



Te Tari Kaumātua
Office for Seniors

Attitudes towards Ageing 2021

Supplementary report on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on attitudes towards older people and towards getting older



May 2022

As part of the *Attitudes towards Ageing 2021* report, we considered the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes. This report provides analysis on:

- people's attitudes towards older people
- people's attitudes towards getting older
- how the COVID-19 pandemic has caused people's attitudes to change.

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on attitudes towards older people

Age groups and changes in attitude towards older people

For most people (70%), the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed their attitude towards older people, particularly those aged 65 to 74 (83%).

- 23% said the pandemic had a positive impact on their attitude towards older people.
- 7% said the pandemic had a negative impact on their attitude towards older people.

People aged 18 to 34 (32%) are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards older people than the total population. Those aged 65 to 74 (12%) and 75+ (16%) are less likely to have had a positive change in attitude.

People aged 18 to 34 (11%) and 75+ (12%) are more likely to have had a negative change in attitude towards older people than the total population.

Table 1: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Age group					
	Total (n=1717)	18-34 (n=376)	35-49 (n=202)	50-64 (n=202)	65-74 (n=202)	75+ (n=543)
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	32%▲	25%	20%	12%▼	16%▼
No change	70%	58%▼	70%	75%	83%▲	72%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards older people	7%	11%▲	5%	5%	5%	12%▲

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

Gender and changes in attitude towards older people

Males aged 65+ (84%) are more likely to have not changed their attitude towards older people than the total population (70%).

Males under the age of 50 are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards older people (32%).

Table 2: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by gender and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Gender (by age)						
	Total (n=1717)	Male			Female		
		18-49 (n=246)	50-64 (n=93)	65+ (n=396)	18-49 (n=512)	50-64 (n=109)	65+ (n=349)
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	32%▲	20%	11%▼	26%	19%	16%
No change	70%	60%▼	72%	84%▲	66%▼	78%	75%▲
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards older people	7%	8%	7%	5%	8%	3%	9%

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

Ethnicity and changes in attitude towards older people

Those who identify as Māori are more likely to have had a negative change in attitude towards older people than the total population.

Those who identify their ethnicity as 'Asian and others' are more likely to have had a negative change in their attitude towards older people (11%) than the total population (7%).

Table 3: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by ethnicity

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Total (n=1717)	Ethnicity*			
		Māori (n=266)	Pacific peoples (n=93)	New Zealand European (n=1123)	Asian and others
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	25%	30%	21%▼	25%
No change	70%	65%	63%	73%▲	64%▼
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards older people	7%	10%▲	7%	6%▼	11%▲

* More than one ethnicity could be selected. Respondents are counted in all the groups they identify with.

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

Regional areas and changes in attitude towards older people

Most people who live in a provincial town (79%) have not changed their attitude towards older people because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by regional areas

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Regional areas				
	Total (n=1717)	A major centre (e.g. Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin) (n=886)	A provincial city (e.g. Napier, Hastings, Tauranga, Palmerston North) (n=354)	A provincial town (e.g. Masterton, Westport, Kaikōura) (n=256)	A rural area (n=181)
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	25%	18%▼	17%▼	29%
No change	70%	67%▼	73%	79%▲	66%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards older people	7%	8%	9%	4%▼	5%

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Living arrangements of people aged 65+ and changes in attitude towards older people

For most people aged 65+, whether they live in their own home (80%) or in another living situation (81%), the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed their attitude towards older people.

Table 5: Changes in attitude of people aged 65+ towards older people because of COVID-19, by living arrangements

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Living arrangements of people aged 65+			
	Total (n=1717)	Live in their own home (n=609)	Live in other living situation (n=66)	Live in a retirement community (n=55)
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	14%▼	9%▼	10%▼
No change	70%	80%▲	81%	65%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards older people	7%	6%	11%	25%▲

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Employment status and changes in attitude towards older people

For most people aged 65+, whether they are retired from paid employment (81%) or in employment (83%), the COVID-19 pandemic had no impact on their attitude towards older people.

People under the age of 50 who are in paid employment (30%) have had a higher level of positive change in attitude towards older people than the total population (23%).

