

Access to the Simple Things in Life

Quality of Life Report for People 55+ in the Tasman Region 2026



Acknowledgement

Tasman Voice for Health and Health Consumers Tasmania acknowledges the important contribution of the Older Person’s Working Group to this work. This group of dedicated Tasman region volunteers was instrumental in the survey design, distribution and data collection between 2024-25, as well as the resulting 2026 report.

The survey was generated from concerns raised by what members of the working group were seeing in their local community, and through their participation, have gained a greater understanding of the quality of life circumstances for the people who responded to the survey. The initial results have already informed a number of key initiatives prior to this written report.

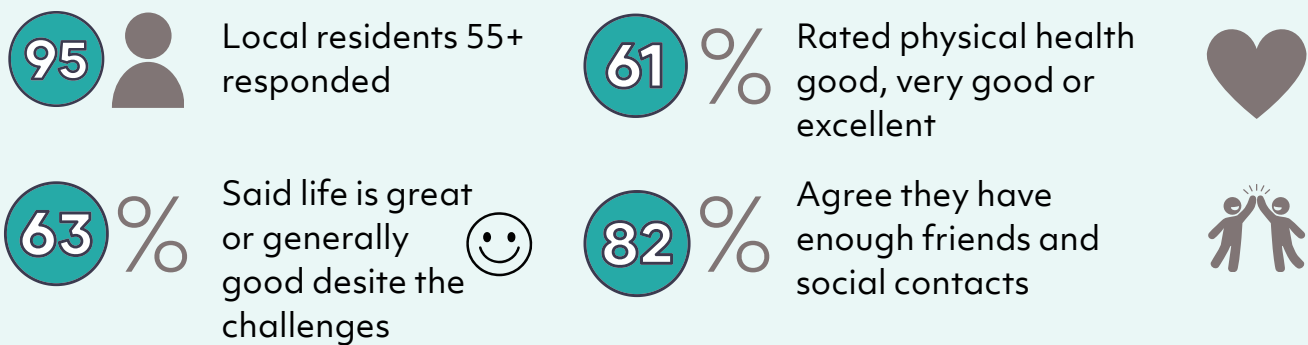
We recognise that not all experiences are captured in this report. We are committed to continuing to listen and learn from older people who continue to experience challenges accessing services, opportunities, and support, so their experiences can help shape future improvements.

Executive Summary

This report shares what older people in the Tasman Municipality told us about living well, staying connected and participating in community life.

The survey points to a community with strong community assets: relationships, contribution, practical skills, love of place and a strong desire to remain active and independent.

The survey results are grouped into 6 distinctive themes. Together, they tell a story of people whose wellbeing is linked to community participation, but who face challenges finding, affording, understanding and accessing the health-related activities, programs, services and information they need, particularly when these are spread across multiple locations and digital platforms.



Six Top Findings

1



Most people described a generally positive life, even where there were challenges

2



Connection, relationships and contribution are central to enjoyment & wellbeing

3



Independence, choice and control are strongly valued

4



Access to health and support services needs strengthening

5



Staying active and enjoying life are important to older people in the region

6

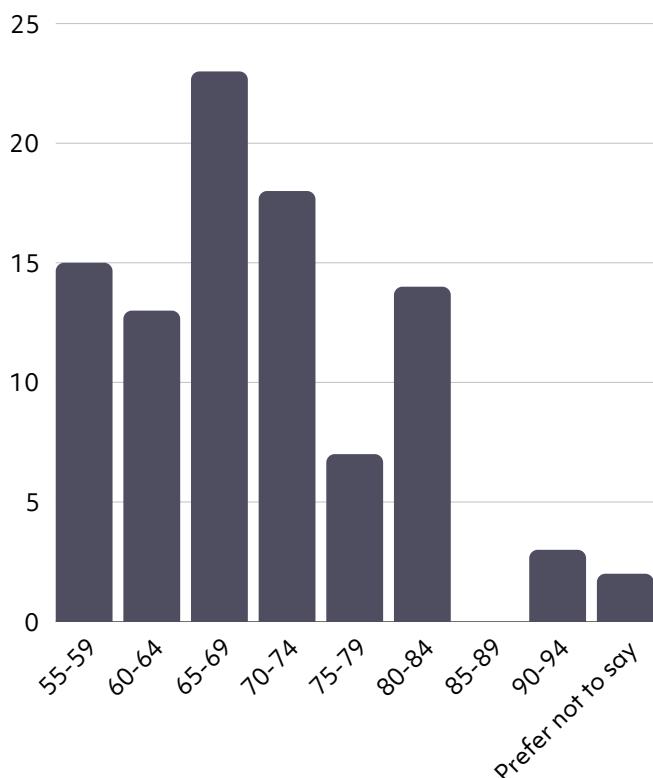


Transport and information access are practical barriers that shape participation

Who we heard from

The survey reached a broad group of older people, with the strongest representation from people aged 65-74 with a high proportion of women. Many respondents were retired, while a substantial number were also volunteers, part-time workers, carers or community contributors. We wanted to hear more from men, people receiving formal care and isolated individuals. The working group knew of these people, but they were hard to engage in the survey and their experience is not fully reflected in this report.

