



Otago Spotlight Series  
Cancer Research

# Public understanding of cancer risk reduction

---

Cancer Society Social and Behavioural Research Unit  
*25 years of cancer research*



# Its about people...



# Reducing cancer risk

- From one third to half could be prevented
  - Tobacco control
  - Healthy weight
  - Fruit and vegetable consumption
  - Limiting alcohol
  - Avoiding sunburn and sunbeds

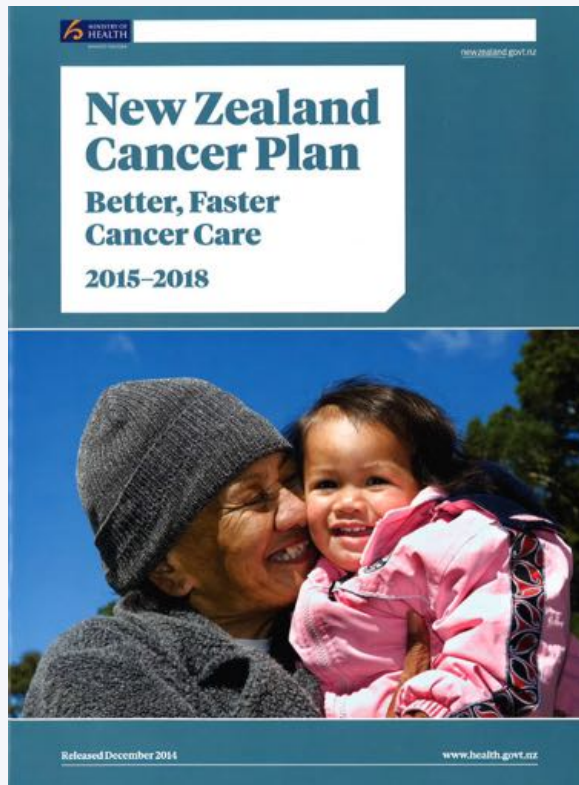


# Cancer awareness





# More people will be aware of cancer risks...



	2001
• Eating well	60%
• Keeping active	25%
• Healthy weight	<5%
• Smokefree	54%
• Alcohol	8%
• Sun protection	19%



# Challenges

- Media and advertising interest in health





# Challenges

- Media and advertising interest in health
- Complexity of risk messages

## All cancers

- Obesity** Being 10% above normal weight
- Low fruit & veg diet** Having less than 5 portions a day
- Radiation** Being exposed to any ionising radiation, including background levels such as those released from the earth
- Red meat** Eating less red or processed meat
- Infections** Exposure to certain causing infections like HPV and Hepatitis B or C
- Sunlight & sunbeds** Getting more UV than you should for your skin in 1000
- Occupation** Being exposed to cancer causing chemical or conditions at work
- Alcohol** Drinking one bottle of alcohol a week
- Low fruit & veg diet** Having less than five portions a day
- Over-weight** Having a BMI of 25 or above
- Tobacco** Smoking any form of tobacco, or exposure to environmental tobacco smoke

