

## COVID-19 indicators for older people – July 2021 update

- 1 This report will be the last update of the key indicators being used to track the impact of COVID-19 on older people. Most data points captured either appear to be returning to pre-COVID-19 levels or following trajectories that cannot be distinguished from longer-term pre-pandemic trends. Stakeholders have also reported a return to a degree of pre-pandemic normalcy.
- 2 This report uses data available up to the March 2021 quarter. The March 2021 quarter wellbeing data is the last release of quarterly wellbeing data. The next release of wellbeing data will be in mid-2022 from the 2021 General Social Survey.
- 3 The Office for Seniors will move its focus to reporting on the initial Better Later Life indicators as outlined in the Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034 strategy.

### Highlights

- This report uses data up to the March 2021 quarter (three months to March 2021).
- Underutilisation rates for the total adult population (those aged 15+) have increased from pre COVID-19 levels quarters and have remained elevated through to the March 2021 quarter. Increases in underutilisation for older workers (aged 50+) were not statistically significant.
- Total income support recipients aged 50+ have increased and remain elevated as a result of COVID-19. This was mainly driven by a jump in Jobseeker Work Ready rates since March 2020, in spite of a more recent flattening and slight decline in numbers. This is in line with trends in the total adult population.
- Jobseeker cancellation rates for older workers aged 50+ obtaining work are consistently lower than those for workers between the ages of 16 and 49. This discrepancy was evident prior to COVID-19.
- Indicators of material hardship, loneliness and discrimination have not changed significantly for the 65+ population throughout the pandemic and remain moderately lower than for the total adult population.
- There does not appear to be any change in the rates at which potential elder abuse is reported to the national helpline service as a result of COVID-19.
- The number of applicants aged 65 and over on the Public Housing Register (excluding numbers on the transfer register) has been rapidly increasing since before the pandemic began. This is a similar pattern to that for the entire housing register. The number of applicants aged 65 and over on the Public Housing Register increased by 153 between December 2020 and March 2021.
- MSD paid 390 Emergency Housing Grants to older people (65+) in the month of March 2021, less than a peak of 411 in October 2020 but still higher than before lockdown.
- Most organisations said the challenges the pandemic brought have now passed, although there is still some lingering concern amongst older people, especially regarding the communication surrounding the vaccine roll out. Some older people are fearful of getting COVID-19 before they receive their vaccine, although the most frequently raised concern was that some older people are confused by the communications they have been receiving regarding the vaccine roll out and feel it is unclear who they should be speaking to about the vaccine roll out.

## Introduction

- 4 In July 2020 we published a small set of short-term indicators to track the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on older people aged 65 years and over (65+) and older workers aged 50 years and over (50+). Following the initial report, we published updated quarterly reports in August 2020, November 2020, and February 2021.<sup>1</sup>
- 5 This report incorporates published and customised data available up to the March 2021 quarter:
  - March 2021 quarter financial wellbeing, loneliness, and discrimination data from Stats NZ's Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) wellbeing supplement<sup>2</sup>
  - March 2021 quarter unemployment, employment, and underutilisation data for older workers (aged 50+) from Stats NZ's Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS)<sup>3</sup>
  - MSD income support data up to March 2021
  - numbers of calls to the Elder Abuse helpline up to March 2021
  - feedback from key stakeholders who work with older people
  - housing register data up to the March 2021 quarter.<sup>4</sup>

## Official statistics show little change in the unemployment rate and underutilisation

Rationale for the unemployment indicator: While older workers are less likely to become unemployed, they are more likely to become long-term unemployed than younger workers.<sup>5</sup> The long-term impacts of job displacement are greater for older workers than younger workers - on average displaced workers over 50 have 11-12 percent lower employment (and 25-30% lower earnings if employed) after 4-5 years.<sup>6</sup>

- 6 An estimated 83,700 older workers aged 50+ were underutilised in the March 2021 quarter – 26,100 unemployed, 31,300 underemployed and the remainder in the potential labour force<sup>7</sup>.
- 7 Changes in underutilisation and unemployment rates for older workers (aged 50+) between the December 2020 and March 2021 quarters were not statistically significant. Changes in underutilisation and unemployment rates have not been statistically significant for the entire COVID-19 period, between the September 2019 quarter (pre-COVID-19) and March 2021 quarter (the onset of COVID-19 economic disruption).
- 8 Relative sampling errors are higher for the 50+ population than for the total adult population, making it harder to draw conclusions from this data. More research is

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<sup>1</sup> Previous reports can be found at: <http://www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz/about-superseniors/ageing-population/covid-19.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The March 2021 release can be found at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-march-2021-quarter>

<sup>3</sup> The March 2021 quarter release can be found at <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/labour-market-statistics-march-2021-quarter>

<sup>4</sup> The latest housing register statistics can be found at <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> For more information see <http://www.superseniors.msd.govt.nz/documents/better-later-life/financial-security-and-economic-participation-indicator.docx>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://motu.nz/about-us/news/workers-who-lose-their-jobs-are-disadvantaged-for-years/>

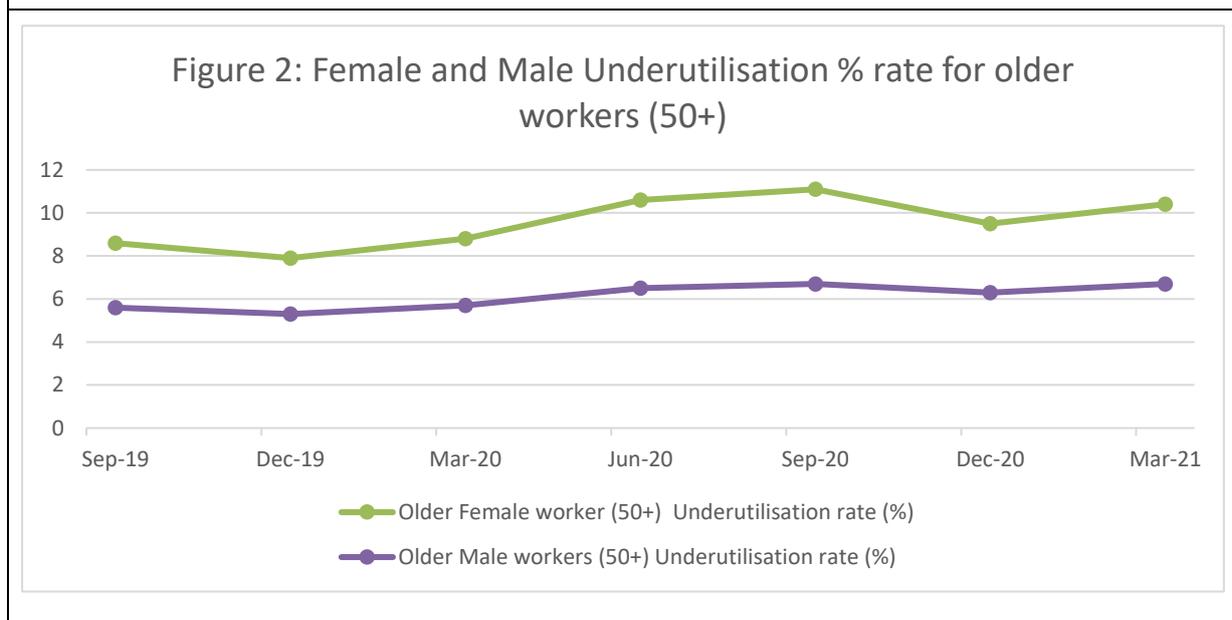
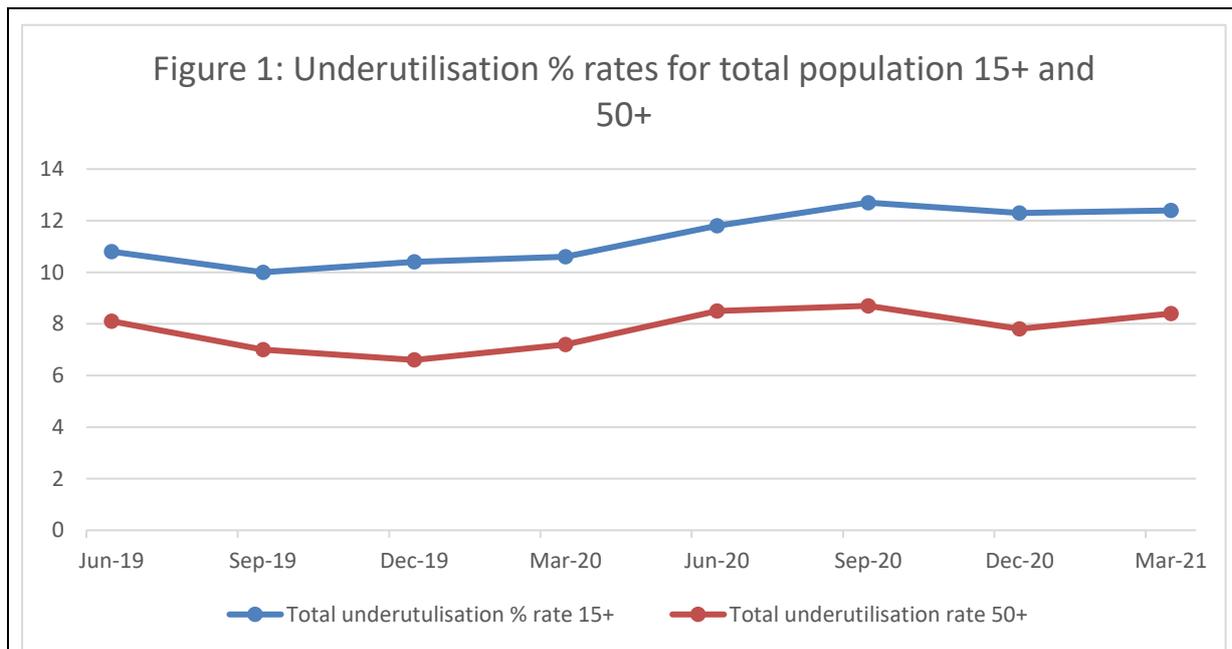
<sup>7</sup> The potential labour force is a measure Stats NZ use to describe those who want a job and are available for work, but are not currently looking for a job <https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/underutilisation-rate>

necessary to see if the 50+ population has been affected in a similar way to the total adult population.

