to thrive as a scenic and vibrant community. The residential population of Thames^c is approximately 6730 (June 2022).⁶ The town's demographics reflect a majority of Europeans, constituting 70.4 percent of the population, followed by a significant Māori population at 19.3 percent. Additionally, 5.5 percent identify as Asian and 2.4 percent identify as Pasifika, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Demographics of Thames



Thames has a median age of 53.5 years, with over a third of its population aged 65 and above. Approximately 66.3 percent of local residents have called Thames home for more than a decade, demonstrating a strong bond, stability and commitment to their community.

THAMES' ATTRIBUTES: What do you like about your local community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Local residents in Thames highly value the strong sense of **community (59%)**, often describing the town as **supportive (12%)**, **friendly (38%)** and **close-knit (12%)**. They appreciate the proximity to **essential services (10%)**, which adds convenience to their lives. The **small-town charm (16%)** and **unique character (12%)** of Thames are particularly cherished by those who seek a relaxed and distinctive living

^c SA2 is Thames Central, Thames South and Thames North.

environment. Access to Thames' beautiful beaches and **natural surroundings (16%)** is a key attribute, while others find comfort in the community's overall sense of **safety and peace (8%)**.

17–24 years old: *'Unique.'*

'Familiar faces, friends, family.'

25–34 years old: *'I like that the people are friendly, and everyone seems to have time to stop and chat. I love how closely connected everything is and how it doesn't take long to feel welcome in this community.'*

'Very friendly community. No traffic, so it's an easy commute to my work and baby's daycare.'

35–44 years old: *'Community connection.'*

'The willingness of locals to help each other, great outdoor lifestyle.'

45–54 years old: *'Arty, creative, historic, small, vibrant.'*

'It is close and easy to get to Auckland, Hamilton and other places.'

55–64 years old: *'The people are innovative and care for one another.'*

'Even though there seems to be more and more crime going on, everyone helps each other out in ways.'

65–74 years old: *'The people, the hospital nearby, beaches nearby.'*

'Deep sense of community.'

75+ years old: *'There are people who care about trying to find solutions for the problems.'*

KEY INFORMANTS

Thames is an important service hub, providing essential amenities like healthcare and retirement options to a wider region. The community is known for being diverse, friendly and inclusive, with many clubs and organisations catering to various

community needs and interests. The town benefits from an active senior population that's involved in volunteering and social activities, making the community lively. Thames has a working-class history, with a strong sense of togetherness and stability. These strengths shape Thames' distinct identity and contribute to its ongoing growth and vibrancy as a community.

THAMES' CHALLENGES: What are some of the challenges your community faces?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Housing issues (44%) are significant challenges, including concerns about **emergency housing (12%)** availability, **high rent (12%)** and **homelessness (21%)**. Rising **crime rates (38%)** and **safety (16%)** worries also trouble the community, with various criminal activities such as ram raids causing distress. Locals have attributed these ram raids to lack of **youth (32%)** engagement and lack of activities for young people during school holidays. **Cost-of-living challenges (18%)** like high **food (14%)** costs, poverty and low wages are ongoing concerns. Access to **healthcare and mental health (10%)** services is a significant issue, along with worries about **road conditions and infrastructure (12%)**. Isolation and **loneliness (12%)** among seniors, **education (9%)**, racial issues and **discrimination (9%)** are also challenges discussed by locals. The community is grappling with the economic impact of an **aging population (6%)** and the need for future infrastructure and **development (10%)** for resilience and growth for Thames.

Been in community for <2 years: *'Not enough emergency housing for the number of people who need it. Not enough activities for young people.'*

'Lack of affordable housing, GP appointments too expensive, not enough mental health and addiction support.'

Been in community for 2–5 years: *'Huge crime during school holidays.'*

'Hopelessness and lack of ambition for disconnected youth.'

Been in community for 5–10 years: *‘Housing, bored teens, underlying drug and alcohol issues.’*

‘Poverty, addiction, depression, homelessness.’

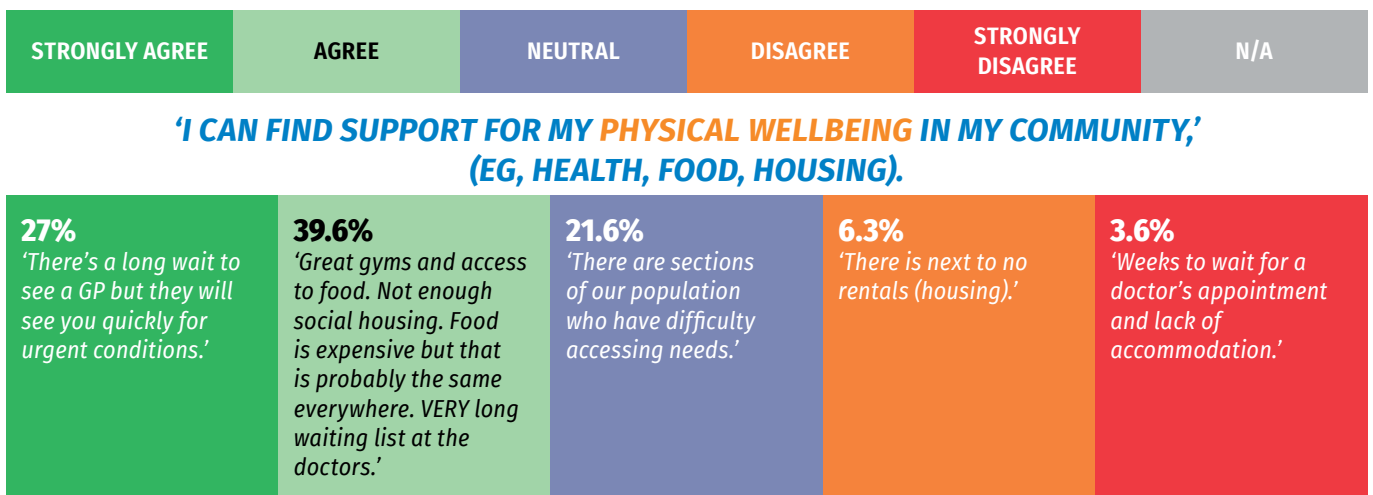
Been in community for 10+ years: *‘Homelessness, lack of housing and rental properties, lack of employment opportunities, lack of activities for young people.’*

‘The antisocial and/or criminal behaviour that seems to be becoming more prevalent, almost nothing for kids/teens to do that’s inside for the wet rainy weekends/holidays (movies, arcade, etc).’

KEY INFORMANTS

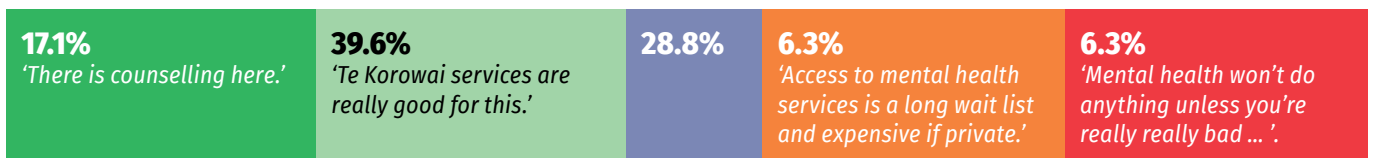
Housing stands out as a central concern, marked by a lack of affordable and available housing, with a significant portion being state-owned. Poverty is another key issue, affecting retirees and families due to the rising cost of living, often seen in Thames as significant levels of food insecurity. Thames also grapples with limited opportunities for young people in terms of education and jobs, leading to a declining youth population. Infrastructure and accessibility issues, such as road closures and flooding due to storms, create barriers to accessing Thames. These challenges further exacerbate economic difficulties, as fewer people are passing through the town.

Table 5: The Thames community and my wellbeing



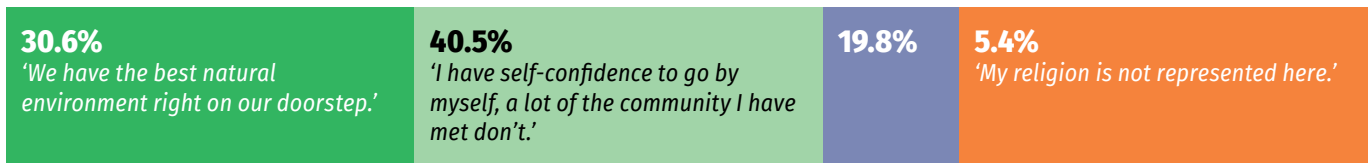
KEY INFORMANTS: Housing is an issue with many who are homeless. The shortage of police officers in Eastern Waikato, including Thames, impacts community safety, exacerbated by the loss of experienced officers due to vaccination-related issues.

**‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’
(EG, ANXIETY, HAPPINESS, STRESS).**



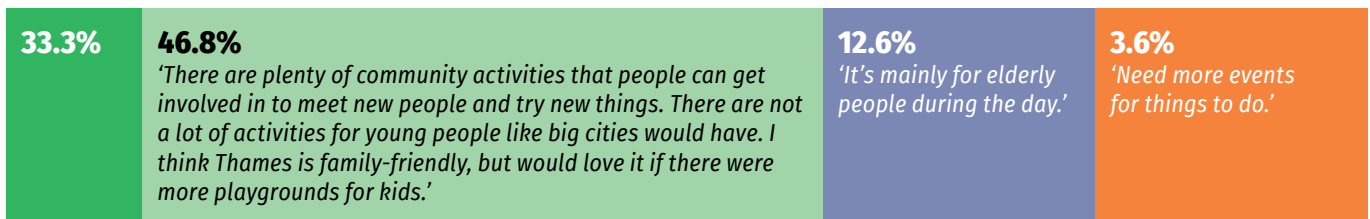
KEY INFORMANTS: Thames is grappling with severe mental and emotional wellbeing challenges, marked by heightened anxiety, fearfulness and even suicidal ideation, particularly among the youth. The closure of State Highway 25A, disrupting business and livelihoods, has exacerbated these issues, resulting in an unprecedented sense of despair in the community. The lack of accessible supports such as counsellors and mental health services adds to the community’s emotional struggles. Youth workers report increased anxiety and mental health issues among students in both primary and secondary schools.

'I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SPIRITUAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,' (EG, FAITH, MEDITATION).



KEY INFORMANTS: Thames has a diverse range of churches, including Pentecostal, Catholic, Anglican, Baptist and The Salvation Army, which collectively provide spiritual support and community for locals. The existing church networks can potentially serve as a foundation for broader community support initiatives, including addressing homelessness and related challenges.

'I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SOCIAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,' (EG, FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY).



KEY INFORMANTS: Thames has many activities and social clubs, such as sports clubs and fishing, which are opportunities for social engagement within the community. However, despite these options, pockets of isolation and loneliness persist. This loneliness affects not only the elderly, who may face mobility-related isolation, but also the youth, who, despite virtual connections, may experience a lack of real-life social connections.

THE STATE OF THAMES

The following section provides an overview of data from public sources to illustrate some of the challenges that respondents discussed. The next section defines Thames as Monataiari and Parawai as seen in Statistical Area 2 (2017), which were then redefined as Thames Central, Thames South and Thames North in Statistical Area 2 (2022).

POVERTY AND COST OF LIVING

Table 6 shows an overview of socio-economic indicators for Thames compared to the national average.⁷ Both areas,^d Monataiari and Parawai, exhibit a high Deprivation Index, as evidenced by the welfare rates in Thames being higher than the national average. However, it's important to consider the demographic composition of Thames. The community in Thames skews towards an older

population, with a significant portion being retirees. This demographic profile could contribute to the lower median household income levels observed compared to the national rate, as retirees typically rely on pensions.

When assessing indicators typically associated with deprivation, such as the lack of vehicle access and internet access, it's important to acknowledge that these might not necessarily be indicators of economic hardship in this context. Instead, they could be more reflective of the preferences and lifestyle choices of an older population in Thames. However, there are certain indicators, such as cost of housing, increasing food prices and job seeker support rate, which are significantly higher than the national average that suggest that there is high levels of deprivation and lack of employment opportunities in Thames.

