



Tasman Region Men's Health & Wellbeing Survey Results

The Survey

Who conducted the survey?

Since 2020, Tasman Voice for Health (TVH) has advocated for community and consumer issues to help improve access to local services for health and wellbeing. We have worked together with services and the community, building connections and sharing knowledge to support community-wide conversations for desired change.

Why the survey?

Through this work, it was brought to our attention that men, particularly working men, did not often attend many of the existing preventative health and wellbeing services available to them. We know that if health and wellbeing issues are not addressed early, then they can lead to more serious and costly health concerns. Based on this, TVH decided to do a brief community survey to ask men what was important for their health and wellbeing.

Who was surveyed?

Men living across the Tasman Municipality were asked questions about their current health and wellbeing and what they would like to know more about. We also asked them what is stopping them from being able to reach their goals and what they would like to see more of in the Tasman Region.

How did we do it?

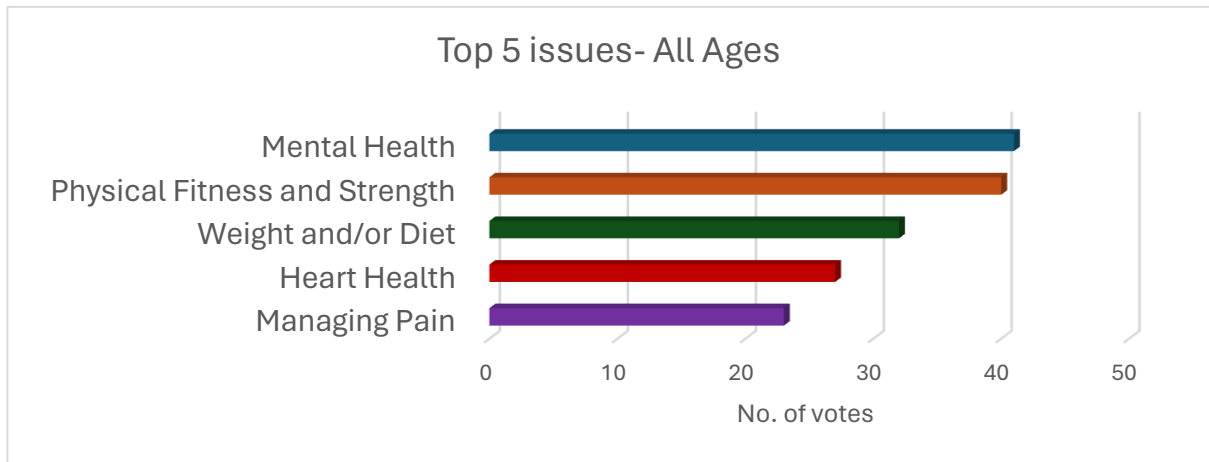
We used an online survey which we shared through social media, local services and Tasman Voice for Health networks. We also had paper surveys and drop-boxes at five service locations.

Who responded?

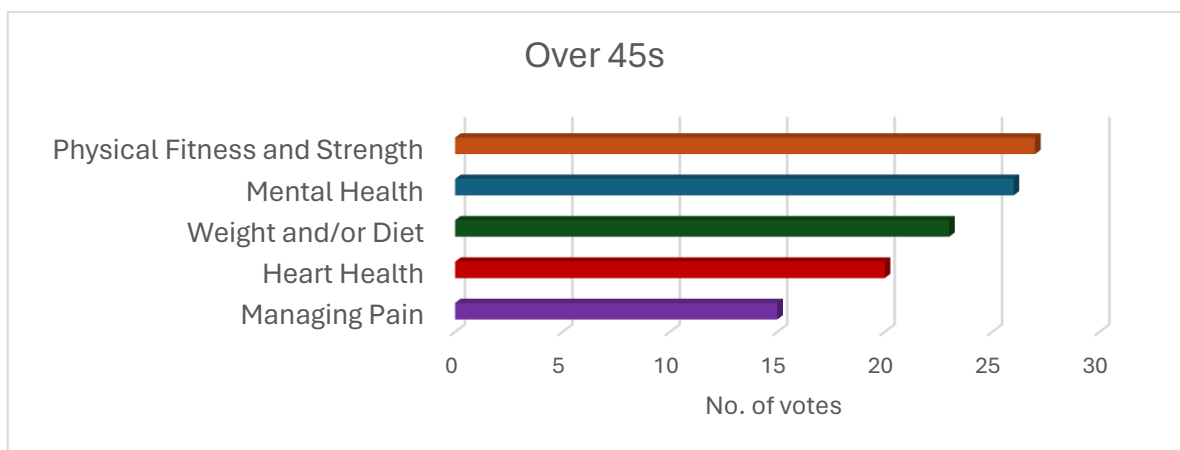
87 men from all age groups (over 18) answered the questions in the survey. There were men represented from various locations across the Tasman Region, including emergency services personnel.