Tobacco

Occupation

Red meat

Over-weight

Low fruit & veg diet

Alcohol

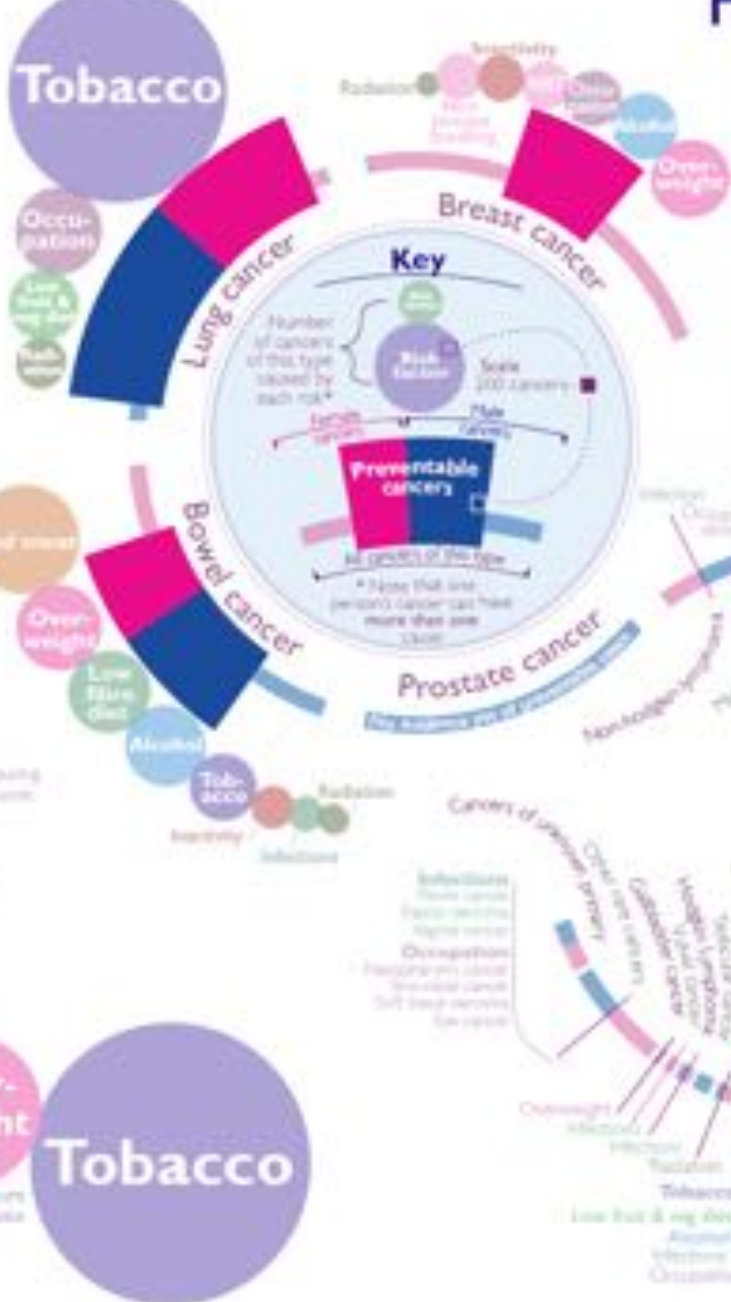
Tobacco

Infections

Radiation

Obesity

Low fruit & veg diet

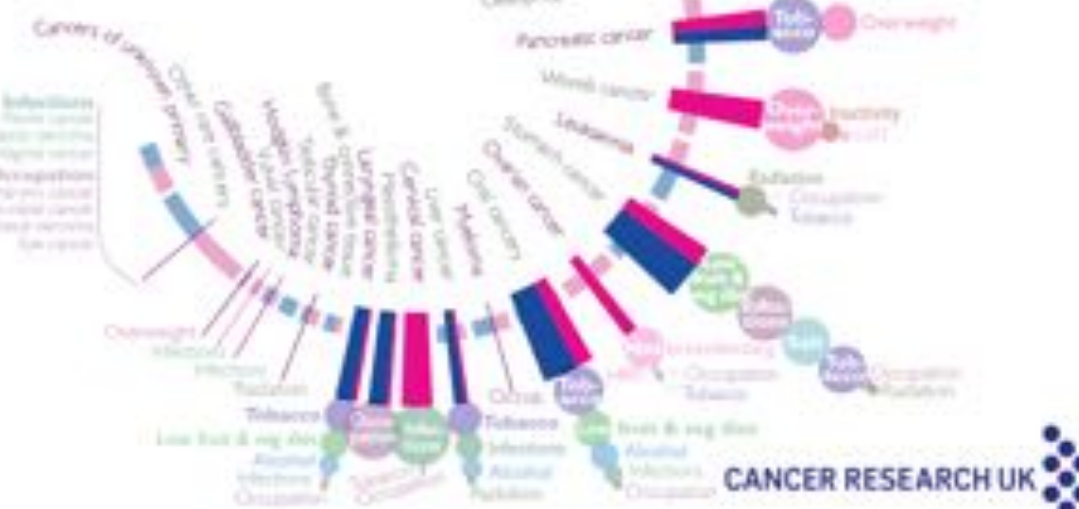


# How many cancers can be prevented?

Although there are some things we can't control about our cancer risk, decades of research have clearly shown that by living a **healthy life**, people can reduce the risk of developing the disease. But how many cancers in the UK are really caused by things we can change?

This diagram shows the results of new research funded by Cancer Research UK, which aims to show the number of cancer cases in the UK that could be prevented by known lifestyle and environmental factors, like being a **non-smoker**, keeping a **healthy weight**, drinking **less alcohol**, eating a healthy **balanced diet**, and **avoiding** being exposed to certain infections or radiation.

