

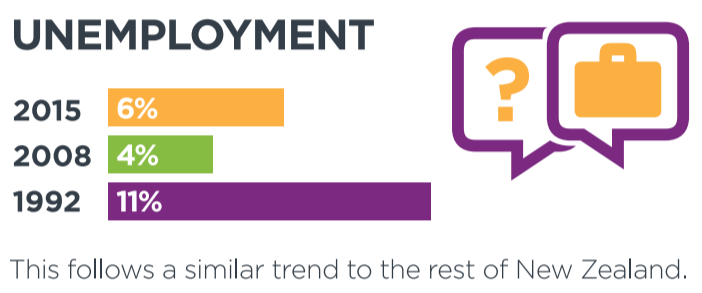
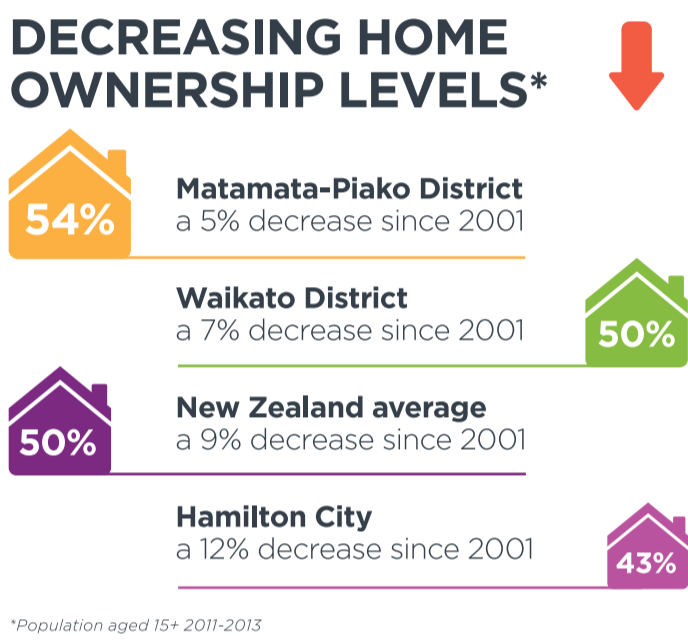
ECONOMY

The Waikato is the fourth largest regional economy in New Zealand, providing wealth and opportunity for many, but not for all. Our community's biggest economic concern is housing: its affordability, availability and most importantly its quality. Coming together with whaanau and friends in a safe and healthy place we can call home is something we all believe everyone should be able to do.



Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2015; Waikato Means Business, 2014.

DID YOU KNOW - Income inequality compares high and low incomes, and is a measure of the fairness of the society we live in. Inequality in the Waikato region stayed about the same from 2001-2013. However, income inequality in New Zealand got worse overall from 1982-2014, and it became worse faster than anywhere else in the developed world.



What are we going to do about housing prices? How can we build affordably?
Ngaruawahia Vital Signs community engagement participant

COMMUNITY VOICES - WE WANT TO:

- Address issues around **housing**: affordability, availability and quality.
- Reduce unemployment and increase job opportunities.
- Increase funding for community projects.

WARM HEARTS CREATE WARM HOMES

A community response is helping address the needs of a growing number of low income homeowners in unliveable houses.

Habitat for Humanity Central North Island General Manager, Nic Greene, says home ownership isn't always an indication that there's an absence of poverty, and over the last year the charity has seen a sharp increase in applications for Habitat's critical home repair programme for low income homeowners.

"We see people living in uninsulated garages and even garden sheds because they're warmer and more liveable than the house. When there's no power, there's no hot water either, so you can imagine how difficult it is to take care of the household tasks most of us take for granted."

So much can be done at low or no cost. "Fixing problems with people's homes can help to completely change their outlook on life. A decent home gives a family the space to grow and look towards the future with hope."

The houses Habitat sees may lack electricity or plumbing, have rotten or missing linings, unsanitary bathrooms, leaking roofs, no heating - or all of the above. In these situations, poor health is almost always present, and as a result the charity often first meets homeowners through Waikato DHB's Whare Ora programme.

Habitat works in partnership with homeowners to carry out urgent repairs, offering low or no-interest repayments to cover costs.

At the same time, they mobilise volunteers in the community to donate time and materials to get the job done. A social justice programme with Waikato Diocesan School for Girls has seen 100+ students from the school working in shifts to repaint local family homes.

For the people involved, the work completed by their community is life-changing, providing an opportunity to lift themselves and future generations out of poverty.



Nic Greene - Habitat for Humanity

How can we close the gap between our strong economic performance and our people who are most in need?