

Key Area: Promoting healthy ageing and improving access to services



Increasing trend



Decreasing trend



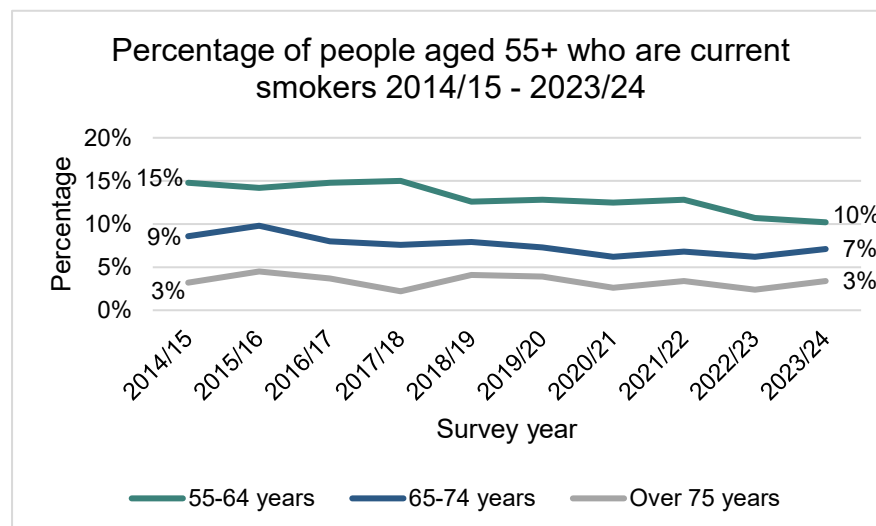
No change in trend, or changes are minimal/not significant

Indicators are signs of progress towards what the Better Later Life Strategy and Action Plan aim to achieve. Some figures in these indicators (marked with *) should be taken with caution because of small number of people sampled or counted. This means that changes may not be statistically significant, or the figures are estimates. However, the general trends and overall picture are still informative.

What we want to achieve: People enter later life as fit and healthy as possible

For these indicators we are looking at age ranges both before and after 65.

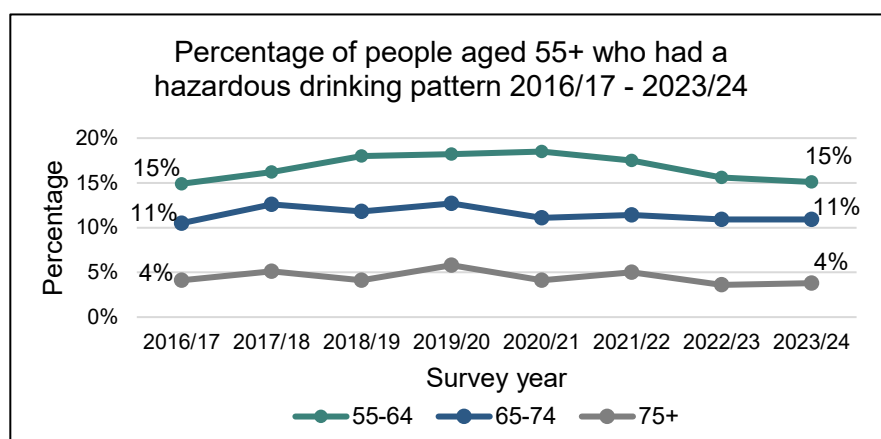
Indicator 14: The percentage of people aged 55+ who are “current smokers”.¹



There is evidence of a slow but steady decline in smoking rates across 55-74-year-olds, though only the decline for those who are aged 55-64-year-olds is statistically significant during the 10-year period. The lower rate for the 75 and over group may also represent the negative effects on life expectancy of long-term smoking.