9 Noting the above the March 2021 data shows the following:

- The underutilisation rate for older workers aged 50+ increased from 7.8% in the December 2020 quarter to 8.4% in the March 2021 quarter (see Figure 1).
- The unemployment rate for older workers aged 50+ increased from 2.6% in the December 2020 quarter to 2.7% in the March 2021 quarter (see Figure 1).
- The underutilisation rate for older female workers (50+) increased from 9.5% to 10.4%, and older male workers increased from 6.3% to 6.7% (see Figure 2).

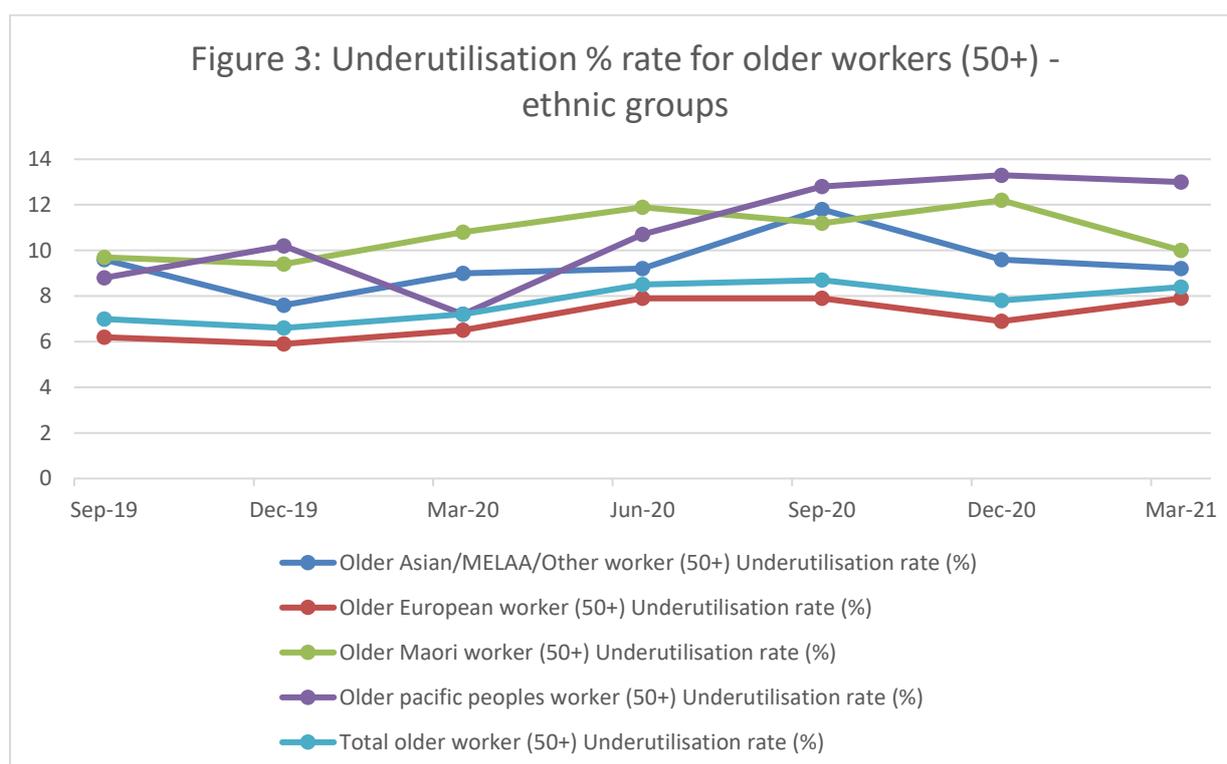
10 Underutilisation and unemployment rates for the total adult population (those aged 15+) have increased from pre COVID-19 levels in the September and December 2019 quarters and have remained elevated through to the March 2021 quarter.



Source: Stats NZ, Household Labour Force Survey, customised data

11 High sampling error for older workers when divided by ethnicity mean comparisons in any quarter should be treated with caution.

- 12 The underutilisation rate in the March 2021 quarter for older Pacific workers (50+) was 13%; higher than the rate of 7.9% for older European workers (50+). The rate for older Māori workers (50+) was 10% and for Asian/Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA)/Other older workers (50+) the rate was 9.2% (see Figure 3).
- 13 Older European workers have had lower rates of underutilisation than the total 50+ population since before the COVID-19 pandemic began. This trend has continued throughout the pandemic (see Figure 3). This trend is consistent with trends reflected in the total adult population (aged 15+).
- 14 The unemployment rate in the March 2021 quarter for older Pacific workers (50+) was 6.2% and for older Māori workers (50+) the rate was 4.8%. The unemployment rates for both groups were higher than the rate of 2.3% for older European workers (50+). The unemployment rate for Asian/MELAA/Other older workers (50+) was 2.8%.



Source: Stats NZ, Household Labour Force Survey, customised data

### Increasing numbers are receiving income support

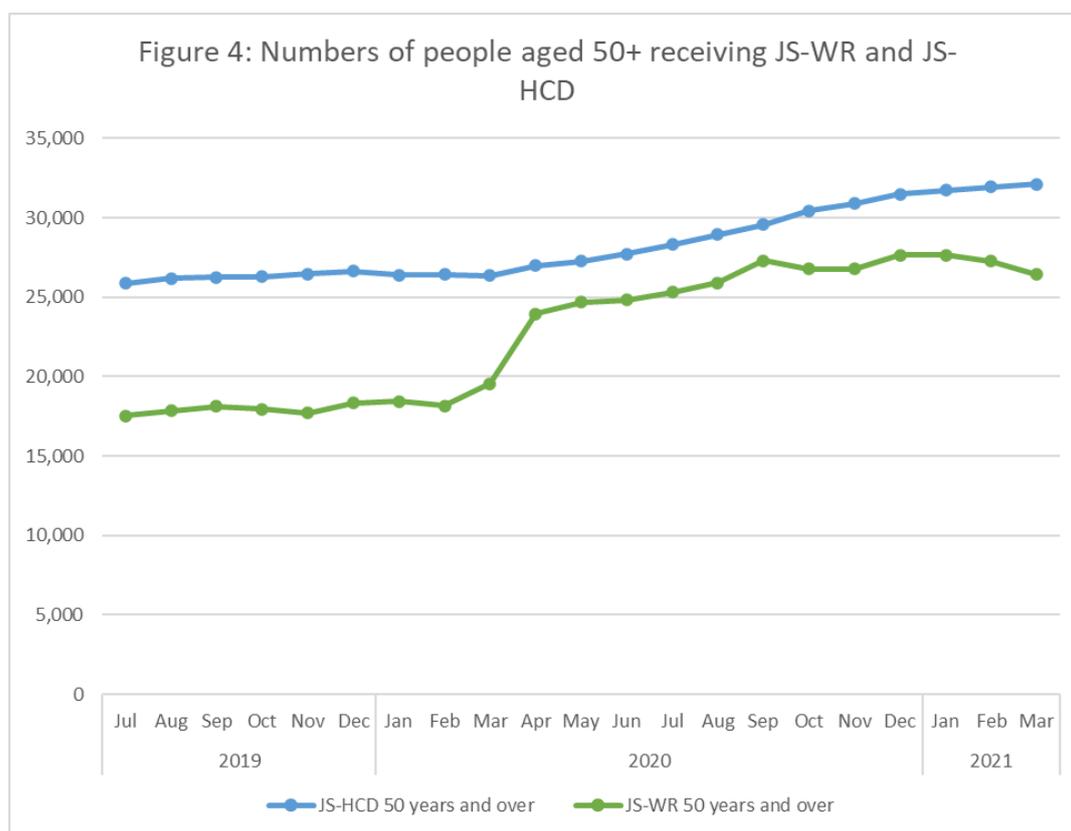
Rationale for the indicator: The number of people receiving Jobseeker Support (JS) and other income support is expected to increase as people lose their jobs and earn less from investments, and investment balances reduce. Some people who lost their job from 1 March 2020 to 30 October 2020 due to COVID-19 were eligible for the COVID-19 Income Relief Payment (CIRP) for up to three months, including some people not eligible for main benefits<sup>8</sup>. Others were in jobs supported by wage subsidies.<sup>9,10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For more information refer <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19/income-relief-payment/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> For more information refer <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/covid-19-evidence.html#WhoreceivedtheCOVID19wagesubsidiesSeptember20206>

<sup>10</sup> For mor information refer <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/covid-19/covid-19-evidence.html#WhoreceivedtheWageSubsidyandWageSubsidyExtensionJuly20207>

- 15 Total income support recipients aged 50+ have increased and remain elevated as a result of COVID-19. This was mainly driven by a jump in Jobseeker Work Ready (JS-WR) rates since March 2020, in spite of a more recent flattening and slight decline in numbers. This is in line with trends in the total adult population.
- 16 Jobseeker Health Condition and Disability (JS-HCD) numbers have also grown, but less sharply. The rate of increase is significantly bigger than in the past. This may be partly due to the pausing of requirements for medical certificate renewals.
- 17 At the end of the March 2021 quarter, 58,527 people aged 50 years and over (50+) were receiving Jobseeker Support (JS). This was made up of 26,415 receiving JS-WR and 32,112 receiving JS-HCD.
- 18 The number of people aged 50+ receiving JS-WR increased from 18,177 in February 2020 (before lockdown) to 26,415 in March 2021. This is an increase of 8,238. (see Figure 4).
- 19 The number of people aged 50+ receiving JS-HCD increased from 26,442 in February 2020 (before lockdown) to 32,112 in March 2021. This is an increase of 5,680 (see Figure 4).
- 20 Other benefits, supplementary support and hardship assistance appear to be similar to the December 2020 month. There has been only a minimal increase in the rate of those aged 50+ receiving these benefits and supplementary supports over the course of the pandemic. (For more information, please see appendix A.)



