

Age Friendly Ashburton

ACTION PLAN
2026 - 2029



Ashburton's older residents are engaged, active, contributing and valued members of the communities in which they live, work and socialize.



**Safer Mid Canterbury
Hakatere Haumarū**
Together we're safer • Me uru kahikatea



**SAFE
COMMUNITIES
ASHBURTON DISTRICT**
Keeping ourselves, our families
and our communities safe



Vision

Ashburton's older residents are engaged, active, contributing and valued members of the communities in which they live, work and socialise.

Introduction

Like many places in New Zealand and around the world, Ashburton/Mid Canterbury is seeing a growing rate of older people making up our society.

With this comes the need for our elders to retain their connection with the organisations and systems that influence their lives, such as financial institutions and health providers.

We welcome and celebrate older residents as key members of our communities, contributing their knowledge and skills for the benefit of all, especially through continuing to work or volunteer, and care for others.

Our Age Friendly Ashburton Action Plan lists a number of areas which our older residents tell us make living in Ashburton/Mid Canterbury "age friendly" and actions to help improve areas which are less "age friendly".

We look forward to working together to celebrate our older residents, making life even better for them here in Ashburton/Mid Canterbury.

Ashburton District Councillor Julie Moffett
Chair, Age Friendly Ashburton Steering Group



Our Vision for an Age Friendly Ashburton

Ashburton's older residents are engaged, active, contributing and valued members of the communities in which they live, work and socialise.

Goals

- Ashburton's older residents have opportunities to participate fully in their communities throughout their lives
- Ashburton is a supportive, welcoming, attractive community where older residents can thrive