The **thin lines** show the total number of cancers of each type from the latest UK incidence figures, and the **large bars** in the centre of each line show the proportion of these cases that could be prevented in **men and women**. Around the outside, you'll see the lifestyle and environmental factors that are linked to each cancer type. On the left is the contribution of each lifestyle factor to cancer overall.



Together we will beat cancer





# Challenges

- Media and advertising interest in health
- Complexity of risk messages
- Cancer information overload

*“It seems like everything causes cancer”*



# Where are we now?

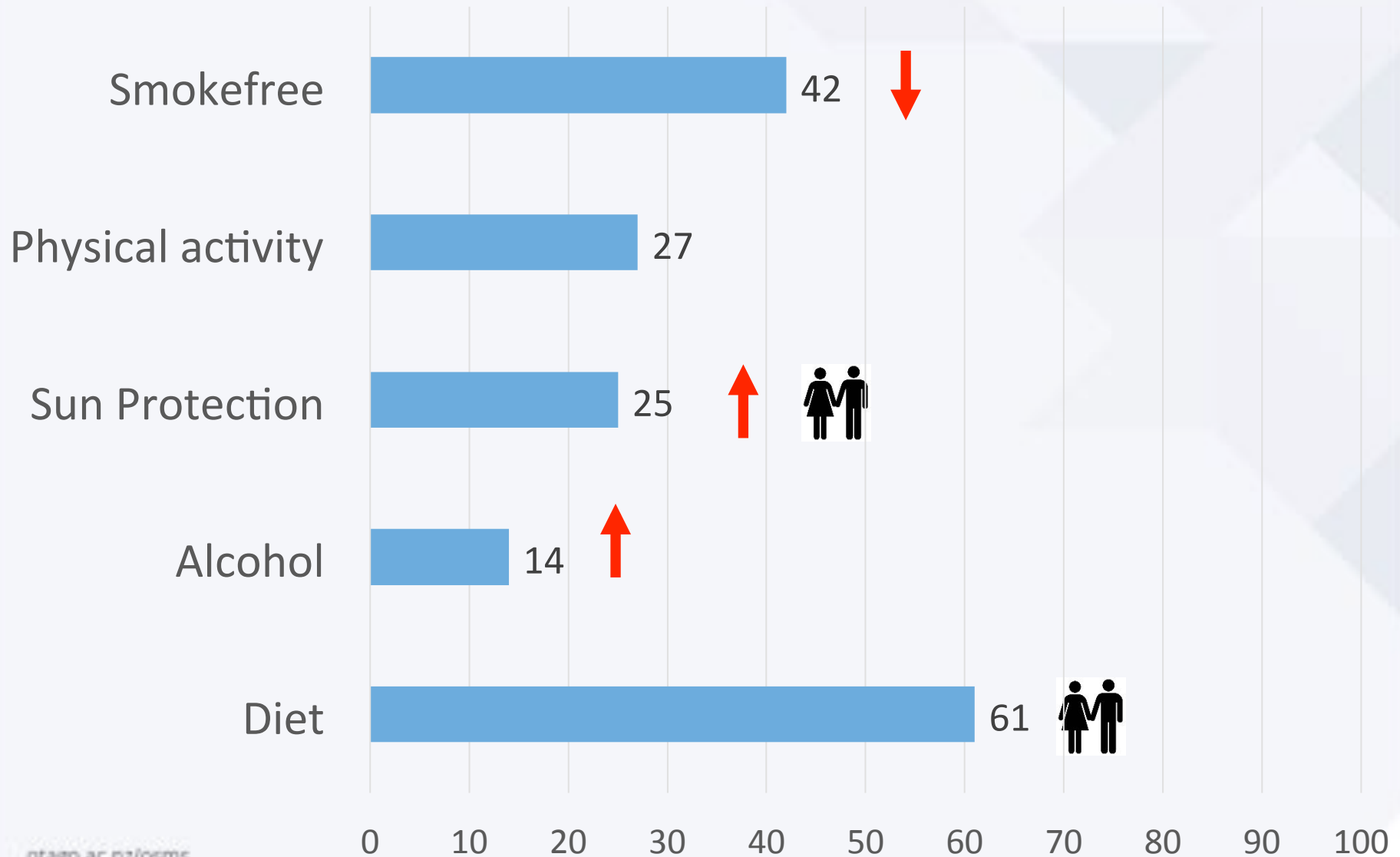
- Cancer awareness in Aotearoa NZ
  - Randomly selected from electoral rolls
  - Letter of introduction then phone interview
  - November 2014 - March 2015
  - 1064 individuals (578 women, 467 men)
  - 64% response rate
  - Replicated questions from 2001



