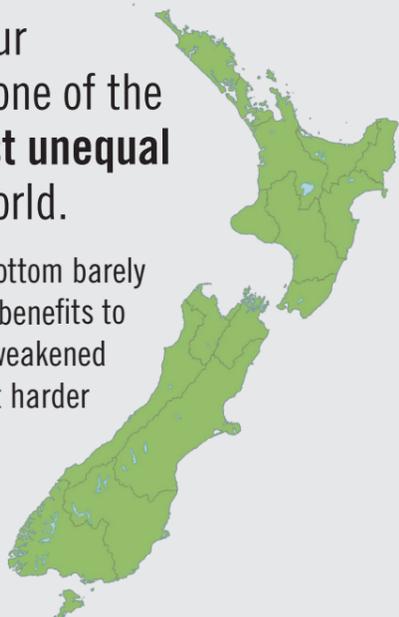


New Zealand has an inequality problem

Over the last three decades our country has gone from being one of the most equal to **one of the most unequal countries** in the developed world.

Top incomes doubled, while those at the bottom barely changed. We cut taxes to the rich and cut benefits to the poorest. Changes to employment law weakened workers' bargaining power so they found it harder to win pay increases.



What's the big deal about inequality?

This dramatic increase in inequality has had far-reaching impacts for our society. It has worsened the health, housing, education and opportunities of many New Zealanders and affects everyone, including the wealthy. For example:

Children

Twice as many children are living in poverty now than 30 years ago, and many more children suffer from **third-world diseases** such as rheumatic fever.



Mental illness

The rich-poor gap is playing on our minds: mental health problems, including depression, are more than twice as common as in similar but more equal countries.



What can we do about it?

Government can

... adopt more socially just policies to make a difference for those with the least. Policies that would help:

- **Raise welfare benefits** above recognised poverty lines.
- Introduce a **universal child benefit payment**.
- Invest in **good, well-paid jobs** and the training to support this.
- **Lift the minimum wage** above \$16 per hour.
- Implement a **broad-based, fairer tax system** – including wealth taxes (e.g. on capital gains), a financial transaction tax, and a high income tax band.



Your organisation can

- **Host a meeting** and invite us to speak about inequality.
- Encourage your staff, clients or members to **vote**.
- Join the **Living Wage campaign**: work towards paying employees enough to provide them and their families with the basic necessities of life.
- **Commit to a maximum ratio of highest to lowest paid employees**. The international wage standard Wagemark suggests 8:1.



You can

- Get informed at www.closetogether.org.nz
- Join the conversation about inequality and what we can do about it at facebook.com/closetogethernz
- **Talk with your networks** about inequality and encourage them to vote for policies that will make a difference.
- **Write letters** to your MP, newspapers and magazines.
- **Support local initiatives that reduce inequality** – affordable rental housing, microfinance, time banks... there are lots of ideas at www.closetogether.org.nz or just talk to us!



We'd love to help with any of the above. Get in touch on **04 473 2627** or paul@closetogether.org.nz

Imprisonment

We put **twice as many people into prison** than we did 30 years ago, even though crime rates have basically stayed the same.



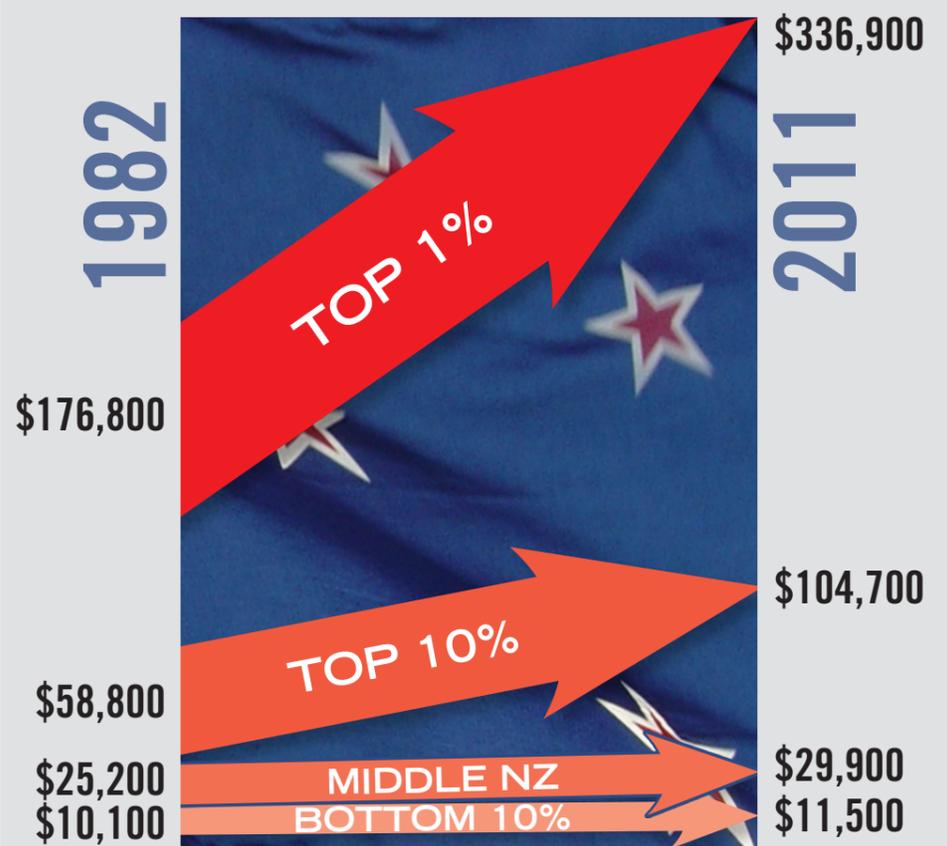
Empathy

Highly unequal countries have a **'money-empathy gap'**: the wealthy lose compassion for the less well-off, feel more deserving and self-interested.



The growing gap

Over the last few decades some of us have done much better than most. Do you think this is the way it should be?



The change in yearly incomes

2011 dollars. Adapted from Table 9.2, Perry (2013), Household Incomes in New Zealand, Ministry of Social Development; and Alvarado, Atkinson, Piketty & Saez, World Top Incomes Database, Paris School of Economics.

**In a more equal
New Zealand we'll
all be better off**

Find out why & how at closertogether.org.nz
or join the conversation at
facebook.com/closertogethernz



New Zealand Council of
Christian Social Services

**CLOSER TOGETHER
WHAKATATA MAI**

REDUCING INEQUALITIES