Source: MSD, administrative data

### **Increases have been reflected across all ethnicities**

- 21 MSD currently uses prioritised ethnic groups, where Māori have the highest priority, and NZ European the lowest priority. This results in undercounting for groups such as NZ European and Pacific Peoples. Numbers should be used with caution.
- 22 The number of Māori aged 50+ receiving JS-WR has increased from 6,594 in February 2020 to 8,496 in March 2021. For New Zealand Europeans the increase is from 6,840

to 10,137; for Pacific People's the increase is from 1,341 to 2,169; for other the increase is from 2,844 to 4,590; and for unspecified the increase is from 564 to 1,029.

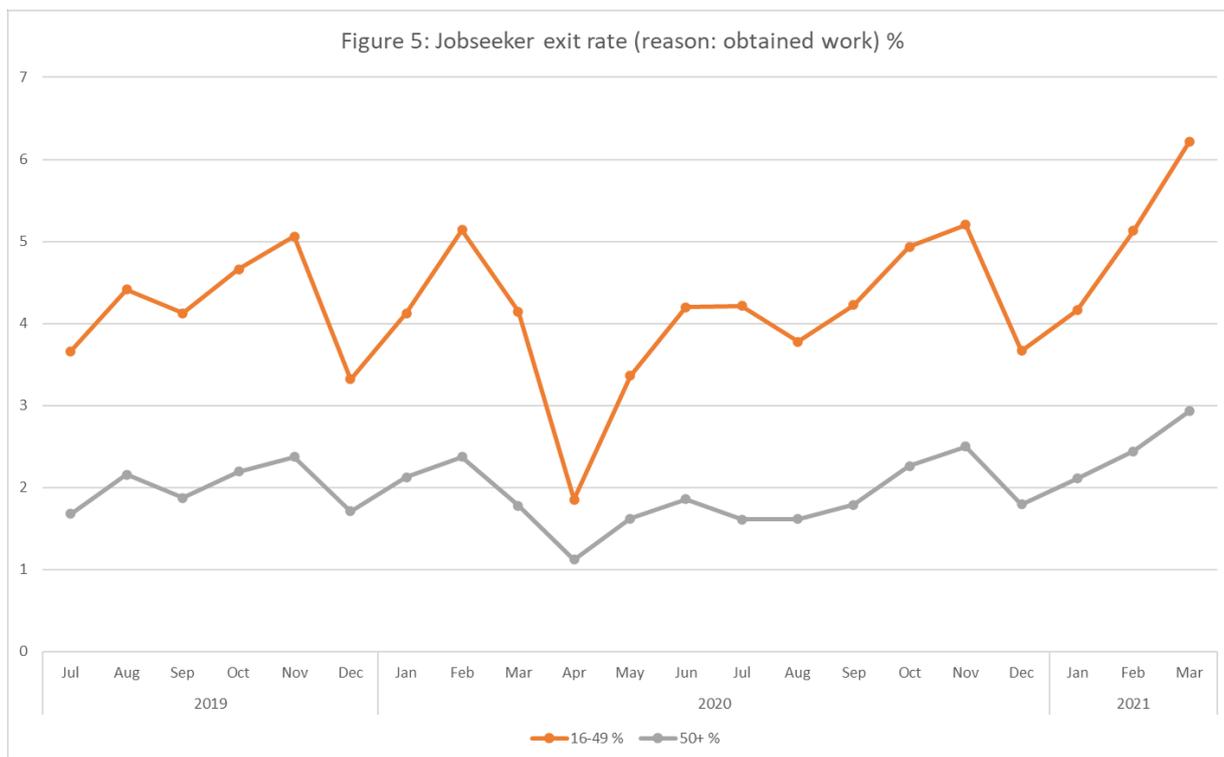
- 23 A higher number of males than females received JS-WR throughout the pandemic, in line with pre-COVID-19 trends. The number of males receiving JS-WR in February 2020 was 9,510 and grew to 13,752 in March 2021. The number of females receiving JS-WR in February 2020 was 8,664 and grew to 12,660 in March 2021. The numbers receiving JS-WR for both males and females appears to have flattened and begun a modest decline in the first quarter of 2021.
- 24 There has been a steady increase in the numbers of people aged 50+ receiving JS-HCD including amongst different ethnic groups over the course of the pandemic. This increase between different ethnic groups is not clearly distinguishable from the increase rate pre-pandemic, with the exception of the New Zealand European population group which has seen a sharper rise since March 2021 than other groups.
- 25 The number of Māori aged 50+ receiving JS-HCD has increased from 7,413 in February 2020 to 8,946 in March 2021. For New Zealand Europeans the increase is from 10,638 to 13,146; for Pacific Peoples the increase is from 2,187 to 2,688; for "other" the increase is from 5,463 to 6,381.
- 26 A higher number of females than males have received JS-HCD throughout the pandemic, continuing the pre-COVID-19 trend. The number of females receiving JS-HCD in February 2020 was 13,878, rising to 16,773 in March 2021. The number of males receiving JS-HCD in February 2020 was 12,564 and rose to 15,333 in March 2021. There appears to be a very slight increase in the rate of females receiving JS-HCD as compared to males.

### **The percentage of older workers returning to work is less than for younger workers**

- 27 Jobseeker cancellation rates due to obtaining work for older workers aged 50+ remained fairly stable from the period pre COVID-19 to December 2020. Since December 2020, cancellation rates have seen a steady increase (see Figure 5).
- 28 Jobseeker cancellation rates for older workers aged 50+ obtaining work are consistently lower than those for workers between the ages of 16 and 49. This difference was evident prior to COVID-19.
- 29 Cancellation rates amongst workers of all ages have increased since December 2020, likely reflecting strong labour market demand as a result of increasing economic activity. The increase in the cancellation rate for workers aged 16 to 49 has been larger than for those aged 50+. This is in line with research based on the 2009 financial crisis, which found that displaced older workers were on average slower to return to employment.
- 30 Note the dip in cancellation rates between March 2020 and April 2020 reflects the decline in economic activity over that period<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> [Jobseeker Support Work-Ready grants and cancellations during and after lockdown in NZ - impacts to the seventh week of Alert Level 1 \(msd.govt.nz\)](https://www.msd.govt.nz/impacts-to-the-seventh-week-of-Alert-Level-1)



Source: MSD, administrative data

### Stats NZ Wellbeing Data (material hardship, loneliness, discrimination)

Stats NZ has not yet released data for the proposed COVID-19 material hardship indicator collected in the household labour force survey (HLFS) COVID-19 supplement. Their initial exploration of the data has identified concerns about the quality of the data, especially its comparability with the 2018/19 Household Economic Survey (HES) used for published poverty measures. This data may be published later. They have, however, published some other wellbeing data which we have used.<sup>12</sup> This includes:

- material hardship (financial)
  - people that said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs
  - people that said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months
- loneliness
- discrimination.

The March 2021 quarter wellbeing data is the last release of quarterly wellbeing data. The next release of wellbeing data will be from the 2021 General Social Survey in mid-2022.

**Material hardship** (people that said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs, and people that said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months)

Rationale for the indicator: Material hardship may increase due to reduced employment earnings, reduced income from investments (including interest) and impacts on investment balances (including KiwiSaver).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-june-2020-quarter>

Baseline data for older people showed that younger cohorts were a little more likely to be in material hardship (4% for those aged 65-74 and 2% for those aged 75+ in 2018/19)<sup>13</sup> and European ethnicities<sup>14</sup> are less likely to be in material hardship than other ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup>

### **People that said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs**

- 31 In the March 2021 quarter, 5.1% of people aged 65+ (not significantly different to the 5.8% in the December 2020 quarter) said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs (see Figure 6):
- 5.3% of females aged 65+ said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs in the March 2021 quarter compared to 5.6% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 7).
  - 4.8% of males aged 65+ said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs in the March 2021 quarter compared to 6.1% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 8).
- 32 The percentage of the total 18+ population that said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs has remained slightly higher than the 65+ population and was 7.3% in the March 2021 quarter (see Figure 6):
- 8.2% of the total 18+ female population said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs in the March 2021 quarter compared to 5.3% of the female population aged 65+ (see Figure 7)
  - 6.3% of the total 18+ male population said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs in the March 2021 quarter compared to 4.8% of the male population aged 65+ (see Figure 8).
- 33 Over the course of the pandemic the percentage of Europeans aged 65+ that said they did not have enough money to meet their everyday needs has been consistently below the total 65+ population. Māori, Pacific and Asian (missing June 2020 quarter data)<sup>16</sup> aged 65+ have been higher than the total 65+ population (see Figure 9). There is insufficient data to show the Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA)/Other groups aged 65+ group on the graph and to make comparisons.
- 34 These ethnicity differences are consistent with trends reflected in the total population aged 18+.
- 35 Differences between the December 2020 quarter and the March 2021 quarter are not statistically significant. Note that the relative sampling error is high or very high for all ethnic groups except European, so any conclusions should be treated with caution.

