

**Palmerston North  
Older Persons' Profile**

**December 2012**

This *Palmerston North Older Persons' Profile* is the latest in a series of sector profiles prepared by the Palmerston North City Council. Information here is drawn from a variety of government and non-government sources. The Palmerston North City Council thanks all those agencies who have contributed to this picture of older people in the City. For further information please contact Julie Macdonald, Policy Analyst, Palmerston North City Council (email: [julie.macdonald@pncc.govt.nz](mailto:julie.macdonald@pncc.govt.nz)).

Published by:

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## Executive Summary

1. At the time of the 2006 Census older people<sup>1</sup> made up around 11.5% of the local population (around 9,000 older people). In New Zealand overall older people were 12.3% of the population in 2006.
2. Population projections show that by 2031 there will be 18,500 (18.9%) people aged 65+ years living in Palmerston North.
3. The older population in Palmerston North is much less ethnically diverse than the population overall. The vast majority (93.3%) of older people identify as 'European or other', compared to 82% of the wider population. It is projected that this will decrease by ten percent over the next ten years, with a corresponding rise in the percentage of people identifying as Maori, Asian and Pacific.
4. Papaioea is the suburb with the highest proportion of older residents (17.6%) followed by Westbrook, Palmerston North Hospital, Terrace End, Awapuni South and Highbury.
5. Just over half of all older people in Palmerston North are married or living in a civil union or partnership. Around a third of the older age group are widowed or bereaved.
6. Superannuation is the only source of income for around 40% of older people, although older people are less likely to be in low income households than other age groups. The more adverse life events experienced by an older person (such as separation or divorce, long-term illness, unemployment, and no formal education) the more likely they are to experience financial hardship in later years.
7. Older people's participation in the paid workforce increased between 2001 and 2006, both nationally and in Palmerston North. This was the case for full and part-time employment. The rate of employment of older people in Palmerston North was slightly higher (18%) in 2006 than for the country overall (16.4%).
8. Most Palmerston North older people live in private dwellings, with a small percentage (around 5%) in residential care. Older people are more likely to own their own home than other adults in Palmerston North, although the rates of home ownership for all groups are declining.
9. Older people are much less likely to commit crimes than other age groups, and are also unlikely to be the victims of crime. The large majority of people in Palmerston North are satisfied with their safety, although older people are less likely to be satisfied than younger adults.
10. Many older adults are involved in education, although the opportunities taken up tend to be informal (Adult and Community Education) rather than formal (for example, university or Wananga).

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document the term 'older people' is used to describe the 65+ years age group. Further explanation is provided in the Introduction.

11. Older people are less likely to achieve levels of recommended physical activity than younger adults. There are many opportunities to participate in recreation activities in Palmerston North, and there are some specific initiatives to increase the activity levels of older people.
12. The prevalence of diseases and disability are more common in the older age group. In a recent study older people identified broad factors (such as affordability and access to health services, social support and transport) as influencing their ability to maintain health and independent living.
13. Older people are more likely to vote and participate in democratic processes than younger people. As the population of Palmerston North ages, they will be an increasingly influential political voice.

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the Older Persons' Profile is to gather together information about Palmerston North people aged 65 years and older, and to consider some of the important issues for them. The Profile covers the projected changes to the older persons' population over the next decades, as well as information about the health and wellbeing of Palmerston North older people in comparison to the New Zealand population overall. The Profile begins by placing this information within a broader national policy context.

While people 65 years and older are defined as older persons in this report, it is acknowledged that this is a fairly arbitrary definition based on the current age of entitlement for New Zealand Superannuation. It is also the age grouping used by Statistics New Zealand in its population analysis. It should be noted, however, that people 65 years and older are a widely diverse group, and so generalisations should be made with caution.

The Profile uses a variety of information sources, and these are referenced throughout the document. The source of demographic information about older people in Palmerston North is the 2006 Census (unless otherwise stated).

## 2. National Context

There are a number of agencies providing services for older people as well as for the wider population. These include the Ministry of Health (and the District Health Boards), the Housing New Zealand Corporation, the Ministry of Social Development (Work and Income, and Family and Community Services), and the Office for Disability Issues.

There are also some agencies which are tasked with providing services specifically for the benefit of older people. These agencies are:

### **The Office for Senior Citizens<sup>2</sup>**

In 2001 the Government adopted the *New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy*, in response to the issues raised during the 1999 International Year of Older Persons. The Strategy sets out a vision for positive ageing where older people are highly valued and are recognised as an integral part of families and communities. The Strategy provides guidance for the development of policies and programmes for older people by central and local government. The office of Senior Citizens (part of the Ministry of Social Development) is the agency responsible for leading and monitoring the implementation of the Strategy.

### **The Retirement Commissioner<sup>3</sup>**

The Retirement Commission helps New Zealanders prepare financially for retirement through education, information and promotion. While its work is focused on retirement, the activities are targeted at New Zealanders of all ages. The goals of the Commission are:

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.osc.govt.nz/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.retirement.org.nz/>

- New Zealanders are better educated in financial matters and can make more informed financial decisions throughout their lives
- The government's retirement income policies remain effective and stable.
- New Zealanders have more trust in the financial services sector
- All retirement villages meet societal expectations and current quality standards

There are many non-governmental organisations working to progress the interests of older people in their local communities. The two national non-governmental organisations are:

### **Age Concern**

The vision of Age Concern is “an inclusive society, where older people, koroua and kuia are respected, valued, supported and empowered.” Age Concern is a national organisation working to promote the rights, wellbeing and quality of life of older people and to promote healthy, active ageing to people of all ages. There are 33 branches of Age Concern around New Zealand, including the Manawatu branch based in Palmerston North. The activities of the Manawatu branch of Age Concern cover a large geographical area and include working on issues such as social isolation, elder abuse and advocacy. Age Concern also has a co-ordinating role, working to promote connections between various service providers.

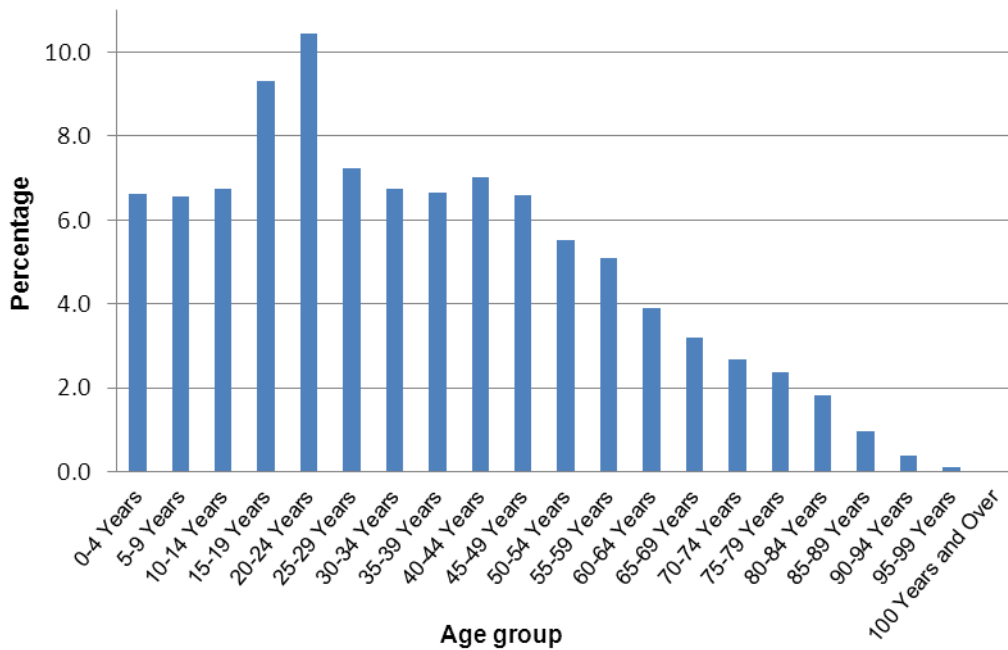
### **Grey Power**

Grey Power is a national political lobby organisation which works to promote the interests of people aged 50+ years. The Manawatu branch of Grey Power is based in Palmerston North. Grey Power works to promote awareness of issues for older people, and recently made a deputation to Council to discuss the needs of older people on low incomes.

