



2006 National Survey of Unmet Legal Needs and Access to Services

Summary Results for Northland

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Key Highlights for Northland

In comparison with national results, the following differences are noted for people in Northland:¹²

1. **Northland** is noted for a higher incidence of problems overall, as evident in Whangarei and other areas across the region.
2. Welfare benefit and family/relationship breakdowns are regarded as relatively more serious than over the country as a whole.
3. The region is also noted for fewer people seeking help or advice. Those that do seek help, utilise fewer sources on average than nationally, including state funded and free legal services. Awareness and knowledge of community law centres is relatively lower.
4. Personal visits are preferred over telephone access to services.
5. Specifically, people of **Whangarei** have a higher incidence of money or debt problems, family/whanau/relationship breakdown problems and other problems, the latter two regarded as particularly serious. Being the victim of a crime was more likely to be a causal factor for problems happening in the first place.
6. Consumer related problems, common across the rest of the country, are relatively less of an issue in Whangarei.
7. People in Whangarei are more likely to not seek advice because they want to keep it in the family/whanau. While a higher than average proportion of people are not trying to do anything because they do not know what to do.
8. In Whangarei, friends and family are more likely to have helped them to resolve their problems.
9. Fewer services in general are accessed, especially private lawyers, government agencies and health professionals.
10. The nature of any help or advice sought is more likely to be information only so that they can sort the problem out themselves.
11. People with problems in Whangarei appear more likely to have their confidence knocked.
12. In the **rest of Northland** (i.e. rural areas), there is a higher incidence of serious consumer related problems, though welfare benefit problems are also regarded as relatively serious.
13. The nature of any help or advice is more likely to involve wanting someone to help them deal with the problem or sort it out for them

¹ Note that some base sizes are relatively small and so caution should be exercised when interpreting the results for that area. *denotes small base sizes less than 30.

² No secondary urban areas were quota sampled, with main urban represented by Whangarei and the rest of Northland classified as Rural

14. Government agencies and health professionals are more widely used in rural areas than in Whangarei.
15. Those not seeking help in rural areas are more likely to try to deal with the problem themselves, and often achieve resolution before help is needed.

Table: Prevalence of Problems Aggregated for Northland and New Zealand

| Nature of Problem or Dispute | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Consumer related | 7 | 14 | 11 | 10 |
| Money or debt | 13 | 7 | 10 | 8 |
| Welfare benefits | 8 | 10 | 9 | 7 |
| Housing or land | 8 | 10 | 9 | 6 |
| Employment | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Family/whanau or relationship breakdown | 13 | 6 | 9 | 5 |
| Immigration | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 12 | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| | | | | |
| Nett have a problem | 35 | 35 | 35 | 29 |
| Nett do not have a problem | 65 | 65 | 65 | 71 |
| | | | | |
| Base | 190 | 210 | 400 | 7,200 |

Table: % Rating Problem as Most Serious

| Problem type | Main issues | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|----------------------|--|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Consumer related | Faulty or defective goods and services, difficulties getting refunds or replacements, problems with phone or power companies, banks and insurance companies | 10 | 23 | 17 | 18 |
| Money or debt | Not meeting day to day living needs, and not being able to make credit card or hire purchase payments | 14 | 13 | 14 | 17 |
| Housing or land | Disputes with neighbours, disputes with councils and local authorities and tenant disputes with landlords | 11 | 12 | 12 | 11 |
| Welfare benefit | Difficulties trying to obtain entitlements and difficulties finding out what benefits, grants, loans or superannuation entitled to | 11 | 21 | 16 | 12 |
| Employment | Unfavourable changes to terms and conditions of employment, harassment at work, and discrimination | 5 | 6 | 5 | 12 |
| Family/ relationship | Disputes over division of money or property with a former partner, difficulties with custody and access to children, domestic violence, difficulties obtaining child support | 25 | 15 | 20 | 15 |
| Immigration | Difficulties obtaining NZ residency or citizenship and sponsoring a partner or other family members | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Other | Traffic/driving offences and being the victim of a crime | 23 | 10 | 16 | 14 |
| | | | | | |
| Base | | 66 | 73 | 139 | 2069 |