Table 6: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by employment status and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Employment status (by age)									
		Retired from paid employment			In employment			Not in paid employment		
	Total (n=1717)	18-49 (n=1)*	50-64 (n=21)*	65+ (n=609)	18-49 (n=534)	50-64 (n=121)	65+ (n=82)	18-49 (n=186)	50-64 (n=54)	65+ (n=27)*
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	0%	37%	13%▼	30%▲	20%	11%▼	25%	15%	27%
No change	70%	100%	63%	81%▲	63%	74%	83%▲	64%	80%	27%
A negative change in attitude towards older people	7%	0%	0%	6%	8%	6%	6%	11%	6%	37%

* Sample size too small for representation.

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

Income adequacy and changes in attitude towards older people

Most people aged 65+ who have *more than enough money* (88%), *enough money* (79%), or *just enough* (81%) said the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed their attitude towards older people. This is significantly higher than the total population (70%).

People under the age of 50 who have *enough money* or *not enough money* are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards older people than the total population.

Table 7: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by income adequacy and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Income adequacy (by age)												
	Total (n=1717)	Have more than enough money			Enough money			Just enough money			Not enough money		
		18-49 (n=55)	50-64 (n=18)*	65+ (n=120)	18-49 (n=232)	50-64 (n=59)	65+ (n=333)	18-49 (n=308)	50-64 (n=75)	65+ (n=203)	18-49 (n=155)	50-64 (n=46)	65+ (n=65)
A positive change	23%	29%	21%	6%▼	31%▲	20%	16%▼	27%	17%	12%▼	30%▲	24%	12%▼
No change	70%	66%	79%	88%▲	62%▼	77%	79%▲	64%▼	78%	81%▲	61%▼	66%	66%
A negative change	7%	5%	0%	6%	7%	3%	5%▼	9%	5%	7%	9%	10%	22%▲

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Disability and changes in attitude towards older people

Most people aged 65+ who do not have a disability (84%) said the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed their attitude towards older people. This is significantly higher than the total population (70%).

People under the age of 50 with a disability (33%) or without a disability (28%) are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards older people.

Table 8: Changes in attitude towards older people because of COVID-19, by disability and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Disability (by age)						
	Total (n=1717)	No disability			Have a disability		
		18-49 (n=621)	50-64 (n=133)	65+ (n=436)	18-49 (n=122)	50-64 (n=62)	65+ (n=267)
A positive change in attitude towards older people	23%	28%▲	18%	11%▼	33%▲	21%	16%▼
No change	70%	64%▼	77%	84%▲	60%▼	74%	73%
A negative change in attitude towards older people	7%	8%	5%	4%▼	7%	5%	11%▲

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on attitudes towards getting older

Age groups and changes in attitude towards getting older

For most people the COVID-19 pandemic has not changed their attitude towards getting older (68%), particularly those aged 65 to 74 (75%) and 75+ (77%).

- 16% said the pandemic had a positive impact on their attitude towards getting older.
- 17% said the pandemic had a negative impact on their attitude towards getting older.

People aged 18 to 34 (21%) are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older than the total population.

Table 9: Changes in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older	Age group					
	Total (n=1718)	18-34 (n=383)	35-49 (n=387)	50-64 (n=200)	65-74 (n=202)	75+ (n=538)
A positive change in attitude towards getting older	16%	21%▲	18%	14%	8%▼	10%▼
No change	68%	61%▼	67%	66%	75%▲	77%▲
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards getting older	17%	18%	14%	19%	17%	13%▼

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

Gender and changes in attitude towards getting older

Males aged 65+ (78%) are more likely to have not changed their attitude towards getting older because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Males under the age of 50 (22%) are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19.

Table 10: Changes in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by gender and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older	Gender (by age)						
	Total (n=1718)	Male			Female		
		18-49 (n=248)	50-64 (n=93)	65+ (n=397)	18-49 (n=519)	50-64 (n=107)	65+ (n=343)
A positive change in attitude towards getting older	16%	22%▲	14%	8%▼	17%	14%	10%▼
No change	68%	63%	67%	78%▲	65%	66%	73%▲
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards getting older	17%	15%	18%	14%	18%	20%	17%

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Ethnicity and changes in attitude towards getting older

New Zealand Europeans (70%) are more likely to have not changed their attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19.