### 3. Demographic information

Palmerston North now (in 2012) has a population of 85,300 and is New Zealand's eighth largest city. At the 2006 Census, the 65+ years age group made up around 11.5% of the local population (around 9,000 older people). This is slightly below the overall New Zealand figure of 12.3%.

**Figure 1: Percentage age distribution of the Palmerston North population 2006**

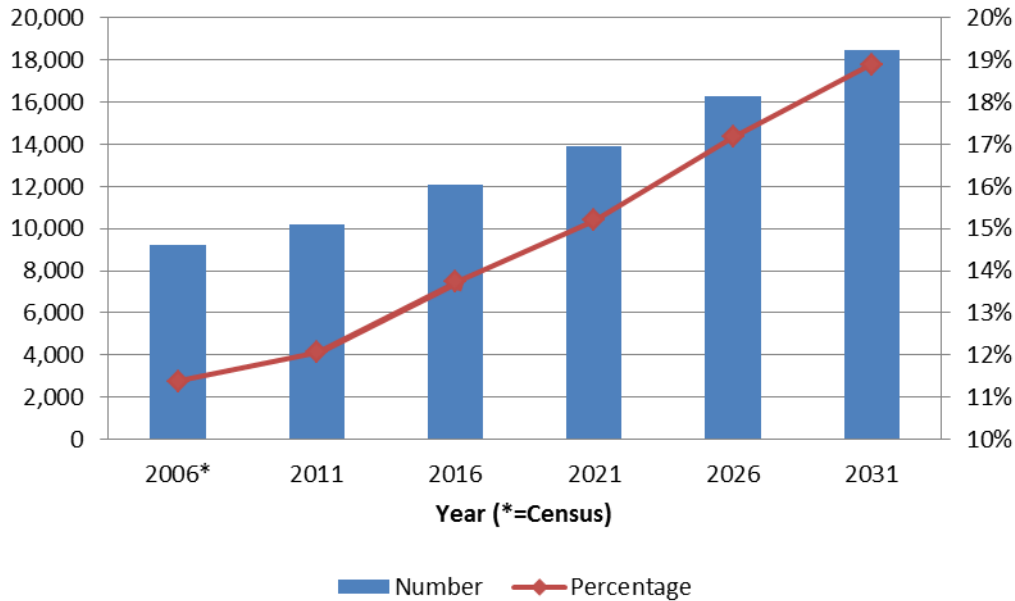


Source: Statistics New Zealand

Statistics New Zealand medium growth projections show that the 65+ years age group will grow to 18.9% (18,500) of the Palmerston North population by 2031.



**Figure 2: Projected number and percentage of people aged 65+ years in Palmerston North 2006-2031**



Source: Statistics New Zealand

### Ethnicity

At the 2006 Census the ethnic make-up of the 65+ years age group was significantly different to that of the Palmerston North population overall.<sup>4</sup> A far greater proportion of the older population identify as European or Other, and there are only a small number of older Maori and Pacific people.

**Table 1: Population ethnicity structure of Palmerston North 2006**

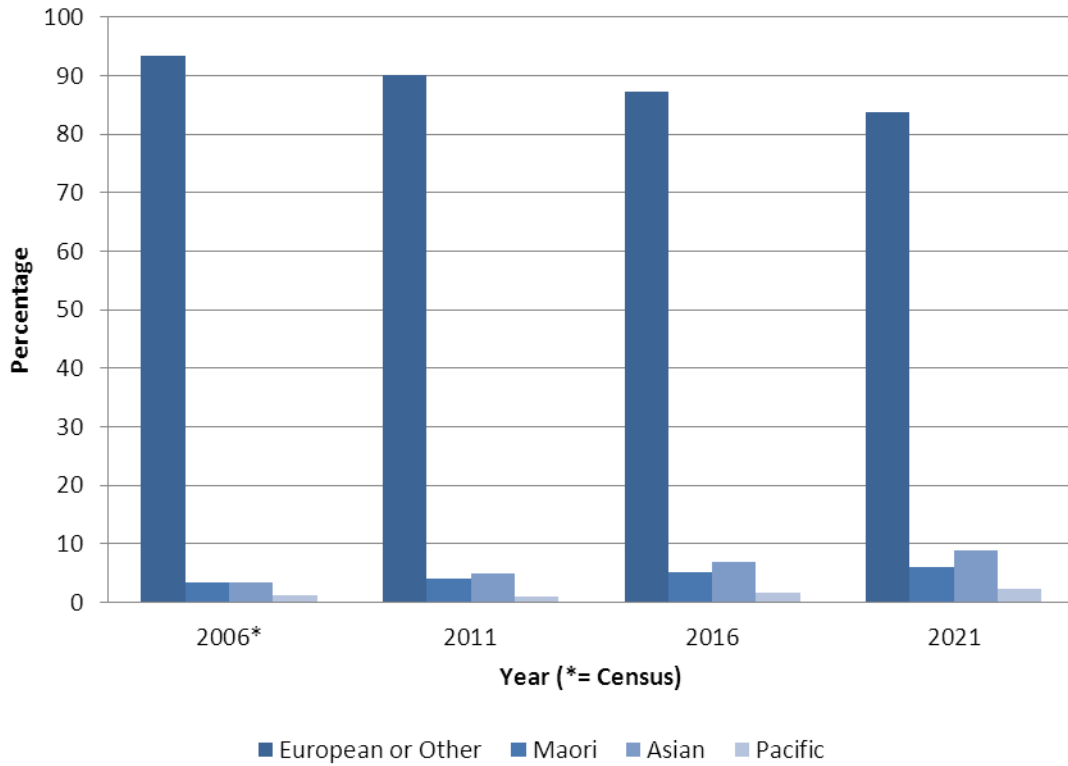
	European or Other	Maori	Asian	Pacific	Total population
Total population	64,500 (82.0%)	12,400 (16.0%)	6,100 (8.0%)	3,000 (4.0%)	78,500
65+ years	8,400 (93.3%)	300 (3.3%)	300 (3.3%)	100 (1.1%)	9,000

Source: Statistics New Zealand

This picture is beginning to change. Over the next ten years Statistics New Zealand projects that the percentage of the 65+ years' age group who will identify as Maori, Asian, or Pacific will increase, and that the European and Other group will decrease by ten percent (compared with the Census figure) (see Figure 3). Given that the population will increase overall during this time, the actual numbers of people in all four ethnic categories will also increase.

<sup>4</sup> Note that the ethnic categories are not mutually exclusive because people can, and do, nominate more than one ethnic group that they belong to, and have therefore been included in figures for each group they identify with.