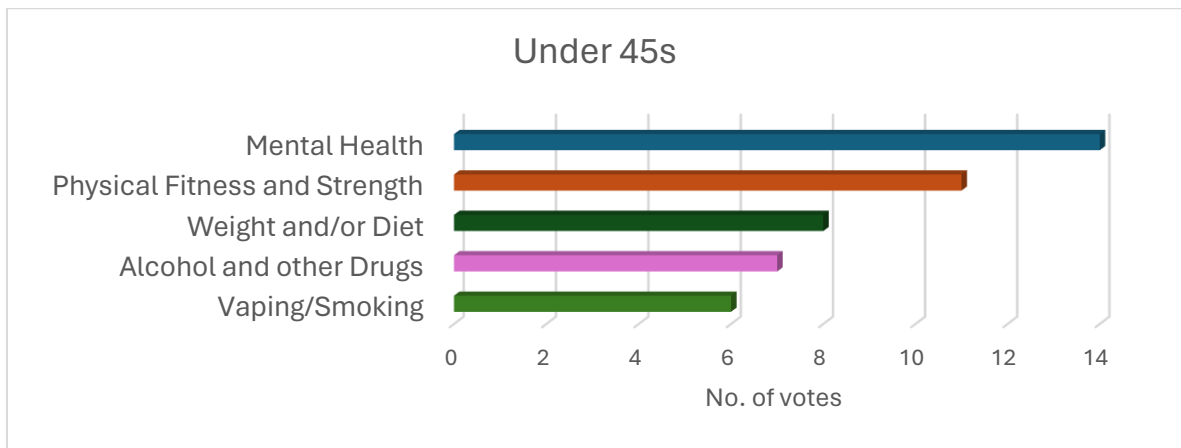
Top 5 health issues for Men:

Men were asked what their main health and wellbeing concerns were. They selected up to five issues from a list of common health concerns, or they could add their own. This graph shows the 5 most important issues identified by men across all ages in the Tasman Region for their health and wellbeing.