Table: Main Cause for Most Serious Problem to Happen in First Place

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---|----------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Receiving incorrect information/being mislead/false advertising | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Other (non income) job related such as bullying, overwork etc | 5 | 5 | 5 | 9 |
| Faulty goods and appliances | 2 | 12 | 7 | 8 |
| Relationship break up, e.g. separation or divorce | 4 | 10 | 7 | 6 |
| Being the victim of a crime, e.g. theft, burglary, assault | 11 | 3 | 7 | 5 |
| Low income/wages | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Taking on too much debt | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| Unable to meet (re)payments | 10 | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| Illness or poor health | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Being overcharged for a good or service | 2 | 9 | 6 | 3 |
| Difficulties with a government agency or department ³ | 1 | - | 1 | 3 |
| Loss of/breakdown in communication | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Committed a traffic or driving offence | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Problems with neighbours | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Loss or change of job | - | - | - | 3 |
| Conflicts/disputes with partners, ex-partners, children or other family | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Alcohol or drugs | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| Being taken advantage of | - | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Difficulties with billing and poor/untimely service | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| A reduction in benefit/change in benefit status | - | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Not understanding the implications of credit contracts | - | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Death of a family member | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Suffered an injury or accident | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Irregular income | - | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Difficulties with council/planning subdivisions | - | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Domestic violence | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | |
| Base: All people with most serious problem | 66 | 73 | 139 | 2069 |

³ This covers a broad range of agencies and departments, including, but not limited to, IRD, WINZ, ACC and the Immigration Service.

Table: How Problem was Resolved

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---|----------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Solved the problem on own without the help of anyone | 14 | 17 | 16 | 28 |
| Agreement was reached with the other party | 38 | 43 | 41 | 24 |
| Solved the problem with the help of someone (other than mediator or family and friends) | 10 | 3 | 6 | 10 |
| The problem sorted itself out | 4 | 7 | 6 | 10 |
| After court or tribunal action | 4 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| Solved the problem with the help of family and friends | 26 | 7 | 15 | 7 |
| Gave up trying to resolve the problem | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Through mediation | - | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| Did nothing to resolve the problem | - | 9 | 5 | 2 |
| | | | | |
| Base: Most serious problem over | 30* | 39 | 69 | 1016 |

Table: Current Problem Position

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---|----------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Trying to solve it on own without help of anyone else | 28 | 10 | 20 | 28 |
| Trying to solve it with help of family and friends | 14 | 17 | 15 | 16 |
| Trying to solve it with the help of someone (other than mediator or family and friends) | 4 | 16 | 10 | 15 |
| Trying to reach agreement with the other party without court or tribunal action | 13 | 20 | 16 | 10 |
| Not trying to do anything because don't know what to do | 25 | 4 | 15 | 9 |
| Not trying to do anything because think it will resolve itself | 5 | 16 | 10 | 7 |
| Court or tribunal action is occurring | - | - | - | 5 |
| Court or tribunal action is about to occur | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| In the process of going though mediation | 9 | 13 | 11 | 4 |
| | | | | |
| Base: Most serious problem still ongoing | 36 | 34 | 70 | 1052 |

Table: % Intend to or Have Sought Help

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Yes | 36 | 39 | 38 | 44 |
| Maybe | 7 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| No | 57 | 58 | 58 | 52 |
| Base: Have problem | 66 | 73 | 139 | 2069 |

Table: % Type of Help Wanted

| Type of help wanted | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|--|----------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| Information only, so they can sort problem out themselves | 52 | 32 | 41 | 34 |
| Information <u>and</u> basic support (e.g. help with filling in forms, help with contacting third parties to seek information) | 22 | 41 | 32 | 35 |
| Someone to help them deal with the problem (e.g. talking to the other side) | 36 | 52 | 44 | 35 |
| Someone to sort out problem for them | 14 | 30 | 22 | 11 |
| Someone to appear on their behalf and/or represent them before a court or tribunal | 12 | 8 | 10 | 18 |
| Base: Seeking help | 28* | 31 | 59 | 981 |