^d The Dynamic Deprivation Index uses Statistical Area Unit 2 (2017) as the equivalent of the areas in Statistical Area Unit 2 (2022) which we will use in the rest of this section.

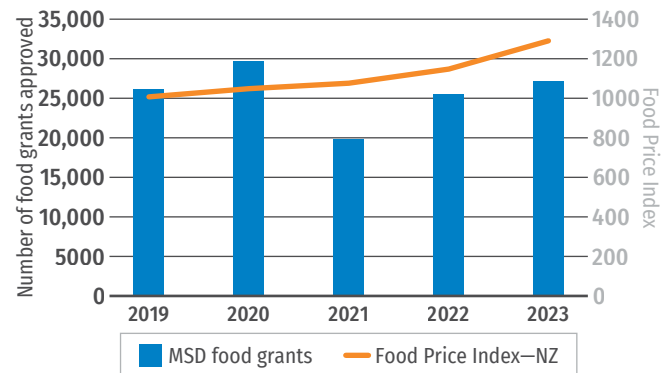
Table 6: Socio-economic Indicators for Thames

	National Rate	Monataiari	Parawai
Deprivation Index		9	8
Median household income (\$)	\$92,354	\$48,349	\$60,824
Adult with no qualifications (%)	18.20%	30.38%	28.74%
Child education score	100	109	106
Consumption and purchasing score	100	95	99
Households with no vehicle access (%)	6.61%	13.04%	6.85%
Households with no internet access (%)	14%	26.90%	22.81%
Sole Parent Support rate (%)	2.36%	2.68%	3.58%
Jobseeker Support rate (%)	5.51%	10.28%	7.40%
Means-tested benefit rate (%)	3.24%	13.11%	6.82%
Not in home ownership (%)	35.50%	36.73%	33.31%
Rent affordability (%)	30%	48%	42%
Households with damp and mould (%)	3.30%	3.29%	2.98%
Household overcrowding (Equivalent Crowding Index)	0.632	0.585	0.576

KEY: Worse than National Rate

Figure 12 shows the national Food Price Index and the number of hardship special needs grants for food for the Waikato region, which includes Thames.⁹ The Food Price Index nationally has increased by 28 percent since 2019, and in addition the number of special needs grants for food is also back to the same levels seen in 2019 after a significant decline in 2021. These figures help to illustrate the challenges around the cost of food and underscore the cost-of-living challenges experienced by locals. The cost-of-living challenges in Thames are particularly daunting given that the median household income in the area is below the national rate. Moreover, the situation is compounded by the significant number of seniors relying on NZ Super as their primary source of income. For these seniors, there is often no means to increase their income to offset the rising cost of living.

Figure 12: Food Price Index (Thames) and food grants



HOUSING

Housing stands out as a significant and ongoing concern for the residents of Thames. **Table 7**, which shows an overview of housing indicators, show that home ownership in Thames is steadily declining.²⁶ Despite a decrease in median property values, it remains a challenge for locals to save enough for a 20 percent deposit to purchase a home, with

estimates ranging from 19 to 26 years of savings. Affordable rent is defined as 30 percent or less of a household’s income. However, in Thames the cost of rent consumes almost half of the income for locals, particularly in Thames North. The cost of housing continues to compound the financial hardship challenges locals are facing.

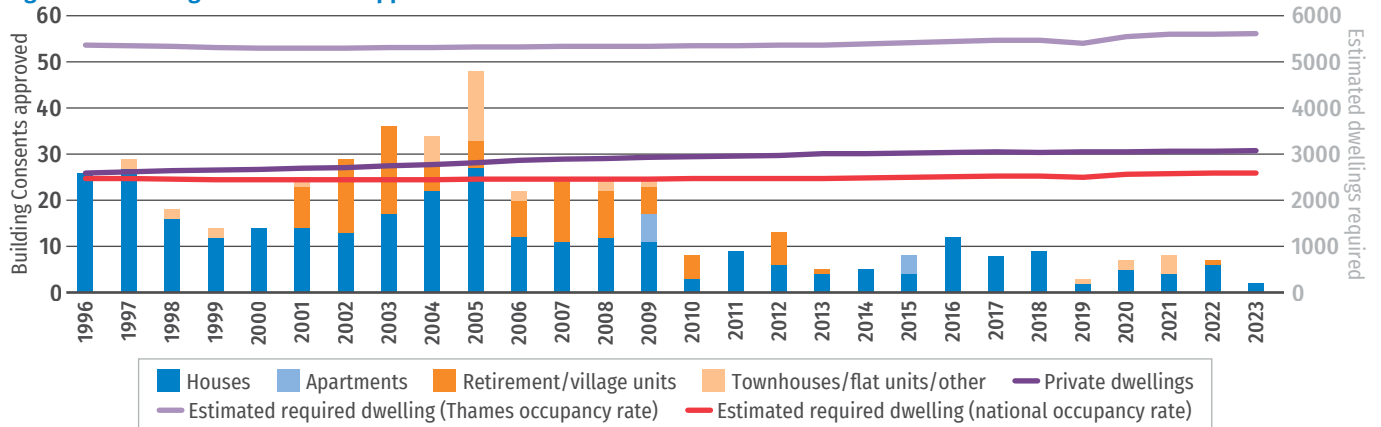
Table 7: Housing Indicators for Thames

	Thames Central		Thames North		Thames South	
Median household income (2023)	\$45K	–	\$51K	–	\$62K	–
Home ownership (2018)	35%	▼ 24%	50%	▼ 12%	48%	▼ 9.7%
Median property value (Jul 2023)	\$632K	▼ 0.7%	\$695K	▼ 0.6%	\$690K	▼ 0.7%
Median rent (Jun 2022)	\$390	▲ 3	\$477	▲ 1.8%	\$499	▼ 1.1%
Rental affordability (Jul 2022)	45%	–	48%	–	42%	–
Years to save for a deposit (2023)	26	▲ 0.7%	26	▼ 0.6%	19	▼ 0.7%

Key | Compare, 2013 Trending up: ▲ Trending down: ▼ Improving Worsening No change

Figure 13 shows the number of consents granted for new residential dwellings in Thames. There is a significant decline in the number of consents for new builds, especially after the year 2010.¹⁰ Between 1996 and 2009, there were a total of 400 consents granted compared to 104 since 2010.

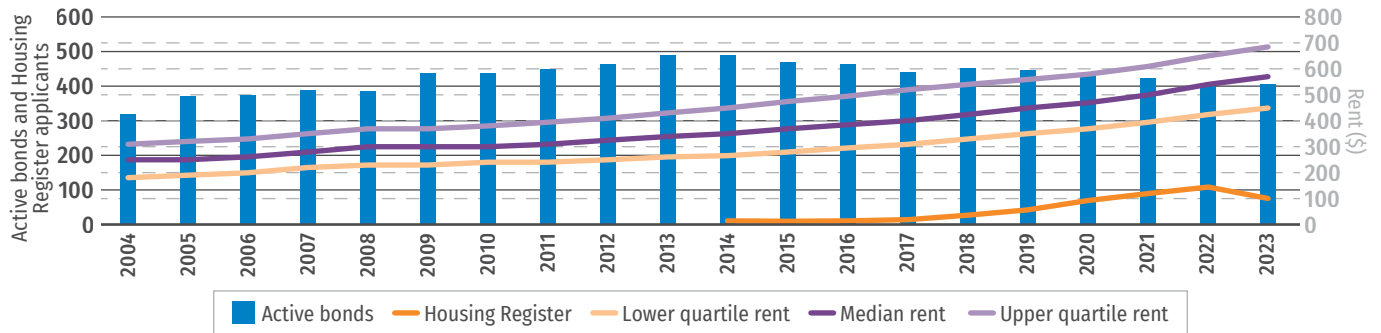
Figure 13: Dwellings and Consents approved for Thames



According to the 2018 census, the occupancy rate is only 1.2 people per dwelling in Thames, which is significantly lower than the national average of 2.6.²⁸ About a third (33%) of the population of Thames are 65+ years old, and being a holiday destination also likely contributes to the estimated low occupancy rate. **Figure 13** shows how many dwellings are needed based on both of these occupancy rates,

and regardless of which occupancy rate is applied, there remains a substantial shortfall in the number of dwellings required to meet the needs of the population. If we use the local occupancy rate of 1.2, there’s a deficit of 2537 dwellings, and if we use the national rate of 2.6, it’s still a shortfall of 468 dwellings. There aren’t enough homes in Thames to meet the needs of the local population.

Figure 14: Active bonds for rental properties in Thames



The rental property availability in Thames, as shown by the active bonds in **Figure 14**, shows a 53 percent increase from 2004 to 2014 where the number of active bonds peaked at 492 active bonds.¹³ However, since 2014 the number of active bonds has declined gradually by 18 percent to 405 active bonds in April 2023. Since 2004 the median rental cost in Thames has seen a substantial increase, rising by 56 percent since 2004. Housing affordability, availability and the limitation on rental properties in Thames underscore the significant housing challenges locals face. In 2014, there were ten applicants on the social housing register from Thames–Coromandel district. In 2023, that number has risen to 75 applicants, however the Kainga Ora stock in the region has remained relatively unchanged with 208 properties in the region (217 in 2015).

CRIME

Crime and safety were key concerns for locals in Thames. **Figure 15** shows the crime rates and incidences deemed as crime that police report to in Thames.²⁶ In July 2023, Thames had a crime rate^e of 100.78 incidents per 10,000 people, representing a

significant 45.7 percent increase since 2019. Notably, this crime rate is two and half times higher than the rate across Thames–Coromandel district. The primary types of crime in this area include theft from retail premises, burglary, motor vehicle theft and assault. As shown in **Figure 15**, increases in crime incidences that police report to is for theft- or burglary-related incidences, as the level of other offences has remained relatively unchanged.

Figure 16 shows police wastewater tests, specifically focusing on the detection of drug traces in the wastewater within the Waikato region and the prevalence of drug usage in Thames.¹⁹ Methamphetamine (meth) continues to be the primary drug of preference in Thames, with an average weekly consumption of approximately 1.64 kilograms across the Waikato area. This translates into a weekly expenditure of \$665,820 spent on methamphetamine within the Waikato region. Meth use in the Waikato region has increased by approximately 88.5 percent since 2020.

^e Crime rate is defined as the number of victimisations over the last 12 months per 10,000 people.

