

Accessing health information online

Background

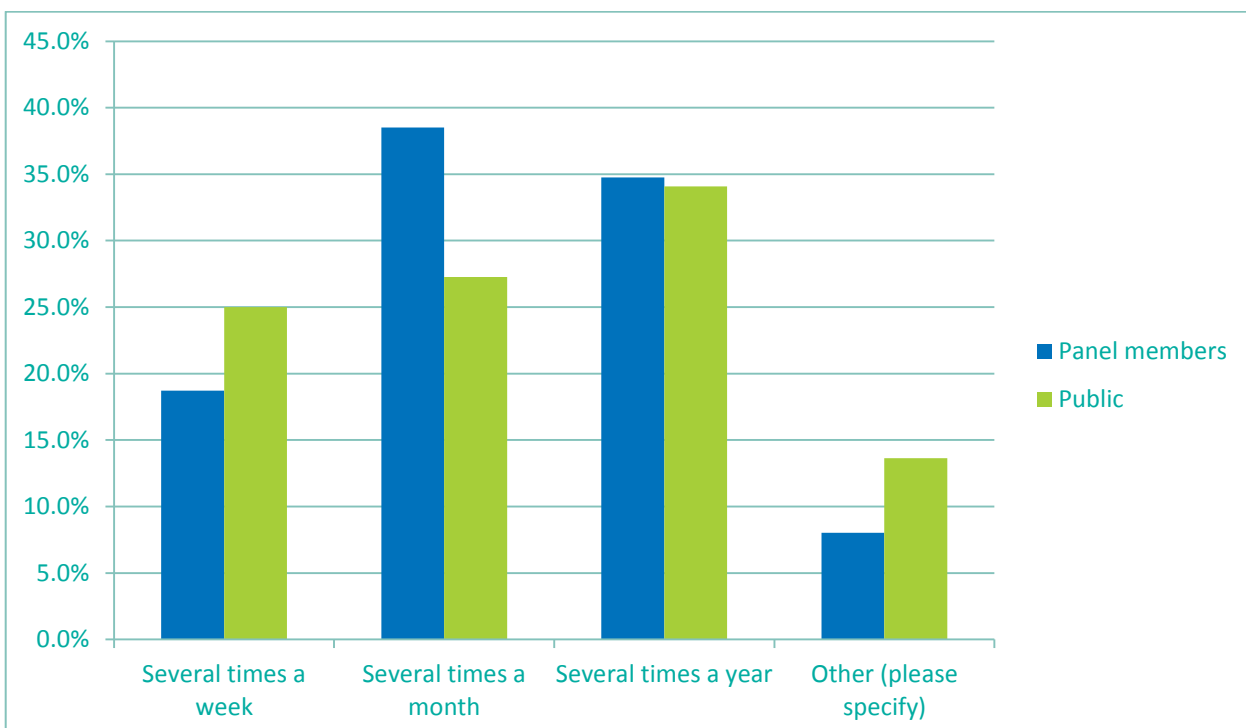
Auckland and Waitemata District Health Boards (DHBs) were considering the best way of providing high quality online information on common health conditions and healthy lifestyles for patients and their families. The DHBs were keen to ensure that information was also culturally appropriate and presented in a user-friendly way. This survey asked for information on where people looked for health information, how they accessed that information and what helped them to feel that the information was reliable. This information would be used to inform discussions on the future direction of the Health Navigator website. Surveys were initially distributed during November and December 2017 through an online community panel and at face to face events during Engagement Week and Pacific Week.

In January 2018, a reminder was sent to online community panel members and a targeted email was sent to a regional database of Pacific and Māori community members. In addition, key survey questions were included at a regional Pacific and Māori rugby league tournament. A total of 304 responses were received. This comprised:

- 187 from existing online panel members
- 73 from a modified public version of the survey shared at a Pacific and Māori youth rugby league tournament
- 44 from the public version of the survey which was provided online and in hard copy format during Pacific and Engagement Weeks

There were two versions of the survey with a slightly shorter version being used at the Pacific and Māori rugby league tournament. In the feedback below, questions include the demographic breakdown where this is felt to be important. As most of the feedback came from existing online community panel members, there is a bias towards those who are already online, particularly for Asian and European participants.

How often do you go online to look for health information?



Other answers included: as required, hardly ever, never, once a year or less and rarely

Where do you go to find information about health and wellbeing for your family?

