
Pricing Recreation in Christchurch

Report prepared for the Christchurch City Council by

**Caroline Saunders, Paul Dalziel
and Glen Greer**

January 2005



Lincoln University

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

SPARC wishes to thank Alan Bywater and Christchurch City Council for making this report available to local authorities throughout New Zealand.

SPARC is interested in facilitating the sharing of sport, recreation and leisure information between local authorities. If your council has recently completed a literature review, a guidance document or some research which you would be willing to share please email jason.morgan@sparc.org.nz

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Christchurch City Council (CCC) is committed to making a significant and sustainable contribution to the quality of life of its residents, particularly its children and youth, by supporting a broad range of recreation and sport services, facilities and programmes (CCC 1996). CCC leisure facilities provide many services for which user charges are established, ranging from entry charges to swimming pools to fees for specialist tutored recreational programmes. The Recreation and Arts Team also operates recreation programmes based in leisure facilities, usually in areas where access to leisure facilities is difficult for the local population and there are no other providers. The programmes operated in community facilities by the Recreation and Arts Team may be similar to those operated in leisure facilities and are sometimes developed jointly.

Unlike charges for programmes delivered at leisure facilities, which are generally standard across facilities and approved by Council annually, the prices of community-based recreation programmes are largely at the discretion of the Recreation and Arts Team and depend on the costs involved, budget requirements and perceived ability of the target market to pay. The direct costs are frequently subsidised. The different pricing approaches adopted by the leisure centres and the Recreation and Arts Team mean that very similar programmes, offered in relatively close proximity, may be priced differently.

As part of the 2001/02 Annual Plan the CCC established a new pricing policy for sports groups making use of CCC sports fields, which essentially eliminated sports grounds charges for regional sports associations except for the maintenance component of prepared cricket wickets. This policy may have exacerbated a perceived inequity between the treatment of outdoor sports associations making use of the CCC sports fields and indoor sports associations using leisure centres (which generally pay fees). This inequity was identified by staff in the process of considering the sports field charges and was the subject of much discussion during consultation on the new policy.

During the preparation of the Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy the CCC's pricing of its recreation and sports activities was considered. It is clear that prices charged by CCC have an impact on prices that can be charged for similar services by the private sector. A number of private providers view CCC facilities as unfair, rates-subsidised competition (although whether there is a subsidy involved is debatable). In the past justification for any subsidy was largely based on the need to ensure that recreation activities are available to those on low incomes. However, the non-discriminating nature of subsidies is clearly an issue. The Strategy identified a need for the CCC to target its subsidies more carefully towards residents who are constrained by price from participating in recreation and sport activities.

A number of concessions are currently offered for aspects of CCC services to Community Service cardholders, KiwiAble cardholders, New Zealand Superannuation cardholders and school students over 15 years of age with school identification. These concessions are applied to specific charges but not in a systematic or comprehensive manner across the leisure activities provided by CCC.

A number of Council outputs are affected by changes to the CCC policy on pricing recreation. They include:

- Community Programmes and Promotions
- Stadia – Council Operated
- Pools – Council Operated
- Centennial Leisure Centre
- Pioneer Leisure Centre
- QEII Pools
- QEII Swim Academy
- QEII Stadium
- QEII Fitness and Other Facilities
- QEII Grounds

Each of these outputs generates a different proportion of total funding from user charges, ranging from 5.18 percent to 106.71 percent, as established by the CCC Funding Policy.

In order to assist in formulating a consistent approach to the provision and pricing of recreation services for Christchurch, CCC commissioned the AERU at Lincoln University to undertake a study of Christchurch residents' use of recreation facilities, the barriers to their use and their attitudes to changes in the prices for recreation activities. This information, in conjunction with the results of a review of the international literature on recreation pricing, was to be used to develop a pricing policy consistent with the CCC Recreation and Sport Policy, Physical Recreation and Sports Strategy and Revenue and Financing Policy.

1.2 The Study

The study was undertaken in three stages. In the first a review of the international literature on the provision and pricing policies for leisure services was undertaken, concentrating on policies and practices in countries which have similar social, cultural and political structures to those of New Zealand. The results of this are summarised in Section 2.

The second stage comprised a personal interview survey of adult residents of Christchurch, which elicited information on the use of leisure facilities by members of their households and their expected response to changes in the prices paid for entry to facilities and programmes. The results of this are summarised in Section 3.

The third stage of the study, reported in Section 4, involved a series of focus groups involving representatives of six target groups within the Christchurch community. These included:

- Current users of CCC leisure facilities (under 50 years of age)
- Older non-participants (aged 55 or more, physically capable of getting round the city, and not currently a regular user of CCC recreation facilities)
- Independent youth (aged 18 to 24 years – participants and non-participants)

- Adults from families whose children attend a low decile primary or intermediate school and which also have at least one child at secondary school
- Adults from families whose children attend a medium to high decile primary or intermediate school and which also have at least one child at secondary school
- Adult non-participants on low incomes

It is acknowledged that the focus group approach does generally involve members of the community who are more willing than the average to participate in discussions of this type and to express their views. In most cases group members were selected from existing networks or databases. However, there is no reason to assume that the constraints to involvement in recreation faced by these individuals differ from those faced by other members of these target groups.

SECTION 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leisure Participation / Involvement

2.1.1 Involvement in Leisure Activities

Participation levels in leisure, recreation, and sporting activities are affected by a number of factors including the characteristics of the community. It has long been recognised that leisure practitioners, researchers and educators are able to influence levels of leisure involvement on an overall level, and at an individual activity level (Raymore, 2002). Research has identified various factors that lead to the participation and non-participation of individuals in leisure activities.