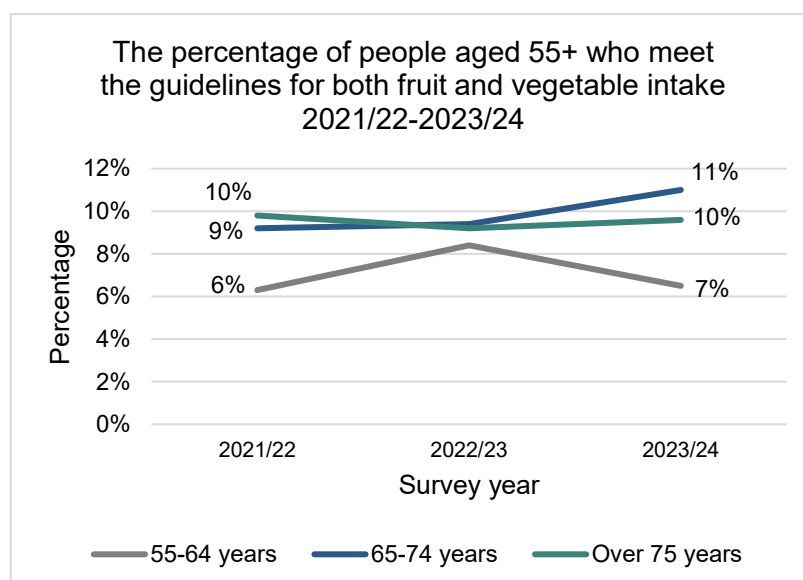
¹ A current smoker is defined as someone who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their life and currently smokes at least once a month.

Indicator 15: The percentage of people aged 55+ with a hazardous drinking pattern.²



The percentage of older people who had a hazardous drinking pattern has remained steady since 2016/17.

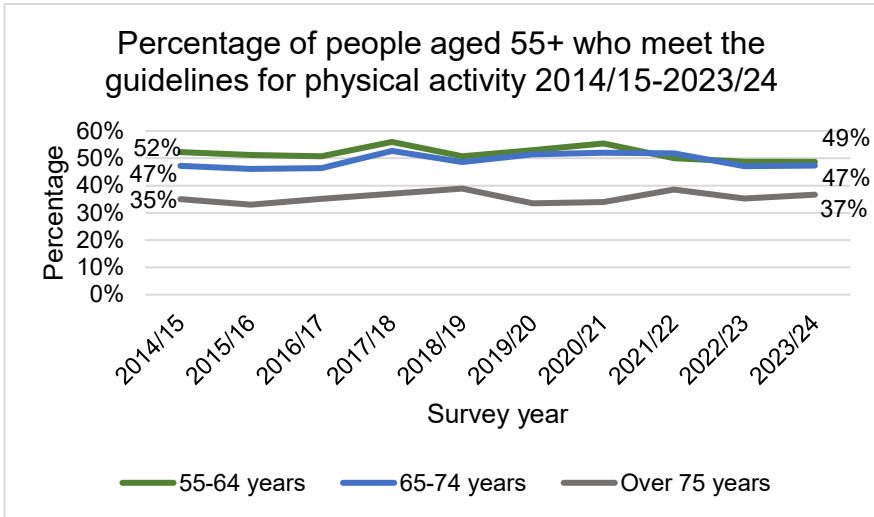
Indicator 16: The percentage of people aged 55+ who meet the guidelines for both fruit and vegetable intake.³



In 2020, the Ministry of Health updated its guidelines on the recommended daily intake of vegetables for individuals aged 15 years and over. Recommendations are now tailored by age and gender to better reflect varying nutritional needs. There have been no changes in fruit and vegetable consumption since the new guidelines were introduced.

² Hazardous drinking is measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test which covers three aspects of alcohol use: consumption (frequency and amount), dependence and adverse consequences. A score of eight or more indicates a pattern of drinking that carries a high risk of future damage to physical or mental health.

³ Men aged 51 to 70 years are advised to consume at least 5.5 servings of vegetables per day, men aged 71 and over should consume at least 5 servings, and women aged 15 years and older are recommended to have at least 5 servings daily. All adults are recommended to eat at least two servings of fruit per day.