**Figure 3: Projected population ethnicity structure of people aged 65+ years in Palmerston North 2006-2021**

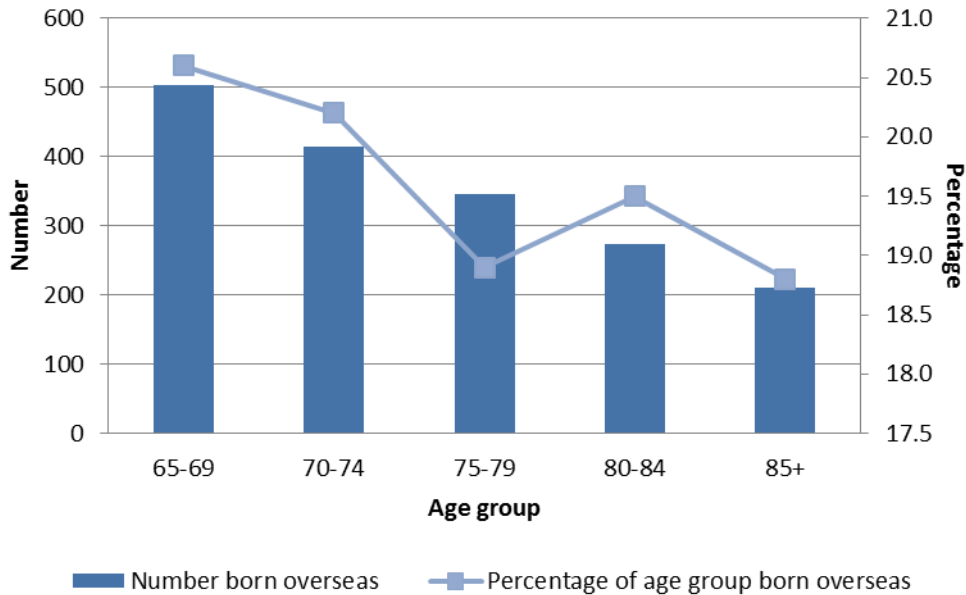


Source: Statistics New Zealand

**Older People Born Overseas**

Most of the Palmerston North people born overseas are in the younger age groups. For example, around 20% of the overseas-born population in the City are in the 20-24 years age group, but only 11.6% are aged 65+ years. However, the picture changes when the overall proportion of each age group who were born overseas is considered. While 16.7% of Palmerston North’s total population was born overseas, 19.8% of the Palmerston North aged 65+ years was born overseas. See Figure 4 for the detailed profile of the older people in Palmerston North.

**Figure 4: Number and percentage of Palmerston North older age groups born overseas**

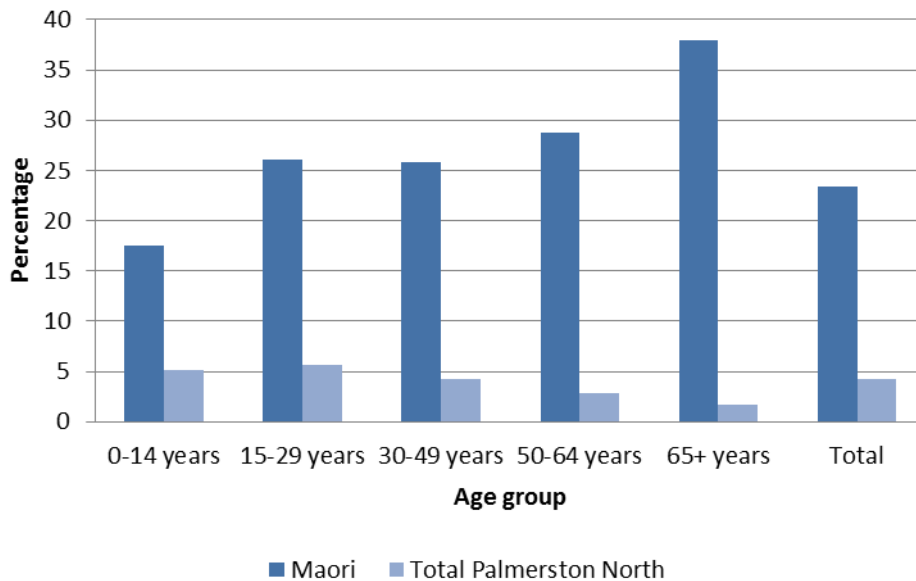


Source: Statistics New Zealand

**Te Reo Maori**

Fewer Palmerston North older people are fluent in te reo than in New Zealand overall (1.7% compared with 2.6%). Amongst Maori people in Palmerston North, people aged 65+ years are by far the most fluent age group (38%), and this is a consistent finding over the last three censuses. Nationally, almost half of all older Maori (47.7%) and slightly less than a quarter of all Maori (23%) are fluent in te reo. See Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Maori language speakers in Palmerston North**

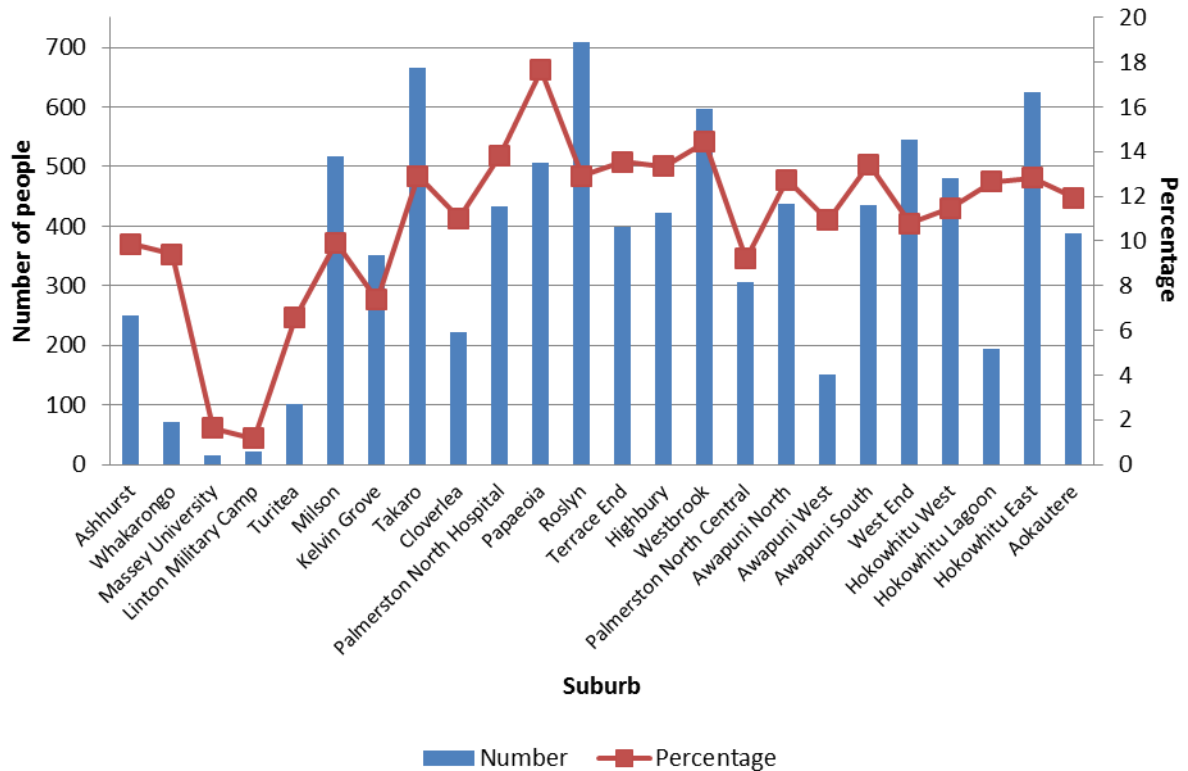


Source: Statistics New Zealand

### Suburban Profile

Some suburbs in Palmerston North have much higher numbers of people aged 65+ years than others. Milson, Takaro, Papaioea, Roslyn, Westbrook, Westend, and Hokowhitu East all have more than 500 older residents, although the overall population of these suburbs varies considerably. The picture changes somewhat when we consider the percentage of older people in each suburb. In the City as a whole, 11.5% of residents were aged 65+ years in 2006. Papaioea has by far the largest percentage of older residents (at 17.6%), followed by Westbrook, Palmerston North Hospital, Terrace End, Awapuni South, and Highbury. Unsurprisingly, Linton Military Camp and Massey University have the lowest proportions of older people in their populations. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Number of people aged 65+ years living in Palmerston North (2006)**