Common answers to this question were:

- Doctor or GP – 50%
- Online / internet – 34%
- Google – 18%
- Friends and family – 12.5%

Other responses were the pharmacist, nutritionist, school, library or other community places and social media.

Do you have specific websites you visit regularly to find health information? If so, which ones

The most frequently mentioned websites follow.

From those within the health sector (in order of frequency mentioned)

- Google or other internet search (including google scholar)
- Ministry of Health
- Mayo Clinic
- Health Point
- Health Navigator
- Wikipedia
- WebMD
- Medsafe
- Southern Cross
- DHB specific sites

From those not in the health sector

- Google
- Ministry of Health
- WebMD
- Medsafe
- Health Point
- DHBs including Starship
- Kidshealth
- Social media including facebook support groups
- Health Navigator
- Manage my health

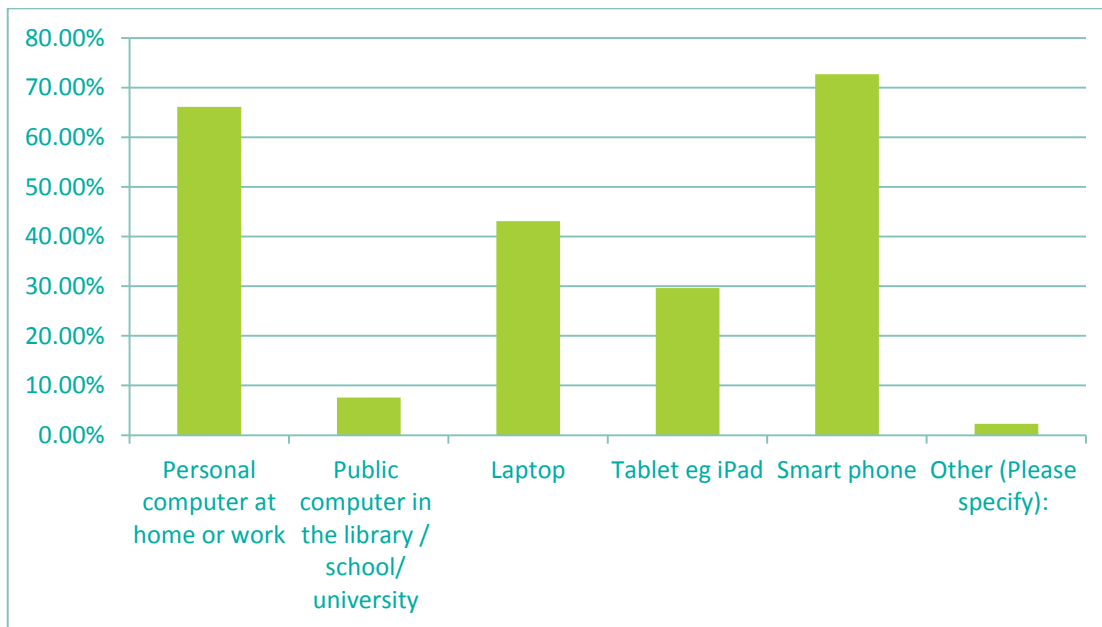
UK websites were also mentioned such as the NHS, Patient.co.uk and NICE with one person commenting that it was the only place they were able to find 'EasyRead' information.