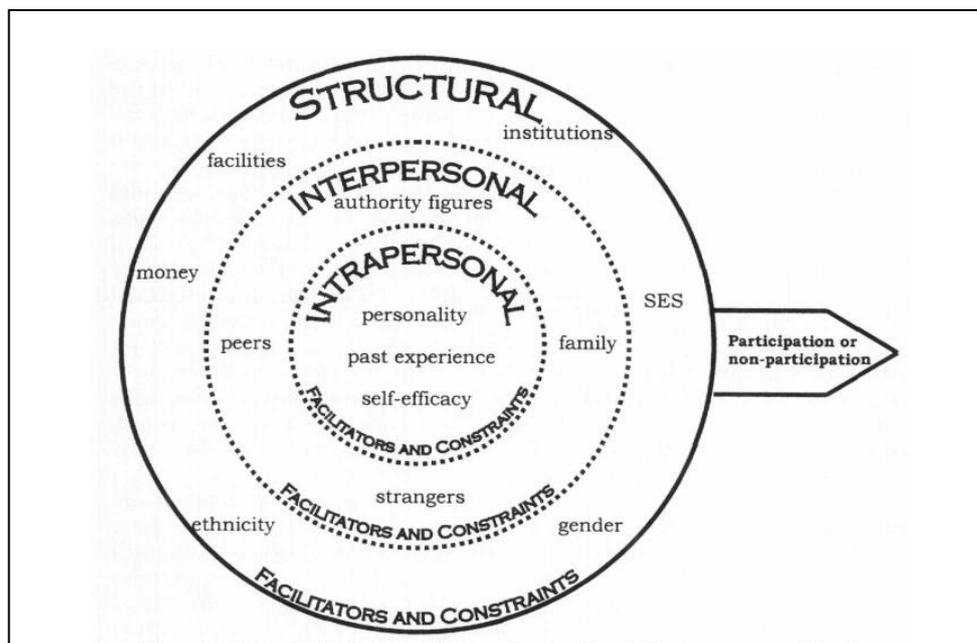
These factors can be classified into two main groups - facilitators and constraints. Although it may appear that facilitators and constraints are opposite in nature, Raymore (2002) contends that they are two distinct concepts that are not always related and can both lead to participation and non-participation in leisure activities. Raymore (2002 p.39) defines facilitators to leisure as “factors that are assumed by researchers, and perceived or experienced by individuals, to enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and to encourage or enhance participation”. This compares to Jackson’s (1997) definition of constraints to leisure, which are “factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (p. 461, cited in Raymore, 2002, p. 38).

The constraints approach to understanding leisure involvement, often adopted by researchers, “assumes that the basic human condition involves a desire or need to participate” (Raymore, 2002, p. 38). If an individual does not participate it is assumed that there were constraining factors that prevented them from doing so, and if an individual does participate it is assumed that they have overcome these constraints (Raymore, 2002). The basic assumption is that “there is a direct link between the reporting of constraints and the level of participation in leisure activities” (Shaw, Bonen, and McCabe, 1991, p. 287).

Examining the constraining factors has been the approach taken by most researchers in the past but researchers are now trying to focus on the facilitating factors (see for example, Raymore, 2002). In order to fully understand the reasons for an individual’s involvement in leisure activities, the facilitators and constraints affecting each person, the relationship between and the manner in which this results in participation and non-participation must be understood (Raymore, 2002).

The constraints model developed by Crawford and Godbey (1987) and modified by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) categorised constraints as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. This model has been further adapted by Raymore (2002, p. 43) to reflect facilitators as well as constraints and is shown in Figure 1. Only a selected number of factors have been shown in Figure 1, and these, and other factors, will vary with the activity and the individual.

Figure 1
An ecological approach to understanding influences on participation



Source: Raymore (2002, p. 43).

The facilitators and constraints depicted in Figure 1 are encountered hierarchically. Individuals form leisure preferences after considering intrapersonal factors which are considered the most powerful factors since they “condition the will to act” (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991, p. 314). Depending on the nature of the activity, the individual may also face interpersonal factors affecting compatibility and coordination. After negotiating the latter an individual will be faced with structural factors. Overcoming structural factors will result in leisure participation (Crawford et al., 1991).

Intrapersonal factors, also referred to as personality measures, are those individual characteristics, traits and beliefs that influence an individual’s leisure preferences and involvement. Interpersonal factors include other individuals or groups that influence an individual’s leisure preferences and involvement. Structural factors are the social and physical institutions, organisations, or belief systems of a society that operate external to the individual and influence that individual’s leisure preferences and involvement (Raymore, 2002).

2.1.2 Factors Influencing Leisure Involvement

Facilitators and constraints influence the level of involvement in leisure activities, including the use of indoor facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasiums, and recreation centres. Leisure research often examines the effects of these facilitators and constraints on an individual’s decision to participate or not participate in leisure activities. However, facilitators and constraints may also affect the level of participation, frequency of participation, and level of specialisation (Crawford et al., 1991). The factors influencing leisure involvement have been examined in a number of previous studies.

The most widely examined factors affecting overall leisure participation, as well as participation in specific leisure activities, are personality measures or intrapersonal factors (Raymore, 2002), while the most common constraints identified in leisure research are structural factors (Jackson & Scott, 1999, cited in Raymore, 2002). Most factors influencing leisure involvement are related to individual, environmental, and social barriers.