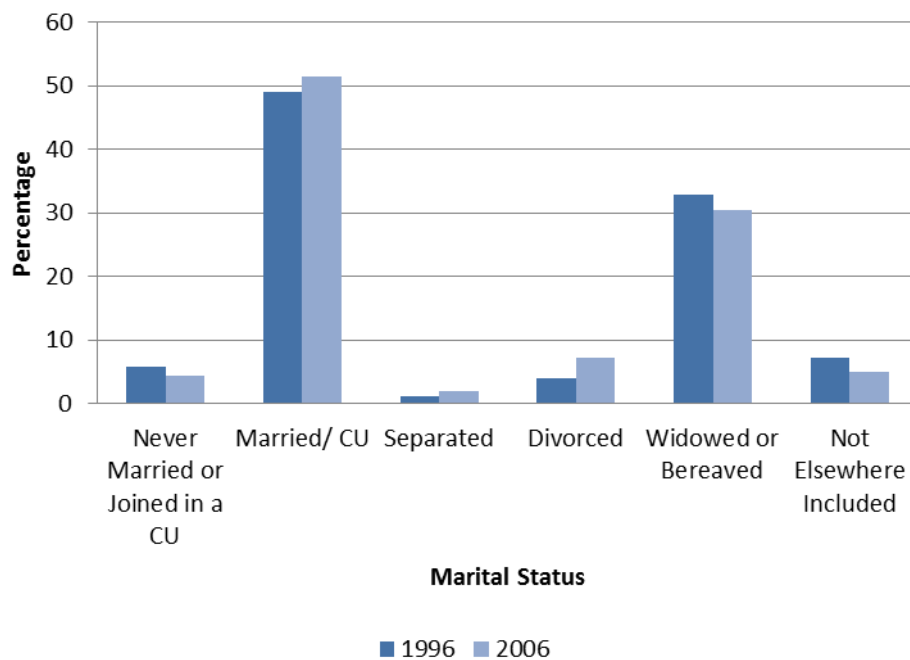


Source: Statistics New Zealand

### Marital Status

Just over half of all older people aged 65+ years in Palmerston North are married or living in a civil union or partnership. Figure 7 shows that between the 1996 census and the 2006 censuses, the percentage of the older age group who were separated or divorced went up slightly, but that the percentage of people widowed or bereaved declined.

**Figure 7: Marital status of Palmerston North people aged 65+ years (1996 and 2006)**



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Note: Widowed or Bereaved includes for Civil Union partnerships

## 4. Social Wellbeing

### Income

Current government policy is that New Zealand residents who have lived here for at least ten years since the age of 20 (and five of these since age 50) are entitled to receive New Zealand Superannuation. This entitlement is set out in the New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001. The level of payment is reviewed each year and is adjusted to take account of increases in cost of living (inflation) and wages. When wages increase, Superannuation is adjusted so that it stays between 66% and 72.5% of average earnings after tax. This means for couples where both partners are over 65 years, their pensions (after tax) will not fall below 66% of the average wage (after tax). For single people the pension is about 40% of that average wage.<sup>5</sup>

In 2009, the mean household income for older New Zealanders (65+ years) was 77% of the population mean. New Zealand Superannuation is the sole or main source of income for a large proportion of older people, and 40% of older people have virtually no other income source.<sup>6</sup> The next 20% of older people receive, on average, 80% of their income from NZS and other government transfers.<sup>7</sup> However, around one in three older New Zealanders receive more than half their income from sources other than government transfers. This group is growing in size, mainly due to increasing non-government income for those in younger (aged 66-75 years) family households.<sup>8</sup>

In 2010, 7% of New Zealand older people were living in low income households, compared with 14% of the total population.<sup>9</sup> These figures reflect the disposable income of households once their housing costs are taken into account. Older people living alone were more likely to be on low incomes (11%) than were older people in couple relationships (5%). This shows that most older people in New Zealand have sufficient assets and income to enable a reasonable or good standard of living. While some older New Zealanders have a lower standard of living, a lower proportion of people aged 65+ years live in low income households when compared with younger people. This reflects the high rate of mortgage-free home ownership and the level of publicly funded income support.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sorted.org.nz/home/sorted-sections/retirement/new-zealand-superannuation>

<sup>6</sup> Perry, B. (2011). *Household incomes in New Zealand: Trends in indicators of inequality and hardship 1982 to 2010*. Ministry of Social Development.

<sup>7</sup> Government transfers are New Zealand Superannuation and Veterans Pension and other state support such as the Disability Allowance and the Accommodation Supplement.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, B. (2011). *Household incomes in New Zealand: Trends in indicators of inequality and hardship 1982 to 2010*. Ministry of Social Development. The source of this national income information is the Statistics New Zealand's 2009–2010 Household Economic Survey (HES).

<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Social Development defines 'low income households' as those with a real gross income which is less than 60% of the median household equivalised national income benchmarked at 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Social Development. (2010). *The Social Report*.

Research suggests that the more adverse life events that are experienced by an older person (such as separation or divorce, long-term illness, unemployment, or no formal educational qualifications), the more likely they are to experience financial hardship in later years.<sup>11</sup>

Another measure used to compare the numbers of low income households across the age groups is income before the deduction of housing costs. These figures show a different picture (See Table 2). Older people in Palmerston North are the most likely to be living in low income households. These figures suggest that at the present time, the relative housing security of older people means that they are less likely to be in low income households, and that changes in housing security and ownership may impact on this.

**Table 2: Percentage of Palmerston North people in low income households 1986-2006**

	0-14 years	15-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	Total
1986	20.7	14.8	11.0	11.4	38.9	17.0
1991	29.8	25.0	16.3	18.5	49.9	24.9
1996	29.6	31.8	16.3	15.2	41.1	24.7
2001	28.6	28.1	15.6	13.7	33.7	22.2
2006	22.5	24.0	13.0	11.7	34.4	19.1

Source: Statistics New Zealand

The financial independence of older people is a key contributor to their health and wellbeing. There are wider benefits too; well and active older people have the opportunity to contribute to society through continued paid work, volunteering, or by looking after family members.<sup>12</sup>

The SuperGold Card is a free discount and concession card available to people 65 years and over. It can be used to obtain discounts on a wide variety of goods and services. In July 2012 the Minister for Senior Citizens reported that there are now over 3,600 participating businesses offering discounts to older New Zealanders. Discounts are available at 244 individual businesses or branches in Palmerston North. These discounts may make some contribution to an improved standard of living for older people.

