



# SECONDARY AGE REVIEW

**REPORT**

—  
MARCH 2019



New Zealand Government



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# WE ARE PLEASED TO SHARE THE FINDINGS OF OUR REVIEW INTO SECONDARY AGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION

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SPORT NZ

Sport NZ is in the fourth year of its current five-year strategic period with work well underway to transition to a new strategy spanning 2020-24. Across this transition, our focus will remain on minimising the drop-off in physical activity for young people, which includes sustaining the level of those who are active and, equally importantly, improving outcomes for those who are less active.

The secondary age group is at risk in New Zealand. We know from the nationwide Active NZ 2017 survey that participation is at its highest from ages 12 to 14. Meanwhile the first significant drop-off both in time spent and frequency of being physically active occurs at age 15. Most will never recover from this drop-off across their lifetime.

To address the significant challenges teenagers are facing, for example, pressures at school and wider mental health, we must understand the world our young people live in and provide quality opportunities to participate that meet their holistic needs. In recent years we have recognised that meeting participants' changing needs means focusing our work on demand – what today's participants want – rather than what the play, active recreation and sport system has traditionally supplied.

This Review has demonstrated that we're not there yet. It has brought to light key insights, namely that teenagers are not a homogeneous group, and the issues they face differ, for example, by gender, and for a Year 9 student compared to a Year 13 student. The opportunities we provide must be as diverse as they are.

The secondary age group is when young people come to understand the value of, and wider health and wellbeing benefits afforded by, a physically active life. Unless we provide valued experiences that meet their needs, they will spend their time in other ways – which means dramatic long-term negative impacts on our health system and our social and community connectedness.

Although this review is wider than sport in the traditional sense, this is also the age group where talent is revealed. In this respect, many of our talented young athletes are at risk of integrity issues such as early specialisation and doping. We have taken steps to improve experiences for young people in competitive sport through improved coaching, targeted investment into growth sports and through key messages that balance is better and having fun is paramount. Yet there is still much work to do.

We encourage organisations across the system – sport, active recreation and others – to collaborate and innovate at the system level to provide equitable and quality experiences which make collective impact to bring about change. As an example, Councils should work with clubs and schools, and physical activity providers should work with churches and youth groups to share a passion for active opportunities.

Finally, we champion local solutions and co-design – we need to hear young people's voices in conversations and decisions about them. Young people understand the wellbeing issues they face and are best placed to work with adults and co-design meaningful solutions which have long-lasting, empowering impact. I'd like to thank all of the young people and those working across the sector whose voices are reflected in and have contributed to this report.

# INTRODUCTION



I do realise that it's quite competitive. You get a bit nervous because you don't want to lose because everyone would be angry with you 'cos you'd let the ball go past. But most of the time you're just there to try and enjoy it"

- 14 YEAR OLD RESPONDENT, TOUCH PLAYER

The teenage life stage is one of the most at-risk for establishing ongoing habits and a life-long love of participating in sport and physical activity.

After increases throughout the primary years, teenage participation drops in all areas – time spent, number of activities, involvement – and the proportion of participants spending no time at all being active climbs from around the age of 15.<sup>1</sup>

Girls, in particular, have a significant focus on self-driven activities such as walking for fitness, swimming and running/jogging rather than organised team sport. Our Active NZ Survey (2017) suggests that re-engagement in sport beyond school is increasingly challenging, with a significant reduction in activity of 13.9 per cent in the 18-24-year-old age group during the past 16 years.<sup>2</sup>

Studies show the proportion of participants who don't like sport also increases through the teenage years, suggesting the sport offering is not meeting their needs.<sup>3</sup>

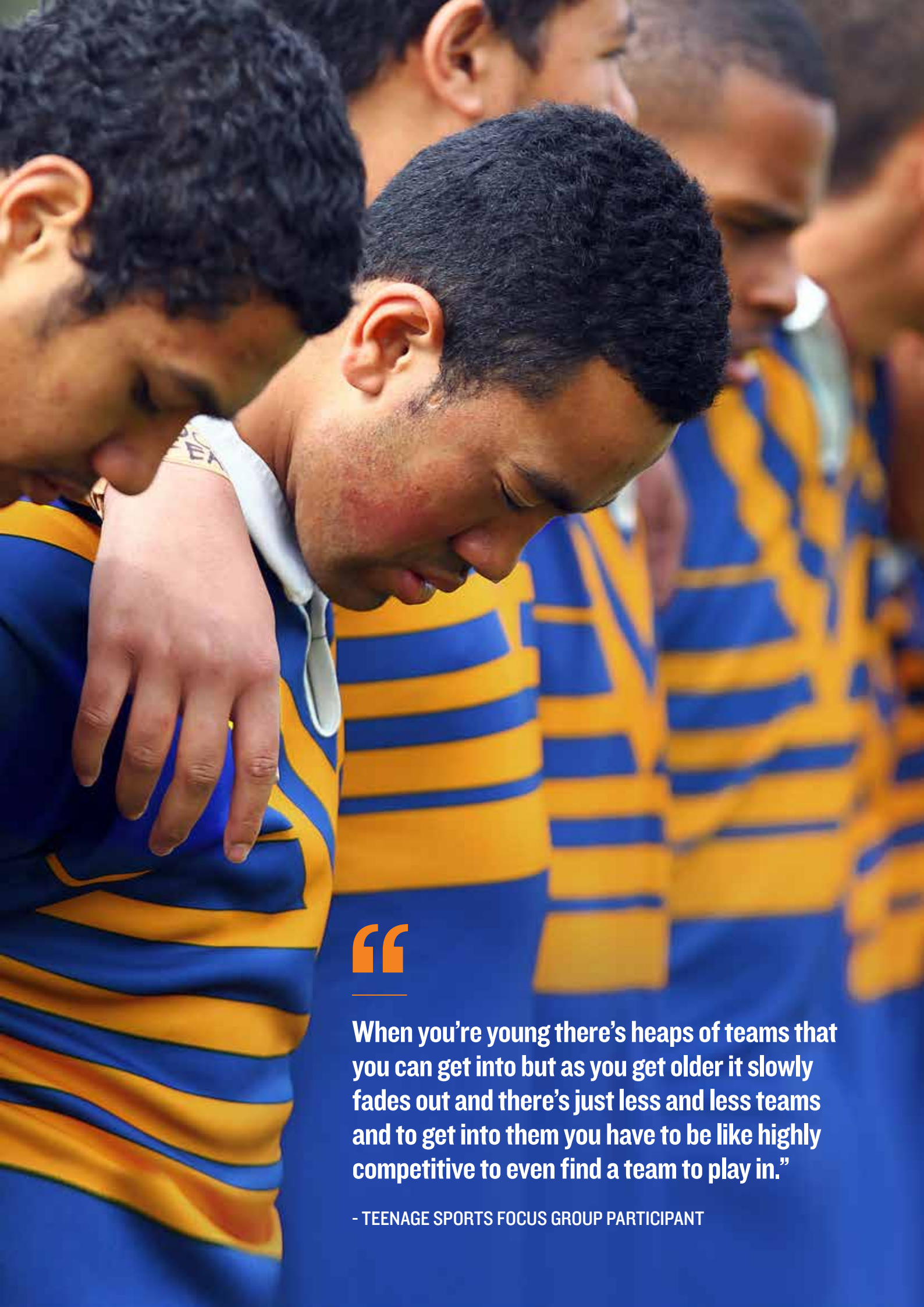
Significant issues that impact the quality of young people's experiences include:

- Self-confidence, self-esteem and body image
- Overemphasis on competition and winning
- Early specialisation
- Poor player management – overuse injuries, pressure to succeed, selection/deselection
- Lack of ability/skills/physical competence
- Peer pressure
- Parental pressure and influence
- Competing demands on time and interest – study, friends, family, sport, work
- Club vs school competing demands
- Sport structures and offerings not responding to youth expectations/lifestyle.

<sup>1</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017](http://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017)

<sup>2</sup> Sport and Active Recreation in New Zealand. The 16-Year Adult Participation Trends 1998 to 2014, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Young People's Survey (YPS), Sport NZ 2011



“

**When you're young there's heaps of teams that you can get into but as you get older it slowly fades out and there's just less and less teams and to get into them you have to be like highly competitive to even find a team to play in.”**

**- TEENAGE SPORTS FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

This review aims to:

- understand the patterns, barriers and motivations for participation in sport and physical activity by young teenage New Zealanders
- develop an understanding of the current and future environmental/societal and intra-personal impacts on that participation
- identify approaches that might be adopted by those responsible for the provision of sport and active recreation opportunities for this age group.

Some of these approaches will be established through other work currently underway or in implementation – including:

- Sport NZ's new Sport Development team focuses on the competitive sport experiences of secondary-aged participants
- We are promoting our Talent Development Plan, 'Balance is Better', and establishing Athlete Development Leaders to activate that plan
- We have undertaken reviews of Sport Integrity, Māori Participation and the KiwiSport Regional Partnership Fund
- We are looking to expand the Good Sports pilot, designed to communicate the characteristics of a quality experience to providers and supporters of sport for young people
- We are responding to the Government's Strategy for Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation<sup>4</sup> with our set of commitments<sup>5</sup>
- We are promoting and further developing our Physical Literacy, Locally Led Delivery and Insights approaches<sup>6</sup>
- We are implementing our Active Recreation Review<sup>7</sup>
- Values education programmes are available to schools, such as Sport in Education, TLC (Talent–Leadership–Character), Good Clean Sport (Drugfree Sport NZ) and the Olympic Values Education Programme
- We provide professional development support for school sport personnel, including RSDs and sports coordinators
- Education system reforms are underway.<sup>8</sup>

This review is informed by many of the above initiatives, and some key pieces of research that are still in progress: our Active NZ participation survey, our Voice of Participant (Clubs) and the Voice of Participant (Schools) work led by Sport Taranaki and Sport Tasman. Some of the data will be updated as these pieces of work are finalised.

