

Foreword

The New Zealand Health Survey is critical in providing reliable and up-to-date information on the health of New Zealanders and their use of health services.

The survey has produced a wealth of information that will continue to guide us as we plan for delivering health services to ensure we are meeting the needs of all New Zealanders. The survey tells us about our body size, our physical and mental health, our behaviours that can impact on health, and our use and experience of health care services.

This survey found that we are mostly in good health and we have excellent access to health care services. I'm encouraged to read that more people can see a GP when they need to, that daily smoking rates have decreased, and that the rate of increase in adult obesity is slowing.

The information gathered by the New Zealand Health Survey underpins the further development, implementation and evaluation of the Ministry's strategic policies and programmes, including some of the Health Targets. District Health Boards will also find the regional data useful for service planning, while researchers will want to conduct further analyses using the survey data.

This report, *A Portrait of Health*, is the first release of key descriptive findings from the 2006/07 New Zealand Health Survey, and includes comparisons with the previous health and nutrition surveys where possible.

Major innovations in the 2006/07 survey include a more efficient statistical design, a child health questionnaire, and an updated primary health care section. The 2006/07 survey extends and improves on earlier surveys while retaining comparability where possible.

The 2006/07 survey collected information on over 17,000 New Zealanders. I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who gave so freely of their time to answer a multitude of questions about their health and habits, and allowed themselves to be weighed and measured.

Although this information is of great relevance for policy and planning, the report cannot do justice to the richness of information potentially available from the survey. Rather, it is intended to draw the attention of users and encourage them to undertake or commission their own more detailed analyses once the confidentialised data set is available.

I invite readers to comment on the content of this report and how its findings might be translated into policy and improved health for New Zealanders.



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