Figure 15: Crime rate for Thames and criminal incidents

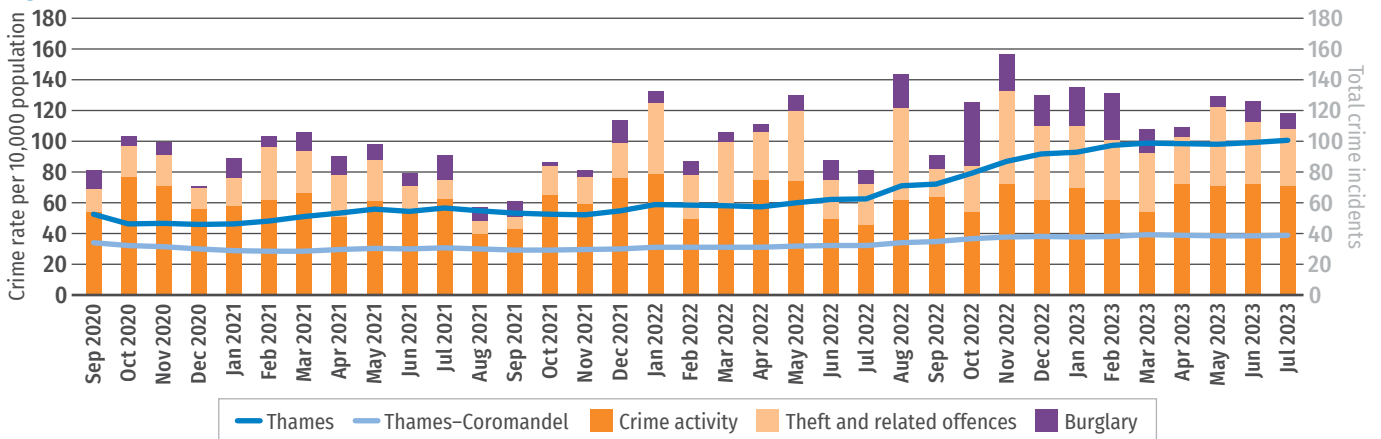


Figure 16: Police wastewater testing Waikato/Thames

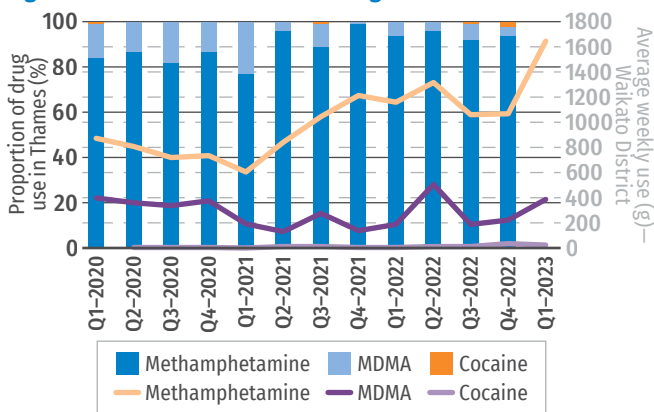


Figure 17: School leavers' highest attainment and regular attendance

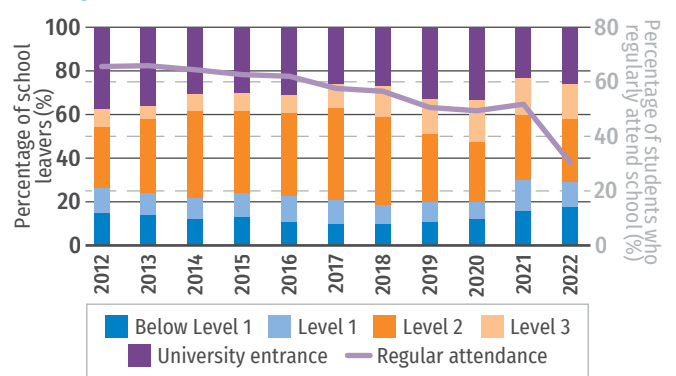


Figure 17 examines the educational outcomes of students in Thames-Coromandel District Territorial Authority. Notably, the percentage of students who regularly attend school has substantially declined over the past decade. In 2012, 65 percent of students attended regularly, whereas in 2022, it dropped to just 30 percent.²³ Additionally, there’s an increase in the number of students leaving school with less than NCEA Level 1, and a concerning decline in students achieving university entrance.²² These trends raise significant concerns regarding the educational outcomes and opportunities available to young people in Thames.

INVESTING IN THAMES: If you were elected prime minister, what issues in your community would you focus on in your first 100 days of power?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Local priorities in Thames are clear: they are determined to reduce **crime (54%)** through stricter laws, increased police presence and effective crime prevention measures, especially for youth involved in antisocial and criminal activities. **Housing (50%)** is a major focus, with an emphasis on tackling **homelessness (14%)**, incentivising rehabilitation for homeless individuals, increasing emergency housing, building more **affordable homes (14%)** and ensuring affordable rents. To address the **cost-of-living crisis (36%)**, locals advocate for tax reductions,

higher incomes and more job opportunities. They also aim to combat **food insecurity (30%)** by making food affordable and supporting services like food banks. Improving access to **healthcare services (12%)**, including more doctors, nurses and mental health services, as well as subsidising dental care, is another goal. Locals want to address challenges related to children, such as child poverty, with targeted support for the first 1000 days of a child's life, early interventions for at-risk children and **education system reforms (12%)** to create a more comprehensive curriculum. Additionally, improving infrastructure, particularly roads and power, is considered vital.

'Crime. Cost of living crisis. As part of this I would stop selling our productive assets to China. Stop Three Waters. Stop selling farmland to non-residents.'

'Housing and food security.'

'Support homeless people into some sort of care and improve their living conditions. I'm aware not all can be helped as it's their chosen way of life.'

'Roading, transportation and homelessness.'

'I would give incentives for the local homeless drunks to get rehabilitation help.'

'A fairer tax system where everyone paid their share would go a long way to solving some of our issues.'

'Affordable housing and food for all.'

'Stop huge immigration as it takes our houses and pushes up rental prices. Cap food prices from supermarkets.'

'Reduce the rates.'

'Cut GP prices, cut prescription charges, subsidise dental care.'

KEY INFORMANTS

In Thames, the current key focus areas revolve around housing and homelessness, social support and youth empowerment. The pressing need for housing solutions in Thames includes the establishment of a community-driven night shelter for the homeless and initiatives aimed at providing meals. The community should actively engage in empowering and engaging its youth, offering support and various

activities to improve their wellbeing. Additionally, there are concerns about the potential perpetuation of intergenerational welfare issues due to a lack of resources for disadvantaged children. There needs to be a focus on breaking the cycle of poverty.

THAMES' ASPIRATIONS: In five years' time, what changes would you like to see in your community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

At the forefront, local hope for secure and affordable **housing (50%)** for all. Locals also hoped for a revitalised main street and the introduction of new **amenities (15%)** such as a movie theatre. An additional aspiration is for improved **healthcare (8%)** services in rural areas ensuring better access to medical care. Safety and the reduction of **crime rates (10%)** are of paramount importance. Furthermore, locals hope to empower their youth and encourage their active engagement in **community activities (14%)**. Locals also hope for adequate **employment (10%)** opportunities and fair wages.

16 years under: *'For everyone to work together and help out.'*

'More shops.'

17-24 years old: *'Decrease crime rate.'*

25-34 years old: *'I would hope to see that the homeless in Thames have the security that they need. I hope to see all the main street shops filled up and I would hope that the movie theatre is back up and running!'*

35-44 years old: *'Something for kids to do. For the town to have a facelift; some of the shops look like wrecks.'*

'Better roads into Thames and around the Coromandel.'

45-54 years old: *'No drugs and no more people moving here and pushing renters out.'*

'Better quality, affordable housing. More communal, shared pedestrian spaces.'

55-64 years old: *'Better hospital care. Better healthcare.'*

'Less violence, less criminal activity and less homelessness, with more people employed in constructive activities.'

65-74 years old: *'Better hospital services.'*

'Enough permanent, affordable housing.'

75+ years old: *'More parking spaces for disabled people.'*

'No one needing food parcels or being homeless.'

KEY INFORMANTS

In 2028, Thames is envisioned as a place of inclusivity and harmony, where diversity is celebrated. The community will be able to offer educational opportunities and youth programmes to deter delinquency and encourage positive societal contributions among young people. Ultimately, Thames will be a vibrant and resilient community that looks after the wellbeing of all its people.

SUMMARY

Thames, with its unique charm and strong sense of community, faces significant challenges. Homelessness, housing issues, rising crime rates and safety concerns are prominent issues. The lack of activities for young people during school holidays, and economic challenges, including high food costs, add to the community's concerns. Access to healthcare and mental health services, as well as concerns about road conditions and infrastructure, are pressing issues. Public data also highlights that Thames is grappling with poverty and a high cost of living, particularly impacting its older population. Housing affordability is a major concern, with declining home ownership rates and rising rental costs. Crime rates have seen a

significant increase and educational outcomes have declined, raising concerns about the future of young people in the region.

Despite these challenges, Thames locals have solutions to address them. They prioritise crime reduction through stricter laws and increased police presence, as well as addressing housing challenges, particularly homelessness and building more homes to ensure that housing is affordable. They also aim to combat food insecurity, improve healthcare access, address child poverty and tackle economic challenges through a fairer tax system and increased employment opportunities. The community's key informants emphasise the need for housing solutions, youth empowerment and breaking the cycle of intergenerational welfare dependence.

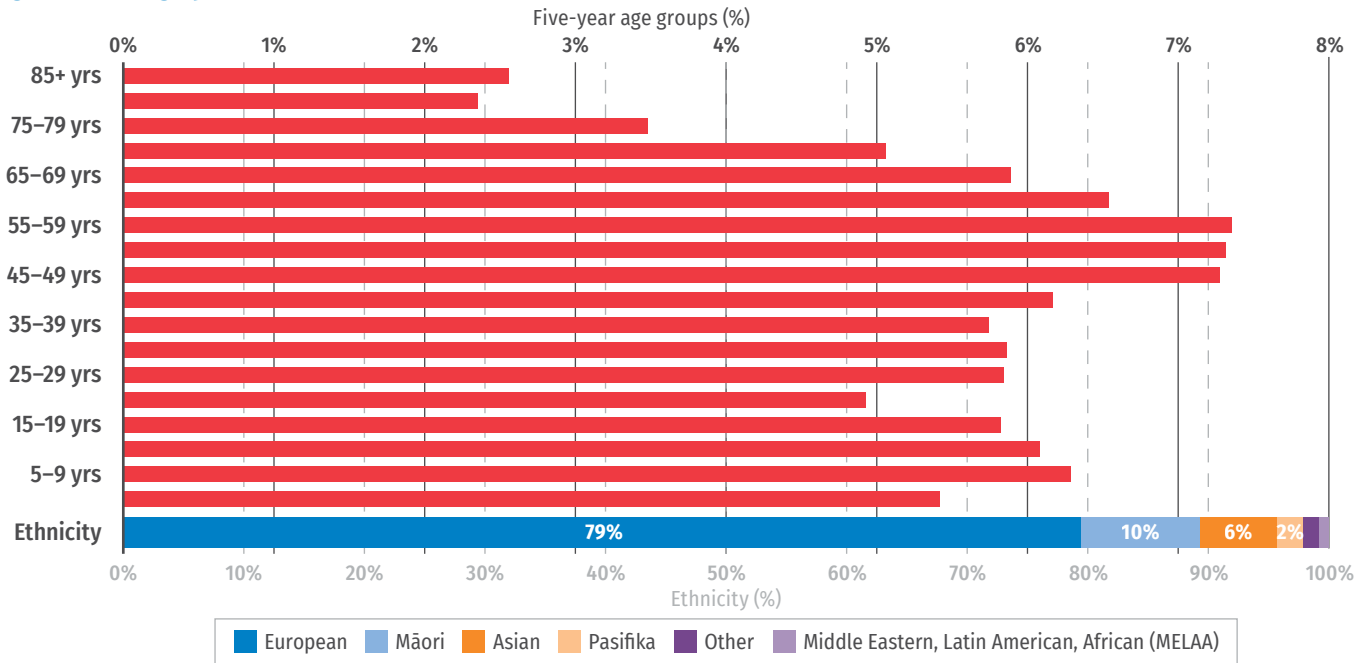
Thames' aspirations include secure and affordable housing for all, a revitalised main street with new amenities, improved healthcare services in rural areas, reduced crime rates, empowered youth engagement and enhanced employment opportunities with fair wages. Thames aspires to create an inclusive, safe and thriving environment that values the wellbeing of all its locals.

NELSON (WHAKATŪ)

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Nelson, nestled at the top of the South Island, is a picturesque city known for its stunning natural landscapes and vibrant arts scene. The estimated residential population of Nelson is approximately 54,500 (June 2022).⁶ The population demographics shown in Figure 18 show its ethnic makeup, with European residents comprising the majority at 79 percent, followed by Māori at 10 percent, Asian at 6 percent and Pasifika at 2 percent.

Figure 18: Demographics of Nelson



With a median age of 43.3 years, Nelson’s age demographic distribution is relatively balanced, with a stable population across different age groups. This indicates that Nelson is a growing community. About 60 percent of Nelson’s residents have called the city home for over a decade, reflecting a strong sense of community and belonging.

NELSON’S ATTRIBUTES: What do you like about your local community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The primary strength of Nelson, according to locals, is its **people (70%)**, who were described as **friendly (25%)**, **supportive (10%)**, **caring (5%)** and **close-knit (10%)**. Nelson has a strong sense of community which

was seen as a key contributor to the overall safety of the area. Additionally, locals discussed that the natural beauty and **environment (35%)** of Nelson—its rivers, beaches and mountains—was a key attribute. Nelson’s small **size (20%)**, meant that there was an ease of **accessibility (12%)** and convenience in getting to different facilities and **amenities (15%)**. Other positive factors mentioned included the vibrant arts and culture scene, community support from different organisations and proximity to family.