The review and its resulting implementation plans will also inform our 2020-24 strategy.

<sup>4</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Govt-Strategy.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Govt-Strategy.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Sport-NZ-Commitments.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Sport-NZ-Commitments.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/three-approaches/](https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/three-approaches/)

<sup>7</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/sport-nz-active-recreation-sector-sept-2016](https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/sport-nz-active-recreation-sector-sept-2016)

<sup>8</sup> [conversation.education.govt.nz](https://conversation.education.govt.nz)



# PREVIOUS REVIEWS

## School Sport Futures

In 2014 and 2015, Sport NZ undertook a comprehensive review of school sport and physical education, the School Sport Futures Project.<sup>9</sup> We completed this work in response to long-standing concerns about the quality and quantity of physical activity, PE and sport available to young people in New Zealand – the report made 11 recommendations:

### Support schools

- Provide schools with access to PE mentors and teacher professional development (primary)
- Provide schools with expertise in understanding and delivering a quality PE curriculum (primary)
- Engage school-based staff to align sport and physical activity opportunities with the curriculum, and to connect school and community opportunities (primary and secondary).

### Communities lead and manage their own solutions

- Establish community alliances to ensure consistency of opportunity and experience for young people in their communities
- Establish shared operating models for facilities and places between schools and Councils
- Establish a Quality Assurance process for community sport providers who access school environments.

### Government leadership

- Long-term, cross-party and cross-agency government commitment to the place of sport and physical activity in young people's lives
- Adopt a Physical Literacy approach
- Better research, monitor and evaluate young people's initiatives to ensure they are meeting their needs
- A review of initial teacher education (ITE).

### Parent education and information

- Better understand what makes a quality experience for young people, and the role that parents and other supporters play.

The review recommendations, particularly support for schools, have been implemented largely in the primary setting to date through Play.sport.<sup>10</sup> In addition, we have initiated a quality assurance process for providers, our Physical Literacy approach<sup>11</sup> is well developed, and we are working to establish collaborative partnerships between school and community facility owners.

<sup>9</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/managing-sport/young-people/School-Sport-Futures-Project-Final-Report.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/managing-sport/young-people/School-Sport-Futures-Project-Final-Report.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/play-sport](https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/play-sport)

<sup>11</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/SPNZ-AGI039-SPNZ-Physical-Literacy-AW4.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/SPNZ-AGI039-SPNZ-Physical-Literacy-AW4.pdf)

## Best practice review of sport and PA interventions for 13-18-year-olds<sup>12</sup>

The most significant New Zealand review into the secondary age cohort was completed in 2006 and made a number of recommendations and observations:

- Use clear and more consistent terminology (physical activity, sport etc)
- Establish physical activity guidelines, and monitor them more effectively
- National leadership from SPARC (Sport NZ)
- Clearer roles and responsibilities for sport provision to this age group
- Reduce the number of external sport/PA agencies working in schools
- Merge school sport organisations with RSTs, and adopt School Sport Units within those RSTs
- Make school sport governance the responsibility of principals' groups, who would act as advisors to RSTs
- Better evaluate and monitor sport and physical activity strategies and plans
- Increase focus on unstructured, non-competitive and non-sport opportunities, that fit around changing youth lifestyles and are informed by young people
- Increase resourcing and support for teachers who support sport, and for sports coordinators
- Better integrate school sport/physical activity with club/community opportunities
- A nationwide marketing campaign aimed at 13-18-year-olds.



<sup>12</sup> Best Practice Review of Sport and Physical Activity Interventions for Young People Aged 13-18yrs; Kolt et al 2006

## Talent development

In 2015, Sport NZ consulted the sector about talent identification and development as part of establishing our Talent Strategy – ‘Balance is Better’.<sup>13</sup> Similar themes were identified through this process:

- The selection, player development processes and competition structures adopted by the sector are often not focused on young peoples’ needs
- There is a lack of holistic approaches to development and athlete management
- There are poor connections and alignment, and unclear pathways, between delivery agencies – NSOs, RSOs, schools
- Parent support and understanding is critical
- Access to quality coaching is an important enabler
- Multiple sport experiences, rather than early specialisation, are important in talent development
- Sport in schools is often seen as a marketing tool by school leaders, and a professional career opportunity by parents. The educative value of sport is often being lost in the pursuit of results and trophies.

In addition to these two key pieces of work, a number of New Zealand and overseas researchers have regularly identified the enablers and barriers to participation by secondary-aged young people. Several NSOs have undertaken, or are conducting, reviews of their sports in this age group (e.g. New Zealand Football, New Zealand Rugby, Netball New Zealand, Volleyball New Zealand) in response to decreasing participation and membership, and insights gathered through research tools such as the Voice of Participant Survey.

Similarly, insights into the patterns, enablers and barriers of participation in wider physical activity, particularly for girls, have been undertaken in establishing initiatives such as Shift, HERA and This is Me (Sport Waikato).

A number of the recommendations from these previous reviews and research inquiries have been implemented – for example, Physical Activity guidelines, improved national leadership – but the issues identified by them are still prevalent in the 13-18-year age group.

<sup>13</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/SportNZ-BalancelBetter.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/SportNZ-BalancelBetter.pdf)

# WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION LOOK LIKE IN THIS AGE GROUP?

Although young people's participation in sport and physical activity is relatively high, the teenage years are marked by reductions in:

- time spent participating
- the proportion of time spent being active in curriculum time (largely due to PE becoming an optional subject after Year 10)
- the number of activities
- time spent playing with friends
- confidence and perceived competence
- the enjoyment of playing sport.

## What and how much do they do?

The early secondary years are marked by the highest participation rates of the life course – 98 per cent of 12-14-year-olds participate in sport and/or physical activity at least once a week, for an average of 12.5 hours. However, these metrics decrease significantly for the 15-17-year age group – only 89 per cent report weekly physical activity and for a reduced amount of time (average 8.3 hours).

These reductions can be seen in the proportion of time spent in organised (PE, competition and coach-led training) vs informal activity (play and self-directed training). The proportion of time spent in organised activity changes across the age cohorts from an average of 6.1 hours per week to 3.8 hours per week, largely attributable to a reduction in PE as the subject becomes optional at Year 11. The physical activity associated with PE is not replaced by other incidental activity.

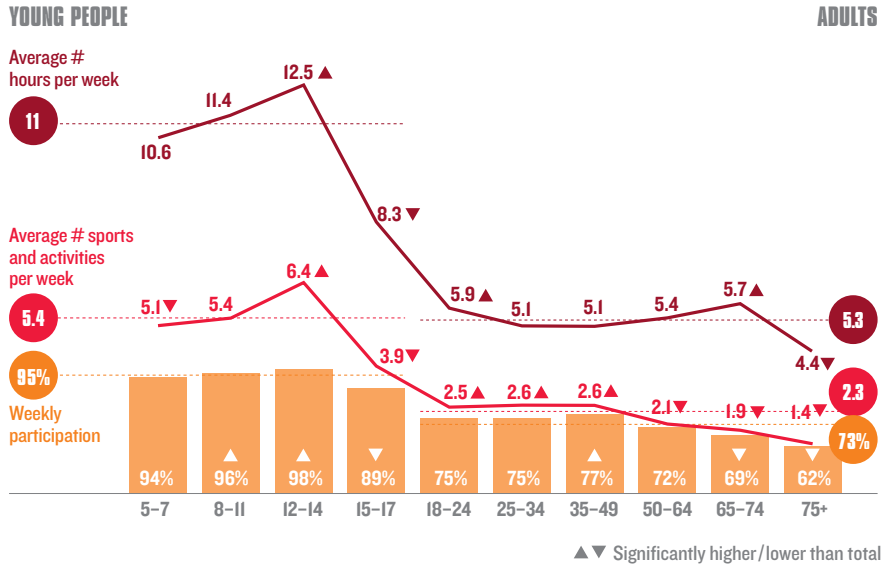
Similarly, the time spent in play (with and without friends) drops from 5.5 hours per week in the 12-14-year age group to 3.0 hours per week in the 15-17-year age group. At the same time as there is a decrease in training for competition with a coach (0.6hrs) there is a slight increase in training alone, without a competitive aim (0.2hrs).

Overall, 60 per cent of secondary-aged young people participate (on a weekly basis) in active recreation (non-sport) activities only. Thirty-three per cent participate in both competitive sport and active recreation activities, and only 1 per cent participate solely in competitive sport.

Physical education is a significant contributor to the total time spent being active – 71 per cent of 12-14-year-olds were active in PE, reducing to 40 per cent when PE becomes an optional subject in Year 11. The numbers involved drop year-on-year after Year 11 as the subject becomes more academic, and young people leave school. The average time spent in PE for the 12-14-year age group is 2.4 hours per week, reducing to 1.1 hours per week for the older age group.

