

Benefit numbers show a booming economy is not helping everyone

We are seeing the growing marginalisation of Maori, Pacific and mature-aged workers from the labour market even though we have a boom economy, according to Donna Wynd, research analyst for the Child Poverty Action Group.

Speaking at the Where to for Welfare? conference held on 21 March to discuss recent and proposed welfare reforms in New Zealand, Ms. Wynd used Ministry of Social Development statistics to demonstrate that although the number of unemployed has fallen steadily between December 2001 and December 2006, we have seen a change in the make up of those on the Unemployment Benefit. In December 2001 31% were Maori and 14% were 55-64 years old, but 5 years later these proportions had increased to 36.5% and 21% respectively. These increases do not reflect changes in the general population.

The same trend is evident with Sickness and Invalids beneficiaries, where numbers continue to increase. Dr Neil Lunt, a sociologist from the University of York, highlighted that as people age, the proportion of the population with disability increases. “Although the growth we are seeing in New Zealand and overseas is the result of many factors, it is certainly no surprise that we are seeing increasing numbers of people on Sickness and Invalid’s benefits when we have an ageing population”, he said.

The conference was organised by the University of Auckland Public Policy Group to raise public awareness about recent reforms to the social security system and their impact on New Zealanders. Proceedings of the conference can be found at <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/publicpolicygroup>

	Number of Invalids beneficiaries	Proportion identifying themselves as Maori	Proportion aged 55-64
Dec 2001	61,369	18.3%	30%
Dec 2006	76,816	21%	33.1%

	Number of Sickness beneficiaries	Proportion identifying themselves as Maori	Proportion aged 55-64
Dec 2001	36,191	22.7%	17.4%
Dec 2006	48,650	26%	21%

	Number of DPB recipients	Proportion identifying themselves as Maori	Proportion aged 40-64
Dec 2001	109,047	37.5%	25.6%
Dec 2006	100,309	40.4%	31.1%

Figures are from <http://www.msd.govt.nz/media-information/benefit-factsheets/national-benefit-factsheets.html>.

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