Age Profile of Respondents



64.2%

Women

34.7%

Men

25.3%

Provide Informal Care

13.7%

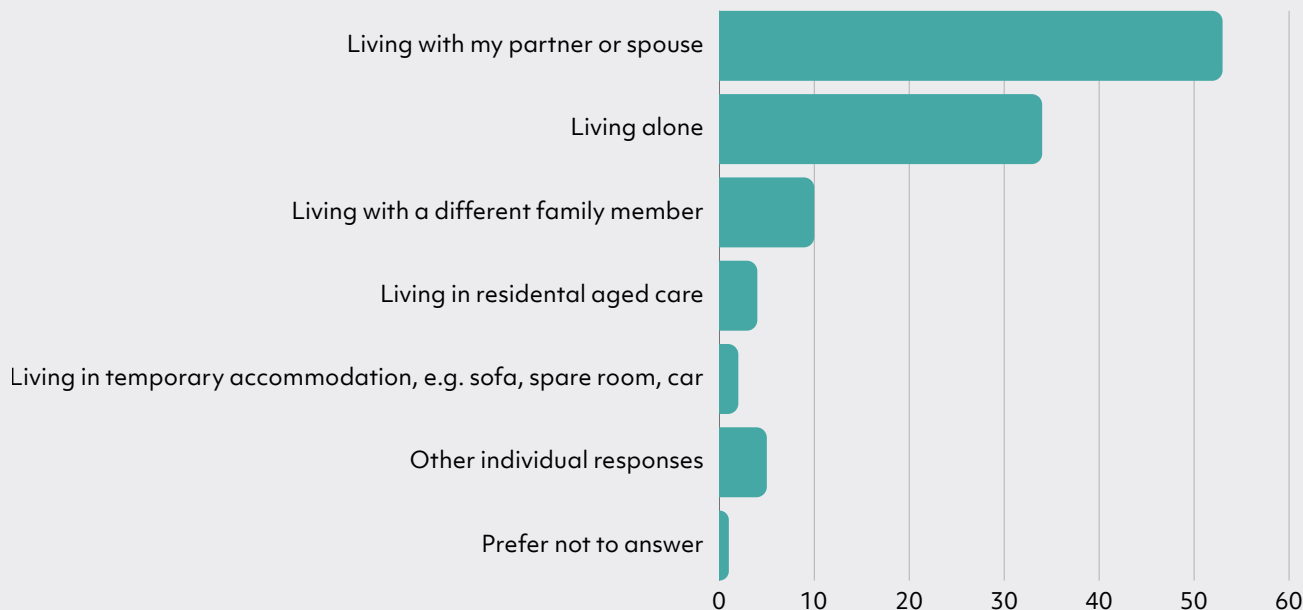
Receive Informal Care

4.2%

Living in residential aged care

Living Situation

Respondents could choose more than one option



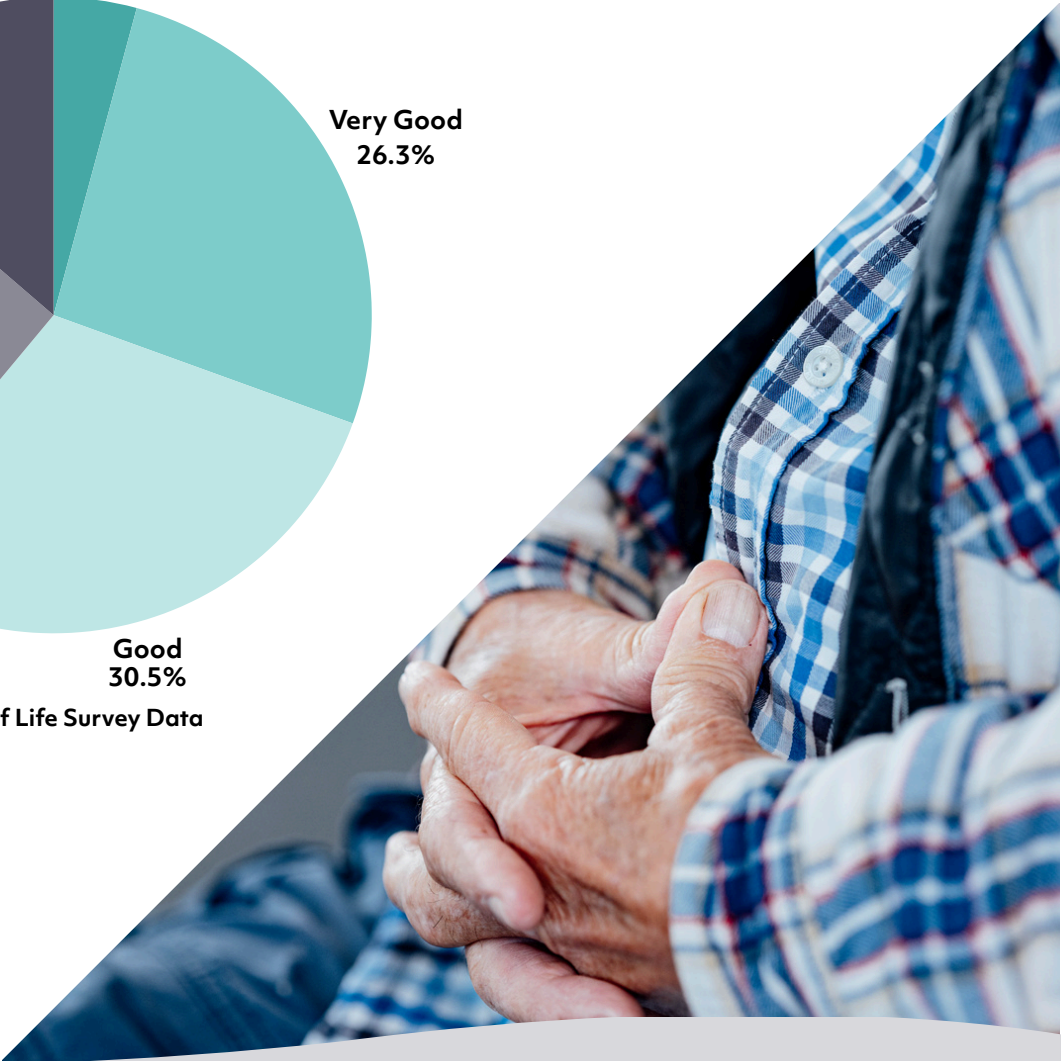
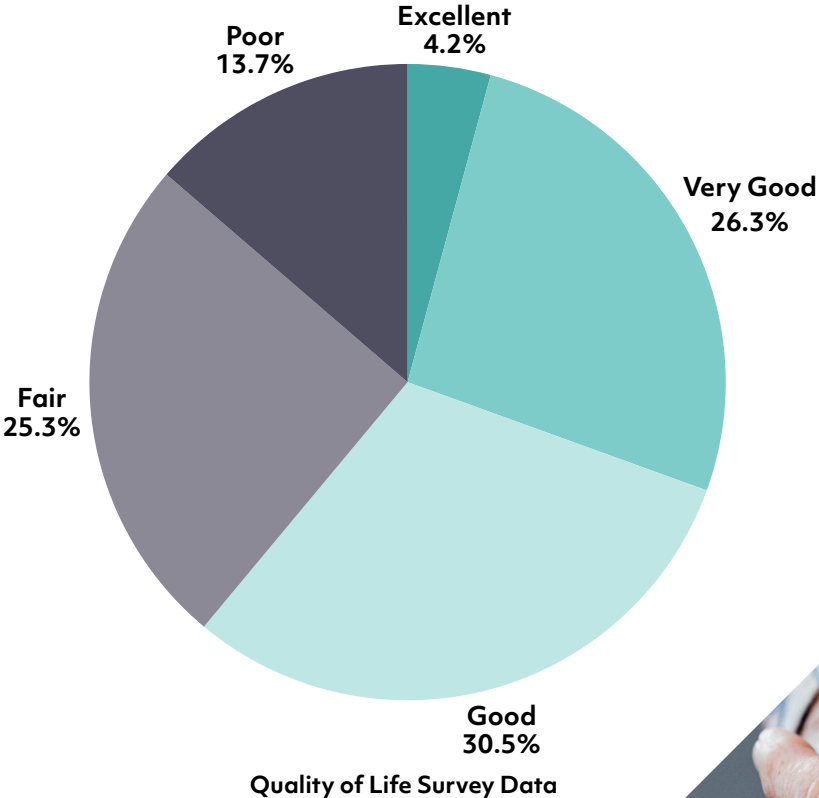
Theme One - Living Well & Wellbeing

Participants generally described a positive experience of ageing and feeling optimistic about life, having a sense of purpose and being able to enjoy daily activities.

Rather than wellbeing being defined solely through physical health, results spoke of wellbeing as a combination of staying active, maintaining relationships, contributing to their community and having opportunities to continue doing enjoyable things.

Many respondents demonstrated resilience and adaptability, particularly around the changes that may come with aging. Health challenges were acknowledged, but were often balanced by a focus on maintaining independence, meaningful relationships and participation in community life.

Physical Health in the last few months



Theme One - Living Well & Wellbeing

Wellbeing Indicators

● Percentage who agreed



What this means:

The graph above shows that most people reported positive personal wellbeing indicators in their lives in the two months before the survey. The highest agreement was around having purpose, feeling worthwhile in relationships and feeling safe. This shows a strong base of individual and community resilience.