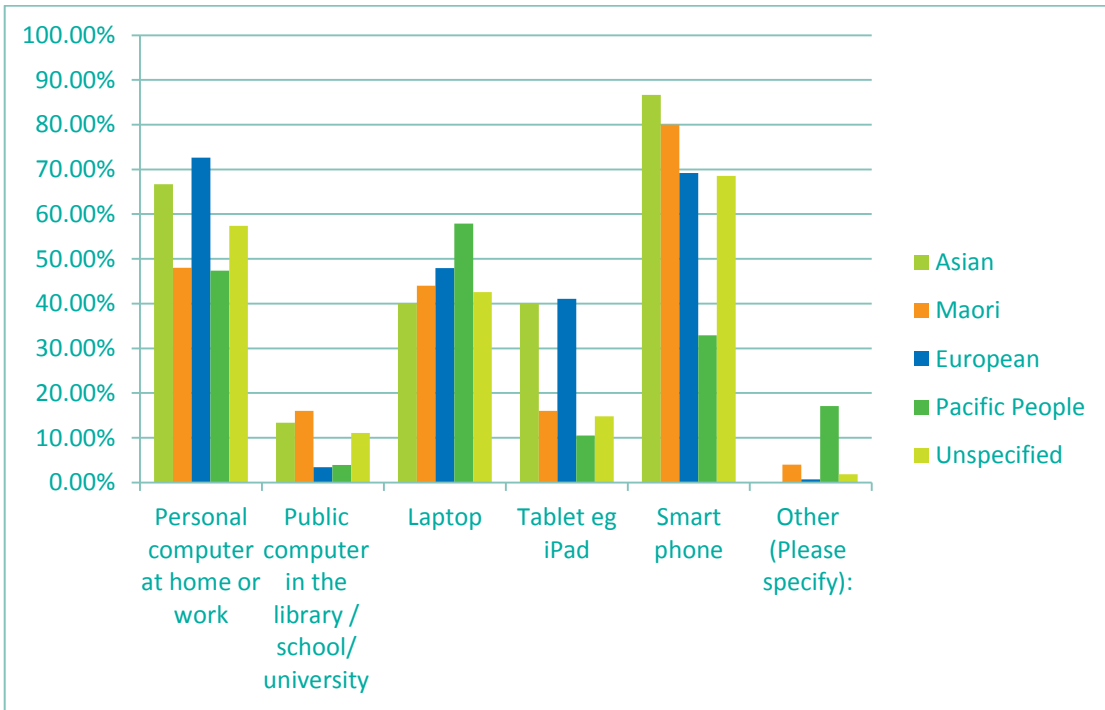
A wide range of other websites were mentioned by participants including those relating to particular health issues or population groups. Several people commented that although they used google or other internet searches to find information, they filtered the results, eg by their own perception of its credibility or they were keen to ensure information was NZ specific.

If you do not have any specific websites you visit regularly, how do you find information about health (eg internet search, referral)?

Google or internet search was overwhelmingly the most common answer: both for members of the public and for people working within the health sector. A small number of respondents also mentioned friends or colleagues, social media, academic journals, referrals or their doctor.

How do you access online information?





Ethnicity	Number of responses (N)
Asian	15
Māori	25
European	146
Pacific People	76
Unspecified	54
Total	316

Several of those who selected ‘other’ indicated that they did not go online.

What helps you to feel that online information is reliable?

Response	% of participants
Recommended by GP or other health professional	74%
Has a government website address (eg ends with govt.nz)	54%
Is New Zealand based	44%
Recommended by friends and family	36%
Endorsed or promoted by well-known people I trust eg sports professionals	16%
Other	21%

Comparing answers to this question between health professionals, those who work in the health sector and members of the public, health professionals were much less likely to take recommendations from friends and family.

Comparing by ethnicity, Māori people were more likely to take recommendations from friends and family while Pacific people were much more likely to feel confident if it had been endorsed or promoted by well-known people they trusted. Asian and European people preferred information that had been recommended by a health professional or that had a government website.

Work Status	N
Not in health	129
In health - not health professional	38
Health professional	61
Unknown if in health	76
Total	304

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Other responses included:

- Evidence or research-based
- Peer reviewed
- International recognition
- Reputable journals
- Endorsed by a professional body or well-known organisation

