

# Unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport

This factsheet presents the estimated number of people in New Zealand who had a medical problem but did not visit or talk to a GP due to a lack of transport over the previous 12 months.



In 2020/21, an estimated 110,000 New Zealanders (1.0% of children and 2.4% of adults) had experienced an unmet need for GP services in the past 12 months as they were unable to access transport.



Lack of transport was a major barrier to accessing GP services for disabled adults, with around one in 13 people (7.6 %) affected in 2020/21. Disabled adults were nearly 5 times as likely as non-disabled adults to be unable to access GP services due to a lack of transport.



In 2020/21, women were more likely than men to experience an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport (3.1% of women compared with 1.8% of men).



Lack of transport was also a barrier to Māori and Pacific people of all ages in 2020/21. Amongst adults in these groups, 5.5% of Māori and 4.8% of Pacific peoples had missed a GP visit due to a lack of transport, as had 1.2% of Māori children and 3.2% of Pacific children.



In 2020/21, adults living in the most deprived areas were more than six times as likely to experience an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport than people living in the least deprived areas.

## How a lack of transport can affect health

Transportation is a basic but essential requirement for access to healthcare services (Syed et al 2013). Lack of access to transport (whether that be private vehicles or public transport) may lead to an inability to access medical advice or treatment, causing an 'unmet healthcare need' – that is, missing out on healthcare when it is needed, which can worsen health outcomes.

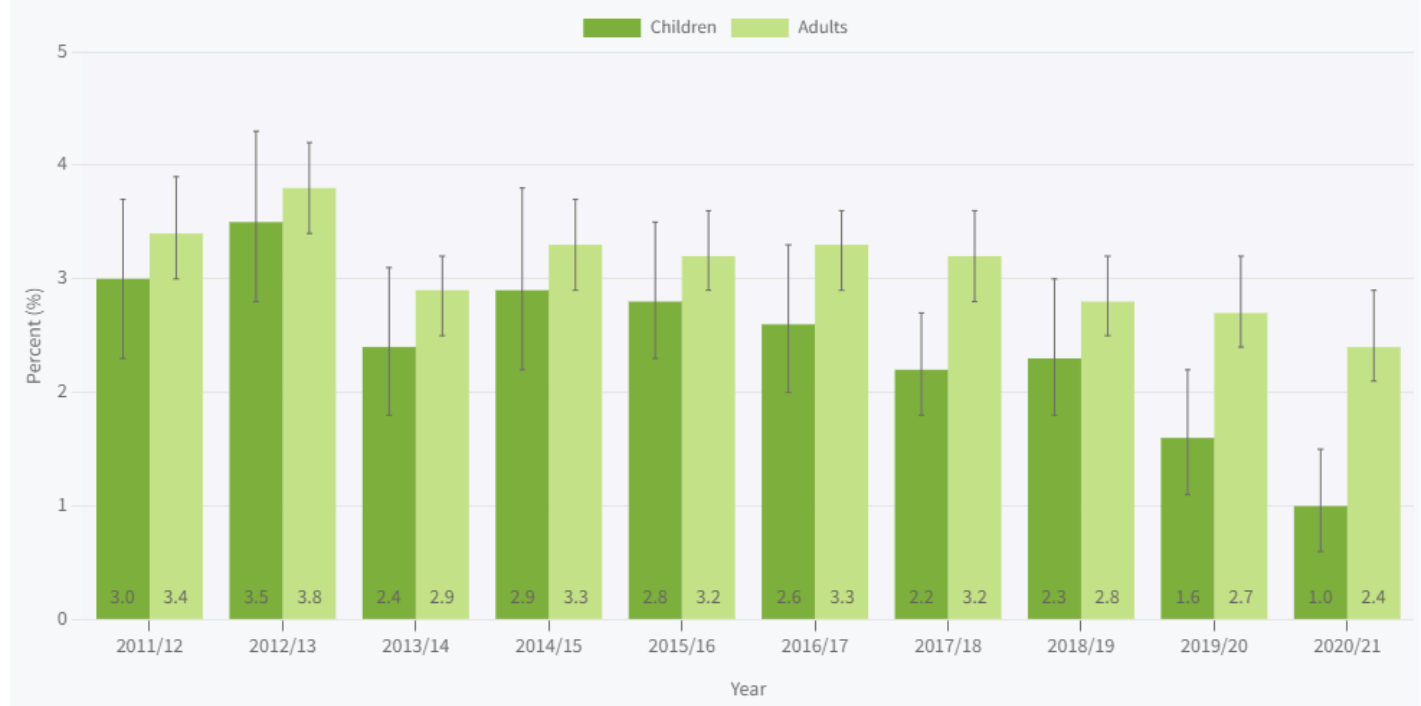
This factsheet presents unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport. In the 2020/21 New Zealand Health Survey, this referred to people having a medical problem but not visiting or talking to a GP due to lack of transport. This question has changed slightly in 2020/21, as due to COVID-19, many primary care consultations were by telephone or video-call, rather than in-person visits. Until 2019/20 this indicator referred to people who had a medical problem but did not visit a GP due to lack of transport.