Table: Services Accessed for Advice and Help

| Service Provider | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Leaflet, booklet or other publication | 4 | 4 | 4 | 10 |
| Internet site | 1 | 11 | 7 | 13 |
| Local council of other public authority | 4 | 15 | 9 | 12 |
| Community law centre | 5 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | 6 | 8 | 7 | 16 |
| Other local social services and advocacy organisation | 11 | 7 | 9 | 13 |
| Private lawyer | 8 | 20 | 15 | 22 |
| Lawyer doing pro bono work | 6 | 2 | 4 | 5 |
| Legal aid lawyer | - | 3 | 2 | 10 |
| Insurance company | 1 | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Government agency or department | 8 | 24 | 16 | 20⁴ |
| Police | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Doctor or other health professional | 13 | 35 | 25 | 23 |
| Mediation or reconciliation service | 1 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Member of parliament | - | - | - | 6 |
| Ombudsman | - | - | - | 2 |
| Friends of other family members | 34 | 47 | 41 | 34 |
| Trade Union | 1 | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Court desk | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Minister of religion | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Māori organisation | 12 | - | 6 | 4 |
| Average number of sources used | 1.3 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 2.5 |
| | | | | |
| Base: Seek help | 28* | 31 | 59 | 981 |

Table: Preferred Methods of Access (All people)

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Personal visit | 54 | 51 | 52 | 42 |
| Telephone | 32 | 30 | 31 | 36 |
| Through a web site | 7 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| By letter | - | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| By email | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Some other way | - | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Don't know/it depends | 4 | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| | | | | |
| Base | 190 | 210 | 400 | 7,200 |

⁴ Note: Some people are likely to have provided this response when they have received legal aid.

Table: Main Reasons Provided for Not Seeking Help

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---|----------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Dealt with it myself | 27 | 48 | 38 | 33 |
| The problem was sorted before got around to seeking help | 14 | 43 | 29 | 13 |
| Thought the problem would resolve itself | 10 | 33 | 22 | 11 |
| Did not think it was serious or important enough | 1 | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| Did not think it would make much difference | 3 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| Couldn't be bothered | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Didn't know what to do or where to go | 8 | 9 | 9 | 4 |
| Wanted to keep it in the family/whanau | 20 | - | 10 | 4 |
| Thought it would cost too much | - | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Thought it would be too stressful to sort out | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Tried to seek help or advice but they were unable to help | - | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| Was uncertain of my rights | - | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Thought it would take too much time | 1 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Didn't trust anyone | - | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Fear of government or official agencies/intimidated by them | - | - | - | 2 |
| The help or advice wanted was not available locally | - | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Too embarrassed/shy | - | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Confused by the legal process/intimidated by it | - | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Thought that the other party was right | - | - | - | 1 |
| Too scared | - | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Thought it would damage the relationship with the other party | - | - | - | 1 |
| Other | 29 | 9 | 18 | 20 |
| Base: All people not seeking help | 38 | 42 | 80 | 1087 |

Table: Impacts Reported by People with Problems

| Impacts of problem | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Stress related illness | 25 | 39 | 33 | 39 |
| Loss of confidence | 40 | 28 | 34 | 32 |
| Loss of income | 30 | 25 | 27 | 26 |
| Physical ill health | 16 | 21 | 19 | 20 |
| Relationship breakdown | 22 | 17 | 20 | 16 |
| Loss of employment | 20 | 20 | 20 | 14 |
| Had to move home | 9 | 10 | 9 | 10 |
| Violence | 11 | 5 | 8 | 6 |
| | | | | |
| Base | 66 | 73 | 139 | 2069 |

Table: Awareness and Knowledge of Legal Aid

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|--|----------------|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Aware of legal aid and know where or how to apply for it | 38 | 42 | 40 | 34 |
| Aware of legal aid but don't know where or how to apply for it | 44 | 47 | 46 | 51 |
| Total awareness | 82 | 89 | 86 | 85 |
| Not aware of legal aid | 18 | 11 | 14 | 15 |
| | | | | |
| Base: All people | 190 | 210 | 400 | 7,200 |

Table: Awareness and Knowledge of Community Law Centres

| | Whangarei % | Rural % | Total region % | NZ % |
|--|----------------|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Aware of community law centres and know where they are located | 14 | 14 | 14 | 23 |
| Aware of community law centres but don't know where they are | 25 | 16 | 20 | 25 |
| Total awareness | 39 | 30 | 34 | 48 |
| Not aware of community law centres | 61 | 70 | 66 | 52 |
| | | | | |
| Base: All people | 190 | 210 | 400 | 7,200 |