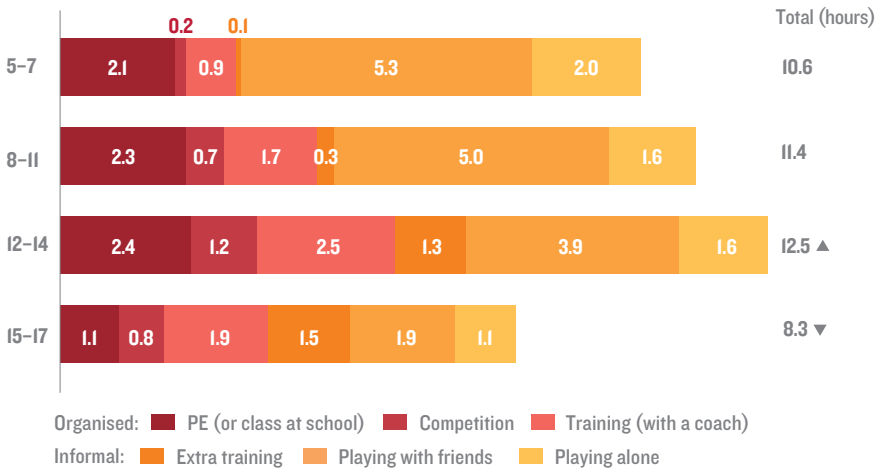
**FIGURE 1**

WEEKLY PARTICIPATION, TIME AND NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES.



**FIGURE 2**

AVERAGE TIME SPENT PARTICIPATING IN SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION ACTIVITIES.



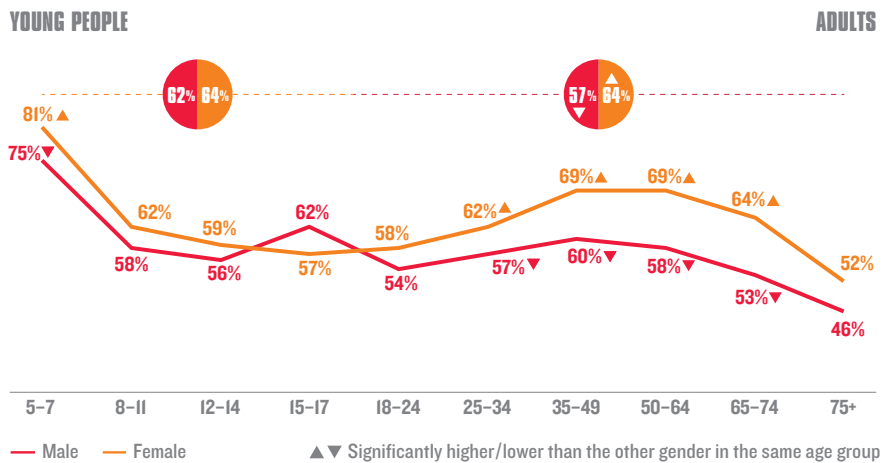
### Gender differences

Gender differences in the time spent participating are evident in the 12-14-year age group (13.2 hours for boys, 11.7 hours for girls), but the 15-17-year age group shows little difference (8.5 hours for boys vs 8.2 hours for girls).

There is no significant gender difference in participation in competitive or non-competitive activities. For 13-17-year-olds, 35 per cent of girls and 33 per cent of boys have participated in competitive activities, and for a similar amount of time (1.1 hours per week and 1 hour per week, respectively). Forty per cent of 12-14-year-olds participate in competitive sport weekly, dropping to 29 per cent in the 15-17-year group.

### FIGURE 3

NON-COMPETITIVE SPORT PARTICIPATION IN THE LAST WEEK.



There is also little gender difference in the number of activities (average 6.4 for 12-14-year-olds and 3.9 for 15-17-year-olds).

The main activities these age groups participate in are typified by health and fitness activities, play, and games in the 12-14-year group, and health and fitness in the older age cohort. The only sports that appear in the top eight activities are netball for girls, and football and basketball (for 15-17-year-olds only) for boys.

Our Active NZ Survey (2017) also clarifies that although some activities may be traditionally viewed as sport, many participants view their engagement with them as non-competitive. For example, across the whole young people age range (5-18-years) only 30 per cent viewed their participation in football as competitive, 26 per cent in basketball, 50 per cent in netball and 42 per cent in rugby.

**TABLE 1**

TOP 8 ACTIVITIES BY AGE.

**GIRLS**

12-14yrs	15-17yrs
Running, jogging or cross-country	Running, jogging or cross-country
Games (e.g. four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)	Walking for fitness
Walking for fitness	Workout (weights or cardio)
Playing (e.g. running around, climbing trees, make-believe)	Netball
Swimming	Swimming
Netball	Games (e.g. four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)
Dance/dancing (e.g. ballet, hip hop etc)	Dance/dancing (e.g. ballet, hip hop etc)
Trampoline	Group exercise class (e.g. aerobics, CrossFit, Jump Jam)

**BOYS**

12-14yrs	15-17yrs
Running, jogging or cross-country	Running, jogging or cross-country
Games (e.g. four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)	Workout (weights or cardio)
Walking for fitness	Walking for fitness
Football, soccer or futsal	Football, soccer or futsal
Playing (e.g. running around, climbing trees, make-believe)	Cycling or biking
Cycling or biking	Games (e.g. four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)
Swimming	Basketball or Mini-ball
Trampoline	Swimming

**Where do they do it?**

The majority of secondary-aged young people participate in sport and physical activity at school (65 per cent), 57 per cent at home and between 50-58 per cent in indoor and outdoor sport facilities. The majority of participation shifts from club to school in the secondary years.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/young-peoples-survey-2011](https://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/young-peoples-survey-2011)

## What enables or stops them doing it?

### Enablers

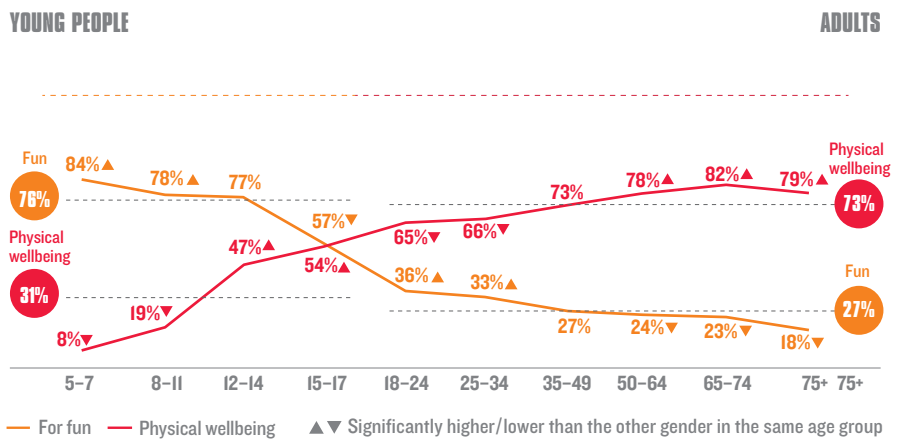
The key factors that motivate adolescent youth to be physically active are orientated around the themes of fun (physical activity must be enjoyable), body image (concerns and perceived outcomes of being physically active associated with 'not being fat'), friends (social acceptance by peers and interaction), a sense of achievement, and enhanced sport performance.<sup>15</sup>

The majority (76 per cent) of young people participate in physical activity for fun, to hang out with friends (45 per cent) for fitness and health (31 per cent) and to learn new skills (31 per cent). These motivations differ by type of activity, and the primary motivation shifts from fun to health and fitness through the teenage years. This trend is more evident for girls (6 per cent difference throughout the teenage years), and girls are significantly more likely to be active to lose or maintain weight, particularly in the 15-17 year age group (22 per cent vs 10 per cent).<sup>16</sup>

For adolescents, higher levels of self-esteem are also thought to positively predict activity levels. For example, Reynolds et al. research in 2004, found that self-efficacy correlated positively with physical activity behaviour, and predicted weekly physical activity participation in US adolescents aged 14-16 years.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, in a review of physical activity behaviours among children and adolescents, Kohl and Hobbs (1998) stated that young people participate in physical activities for which they have positive feelings.<sup>18</sup> New Zealand adolescents have also identified building self-confidence as a reason they find sport appealing.<sup>19</sup>

**FIGURE 4**

WEEKLY PARTICIPATION FOR FUN OR PHYSICAL WELLBEING.



<sup>15</sup> Leslie et al., 1999; O'Dea, 2003; Park & Wright, 2000; Schofield et al., 2002; Wendell et al., 1999

<sup>16</sup> Active NZ 2017

<sup>17</sup> Reynolds et al (2004): Three-step validation of exercise behaviour processes of change in an adolescent sample. Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science

<sup>18</sup> Kohl and Hobbs (1998): Development of physical activity behaviours among children and adolescents Paediatrics.

<sup>19</sup> Sport NZ (2005): The Value of Sport: attitudes, barriers and motivations for participation in sport by 11-14-year-olds





The value that people, organisations and societies place on sport and active recreation is also a predictor of activity. Wold and Hendry (1998) observed, “Nations and countries differ in the value and meaning attached to physical activity in their culture and these differences are expected to result in different activity levels”.<sup>20</sup> Our Active NZ Survey (2017) and the Active Recreation review<sup>21</sup> identified differences in participation patterns across different ethnic groups, particularly Asian<sup>22</sup>, that may be attributable to this research finding.