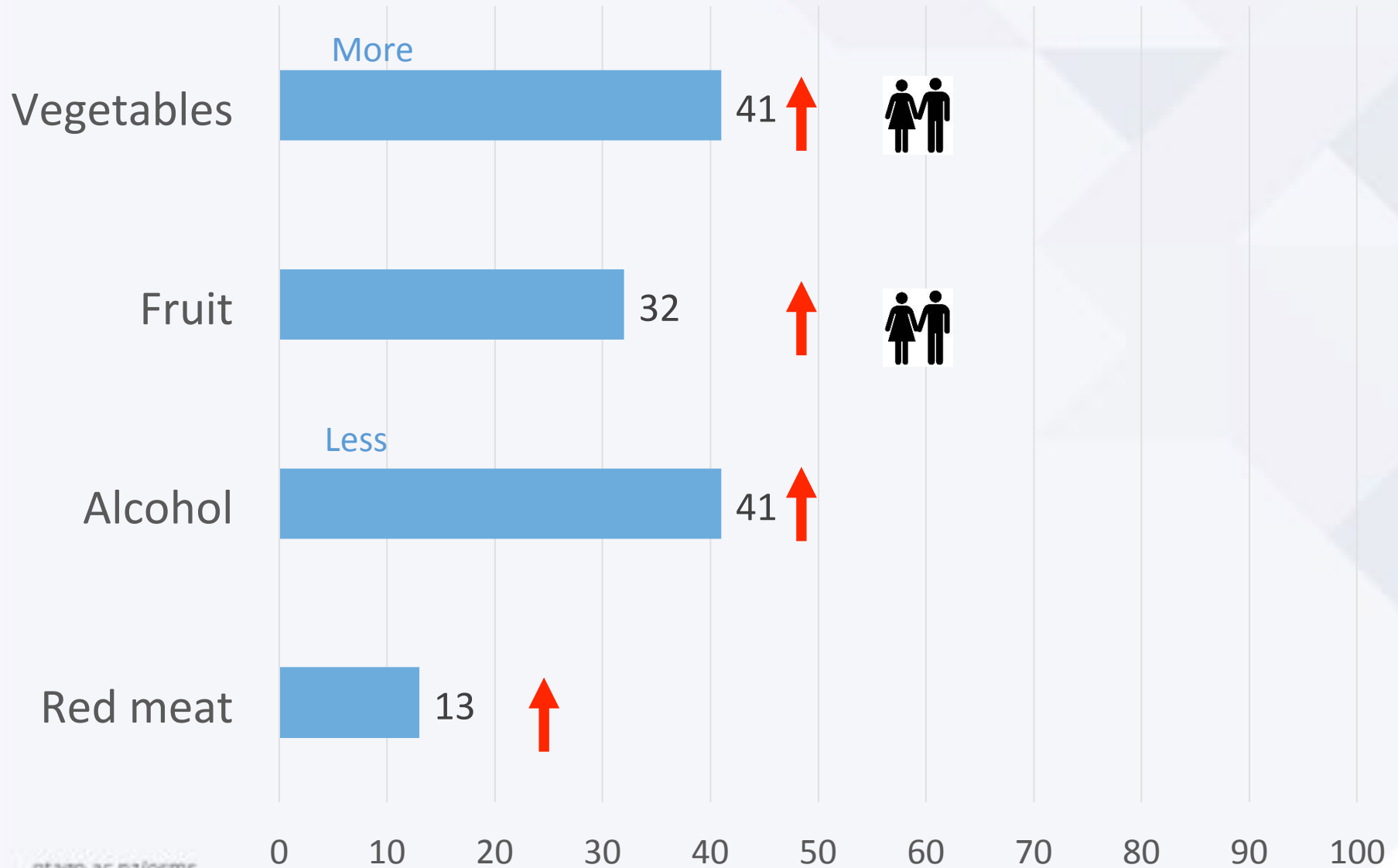
# Asking about risk

- Are there things you can do to reduce risk?
- What kinds of things?
- Things to eat/drink more/less of?