17-24 years old: *‘Relatively close-knit town, lots of people know one another.’*

25-34 years old: *‘It’s small enough that you always see someone you know.’*

‘It feels like a good balance of lively but not bustling.’

35–44 years old: *'Friendly neighbours. Close to parks and reserves.'*

'Accessibility, close by.'

45–54 years old: *'It's home.'*

'The facilities for people in and out and about in the countryside, beaches, walking areas close to shops.'

55–64 years old: *'Friendly, accessible, the beach and walking trails.'*

'People care about others, the members in the community.'

65–74 years old: *'I feel it's safe and there is a sense of community.'*

'Everything is accessible.'

75+ years old: *'The general positivity and friendliness of people.'*

'User-friendly, free from extremes and weather, friendly neighbourhood without gangs.'

KEY INFORMANTS

Nelson has a close-knit community where people are connected and work together, which is different from big cities where people can feel isolated. There are many volunteers and community groups that help with different things like health and social services, showing strong support within the community. Nelson is small and it's easy for people to access services and resources. There are lots of fun things to do in Nelson, like outdoor activities, which bring people together.

NELSON'S CHALLENGES: What are some of the challenges your community faces?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The primary challenge locals discussed was around **housing (52%)**, with problems such as a shortage of housing, unaffordable housing prices for both buying and **renting (15%)**, the difficulty in finding safe and dry housing, **homelessness (13%)** and lack of housing for **seniors (8%)**. Many voiced concerns about the rising **cost of living (35%)**, particularly around the increasing cost of **food (15%)** and petrol. These challenges are compounded by the housing crisis and low **wages (10%)**. Locals discussed that wages often struggle to keep pace with these expenses, leading to increasing **poverty (13%)** levels. One respondent stated that Nelson has sunshine wages that unfortunately lead to financial hardship. Sunshine wages are where people get paid lower wages because of what they gain in lifestyle. Locals also discussed challenges related to **youth (15%)**, particularly concerns about a lack of opportunities and activities, which can lead to antisocial behaviour and disengagement from the community. Locals discussed challenges around increasing levels of **crime (18%)**, gang presence, drugs and a lack of law and order.

Transportation (22%) issues, such as traffic congestion and a lack of public transport, are a concern for locals as this impacts daily commutes and contributes to environmental challenges. Locals discussed this being due to a lack of investment in **infrastructure (11%)** that has not been able to keep up with the growing population. Locals also highlighted issues related to **inequality (15%)**, including income disparities, racism and discrimination. **Healthcare (12%)** access, especially long waiting times to see a GP, is also a key challenge. Other challenges the community mentioned included the lack of investment in the community, the city centre's appeal, litter and untidiness and the need for more public spaces like parks and community facilities.

Been in community for <2 years: *'A dying central city, not enough for kids to do.'*

'Major traffic jams for commuters getting in and out of Nelson at peak times.'

Been in community for 2–5 years: *'Traffic congestion and poor understanding of NZ road rules.'*

'The CBD is unappealing and hard to get around compared to Richmond.'

Been in community for 5–10 years: *'Housing shortages, high-cost housing, aged population, access to medical care.'*

Been in community for 10+ years: *'Cost of living, transport, infrastructure.'*

'The rate of beneficiaries.'

KEY INFORMANTS

The key challenge for locals in Nelson is housing affordability, where high rental and house prices coupled with low wages strain locals financially. This affordability crisis has ripple effects on health outcomes, as inadequate housing conditions lead to adverse physical and social impacts on individuals, resulting in reduced quality of life and limited social interactions. Homelessness is a key concern, often tied to challenges in mental health services. The growing elderly population presents social connectedness and wellbeing challenges.

Table 8: The Nelson community and my wellbeing

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A
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'I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY PHYSICAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY, (EG, HEALTH, FOOD, HOUSING).'

<p>17.4% <i>'Always get help from WINZ when rent increases.'</i></p>	<p>42% <i>'I believe I have access to these things because my husband and I both now earn reasonable wages. This is not the case for many others.'</i></p>	<p>21.7% <i>'I've on occasion had to ask for food assistance and the response hasn't always been a pleasant one.'</i></p>	<p>10.1% <i>'Housing is a major need across all socio-economic groups. Healthcare provision is worsening.'</i></p>	<p>4.3% <i>'I live rurally, I feel forgotten.'</i></p>	<p>4.3% <i>'I do know where to go if I needed to.'</i></p>
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KEY INFORMANTS: Housing quality and affordability are major concerns, with many living in substandard conditions or even resorting to sleeping in cars due to the shortage of suitable accommodation. Access to affordable food is also problematic, exacerbated by high food costs relative to income levels. Homelessness is a prominent issue, affecting both local individuals with mental health problems and transient populations, including agricultural workers who often follow seasonal work patterns.

'I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY, (EG, ANXIETY, HAPPINESS, STRESS).'

<p>14.5%</p>	<p>43.5% <i>'I go for a run in the beautiful hills or wonderful beaches for my mental health.'</i></p>	<p>23.2%</p>	<p>10.1% <i>'There is some free counselling available, but there is often a long wait, often they are a counsellor that is still training and don't necessarily have the needed experience, and private options are not affordable.'</i></p>	<p>7.2% <i>'Mental health hospital services are horrible. People are dying because of their poor quality of service. Nelson has the highest seclusion rate and has no interest in doing anything to improve. Suicidal people are getting turned away. People are asking for help and are not getting it. Look into stats. People that have completed suicide usually have sought help within 24–72 hours. However, no one is talking about it. People often feel judged, unheard and berated for feeling suicidal.'</i></p>
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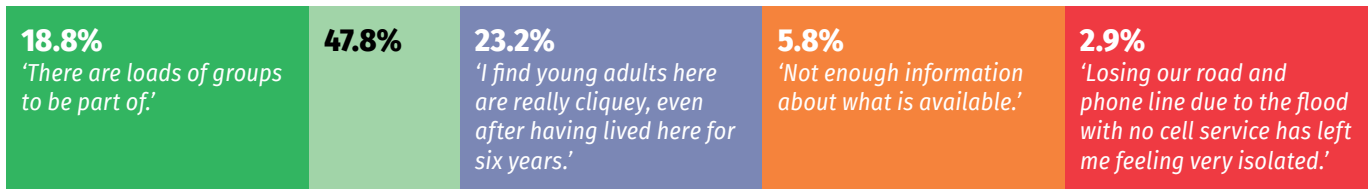
KEY INFORMANTS: While support services exist, they struggle to meet the increasing demand, impacting both older adults and youth. There’s a need to address the capacity gap and provide better support for individuals with serious mental health issues, particularly early interventions in the community.

**‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SPIRITUAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’
(EG, FAITH, MEDITATION).**



KEY INFORMANTS: The area is well-resourced with various avenues for spiritual assistance. However, traditional church models face challenges. Declining attendance, an aging demographic and mistrust due to past issues and stances on social topics have created a disconnect between churches and the community.

**‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SOCIAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’
(EG, FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY).**



KEY INFORMANTS: While there is potential for growth in this area, it currently lacks spaces for people to come together and socialise. The absence of these spaces hinders the formation of social connections. In addition, the impact of an aging population, students leaving the city and a significant migrant population means Nelson’s social landscape is evolving and adapting.

THE STATE OF NELSON

The following section provides an overview of data from public sources to illustrate some of the challenges that respondents discussed. The next section defines Nelson as Nelson City (Territorial Authority).

POVERTY AND COST OF LIVING

Table 9 shows various socio-economic indicators for Nelson City, as well as Trafalgar, Otaia (Stoke), Washington, Tahunanui and Richmond East, which is in Tasman but is included for comparison.⁷ The only commonality among these areas is the low median household income. Overall, Nelson City has a low deprivation index and fares better in most indicators than the national rates. This is a contrast

to Washington and Tahunanui which have the highest deprivation indexes, which is shown in higher rates of individuals receiving welfare support, a significant number of households not in home ownership, high levels of overcrowding and lower educational outcomes. These indicators suggest there is a dependence on rental properties and increasing levels of financial hardship. These indicators also show there are disparities and inequalities within Nelson City, even though the overall deprivation index for the city is low.

Table 9: Socio-economic Indicators for Nelson City and Surrounding Areas

	National Rate	Nelson City	Trafalgar	Omaio	Washington	Tahunanui	Richmond East
Deprivation Index		3	6	6	8	9	4
Median household income (\$)	\$92,354	\$77,226	\$74,774	\$71,138	\$78,753	\$57,950	\$83,848
Adult with no qualifications (%)	18.20%	19.30%	10.88%	25.68%	19.14%	23.66%	22.45%
Child education score	100	100	96	105	104	104	100
Consumption and purchasing score	100	104	92	106	113	113	98
Households with no vehicle access (%)	6.61%	6.06%	14.91%	8.95%	6.12%	9.12%	5.19%
Households with no internet access (%)	14%	12.88%	5.63%	17.31%	12.27%	24.32%	14.03%
Sole Parent Support rate (%)	2.36%	1.90%		2.44%	3.30%	3.57%	1.83%
Jobseeker Support rate (%)	5.51%	4.73%	9.36%	4.55%	6.05%	8.88%	2.87%
Means-tested benefit rate (%)	3.24%	3.91%	1.89%	4.44%	3.77%	7.37%	2.86%
Not in home ownership (%)	35.50%	31.40%	45.69%	34.64%	42.07%	46.48%	28.63%
Rent affordability (%)	30%	30%	31%	37%	31%	39%	32%
Households with damp and mould (%)	3.30%	1.85%	1.75%	2.06%	3.47%	2.29%	1.31%
Household overcrowding (Equivalent Crowding Index)	0.632	0.595	0.791	0.62	0.669	0.696	0.603

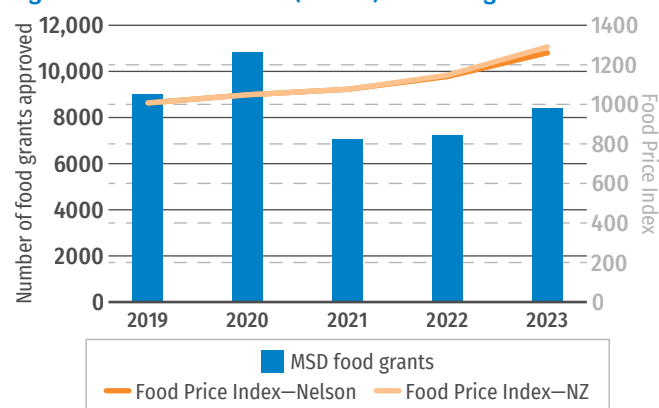
KEY: Worse than National Rate

Figure 19 displays the Food Price Index (FPI), which tracks price changes for household food expenses and the number of hardship grants for food²¹ approved by Work and Income.⁹ Since 2019, Nelson’s FPI has risen by 25.3 percent. While Nelson’s FPI is lower than the national FPI, it’s essential to note that Nelson’s median household income is notably lower than the national average. Furthermore, the average national income has grown by 23 percent during the same period, whereas Nelson’s average income has only increased by 15 percent. Following a Covid-19-related increase in 2020, the number of hardship grants approved by Work and Income declined. However, since 2021, food grants have been gradually on the rise, although they remain below the levels observed in 2019 and 2020.