A number of leisure involvement studies have been undertaken, mainly in Scotland, the United Kingdom, Canada, and North America, which have identified a range of specific factors influencing leisure involvement. These factors include time commitments (work, family and other activities), age, gender, level of education, income or socio-economic status, ethnicity, family size, costs (entrance, equipment and supplies, transport, childcare, food/drink), awareness, accessibility and transport availability, and personal interest, health and other personal reasons (Alberta Community Development, 2000; Alexandris & Carroll, 1997; Coalter, 2002; Jackson, 2000).

The effects of time commitments, personal factors, and costs on the level of leisure participation and the priority placed on leisure participation are discussed below. The effects of these and other factors on sub-groups of the population, including those based on age, gender and income or socio-economic status differences, varies. The probability of participation is higher for males than females (Gratton & Tice, 1994) and men have been found to be more likely than women to perceive themselves as having no constraints affecting their leisure participation levels (Coalter, 1993). Of the constraints that have been identified by men, most are associated with 'lifestyle factors', which affect available time and the priority placed on leisure activities (Coalter, 1993). Furthermore, as members of the population move from one sub-group to another the effects of particular constraints on their leisure participation changes. For example, older people are likely to be less affected by cost and time commitments, and more affected by personal skills and accessibility than younger people (Jackson, 2000).

Time Commitments:

Various time commitments have been found to affect the level of involvement in leisure activities. These time commitments include being too busy with work, being too busy with family, and being too busy with other activities. Furthermore, time commitments have been found to differ by age, gender, and income, with work and family commitments having a greater effect on higher income families than others (Alberta Community Development, 2000). Although people often mention "not enough time" as a factor affecting leisure participation it is often the lack of time management that affects participation levels (Mannell & Zuzanek, 1991).

In a Canadian study undertaken by Alberta Community Development (2000), time commitments, in terms of family, work, and other activities, were found to be one of the main barriers to participation. Time commitments were found to affect both genders but differed depending on age. The main time commitment for adolescents was the level of involvement in other recreation activities, while male adults were predominantly too busy at work, and female adults were predominantly too busy with family (Alberta Community Development, 2000; Coalter, 1993).

Other time commitments and the lack of time for leisure may also be an indication of the low priority placed on leisure participation. The Centre for Leisure Research (1993) study found

the number of respondents indicating they had 'no time' was similar to the number of respondents who indicated they were 'not interested' in participating in leisure activities (cited in Coalter, 1993).

Motivation and Personal Factors:

Motivation and personal factors, including physical abilities and personal interest, have been identified as barriers to involvement in leisure activities. Personal interest in leisure activities has been found to be affected mainly by the lack of information available on leisure activities, inconvenient scheduled times, and a general loss of interest due to lifestyle and life stage (Alberta Community Development, 2000; Boothby, Tungatt, and Townsend, 1981). Barriers relating to personal capabilities increased with age and have been found to be mostly associated with team sports, whereas other personal reasons are associated mainly with creative, cultural, social and passive activities (Alberta Community Development, 2000).

The decision by a female adolescent to participate in swimming is based on two main factors, which could be applied to other sub-groups of the population and other leisure activities. The first factor is the 'situational body image', which is the overall body image modified by the situation. The second factor is the 'desire to swim', and this is influenced by personal perception of potential embarrassment, the strength of desire to be involved in a social activity, and the desire to be involved in swimming on a particular day (James, 2000). James (2000) found in her study of Australian adolescent girls that the girls employed various strategies in order to negotiate the constraints, usually resulting in increased levels of participation (James, 2000).

The constraints associated with female adolescent leisure participation levels can also be extended to the female gender as a whole, with a number of research studies identifying females as being the most affected by intrapersonal constraints such as shyness, self-consciousness, lack of self-confidence, and self-image (see for example, Alexandris & Carroll, 1997).

Some researchers (see for example Searle & Jackson 1985, cited in Alexandris and Carroll, 1997) have tested the effect of the level of education on perceived leisure constraints, suggesting increasing levels of education were associated with decreasing constraint perceptions. A study undertaken by Alexandris and Carroll (1997) in Greece found there was a significant relationship between the level of education and the perception of constraints on leisure participation, with survey participants in lower educational groups identifying the most constraints. The participation rates of those in the lower educational levels were the lowest of all groups and the main constraints identified were lack of knowledge and individual/psychological constraints (Alexandris & Carroll, 1997).

Costs:

Cost has been identified as a barrier to involvement in leisure activities in a number of studies and although discussions relating to cost focus mainly on entrance charges, other costs must also be considered. The composite price of leisure consists of both fixed and variable costs including the cost of equipment/supplies, entrance charges, transportation costs, food/drink and childcare (Coalter, 2002; Gratton and Taylor, 2000). An individual consumer will only purchase a good or service if the benefits received will outweigh the cost of the good or service (Gratton and Taylor, 2000). The decision to participate or not participate in leisure

activities is likely to be based on the total cost, whereas the frequency of participation is likely to be based on the variable cost (Gratton and Taylor, 2000).

The cost of equipment/supplies was the most common barrier to leisure participation in Canada identified by the Alberta Community Development (2000) survey, with admission fees/charges also being identified as an important barrier to involvement in leisure activities. The impacts of entrance charges have been found to decrease with age, increase with income, and affect both genders (Alberta Community Development, 2000). The main activities for which costs are a barrier were identified as exercise-oriented activities, self-propelled outdoor activities, skiing/snowboarding and golf.