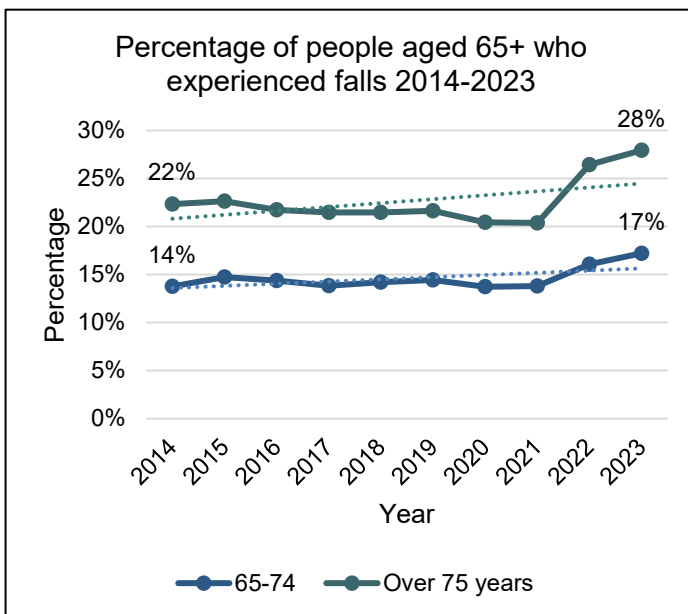


Indicator 17: The percentage of people aged 55+ who meet the guidelines for physical activity (aerobic only).⁴

There has been a small decline in physical activity (aerobic) levels during the period, though this may not be statistically significant.

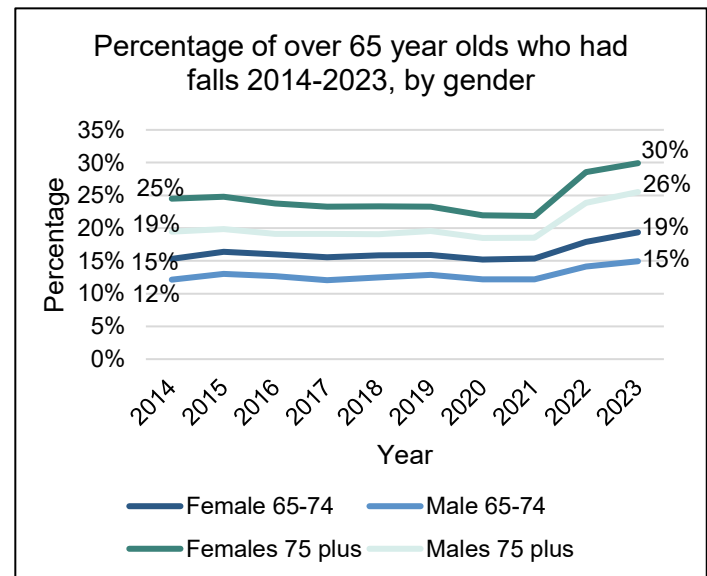
Around half of people aged 55-74 meet the aerobic component of the guidelines

compared to around a third of those aged 75 years and over.