Theme Two - Connection, Belonging and Community

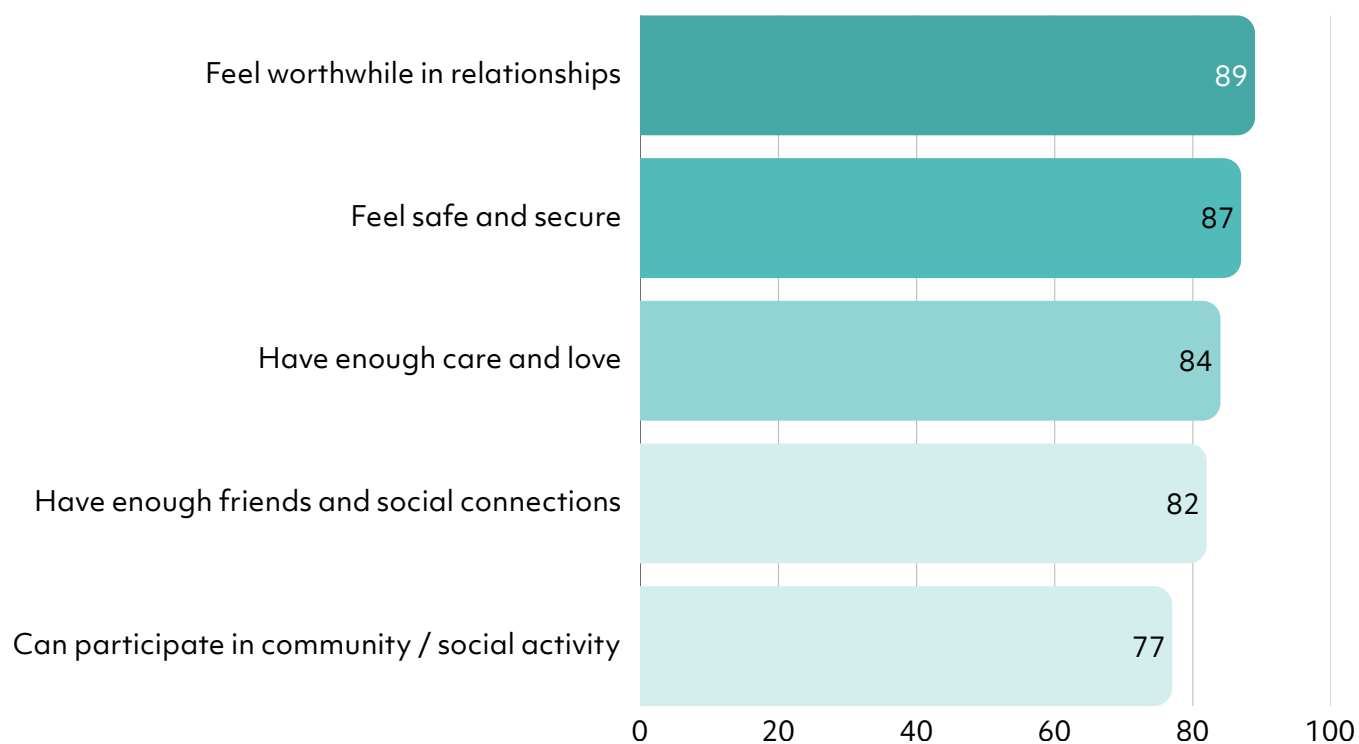
Social connection was one of the strongest themes throughout the survey for those that responded. Participants frequently indicated the importance of family, friendships, neighbours, community groups, clubs and volunteer activities.

Social connection was identified as a key factor in maintaining both mental wellbeing and overall quality of life. Community participation was seen as a source of enjoyment, identity and purpose. Respondents spoke about the value of belonging to local groups and maintaining regular social interactions.



Connection & Belonging Factors

Percentage who agreed



Theme Two - Connection, Belonging and Community

What this means:

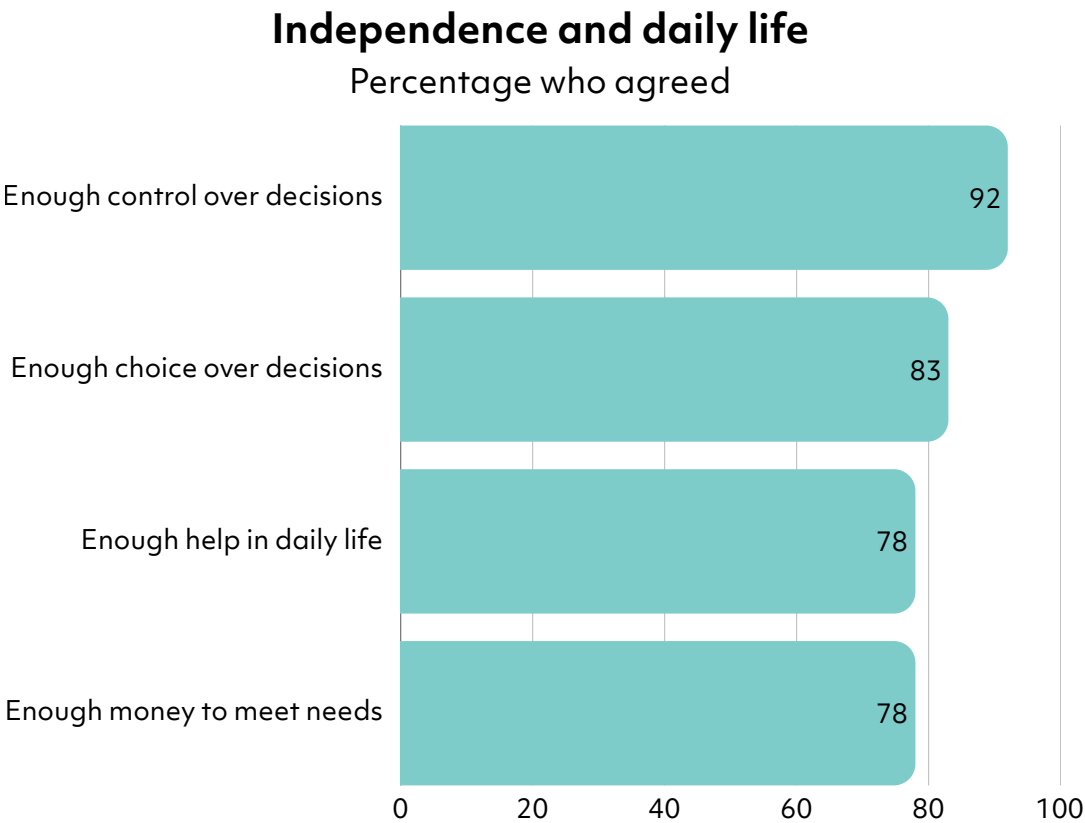
As we age, we go through many life transitions such as retirement or the loss of a spouse. It is natural to lose friends and loved ones, or have sudden or gradual health changes and challenges with mobility. For those living in rural areas, where homes may be geographically isolated, footpaths hard to find, limited transport options and an increasingly digital world, staying connected to meaningful community activity can become more challenging.

Supporting opportunities for older people to continue to experience joy, make new friends, see people they love, feel seen and heard and participate regularly in meaningful activity, becomes especially important. Ensuring people continue to experience these simple things can impact wellbeing, belonging and quality of life.



Theme Three - Independence, Choice and Everyday Life

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of remaining independent and retaining control over decisions affecting their lives.



Many respondents expressed a desire to remain in their own homes, continue managing daily activities and maintain their ability to contribute to community life.

Independence was often described as closely linked to dignity, confidence and quality of life.

Participants valued being able to:

- Make their own decisions
- Know where to access support when required
- Maintain mobility and move around their community
- Remain active
- Continue to contribute to their communities

Challenges to independence were often associated with transport barriers, declining health, cost of living and difficulty accessing information or services.

Theme Three - Independence, Choice and Everyday Life

What this means:

Positive ageing is supported when people have the freedom to make their own choices and maintain control over their lives. This requires more than practical assistance. It involves listening to what is important to the person, addressing barriers that may limit their participation, and working together to find ways to ensure they can continue to engage in meaningful activities, relationships, and experiences that bring purpose and joy.

“I don't want to feel like a burden. I really needed help but it was difficult to ask. It would make it easier if others offered to help, especially when they know I have been unable to drive.”



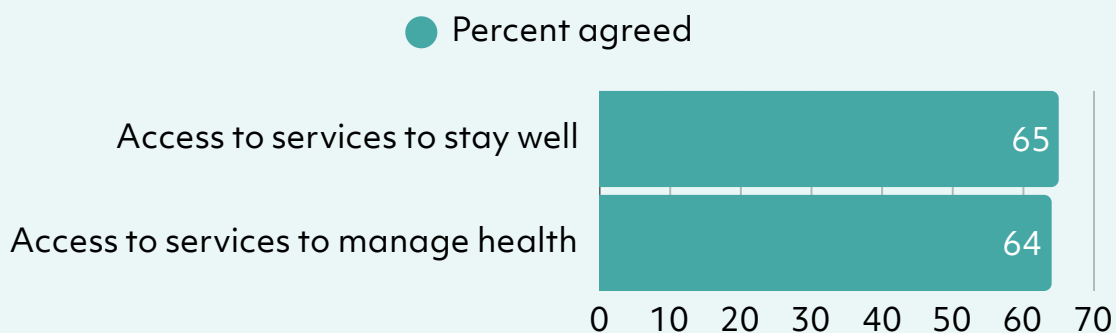
Theme Four - Health, Services and Support

Access to health services was a significant concern for respondents. 34.7% of respondents lacked adequate access to services to stay well, while 35.8% lacked services to manage their health.