HOUSING

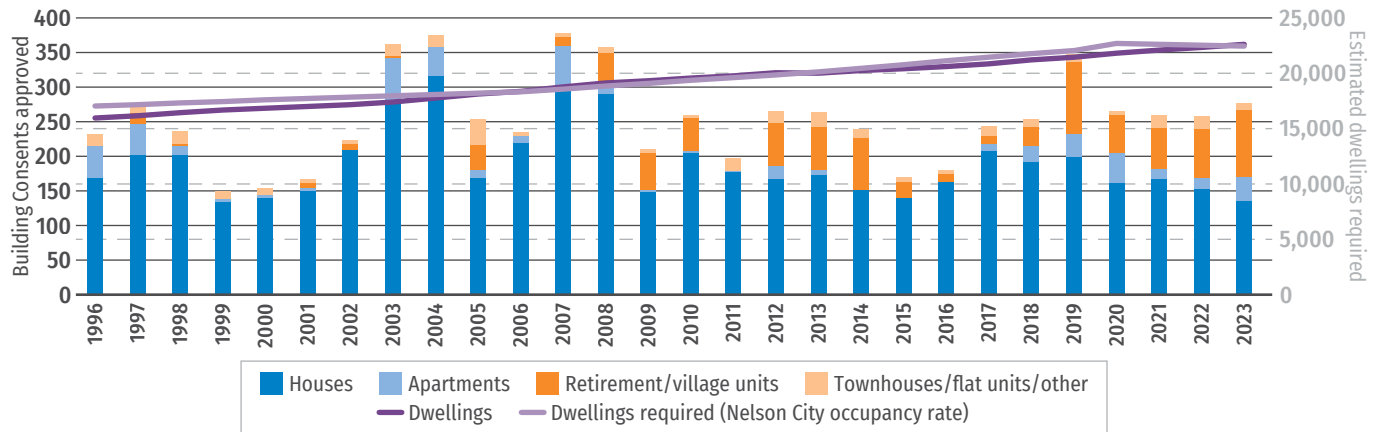
Figure 20 shows the change in residential dwelling consents in Nelson City since 1996.¹⁰ After 2008, there was a noticeable shift in the types of consents issued. Although the overall number of consents has

Figure 19: Food Price Index (Nelson) and food grants



remained stable, there’s been a significant change in composition. Previously, houses accounted for 80 to 90 percent, but now it’s 60 to 70 percent, reflecting fewer houses and more retirement village unit consents. In June 2023, there were 276 consents for residential dwellings, 49 percent for houses, 34 percent for retirement village units and 12 percent for apartments.

Figure 20: Dwellings and Consents approved for Nelson City



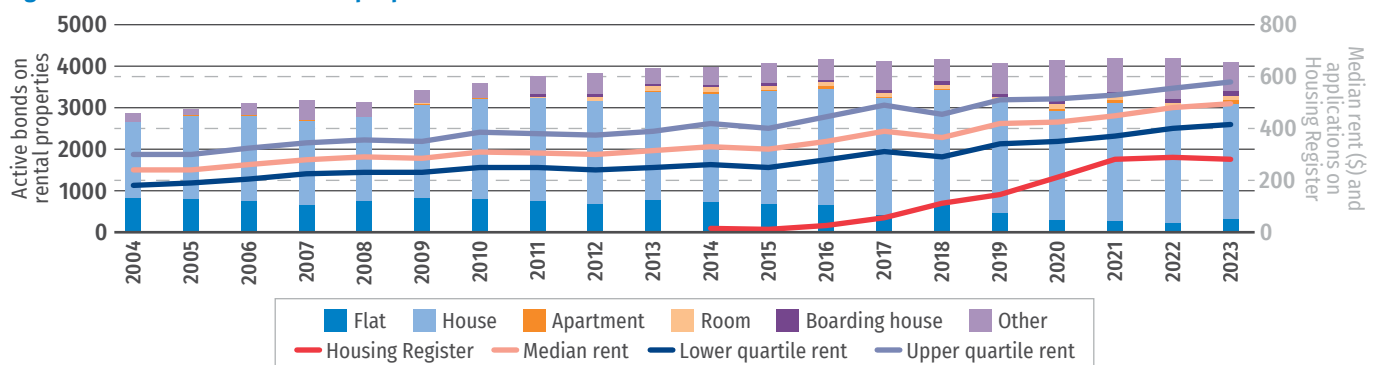
Additionally, **Figure 20** illustrates the estimated number of dwellings needed in Nelson City based on a 2.42 occupancy rate.²⁵ While this suggests adequate dwelling for the population, it doesn't consider unoccupied dwellings like holiday homes or Airbnb rentals. There are 744 active listings for Nelson City on Airbnb, with 37.4 percent of those listings for entire homes.¹⁴ With more retirement village units, the occupancy rate may in reality be lower, as areas with a higher senior population tend to have lower occupancy rates. Therefore, the required dwellings will in reality be much higher than estimated here.

Figure 21 presents insights into Nelson City's private rental market, showing 3399 available rentals in 2023. While the total remains stable, the property landscape has shifted significantly over the past decade.¹³ In addition to traditional flats and houses,

there's been a notable increase in room and boarding house rentals, highlighting the evolving housing challenges in Nelson and the need for versatile solutions.

Figure 21 also tracks rent trends over two decades, with median rent soaring by 106 percent to \$495 and lower quartile rent surging by 131 percent, disproportionately impacting lower-income households. Since 2014, rent for lower-income households has surged by 60 percent, coinciding with a significant rise in social housing applicants, from 15 to 282 for Nelson City, as shown in **Figure 21**. As of 2023, Kainga Ora owns 709 properties in Nelson City, having acquired 142 from Nelson City Council in 2021.¹⁵ While **Figure 20** may suggest that there is adequate housing for the population, **Figure 21** clearly illustrates that there is significant shortage and affordability challenges around housing for locals.

Figure 21: Active bonds for rental properties in Nelson



CRIME

Figure 22 displays crime rates^f in Nelson City (District) and specific Nelson areas as outlined in Table 9 (excluding Richmond) in July 2023.²⁶ Nelson City had a crime rate of 41.65 incidents per 10,000 people, up 48.5 percent since 2019. In contrast, Nelson areas reported a much higher crime rate of 115.14 victimisation reports per 10,000 people, showing a 68 percent increase since 2019. The primary crime types that occur in these areas are theft, followed by assaults and burglary.

Figure 23 presents data on the highest attainment levels of school leavers in Nelson City. It also highlights regular student attendance, which has traditionally been high but has experienced a sharp decline since 2020.²³ This decline is associated with an increased proportion of students leaving with only a Level One qualification and a rise in students departing without university entrance credentials.²² In summary, the trends suggest that academic attainment and regular attendance were on an upward trajectory, but the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted student outcomes and engagement in education.

Figure 22: Crime rate and crime incidents

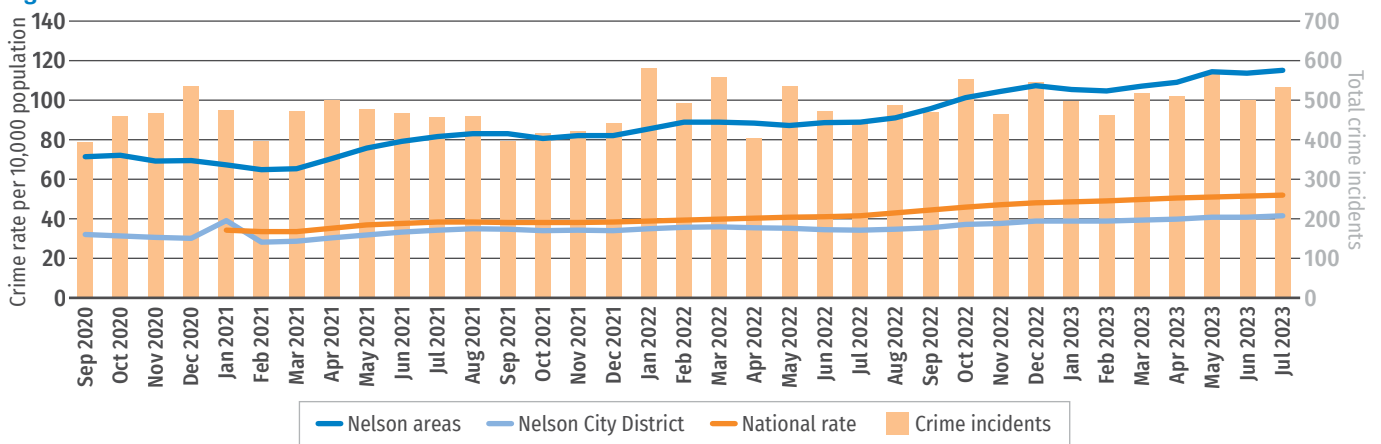


Figure 23: School leavers' highest attainment and regular attendance

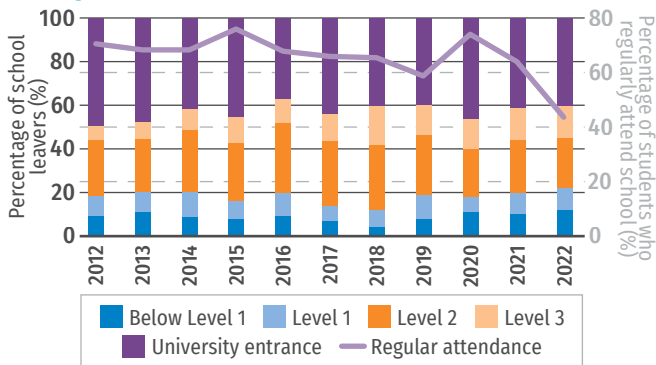
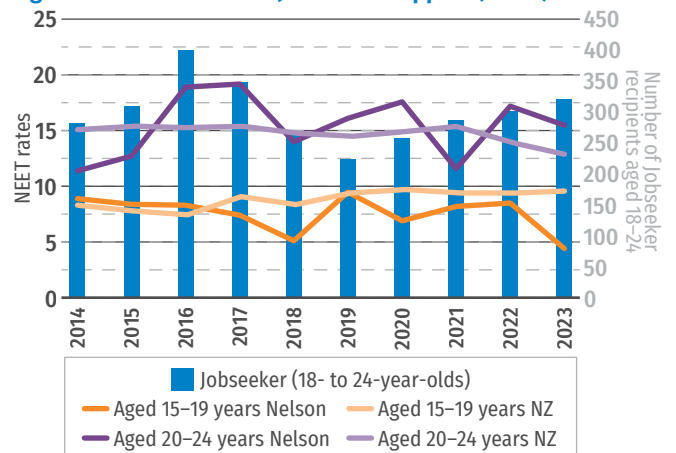


Figure 24 illustrates NEET (not in education, employment or training) rates in Tasman/Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast and the Jobseeker Support recipients aged 18 to 24 in Nelson City.²⁰ Notably, the NEET rate for 15- to 19-year-olds consistently stays below the national average, while the rate for 20- to 24-year-olds consistently exceeds it. NEET

rates align with the number of 18- to 24-year-olds receiving Jobseeker Support, declining from 2016 to 2019 but steadily rising since.²¹ These trends highlight challenges around further education and employment for young people in Nelson after leaving school.

Figure 24: NEET rates and Jobseeker support (18-24)



^f Crime rate is defined as the number of victimisations over the last 12 months per 10,000 people.

INVESTING IN NELSON: If you were elected prime minister, what issues in your community would you focus on in your first 100 days of power?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Housing (42%) ranks as the most significant concern, with proposed actions including making housing more affordable for renters and first home buyers, and providing permanent accommodation for the homeless. Locals would address the **cost of living (38%)** particularly around power and making **food (22%)** affordable and accessible, with a focus on healthy food. Locals would improve access to medical services and mental health support by ensuring there are adequate staff and funding of **healthcare (26%)** services. Many would reform the **education (17%)** system to ensure that all children have access to quality education and support systems, with a particular emphasis on preventing exclusion. **Crime (14%)** reduction is another key focus, locals would increase community policing and social wellbeing programmes. Additionally, locals advocate for fair **wages (12%)** and **tax (12%)** reform to address financial hardships faced by many. Other issues locals would focus on include improving **infrastructure (6%)**, support for the **elderly (6%)**—particularly around loneliness—and creating employment and education opportunities for **youth (6%)**.

'People need the power to improve their lives themselves, via full time employment and fair wages, good education and healthcare. This could be achieved through lower taxes, less central government and local authorities spending on consultants and vanity projects. Spend where it makes a real difference.'

'Making Nelson a more desirable place for young people to live and creating easier/more obvious avenues for treating mental wellbeing.'

'Pay equity for middle income earners who are being left behind. Economic stability for primary industry and trades. Commitment to housing for people of all income levels including additional support for first home buyers.'

'Provide permanent accommodation for the homeless.'

'Removing GST from fruit and vegetables. Increasing pay and conditions for those who look after our most vulnerable—like teachers, nurses, GPs, midwives and aged carers. Also introduce a basic income for all Kiwis. Everyone gets same amount. Scrap unemployment benefits, as this would replace it and be higher. Give everyone the dignity of being able to afford the basics.'