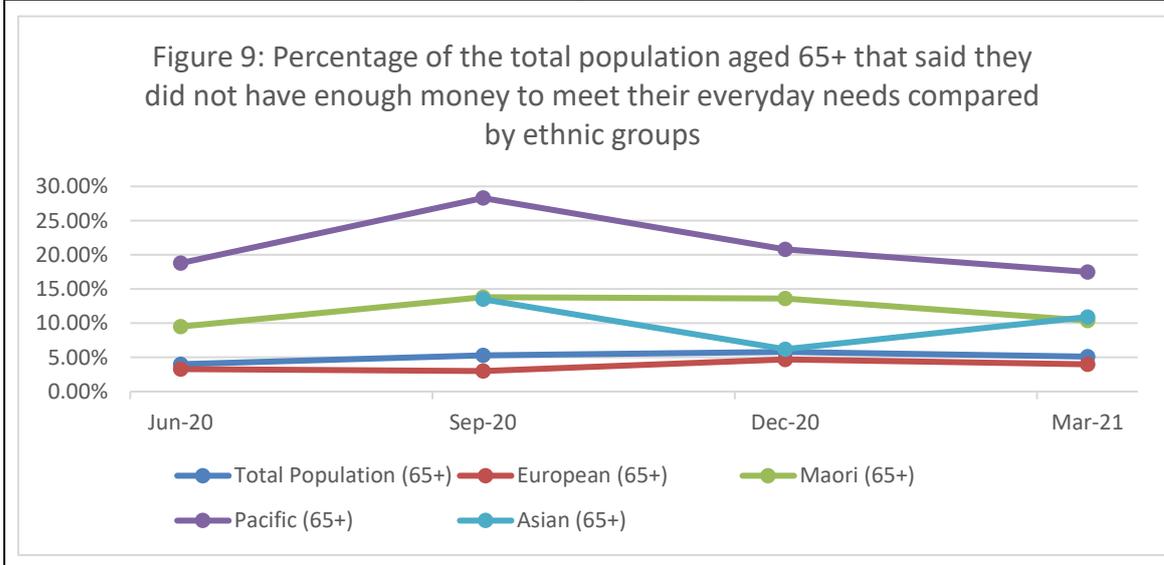
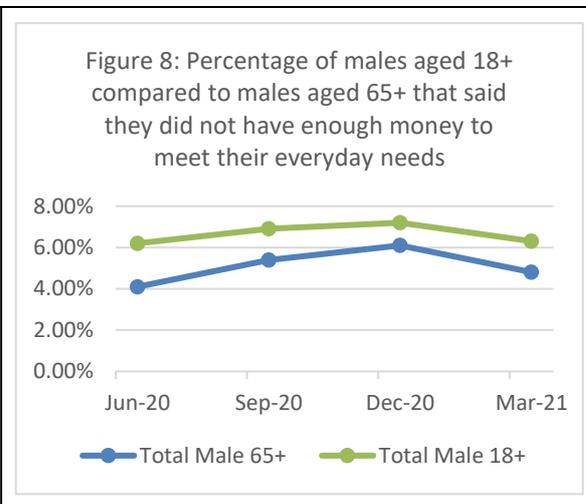
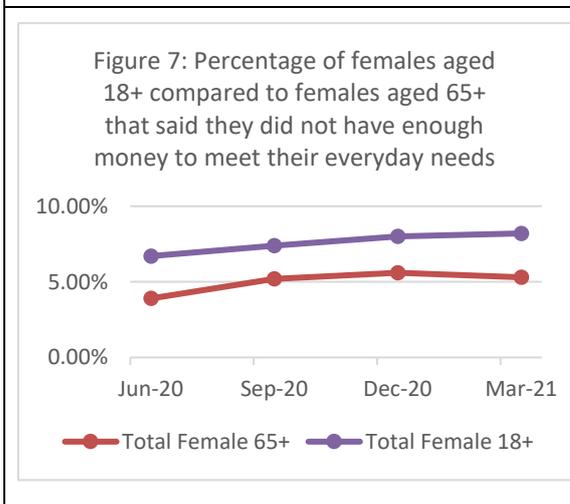
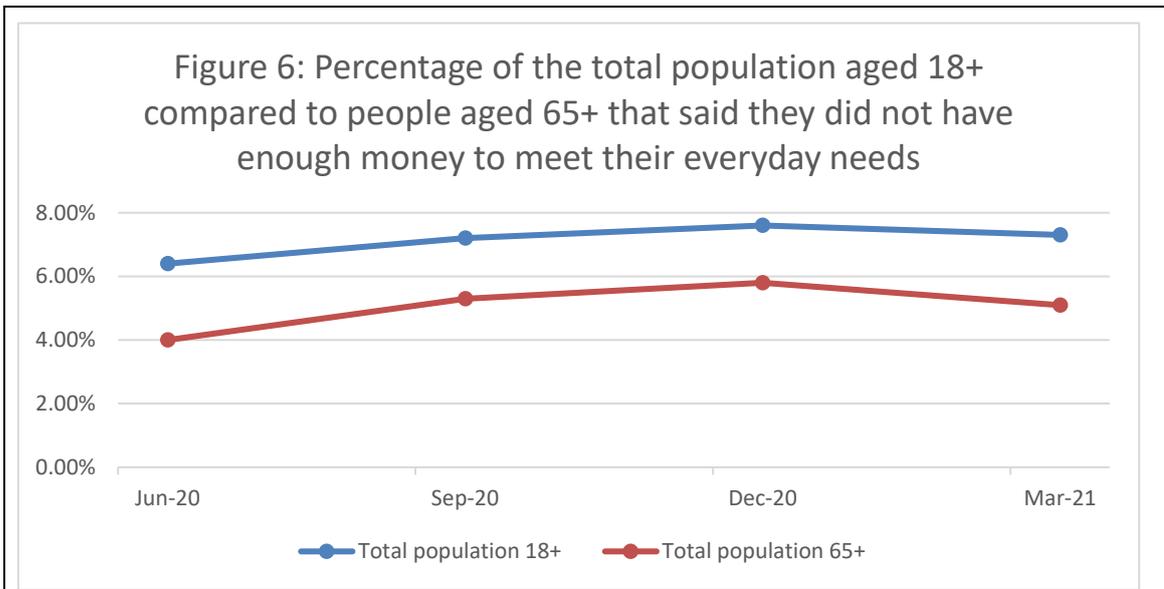
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<sup>13</sup> MSD unpublished analysis of Stats NZ's 2018/19 HES, percentage in a household that is missing out on six or more of 17 basic items (the same DEP-17 measure used in Stats NZ's child poverty statistics).

<sup>14</sup> The European ethnic group includes New Zealand Europeans and a wide grouping of other European communities. Ethnicity data used in Stats NZ surveys is self-identified and people can choose to be included in more than one ethnic group.

<sup>15</sup> MSD unpublished analysis of Stats NZ's General Social Survey, combining data for 2014, 2016 and 2018, using an alternative measure: percentage of people with Material Wellbeing Index (MWI-9) score from 0-7.

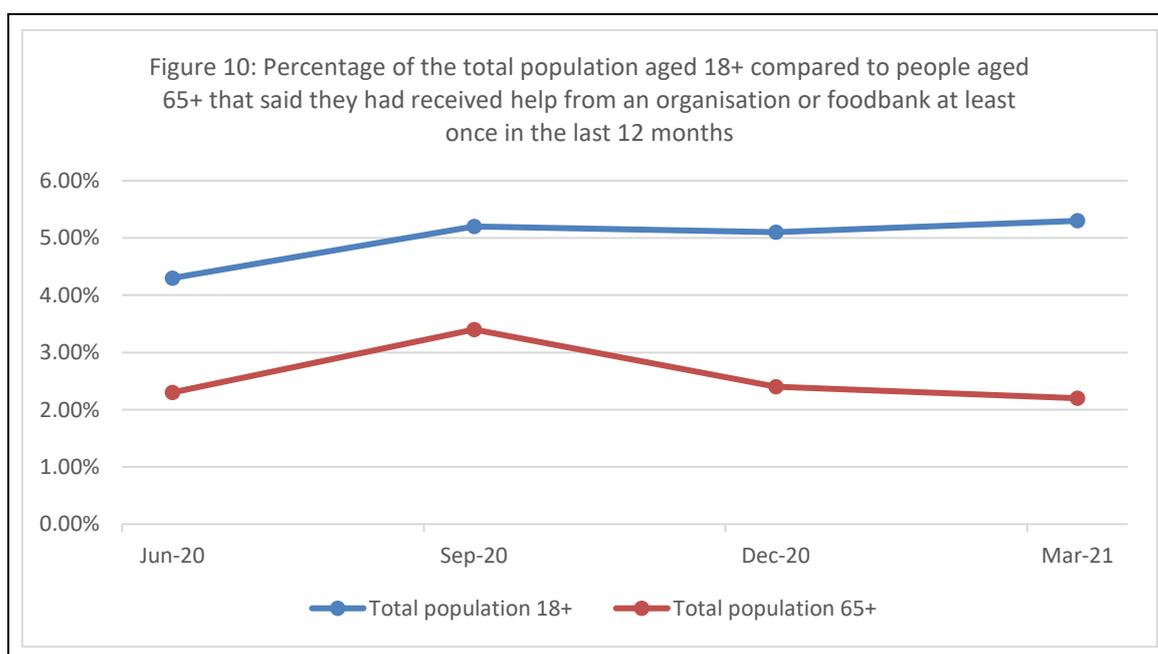
<sup>16</sup> There was not enough of a sample to release the data, so the data has been suppressed