Indicator 18: The percentage of people aged 65+ who experience falls.⁵

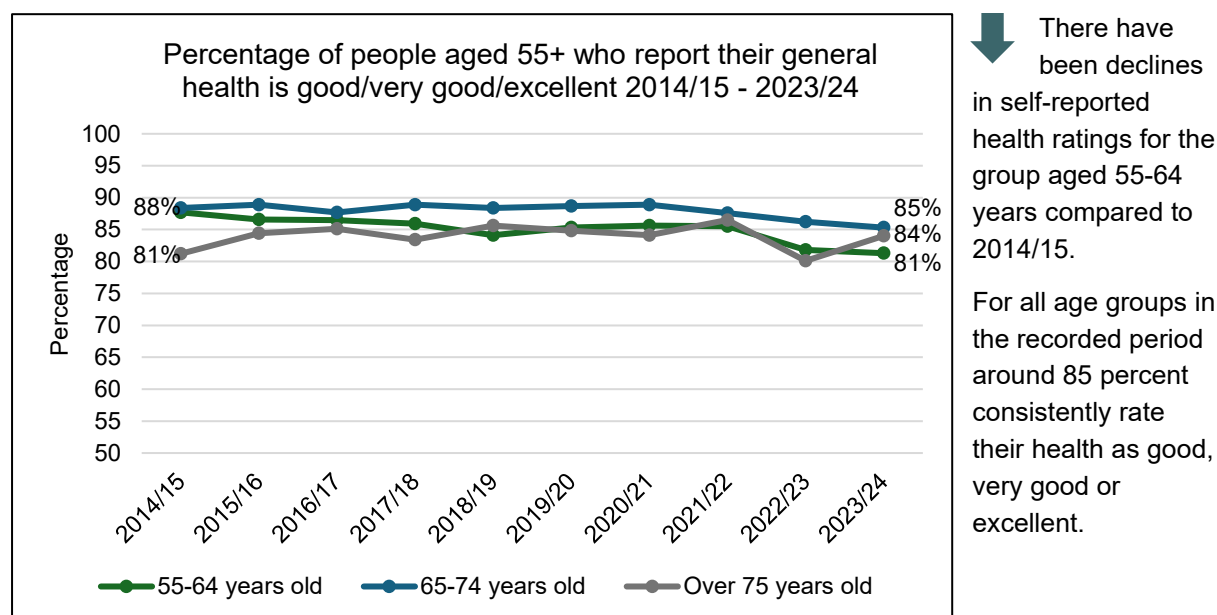
↑ This is measured by falls that are reported to ACC. The proportion of older people experiencing falls has been increasing since 2021. It is unclear what is driving the increase in falls, but it could reflect the fact that the structure of the 65 and over cohort is ageing. There could also be links to the COVID-19 pandemic, during which older people spent more time at home, were less physically active, and experienced reduced social interaction and connection.



⁴ Older people are recommended to do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity five days a week, as well as three sessions of flexibility and balance activities and two sessions of muscle-strengthening activities per week. Data is only available for the aerobic component of the guidelines.

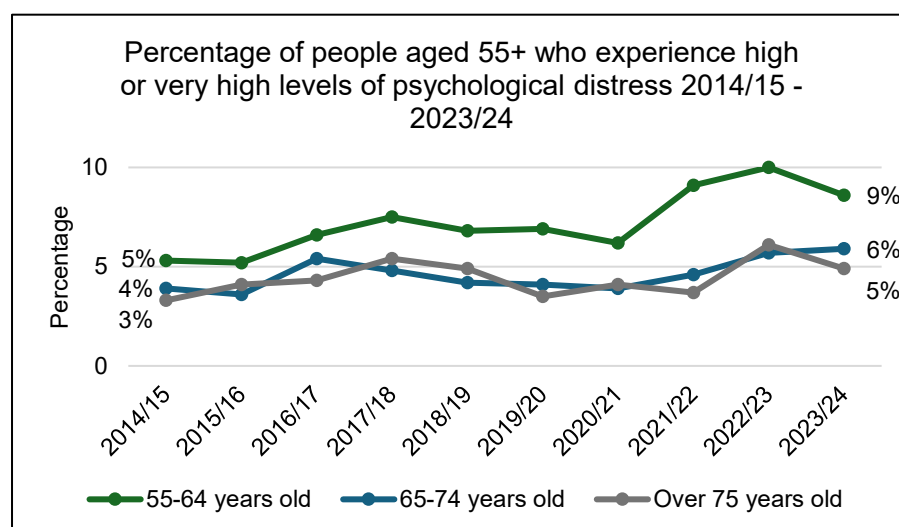
⁵ The data is based on Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and only includes reported falls to ACC.

Indicator 19: The percentage of people aged 55+ who report their general health as good/very good/excellent.