In another Canadian study undertaken by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Recreation Institute (1999, cited in Alberta Community Development, 2000), it was found that adults would participate more if, among other factors, costs were reduced.

In contrast to the Canadian studies discussed above in which costs were found to be an important barrier to participation, Coalter (2002) identifies a number of studies where the cost of participation is not perceived to be an important constraint for some groups. Those groups where costs were less important included adults and young people, while costs were more important for female single parents.

2.1.3 Increasing Involvement in Leisure Activities

In order to increase participation and maintain participation levels, factors other than the pricing of leisure facilities need to be considered, that relate to the market for which individual leisure providers are catering (Coalter, 2002). One basis for understanding why individuals cease participating in leisure activities, particularly organised leisure activities, is social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory, discussed by Searle (1991), individuals participate in organised leisure activities to seek rewards. As these rewards are important to the individual they act as sufficient motivation for the individual to remain involved in the leisure activity.

The quantity of leisure demanded is affected by a number of factors including the price of the leisure activity, the price of alternative activities, the individual's income, the individual's preferences, the availability of time for leisure, the availability of transport, and seasonal factors (Cooke, 1994; Gratton and Taylor, 2000). Thus, "varying the price charged to use facilities is only one variable which can affect the level of demand for a facility at any one particular time" (Cooke, 1994, p. 154). Some of these factors are within the control of the leisure provider, while others are not. It is those factors that are within the control of the leisure provider that should be the focus of any pricing policy.

If individuals choose to cease participating in a particular leisure activity they have the choice of either discontinuing or continuing to participate in some other form of leisure activity. If an individual chooses to continue to participate they have the opportunity to replace the ceased leisure activity with the same activity from a different provider, replace the ceased leisure activity with a new activity from the same provider, replace the ceased leisure activity with a new activity and a new provider or not replace the activity (Searle, 1991). Discontinuing participation altogether indicates, under social exchange theory, that the rewards sought by the individual were not met. Reasons for continuing to participate via

some form of replacement activity may include changes in the rewards sought, the belief that there has been an unfair exchange based on their investment of time, energy and money, or lifestyle and life stage changes (Searle, 1991).

Leisure providers have the option of either encouraging non-participants to participate or encouraging the frequency of participation by participants (Godbey, 1985). A number of factors affect the decision to participate or not to participate in leisure activities, some of which are discussed above, and these need to be considered by leisure providers when trying to increase participation rates and participation frequency. If an individual is able to overcome or negotiate these factors, he/she will be able to participate in the leisure activity.

Some reasons for non-participation in leisure activities are clearly within the control of the leisure provider, while others are not (Godbey, 1985). Leisure providers need to identify which factors are within their control and the extent to which these factors affect participation rates and participation frequency of their user groups. Those factors that are within the control of the leisure provider include the level of entrance fees and other charges, the convenience of opening hours for different sub-groups of the population, the maintenance of the site, and the public's awareness of the availability of services.

“An individual's willingness to pay a fee is assumed to be related to preference for additional development of services/facilities/programmes” (McDonald, Noe & Hammitt, 1987, p.8). Although entrance charges may be affordable and thus do not represent a barrier for all individuals, leisure activities may be given a low priority in terms of money and time by non-participants, who often acknowledge the benefits of exercise, but place a low value on recreation. Therefore, entrance charges and other costs need to be set at a level which reflects the low value assigned to leisure activities. Thus, leisure activities must be “differentially priced in relation to higher priority goods, services and, most importantly, social and professional commitments” (Coalter, 2002, p. 2). This will create, and enable the promotion of, the perception of leisure activities as “good value”, in terms of money and time (Coalter, 2002).

Adjusting scheduled programme times and increasing programme variety will help ensure time barriers are reduced and personal interest is maintained (Alberta Community Development, 2000). Furthermore, programmes could be targeted at specific groups to encourage them to return to leisure participation, after they have been put off participating because of factors no longer relevant to them, or after changes in their lifestyle (James, 2000). Lack of knowledge of the available local leisure services is another common reason for non-participation and has been found to have a significant impact on the level of non-participation (Godbey, 1985).

Two studies discussed by Godbey (1985) found individuals with low information or awareness levels had low or middle-low socio-economic status, and were more likely to watch television and listen to the radio than read the newspaper. The latter needs to be considered when trying to target this sub-group of the population to increase their awareness level of the availability of local leisure services.

Increasing the fees charged by a leisure facility may mean users expect more benefits for their increased monetary investment (McDonald, Noe & Hammitt, 1987). Independent analysis of individual leisure activities, as opposed to leisure as a whole, provides a much better interpretation of the consumer reaction to price changes. Research undertaken by Howard and Selin (1987) found that existing users of programme activities had relatively high levels of price tolerance, suggesting leisure providers “could increase user fees for many specific recreation programmes at least to break-even level without encountering significant consumer resistance” (Howard & Selin, 1987, p. 53). When increasing the fees of leisure services it has been found “that consumers are much more tolerant of incremental price increases than they are of a single major price increase” (Crompton and Howard, 1980 cited in Howard & Selin, 1987, p.53). Individuals are also more tolerant of price changes if they are aware of the basis for entrance charges (Coalter and McGregor, 2000 cited in Coalter, 2002).

Local authorities can, and often do, have misconceptions about the reasons for declining participation in leisure activities (Taylor, 1995). This was the case in Britain in the 1990s when local authorities believed that one of the main reasons for a decline in swimming participation was competition from commercial attractions and from other health and fitness activities. They also believed a reduction in facilities was affecting attendance. However, the participation trends in other activities and facility supply did not support the views held by local authorities. Furthermore, the results of a survey indicated that the numbers of scheduled programmes for target groups, and the quality of the facilities, were considered the most important factors affecting leisure participation levels (Taylor, 1995).