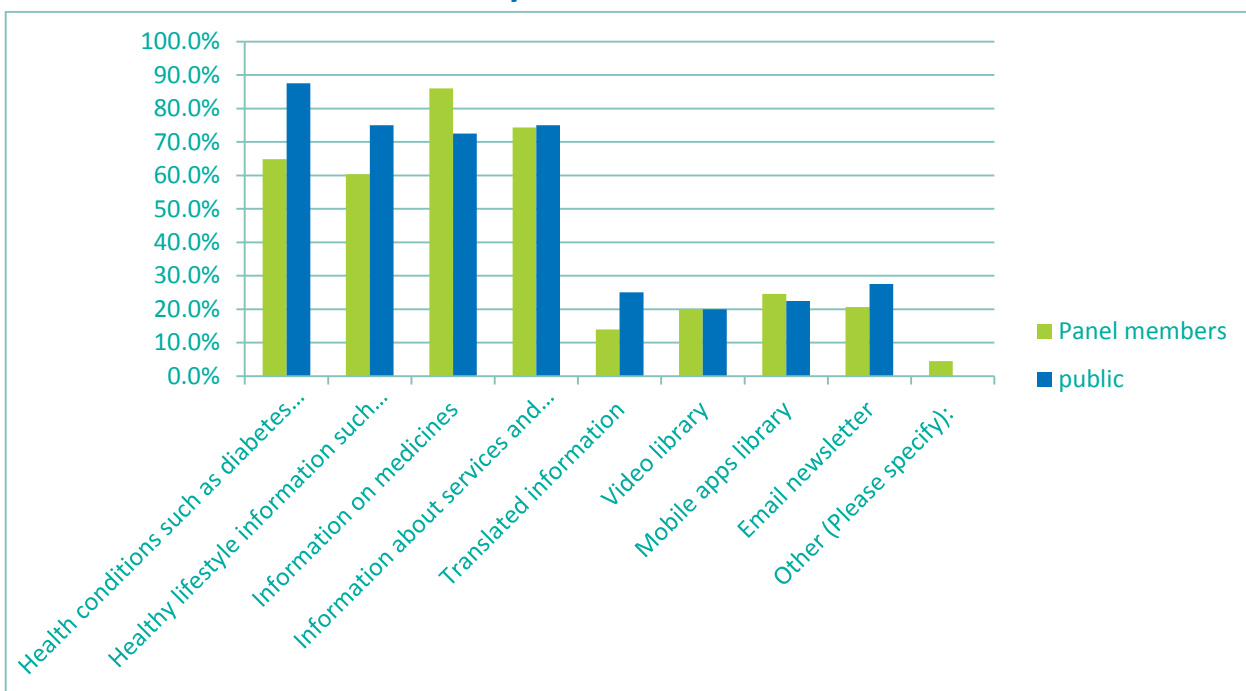
For members of the public, they also commented that they might review several different sources of information and trust it when there were common themes. Some specified that they had less trust in the website if they found that it was funded by a pharmaceutical agency or on a government website.

Have you ever visited the Health Navigator website?

- Yes – 23%
- No – 65%
- Not sure – 12%

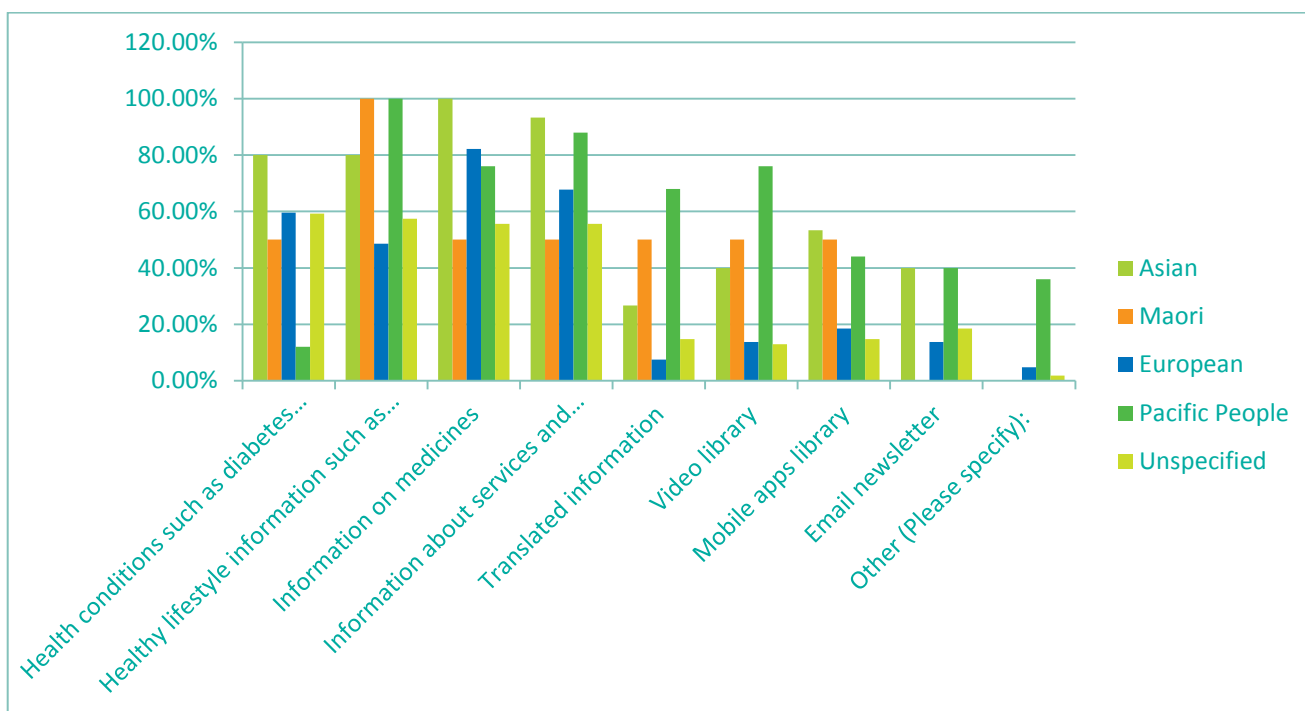
Those working in health were more likely to have visited Health Navigator with 29% stating that they had visited the website.