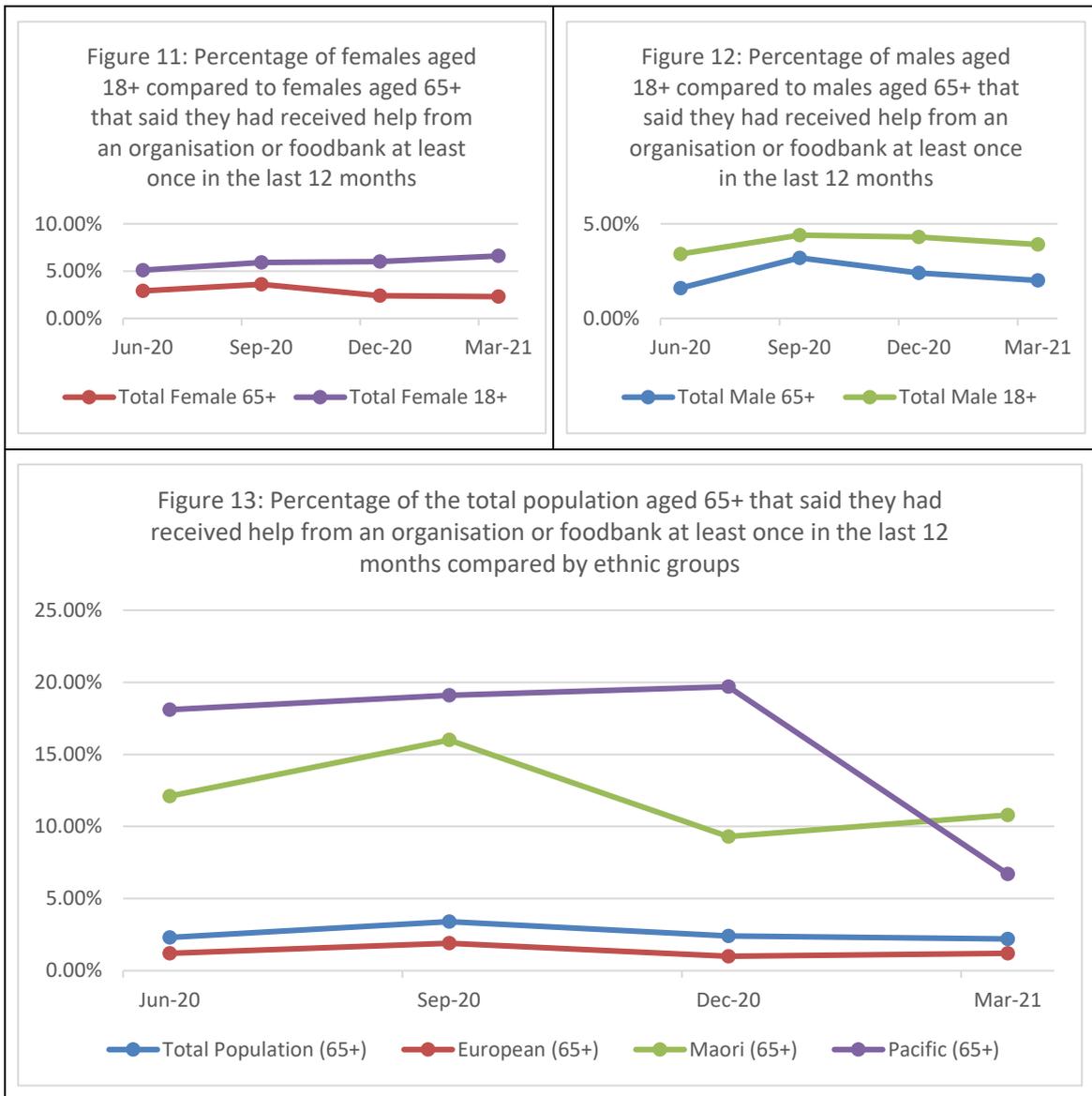


Source: Statistics NZ, Wellbeing Statistics, customised data

## People that said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months

- 36 In the March 2021 quarter, 2.2% of people aged 65+ (not significantly different to the 2.4% in the December 2020 quarter) said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months (see Figure 10):
- 2.3% of females aged 65+ said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter compared to 2.4% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 11).
  - 2.0% of males aged 65+ said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter compared to 2.4% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 12).
- 37 The percentage of the total 18+ population that said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months is slightly higher than for the 65+ population (5.3% in the March 2021 quarter) (see Figure 10):
- 6.6% of the total 18+ female population said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter compared to 2.3% of the female population aged 65+ (see Figure 11).
  - 3.9% of the total 18+ male population said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months in the March 2021 compared to 2.0% of the male population aged 65+ (see Figure 12).
- 38 Over the course of the pandemic the percentage of the total Māori, and Pacific general populations who said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months has been higher than the total 18+ population. There is insufficient reliable data to make comparisons for the Asian and MELAA/Other population groups.
- 39 Similarly, the percentage of Māori and Pacific people aged 65+ who said they had received help from an organisation or foodbank at least once in the last 12 months has been consistently higher than that of the total 65+ population over the same time period (see Figure 13). There is insufficient data to make comparisons for the Asian and MELAA/Other people aged 65+.
- 40 Differences between the December 2020 quarter and the March 2021 quarter are not statistically significant.
- 41 Note that the relative sampling error is high or very high for all ethnic groups except European and for the female and male population aged 65+.





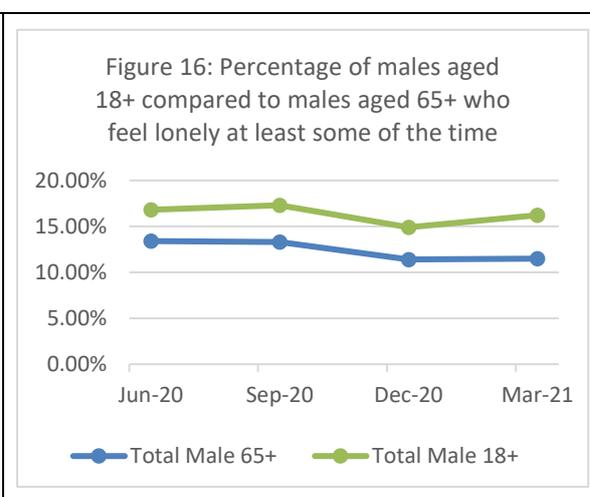
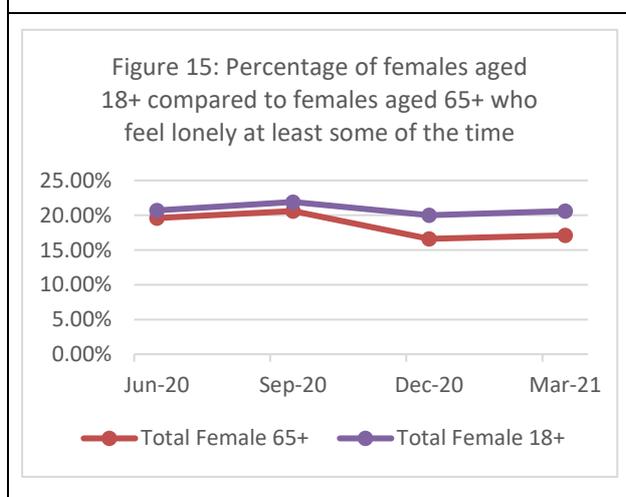
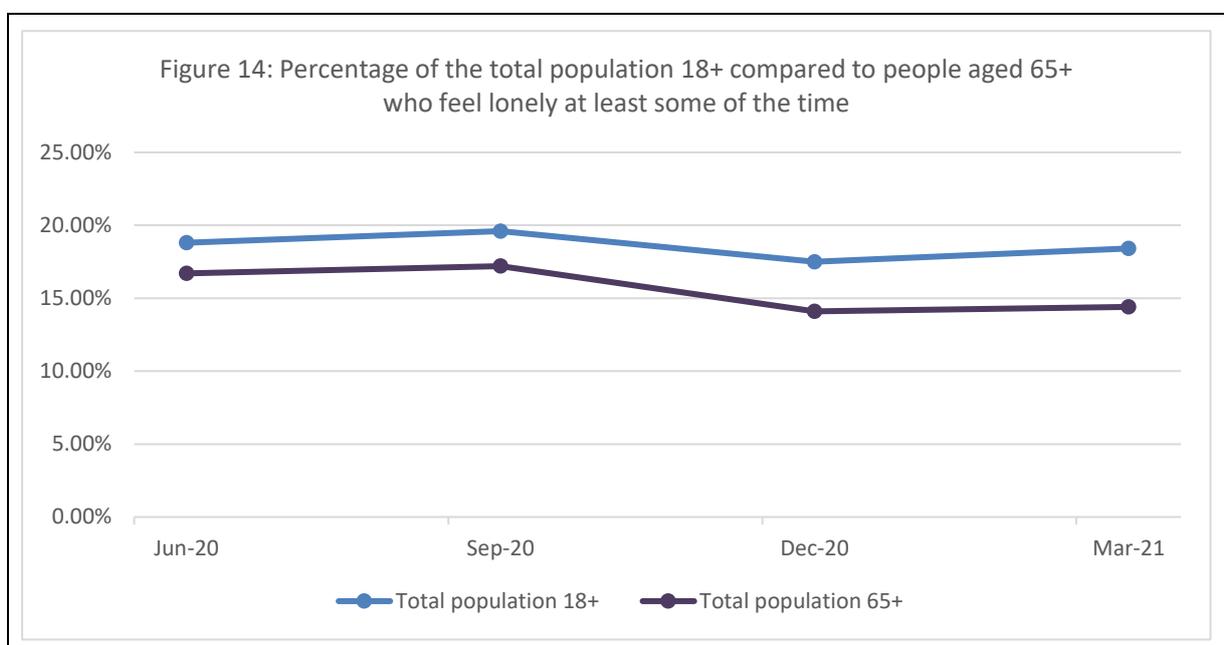
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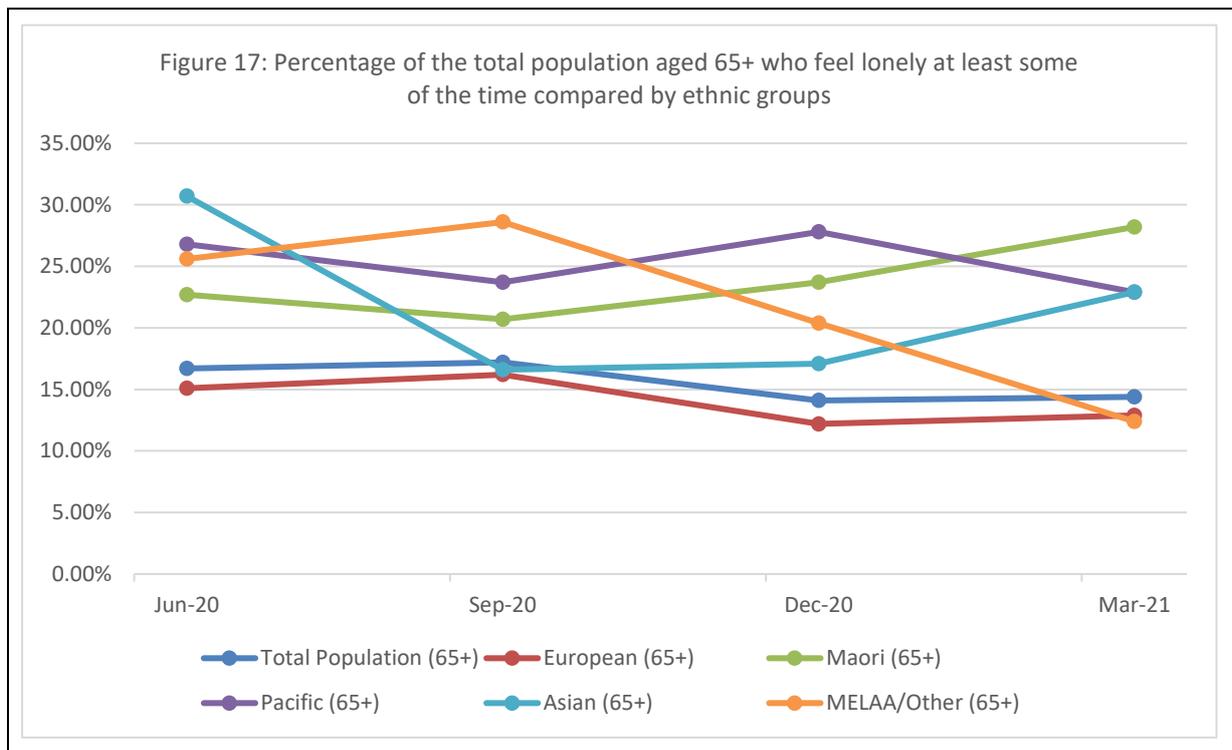
## Loneliness