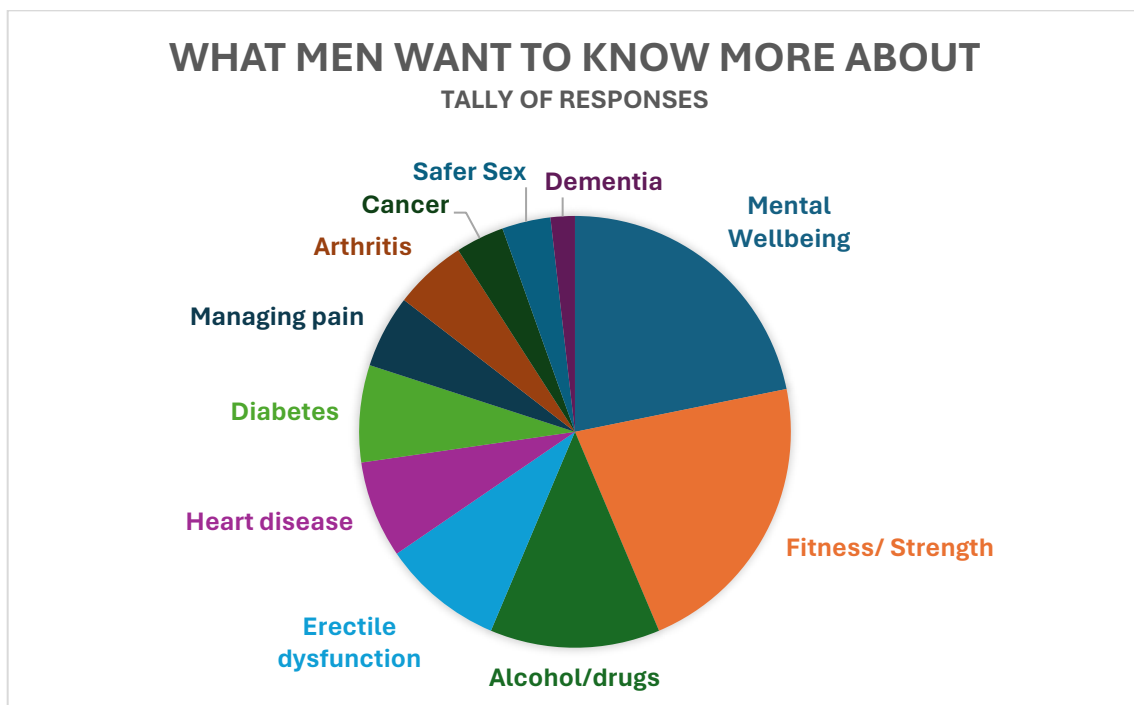
There were some differences between younger and older men. The top 3 issues were the same, but in a different order. Men younger than 45 years thought alcohol and other drug issues were in the top 5 of importance, as well as vaping/smoking. Men over 45 years found heart health and pain management were in the top 5.





What do men want to learn more about?

Men were asked which conditions they would like to learn more about. Some men felt they were “up to date” and knew enough about their main health issues. Other men wanted to know more about their condition, and/or other health issues. Their topics of interest are shown in the chart below.



Many also said they would like to know more about living well with their condition, for example, “keeping physically fit [with] arthritis”.

Some men told us they want to get better at balancing their wellbeing with work and family life. Others felt they needed to know more about what was available in their local area like “where men can go to be healthy”.

What gets in the way of acting on health & wellbeing goals?

Men told us about barriers which they felt were making it hard to act on their health and wellbeing. We grouped the men's responses to this question into four main topics:

1. Individual factors:

- **Physical issues** - coming from getting older or from health conditions, e.g. severe arthritis, diabetes, dementia, or poor mobility
- **Unhelpful lifestyle habits** – e.g. smoking or drinking too much
- **Stress and/or a lack of motivation** - Men often described “themselves” as getting in the way of their wellbeing, (eg “myself”, “only my attitude”, “temptation”)
- **Other priorities** – men struggle to prioritise personal wellbeing in a busy life

2. Environmental factors:

- **Lack of wellbeing facilities** – Men feel there are not enough local facilities for maintaining wellbeing. The lack of a gym was mentioned many times.
- **Remoteness** - from other services and activities.
- **Lack of wellbeing-focused activities** – men felt there were not many men's wellbeing activities on offer locally.
- **Lack of information** - about activities and programs which are happening locally.

3. Social/Cultural factors:

- **A lack of time** – men feel that work/family commitment impacts on their ability to make time for health and wellbeing.
- **A lack of money** – cost of healthcare is problematic.
- **“Isolation”** - This could be both a cause of ill health and a barrier to taking action on health.
- **Transport** – The lack of driver's license or public transport impacted some men.
- **Social norms** – Social norms discourage men from focusing on health or wellbeing:
 - Men recognized that traditional forms of coming together involve unhealthy activities (e.g. alcohol). They felt there was a “Lack of opportunities to engage with others in healthy activities”.
 - There is an assumption that self-care is not seen as a priority or a valid thing to spend time on for men.
- **Discrimination** - against people from different cultural backgrounds affects connection and participation.