Research has found the level of participation is no longer decreasing with age (Gratton & Tice, 1994). Researchers state that one important factor responsible for this trend is the “increased provision of active recreation opportunities, in particular in publicly provided indoor facilities” (Gratton & Tice, 1994, p. 66).

2.2 Pricing Policy Issues

Pricing policy issues surrounding leisure services have received considerable attention over recent years, with user fees being used extensively to supplement public funding and broaden traditional funding bases. Reasons for changing pricing levels exist on both ethical and pragmatic grounds. Ethical reasons are concerned with social equity for low-income groups, while pragmatic reasons are based on administrative concerns for funding diversification, scarcity, resource deterioration, and crowding (Coalter, 1993; Emmett et al., 1996).

The level of community participation in leisure activities is often used as a measure of the success of the leisure provider. However, client satisfaction is being increasingly recognised as a relevant evaluation measure (Godbey, 1985). Being able to match resources to needs is a continual problem faced by leisure providers, and although individuals may demand more and better local leisure services, the willingness to pay, and even the ability to pay, does not always increase in the same proportion (Goodale, 1985). At the site-level some level of non-participation is necessary, as providers do not have the capacity to accommodate every potential user. However, many service organisations, including leisure providers, hold the system-level view that non-participation is a problem that needs to be overcome (Godbey, 1985).

As can be seen from the previous discussion on leisure involvement, price is only one of a number of factors affecting leisure participation levels. Evidence has shown that a pricing policy “based solely on low entrance charges” may not be an effective approach (Coalter, 2002, p. 3). Thus, a pricing policy must take into consideration the effect of other factors, as well as price, on participation rates and participation frequency. To ensure equitable pricing structures for leisure services, Wicks and Crompton (1986) suggest that non-price criteria need to be met, including “equal opportunity, deviations that benefit disadvantaged groups, and adequate baseline levels of service quality” (cited in Emmett et al., 1996, p.79)

Criteria act as guidelines or principles and are an essential part of any policy decision (Martin, 1999). “While fee pricing and meeting revenue goals necessarily involves economic values, users’ attitudes and acceptance of fees is likely to involve non-economic values” (Trainor & Norgaard, 1999, p. 112). Thus, there is a need to develop and formalise decision-making methodologies that explicitly account for the non-economic values of leisure users since monetary expressions of value have limitations (Trainor & Norgaard, 1999). Furthermore, the research on barriers to participation implies a need for leisure providers “to indicate clearly their commitment to those who are in some way unable to take full advantage of the existing opportunity structure” (Searle & Jackson, 1985, p. 32).

“The traditional economic or rationalist perspective suggests that high prices displace participants who lack either the resources or sufficient desire to participate” (Emmett et al., 1996, p. 65). Economists use the term “price discrimination” when firms choose to sell at different prices which are unrelated to the cost of providing the service (Cooke, 1994). Two common pricing techniques employed by leisure providers are product pricing and differential pricing. Product pricing involves subsidising specific leisure activities or programmes in order to attract members of a specific disadvantaged target group (Emmett et al., 1996). Differential pricing strategies involve charging different price levels on the basis of the attributes of leisure activities or the characteristics of programmes (Emmett et al., 1996). Another pricing option is to set prices according to the financial means of individual users, known as the “client-centred” approach. This pricing approach assumes that users differ in their ability to pay for leisure activities (Emmett et al., 1996).

For some leisure providers, the challenge has become one of trying to balance their needs for self-generated funds with the funding assistance needs of selected customer groups (Emmett et al., 1996). The issue of constrained demand and social equity presumes “that a certain proportion of the population *are already predisposed to participation*, but are prevented from doing so by entrance charges” (Coalter, 2002, p. 2). The higher relative cost of participation for low-income groups can be “equalised via targeting the highest subsidies to those with the lowest income” (Coalter, 2002, p. 2).

Heavily subsidised entrance charges for public facilities are often a central component of public leisure pricing policies. This is based on the assumption that entrance costs are a major barrier to leisure participation for a range of social groups, and consequently the use of subsidised entrance costs will improve participation levels (Coalter, 1993). Thus, participation is price sensitive and participation levels will respond to changes in entrance costs (Coalter, 1993).

2.2.1 Entrance Charges

The prices charged in Britain for swimming, as well as other leisure activities, increased more rapidly than the rate of inflation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, a reduction in attendance numbers was not seen until the mid 1990s. Thus, it would appear that increases in entrance charges are not always a significant reason for the decline in leisure participation (Taylor, 1995). Research indicates that “users of local authority leisure centres are insensitive in practice to substantial increases in entrance charges” (Gratton and Taylor, 1993 cited in Taylor, 1995, p.41). However, although there may be low resistance to price changes and individuals may still participate, the frequency of participation may be significantly affected.

The Centre for Leisure Research (1993) undertook a study investigating the effects of increases in entrance charges on participation levels, the results of which are summarised in Coalter (1993). Entrance charges were increased on average between 10 percent and 71 percent for four centres, although these increases often represented small sums of money in absolute terms due to the relatively low charges in place before the price increases. The study found that increases in entrance charges had little impact on the aggregate level of use or the frequency of use by current users (Coalter, 1993).