## About 110,000 New Zealanders missed out on a GP visit as they lacked transport in 2020/21

In 2020/21, an estimated 101,000 adults (2.4% of the adult population) and a further 9,000 children aged 0–14 (1.0% of all children in that age group) had a medical problem but did not visit or talk to a GP due to a lack of transport (Figure 1).

The prevalence of unmet GP need among both children and adults decreased between 2011/12 and 2020/21. The prevalence among adults reduced by more than one-quarter from 3.4% to 2.4%, while the prevalence among children reduced by two-thirds from 3.0% to 1.0%.

Figure 1 Unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport in the last 12 months, in children and adults, 2011/12–2020/21 (unadjusted prevalence)



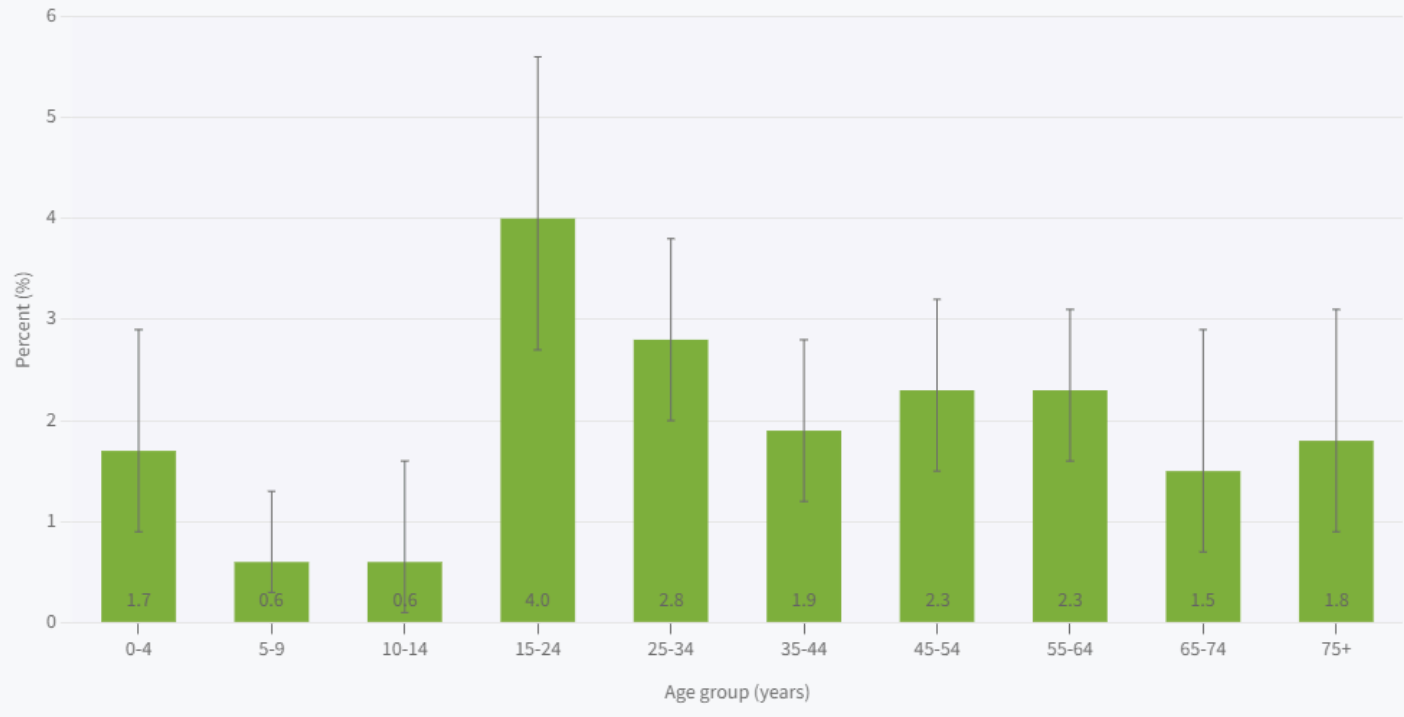
**Note:** This graph shows the prevalence of unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport over time. For 2011/12 to 2019/20, this referred to people who had a medical problem but did not visit a GP because they had no transport to get there. In 2020/21, this included people who had a medical problem but did not visit or talk to a GP because they had no transport to get there. This questionnaire change accounted for greater access to telephone and video-call consultations with primary care services due to COVID-19 in 2020/21.