These gaps strongly overlapped among people who rated their health as fair or poor, with 62.2% reporting at least one access gap, and 51.4% lacked adequate access to both types of support. This indicates that those with the greatest health needs often faced the greatest difficulty accessing services.

The service access gap affected slightly more people living alone (47.1%) than those receiving informal care (45.8%).

Access to services — agreed rates



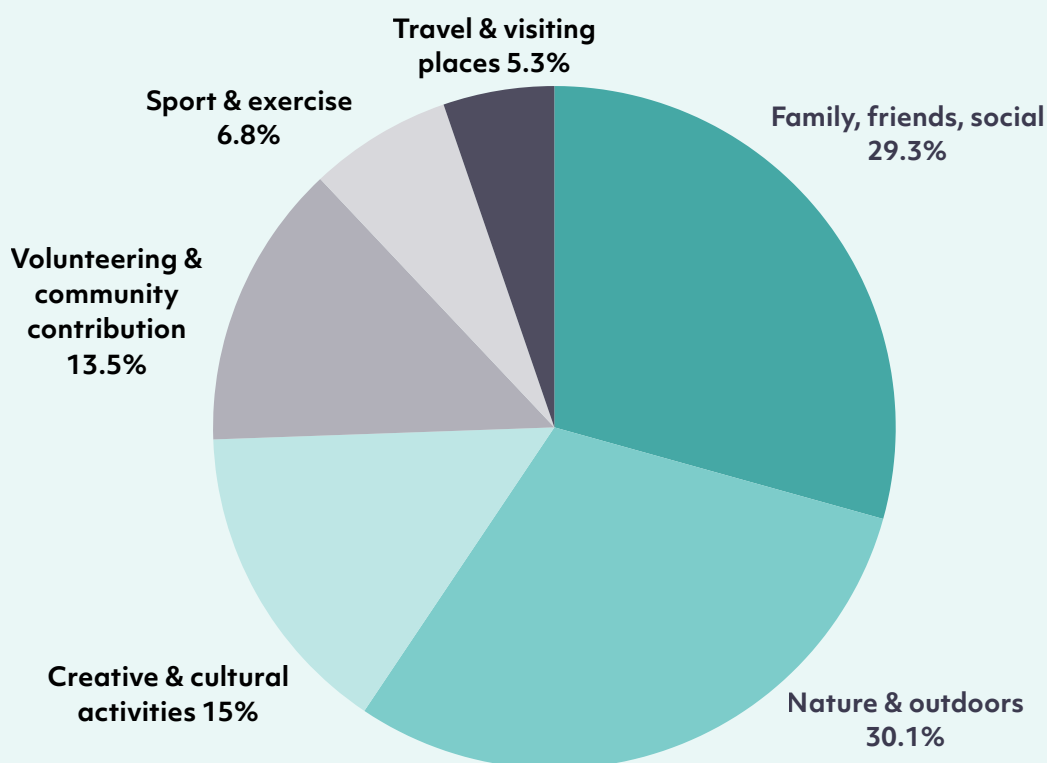
Respondents particularly link health access gaps to transport barriers and limited local services. Transport was highlighted as a major issue and is further explored in theme six.



Theme Five - Staying Active and Enjoying Life

Staying active and enjoying life emerged as a major strength for those who responded to the survey. Participants described a wide range of activities that bring pleasure and routine to their lives including walking, gardening, swimming, creative activities, volunteering, social groups, spending time with family and being outdoors. The link between physical activity and wellbeing suggests that health is viewed holistically.

Activities that Support Wellbeing



Theme Five - Staying Active and Enjoying Life

Participants recognised the relationship between physical and mental health in supporting quality of life.