Additional factors affecting the reaction to the increase in entrance charges included the low awareness of the previous price, the low awareness of the price increases, the belief that, although the price increase was ‘excessive,’ the price paid was ‘reasonable’, and current users’ perceptions of a continued or increased ‘value for money’. Although these results are based mainly on surveys of current users, and thus may not capture the views of past users, the household survey found that only a small portion surveyed (4 percent) considered price to be a major barrier to leisure participation (Coalter, 1993). Thus it appears that “entrance charges have a low salience as an absolute barrier to participation” (p. 176) but “may act as a relative barrier reducing the frequency of participation” (p. 179), which is consistent with the work of Kay and Jackson (1991, cited in Coalter, 1993),

2.2.2 Concessionary Charges and Funding Assistance

Although concessionary prices, which generally target low-income groups, are offered in a number of countries there is a lack of research into, and monitoring of, the effectiveness of these charging schemes (Coalter, 2002). Concessionary charges reduce subsidised entrance costs further and are aimed at specific social groups who exhibit low participation rates. The social groups targeted tend to vary between national and local government, with local governments often differentiating between groups on the basis of income (Coalter, 1993). Common social groups targeted by concessionary pricing include senior citizens, children, families receiving income assistance, and the unemployed (Coalter, 1993; Emmett et al., 1996).

Price discrimination can be applied to individual consumers or to specific sections of the population, and this type of pricing policy “can be used to increase a firm’s revenue above that which would be achieved if a single price were charged” (Cooke, 1994, p.146). Concessionary schemes targeted at specific groups are one type of attempt to address the problems associated with universal subsidies. These problems include the extreme difficulty of differentiating “between those in real need and those whose demands do not justify public subsidy” (Coalter, 1993, p. 172). This type of pricing policy also helps leisure providers to

encourage consumption by sub-groups of society that traditionally have had a low propensity to consume leisure activities (Cooke, 1994).

Concessionary schemes have two main purposes, and are based on the assumption that cost is an absolute barrier to participation for non-participants. Firstly, they allow people who want to participate, but are unable to afford the charges, to do so. Secondly, they “encourage people who place a low value on sport to participate by reducing the cost below its market value” (Coalter, 1993, p. 179). However, evidence shows the success of concessionary schemes is limited, and the validity of the latter assumption is in doubt as non-participants refer to “lifestyle factors” as having a more significant effect on participation levels than cost (Coalter, 1993).

After altering the pricing policy from the choice of membership or programme-by-programme fees to an all-inclusive fee package, a Canadian leisure provider opted for a client subsidy programme, rather than the more common and traditional programme-based discounts and subsidies for general members (Emmett et al., 1996). The client subsidy programme allows each client to negotiate a mutually acceptable membership fee with staff. This type of screening process involves a number of costs, is time consuming for staff, and some clients are discouraged by the potential embarrassment. However, in 1996 nearly 50 percent of members were fee-assisted members (Emmett et al., 1996).

Since the adoption of this new pricing policy in the early 1980s, total revenues for this leisure provider have increased. Furthermore, non-assisted memberships have remained relatively stable, indicating that assisted membership has had little effect on non-assisted membership (Emmett et al., 1996). This was also the case in Britain in the mid 1990s, where although there was an overall decline in the number of attendances, the number of discounted attendances rose substantially according to evidence collected by Taylor (1995). Thus, “developing and promoting discount systems will minimise any negative impact of rising prices on attendances” (Taylor, 1995, p. 41).

Despite the initial success of implementing new pricing policies, staff members must continually differentiate between those who are unable and those who are unwilling to pay fees” (Emmett et al., 1996, p. 78). There are also other problems associated with fee assistance programmes. In particular, they reduce the ability to increase other fees and thus maintain similar revenues. Consequently, the financial stability of a leisure provider may be in jeopardy if per-capita contributions of assisted members decrease, fee assistance requests increase, or assisted membership numbers are similar to non-assisted membership numbers (Emmett et al., 1996).

Research into leisure participation, particularly in Britain in the 1990s, indicates that overall participation has remained relatively static, due to the offset of increases in some activities by decreases in other activities (Gratton & Taylor, 2000). However, over the years surveys have included different ranges of leisure activities which has resulted in inconsistencies and results that do not always reflect the increase in sports participation. Sports participation is defined in the statistical indicators used to measure the effectiveness of subsidy policies as those “sports involving some positive aspect of health promotion” (Gratton and Taylor, 2000, p. 71).

Participation in active recreation can be increased through appropriate programme planning, which has as its objective the reduction of many of the barriers faced by non-participants within the community. However, in designing such programmes planners must investigate non-users and the barriers that are prevention their expanded recreation participation, and the data collected should differentiate clearly amongst different aspects of non-participation than has characterised much recent research (Searle & Jackson, 1985). Although notions of equal opportunity have resulted in the offering of many programmes and services to the community as a whole on an undifferentiated basis, equity in the provision of recreation services requires the definition of target groups of non-participants and the specific barriers and constraints they face.

SECTION 3 RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

3.1 Introduction

The personal interview survey was conducted during November and December 2003. Participants were approached in CCC leisure facilities, at shopping malls, the Canterbury Public Library, the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Show and the Riccarton Market, and asked to provide information on their own involvement in active recreation and the involvement of their children. In total 504 survey participants were interviewed, 182 (36 percent) at the leisure facilities and 322 (64 percent) at other venues. The decision to include a sub-sample of those known to use leisure centres for their own or their children's recreation, by interviewing at CCC leisure centres, was made at the request of CCC staff to ensure that an adequate number of those who use these facilities was included in the sample. The comparison of the demographic characteristics of the sample and the wider Christchurch population is provided in Section 3.6.