KEY INFORMANTS

The key focuses for Nelson are housing and health and addressing the cost of living. Addressing these issues would include increasing benefits, offering accommodation support and establishing community initiatives to lower food costs. Some issues like inflation are beyond local control; the goal for the community is to work within their capacity to ensure vulnerable families can meet basic needs.

NELSON'S ASPIRATIONS: In five years' time, what changes would you like to see in your community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

In five years, the hope for locals is that there will be improvements around **housing (35%)** with less homelessness, greater access to affordable housing and that everyone would have a safe and stable home. **Infrastructure (18%)** would be upgraded, with improved roads, reduced congestion and more efficient stormwater management, which will create a sustainable urban environment. **Healthcare (16%)** and mental health services would improve the health and wellbeing outcome of the community. There will be more **job opportunities (16%)**, **higher wages (15%)** and increased job security. **Young people (15%)** will flourish with more educational opportunities, vibrant youth centres, employment and robust support for young families. There would be more **climate-friendly (10%)** initiatives and practices for environmental sustainability. **Crime (14%)** levels would decrease, particularly in regard to drugs and gang-related crime. Some hope for

changes in government and improved **policies (8%)** that are fiscally responsible and make a real difference in Nelson.

16 years old and under: *'A motocross track.'*

17–24 years old: *'Health (including mental health) and a reduction in crime such as burglaries.'*

'Free bus.'

'A more lively, less aggressive nightlife. More gigs and spaces for young people to have a good time.'

25–34 years old: *'Sustainable living in the central city.'*

'More interactions between people groups.'

35–44 years old: *'Less suffering for those in need. More positive behaviour towards others.'*

'Less homelessness and people living in emergency housing. Lower incarceration rates for Māori and a true change in systemic racism within the justice system.'

45–54 years old: *'One nation with a constitution that guarantees the rights of all New Zealanders.'*

'Less gangs. Less graffiti. Better roading, with improved traffic flow.'

55–64 years old: *'Better infrastructure, less congestion and better stormwater management.'*

'Enough affordable housing, especially for singles. Better healthcare.'

65–74 years old: *'Better transport systems.'*
'Clean city, don't increase dog registration.'

KEY INFORMANTS

The key aspiration for Nelson was that there would be greater community integration and wellbeing. Some of the aspirations for Nelson for 2028 included wanting a better understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi in the community, affordable housing, improved transportation options and increased economic opportunities. Additionally, key informants expressed a hope for improved spiritual wellbeing and a strong commitment to fostering inclusivity, overall wellbeing, affordability and sustainability within the community.

SUMMARY

The heart of Nelson's strength has always been its people. In a city known for its friendly, supportive and close-knit community, the residents have fostered a sense of belonging that contributes to the area's overall safety. However, beneath the surface, Nelson faces its fair share of challenges. The rising cost of living, particularly in housing and food prices and in the context of low wages, weighs heavily on the minds of locals. Housing affordability and homelessness are pressing issues, as is the need for improved public transportation. Inequality, healthcare access and environmental concerns add to the list of challenges.

Addressing housing affordability and addressing the cost of living are top priorities, with calls for permanent accommodation for the homeless and support for renters and first-time home buyers. Access to quality healthcare and mental health services is also vital, as is reforming the education system to ensure equitable opportunities for all children. Reducing crime, promoting fair wages and tax reform are also on the agenda.

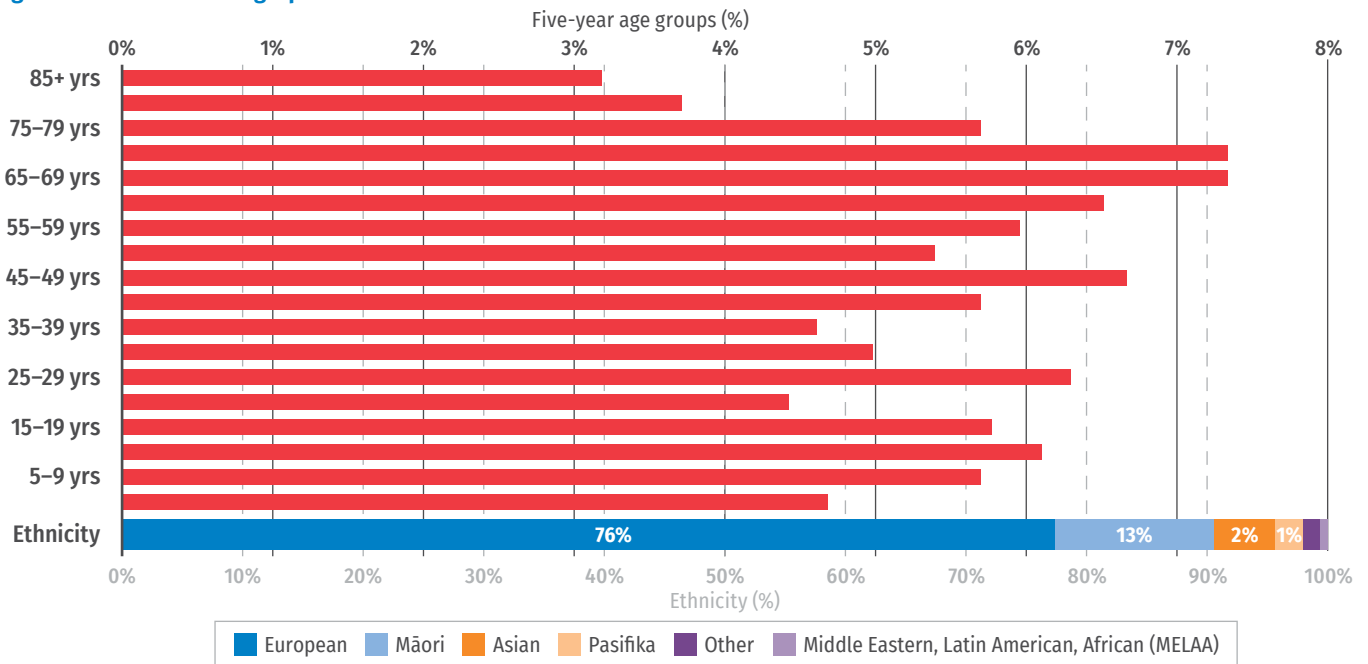
Looking ahead five years, locals hope to see reduced homelessness, improved infrastructure and enhanced healthcare services. Job opportunities, higher wages and increased job security are essential for economic wellbeing. Nelson has the potential to achieve these aspirations and continue to thrive as a close-knit, vibrant and inclusive community in years to come. Locals hope that leaders and politicians will listen to local voices and work together to create a brighter future for Nelson.

MOTUEKA

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Motueka, nestled in the Tasman District of New Zealand’s South Island, is a charming town known for its scenic beauty and thriving horticultural industry, particularly in the production of apples, hops and berries. The estimated residential population of Motueka^g is approximately 8379 (June 2022). Approximately 76.3 percent of residents identify as European, 13 percent as Māori, 5 percent as Asian and 2.2 percent as Pasifika as shown in Figure 25.⁶

Figure 25: Motueka demographics



Motueka has a median age of 46 years. About 58 percent of Motueka’s population are within working age (15–64) which is lower than the national average (64.8%). A significant portion of Motueka’s residents, about 62.5 percent, have lived in Motueka for over a decade, emphasising the strong sense of community and connection to the region.

MOTUEKA’S ATTRIBUTES: What do you like about your local community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The key attribute highlighted by Motueka locals is a tight-knit and **friendly community (62%)**, marked by warmth, kindness and **support (12%)**. Additionally, Motueka’s **small size, accessibility and convenience (21%)** are highly regarded, offering easy access to essential services and amenities. **Safety and peace (15%)** contribute to locals’ sense of security. Cultural diversity and **inclusivity (9%)**, along with the connection to Te Awhina Marae, have been

^g SA2 is Motueka East, Motueka North or Motueka West.

mentioned as a key strength. A sense of belonging and being **family oriented (8%)** is a key aspect of why locals like Motueka.

35–44 years old: *'The people and the neighbourhood.'*

45–54 years old: *'We know each other; friendly vibe; great local services, including library, local council offices, range of shops and cafes; safe, easy to walk around; clean; great beaches.'*
'Super friendly.'

55–64 years old: *'Having our Te Awhina Marae. The community. The physical beauty of the area. The renaissance of Māori language and culture. The library Te Noninga.'*
'Diversity.'

65–74 years old: *'All that is needed is easily accessible.'*
'As a community, people of Motueka support and care for each other.'

75+ years old: *'People are friendly, and it's a small area.'*
'Supportive people, beautiful area to live.'

KEY INFORMANTS

Motueka has a strong community spirit where people work together and support each other. Many locals are dedicated to making the community better and helping it grow. There are also many social organisations that help the community develop and strive to improve the lives of locals. Additionally, the natural beauty of the area, with its lovely scenery, makes Motueka a beautiful and peaceful place to live.

MOTUEKA'S CHALLENGES: What are some of the challenges your community faces?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

In Motueka, the primary challenge is the availability of affordable **housing (59%)**. This issue includes a shortage of affordable rental properties and a growing problem of homelessness. Specifically, locals have pointed out the lack of housing options for single men and senior citizens. These housing challenges exacerbate the ongoing struggles with the **cost of living (34%)**, which is a major concern for many locals. This is closely linked to challenges such as poverty, limited **employment opportunities (10%)** and low wages.

Safety and **crime (27%)** remain significant concerns among the community. Locals have noted issues related to gangs, drug use and general personal security. Additionally, access to **healthcare (12%)** and **mental health services (9%)** is a challenge for locals. The need for improved road **infrastructure (18%)** and amenities like a public swimming pool have also been highlighted by the community.

Been in community for 2–5 years: *'Retaining youth in order to grow and sustain the community.'*

'Housing shortages and the cost of living.'

'The health system is hard to access to see the doctor.'

Been in community for 5–10 years: *'Drug use in the community. Ice is running rampant through the younger generation.'*

'Lack of affordable housing. Few jobs for young women.'

'Accommodation housing, men's shelter, mental health overlooked.'

Been in community for 10+ years: *'Poverty, old houses in need of updating, economic growth (employment and housing opportunities).'*

'Housing at affordable prices to buy or rent, drugs in the community, mental health issues, poverty.'

KEY INFORMANTS

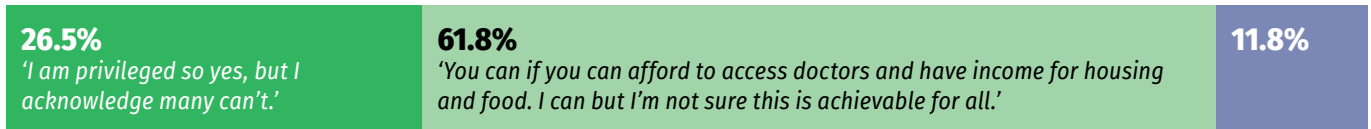
A key challenge faced by the community is the current housing crisis, characterised by a severe shortage of available housing. The lack of affordable housing affects both low- and middle-income households, leading to housing insecurity and causing some families to leave Motueka in search of more affordable housing options. In Motueka there is a lack of transitional and emergency housing as well, which results in homelessness and housing

instability. The dire situation is exemplified by families resorting to living in cars. Income inequality is another significant issue, with a noticeable wealth gap existing between affluent individuals and those grappling with poverty. Youth in the community are also confronted with limited opportunities, especially for those not interested in sports, leaving them with few constructive engagement prospects.

Table 10: The Motueka community and my wellbeing

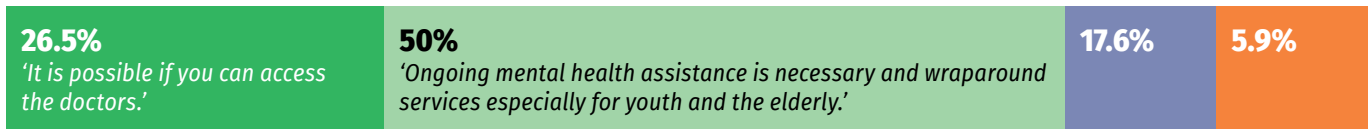
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	N/A
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‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY PHYSICAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’ (EG, HEALTH, FOOD, HOUSING).