4. Health service factors:

- **Factors affecting GP visits:**
 - GP appointments are too short to talk about everything (incl. prevention)
 - Cost (GP is not bulk-billed)
 - Poor continuity of care, because of locum doctors
 - Work hours compete with GP appointment times.
- **Specialists** – There is limited access to specialists and very long waiting lists.
- **Distance** - from services and impact of travel (time, cost, loss of work).

What could help?

Men were asked for ideas about what they would like to see happen to improve local men's health and wellbeing. There were three main groups of suggestions:

1. Increase opportunities for quality connection with other men in healthier environments:

- **Positive and inclusive events** - More events, places and activities which have a healthier culture: *"... more community events that have more people from a broad spectrum of the community"*
- **Physical activity infrastructure** - Many men identified a gym or something similar as essential: *"Why did the outdoor exercise area at Judd Park disappear? We need more of these facilities along the foreshore footpath - extend it to White Beach"*
- **Social Connection** - Men especially described physical activities that also bring social connection. They want *"cool, healthy activities to join in on"* and many suggested activities outdoors, adventure sports and team sports: *"promoting communal sports which leads into more communal interactions between men"*.

2. Strengthen a culture of wellbeing:

- **Information Access** - Better access to information about local events/opportunities
- **Men's Groups** - Spread the concept of Men's Groups: *"The men's group is 10 times bigger"*.
- **Being more inclusive** - Include people from all walks of life, for example be: *"more open and more welcoming to newcomers"*
- **Normalising health conversations** – Have opportunities for positive wellbeing-focused health discussions and talk about men's health more in the community: *"... more social venues for meeting, discussing, sharing"*
- **Events and training** - to increase health-related knowledge and skills. Including *"More education around men's health"*, how to prioritise wellbeing in a busy life and *"what to expect as you get older"*.

3. Adapt and tailor key Health Service delivery for Men's needs:

- **Retain existing local health services** - Continue and build upon important local health services. Many really valued the RFDS exercise physiologist and the GP facility/MPS and felt they could be better equipped/funded.
- **Improve access** to health services:
 - Better access with GP appointments (times/continuity/cost), for example a "drop in" clinic
 - Men's health specific opportunities to engage with local health professionals
 - More local/timely mental health service access
 - Better specialist access
 - Expand telehealth opportunities

- **Preventative health** - More focus on preventative health, for example, longer appointment times to discuss wellbeing, or a “*Well man’s assessments for people over the age of 50 rather than, as at present, over the age of 65.*”
- **Community support** - Men also said that they wanted more general advice and “*more obvious, proactive and unstigmatised community support*” on health and wellbeing.

What can be done with this information?

Share this information locally:

Tasman Voice for Health will give these results to any relevant groups and members of the community for the purpose of shared knowledge, community conversation and possible action. This will also include our current health services so they can know how to better respond to the needs of men in the Tasman Region.

Advocate for change:

This information can be used to advocate for positive change for men’s wellbeing. There is an opportunity to work together or support community members to use this information. It could be used for further learning, the development of clear goals, actions and/ or applying for funding. Contact us if you would like to be a part of these future conversations.

Moving into action:

This current information gives us a broad direction of what men find important. Hopefully, it generates more conversation between men and the services they need. Going forward, it would be helpful to understand the best way to begin working on these priorities, who should be involved and what some of these activities may look like.

We would like to support local men to explore what they can do with some of these results and solutions in more detail. We can support men to organise private, friendly and meaningful conversations with the people they spend time with, where they can talk about what really matters for their health and wellbeing. Men from different walks of life can run these meetings with their mates and have further discussions to help move ideas into action. Please contact us if this interests you. We can share helpful tips to make the discussions work.

Report written by Hannah Fielder (Policy Officer) & Debra Mill (Community Engagement) from Health Consumers Tasmania

If you would like to be involved in any way, contact:

Debra Mill

debra@healthconsumerstas.org.au,

0447 428 722