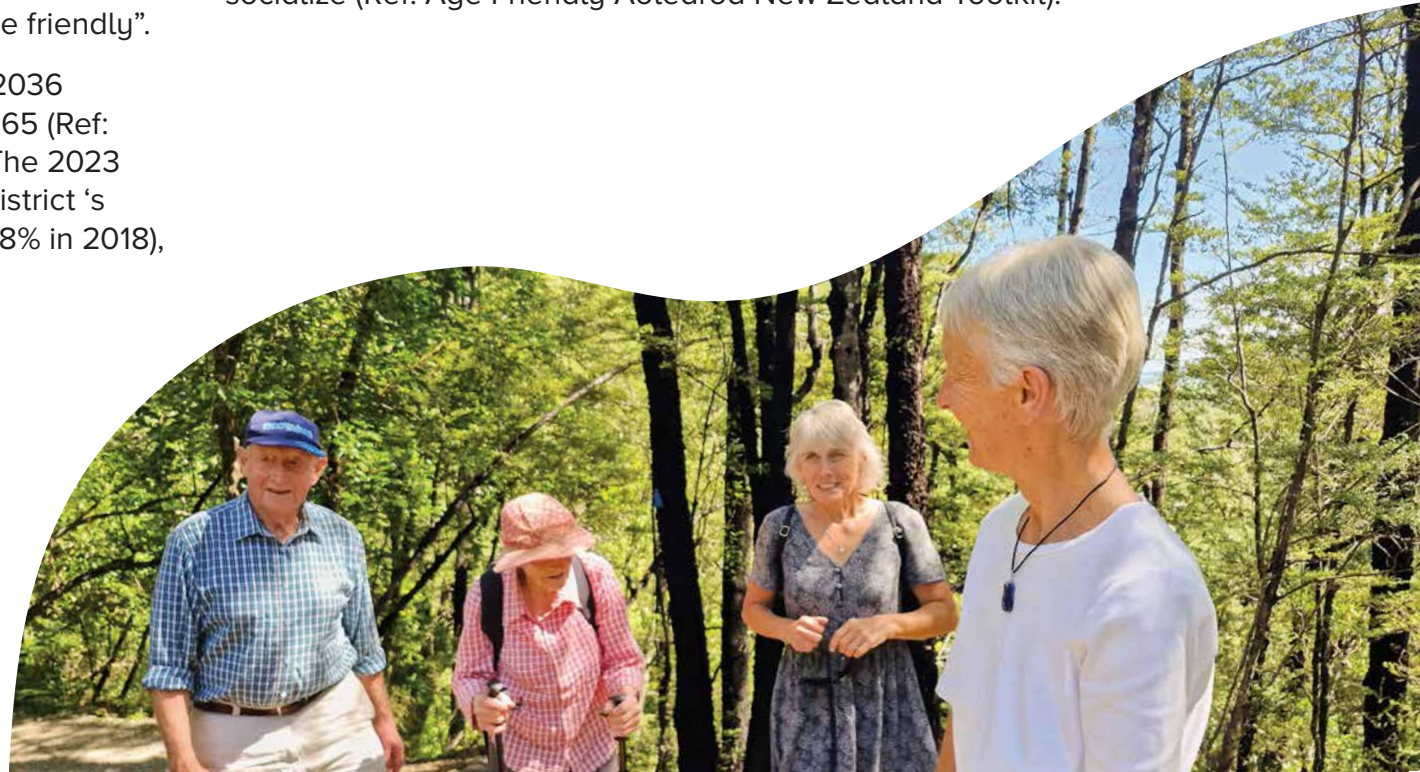
Why it matters

In mid-2025 the Safe Communities Programme (Safer Mid Canterbury) established a Steering Group to develop an Age Friendly Ashburton Strategy and Action Plan, with the objective of making Ashburton District more "age friendly".

Why? New Zealand's population is ageing. By 2036 almost one in four New Zealanders will be over 65 (Ref: Age Friendly Ashburton New Zealand Toolkit). The 2023 Census findings show that 19.7% of Ashburton District's population is aged 65 years and over (up from 18% in 2018), compared to 16.6% nationally.

As a community where older adults already make up around a fifth of all residents, and with this proportion steadily increasing, there is a considerable need for such an approach for the Ashburton District. Older people make a significant contribution to their families and communities, for example as volunteers, grandparents and caregivers, and have a wealth of knowledge and skills to share.

An age friendly Ashburton will help ensure that our older residents are engaged, active, contributing and valued members of the communities in which they live, work and socialize (Ref: Age Friendly Aotearoa New Zealand Toolkit).



Needs Assessment Research 2025

In order to develop an Age Friendly Ashburton Strategy and Action Plan, the Steering Group and the parties behind its establishment needed to understand areas that are currently working well, as well as issues needing attention in the district.

In 2025 the AFA Steering Group successfully applied to the Age Friendly fund (Office for Seniors, MSD) for funding for a needs assessment to be completed to inform the development of a Strategy/ Action Plan for the District, identifying and celebrating ways in which it is already “age friendly” and identifying areas needing improvement.

The Steering Group engaged an independent social researcher to undertake the research, which consisted of:

- Demographic analysis (see Appendix I).
- A community survey (online and paper), using the international Age Friendly Cities and Communities Questionnaire, which probed a range of domains, such as environment, opportunities to participate in the community, etc. Plus the group added questions about emergency preparedness and preparation for retirement.
- The survey was very popular, with 564 responses, around 1/3 via hard copy and 2/3 online.
- 16 community focus groups around the district with 148 participants plus a provider focus group.



Ashburton Action Plan Goals

The goals for an Age Friendly Ashburton are set out under the World Health Organisation Age Friendly Cities Framework of eight interconnected domains that can help to identify and address barriers to the well-being and participation of older people.

WHO Age Friendly Domains



Social Participation



Community Support and Health Services



Respect and Social Inclusion



Communication and Information



Housing



Civic Participation & Employment



Transportation



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings



These interconnected domains guide our work to build community that respects, includes and supports older people to live well, stay connected and continues to contribute.

Research Results

The most age-friendly aspects of life in Ashburton district were:

- ✓ Feelings of safety
- ✓ Communication and information
- ✓ Opportunities for social participation
- ✓ Respect and social inclusion
- ✓ Emergency preparedness

The least age-friendly aspects of life in Ashburton District were:

- 🗉 Access to public transport,
- 🤝 Health and community support - primary health service capacity
- 🏠 Outdoor spaces and buildings - accessibility of buildings, footpath condition
- 💬 Financial situation and financial preparedness for retirement - cost of living - especially for renters and under 65s with health needs

Other aspects of living in Ashburton District which were mentioned were:

Technology

- There was evidence that a large proportion of older adults either do not use technology at all out of fear or their use is restricted because of this
- Fostering digital literacy

Financial

- Age-friendly banking services, especially for those with limited digital literacy
- Risky financial behaviour by some older adults who are not internet banking users and who depend on use of cash

Housing


- Continued development of appropriate social housing for older adults


Support and Connection



- Need for stronger inter-agency collaboration
- Improved home-based services and carer support
- Ongoing needs around information resources via different media including hard copy



A full copy of the research (“Needs Assessment Research Findings to Inform Development of an Age Friendly Community Plan for Ashburton District”, S. Wylie, September, 2025) is available as a separate document.





Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p data-bbox="163 292 277 320">Housing</p> 	<p data-bbox="421 292 680 427">High home ownership; most people in warm, dry homes</p> <p data-bbox="421 475 707 536">Some older renters experiencing hardship</p>	<p data-bbox="734 292 949 352">More affordable rentals needed</p> <p data-bbox="734 400 1003 643">Continued development of appropriate social housing for older adults, including community housing/ shared housing</p> <p data-bbox="734 691 1003 818">Additional support for older people with neurodiversity/ mental health issues</p> <p data-bbox="734 866 1003 927">Funding from private sector</p> <p data-bbox="734 975 1003 1147">Remove barriers to accessing housing - references; internet applications; banking</p> <p data-bbox="734 1195 1003 1323">Strengthen agency/ community relationships to work through barriers</p>	<p data-bbox="1039 292 1240 320">Haven Housing</p>	<p data-bbox="1344 292 1621 320">Safe Communities (L)</p> <p data-bbox="1344 368 1545 397">Haven Housing</p> <p data-bbox="1344 445 1666 474">Neighbourhood Support</p> <p data-bbox="1344 521 1657 582">Council Elderly Persons Housing</p> <p data-bbox="1344 630 1496 659">Kainga Ora</p> <p data-bbox="1344 707 1621 767">Mid and South Canty Community Trust</p>	<p data-bbox="1722 292 2063 464">Receive and discuss the results of the Mid and South Canty Community Trust research on housing needs</p>


Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
The Least Age Friendly Aspects of Life in Ashburton District:					
<p data-bbox="163 368 394 432">Access to public transport</p> 	<p data-bbox="421 368 707 751">A barrier to older people who don't drive/no longer drive in both Ashburton Township and around the district - can prevent community participation and access to core services (medical/dental)</p>	<p data-bbox="734 368 1016 679">Increase options for Ashburton Township, including Total Mobility, Uber, extend Connector community transport service to operate within the Ashburton Township boundaries</p> <p data-bbox="734 724 1016 823">Advocate to ECAN/Council to see this as a priority</p> <p data-bbox="734 868 1016 999">Older Persons Hub to offer transport to and from and around town</p> <p data-bbox="734 1043 1016 1286">Investigate appropriate support and transport for people with high needs to be able to attend appointments in Christchurch</p>	<p data-bbox="1039 368 1321 467">Mid Canty Connector community transport service</p> <p data-bbox="1039 512 1234 576">St John Health Shuttle</p> <p data-bbox="1039 620 1196 652">Taxi service</p> <p data-bbox="1039 697 1218 761">Total Mobility providers</p> <p data-bbox="1039 805 1317 904">Cancer Society/Age Concern/service club drivers</p> <p data-bbox="1039 949 1290 1013">Commercial transport providers</p>	<p data-bbox="1344 368 1637 432">Mid Canty Community Vehicle Trust (L)</p> <p data-bbox="1344 477 1653 509">Total Mobility providers</p> <p data-bbox="1344 553 1635 585">Commercial providers</p>	<p data-bbox="1722 368 2040 608">Investigate the pros and cons of extending the Connector community transport service to operate within the Ashburton Township boundaries</p> <p data-bbox="1722 724 2040 900">Investigate alternative transport options - Uber, Older Persons Hub, additional Total Mobility providers</p>


Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p data-bbox="163 292 371 392">Community support and health services</p> 	<p data-bbox="421 292 707 427">Great supports locally (social services) but the health system is stretched</p> <p data-bbox="421 475 707 571">Telehealth not a palatable alternative for many</p>	<p data-bbox="739 292 1012 499">Advocate to Waitaha Health/DHB for better access to primary health care, especially in Ashburton Township</p> <p data-bbox="739 547 1012 611">Promote pharmacies and what they offer</p> <p data-bbox="739 659 1012 786">Services forum (evenings) for the community to find out more</p> <p data-bbox="739 834 1012 930">Promote health information available online</p>			
<p data-bbox="163 956 371 1163">Outdoor spaces and buildings - accessibility of buildings, footpath condition</p> 	<p data-bbox="421 956 707 1267">Enhance the walkability of Ashburton and other towns - Methven/ Ashburton - slippery tiles; root damage and uneven footpaths; incomplete repairs</p>	<p data-bbox="739 956 1012 1091">More promotion from Council on how to report - Snap, send, solve</p> <p data-bbox="739 1139 1012 1307">Create a sub-group to identify issues with access to buildings etc and advocate</p>	<p data-bbox="1046 956 1319 987">Snap, send, solve</p> <p data-bbox="1046 1035 1319 1203">Council could add information about footpath repairs, etc to its "Council Brief" newsletter</p> <p data-bbox="1046 1251 1319 1347">Council investigating solutions for slippery tiles</p>	<p data-bbox="1350 956 1579 1019">Ashburton District Council (L)</p>	<p data-bbox="1727 956 2047 1091">More information/ education from Council re Snap, send, solve and repairs/solutions</p>

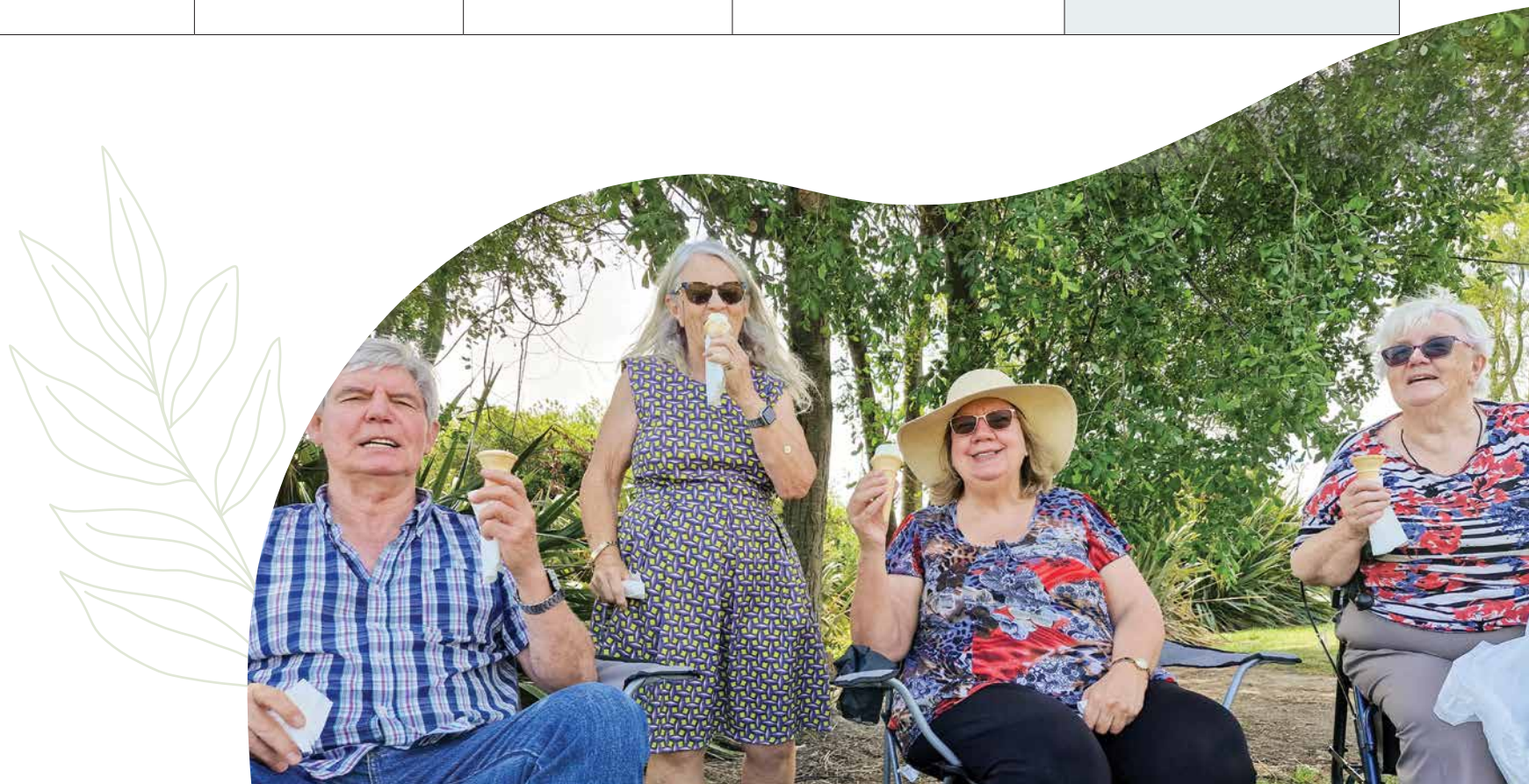
Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p>Nervousness around/ restricted use of technology</p> <p><i>This can impact financial behaviour</i></p> 		<p>Develop digital literacy initiatives</p> <p>Promote free access to the internet at Te Whare Whakaterere</p>	<p>SeniorNet Ashburton</p> <p>Te Whare Whakaterere (Ashburton Library) programmes</p> <p>Digital Waitaha</p>	<p>Safe Communities (L)</p> <p>SeniorNet Ashburton</p> <p>Te Whare Whakaterere (Ashburton Library)</p> <p>Digital Waitaha</p> <p>Keep Learning Mid Canty</p>	<p>More digital literacy education opportunities offered around the District</p>
<p>Need for Age Friendly banking services especially for those with limited digital literacy; risk of older people depending on use of cash</p> 		<p>Improve connection of more vulnerable older people with the age friendly banking services available via the “big banks”</p> <p>Support agencies to take every opportunity to find out what help is available from banks so they can connect those needing it with this</p>		<p>Safe Communities (L)</p> <p>Neighbourhood Support</p> <p>Local banks</p>	<p>Promote age friendly banking services to older people and agencies</p>

Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p data-bbox="163 292 349 427">Need for stronger inter-agency collaboration</p> 		<p data-bbox="734 292 1019 608">Develop the Age Friendly Steering Group as an ongoing networking opportunity as part of the Safe Communities Steering Group meetings</p> <p data-bbox="734 651 1019 855">Sub groups working on particular issues - eg transport; built infrastructure; digital literacy - to report back</p> <p data-bbox="734 898 1019 1007">Investigate Older Persons Hub concept with a Navigator role</p> <p data-bbox="734 1050 1019 1217">Develop a services forum so agencies are aware of what each other does - part of AFA meetings</p>		<p data-bbox="1346 292 1621 323">Safe Communities (L)</p> <p data-bbox="1346 367 1637 430">Agencies working with older adults</p>	<p data-bbox="1722 292 2024 430">Integrate Age Friendly Group meetings into bi-monthly Safe Communities meetings</p> <p data-bbox="1722 547 2078 683">Research Older Persons Hub/Navigator role concepts and suitability for Ashburton District</p>

Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p>Improved home-based services and carer support</p> 		<p>Promote Navigator roles within PHOs, what they do, how to access</p> <p>Investigate Navigator role to assist older people to access services across a range of government and social services</p> <p>Promote Needs Assessment Service Co-ordinators (Ashburton Hospital) and DHB funded home support: Older Persons Health; MSD; ACC</p> <p>List and promote existing carer support groups (Hospice Mid Canty; Dementia Canty; Presbyterian Support)</p>			

Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p data-bbox="163 292 331 355">Respect and inclusion</p> 	<p data-bbox="416 292 712 499">A need for attitudinal change towards older adults from some retailers and medical professionals/respect for elders</p> <p data-bbox="416 544 674 746">Attitude change amongst older people themselves regarding cultural understanding and inclusion</p>	<p data-bbox="734 292 1003 355">Training programme for retail workers</p> <p data-bbox="734 400 1014 571">Shop friendly audit and sticker welcoming older people, multicultural, refugees, LGBTQ, etc</p> <p data-bbox="734 616 981 855">Link in with Community Plan for hospitals/GPs/ emergency care/ after hours to offer training; include carers</p> <p data-bbox="734 900 1014 1070">More opportunities to connect/talk/share stories about cultural awareness and living together</p> <p data-bbox="734 1115 1014 1323">Offer talks by newcomers/refugees to community groups looking for speakers (GreyPower; Rotary; Lions; Inner Wheel)</p>		<p data-bbox="1344 292 1675 395">Welcoming Communities (L); Council; Business Canty</p> <p data-bbox="1344 440 1630 504">Newcomers Network; Health</p> <p data-bbox="1344 549 1675 719">Vol Mid and South Canty buddy system; Museum talks; Neighbourhood Support events; Connecting Mid Canty</p>	<p data-bbox="1720 292 2045 355">Investigate the idea of a Shop Friendly sticker</p>

