

A Portrait of Health

**Key results of the 2002/03
New Zealand Health Survey**

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MANATŪ HAUORA

Foreword

To improve its health and participation outcomes for New Zealand, the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards need valid and reliable evidence on population health status, risks to health, and access to and utilisation of health services. This information is required to monitor trends and inequalities, project future needs for health services, and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of current approaches. To meet these information needs, the Ministry has developed a set of health information tools, including the New Zealand Health Monitor. The New Zealand Health Monitor is a co-ordinated 10-year cycle of health-related surveys, and includes as its centrepiece the New Zealand Health Survey.

The 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey is the third national population-based health survey to be carried out by the Ministry, the earlier surveys having been fielded in 1992/93 and 1996/97. The current survey represents an extension and improvement on these earlier surveys, while still retaining comparability with them to the greatest extent possible. Major developments in the current survey include a more comprehensive assessment of health status and of the prevalence of chronic diseases, questioning about a wider range of health services, and inclusion of measured weight, height and waist circumference to enable more frequent monitoring of the obesity epidemic.

The 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey included face-to-face interviews with more than 12,000 New Zealand adults and included more Māori, Pacific and Asian participants than ever before. To everyone who gave so freely of their time to answer a multitude of questions about their health and lifestyle and allowed themselves to be weighed and measured – thank you.

Provisional results from the survey, covering the key findings, have already been released by the Minister of Health. The current report, *A Portrait of Health*, now updates this information and provides final results on a much wider range of topics. Yet even this report cannot do justice to the richness of the information potentially available from this survey. Rather, it is intended to draw the attention of users and researchers to the survey and encourage them to undertake or commission more detailed analysis. The Ministry will provide access to the dataset in several ways, including datacubes, a data laboratory facility, and confidentialised unit record files. The Ministry will also undertake analytic studies itself, as well as producing District Health Board level results based on small area estimation methods.

The survey findings – both the descriptive statistics presented in this report and the analytic studies to come – will provide valuable evidence to guide the implementation, evaluation and further evolution of the New Zealand Health Strategy. With regular repetition of the survey over time, its usefulness as a monitoring tool will grow. In this way, the New Zealand Health Survey will help address the Ministry of Health's societal and systemic outcomes of better health, reduced inequalities, and equity and access.

Karen O Poutasi (Dr)
Director-General of Health
Ministry of Health

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We are grateful to the participants of the survey who freely gave their time to take part in the survey.

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