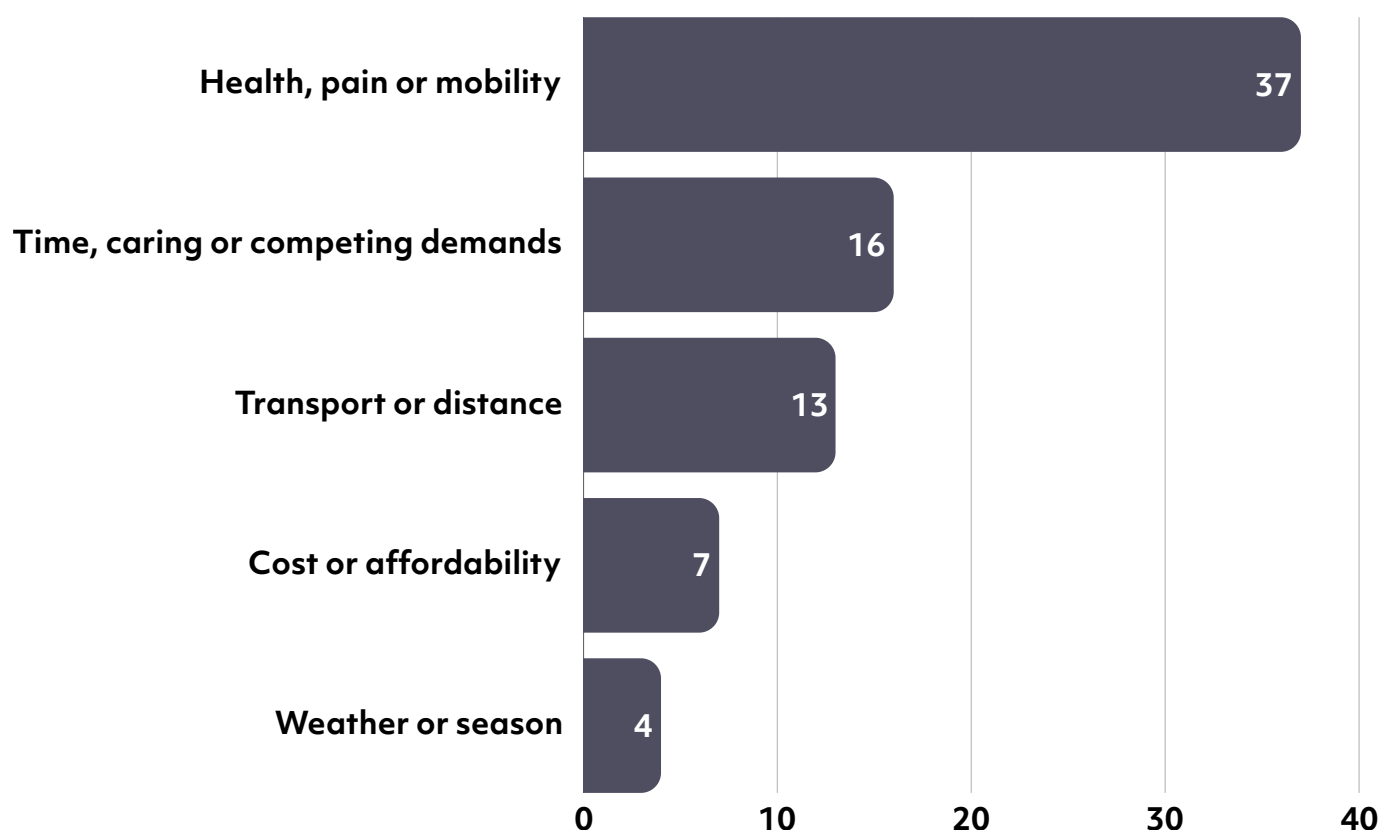
Many respondents actively manage their wellbeing through physical activity, healthy lifestyles, social participation and community involvement.

Physical health was often discussed alongside broader wellbeing factors such as relationships, purpose and community connection.

Experiencing joy was not described as a luxury. It was viewed as essential to wellbeing and quality of life, especially if physical health was impacted. Whether physically active or not, results spoke about the importance of continuing to do activities that bring joy, helping people feel useful, connected and alive. Anticipating a joyful experience also makes it easier to participate in physical active.

The most common barriers across the responses were health, pain or mobility issues, transport and distance, cost, weather and competing demands.

Barriers to Physical Activity or Enjoyment



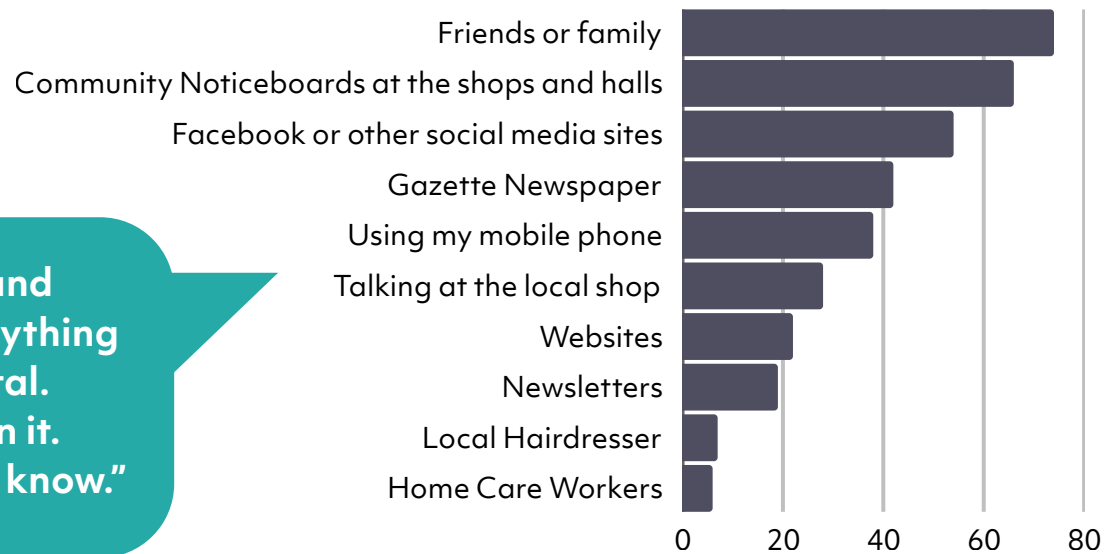
Theme Six - Transport, Access and Information

Information access was highlighted by respondents. Participants described finding out about activities and services through trusted networks such as friends, family, community noticeboards, social media, local papers and community networks.

