



SUMMARY OF THE AGEING WELL STRATEGIC SUMMIT | MANAAKI TANGATA, HAERE WHAKAMUA

WELLINGTON, 11 JUNE 2024

AGEING WELL NATIONAL SCIENCE CHALLENGE



Summary of Ageing Well Summit | Manaaki tangata, haere whakamua Wellington, 11 June 2024

As the Ageing Well National Science Challenge draws to its end, the Directorate, Governance Group and research teams have considered what has been achieved, and the context and priorities for future work. Many of the issues faced by society as individuals age have been recognised for decades; there are no simple solutions, but through ongoing research they can be addressed and ameliorated.

While the Challenge has been successful in delivering a range of outcomes, there remains the need for further research. This need is driven in part by changing demographics and the increase in the proportion of persons aged 65+; noting that a significant proportion of this older group continue to be in paid work and contribute to society in other ways. While there is increasing recognition of the inequities in outcomes for individuals, to date there has been inadequate recognition of the diversity of the older population.

Current policy responses and services are often siloed and/or lack cultural appropriateness and there is a need for greater integration and cultural suitability. For those working with older individuals and their whānau, a major concern is the lack of visibility and urgency in the face of clear evidence of the need for new ways to support people to ageing well.

Research Agenda

The overarching research priority is to address a broad range of societal, health, and environmental issues which, taken together, impact the lives of older individuals and their families in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Such research should support goals that include:

- ensuring financial security for older individuals
- maintaining social connections and opportunities for participation
- securing access to appropriate housing
- reducing ageism
- optimising health and improving access to services
- reducing elder abuse
- reducing inequities.



These goals align with the research agenda of the **United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing**, which provides an internationally relevant framework for research relating to the ageing population.

The framework identifies four priority areas for action:

- combatting ageism
- age-friendly environments, ensuring that communities foster the abilities of older people
- integrated care, delivering person-centred primary health and care services that are responsive to older people
- long-term care, providing access to appropriate long-term care for those who need it.

These four areas are consistent with **Ageing Well's analysis of research priorities** for Aotearoa New Zealand. Within this framework, a series of local priorities, reflecting the specific characteristics of the New Zealand society and environment, have been defined.

These include:

- real-world intervention trials for those identified as at risk for various conditions and circumstances
- testing the applicability of delivering telehealth services for older people
- creating the evidence for, and evaluating, care service models, including the expanded contribution of primary care and the integration of support services
- understanding familism, the balance between the responsibilities of family and state in providing support and care for older individuals
- economic policy, with consideration to credits and debits of ageing cohorts on the social sector, including the impact of fixed incomes of older New Zealanders on financial sustainability. This includes the ability to respond to disaster.
- physical and mental wellbeing, the importance of hauora
- work on effectively reducing elder abuse
- vision of kaumātua to be heard and included in programmes focused on Māori responsiveness. Other considerations include Treaty engagement, equity and incorporation of Mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori (te reo Māori, tikanga Māori).
- sustaining social connection and opportunities for contribution to society
- the application of precision technologies to support health and wellbeing
- housing, the built environment, and transport
- continued evolution of communication and translation of research findings to maximise impact, by understanding the needs of the various audiences.



Proven Ways of Working

The way that future research for ageing well is approached needs to be considered and may be different to other sectors. Based on ten years of experience, Ageing Well has identified what it considers to be critical components.

The Ageing Well Challenge has demonstrated the success of adopting a community-engaged, Te Tiriti-based approach to the way research is undertaken, and the importance of sustainable relationships with partners, agencies, and communities, including whānau, hapū, iwi, and Māori organisations. This underscores the importance of prioritising Māori-led research and evaluating its contribution to elevating Māori leadership within the sector.

New Zealand is well positioned to utilise big data to undertake innovative and locally relevant research for ageing well. The data from interRAI assessments, the Integrated Data Infrastructure, and longitudinal studies are invaluable resources that can support research now and into the future. Particularly for longitudinal studies, continuity of dedicated research funding is critical if the substantial value and impact of the previous investment is to be realised in relation to the health and wellbeing of the ageing population. Therefore, robust funding mechanisms that support this should be prioritised.

Two components should be considered for any future research in this area: *the influence of the life-course on the well-being of older adults, and the relevance of inter-generational effects*. Much of the important life-course research to date has focused on determinants of healthy ageing in children, adolescents, and younger adults, but future work should look to the impacts on older adults.

The Ageing Well National Science Challenge experience has also shown the value of listening to, and working with, older people in shaping and undertaking research and in delivering meaningful and substantive findings. In a similar fashion, co-creation and co-working in the research process with relevant agencies and communities, especially Māori and Pacific communities, is important to ensure that the research is responding to their respective needs and opportunities.

Research funding must allow for these resource-intensive processes. Equally, it must enable the development and sharing of research outputs in formats that are relevant to the various audiences (Ageing Well's 2024 book [Ka Mua Ka Muri: a decade of ageing well in Aotearoa and beyond](#) is an example¹).

¹ Indeed, *Ka Mua Ka Muri: a decade of ageing well in Aotearoa and beyond* conveys many of the Research Agenda goals and Proven Ways of Working, articulated here.

Response to the research priorities should not be viewed as several pieces of disconnected work; rather it should be embedded within a shared vision and collegiality across the research teams. This promotes adaptability, interdisciplinary research, and will help maintain the focus on achieving outcomes.

International connections have proven invaluable to the work of the Challenge and given the international context for some priorities, as exemplified by the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing framework, it will be vital to sustain existing (and develop new) international research collaborations. Our researchers are world-renowned with their expertise for example, in research co-design and co-working with Māori, our indigenous population, and this expertise is valued by research groups working in other countries.

A critical element in delivering meaningful research is to build in – from the outset – deliberate consideration of, and consultation on, how findings are translated into policy or programmes, and how these can be sustainable.

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Much has been achieved in the ten years of the Ageing Well National Science Challenge, and more remains to be done.

There has been a significant upskilling of research capability, and robust collaborative relationships have been established between research groups, agencies, and communities, and particularly with Māori and Pacific communities. This has prepared Aotearoa New Zealand to deliver research outcomes that will address the impacts of our increasing aged population, for now and into the future.

Waiho i te toipoto, kaina i te toiroa

Let us keep close together, not wide apart

