

Health insurance coverage rises, claims paid jump

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The latest health insurance statistics show the number of New Zealanders covered by health insurance continues to grow.

The numbers, from the Health Funds Association show that insurance numbers are up 1% in the March 2006 quarter to 1.355 million New Zealanders, about 35% of the population.

The statistics also show a 10% jump in the value of claims paid for the year to March 2006, increasing \$48 million from the previous year to \$551 million.

The rise in the level of health insurance was welcomed by Health Funds Association executive director Claire Austin. She says the reasons behind the increase were largely anecdotal.

"For a number of years the level of insurance coverage has tracked down. In recent years it has stabilised and is now showing signs of increasing.

The type of health insurance is steadily changing also. People are moving away from comprehensive insurance towards cover for major medical expenses. These policies provide cover for elective services without the wait.

The number of lives covered by comprehensive insurance is down from 800,000 in 2000 to 550,000 in March 2006. Persons covered by major medical insurance are up from 500,000 to 800,000 over the same period.

The statistics include a breakdown in changes by age group. Some of the largest increases in persons insured are in the over 65 years age groups. It is believed this is mainly reflective of the aging population.