Rationale for the indicator: Loneliness and social isolation may be a particular risk for those aged 70+ or with compromised immune systems who were asked to stay home for longer, and for those who are unable to connect with family and friends digitally.

- 42 Throughout the pandemic, the percentage of the total 65+ population who have reported feeling lonely at least some of the time (some of, most of, or all the time) is lower than for the total population aged 18+.
- 43 The percentage of people aged 65+ who felt lonely at least some of the time in the March 2021 quarter is close to the December 2020 quarter (14.4% and 14.1%) (see Figure 14):
- 17.1% of females aged 65+ felt lonely at least some of the time in the March 2021 quarter compared to 16.6% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 15).
  - 11.5% of males aged 65+ felt lonely at least some of the time in the March 2021 quarter compared to 11.4% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 16).
  - The difference between female and male rates of loneliness is statistically significant. The higher rates of loneliness among women is likely partly explained by the prevalence of women living alone in this age group.

- 44 The percentage of the total population aged 18+ who felt lonely at least some of the time is slightly higher than the 65+ population (18.4% and 14.4% in the March 2021 quarter) (see Figure 14):
- 20.6% of the total 18+ female population felt lonely at least some of the time in the March 2021 quarter compared to 17.1% of the female population aged 65+ (see Figure 15).
  - 16.2% of the total 18+ male population felt lonely at least some of the time in the March 2021 quarter compared to 11.5% of the male population aged 65+ (see Figure 16).
- 45 Over the course of the pandemic the percentage of Māori, Pacific, Asian and MELAA/Other population groups aged 65+ who have reported feeling lonely at least some of the time has been higher than that of the total 65+ population (see Figure 17), with the exception of the March 2020 quarter result for MELAA/Other. This ethnicity difference is in line with that seen in the total general population.
- 46 Differences between the December 2020 quarter and the March 2021 quarter are not statistically significant.
- 47 Note that the relative sampling error is high or very high for all 65+ ethnic groups except European.





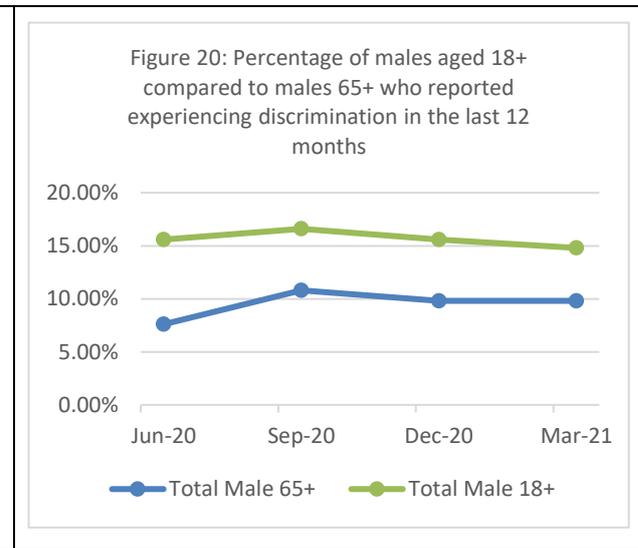
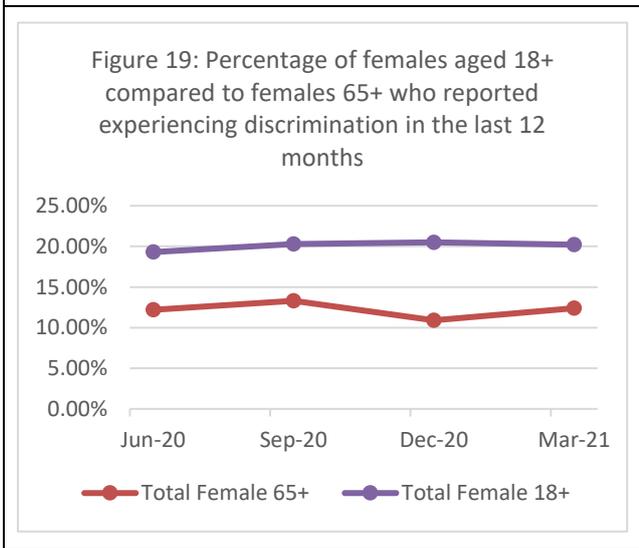
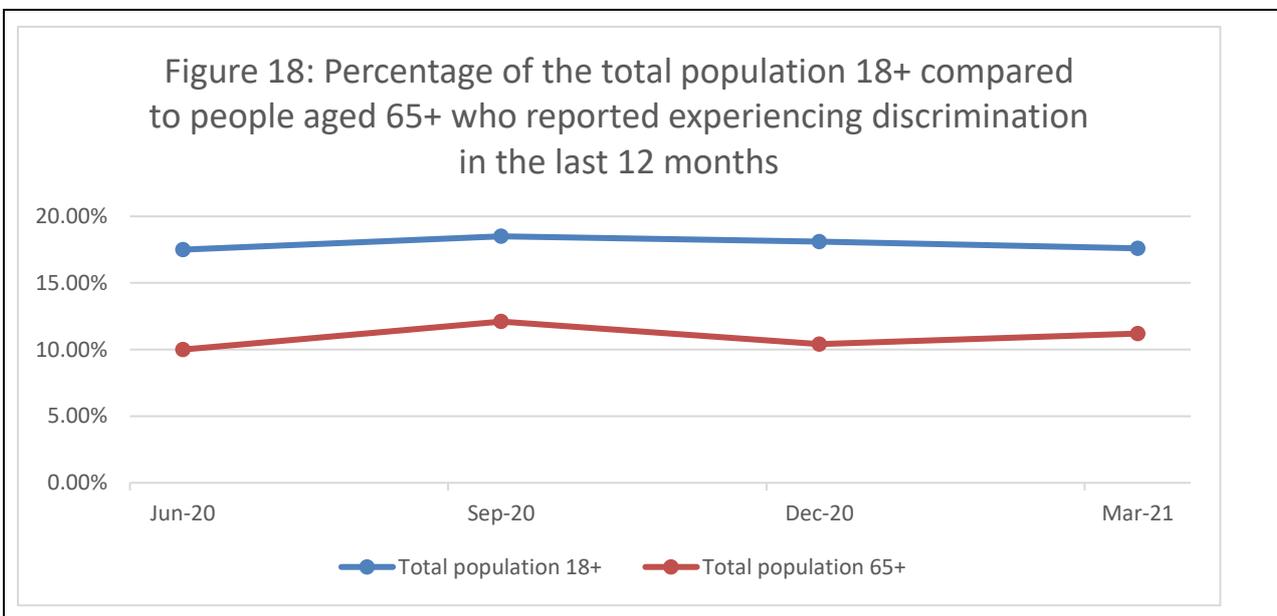
Source: Statistics NZ, Wellbeing Statistics, customised data

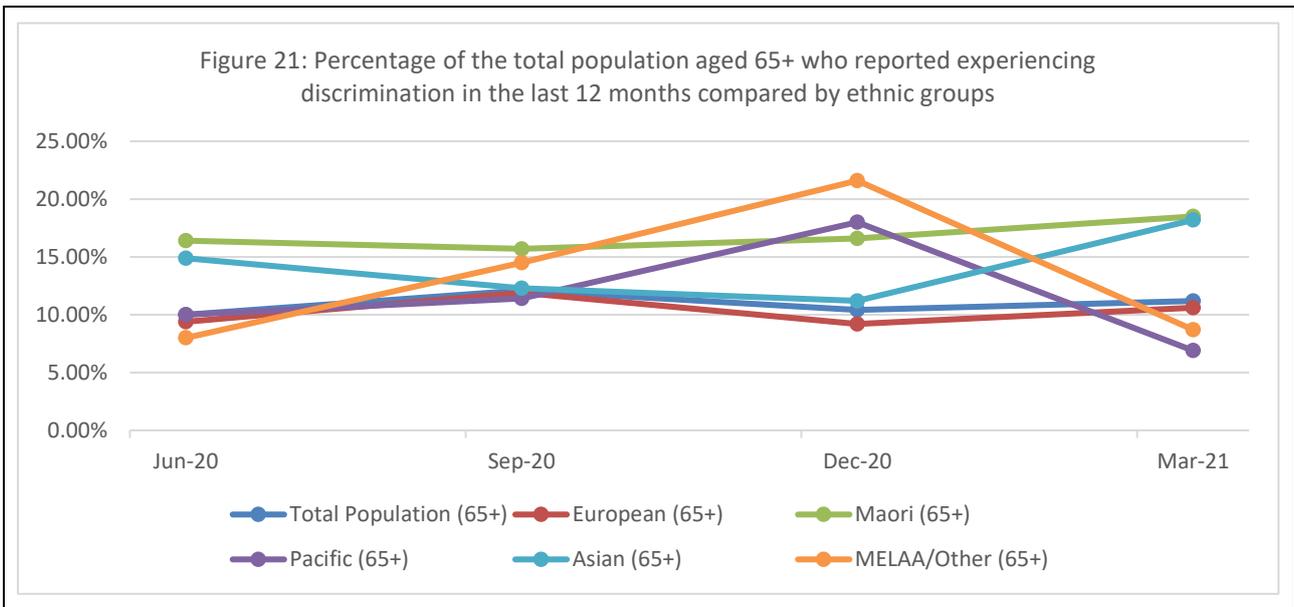
## Discrimination

Rationale for the indicator: Perceptions that lockdown and the associated economic impacts were only to protect older people and that older people are vulnerable may increase ageism.