Enjoyment is high for all young people’s age groups, and there is relatively little gender difference – enjoyment of sport for 15-17-year-olds is 85 per cent.

### Barriers

Irrespective of the level of activity they are currently undertaking, all secondary-aged young people wish to do more activity (73 per cent), particularly girls in the 12-14-year age group.

The main barrier to increasing participation is time – 48 per cent of those who would like to be more active are too busy. Busy lives assume greater significance as young people progress through their teens – 41 per cent of 12-14-year-olds cite other commitments as the reason why they don’t do as much activity as they would like, climbing to 55 per cent in the 15-17-year age group, and continuing to increase post-secondary school.

Seventy-nine per cent of secondary school students identified school work as the primary reason for this busyness – 46 per cent reported other hobbies, 35 per cent other physical activity and 20 per cent employment responsibilities. School work assumes greater importance across the age groups, and the introduction of work and jobs in the 15-17-year age group corresponds with significant reductions in other physical activity and hobbies.



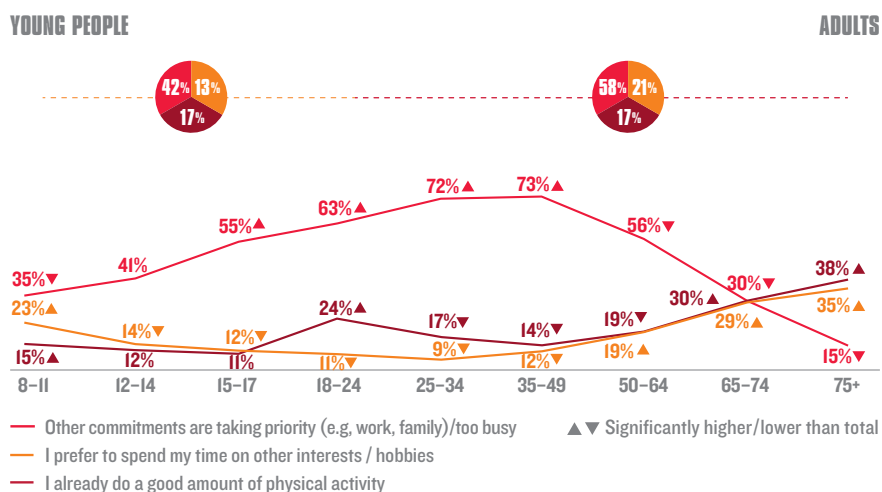
<sup>20</sup> *Best Practice Review of Sport and Physical Activity Interventions for Young People aged 13-18*, pg 57 Auckland University of Technology (2006) *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/sport-nz-active-recreation-sector-sept-2016](http://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/sport-nz-active-recreation-sector-sept-2016)

<sup>22</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017](http://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017)

## FIGURE 5

### KEY BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION.



“

“I got really sick of it because I missed the tryouts because they didn't give the notices out for where they were...and it was my first year but others knew because they had been there for like four years...”

- YEAR 9 GIRL

Eighteen per cent (of 12-14-year-olds) and 30 per cent (of 15-17-year-olds) don't have the energy and similar proportions (16 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively) can't motivate themselves to be active. A significant proportion (21 per cent) are affected by judgement barriers: lack of confidence, fitness or fear of failure. Judgement barriers are more prevalent for girls (25 per cent for girls cf. 16 per cent for boys).

Fifteen per cent of young people in this age group are also impacted by social barriers: not having anyone to participate with, or a peer group that is not active in the activities sought by the young person.

Physical and cultural safety play a role in enabling access to physical activity. The concern for safety regarding active transportation was especially acknowledged by female students<sup>23</sup> and 25 per cent of mothers worry that their children will get hurt when they do physical activity.<sup>24</sup> Different ethnic groups may be unable to participate for religious or cultural reasons (e.g. respecting religious dress requirements).<sup>25</sup>

Supply can also present a barrier to participation – this is particularly evident in low decile, high deprivation areas, and geographically isolated communities. These communities typically do not have access to a wide variety of sport and activity providers, sport and recreation facilities or equipment. Logistical barriers such as a lack of transport options, events and activities that are on at the 'wrong' time and financial constraints also present significant challenges.

<sup>23</sup> Auckland University of Technology (2006) *Best Practice Review of Sport and Physical Activity Interventions for Young People aged 13-18*, pg 62

<sup>24</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017](http://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017)

<sup>25</sup> School Sport Futures Project, Discussion document I: Background Information, pg 6

# THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT

New Zealand has a relatively well-structured system to support sport and active recreation for teenagers. More than 50 per cent of secondary school students participate in a school sports team, and more than 50 per cent are engaged in sport or active recreation through a community organisation such as a club – overall sport and physical activity participation for secondary-aged young people is 93 per cent.<sup>26</sup>

The New Zealand environment is largely accessible to anyone who wishes to be physically active through active recreation and play – local authorities spend an estimated \$800 million per year developing and maintaining community facilities and spaces. Our Active NZ Survey (2017) results suggest that these are well utilised by young people – 58 per cent of teenagers use outdoor sports facilities and 56 per cent use outdoor recreation locations.

## School setting

Given most young people attend school, this is the most equitable and accessible environment for physical activity and sport, providing the school culture enables and encourages participation and activity by ensuring access to these opportunities for all.

Almost all secondary schools have access to a dedicated sports coordinator (or coordinators) – many also have a director/head of sport responsible for setting the strategic direction of sport in their schools, and increasingly schools are adding sports expertise and athlete development programmes to cater for talented athletes. Around 6,000 teachers, 3,700 students and 8,600 community personnel coach school teams.

Sports coordinators, however, are under pressure to cater to an increasing demand for variety and choice in the sport offering. They typically:

- are part-time (54 per cent)
- have been in the role for less than 3 years (53 per cent)
- have other school roles such as teaching or support staff (65 per cent)
- are over 46-years-old (50 per cent)
- are female (67 per cent).<sup>27</sup>

Increased resourcing for sports coordinators has been regularly proposed through reviews – most recently the Graham Task Force Report (2000)<sup>28</sup> and the Best Practice Review (2006)<sup>29</sup> – and workload pressure is regularly cited as a reason why the range of options available in schools cannot be expanded, nor innovative practices introduced.

School sport is also supported by a network of regional sports directors, and the NZ Secondary Schools Sports Council (NZSSSC). These roles typically are responsible for coordinating and delivering a calendar of inter-school sport competitions, for supporting the school sport workforce with planning and professional development opportunities, and for advocating for the value of sport to senior leadership. They also broker the relationship between the sport (clubs) and the education (school) sectors.

<sup>26</sup> Physical activity at least once in the past 7 days for sport, PE, exercise or fun

<sup>27</sup> nzsssc.org.nz/NZSSSC-Census-Data/Sports-Coordinator-Survey-Report

<sup>28</sup> Getting Set for an Active Nation, Prof R McConnell, 2000

<sup>29</sup> Best Practice Review, 2006

More than 200 national inter-school sports events are coordinated by the NZSSSC, which also develops and implements policies and procedures designed to enhance the quality of the experience for secondary school participants.

The settings for engagement in sports through the secondary years are shared between the school and the club system – in some cases there is an agreement by one setting or another to be the primary provider (e.g. rugby through schools, swimming through clubs) while for other codes there is competition between settings for members and participants, particularly in football.

Schools contend they are best placed to understand the pressures facing young people and can ensure their sport provision takes this into account. Clubs on the other hand argue the disruption from participation in a community setting through the primary years is a significant contributor to drop-off post-secondary school, with young people finding it difficult to re-integrate into the club system after five years away from it.

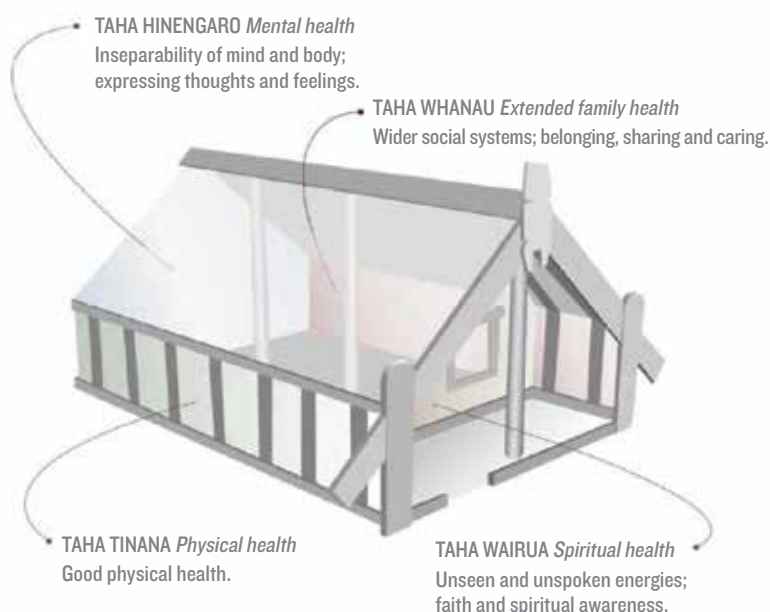
Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory subject in secondary schools until Year 10, after which it becomes optional in most schools. Our Active NZ Survey (2017) reports that 53 per cent of students continue with PE at Year 11, but that this proportion reduces through the remainder of the secondary years, to 33 per cent in Year 12 and 24 per cent in Year 13. Those taking PE beyond Year 10 enjoy the subject (89 per cent), while those that don't have a poorer view of their time spent in PE up to Year 10 (29 per cent).