Those who identify their ethnicity as 'Asian and others' are most likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19 (20%).

Table 11: Changes in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by ethnicity

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards older people	Ethnicity*				
	Total (n=1718)	Māori (n=265)	Pacific peoples (n=94)	New Zealand European (n=1126)	Asian and others (n=372)
A positive change in attitude towards getting older	16%	18%	19%	13%▼	20%▲
No change	68%	69%	60%	70%▲	61%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards getting older	17%	13%▼	22%	17%	18%

*More than one ethnicity could be selected. Respondents are counted in all the groups they identify with.

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Regional areas and changes in attitude towards getting older

Over 80% of people who live in a provincial town have not changed their attitude towards getting older because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is higher than people who live in a rural area, a major centre or a major provincial city.

People who live in a major centre are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older (19%) than people who live in a provincial city (12%) or a provincial town (8%).

Table 12: Changes in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by regional areas

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older	Regional areas				
	Total (n=1718)	A major centre (e.g. Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin) (n=882)	A provincial city (e.g. Napier, Hastings, Tauranga, Palmerston North) (n=358)	A provincial town (e.g. Masterton, Westport, Kaikōura) (n=254)	A rural area (n=182)
A positive change in attitude towards getting older	16%	19%▲	12%▼	8%▼	16%
No change	68%	63%▼	70%	82%▲	67%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards getting older	17%	18%	17%	11%▼	17%

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Living arrangements of people aged 65+ and changes in attitude towards getting older

People aged 65+ who live in their own home (77%) are more likely to have not changed their attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19.

People aged 65+ who live in their own home have a lower level of positive change in attitude towards getting older than the total population (16%).

Table 13: Change in attitude of people aged 65+ towards getting older because of COVID-19, by living arrangements

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older	Living arrangements of people aged 65+			
	Total (n=1718)	Live in their own home (n=607)	Live in other living situations (n=64)	Live in a retirement community (n=56)
A positive change in attitude towards getting older	16%	9%▼	8%	3%▼
No change	68%	77%▲	67%	76%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards getting older	17%	14%▼	24%	21%

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Employment status and changes in attitude towards getting older

People aged 65+ who are retired from paid employment (77%) are more likely to have not changed their attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19. This is higher than the total population (68%).

People under the age of 50 who are in paid employment (21%) are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19. This is higher than the total population (16%).

Table 14: Change in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by employment status and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older	Employment status (by age)									
		Retired from paid employment			In employment			Not in paid employment		
	Total (n=1718)	18-49 (n=1)*	50-64 (n=21)*	65+ (n=607)	18-49 (n=540)	50-64 (n=119)	65+ (n=82)	18-49 (n=189)	50-64 (n=54)	65+ (n=27)*
A positive change in attitude towards getting older	16%	0%	12%	7%▼	21%▲	13%	13%	13%	18%	19%
No change	68%	0%	60%	77%▲	62%	66%	75%	73%▲	68%	42%
A negative (lot less positive) change in attitude towards getting older	17%	100%	29%	16%	17%	21%	11%	14%	14%	39%

*sample size too small for representation

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

Income adequacy and changes in attitude towards getting older

Nearly all people aged 65+ who have more than enough money have not changed their attitudes towards getting older because of the COVID-19 pandemic (89%). This is higher than the total population (68%).

People under the age of 50 who have enough money (21%) and just enough money (20%) are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older than the total population (16%).