- 48 Overall, the percentage of people aged 65+ who reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months in March 2021 quarter is close to the December 2020 quarter (11.2% and 10.4%) (see Figure 18):
- 12.4% of females aged 65+ reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter compared to 10.9% in the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 19).
  - 9.8% of males aged 65+ reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter which is the same percentage as the December 2020 quarter (see Figure 20).
- 49 The percentage of the total 18+ population who reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months is slightly higher than the 65+ population (17.6% in the March 2021 quarter) (see Figure 18):
- 20.2% of the total 18+ female population reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter compared to 12.4% of the female population aged 65+ (see Figure 19).
  - 14.8% of the total 18+ male population reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months in the March 2021 quarter compared to 9.8% of the male population aged 65+ (see Figure 20).
- 50 Over the course of the pandemic the percentage of the total Māori, Pacific, Asian, and MELAA/Other populations aged 18+ who have reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months has been higher than the total 18+ population.
- 51 Over the course of the pandemic the percentage of Europeans aged 65+ who reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months has been consistently below the total 65+ population. The percentage of the Māori and Asian population aged 65+ has been higher than that of the total 65+ population (see Figure 21).

- 52 The percentage of Pacific and MELAA/Other groups aged 65+ who reported experiencing discrimination in the last 12 months has varied widely across this period. This is likely a reflection of the relative sampling error being high or very high for these groups throughout this period (see Figure 21).
- 53 Differences between the December 2020 quarter and the March 2021 quarter are not statistically significant.
- 54 Note that the relative sampling error is high or very high for all ethnic groups except European.



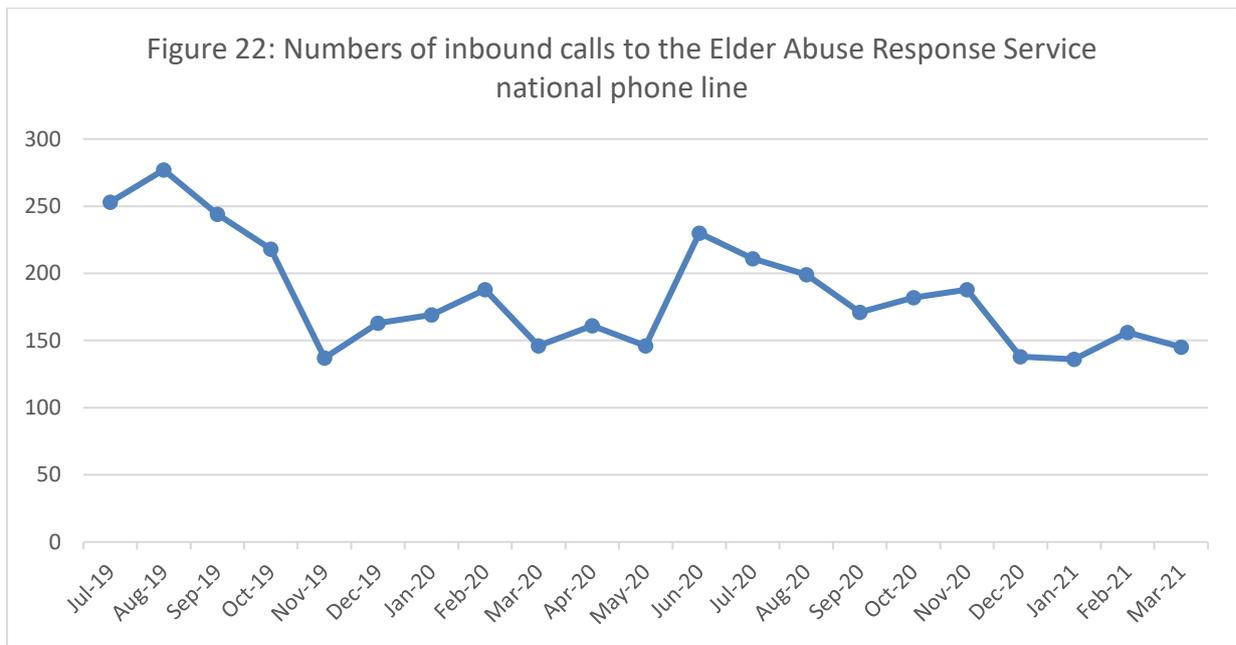


Source: Statistics NZ, Wellbeing Statistics, customised data

### Elder abuse

Rationale for indicator: Some older people may have become more vulnerable to elder abuse due to increased family stress (including financial stress) and being unable to leave their home environment.

- 55 Over the past 18 months, on average about 510 telephone calls per quarter, or 170 per month, were made to the Elder Abuse Response Service (EARS) national phone line.
- 56 There were 437 calls to the EARS national phone line in the March 2021 quarter. This was lower than the 508 calls in the December 2020 quarter.
- 57 The peaks in the numbers of calls in July 2019, August 2019 and June 2020 follow periods of awareness raising activities conducted by the Office for Seniors.
- 58 There were also 93 emails and nine SMS (texts) received in the March 2021 quarter. The contacts via emails are often from "concerned others", such as family members seeking information regarding locally available services.
- 59 This does not appear to indicate any change in the rates at which potential elder abuse is reported to the national helpline service as a result of COVID-19.
- 60 Note this data does not include direct approaches or referrals to local EARS providers that do not go through the national phone line, which anecdotally have increased. There is also not sufficient demographic information for further analysis as it is not collected for all calls, many callers prefer to remain completely anonymous or provide only a first name.

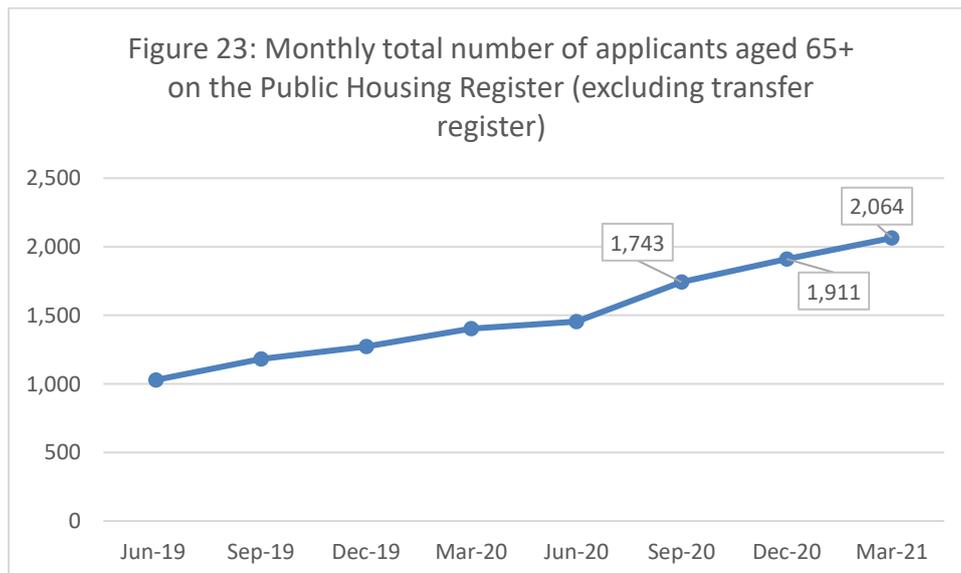


Source: Homecare Medical

## Housing

Rationale for the housing indicator: Reduced incomes may affect some older people's ability to pay rents and mortgages. While older people are least likely to be in severe housing deprivation and least likely to be on the public housing register, the increase in the number of older people on the housing register is similar to the overall increase in the past five years.