### **Participation in the Labour Force**

New Zealand older people have one of the highest rates of employment in the OECD. Contributing to this is the lack of a compulsory retirement age and the provision of superannuation which is not means-tested.<sup>13</sup>

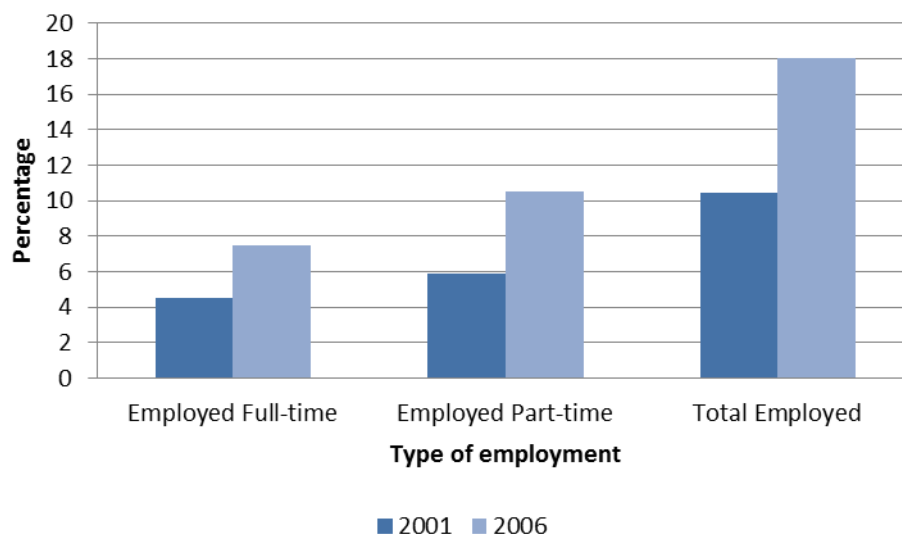
<sup>11</sup> Perry, B. (2010). *The material wellbeing of older New Zealanders: Background paper for the Retirement Commissioner's 2010 review*. Ministry of Social Development.

<sup>12</sup> Crossan, D. (February, 2006). *Managing the Ageing Workforce Conference*. (Presentation). Wellington.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/seniorcitizens/positive-ageing/trends/economic-contributions.html>

The most recent labour force data for Palmerston North is provided by the 2006 Census. This shows that older people's participation in full and part-time employment increased between 2001 and 2006, both nationally and in Palmerston North.

**Figure 8: Participation in the workforce by Palmerston North people aged 65+ years (2001 and 2006)**



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The rate of employment of older people in Palmerston North was slightly higher (at 18%) in 2006 than for the country overall (16.7%). See Table 3.

**Table 3: Work status of people aged 65+ years (2006)**

Work Status	Employed Full-time	Employed Part-time	Total Employed	Un-employed	Total Labour Force	Not in the Labour Force	Status Unknown
New Zealand	7.9	8.5	16.4	0.2	16.7	80.8	2.5
Palmerston North	7.5	10.5	18.0	0.2	18.2	80.3	1.5

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Women are less likely than men to be in paid employment (full and part-time) after the age of 65 years.<sup>14</sup> The Household Labour Force Survey, which captures national participation in the labour force on a quarterly basis, also confirms that the trend for people to remain in the workforce after the age of 65 years has continued to grow to 2012. The 2013 Census will provide further Palmerston North data to confirm the nature of this increased participation locally.

<sup>14</sup> Alpass, F. & Mortimer, R. (2007). *Ageing workforce and ageing occupations: A discussion paper*. Department of Labour.



The Retirement Commissioner has suggested<sup>15</sup> that the experience and expertise offered by an older workforce should be viewed as an opportunity for employers rather than a liability. However research suggests that older workers still face age-related discrimination. This includes being subject to negative stereotypes about adaptability and skill with technology, and can occur both at the time of recruitment and on the job.<sup>16</sup> The growing proportion of the older population remaining in full or part-time work will, therefore, provide challenges both for employers and for older workers themselves.

### **Voluntary Work**

Volunteering is one of the ways people participate in their communities, and older people have traditionally formed a significant part of the volunteer workforce. The 2006 Census shows that around 15% of people aged 65 years and over had done voluntary work for a group or marae during the past four weeks. Unsurprisingly, the most active volunteers are amongst the 65 to 70 years age group, and volunteering tends to decline with increasing age. However around 10% of people aged 80-84 years are still active volunteers. Older Maori and European people were the most likely to have participated in voluntary work in the month prior to the 2006 Census.

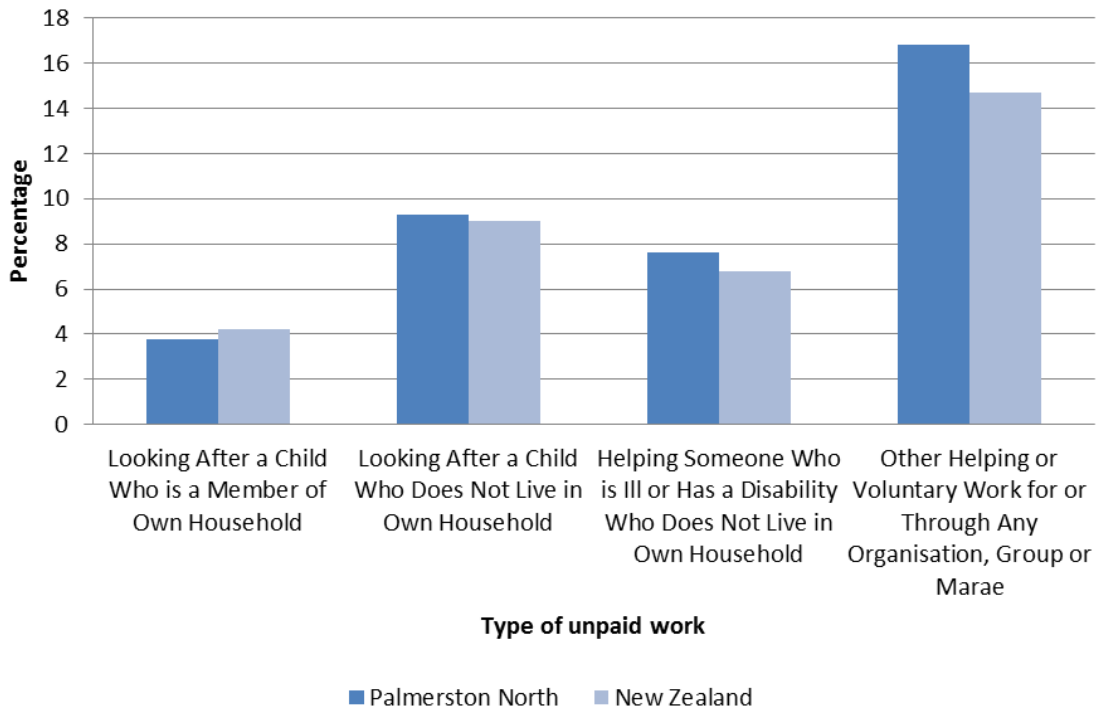
Figure 9 shows the participation of Palmerston North people aged 65+ years in some selected types of unpaid work (at the 2006 Census). It indicates that fewer Palmerston North older people care for children who are members of their own household than in New Zealand overall. However older Palmerston North people are more likely to care for children or other people who are not part of their household, and do voluntary work through organisations and groups. Women are much more likely to be involved in all these activities than men.

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<sup>15</sup> Crossan, D. (February, 2006). *Managing the Ageing Workforce Conference*. (Presentation). Wellington.

<sup>16</sup> Alpass, F. & Mortimer, R. (2007). *Ageing workforce and ageing occupations: A discussion paper*. Department of Labour.

