

Seven next most important actions to reduce health inequities in Aotearoa New Zealand

1. Equitable and fair fiscal and social welfare policy, ensuring that everyone has a minimum income for healthy living. Policy needs to be a balance of targeting and universalism.
2. Ill-health prevention that addresses risk factors contributing to health inequities, including making New Zealand Smokefree by 2025 (as per Parliament's response to Māori Select Committee), encouraging or ensuring healthy food formulation (e.g. salt content in breads and cereals, clear labelling of foods that are healthy and unhealthy, packages of taxes and subsidies to improve healthy eating), and stronger policies to tackle harmful alcohol consumption.
3. Maintaining and enhancing investment in early childhood. Child poverty rates need to be reduced. There needs to be greater coordination among services for children, and a visible cross-party agreement that determines the strategy for improving the environment in which children live.
4. Aligning climate change, sustainability and pro-equity policies, including programmes such as warm and healthy housing in deprived areas to environmental, health and health equity win-wins such as increased walkability of neighbourhoods and financial incentives that both reduce carbon emissions and increase healthy compared to unhealthy food production. Transport, trade, food and agricultural policies all intersect with respect to health and the environment.
5. Ensuring fair employment and safe and healthy workplaces, extending to include greater access to work for beneficiaries and people with disabilities, a low unemployment rate, and strengthening of occupational health policies.
6. Maintaining and enhancing Māori, Pacific and Asian policies and programmes, including health promotion, screening and health care services models that are culturally specific or tailored.
7. Ensuring health services are equitable, including ensuring a strong equity focus in prioritisation of health resource allocation, quality improvement policies and programmes, and improved information systems. Transparent monitoring, smoothing out regional variations in access, and on-going provider education and support are all required.