**Source:** New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health 2021)

## The prevalence of unmet GP need due to a lack of transport varies by age group

Within the adult population in 2020/21, the highest prevalence of unmet GP need due to a lack of transport was found in young adults aged 15–24 years. As for children, young children aged 0–4 years were more likely to have an unmet need for GP services for the same reason (Figure 2). The distribution of unmet GP need across age groups in 2020/21 was similar to 2019/20.

Figure 2 Unmet need for GP services due to lack of transport in the last 12 months, by age group, 2020/21 (unadjusted prevalence)



Source: New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health 2021)

**People with disabilities are far more likely to be unable to access GP services due to a lack of transport**

In 2020/21, one in thirteen (7.6%, 5.6–10.1%) disabled adults had an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport in the last 12 months. This is equivalent to an estimated 28,000 people.

After adjusting for age and gender differences, disabled adults were nearly 5 times more likely than non-disabled adults to experience an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport (adjusted rate ratio 4.8, 3.5–6.5).

**Women were more likely to be unable to access GP services due to a lack of transport**

In 2020/21, the prevalence of unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport among women (3.1%, 2.5–3.7%) was much higher than that of men (1.8%, 1.4–2.3%). After adjusting for age differences, women were 1.7 times as likely to experience unmet GP need due to lack of transport than men (adjusted rate ratio 1.7, 1.3–2.3).

**Māori and Pacific people have a greater prevalence of unmet GP need due to lack of transport**

The prevalence of unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport varies by ethnic group. Among adults, Māori and Pacific peoples had the highest prevalence, with 5.5% and 4.8% respectively having been unable to access a GP in the previous 12 months because they had no transport. Among children, the greatest prevalence of unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport was experienced by Pacific children (3.2%).

Table 1	Unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport in the last 12 months, by ethnic group, 2020/21 (unadjusted prevalence and estimated number)
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Ethnic group (total response)	Unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport (prevalence, %, 95 CI)		Estimated number of people affected	
	Children	Adults	Children	Adults
Māori	1.2 (0.6–2.1)	5.5 (4.3–7)	3,000	33,000
Pacific	3.2 (1.5–5.8)	4.8 (2.8–7.7)	4,000	14,000
Asian	0.5 (0.1–2)	2 (1.2–3)	1,000	12,000
European/Other	0.6 (0.3–1.1)	2.1 (1.7–2.5)	4,000	64,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 (0.6–1.5)</b>	<b>2.4 (2.1–2.9)</b>	<b>9,000</b>	<b>101,000</b>

**Note:** Estimated numbers will add to more than the total, due to ‘total response’ ethnicity being used, where respondents are counted in every ethnic group they report.

**Source:** New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health 2021)

Māori adults were more than two and a half times more likely than non-Māori adults to have experienced an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport, after adjusting for age and sex (Table 2). Pacific adults were nearly twice as likely as non-Pacific adults to have experienced this unmet need, while Pacific children were over five times more likely than non-Pacific children.

**Table 2** Unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport, by ethnic group, 2020/21 (adjusted rate ratio)

Ethnic group (total response)	Adjusted rate ratio (adjusted for sex and age)	
	Children	Adults
Māori vs. non-Māori	1.3 (0.6–3)	2.6* (2–3.5)
Pacific vs. non-Pacific	5.5* (2.4–12.6)	1.9* (1.2–3.1)
Asian vs. non-Asian	0.5 (0.1–4.4)	0.8 (0.5–1.3)

