NEW ZEALAND FOOD NETWORK



NEW ZEALAND HUNGER MONITOR 2026

October 2026

Prepared for New Zealand Food Network

Ipsos Public Affairs

Ipsos

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Foreword

Hunger is an immediate, human experience most of us recognise, but its causes are complex. The 2026 Hunger Monitor shows that food insecurity exists on a continuum, from confidence in having enough good food to uncertainty, compromise, disrupted eating and reduced food intake. It may be brief or occasional, repeated or persistent. Whatever the circumstances, hunger is still hunger.

This second Hunger Monitor shows that food insecurity remains widespread in Aotearoa New Zealand. Almost one in three households experienced some form of food insecurity in the past year, with no significant change from 2025. It affects working people, families with children, people living alone and households across income levels. Changes in income, housing costs, health or family circumstances can quickly affect a household's ability to put enough good food on the table.

Food insecurity reaches beyond an empty stomach. It affects health, wellbeing, dignity and participation in everyday life, often forcing difficult trade-offs between food and other essentials. Yet much of this need remains unseen, with more than half of food-insecure households never accessing formal food support. Many manage quietly by relying on family or friends, changing what they eat or going without. The number seeking support tells only part of the story.

At New Zealand Food Network, we see the consequences of food insecurity through the organisations and communities we work alongside across the motu. We established the Hunger Monitor not simply to count need, but to understand it. This second year begins to show what is changing, what is not and where we need to do better. Over time, the research will help us assess whether our collective response is making a difference.

No organisation or sector can address food insecurity alone. Government, business, funders, community organisations and individuals all have a role. We must keep food insecurity visible, talk about hunger without judgement and ground our responses in people's experiences. We thank Ipsos for its continued rigour in undertaking this research and, most importantly, the New Zealanders who shared their experiences. We also acknowledge the organisations, volunteers and communities working every day to ensure people can access food with dignity.

The value of this research will ultimately be measured not by the attention its findings receive, but by what we choose to do with them. Understanding the extent of food insecurity is a starting point. Ensuring that everyone can reliably access enough good food is a responsibility we all share.

Deborah Manning
Founder
New Zealand Food Network

Gavin Findlay
Chief Executive
New Zealand Food Network

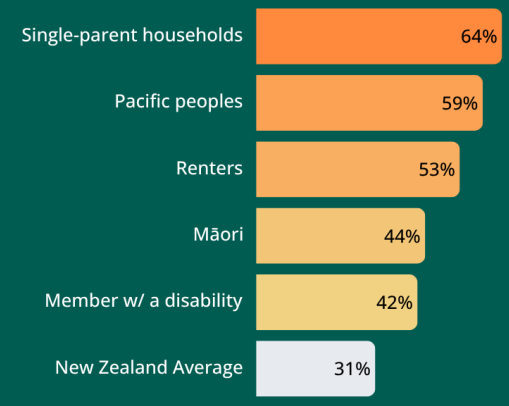
2026 HUNGER MONITOR
AT A GLANCE

NEW ZEALAND FOOD NETWORK

Food insecurity remains pervasive across Aotearoa

Nearly **one in three** (31%) New Zealand households were found to be **moderately** or **severely food insecure.** Households with children were more likely to be food insecure (43%).

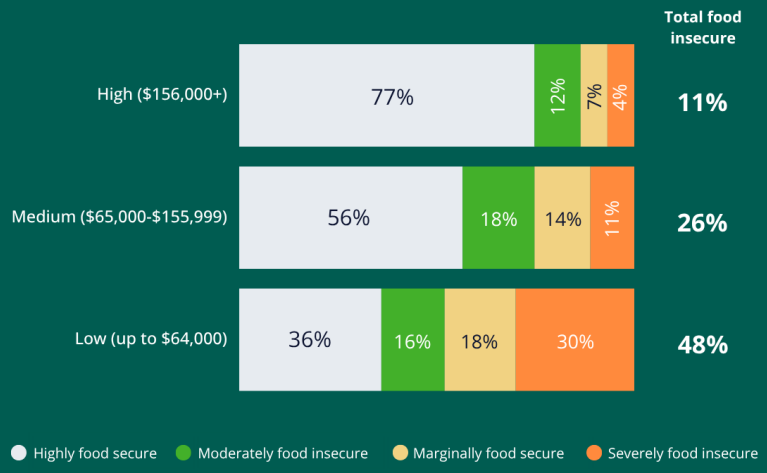
Some households are **more likely** to face food insecurity than others. Close to **two thirds** of **single parent households** (64%) were found to be food insecure



Pasifika households, people who rent their homes, and households with children were more likely to be food insecure **even among medium and high incomes**

Food insecurity is especially prevalent among **low-income households**. **Close to half** (48%) were found to be food insecure, with **30%** being **severely food insecure**

However, food insecurity is still felt **across all income levels**, with **over a quarter** (25%) of medium-income households and **one in ten** (11%) high-income households facing food insecurity



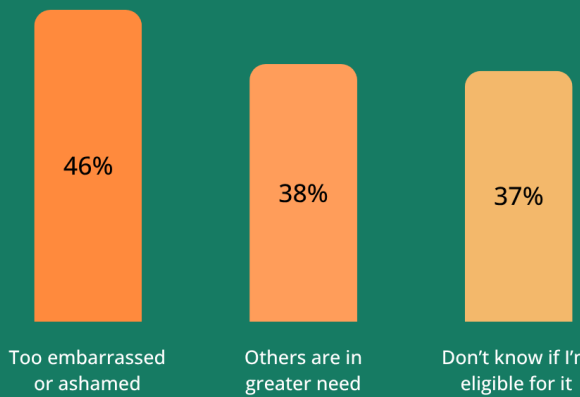
Several barriers prevent seeking food support

More than half (54%) of food-insecure households have **never received formal food support**

Embarrassment remains the **number one barrier** preventing food-insecure households from seeking food support from formal organisations

Uncertainty about eligibility is also a key barrier, with **more than a third** (37%) saying they have avoided seeking food support for this reason

Top 3 barriers to seeking formal food support



Food-insecure households reported poorer health

Both physical and mental health ratings were **significantly lower** among food-insecure households

45%
Of those who are severely food insecure rate their **physical health** as *fair or poor,* compared to **21%** of food-secure households

54%
Of those who are severely food insecure rate their **mental health** as *fair or poor,* compared to **17%** of food-secure households

Four in five (87%) food-insecure households **could not afford balanced meals** often or sometimes

One in five (22%) severely food-insecure pet owners have **skipped meals altogether** so that their pets could eat instead

The 2026 Hunger Monitor is the second annual wave of a survey conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the NZ Food Network. 3,000 New Zealand adults were surveyed, with results weighted to reflect the national population. A deep-dive module was also completed by 1,015 respondents from food-insecure households. See the full report for further information and results.

Ipsos

GETTING FOOD TO WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST

Get in touch!

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Full report available by scanning below or at nzfoodnetwork.org.nz/hunger

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