Physical Education is part of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum area, which is centred on hauora and wellbeing. Despite the commonly expressed view that sport and PE are synonymous, the HPE curriculum is more complex, and sport is only one of many contexts that are used to deliver four strands of the subject: Personal Health and Development, Movement Concepts and Motor Skills, Relationships with Other People and Healthy Communities and Environments.

In 2015, the School Sport Futures project observed the curriculum delivery from Year 11 to Year 13 often becomes more academic, and that the subject area can fight for academic legitimacy among the many options that are offered in senior school.

## FIGURE 6

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF HAUORA, TE WHARE TAPA WHA, DR MASON DURIE.



## Community setting

More than 50 per cent of teenagers participate outside the school setting, through clubs, private providers such as health and fitness businesses and facility providers, and outdoors.

Sport NZ's Voice of Participant survey (VoP) showed relatively higher disaffection than other age cohorts with the club experience among young people in selected sports. They were particularly dissatisfied with the registration process, and were less likely than other age groups to recommend the club to others. Girls, in particular, are less satisfied than boys, particularly in the areas of fairness, facilities and inclusiveness.

Secondary-aged young people are more likely to join a community club for competition, seek improved coaching through that environment and to have been injured in the past 12 months, when compared with other age cohorts. Club members in this age group are significantly less likely to be male, (48 per cent male compared with 64 per cent across all age groups), European/Pakeha (66 per cent cf. 80 per cent) and to be playing or training less than once per week (9 per cent cf. 24 per cent).<sup>30</sup>



<sup>30</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/voice-of-participant/club-member-experience-survey/](https://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/voice-of-participant/club-member-experience-survey/)

## Home setting

The home setting is the primary location for physical activity in the pre-school years – this shifts to clubs and community in the primary/intermediate years and to schools in the secondary years.<sup>31</sup>

The home environment is increasingly marked by societal and demographic shifts. More families have two working parents, 18 per cent of young people live in single-parent homes, and there is an increasing number of couple-only families (41 per cent of all family households). The average number of children per family is two, and the age at which women are giving birth to their first child is increasing (29 years).<sup>32</sup>

The increasing ethnically diverse population has an impact on support for sport and physical activity, as parents' values determine parental support for, and family prioritisation of, sport and activity. Increasing proportions of our population did not grow up with a heritage of sport and outdoor activity. Further, some cultures expect that young people work in the family business, care for their siblings and wider whānau, or observe religious practices that may conflict with weekend games, practice sessions and active recreation/sport opportunities outside the school setting.

Parental influence plays an important role in determining young people's activity behaviour, either directly through modelling, or indirectly (Kohl & Hobbs, 1998; Sallis, 2000a), and has been shown to have both positive and negative effects on young people's sport and physical activity behaviour.<sup>33</sup> The 2011 Young People's Survey showed that parents are the primary influencers for boys and girls aged 10-14 years.

The number of activities presented in the home setting in earlier childhood has been shown to have an effect on persistent activity, persistent inactivity, and declining participation in adolescence<sup>34</sup> and psychological factors are also widely accepted as determinants of physical activity behaviour in young people (Sallis et al., 2000; Strauss, Rodzilsky, Burack, & Colin, 2001).

Parents are the funders, transporters and supporters of sport and active recreation for young people and as such are major determinants in the frequency, time and location of that activity. In addition to the positive contribution they make, their values and attitudes can drive negative behaviours such as an emphasis on early specialisation, a focus on winning over development, poor side line behaviour, and pursuit of talent development opportunities at young ages through academies and camps.

<sup>31</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/young-peoples-survey-2011](http://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/young-peoples-survey-2011)

<sup>32</sup> Statistics NZ, 2013 Census

<sup>33</sup> As cited in *Best Practice Review of Sport and Physical Activity Interventions for Young People aged 13-18*, (2006) pg 59

<sup>34</sup> Richards, R., Poulton, R., Reeder, A.I., Williams, S.M. (2009). Childhood and contemporaneous correlates of adolescent physical inactivity: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2009, 44(44), 260-267.

# THE WORLD YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE IN

## Generation Z

Today's secondary-aged young people are part of the GenZ generation (or iGen, or Founders or Centennials, born after 1996) comprising 25 per cent of the US population (more than Baby Boomers and Millennials).

GenZ are highly educated, want to make a difference in the world and are more diverse than Millennials. They are increasingly self-aware, self-reliant, innovative and goal-oriented.

GenZ are the first generation not to have known life without social media – 42 per cent feel that social media has a direct impact on how they feel about themselves, and the same percentage say social media affects how people see them (compared to 28 per cent of the previous generation). Social media also impacts on their happiness (37 per cent) and self-esteem (39 per cent).

Researchers in the US have shown GenZ youth have lower teen pregnancy rates, less substance abuse, and higher on-time secondary school graduation rates compared with Millennials. They compared teens from 2008 and 2014 and found a 40 per cent drop in teen pregnancy, a 38 per cent drop in drug and alcohol abuse, and a 28 per cent drop in the percentage of teens who did not graduate on time from secondary school.<sup>35</sup>

They prefer to be communicated with via social media, prefer 'cool products' over 'cool experiences' and respond to 'edgy' campaigns (preferably through video). Seventy-five per cent want to convert their hobbies to full time jobs, and 61 per cent would rather be an entrepreneur than an employee after they finish school.<sup>36</sup>

## Wellbeing and health

Although most teenagers are relatively well and happy, there is an increasing prevalence of those with mental health concerns, particularly for girls. Thirty-seven per cent of secondary-aged students reported sleep problems that had lasted more than one month, 19 per cent reported depression and 17 per cent anxiety.<sup>37</sup> Rates of youth suicide in this age group are the highest in the world for boys, and fourth highest for girls. High deprivation communities present elevated mental and physical health issues.

Screen time and social media use have been shown to correlate to increased feelings of loneliness and feeling left out, and increased likelihood of depression.<sup>38</sup> Anti-depressant use among 14-18-year-olds in New Zealand has increased 102 per cent since 2006.<sup>39</sup>

Weight and body image issues are significant for this age group, and young people increasingly cite physical wellbeing as the primary motivator for their engagement in sport and physical activity. Pressure to conform to a body shape and size is well documented and has been exacerbated by public media, advertising and social media campaigns which portray images that few young people can identify with, but nevertheless aspire to.

Our Active NZ Survey (2017) shows a positive correlation between the amount of time spent being active, and a series of wellbeing indicators: emotional wellbeing, healthy eating, sleep and reduced screen time.

<sup>35</sup> [aecf.org/blog/who-is-generation-z](http://aecf.org/blog/who-is-generation-z)

<sup>36</sup> VisionCritical 2015

<sup>37</sup> Youth 2000 Survey Series – The Health & Wellbeing of NZ Secondary School Students 2012

<sup>38</sup> Jean M. Twenge: iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy..”

<sup>39</sup> Amy Wiggins: NZ Herald 7 June 2017



Wellbeing is also an increasingly important political driver given its contribution to the health system, workforce productivity and education. Initial findings from the education reform consultations suggest wellbeing will be a central plank of the education system of the future, and government agencies are increasingly incorporating wellbeing outcomes in their planning.

## Technology and the future

Technology is now an integral part of young people’s lives, and its impact and consequences for sport and physical activity is significant. Since the widespread adoption of the smartphone in 2012, young people have unlimited access to knowledge and information, a communications and social networking tool, a personal trainer, and a way of capturing, recording and commenting on their and their peers’ lives.

Technology is significantly changing young people’s expectations, and the quality of their experiences. Wearable technology provides instant feedback on performance and activity – haptic sensors in clothing and equipment are not only a central part of the gaming experience, but are widely used to enhance the active recreation and sport experience as well. Feedback on distance travelled, heart rates, calorie expenditure and sleep patterns are widely accessed via Fitbits and watches, and the phone has become a tracking and record-keeping tool that shows progress against self or coach-imposed programmes and regimes.

The data collated through these tools can be used by algorithms to ‘push’ products and messages to young people, and will eventually be used as a way of personalising and targeting the recreation and sport opportunities available to them. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will also process data streams to enable real-time adjustments to decision making and game strategies – the NBA has already commenced work in this area.

The ability to enhance and modify a person’s makeup, by editing genes responsible for muscle mass, bone density, oxygen delivery and pain, for example, is becoming more accessible and widespread and will fundamentally change the level playing field of performance. It may also render the current efforts to detect and punish athletes who use externally applied performance enhancement products – including doping – redundant.