The "intercept method" of approaching respondents was employed. Although this approach has the potential to introduce bias into the sample if those selected and willing to respond differ significantly in their use of leisure facilities from non-participants, there is no reason to assume that to be the case.

Survey questions focussed on participation in activities that **can** be accessed at CCC facilities but participation in these activities at **any** venue was included in estimates of participation rates, etc. The questionnaire employed is included in this report as Appendix 1.

3.2 Overall Involvement in Active Recreational Activities

All respondents reported that they undertake some form of active recreation, including housework, gardening, walking, jogging and playing sport, as well as the type of activities that are available through CCC. Ninety six are involved in active recreation defined as activities provided by CCC plus walking, jogging or playing sport. However, only 53 percent of those with children reported that their children do so. Seventy seven percent (96 percent of those interviewed at CCC leisure centres, 66 percent of those interviewed elsewhere) reported that they are personally involved in at least one of the activities offered by CCC, although CCC was not the provider chosen by all respondents. Amongst respondents with children, 46 percent reported that their children are involved in activities provided by CCC or similar to those provided by CCC. This percentage did not differ between those interviewed at CCC leisure centres and elsewhere.

3.3 Involvement in Active Recreational Activities not Provided by CCC

Respondents were asked whether they undertake several physical activities, not provided by CCC, at least once per week. Table 1 shows that the physical activity most regularly engaged in by most adult respondents is housework (89 percent) followed by walking (75 percent).

Table 1**Adults' involvement in physical activities not provided by CCC**

	% of all respondents
Housework	89.1%
Walking	75.6%
Gardening	61.1%
Playing sport	33.9%
Jogging, running	21.9%

Amongst respondents' children the most common of these activities is playing sport, as Table 2 shows (25 percent), although almost as many walk and do housework.

Table 2**Children's involvement in physical activities not provided by CCC**

	% of respondents children
Housework	21.5%
Walking	21.5%
Gardening	10.7%
Playing sport	24.6%
Jogging, running	10.5%

3.4 Involvement in Active Recreational Activities Provided by CCC

3.4.1 Involvement in Swimming

Swimming is the active leisure pursuit undertaken by the largest proportion of adult and child residents of Christchurch. In total 54 percent of those interviewed reported that they participate in swimming (75 percent of those interviewed at leisure centres and 43 percent of those interviewed elsewhere), and 40 percent of those who lived with children under the age of 15 years said that their children participate in swimming (43 percent and 36 percent respectively).

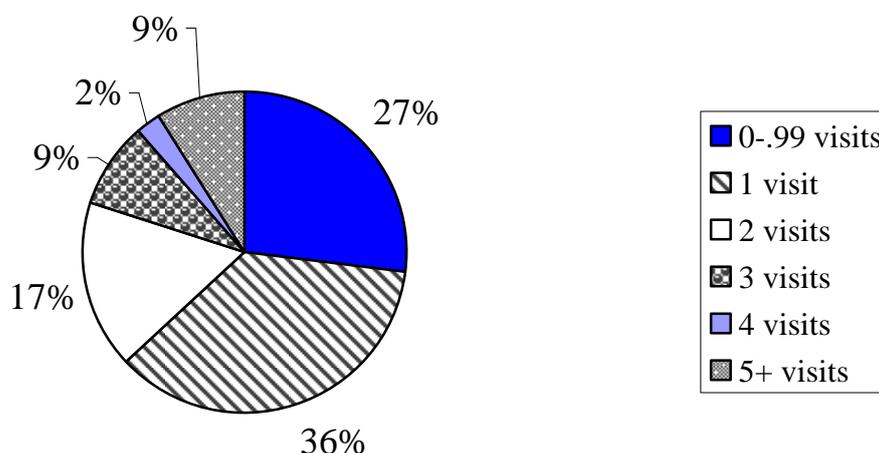
Table 3 shows the venues selected for swimming by survey respondents. As this table shows, almost all respondents and their children who swim at all, do so at CCC leisure centres (98 percent), while the next most popular venues are public outdoor pools run by organisations other than the CCC, including school pools (seven percent).

Table 3
Swimming pools used by survey respondents

	% of total	% of swimmers
CCC Leisure Centres	57.5%	98.0%
Outdoor CCC	1.8%	3.0%
Other indoor	4.0%	6.8%
Other Outdoor	6.9%	11.8%
Non-pool	3.0%	5.1%
Total	73.2%	124.7%

The average frequency of swimming amongst respondents and their children was 1.72 swims per week. Adults who do not live with children under 15 years of age swim 2.1 times per week, children whose parents do not swim average 0.89 swims per week and members of households where both adults and children swim, swim 1.4 times per week on average. Figure 1 shows the average number of swims per week reported by respondents.

Figure 2
Frequency (visits per week) of participation in swimming



Lack of interest was the most frequently cited reason for not swimming, (42 percent of those who do not swim), followed by lack of time/work pressure, and inability to swim (11.3 and 4.5 percent). The cost of swimming prevents only 1.5 percent of respondents from swimming. A variety of “other” reasons, with little consistency amongst them, was also given

for non-participation. Amongst those households where residents never swim, 38 percent (16 percent of all respondents) would consider participating if they were able. Their main reasons for non-participation were lack of time/work (39 percent) and lack of motivation (17 percent). Cost was reported as a barrier to swimming by only six percent of those who do not swim but would like to.