What health information would you be interested in?



Answers to this question were similar between those working in health and those who were not. However, there were substantial differences when reviewing the responses by ethnicity – however it must be noted that sample sizes were small for some ethnic groups:

Ethnicity	N
Asian	15
Māori	2
European	146
Pacific People	25
Unspecified	54
Total	242



Do you have any comments or feedback on the range of content provided?

Most comments from the public were positive about the range of content provided but there were some general comments that might improve the range or type of content provided:

- I just had a look at the health navigator website and it looks great. Wide range of topics, with a good focus on HEALTH and prevention as opposed to just treatment.
- I would prefer to get my medical information from a health professional, gp, wdhb or known contact
- Well none is in easy read information, so not accessible for a lot of disabled people.
- Please keep it in plain English not some high fluting medical language
- No comment at present. I work as an information officer for the citizens advice bureaus and we used to have business cards advertising health navigator but they seem to have disappeared in recent years. Brochures would be good for display in work if they are available please email me. I am registered to manage my health with my GP and find this an excellent portal to access to find all my test results, book appts. Order scripts and much more
- Translated for Pacific Communities and for a youth audience (I hope that these groups are involved in the planning and consultation process before any of the documents or resources become published to ensure that they will work for Pacific and youth audience).
- Health Navigator is amazing given the restricted funding that is provided to support their activities.

- Very wide medical content from trusted professionals. Needs to be open about alternative options eg. medication not available in NZ but used overseas.

Comments from those working in health included:

- Health Navigator content appears trustworthy and accessible. I have had discussions with them in the past about partnering to provide online patient information via a clinical decision support portal
- I would like to see a lot more information displayed on healthy food choices and exercise programmes that are suitable for obese people
- Information about private doctors
- Information needs to be accessible to all - eg. videos with captions, NZSL videos, etc
- Links to engaging self-help tools re: sleep management; depression; anxiety; hearing voices
- Please make it smart phone friendly. Might be worth being on social media such as instagram or Facebook to capture the younger population
- Need specific navigation assistance for patients from being in their community to accessing primary care and navigating that pathway. Keep it patient-centred i.e. rather than information overload, use the patient as the starting point and go from there. The site really needs to first link the patient to their primary care practice/GP and not their DHB or Regional Alliance or anything else.
- There are so many well-known international websites with info on health conditions. There is no need to duplicate this. What is needed is info that is unique to NZ, for example where to find specialists.
- Translated information on a wide variety of subjects would be incredibly beneficial to myself to refer to when discussing health issues with people who have English as a second language. Quite often there are not enough resources to support this
- Websites that are easy to navigate in language text and that I'm not having to continue to click

What support, services or information do you think is needed to help you and your family adopt healthier lifestyles?

Key themes were:

- Healthy food – cheaper or subsidised, easily accessible, access to nutritionists / dieticians, easy recipes, food shows, information targeting key demographics eg Pacific or youth and put taxes on unhealthy food
- Exercise – free classes and facilities, community based activities such as Zumba or bootcamps, exercise equipment in parks and access to the Green Prescription
- Information should be made available through magazines, it should be provided in simple language and translated where possible. Information should be easy to find online, shown on TV adverts, provided in the workplace, schools or marae and through presentations in the community

Other ideas included more mobile clinics, family and friends, free GP, culturally relevant services, improved state housing and benefit increases, programmes that engage the whole family.

Do you have any other ideas or comments about online health information?

Common suggestions from participants were that they would like information they could trust and that a website that was easy to navigate, balanced, provided multimedia content, translated material, was endorsed by health professionals and was easy to find with regular communications on key areas of interest.

Suggestions for content and improvement included:

- It would be great to have a list of specialist doctors for specific diseases / illnesses

- Magazine cluttered sites are out-dated. Clean up and just have a simple search tool on the home page
- Nutrition – hear one thing one day and something else the next
- Pasifika section
- Please make sure to consult with the disability sector to co-design information that will be accessible
- A pointer to information about potential conditions indicated by tests would be helpful
- Someone who can reply back on any query or helpful in chatting
- Tele rehab – re hab games for aging – post stroke intensive programs families can administer at home
- Link to lactation consultant for breastfeeding support
- I have found with young children, I like using image searches to check rash / skin irritations
- Outline some basic tips on what vitamins and minerals do for your body. Be more proactive in making people aware of how poor food choices affect them eg diabetes

Some people also suggested connecting this kind of information with patient e-records and patient portals.