**Figure 9: Percentage of 65+ years age group undertaking unpaid work Palmerston North and New Zealand (2006 Census)**



Source: Statistics New Zealand

The Volunteer Resource Centre Manawatu and Districts (VRCMD) was established in 2010. Its purpose is to support and promote volunteering. While Census data suggests that many older people in the City do work in voluntary roles, many of these people seem to find these roles through their own networks and are not necessarily in contact with the Centre. The Centre intends to work more with older people in future and suggests that there are benefits to offering older people different opportunities to the ones they may have known about when younger. New volunteering will also be a way to enable some older people to re-engage with their communities and potentially help counter social isolation.

**Social Connectedness**

Many organisations work to overcome social isolation which can be an issue for some older people. For example, the Ministry of Health funds an accredited visiting project provided through Age Concern. Some rest homes and social housing providers are also considering the role they can play in encouraging interaction among residents to ensure social connections are maintained.

The first report to the Minister of Social Development from the Palmerston North/Manawatu/Horowhenua/Tararua Community Response Forum (in 2011) noted that better access to social services is required to ensure older people are a valued part of the community, and are not isolated or lonely.

The Census asks about access to telephone and access to communication via the internet as a measure of social connectedness. At the last Census almost all older people (99%) had access to a telephone in their own home. Access to the internet has become increasingly important as a means of finding information and staying in touch with friends and family. Internet access grew sharply in the five years prior to the last census (from 42.9% to 66.4% nationally), although older people are less likely to have access to the internet in their homes. The internet access of older people in Palmerston North mirrored that of the country overall, and showed a much lower rate of access than for the wider population. See Table 4.

**Table 4: Older people's (65+ years) internet access in the home (percentage) (2006)**

	2001	2006
New Zealand	16.6	39.1
Palmerston North	16.4	39.2

Source: Statistics New Zealand

It is also interesting to note that the national data shows that older people who are 75+ years, and those who are on more limited incomes (with no or little other income other than Superannuation), are less likely to have internet access. Women in the 65+ age group are also less likely (35%) than men (45%) to have access to the internet in their homes. Data from the next census will show the extent to which older people's internet access has kept up with that of the wider population. It should be noted that this measure does not include internet access older people in Palmerston North have at venues other than their own homes (such as libraries or community centres).

## 5. Housing

At the time of the 2006 Census the large majority of people aged 65+ years lived in private dwellings. Some of these were in retirement complexes. A very small proportion of people (nationally 5%) were accommodated in residential care. Applying this percentage to Palmerston North, in 2006 around 450 people (aged 65+ years) were living in residential care facilities.<sup>17</sup> Residential care includes rest home care, continuing care (hospital), dementia care, and specialised hospital care. Long term residential care does not include independent living in a retirement village. Older people are entitled to financial support for long-term residential care (where a needs assessment determines that they require it), and this support is subject to asset and income-testing.<sup>18</sup>

In recent years there has been a growth in the provision of purpose-built accommodation for older people, and this is also true for Palmerston North. For example, the number of building consents for new apartments increased to 9.5% of total consents between 2006 and 2010, and the majority of these were in retirement complexes. Most of these recent developments cater for people with the financial means to pay for more than the most basic housing.

Older people are among the most likely to own their own homes, although for all age groups the rate of home ownership is declining (from 65.2% in Palmerston North in 1996 to 62.9% in 2006). Nationally and locally, people are more likely to own their own home if they are on higher household incomes.

The large majority of rental accommodation in Palmerston North is owned privately. Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) is the largest provider of social rental housing in the City (with around 1,500 properties) and the Palmerston North City Council has around 300 units, of which 70% accommodate older people on low incomes. Older people are unlikely to qualify for HNZC properties unless they have multiple and complex social needs in addition to financial hardship.

In 2006 Palmerston North had 6,612 one and two bedroom private dwellings. Statistics New Zealand suggests that 30% of households (11,600) could be one person households by 2031. This means that by 2031 Palmerston North will need over 11,000 dwellings to accommodate those people living in one person households, many of whom will be 65+ years. At the same time, research suggests there will also be an increase in the need for residential care for older people<sup>19</sup>, possibly of around 900 places in the next twenty years.<sup>20</sup>

The quality of accommodation that older people live in will increasingly be of concern, particularly as the trend to rental accommodation grows. The regular survey by Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ) indicates that the overall standard of New Zealand housing is declining. For example, temperatures in New Zealand homes are generally 6° below the World Health Organisation minimum recommendation for indoor temperatures. Indoor temperatures below 18° lead to dampness and

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<sup>17</sup> Palmerston North City Council. (2011). *Palmerston North Housing Needs Assessment*.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Health.

<sup>19</sup> Grant Thornton. (2010). *Aged Residential Care Service Review*.

<sup>20</sup> Palmerston North City Council. (2011). *Palmerston North Housing Needs Assessment*.

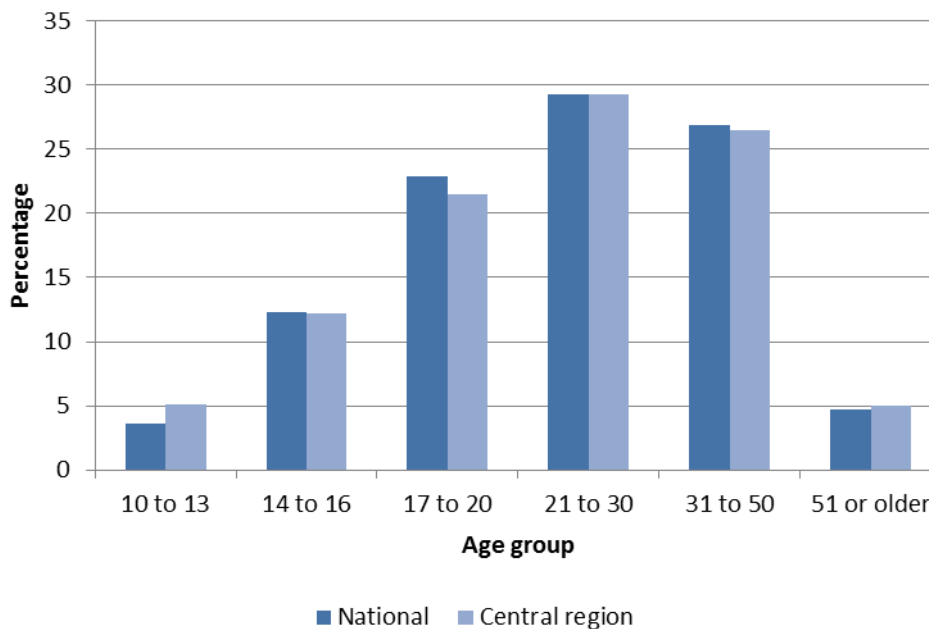
condensation, which in turn lead to an increase in fungi and dust mites, as well as increased susceptibility to infectious diseases.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. Safety and Crime

The *2009 New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey*<sup>22</sup> provides an insight into people’s experience of crime. The Survey reveals that only about a third of crime is reported to police, with theft of (and from) vehicles the most likely to be reported (76%), and sexual offences the least likely (7%). There has not been a significant change in the level or nature of the crimes experienced since the previous survey in 2006. Nationally, most people (64%) experienced no crime, and six percent of people experienced around half (54%) of all crime.