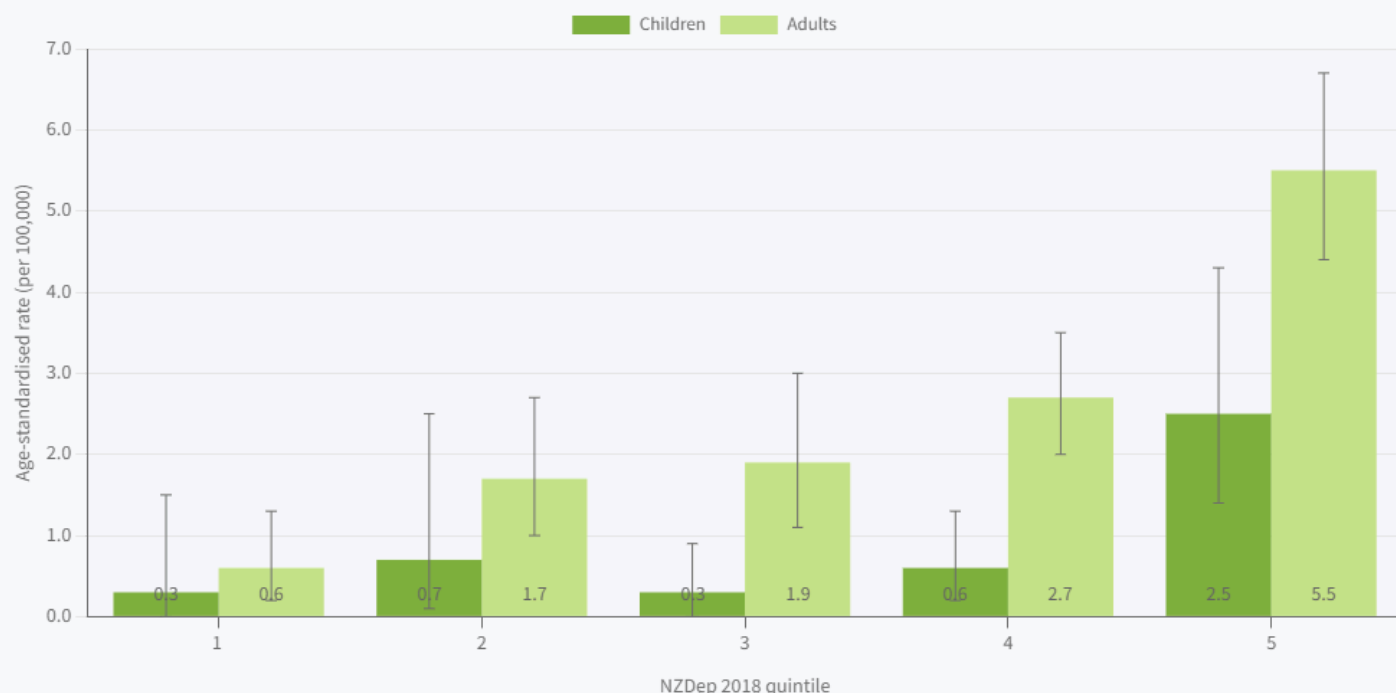
**Note:** An asterisk (\*) indicates a statistically significant ratio. A ratio higher than 1 indicates the prevalence is higher in the group of interest than in the comparison group.

**Source:** New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health 2021)

## **Lack of transport of was a significant barrier to healthcare for people living in high deprivation areas**

In 2020/21, children and adults living in more deprived areas were far more likely than those living in the least deprived areas to have experienced an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport. About 2.5% of children and 5.5% of adults in the most deprived areas (NZDep2018 quintile 5) experienced this unmet need in the past 12 months (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport in the last 12 months, by NZDep2018 quintile, 2020/21 (unadjusted prevalence)



Source: New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health 2021)

In 2020/21, adults in the most deprived areas were 6.5 times as likely as those in the least deprived to experience an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport (adjusted rate ratio 6.5, 3.3–12.5). Children in the most deprived areas were 5.6 times as likely as those in the least deprived areas to have experienced an unmet need for GP services due to a lack of transport (adjusted rate ratio 5.6, 0.5–50.9).

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### Data for this indicator

This indicator contains the most recent data available from the 2020/21 New Zealand Health Survey (Ministry of Health 2020) and the 2017–20 regional results from New Zealand Health Survey 2017/18–2019/20 (Ministry of Health 2021). All 95% confidence intervals have been presented as error bars on graphs. All the results were calculated by the Ministry of Health.

Data collection took place between September 2020 and August 2021. For some periods in 2020 and 2021, the survey was suspended in parts of New Zealand that had known community outbreaks of COVID-19. As a result, the sample size for 2020/21 is smaller than usual and the 95% confidence intervals around some estimates are wider than usual.

The Health Survey defines disabled people as “those who have at least a lot of difficulty seeing or hearing (even with glasses or hearing aids), walking or climbing stairs, remembering or concentrating, self-care, or communicating, as measured by the Washington Group Short Set.” (Ministry of Health 2021).

For additional information, see the metadata link below.

## References

Ministry of Health. 2021a. Regional Results 2017–2020: New Zealand Health Survey. URL: <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/regional-results-2017-2020-new-zealand-health-survey> (accessed 26/10/2021). Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Health. 2021b. New Zealand Health Survey Annual Data Explorer. URL: <https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/nz-health-survey-2020-21-annual-data-explorer> (accessed 08/09/2022). Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Syed S T, Gerber B S, & Sharp L K. 2013. Traveling towards disease: transportation barriers to health care access. *Journal of Community Health*, 38(5): 976-93.

### Other related topics include:

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