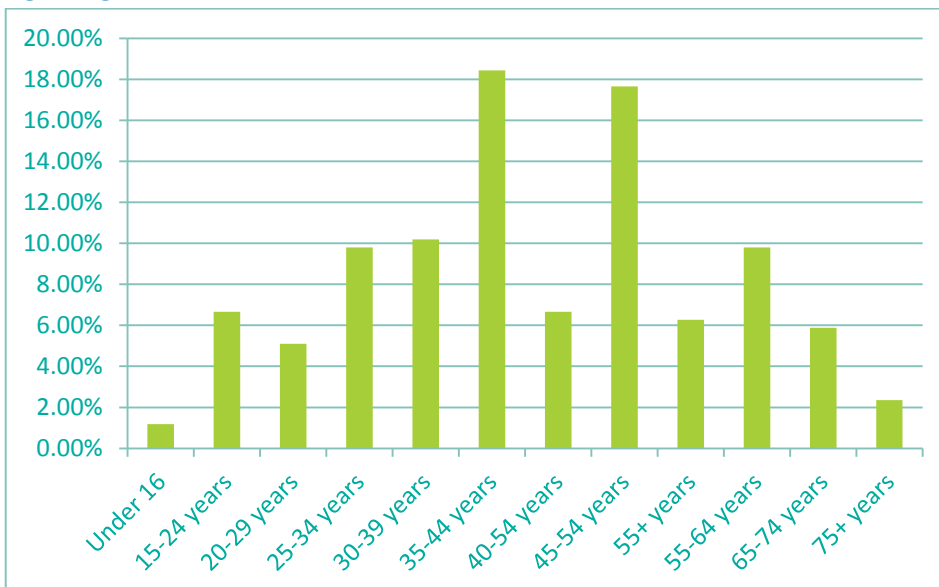
Health professionals also suggested access to referral forms, guidelines and protocols and suggested that there should be something saying that the website is a guide only and to contact a GP for professional help. Other suggestions by those working in health included including some holistic approaches, provide more detailed information for deeper conversations and provide free access to online health information at GPs, hospitals etc.

Demographics

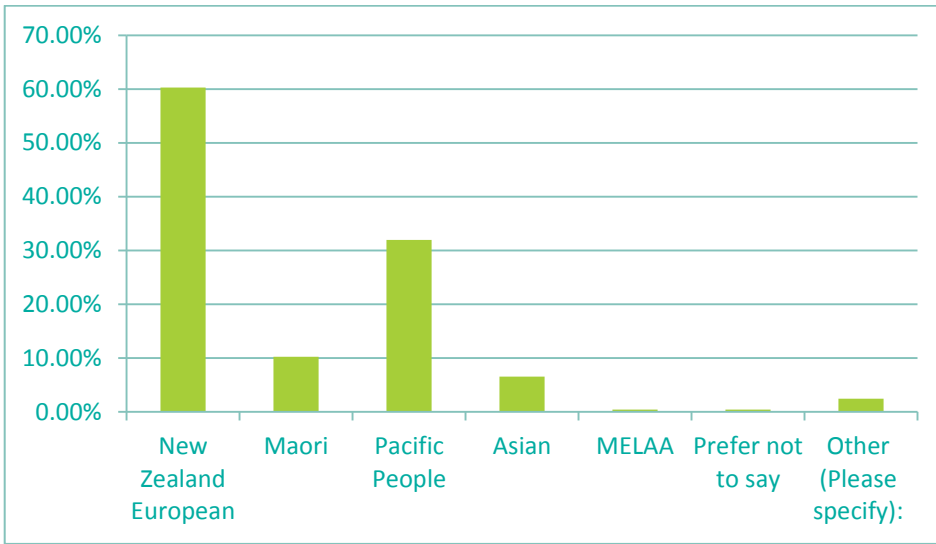
Gender

- Female – 73.5%
- Gender diverse – 0.7%
- Male – 25.5%
- Prefer not to say – 0.3%

Age range



Ethnicity



Geographical location of participant

65% of respondents came from the Waitemata area, 18% from the Auckland DHB area, 13% from the Counties Manukau DHB area, 3% from other parts of NZ and 1% from overseas.

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