**How will innovations in biological science change the fairness, safety and meaning of sports? Professional and scholastic sports will essentially become like NASCAR, with the human body regulated the way stock cars are. The often-hypocritical stigma against self-optimization in sports is a hindrance to the ability to improve one's own genetic makeup given modern scientific advances in gene-editing technologies like CRISPR. Safe and deliberate edits that target key physiological factors to specific, pre-determined amounts will be legal and will level the playing field for all. Success will be determined more by technology – a teamwork, strategy, and the mental edge than by the genetic merit. In other words, sports will become a purer test than we have today.**

**CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

01 The first step in understanding the athlete's performance is to determine which factors contribute to their success.

02 Genetic predisposition, training, and nutrition are key factors in an athlete's performance.

03 The most significant genetic variations that cause superathleticism are those that affect muscle mass, bone density, and oxygen delivery.

**KNOWN GENE VARIATIONS THAT CAUSE SUPERATHLETISM**

Gene	Location	Effect
ACTN3	3q21	Associated with elite sprinting performance.
ACE	17q23.1	Associated with elite endurance performance.
PP2R1B	12q24.1	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE2	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE1	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE3	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE4	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE5	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE6	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE7	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE8	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE9	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE10	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE11	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE12	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE13	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE14	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE15	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE16	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE17	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE18	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE19	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.
ACE20	11q23.3	Associated with elite endurance performance.

**DISRUPTION**  
Genetic engineering techniques are now cheap and widespread enough that any knowledgeable individual can order every material they need off the Internet and download the software to do their own experiments on themselves. Everyone in the open science and the biohacker community has a chance of being contacted by trainers, coaches, and sponsors. There is absolutely no way to regulate it, and the only limit to it would be the stemming the tide with a wall.

**OPPORTUNITY**  
Genetic engineering techniques are now cheap and widespread enough that any knowledgeable individual can order every material they need off the Internet and download the software to do their own experiments on themselves. Everyone in the open science and the biohacker community has a chance of being contacted by trainers, coaches, and sponsors. There is absolutely no way to regulate it, and the only limit to it would be the stemming the tide with a wall.

**ENDURANCE VS SPEED**  
A graph showing the relative frequency of gene variants associated with endurance (green) and speed (red) across different populations. The x-axis represents populations (African, European, East Asian, South Asian, Admixed American, Oceanian) and the y-axis represents the number of variants (0 to 100). The green area represents endurance variants, and the red area represents speed variants.

The most common logistical barriers to participation – transport, equipment and time – will also be impacted by advances in technology. Self-driving cars are in the final stages of development and testing, 3D printing is now so advanced that it can reliably produce sport and recreation gear and clothing customised for the participant’s needs, and virtual and augmented reality advances, coupled with social networking, means many sport and recreation experiences will be able to be accessed from home rather than in a physical space or place.

The next generation wireless coverage (5G) will be able to render imagery that is almost indistinguishable from reality, enabling VR and AR activity environments to be accessible through phones and wearables. The merging of technology and the delivery of sport will be a significant trend the sector will need to accommodate if sport and recreation are to remain relevant in young people’s lives.

## Diversity and inclusion

New Zealand’s increasing ethnic diversity requires an increased range of options to ensure migrant communities’ needs, experiences and skillsets are recognised and met. Often there is no one available in schools or the community who has experience or knowledge of the relevant codes (e.g. kabaddi, sepak takraw, various martial arts), and the sport and recreation sector is relatively slow at responding to changing market needs.

Research suggests Pacific Island girls are the least active (52 per cent active) among different ethnic groups studied. This may be explained by the results of a qualitative study on the value of sport in 11-14-year-olds which reported that some Pacific Island parents were found to be very protective of their daughters and would not allow them to associate with boys or participate in male-dominated sports. Additionally, some Pacific Island females believed they were expected to restrict their focus on sport and concentrate on academic or musical activities.<sup>40</sup>

Young people are looking for meaningful experiences they can use as a way of having fun, developing social and physical skills, and developing their fitness. Gill and Overdorf state that a psychosocial factor influencing exercise participation is the meaning of the exercise experience for that person.<sup>41</sup> When that experience is viewed as meaningful, a person will be more motivated to participate in that activity. In addition, the positive physical changes that can result from increased physical activity will only serve to empower teenage girls (Wright and Dewar, 1997).<sup>42</sup> This concept of meaningfulness needs to be understood in the context of different genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages and even across time – what might be meaningful today may not be tomorrow.

Biddle and Murtrie state that, “experiencing previous achievement and having ability at sports lead kids to continue, but it is the level of self-efficacy (the confidence an individual has in being able to perform a behaviour), in particular, that has been widely linked with physical activity behaviour in adults.”<sup>43</sup> Self-efficacy enables young people to access opportunities but relies on the development of their confidence in earlier years.

<sup>40</sup> Sport NZ (2005): The Value of Sport: attitudes, barriers and motivations for participation in sport by 11 to 14-year-olds

<sup>41</sup> Gill and Overdorf (1994): Incentives for exercise in younger and older women, *Journal of Sport Behaviour*

<sup>42</sup> Wright and Dewar (1997): On Prejudice and Pain: Women Speak Out About Physical Activity

<sup>43</sup> Biddle and Mutrie (2001): *Psychology of Physical Activity: Determinants, well-being and interventions*

Disabled young people are regularly excluded from sport and active recreation opportunities, either through a lack of opportunities (particularly sport competitions), or a lack of support. There are few relatable disabled role models, and schools often do not place a high value on the achievements of disabled athletes through promotion, opportunity customisation, or recognition.

Similarly, the LGBTQI community regularly experiences exclusion from activity on the basis of their gender identity – this can range from logistical issues such as access to changing facilities and exclusionary team eligibility criteria, to conscious and unconscious bias in coaching and other support systems, and peer exclusion practices. A recent survey of 17,000 13-17-year-olds in the US identified that only 24 per cent of LGBTQ youth play a school sport, compared to 68 per cent of non-LGBTQ youth. And the numbers get worse when you break them down: only 14 per cent of transgender boys and nonbinary youth, and 12 per cent of transgender girls, participate in school sports.<sup>44</sup>

## Risk and adventure

Adventure and action sports and activities are now challenging traditional codes for viewership and engagement, and unlike more traditional codes, the numbers involved are growing. These activities include freestyle versions of cycling (e.g. MTB and BMX), skate, snow and surf sports, climbing and skydiving, and motor sports. A consequence of the rise in popularity of adventure and action sports is the plethora of national and international events, typified through highly monetised and promoted events such as the X-Games.

Many of these events and action/adventure activities are driven by social media – GoPro camera sales in the US were expected to reach 9 million in 2018 and growing at nearly 50 per cent annually. Adventure sports lend themselves well to video and are one of the most popular categories on YouTube – more than 400 hours of video is uploaded every minute worldwide and it is the most popular social media platform in New Zealand, just ahead of Facebook.

## Personalisation and choice

Young people are increasingly seeking a customised, personalised experience in sport and active recreation. The provision of opportunities needs to accommodate workloads at school (increasing), the need to remain connected to (and develop new) peer groups, after-school responsibilities, and to provide a positive, reinforcing experience from their involvement. The ability and tendency to opt in and out of activity depending on the ‘fit’ with young people’s lives has implications for the current sport delivery model.

Young people will determine what they need and when they need it – the increasing use of online media such as Netflix and YouTube rather than TV, pay-for-play access to gyms at any time of the day or night, online shopping, access to cloud-based coaching and personal training programmes, and the rise of the ‘virtual club’ that is organised by text or social media are examples of this move to individualism and personalisation.

## Summary

Secondary-aged young people are characterised by a desire for connectivity, relevance and choice. Increasingly it is technology that is providing these things rather than the sport and active recreation experience. Rather than a discrete set of opportunities delivered by multiple, unconnected providers, the demand from young people is to be able to access an opportunity at a level, time, cost and location that suits them, irrespective of the provider.

<sup>44</sup> Play to Win: Improving the Lives of LGBTQ Youth in Sports 2018

# KEY THEMES, RISKS AND APPROACHES

The value of being active isn't always recognised, realised or promoted by schools, parents and community organisations.



## How do we know?

In New Zealand, and globally, it is recognised that physical activity is reducing, and there is a decline in the importance placed on, and practice of, quality PE. School settings prioritise subjects other than PE (in terms of support for teachers, teacher training, and quality and quantity of delivery), in favour of a focus on numeracy, literacy and courses that equip young people for careers or further education. There is poor understanding of the role that quality PE, sport and active recreation play in establishing employability skills, self-management, confidence, and young people's development.

Parents are often focused on the win/lose outcomes of sport, rather than young people's development through sport. They are regularly captured by arguments put forward by the sport sector to specialise early, either overtly, or through practices such as lengthening seasons, punitive selection processes, and/or year-round offerings. At the same time, talented athletes are increasingly seen to be developing a sense of entitlement, particularly those with high media attention and financial rewards.<sup>45</sup> And there are regular, and widely reported, incidences of poor side line behaviour.

There is disparity in the sport system for girls, particularly in the high performance system. Fewer resources are allocated, there are fewer career pathways, less profile, and lower financial rewards. Media coverage of girls and women's sport is poor – few role models are portrayed despite high levels of success. Similarly, the voice of women and girls is not heard at the governance level of sport.

Finally, there are medium-high density housing pressures alongside a relatively low priority given by Councils to planning for both outdoor and indoor sport and recreation places and spaces. Overall, more young people understand the value of sport and physical activity than report personal benefit from it.<sup>46</sup> Clearly the value ascribed to being active sits below other choices.