This suggests that information is available, but may be scattered across many places. For some people, especially those who are less digitally connected, this can make opportunities harder to find.

How people find out about activities

● Mentions (selections)



"I feel unsafe and insecure with everything becoming digital. I will never learn it. It is not the world I know."

Suggestions for improving information access

"Better online / social media updates"

"Noticeboards and local places"

"Word of mouth / local networks"

"One central place for information"

"Printed newsletters / mailouts"



Theme Six - Transport, Access and Information

This theme saw some of the clearest practical issues identified in the survey. Participants often want to be involved, attend activities and access services, but practical barriers made this difficult. Transport becomes a key issue because it affects more than travel. It influences people's ability to enjoy life, access community, services and maintain independence.

33.7%
mentioned travel as an issue

"Fuel costs too much. I have to think twice about going out"

44.6%
called for better transport

"I don't think the free public transport has helped many in my area, it is the timing of the transport... up too early and back too late for older folk"

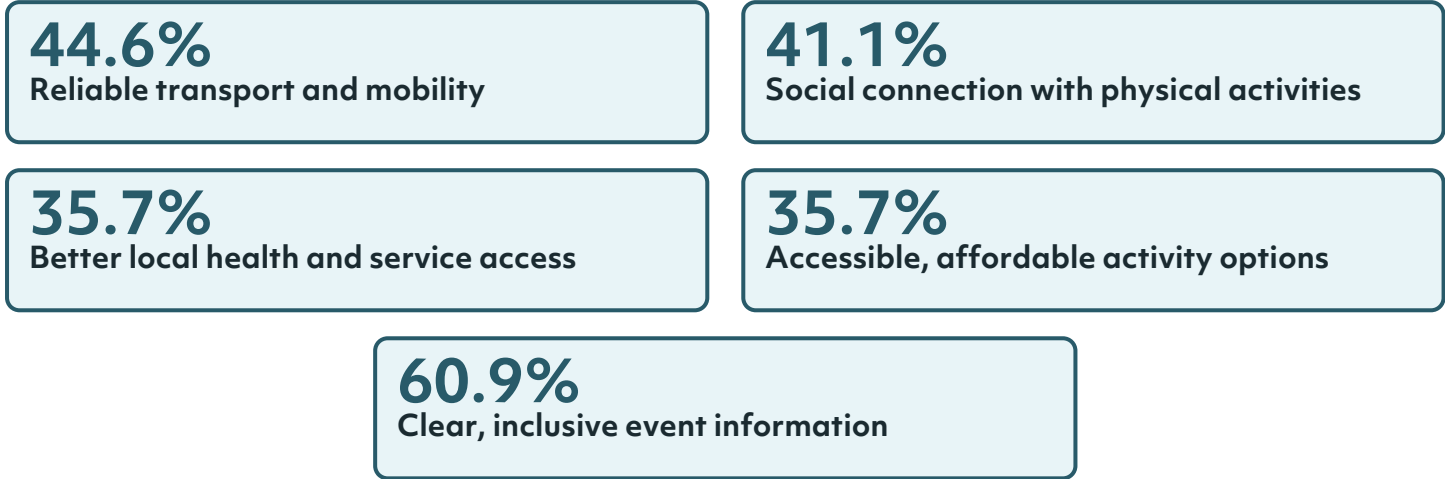
Many barriers to participation are fixable. Better transport options, clearer communication and information delivered in more relevant ways could make a significant difference to quality of life for older people in the Tasman region.



Looking Forward - Recommendations and Next Steps

The findings suggest a clear way forward:

Build on community strengths while removing practical barriers that stop older people from participating fully.



Recommendations

- 1 Create a simple central information pathway for older people in print and digital format and support them to develop digital skills and confidence.
- 2 Strengthen local transport options, including community transport, shared rides and minibuses, to help people access key activities and travel to Sorell or Hobart.
- 3 Encourage low-cost local activities that bring joy, encourage connection, keep people active and provide a sense of purpose.
- 4 Invest in community-led gathering places, groups and volunteering opportunities.
- 5 Improve service navigation so people know where to get health, wellbeing, aged care and community support.
- 6 Continue seeking the unheard voices and involve older people as co-design partners in local planning.

With Thanks

This report was produced by Tasman Voice for Health with ongoing direction and participation from the Older Person's volunteer Working Group.

We are also grateful to the Jeder Institute, and Dr Faline Howes for their support and collaboration.

Most of all, we thank the community members whose voices and experiences sit at the heart of this report. Your contributions have helped create a deeper understanding of what supports quality of life and wellbeing for older people in the Tasman community.

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