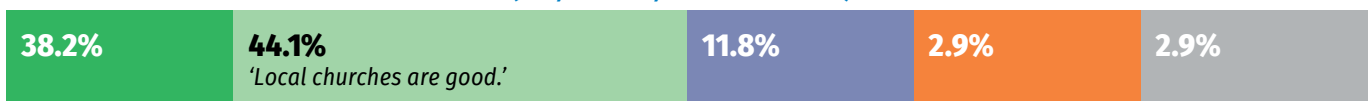
KEY INFORMANTS: In Motueka there’s a housing shortage, ongoing construction efforts to build new homes, and many existing houses are substandard and unfit for the families living in them. Without proper housing, fundamental needs are not met. Regarding food, the community has numerous collaborations and partnerships to address food insecurity. There are also healthcare accessibility challenges, particularly in securing local doctor appointments. While there is existing support, there’s a clear recognition of the need for further improvements particularly in housing and healthcare accessibility.

‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’ (EG, ANXIETY, HAPPINESS, STRESS).



KEY INFORMANTS: Addressing the impact of addictions on emotional and mental wellbeing is a pressing concern in Motueka. Substance abuse, especially methamphetamine use, is a major issue, often connected to family violence and intergenerational trauma. Access to mental health support is limited, especially for vulnerable groups such as men and disengaged youth. While counselling services and healing centres exist, there is a clear need for additional resources and trained professionals. Additionally, the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic have exacerbated these mental health issues in the community, highlighting the existing gaps in support for such issues.

‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SPIRITUAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’ (EG, FAITH, MEDITATION).



KEY INFORMANTS: There are numerous avenues of support for those seeking spiritual wellbeing. From a Māori perspective, there are established systems to nurture spiritual health and other communities have their own unique practices. The community also has easy access to many churches and other religions if they desire spiritual support.

‘I CAN FIND SUPPORT FOR MY SOCIAL WELLBEING IN MY COMMUNITY,’ (EG, FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY)

32.4%
‘I can, many are not able to.’

55.9%
‘If you have family, then generally yes.’

11.8%
‘I find this community quite insular and not terribly friendly.’

KEY INFORMANTS: There is support for social wellbeing, but it can be affected by isolation, especially in smaller towns with transportation challenges. However, building social connections, strengthening family bonds and fostering a sense of community is achievable if you know where to seek support. Many of these connections are formed through schools, the marae and community organisations which facilitate gatherings, annual events, activities and collaborate with social services and health providers, all contributing to a strong sense of community.

THE STATE OF MOTUEKA

The following section provides an overview of data from public sources to illustrate some of the challenges that respondents discussed. The next section defines Motueka as Motueka East and Motueka West as defined by Statistical Area 2 (2017) which was then redefined as Motueka Central, East and West in Statistical Area 2 (2022).

POVERTY AND COST OF LIVING

Table 11 provides a detailed snapshot of socio-economic indicators in Motueka relative to the national average. Motueka displays a higher percentage of adults without qualifications, alongside higher child education scores, suggesting possible educational disparities.⁷ Household income in Motueka is notably lower than the national average, while the means-tested benefit rate is higher, signalling financial challenges and limited employment opportunities.

Table 11: Socio-economic Indicators for Motueka

	National Rate	Motueka East	Motueka West
Deprivation Index		7	8
Median household income (\$)	\$92,354	\$61,237	\$66,022
Adult with no qualifications (%)	18.20%	27.34%	26.35%
Child education score	100	105	103
Consumption and purchasing score	100	99	102
Households with no vehicle access (%)	6.61%	6.55%	4.29%
Households with no internet access (%)	14%	20.39%	17.52%
Sole Parent Support rate (%)	2.36%	3.48%	2.99%
Jobseeker Support rate (%)	5.51%	5.25%	7.57%
Means-tested benefit rate (%)	3.24%	4.61%	3.79%
Not in home ownership (%)	35.50%	29.63%	27.51%
Rent affordability (%)	30%	41%	42%
Households with damp and mould (%)	3.30%	1.98%	1.95%
Household overcrowding (Equivalent Crowding Index)	0.632	0.588	0.676

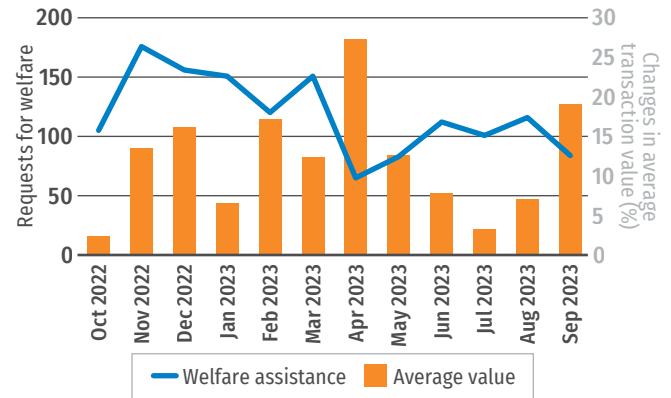
KEY: Worse than National Rate

Figure 26 presents EFTPOS transaction data and the number of welfare requests made to The Salvation Army in Motueka over the past year.⁸ The EFTPOS data examines the change in the average transaction value at supermarkets in the Tasman District compared to the same period in 2019, indicating the increasing costs of food as mentioned by locals. It is evident that throughout the entire year, the average transaction value at supermarkets has increased when compared to 2019. **Figure 26** also illustrates the number of individuals seeking welfare assistance for essentials like food. These trends underscore the growing challenges related to the cost of living faced by Motueka locals.

HOUSING

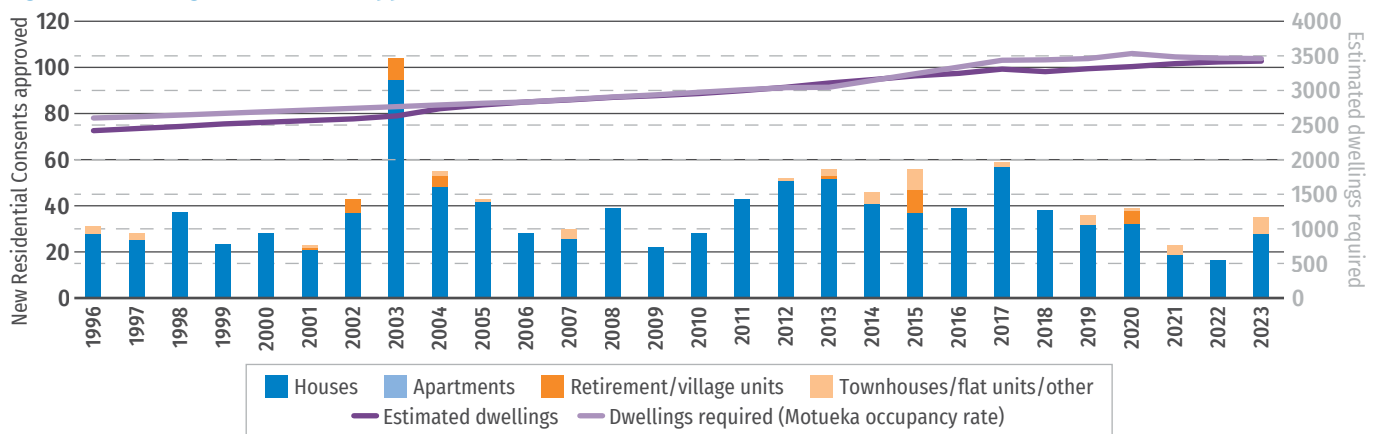
In 2018, there were an estimated 3276 private residential dwellings in Motueka—since 2018, there have been 187 consents for new residential construction. **Figure 27** shows the number of consents approved since 1996, which has remained relatively unchanged over time. The estimated occupancy rate of Motueka is 2.4 per household. Based on this rate and the estimated population, **Figure 27** shows the required dwellings to meet

Figure 26: Grocery store and supermarket consumption and welfare assistance



the needs of the population in comparison to the estimated population. There is a deficit of 35 dwellings based on this model, however, we do not account for houses that are holiday homes, Airbnb or residential dwellings that are not occupied. The Tasman District is a holiday destination and over the summer period accrues more than three times the total tourism spend in comparison to the national median spend.²⁹ Currently there are 350 Airbnb listings for Motueka and 117 (33.4%) of these are for entire homes. Therefore, we estimate that the deficit would be significantly larger.¹⁴

Figure 27: Dwellings and Consents approved



The housing challenges are further highlighted in **Table 12**. Home ownership has declined, which suggests that a higher proportion would be renting, however, rent affordability is 40 to 42 percent (an affordable rental would be 30% or less). The median

property value has been declining, however, it would still take 18–20 years to save for a deposit for a house, based on the current median household income which is significantly lower than the national median income which is \$92,354.

Table 12: Housing Indicators for Motueka

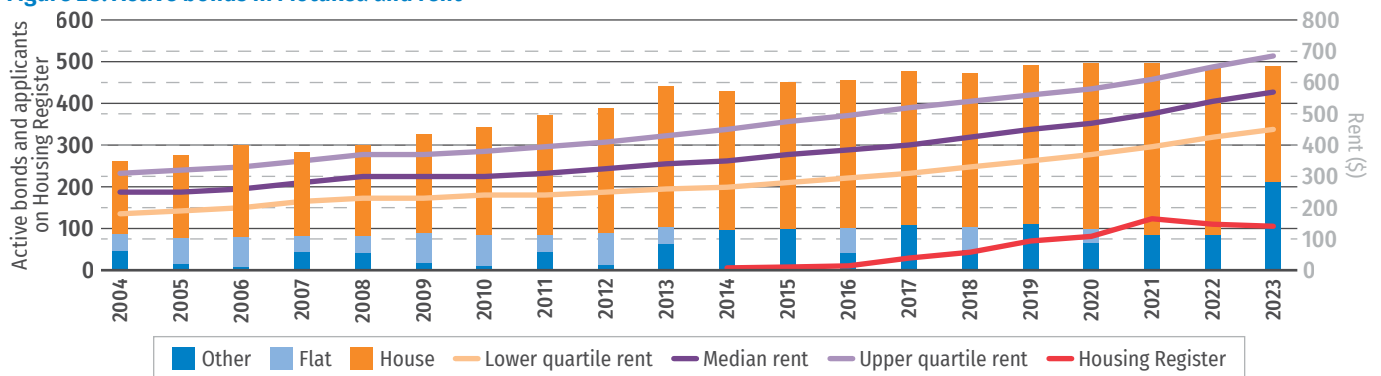
	Motueka East		Motueka North		Motueka West	
Median household income (2023)	\$65K	–	\$59K	–	\$71K	–
Home ownership (2018)	50%	▼ 22%	48%	▼ 18%	45%	▼ 9.7%
Median property value (Jul 2023)	\$758K	▼ 0.2%	\$629K	▼ 0.6%	\$639K	▼ 0.7%
Median rent (Jun 2022)	\$513	▲ 4.1%	\$458	▲ 3.1%	\$508	▼ 1.1%
Rental affordability (Jul 2022)	41%	–	40%	–	42%	–
Years to save for a deposit (Jul 2023)	20	▼ 0.2%	18	▼ 0.6%	19	▼ 0.7%

Key | Compare, 2013 Trending up: ▲ Trending down: ▼ Improving Worsening No change

Figure 28 shows the active bonds for rental properties in Motueka, currently totalling 489. Notably, the lower quartile rent has seen a significant 150 percent increase, reaching \$450, compared to the median rent, which has risen by 128 percent to \$570 since 2014.¹³ Over the past two decades, there has been an 87 percent increase in rental properties, but the availability of private rentals in Motueka has seen relatively minimal change in the last decade.