<sup>45</sup> Respect & Responsibility Review, NZ Rugby 2017

<sup>46</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Angus-Associates-Value-of-Sport-FINAL.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Angus-Associates-Value-of-Sport-FINAL.pdf)

## What are the implications?

Unless young people understand the value that sport offers to them personally, they will not prioritise physical activity and sport in their lives even when the barriers to participating are reduced.

Several significant risks exist in the present environment:

- Any loss of PE as a curriculum subject, or its continued marginalisation in schools, will be catastrophic for the sport system and for the value that young people place on being active. The foundation skills and knowledge developed through the HPE curriculum cannot be replaced by the private sector.
- Parents will drive schools and sports to narrow their focus to cater for confident, talented athletes, and to see sport as a career opportunity rather than as a worthy pursuit in its own right.
- The sport system will increasingly focus on practices associated with high performance and professionalism, and reduce their resourcing and support for sport for all.
- Continued poor side line behaviour will lead to the loss of participants, coaches and officials.
- The positive impact of a physically active lifestyle on teenagers' mental and physical health will be reduced (throughout their lives).
- A growing sense of entitlement among young people and exit from the sport system if/when their expectations are not met.
- An increased number of 'remedial' programmes will be designed to equip youth with skills for life, rather than maximising the establishment of these through sport and physical activity.
- Urban design does not enable or provide safe opportunities for people to be active.



## What might we do about it?

First and foremost, we need to provide education about young people's needs, developmental stages, the importance of play and active recreation in teenagers' lives, and the realities of talent development and transfer. This should be directed to adults who provide opportunities and support for young people, particularly parents and coaches.

Our suggested approaches include:

- Improve the profile and articulation of the value of sport and active recreation with national and local government agencies, education and health providers and institutions, and young people.
- Establish youth sport champions with appropriate messages that highlight the value of sport with their peers.
- Establish and support a role modelling programme ensuring coverage of girls, disabled young people, young people from various ethnic groups and other low participating communities, and participants from smaller sports or recreation activities.
- Dedicate secondary-age expertise inside RSTs, NSOs and other providers that uses insights and the voice of participant to advise on appropriate design and delivery of opportunities to secondary-aged young people.
- Develop and use market segmentation to target customised offerings, value propositions and promotions.
- Support teacher engagement, confidence and competence in using the concepts of sport and active recreation as a teaching and learning context.
- Input into the education reforms – wellbeing has been identified as the top priority for education and the consultation underway is an opportunity to link sport and recreation more closely to the education system of the future.



## Active recreation and sport offerings are not meeting the needs of all teenagers.



### How do we know?

Young people tell us sport and physical activity become less enjoyable as they progress through their teens – they are among the least satisfied with their club sport experiences.

While the sport system generally accommodates disparity in size and skill level through customised competitions, there tends to be a consistent delivery model (e.g. 16-week competitions, selection and trials, standard and inflexible team sizes, formalised coaching) that does not fit the changing lifestyles of youth nor accommodate their changing motivations to be involved. Year 9 competition structures tend to mirror those in Year 13, but the audience is different.

After Year 10, participation decreases year-on-year in both sport and active recreation in this age group.<sup>47</sup> Young people tell us they would play more sport if they could try different codes before they committed to playing, could play friendly games where the result was not a focus, and if they were better at the sports available. One of the most regularly reported disincentives to participation is the competitive nature of the available offerings, particularly for girls.

Choice is increasingly impacted by lengthened and clashing sports seasons, and a drive by sports organisations to deliver year-round offerings. This means young people do not have a break between seasons, and increasingly are being forced to choose either a winter or summer sport – but not both.

There is an increasing prevalence of overuse injuries in teenagers more commonly seen in older athletes, including ACL reconstructions, patellar tendonitis, shin splints and tennis elbow.

### What are the implications?

Establishing and maintaining active lifestyles in youth is a predictor of participation as an adult.<sup>48</sup> Failure to accommodate teenagers' active recreation and sport needs will result in reduced adult participation and increase associated health and productivity downsides.

High deprivation areas will be particularly impacted by barriers such as transport and cost. As life becomes more complex and busy (employment, study pressures, social lives) these groups would benefit significantly from adopting a healthy active lifestyle – conversely, failure to do so compounds many of the other challenges faced in these communities, including mental and physical health.

<sup>47</sup> YPS 2011

<sup>48</sup> Sports Participation Among Females from Adolescence to Adulthood – A Longitudinal Study, International Review of the Sociology of Sport, Dec 2006. Sport participation by youth as a predictor of physical activity – A longitudinal study, Murphy, Rowe, Woods 2015

Several significant risks exist in the present situation:

- Failure to meet the needs of diverse communities will result in overrepresentation of these groups in sedentary/inactive/disengaged young people – the current low participating groups such as disabled, certain ethnicities, and socially disadvantaged will continue to miss out on the benefits of a physically active lifestyle.
- Reduced options for traditional, team, organised sports and increase in pay-for-play, smaller and self-selected teams, and social media-driven activity options have implications for the current sports system. In particular, the volunteer infrastructure that is driven through the traditional sport system, and the connectedness and contribution that the sport system offers, could be lost.
- As the relevance of existing sport structures and systems to teens decreases, the resulting reduced membership will reduce the traditional sports system's revenue and capacity.
- A 'lost generation' no longer familiar with and engaged in a culture of active lifestyles has significant consequences. Our patterns of behaviour, attitudes and values are transferred to our children – it is highly unlikely that we will be able to recreate this culture once it is lost.

### What might we do about it?

As the majority of secondary-aged young people participate in sport and physical activity at school, it starts with the school context. We recommend reviewing the competitive sport structure and offerings available to secondary-aged people and customise for their needs – particularly the needs of those currently disengaged or inactive. In particular, distinguish between Year 9-10, and Year 11-13 cohorts and present a wider range of offers in the older age group.

Some further suggested approaches include:

- Make 'choice' a fundamental principle; enforce seasonality, discourage early specialisation and year-round offerings to young people, and incentivise variety in offerings to young people.
- Establish clear principles and practices across the sector about representative teams, ensuring choice and development for all are key underpinning principles.
- Sports and schools should review their selection processes to better understand the pathways and opportunities available for those who are 'deselected'. Opportunities for self-selected teams should be widely available and accommodated.
- Maximise time on task by customising traditional sport formats. Some NSOs are already researching the effects of different competition formats, for example, on number of touches or goal shooting opportunities.
- The sport system should adopt more agile approaches to sport design and delivery and be prepared to regularly change their offerings as young people's motivations and personal circumstances change.
- Establish and make available a menu of options that meet young people's confidence and competence levels, rather than technical and tactical sport skills and knowledge. These options should range from play, to health and fitness activities, to outdoor recreation, to sport skill development opportunities – and should accommodate young people's social needs.
- Specific initiatives and support structures should be developed for those with the most significant barriers to participation – particularly disabled young people or those from high deprivation communities.

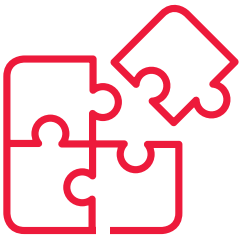




- Apply Sport NZ’s Play Principles<sup>49</sup> to the secondary setting, and work to provide play as a legitimate activity option for teenagers.
- Clarify, negotiate and agree roles and responsibilities between community providers, clubs and schools in providing and supporting active recreation and sport at a local level. Ensure there are no penalties for the pathway choices made by young people.
- Proactively use technology to enhance young people’s active recreation and sport experience. Consider establishing links with e-gaming organisations and industry with a view to gaining a better understanding of the opportunities presented by incorporating virtual and augmented reality into the sport and recreation offering.
- Better communicate opportunities to young people, through apps and social media. Smartphones should be the primary source of information, enrolment or registration for opportunities. Sector organisations should push messages to them through these channels, rather than expecting them to find them among the plethora of platforms and sites available to them.
- Use segmentation to customise the sport and recreation opportunities and support offered to young people. Ensure the sport and recreation offering is informed, designed and delivered by groups who incorporate meaningful participation for young people – empower and resource young people to implement activities for themselves, their peers and communities.
- Incorporate (and value) events into the school setting, rather than longer-term sport competition leagues. Initiate pop-up events delivered by students.
- Make gender-exclusive health and fitness opportunities available in schools to address cost and judgement barriers.
- Be more overt about our role and focus on physical activity, including active transport, as these opportunities better meet the needs of young people in the secondary years and maintain a level of fitness and confidence that will equip them to re-enter the sport system when they are able.

<sup>49</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/Sport-New-Zealand-Play-Principles-Nov-2017.pdf](https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/Sport-New-Zealand-Play-Principles-Nov-2017.pdf)

**Organisations aren't working effectively together to provide quality experiences for young people.**



### How do we know?

There is no common, agreed understanding of the outcomes we are seeking for young people in New Zealand across agencies – government or community. Nor is there a common approach to placing young people at the centre of our decision-making, or the role they should play in designing and delivering the sport and recreation experience for themselves and their peers.

Similarly, there is no common understanding of teenagers' lives – their needs and desires – and no common plan to ensure these needs and desires are met.

The increasing relevance and integration of technology and social media in teenagers' lives is often not appreciated by previous generations who are largely responsible for the provision (and design) of opportunities for this age group. In some cases, they are actively opposing its adoption rather than working to understand how it can be used to enhance the quality of the experience for young people.