- Does \_\_\_\_\_ increase or decrease your risk of cancer?

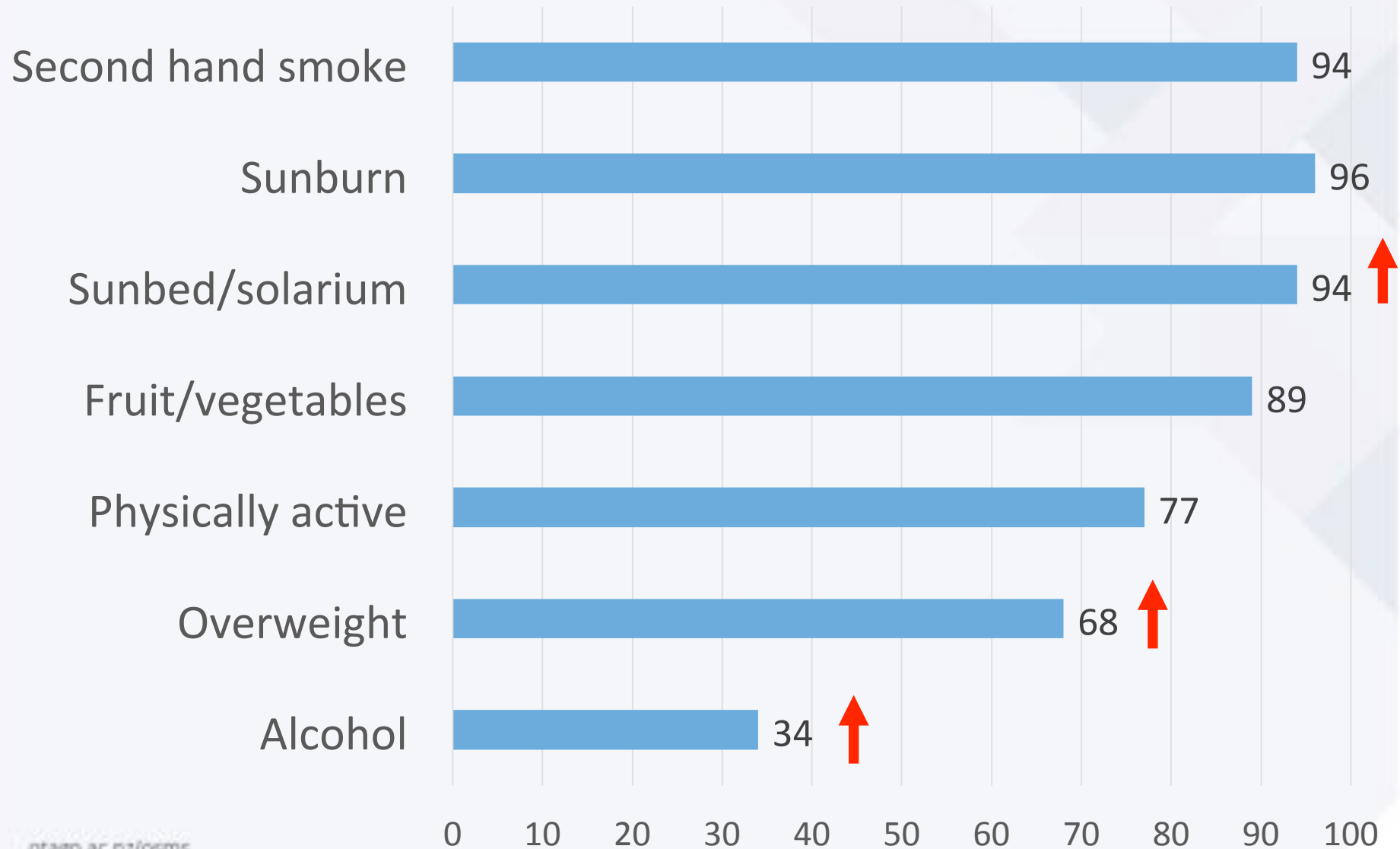
# What kind of things can you do to reduce your risk?