In Palmerston North, Police figures show that older people (51+ years) are the least likely group of adults to be apprehended for committing an offence. The figures for the Central district (wider than Palmerston North) closely match the national figures (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Percentage of criminal apprehensions by age group (2011)**



Palmerston North Police report that in the year from July 2009 to June 2010 offenders/suspects were aged 65 years or older on just 39 occasions. Older people were much more likely to be a victim of crime than to commit one; in the 2009/2010 year older people were the complainant/ victim on 280 occasions. This figure is markedly lower than for the previous two years.

<sup>21</sup> Beacon Pathways Ltd. (2007). Indoor Environment Quality.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Justice. (2010). *New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey: 2009. Main Findings Report*.

The *New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey* shows that, nationally, people who are significantly less likely to experience any form of crime were:

- older (aged 60 years or more)
- European
- married or widowed
- retired
- managing well financially
- living in the least deprived areas of the country
- living alone or living in households containing couples without children living at home
- living in owner occupied properties
- residing in less urbanised or rural areas

In New Zealand overall, most people (63%) did not perceive there to be any crime problem in their neighbourhood. People who were most likely to feel unsafe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark compared to the New Zealand average were:

- female
- aged 60 or more
- Pacific or Asian people
- widowed, divorced or separated
- living in the most deprived areas of the country
- living in households just coping financially
- engaged in home duties, retired, or unemployed and/or on benefits
- living alone
- living in rented accommodation
- residing in Auckland
- living in the upper North Island
- victimised in the previous year

The Palmerston North City Council's biennial residents' survey (Communitrak Survey) monitors the level of safety residents feel in the City. When asked about the level of safety they feel in public places at night in and around Palmerston North, older people were less likely to be satisfied (33%) than people aged 40 – 59 years (41%) or people aged 18 – 39 years (58%).

The Communitrak Survey also provides information about the level of safety residents feel for themselves, their family and their home. Over the decade 2000 to 2010 the level of safety felt by adult residents overall increased slightly. Information about the perceptions of different age groups is not available, but in 2010, 92% of residents felt satisfied with their safety.

### **Elder Abuse**

Some older people in Palmerston North are subjected to abuse and neglect by family members, or other people whose support they should be able to count on. Elder abuse is “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person”.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Action on Elder Abuse. (1995). Adopted by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

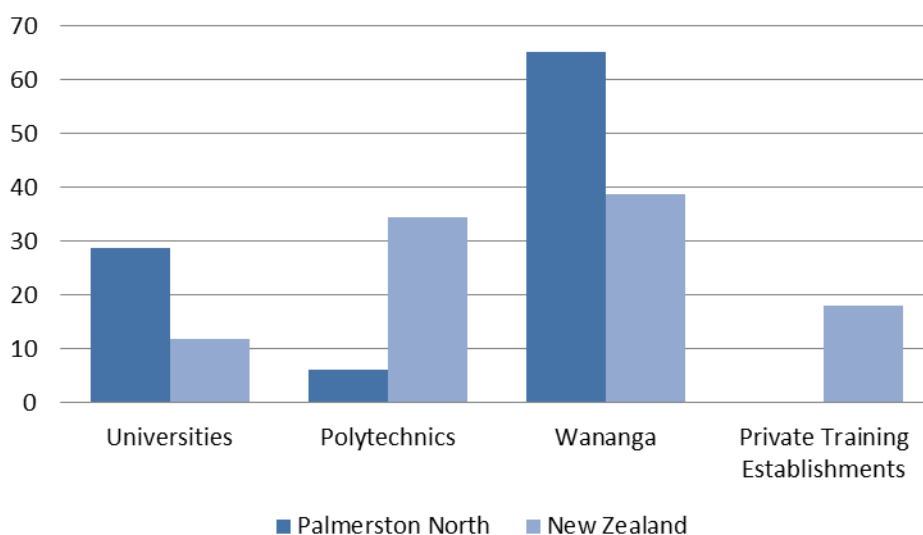
Age Concern reports that each year its national Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention (EANP) service receives more than 1,000 referrals of people who may be facing elder abuse.<sup>24</sup> This is generally acknowledged to be the ‘tip of the iceberg’. In 2002 a United Nations report estimated that between three to 10% of the older population could be victims of elder abuse in New Zealand.<sup>25</sup> This could translate to between 270 and 900 older people in Palmerston North.

Women are significantly overrepresented as victims of elder abuse and most (around 80%) of abuse is committed by family members. Up to 35% of abuse is by a primary care giver, including family members, support workers and staff of residential care facilities.

## 7. Education

Many older people continue or begin participation in education well after the age of 65 years. New Zealand’s relatively accessible formal education system means there is a range of options for people to pursue vocational or non-vocational studies. In 2011, 0.9% of Palmerston North older people were enrolled in formal education, slightly below the national figure of 1.1%. These enrolments include anyone enrolled for formal qualifications of greater than 0.03 EFTS<sup>26</sup> (more than one week’s duration). Figure 11 shows the distribution of these students across the different types of institution. In Palmerston North, 75 of the 115 local older students were enrolled at Wananga. Massey University’s Manawatu Campus reports that of the students aged 65+ years (which include students from around the country studying extramurally), 79% were studying part-time.

**Figure 11: Percentage of older people in formal education enrolled in each type of educational institution (2011)**



<sup>24</sup> [www.ageconcern.org.nz/safety/elder-abuse/key-statistics-about-eanp](http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/safety/elder-abuse/key-statistics-about-eanp)

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2002). *Report of the Secretary General: Abuse of older persons: Recognizing and responding to abuse of older persons in a global context*. New York.

<sup>26</sup> Equivalent Full Time Students.

Some older people continue to participate in informal education opportunities. The Ministry of Education participation figures record the age of participants, but the older age group is 40+ years. More than half of all students in ACE<sup>27</sup> in New Zealand overall are in this older age group. Many other older people take part in other informal learning opportunities.

## 8. Recreation and Leisure

National research undertaken by Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) in 2007/08<sup>28</sup> found that the most popular recreational activities participated in (in the last 12 months) by older adults were walking (73.3%), gardening (65.7%), swimming (15.3%), equipment based exercise (14.0%) and bowls (13.5%). The survey found that in any week 79% of adults participated in at least one sport or recreation activity, and that participation by those aged 65+ years was at a similar level (82.1%). Fewer older adults than other adults were members of clubs or centres, however, and the likelihood of receiving instruction in a recreational activity also decreased with age. The survey also measured the level of physical activity of adults to find out the proportion of the population meeting the recommended activity level of at least 30 minutes of exercise on five or more days of the week (referred to as the 30 x 5 guideline).<sup>29</sup> Adults over the age of 65 years were twice as likely to be inactive than were other adults. (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Physical activity for New Zealand adults (2007/08)**

	Meet 30 x 5 guidelines	Some activity	Inactive
Total adult population	48.2	39.1	12.7
Older adults 65+ years	34.2	41.8	24.0

Source: SPARC

There is no comparable Palmerston North data with which to gauge the level of activity of local older people. However, the activity level of Palmerston North adults is similar to that of New Zealanders overall. We can assume from these findings that older adults in Palmerston North also have typical levels of activity and, therefore, that at least half the population do not do enough physical activity to keep healthy and well.<sup>30</sup>

The provision of active recreation facilities in Palmerston North is of a high standard, relative to New Zealand overall. The City Council provides a good level of parks and reserves when compared to national benchmarks, and there is a range of indoor sports facilities including Arena Manawatu, and those provided by the tertiary education institutions, Linton Army Camp, and the private sector. Walking is a popular activity for many older adults and Palmerston North has an extensive network of accessible walkways. There are a number of programmes that specifically target older adults, in an

<sup>27</sup> Adult and Community Education.