Indicator 20: The percentage of people aged 55+ who experience high or very high levels of psychological distress.⁶

There has been a slight increase in the proportion of New Zealanders aged 55 and over experiencing high or very high psychological distress. This is particularly noticeable for the cohort aged 55-64 years, with rates increasing from about 5 percent in 2014/15 to 9 percent in 2023/24.



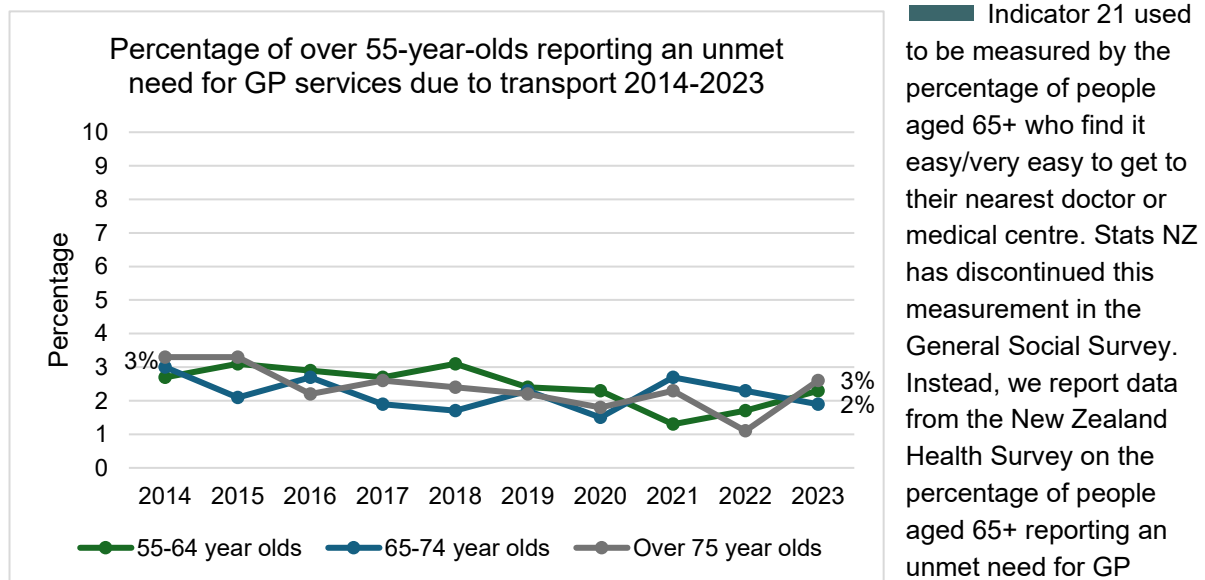
⁶ High psychological distress is assessed by looking at anxiety, psychological fatigue or depression using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale. To experience high or very high levels of psychological distress, a person would need to score 12 or more out of 40 in the past four weeks.

What we want to achieve: People have equitable access to the health and social services and the support they need to live and age well.

There is one indicator that does not yet have a data source:

- Indicator 22: The percentage older people who say they believe the social service support they need is available all the time, or most of the time increases