Although some schools, clubs and regions reach agreements on scheduling (e.g. weekday vs weekend competitions) and selection, there is still competition in many regions between schools and clubs for players, time and facilities. Relatively few formalised school-club agreements are in place, even though school-club links have been identified as a solution to reduced participation since the 1980s.

Disadvantaged groups – such as those who are disabled, in deprived communities or geographically isolated – report difficulty in understanding how organisations in their community work together to provide an experience for them. The 'entry and re-entry points' to an active recreation or sport opportunity are not clear and consistent. Our Disability Sport and Active Recreation Review has identified unclear roles and responsibilities, and confused pathways for disabled young people.<sup>50</sup>

The timeframes for team selection and competition delivery in schools are often driven by a national or regional qualification model that does not always meet the workload, familiarisation and socialising needs of secondary-aged young people, particularly in Year 9. Early selection processes and pre-season games for winter teams, and existing Year 8 club commitments for summer codes are particularly problematic.

There is little transfer of sport and activity information (including leadership development) to secondary schools from feeder intermediate schools. Increasingly academies and talent development programmes are being established in schools with little reference to, or integration with, the sports involved.

The consultations that informed our Talent Plan and Sport Development Approach identified significant issues with poor player management and welfare arising from poor school-club relationships.<sup>51</sup> Overuse injuries and heavy workloads, particularly for talented athletes, are prevalent.

Overall, the Value of Sport to government agendas (particularly education and health) is not well understood or activated.<sup>52</sup> Government drivers and accountabilities are typically short term, not well joined up and often inconsistent.

<sup>50</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/disability-sport-and-recreation-review/](https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/disability-sport-and-recreation-review/)

<sup>51</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/our-plans-and-programmes/talent-plan/](https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/our-plans-and-programmes/talent-plan/)

<sup>52</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/news-and-events/media-releases-and-updates/articles/value-of-sport](https://sportnz.org.nz/news-and-events/media-releases-and-updates/articles/value-of-sport)

## What are the implications?

Several significant risks exist under current circumstances:

- Young people are seen as a market to tap, as potential high performance athletes, and as revenue streams.
- The increasing development of genetic modification techniques, bionic advancements, and feedback mechanisms direct to the athlete will mean performance enhancement will become almost impossible to detect and/or prove. It is possible that the resources currently directed at drug cheats will be misplaced as the costs of maintaining a level playing field will be too high.
- Increasing prevalence of eating disorders and mental health issues, particularly for girls.
- Continued loss of resilience and soft skills that are developed through sport.
- Drop out – the academy/talent development system raises expectations that cannot be fulfilled given the limited number of high performance opportunities in New Zealand. Serious mental health issues are being reported in the UK football system as young people are recruited early to camps, and progressively excluded through de-selection at various points of the talent development pathway.

## What might we do about it?

We know that fairness is important to the sport experience, and we must proactively highlight the downsides of performance enhancement, particularly to young people and parents as key influencers.

Some suggested approaches include:

- Watching brief on international trends and develop responses as appropriate.
- Explore the implications of competition formats that legitimise performance enhanced athletes, while maintaining non-enhanced competitions – re-establish a level playing field that recognises the reality of the future.
- Promote safe sport practices and monitor their application and implementation.
- Implement the findings of our Sport Integrity Review.<sup>53</sup>
- Promote the benefits of active lifestyles widely – establish role modelling programmes, and provide information to parents and other key influencers about young people's experiences e.g. through social media campaigns.
- Understand and meet the sport and recreation needs of lower participating groups, particularly new migrants, certain ethnic groups and disabled young people.
- Work with players' associations to ensure appropriate messaging and information is provided to players, and agree with agents on appropriate recruitment practices.

<sup>53</sup> [sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/have-your-say-sport-integrity-review](https://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/have-your-say-sport-integrity-review)

## The culture and ethos of our active lifestyles is under threat.



### How do we know?

Selection processes are exclusionary and are happening at younger and younger ages. In the secondary school environment, competition and winning are often a stronger focus than development. Competition, coaching, resources and development opportunities are concentrated in fewer and fewer players as sports seek to mine talent. Secondary school sport is increasingly not providing a sport-for-all environment.

Despite practices and policies to dissuade it, schools are still incentivising young people to transfer schools on the basis of their sporting ability, in order to enhance a school's prospects of winning competitions and trophies. This is driven partly by a need to increase school rolls and therefore funding – school success and the establishment of specialised academies is often more about providing a competitive edge than genuine concerns for player welfare and educational benefits.

Fairness is a significant enabler of the sport experience for young people.

The rewards in sport – financial, public profile, positions of responsibility – are now driving increasingly sophisticated ways of enhancing performance. The use of technology in particular presents a risk to the level playing field that players expect.

Evidence of supplement use in secondary-aged young people is being driven by desire/pressure to enter a professional sport pathway and to receive the rewards that come with it. There appears to be relatively little attention paid to the uneven playing field this creates, or the health risks that go with it.

Player agents are signing young athletes to contracts at a time when they should be focusing on their education – despite guidelines, New Zealand and overseas agents are now active on the side lines of intermediate competitions such as the AIMS Games.

Unsafe and unethical practices are inadvertently incentivised in the high performance system – results are tied to funding, and the drive to retain this revenue can lead to a lack of declaration and action about anything that may jeopardise this support.

Beyond the sport system, the increasing diversity of New Zealand's population means a more significant proportion have not grown up with a heritage of active lifestyles. The culture of sport and physical activity in New Zealand is changing.

Social media, and media in general, is portraying messages that are at odds with reality: most young people do not have the body shape and size, speed and accuracy, and social skills that are idealised in sport and activity through the media. This leads to disaffection with the reality of their experience, or the pursuit of the ideal – weight loss and body image issues, performance enhancement options, anxiety, embarrassment and mental health issues are consequences of the widespread portrayal of these 'ideals'.

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# ACTIVATING THIS REVIEW

Given the increasingly diverse population in this age range, and the need for young people to receive meaningful, personalised experiences that they value, solutions to these challenges need to be highly customised, local, and informed and designed (and in some cases delivered) by young people.

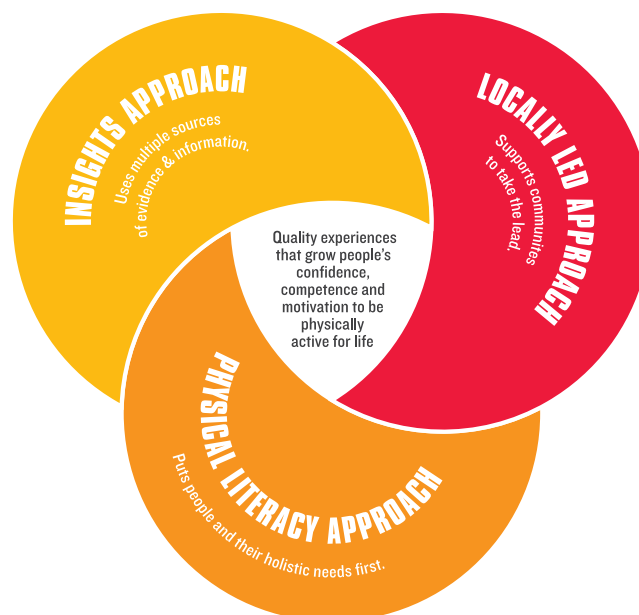
Developing these solutions must therefore be an iterative process implemented in the community, rather than nationally. While this paper has made some high level recommendations about potential solutions, the implementation will be customised and targeted through further consultation and empowerment.

Establishing solutions to these four challenges needs to incorporate the following principles:

- **Solutions must be local** – any national approaches should be the result of commonalities or economies arising from local solutions.
- **A youth development and empowerment approach** should be adopted.
- **Flexible and agile design and delivery models** should be used.
- **Choice and inclusion** are paramount - multiple options, pathways and stepping stones are needed.
- Agreed and **clear roles and responsibilities**, promoted and mandated.
- **Technology should be embraced** where it enhances the quality of the experience.

Sport NZ will explore solutions to the four challenges identified by:

- a. collating existing good practice and sharing this with schools and the community
- b. resourcing a series of design-led initiatives using young people to develop and test solutions
- c. socialising the findings of this review, and any resulting solutions, with all organisations providing sport and physical activity opportunities for secondary-aged young people
- d. using the results of existing and new prototypes to inform our future strategies for the sport sector, in particular to clarify organisational roles and responsibilities.



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# SUMMARY

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The teenage life stage is one of the most at-risk for establishing and maintaining ongoing habits and a life-long love of participating in sport and physical activity. The costs of declining participation and enjoyment of being active are high – to individuals, education institutions, whānau/families, and society.

Solutions to address the decline in participation through the teenage years are complex. If we are to continue to meet the sport and physical activity needs of secondary-aged young people over the next 10 years, which importantly includes ensuring their experiences are high quality, well supported and accessible, we need to address the four themes developed through this review:

- The value of being active isn't always recognised, realised or promoted by parents, schools and community organisations
- Active recreation and sport offerings are not meeting the needs of all teenagers
- Organisations are not working effectively together to provide quality experiences for young people
- The culture and ethos of our active lifestyles is under threat.

This review considers the evidence that has led to these findings, observes some trends that may work against a reversal of the current participation declines in the 13-18-year age group, and proposes that solutions to these challenges must come from young people themselves.

## WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

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