<sup>28</sup> Sport and Recreation New Zealand. (2008). *Sport, recreation and physical activity participation among New Zealand adults: Key results of the 2007/08 Active NZ Survey*. Wellington: SPARC.

<sup>29</sup> Adults can achieve the 30 x 5 guidelines through sport and recreation activities, occupational activity (e.g. farming), active travel (e.g. biking to work) and unpaid work/other physical activities (e.g. DIY).

<sup>30</sup> Palmerston North City Council. (2012). *Active Recreation Strategy 2012*.



effort to increase their activity level. A pilot GRx (Green Prescription) programme was run by Sport Manawatu in 2012. The purpose of this programme was to introduce older adults (in a rest home setting) to a variety of recreation opportunities. The programme also included an education component and an increase in the use of facilities (within the residential setting) that were already available.

## 9. Health and Disability

Palmerston North's ageing population will influence future local health care needs as most diseases and causes of disability are more common in the older age group. For example, older adults are the most likely group to experience hospitalisation due to cancer and heart disease. Detailed information about hospitalisation data for older people is available elsewhere from the Midcentral District Health Board and the Ministry of Health.<sup>31</sup> However the purpose of this section is to briefly describe some of the broader findings of research into the health and needs of older people, and to briefly mention health promotion efforts towards fall prevention, one of the main causes of harm and hospitalisation of older adults.

The prevalence of disability is higher with increasing age, with rates of moderate and severe levels of disability markedly higher among older people than among adults aged 45 – 64 years.<sup>32</sup> In 2004 Midcentral Health produced a Disability Needs Assessment for Older People which found that the most common types of disability experienced by older people in the Midcentral region are physical (83.3%) and sensory (51.2%). Most disabled older people (70%) had more than one type of disability. The most common causes for disability among those 65 years and over are disease/illness (50%), the ageing process (40%), and accident/injury (25.6%) (although disability can have more than one cause).<sup>33</sup>

Midcentral Health's Older Persons District Group has recently undertaken a comprehensive research project to gather feedback on current health services for older people and to inform health service future planning. Many (44%) of the survey respondents lived in Palmerston North, and while some care givers and agency representatives took part, the large majority of surveys (91%) were completed by people 65 years and older.

The top five themes which emerged as the most pressing needs of older people were:

- Cost of health services/ care/ medications
- Access to health services
- Support/home health when needed
- Mobility/being mentally and physically able
- Basic necessities being met

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<sup>31</sup> For example: Ministry of Health. (2006). *Older People's Health Chart Book. Public Health Intelligence Monitoring Report No. 12.*

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Health. (2006). *Older People's Health Chart Book. Public Health Intelligence Monitoring Report No. 12.*

<sup>33</sup> Midcentral Health. Unpublished. *2004 Disability Needs Assessment for Older People.*

Survey participants were asked to identify the top three things that they worry about as they get older. The most commonly identified were:

- Health and wellbeing
- Mobility/independence
- Paying for bills/costs/maintaining a standard of living
- Support and health when needed
- Transport/not being able to drive a car

Participants were asked to identify the things that would help them to remain healthy and independent. The responses largely moved beyond specific health service interventions, and tended to focus on broader social support such as companionship, affordability of services, exercise and lifestyle changes, and the availability of home help and other support to enable independence. It is interesting that the older people who took part in the survey identified a wide range of non-health services and supports as being the most important determinants of their ability to maintain an independent lifestyle.

### **Fall Prevention**

Hospitalisation and mortality rates for unintentional injury are significantly higher in older age groups, and especially amongst those aged 85+ years, compared with adults aged in their fifties and early sixties. In 2006 motor vehicle traffic accidents were the leading cause of death for males and females aged 65 – 74 years, but falls topped the list for older people (male and female) aged 75+ years.<sup>34</sup> The consequences of falls for older adults can be serious and long-term, and include restrictions to social activity and interaction. The Ministry of Health's *Preventing Injury from Falls: The National Strategy 2005-2015* also notes that the fear of falling can reduce the quality of life of older people. For these reasons, fall prevention initiatives focus on improving individual balance and strength, and focus on social as well as physical health outcomes.

## **10. Participation in Democracy**

There are many ways that individuals can participate in democratic processes. These include voting in national and local elections, becoming part of the governance bodies for health, community, or sports organisations, and making submissions on the decision-making of government (central and local). As with all age groups, older people vary in the extent to which they take up these opportunities, and there is little information available about their participation.

Voter turnout has been steadily decreasing in Palmerston North City Council elections. While there was a 50% turnout in 2001, this decreased to 46% in 2007 and then to 43% in the most recent elections. Palmerston North's voter turnout is considered to be medium-low compared with the country overall (the national average turnout in 2010 was 49%).<sup>35</sup> There is no analysis available about the age profile of either voters or candidates, however it is generally accepted that older people in New Zealand are more likely to vote and more likely to become political representatives than are younger adults.

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<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Health. (2006). *Older People's Health Chart Book. Public Health Intelligence Monitoring Report No. 12.*

<sup>35</sup> Note that Christchurch and Auckland may have experienced high voter turnout due to the particular circumstances in those cities at that time.

Clearly, society benefits from the participation of people from a wide range of ethnic groups and ages in decision making processes, and for this reason research and education initiatives have been undertaken to try and increase the participation of particular groups (such as young people and Maori).<sup>36</sup>

As the New Zealand population ages, it is likely that older voters will become politically more influential.<sup>37</sup> Politically contentious issues such as the retirement age, which have great relevance for older people, may encourage greater involvement in political decision making. It is also likely that political advocacy groups and parties will become increasingly aware of the potential influence of the growing older population, and tailor their activities accordingly.

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<sup>36</sup> Electoral Commission. <http://www.elections.org.nz/>

<sup>37</sup> Te Ara The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. [www http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/older-people/4](http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/older-people/4)

## **11. Conclusion**

This Older Persons Profile draws together some information about some of the issues for people aged 65+ years in Palmerston North. It shows that, while there may be some commonalities for people within this age group, older people are hugely diverse in terms of their experiences, opinions, interests and daily lives. Conclusions about older people in general, therefore, need to be made with caution, just as they do for any other diverse population group. The quality of life of an active working 72 year old may be hugely different to that of another 72 year old with chronic health problems. It is also useful to ensure that the views and needs of the diverse older population are taken into account in planning and delivery of services and activities. With this in mind, the following section identifies some points which could usefully inform this work.

## **12. Emerging Issues**

- The older population is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. Future planning for services will need to ensure that the needs of this diverse population is taken into account.
- Increased participation in the paid workforce by many older people may have an impact on the availability of volunteers. Employers will also increasingly need to respond to the needs of older workers.
- As the availability of information is increasingly technologically based, the access of older people to this information will impact on their social participation.
- Older people are increasingly going to be accommodated in private rental housing. The availability of good quality housing, which is of the appropriate size, will have an impact on the health and wellbeing of the City's older population.
- The accommodation needs of older people are increasingly diverse, and the City will be required to respond to meet a range of needs, from people in small, independent households, to those who require intensive support.
- Many older people are socially isolated and some are subject to elder abuse. The responses by communities and social agencies will contribute to the health and wellbeing of these older people.
- The City's ageing population has implications for the recreation and health sectors, given that older people are less likely to be active.
- Cost could become an increasing barrier to participation in recreation for older people on low incomes.
- While older people are more likely to have health problems or disabilities, the success of initiatives to address preventable injuries and diseases will have a significant impact on the quality of life of many older people.