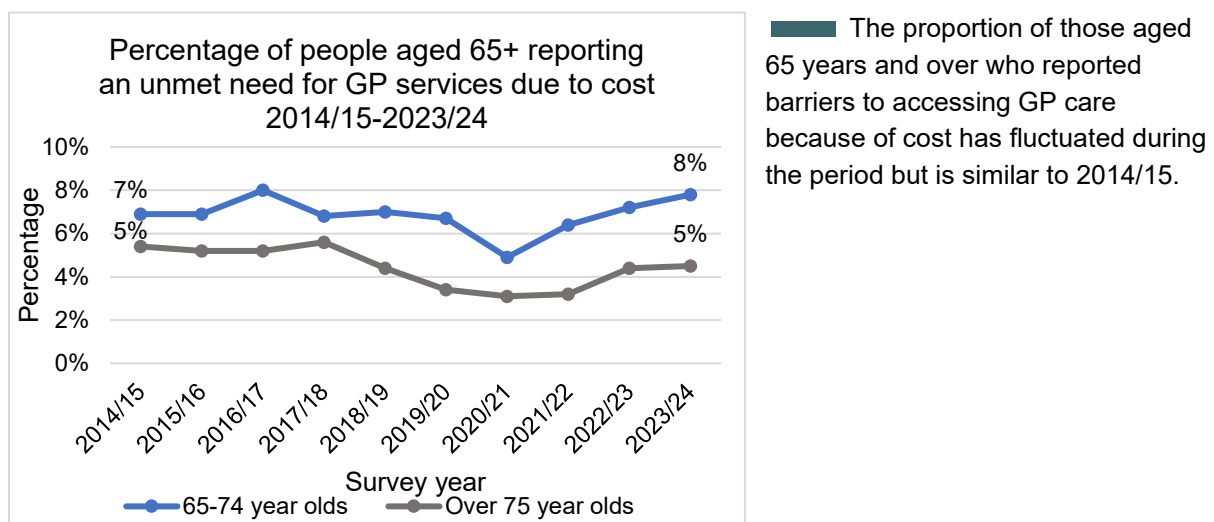
Indicator 21: Percentage of people aged 65+ reporting an unmet need for GP services due to transport



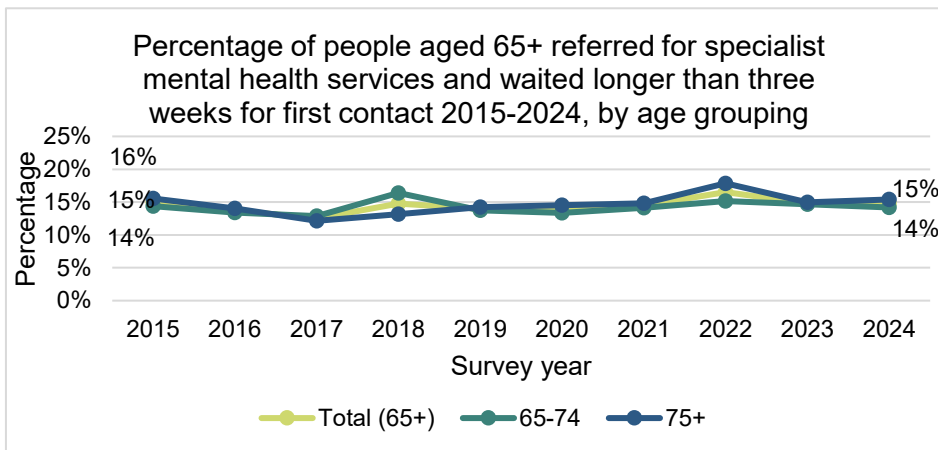
services due to a lack of transport.

The proportion of those aged 65 years and over who have an unmet need for a GP due to lack of transport has remained relatively low and stable overtime at around 2-3 percent for those aged 55+.

Indicator 23: The percentage of people aged 65+ reporting an unmet need for GP services due to cost.



Indicator 24: The percentage of people aged 65+ who were referred to mental health services and waited longer than three weeks for first contact.



■ This measure has remained relatively stable over the past decade, generally ranging between 12-15 percent.

Indicator sources:

Indicator	Source
The percentage of people aged 55+ who are “current smokers”.	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 55+ who had a hazardous drinking pattern	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 55+ who meet the guidelines for both fruit and vegetable intake	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 55+ who meet the guidelines for physical activity	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 65+ who experience falls.	Falls data, ACC
The percentage of people aged 55+ who report their general health as good/very good/excellent.	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 55+ who report high or very high levels of psychological distress.	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 55+ reporting an unmet need for GP services due to transport.	Health Survey, Ministry of Health Previously General Social Survey NZ
The percentage of people aged 55+ reporting an unmet need for GP services due to cost.	NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health
The percentage of people aged 65+ who were referred to mental health services and waited longer than three weeks for first contact.	Administrative data, PRIMHD, Ministry of Health