During this same 10-year period, the number of applicants on the Housing Register in the Tasman District has surged significantly, rising from seven applicants in 2014 to 141 applicants in 2023 awaiting social housing.¹⁵ It's worth noting that despite the increase in applicants for social housing, there have been only seven additional properties added to the Kainga Ora stock for the Tasman District, which currently sits at 172 homes.¹⁶

Figure 28: Active bonds in Motueka and rent

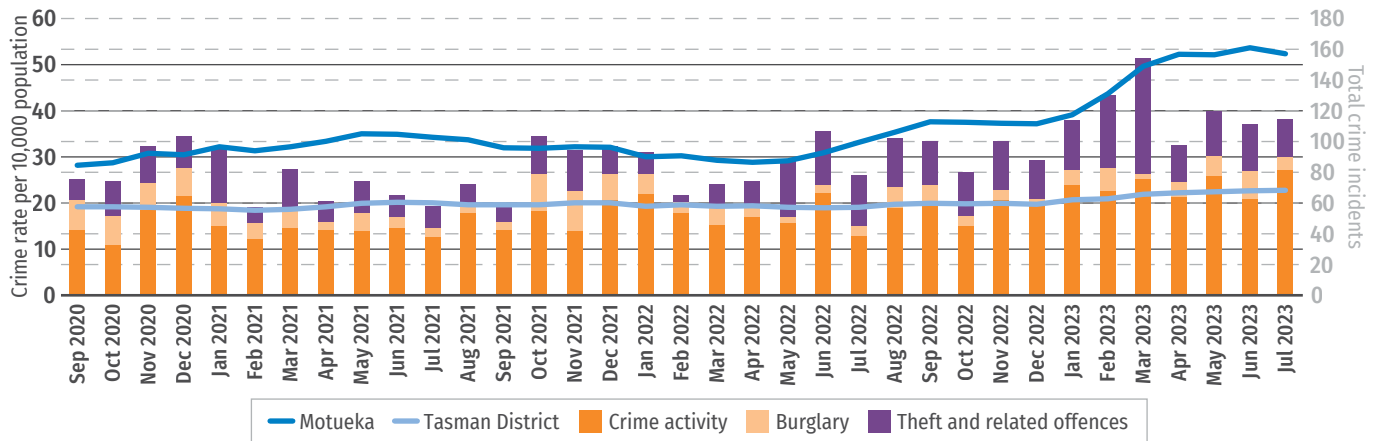


CRIME

Figure 29 shows the crime rate^h in Motueka which in July 2023 was 52.31.²⁶ The highest offence in Motueka was theft and burglary, which accounts for the increases in crime incidences. As shown in **Figure 29**, the crime rate for Motueka compared to the Tasman District is significantly higher, and since October 2019 the crime rate has increased by 89 percent for Motueka compared to 18.6 percent in the overall Tasman District.

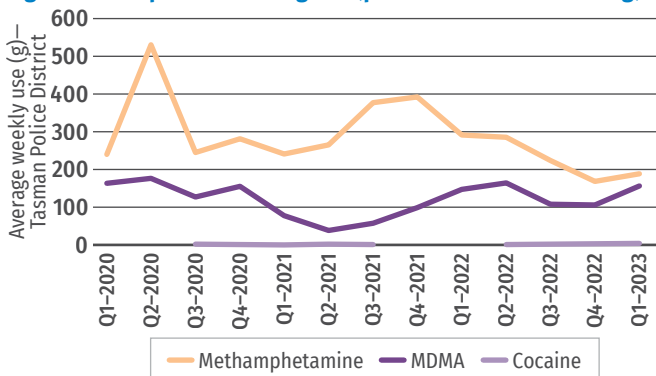
^h Crime rate is defined as the number of victimisations over the last 12 months per 10,000 people.

Figure 29: Crime rate and incidents Motueka



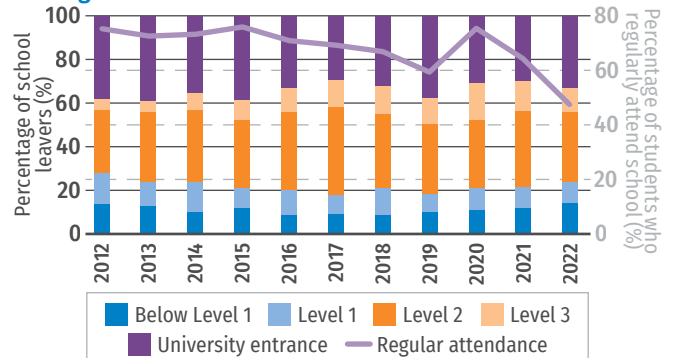
The Police Wastewater Testing Programme looks at the level of drug use across the Tasman Police District, shown in **Figure 30**.¹⁹ The drug of choice in the Tasman Police District is methamphetamine, followed by MDMA. The weekly use of methamphetamine has declined to 168 grams per week, which is the lowest it has been since 2020. This amount equates to \$68,208 spent on meth per week for the Tasman Police District.

Figure 30: Proportion of drug use (police wastewater testing)



students who regularly attend school has seen a substantial decline over the past 10 years, dropping by 37 percent.²³ These figures shed light on the challenges in education engagement and achievement within the Tasman District and seen across the country due to the impact of Covid-19, but also offers insights into the wellbeing and performance of young people in the Motueka area.

Figure 31: School leavers' highest attainment and regular attendance



YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

Figure 31 shows school leavers' attainment levels for the Tasman District alongside the regular attendance rate. Notably, the proportion of students leaving school with attainment levels lower than NCEA Level 1 has increased, reverting to levels from 10 years ago.²² Furthermore, the percentage of students achieving university entrance has slightly declined. However, the proportion of students attaining NCEA Level 3 or higher has increased overall. Most significantly, the percentage of

INVESTING IN MOTUEKA: If you were elected prime minister, what issues in your community would you focus on in your first 100 days of power?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Many locals would address the **cost of living (54%)** by addressing essential expenses like **power, food and rent (35%)**. **Housing (40%)** continues to be a key priority, with locals hoping to ensure that housing is affordable and the quality of housing improved. Also, for those on the sharper end of housing, locals would build a night shelter to home rough sleepers. Locals also would address levels of poverty through **job creation (10%)**, especially for **young people (20%)**. **Mental health (15%)** and holistic wellbeing emerge as significant priorities, with a need for enhanced community-based mental health services and addiction support. Locals would increase access to healthcare by employing more community nurses and implementing educational initiatives for students' wellbeing. Other areas locals discussed included improving public transport and infrastructure such as road improvements and better use of land. Locals would also implement fair taxation and ensure that there is sound governance so that there is no wasteful allocation of resources.

'Reducing the cost of living, ie, power, food and rent.'

'Mental health, self-governance and self-sovereignty, housing.'

'Improved housing, better educational outcomes, greater range of apprenticeships and investment in employment with opportunities for training and promotion. Increased quality housing (large and small homes).'

'More KiwiBuild affordable housing. Setting up school canteens for free, low-cost school breakfasts and lunches. More community-based mental health services and addiction services. Increase hospital staffing on the front line. Set up more 'getting healthy' and self-sufficient programmes like gardening and trade training for youth.'

'A bypass and a larger bridge. Men and women night shelter.'

'Accommodation prices, food, poverty and wellness support.'

'Better access to healthcare—community nurses, not necessarily GPs. Taxes for Airbnbs, utilise land not built on in town and ghost houses. Cap prices on energy/telecommunications/fuel prices with a view to having maximum standardised prices. Limit alcohol, tobacco and vape retailers. Use the Community Services card as a benchmark for more things.'

'More money making it to the families.'

'Stop spending money on unnecessary items.'

'Homelessness, more housing for the community and addressing cost of living.'

KEY INFORMANTS

In Motueka, affordable housing is a pressing issue, especially for single-income families, while job security and local employment opportunities are top priorities. Building a sense of community and belonging is crucial, along with promoting sustainability. Challenges exist, particularly for youth-focused community groups facing short-term funding limitations and concerns about youth apathy and anxiety in the face of global events.

MOTUEKA'S ASPIRATIONS: In five years' time, what changes would you like to see in your community?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Changes locals would hope to see are an improvement in **infrastructure (30%)**, including the construction of a swimming pool, enhanced facilities, a bypass road and a wider bridge. Moreover, there is a collective hope for increased accessibility to **affordable housing (35%)** and a reduction in the overall **cost of living (20%)**. Locals envision Motueka to be a happy, healthy and **thriving community (18%)**, underpinned by strong social connections and robust support systems. Hopes for 2028 include

the establishment of a **youth (15%)** centre, fostering collaborative relationships with mana whenua and promoting inclusivity to create a harmonious and diverse community. Furthermore, there is a shared aspiration that addiction issues will be addressed, poverty levels reduced, improvements made in the education system and healthcare, and greater support for the elderly.

35-44 years old: *'I hope to see a pool and better facilities.'*

55-64 years old: *'I hope to see te reo Māori spoken throughout our community, kindness, a thriving, diverse, healthy and safe community, a youth centre, a swimming pool, a collaborative and respectful relationship with mana whenua and an acknowledgment and comfort within the Treaty of Waitangi. A bypass and wider bridge.'*

65-74 years old: *'I hope to see more easily obtained housing, more self-direction and determination and a happy, healthy community in all ways.'*

KEY INFORMANTS

Hopes for Motueka are that housing is affordable for all in the community. The council would utilise more land to build more houses. Motueka would be a place that fosters resilience from a young age by engaging young people, appreciating diverse cultures and breaking the cycle of family violence. There would be greater support for those impacted by family violence, particularly children. There would be adequate investment in the community and sustainable initiatives to support the wellbeing of locals. There would be support around food, such as planting fruit trees in public spaces or an established central food bank to assist those in need.

SUMMARY

Motueka, as voiced by its residents, is a community defined by unity and mutual support. People here are wholeheartedly dedicated to the town's wellbeing,

with numerous social organisations tirelessly working to enhance the lives of locals. Yet, like any community, Motueka grapples with challenges. The key challenge is the scarcity of affordable housing, resulting in both a shortage of reasonably-priced rentals and a growing homelessness issue. These housing difficulties exacerbate concerns about the overall cost of living, a major source of anxiety for many locals. Safety and crime are also significant worries, with concerns about gangs, drug use and personal security. Furthermore, access to healthcare and mental health services presents hurdles, along with the need for improved road infrastructure and additional amenities.

Despite these trials, Motueka's residents' future priorities encompass reducing living costs, creating job opportunities and addressing housing affordability and living conditions. Mental health and holistic wellbeing take precedence, with a call for enhanced community-based mental health services and addiction support.

Looking ahead, infrastructure enhancements, including a swimming pool and improved facilities, top the agenda. Affordable housing and a reduced cost of living are paramount. Aspirations include establishing a youth centre, fostering collaborative bonds with mana whenua and championing inclusivity to create a diverse and harmonious community.

APPENDIX

Dot Socio-Economic Deprivation Dashboard Variables

Variable	What it means
Deprivation Index	Deprivation Index of the area (using DOT Loves Data's Dynamic Deprivation Index), where an index of 1 represents the least deprived areas and an index of 10 represents the most deprived.
Adults with no qualifications	The proportion of the population aged 15 or over that do not hold any formal qualifications.
Child education score	Using data on the educational attainment of primary and secondary school education, we assigned an education score to each geographic region.
Consumption purchasing score	We tracked the online spending of consumers and assigned a consumption score to each geographic region. This forms our measure of material deprivation. If most of your spending is on essential needs, your consumption score is high. However, if you allocate your spending towards lifestyle and leisure purchases, then your consumption score is low.
No vehicle access	The proportion of households that do not have access to a vehicle.
No internet	The proportion of households that do not have access to the internet.
Median household income	By inflation-adjusting census data, we derive estimates of the median level of household income within each geographic region.
Sole Parent Support rate	The proportion of the population aged 18–64 claiming Sole Parent Support within a geographic region.
Jobseeker Support rate	The proportion of the population aged 18–64 claiming Jobseeker Support within a geographic region.
Means-tested benefit rate	The proportion of the population aged 18–64 claiming Supported Living Payment or other benefits within a geographic region.
Not in home ownership	Using census data, we measure the proportion of households who do not own or partially own the home in which they live.
Overcrowding	By means of creating an equivalent crowding index, we measure the ratio of bedrooms required versus bedrooms available within each geographic region.
Damp and mould	The proportion of households that have significant levels of damp and/or mould within their home.

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