Table 15: Changes in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by income adequacy and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older	Income adequacy (by age)												
		Have more than enough money			Enough money			Just enough money			Not enough money		
	Total (n=1718)	18-49 (n=56)	50-64 (n=18)*	65+ (n=122)	18-49 (n=230)	50-64 (n=59)	65+ (n=329)	18-49 (n=312)	50-64 (n=74)	65+ (n=204)	18-49 (n=160)	50-64 (n=45)	65+ (n=65)
A positive change	16%	22%*	8%	5%▼	21%▲	17%	9%▼	20%▲	11%	10%▼	17%	20%	12%
No change	68%	63%	79%*	89%▲	61%▼	66%	80%▲	67%	65%	73%	61%	61%	45%*▼
A negative change	17%	15%	13%	6%▼	18%	17%	11%▼	13%▼	24%	18%	22%	19%	43%*▲

*sample size too small for representation

▲▼Significantly higher/lower than total

Disability and changes in attitude towards getting older

People under the age of 50 who have a disability are more likely to have had a positive change in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19 (27%) than the total population (16%).

People aged 65+ who have a disability (22%) have a higher negative change in attitude towards getting older than the total population (17%).

Table 16: Changes in attitude towards getting older because of COVID-19, by disability and age

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's attitudes towards getting older		Disability (by age)					
		No disability			Have a disability		
	Total (n=1718)	18-49 (n=629)	50-64 (n=131)	65+ (n=436)	18-49 (n=122)	50-64 (n=62)	65+ (n=263)
A positive change	16%	18%	13%	7%▼	27%▲	16%	11%▼
No change	68%	64%	67%	81%	62%	67%	68%
A negative change	17%	18%	20%	12%▼	11%	17%	22%▲

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than total

How has the COVID-19 pandemic caused attitudes to change?

When asked about how the COVID-19 pandemic caused their attitude to change, 1 in 5 (21%) said their attitude had not changed. For those who did describe a change in attitude, the most common responses centred on awareness or worries. The second most common theme was around appreciation.

Table 17 provides details of the categories the comments were coded into.

Table 17: Changes in respondents' attitudes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, by category

Themes	Coded categories	% of responses
Awareness/worries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be more health conscious; fear of COVID-19 infection • Feel worried/scared/stressed; fear of the unknown • To be cleaner/more hygienic • To be more careful/cautious • To be more aware of people, surroundings, and different age groups • Money/financial stress; loss of income • Lost my job; redundancy; fear of job loss 	24
No change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change to my attitude/not applicable/none 	21
Appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To appreciate/value life more; live life to the fullest • More appreciation/awareness of older people/ older family members • To reset/simplify my life; be more adaptable; be open to change • Grateful to live in New Zealand; grateful for government's swift response to pandemic; grateful for team of 5 million 	20
Older people and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel vulnerable/older people are more vulnerable/at risk • Older people are more susceptible to illness/COVID-19 • Risk of dying; people dying; dying before my time • Tolerance/patience/empathy • Resilience; how resilient older people/people can be 	19
Social connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family; family time; valuing time spent with family and friends • Isolation/loneliness; older people are isolated • Socialisation; became less social; staying at home more • Travel restrictions; less likely to travel; unable to visit family overseas 	10
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others/don't know • Everything; COVID-19 has changed the world • Vaccine – positive/negative mentions 	26

Quotes from respondents about COVID-19

"I notice older people a lot more now, and I check consciously that they are okay, or if they need help. They are on my radar a lot more than before because I feel that their age has made them more vulnerable than most to COVID."

Female, Canterbury, 35–49, Asian

"Have become more focused on what is most important in life e.g. family and friends and mental and physical health."

Male, 50–64, Auckland, European/other

"By reassessing my own mortality with respect to the pandemic I am generally more appreciative of normal interaction with people and more so with older people due to their life experiences."

Male, 65–74, Waikato, European/other

"Older people are being affected and are dying so have to be more careful where I go as my mum and dad are of age."

Female, 18–34, Christchurch, Pasifika

"It's made me think more empathetically about other peoples' needs and well being whereas I may have been more self concerned beforehand. To be a contributing part of the team of 5 million united in the fight against the pandemic has been significantly life changing."

Male, 65–74, Wellington, Māori

“I think I took everything for granted, and when the virus hit one tends to reflect and change attitudes.”

Male, 65–74, Auckland, Asian

“If you’re older you’re more susceptible to disease and illness which is just scary. So you want to avoid older people in case they have it, and you don’t want to get older because it attaches to you easier.”



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