# What can you eat/drink to reduce your risk?

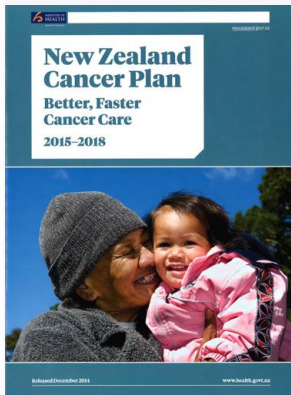


# Does this increase/decrease risk of cancer?

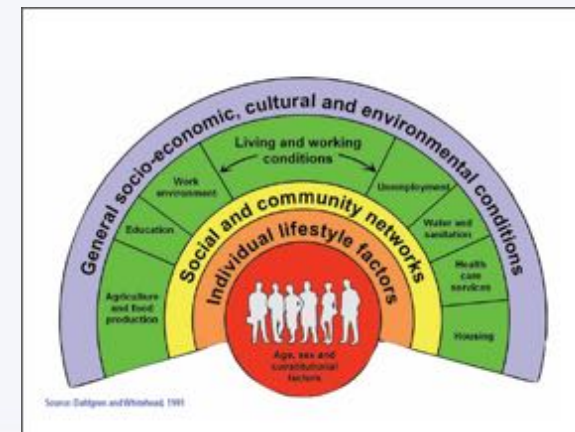




# Discussion



- Baseline for measuring progress
- Some promising directions in awareness
- Still some significant gaps – even when prompted
- Awareness is only one piece of a larger puzzle





# Limitations/future directions

- Caution about changes
- Study population was older and under-representative of Pacific, Asian and Māori
- 34% females 23% males had actively looked for cancer information in past year
- Jump on that opportunity – evidence based







# Acknowledgements

- Participants
- Interview team



- Co-Authors: B McNoe, E Iosua, A Reeder, R Egan, A Dawson, L Robertson, L Marsh, B MacLennan, A-C Petersen, R Quigg, C Cameron.



# Acknowledgements

- Cancer Society of New Zealand
- University of Otago