Issue	Additional information comment	Actions - New	Actions - Already Happening	Agencies Involved (L = project lead)	Priority Projects for Year 1, 1 July 2026-30 June, 2027
<p>Ongoing needs around information resources including hard copy</p> 	<p>People are pretty well-informed and appreciate having a range of information resources - digital and hard copy. How do we continue to promote this</p>	<p>CAB Community Directory</p>	<p>Older Persons booklet</p> <p>Council to promote the Community Directory</p>	<p>Citizens Advice Bureau</p>	<p>Older Persons booklet</p>



Appendix 1 Older Adults in Ashburton District: Key Facts From the 2023 Census

Older adults in Ashburton District: Key facts from 2023 Census



Nearly **1 in 5** Ashburton District residents is aged **65 years or older** and of these:

- 95% are NZ European / European
- 78.9% own their home or hold it in a family trust
- 24.1% live alone
- Around 95% live in houses free of damp + mould
- 91% have access to a cellphone
- More than 4 in 5 have access to the internet
- 13.7% are in full-time employment and a further 12% work part-time



18.7% of Ashburton's population aged 65 years+ volunteer for a community entity, compared with 14.4% of people aged 65 yrs+ across NZ



trend of increased workforce participation over time for those aged 65 yrs+ in the district



15.1%

of Ashburton District residents aged 65 years+ have a disability, with this increasing steadily with age **Mobility limitations** = most common

Median income for Ashburton 65+ population = \$26,100

= higher than 66+ pop. in Timaru, lower than those in Christchurch

1.8% Ashburton residents aged 65 yrs+ have an annual income of \$150,001+



Age breakdown: Ashburton District residents 65 yrs+



Age Group	Population
65-69 yrs	1,971
70-74 yrs	1,761
75-79 yrs	1,365
80-84 yrs	984
85-89 yrs	495
90 yrs+	285

Older adults / older-adjacent as proportion of total population, Ashburton district

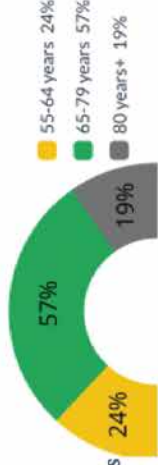


Age Group	Proportion
Under 55 years	68%
55-64 years	12%
65 years+	20%

Age-Friendly Ashburton District: Summary of consultation findings

Who had
their say?

564
survey
respondents



2/3 PEOPLE WHO FILLED IN THE SURVEY WERE FEMALE

AND



129 OLDER ADULTS + 19 SERVICE PROVIDERS

took part in 14 FOCUS GROUPS (45% males, 55% females)

Age-friendly report card

- Social Participation** Vast array of opportunities to connect, learn, be active, have fun, help others ★★★★★
- Housing** High home ownership, most people in warm, dry homes - more affordable rentals needed ★★★★★
- Respect + Inclusion** Room for improvement - respect for elders, cultural understanding and inclusion ★★★
- Civic Participation + Employment** Room for improvement - intergenerational connection ★★★★★
- Community support + healthcare** Great supports locally but health system stretched ★★★★★
- Communication + Information** Continuing demand for hard copy info resources ★★★★★
- Financial Wellbeing** Cost of living hard for many, need for more retirement planning, haves + have-nots ★★★★★
- Safety** Good physical safety + emergency preparedness, nervousness around technology for many ★★★★★
- Outdoor spaces + Buildings** Footpaths need improving, some shops + spaces hard to access ★★★★★
- Transportation** No public transport, monopoly on Total Mobility ★★

Key priorities for making Ashburton District more age-friendly:

- Active preparation for retirement
- Age-friendly banking services
- Enhanced walkability
- Public transport + more taxis / TM
- Comms via multiple media including hard printed copy



Building an **Age Friendly**
Ashburton together.