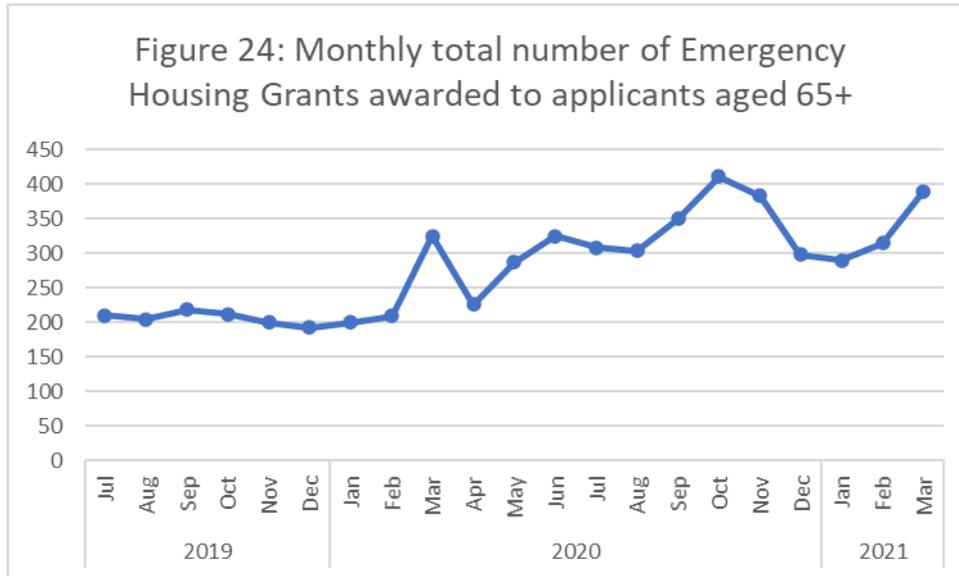
- 61 The number of applicants aged 65 and over on the Public Housing Register (excluding numbers on the transfer register) has been rapidly increasing since before the pandemic began (see Figure 23 for numbers going back to June 2019). This is a similar pattern to the pattern for the entire housing register.
- 62 Data from the end of the March 2021 quarter shows that the number of applicants aged 65 and over on the Public Housing Register has increased by 153 from December 2020 compared to March 2021 (see Figure 23).



Source: MSD, Housing Register

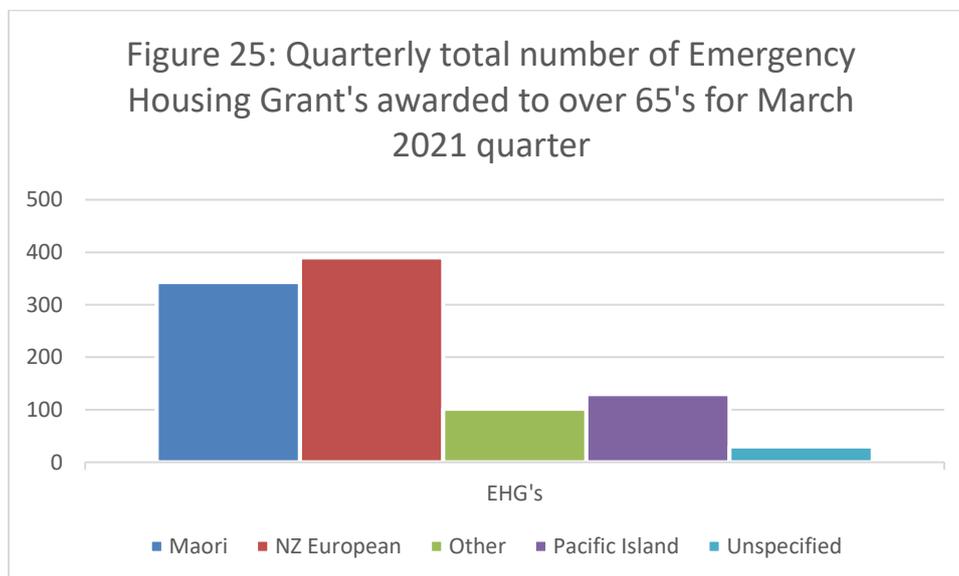
- 63 MSD paid 390 Emergency Housing Grants to older people (65+) in the month of March 2021, less than a peak of 411 in October 2020 but still higher than before lockdown.

There was a decline from October 2020 to January 2021 with the number of grants then increasing over the months of January to March 2021 (see Figure 24).



Source: MSD, administrative data

- 64 MSD paid 345 Emergency Housing Grants (EHG's) to Māori older people (65+) over the March 2021 quarter. This is compared to 390 EHG's paid to New Zealand Europeans, 132 EHG's paid to Pacific Island people, 102 EHG's paid to other and 30 EHG's paid to an unspecified ethnic group (see Figure 25).
- 65 This shows significant over-representation of older Māori people as recipient of emergency housing grants, relative to their representation in the 65+ population. However, MSD's ethnic group data is hierarchical and does not capture people who identify in multiple ethnic groups so caution with these types of conclusions is warranted.



Source: MSD, administrative data

## Key stakeholders

- 66 Following its initial stakeholder contact in the week ending 20 November 2020, the Office for Seniors conducted further outreach to a cross-section of stakeholders in the week ending 19 February 2021 to ask them about the experiences of older people and their organisations during the pandemic. The Office for Seniors further followed up with a selection of stakeholders throughout the month of June 2021.

### **Most organisations said the challenges the pandemic brought have now passed**

- 67 When contacted in June 2021 most organisations said the impact of COVID-19 had mostly passed and they had returned to business as usual. Although many of the organisations discussed challenges, these were not explicitly linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some commented that people are feeling relaxed at the moment.
- 68 Organisations feel they are well prepared for another outbreak. They have the relationships and plans in place to support their organisations and the older people that they work with.
- 69 Most of the organisations contacted expressed a hope that the wider sector would take on board learnings from the pandemic and change practices in the longer term.

### **There is still some lingering concern amongst older people, especially regarding the vaccine roll out**

- 70 Some older people are still apprehensive, especially those not yet vaccinated. They are still fearful about what might happen if they were to get COVID-19 before being vaccinated.
- 71 Most organisations expressed that their focus is now on helping older people navigate the vaccine roll out. Their biggest concern was that the communications for this process are appropriate for the needs of older people. Older people who have expressed concerns about this process are reportedly concerned about confusion around the timings of vaccines and who they should be communicating with about their vaccine.
- 72 Some older people have expressed a desire to either maintain the digital skills they developed during the lockdown periods or to improve their digital skills so they will be better digitally included if a lockdown were to happen again.

### **Over the course of the pandemic most older people did well, however pre-pandemic struggles were exacerbated for some**

- 73 The consensus among stakeholders was that older people who were doing well before the pandemic generally continued to do well, and those struggling or close to struggling before the pandemic continued to struggle. There were several other factors that influenced this including whether they were already connected with support services, what type of support services they were using, where they lived and who they lived with, their age group and health.
- 74 Themes brought up in November 2020 and February 2021 included:
- the resilience of people and communities, including enablers and barriers to resilience
  - fear of resuming activities and reengaging in public life. Stakeholders were concerned about the risk of “social atrophy” among a reportedly significant minority of older people who were apprehensive or fearful of resuming activities
  - delay in resumption of services or services being cut entirely (raised by many stakeholders). Stakeholders were particularly worried about how this would affect social isolation and physical health, particularly in relation to fitness
  - the digital divide – while for some the pandemic has been a push to get digitally connected, for many others who are not digitally connected this increasingly impacted on their ability to meaningfully participate in society. The impact of banks reducing the use of cheques was also a common concern
  - a perception that some of the public health response rules were discriminatory. Examples given included higher alert level restrictions being imposed on those living in rest homes, including independent villas in retirement villages, than on the rest of the population
  - an increase in elder abuse over lockdown periods reported by some stakeholders.

**Appendix A – MSD selected main benefit, supplementary support, hardship assistance and CIRP time series for people aged 50+**

Main Benefits																
Benefit	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21
Jobseeker Support Work Ready (JSWR)	18,354	18,438	18,177	19,557	23,967	24,678	24,825	25,329	25,905	27,306	26,772	26,769	27,663	27,651	27,276	26,415
Jobseeker Support Health Condition or Disability (JSHCD)	26,652	26,388	26,442	26,379	26,994	27,261	27,723	28,332	28,944	29,577	30,450	30,885	31,506	31,743	31,938	32,112
Sole Parent Support (SPS)	3,069	3,066	3,057	3,108	3,213	3,237	3,261	3,285	3,315	3,378	3,426	3,438	3,507	3,501	3,492	3,462
Supported Living Payment (SLP)	51,549	51,411	51,465	51,786	51,942	51,930	51,933	51,918	51,864	51,912	51,930	51,990	52,071	52,068	52,128	52,173

Source: MSD administrative data

**Supplementary support and hardship assistance**

<b>Supplementary support and hardship assistance</b>	<b>Dec-19</b>	<b>Jan-20</b>	<b>Feb-20</b>	<b>Mar-20</b>	<b>Apr-20</b>	<b>May-20</b>	<b>Jun-20</b>	<b>Jul-20</b>	<b>Aug-20</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>	<b>Oct-20</b>	<b>Nov-20</b>	<b>Dec-20</b>	<b>Jan-21</b>	<b>Feb-21</b>	<b>Mar-21</b>
Accommodation Supplement	114,654	114,372	114,312	115,860	119,070	120,021	121,275	123,222	124,662	126,060	126,417	126,801	127,845	128,166	127,986	127,524
Disability Allowance	182,997	181,920	181,947	182,868	183,375	183,276	183,117	183,342	183,690	184,185	184,452	184,902	185,601	186,015	186,120	186,573
Temporary Additional Support and Special Benefit	31,737	31,257	31,386	32,172	33,969	34,536	35,079	35,952	36,774	37,917	38,085	37,245	37,188	37,431	36,714	36,114
Benefit Advances*	13,206	16,446	15,546	13,023	4,581	12,615	16,995	17,247	13,818	14,640	14,655	16,254	15,198	16,512	16,386	17,814
Special Needs Grants	29,091	25,974	22,932	28,113	51,552	31,734	26,715	28,530	24,009	20,100	24,375	26,256	34,062	28,128	25,254	26,658

\* Number of grants granted, not number of people receiving grants. An individual could receive multiple grants during the month.

**COVID-19 Income Relief Payment (CIRP)**

	<b>Dec-19</b>	<b>Jan-20</b>	<b>Feb-20</b>	<b>Mar-20</b>	<b>Apr-20</b>	<b>May-20</b>	<b>Jun-20</b>	<b>Jul-20</b>	<b>Aug-20</b>	<b>Sep-20</b>	<b>Oct-20</b>	<b>Nov-20</b>	<b>Dec-20</b>	<b>Jan-21</b>	<b>Feb-21</b>	<b>Mar-21</b>
<b>COVID-19 Income Relief Payment (CIRP)</b>							2,748	5,733	6,615	3,465	2,625	1,854	894			

Source: MSD administrative data