



## NATIONAL

# Fear of dangerous rift from wealth gap

SOPHIE SPEER    Last updated 05:00 17/02/2012

An increasing number of children are being abused and assaulted by the people who ought to be caring for them, according to the Salvation Army's state-of-the-nation report.

Over the past five years, it says, reported assaults on children have risen by 152 per cent and reported cases of child neglect have doubled.

The report, *The Growing Divide*, suggests a growing proportion of the population is increasingly being sidelined from mainstream economic and social life.

The Salvation Army said it feared "a permanent and dangerous fracture" in society if policymakers continued to concentrate wealth and influence in the hands of a privileged few.

The report says one in three Maori children is likely to live in relative poverty, compared with one in four Pacific children and one in six Pakeha children.

It shows some social gains, including falling rates of teenage pregnancy, declining rates of youth crime and overall crime, and more Kiwis paying down housing debt.

But it underscores a lack of progress in reducing child poverty and a big increase in child abuse and neglect by caregiver

The rise is attributed in part to the campaigns to address domestic violence, as well as the recent practice of police reporting domestic violence incidents to Child, Youth and Family when children have been present at such incidents.

Major Campbell Roberts, director of social policy for the Salvation Army, said the report tragically signalled "that we have few aspirations for our children and young people and have all but given up on any serious efforts to relieve child poverty, youth marginalisation or address the causes of crime".

"To have a large number of young people effectively shoved on the scrapheap defies logic when the social and economic costs long-term are enormous and at a time when we need as many taxpayers as we can muster as the retirement population starts to rapidly expand."

A striking employment trend over the past five years has been the rapid growth in workers aged over 65 (from 14.1 to record 19.5 per cent). Meanwhile, workforce participation by people aged 15 to 19 fell by 28 per cent over the same period.

### THE GOOD

Criminal offending by teenagers aged 14 to 16 years old at its lowest rate in more than a decade.

Serious violent crimes – homicide, assault, sexual offences and robbery – down by 3.3 per cent on record high of 2009-10.

Infant mortality second lowest on record.

Number of live births and abortions to teenage mothers down by 20 per cent and 12 per cent respectively between 2009 and 2010.

Gambling down 12 per cent from 2005-06 to 2010-11.

Real average household debt down 4 per cent in 2010-11.

### THE BAD

One in three Maori children likely to live in relative poverty, compared with one in four Pacific children and one in six European/Pakeha children.

Notifications of child abuse rose nearly 21 per cent in the year to June 30, a 140 per cent increase from 2005-06.

Prisoner numbers and imprisonment rates set records in 2010-11 for fourth consecutive year, despite falls in volume and rates of reported crime.

Alcohol availability 2.5 per cent higher than previous year's, and 6.6 per cent up on five years ago.

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