The price of entry to facilities was, however, reported as a determinant of the level of participation. Respondents were asked how many times they, or their children, would be likely to go swimming each week at a range of specified prices. At present, the average price of entry paid by adults is \$4.13, while for children the average entry price was more difficult to establish but appears to be slightly less than \$2 per swim. Not only did the numbers of visits per week by those who would still swim decline markedly with increasing price, but the numbers of visitors would also decline. If the average price per adult swim rose to \$7 or more only 33 percent of adults who would swim at prices of less than \$3.00 per visit would do so and the average number of swims per week of those who continue to swim would decline to 0.4. An increase in the average entry price for children would result in a decline in numbers of participants of 30 percent and a reduction in the total number of swimming visits per week to 0.5. Figures 3 and 4 show the expected frequency of swimming by adults and children at a range of average entry prices and the decline in the numbers of swimming visits made as prices increase

Figure 3
Expected average number of adult swimming visits per week at different prices

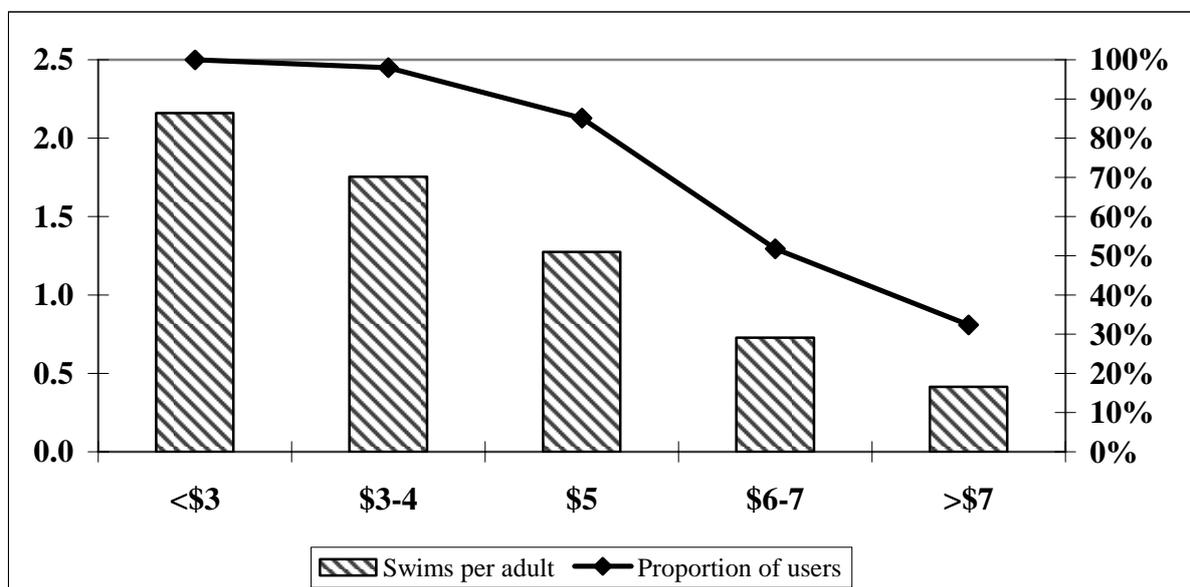
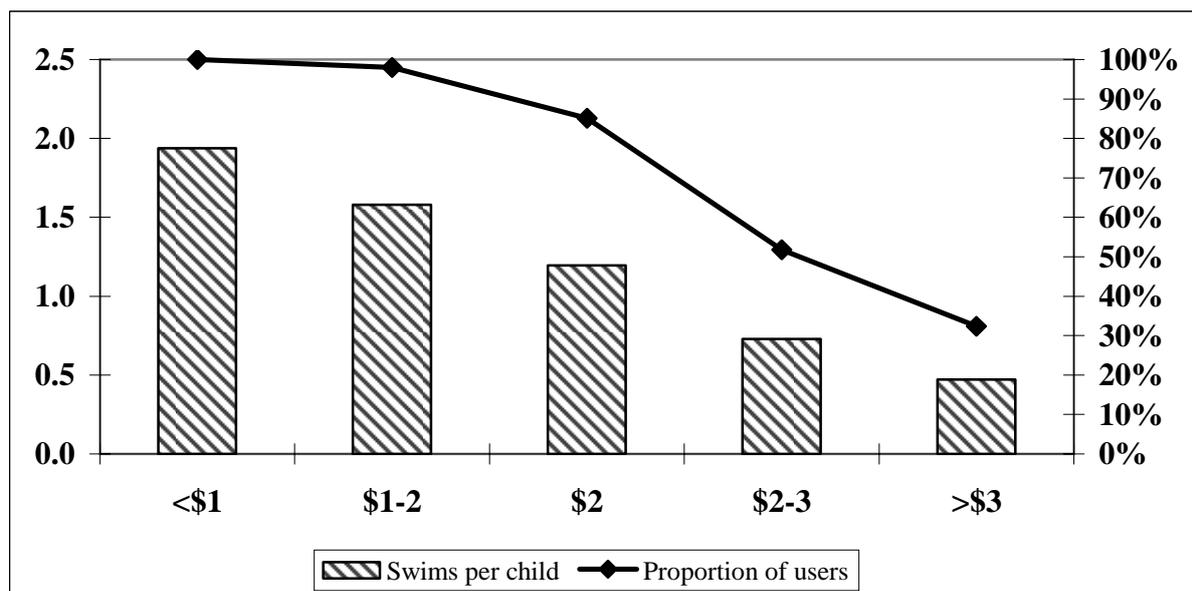


Figure 4
Expected average number of child swimming visits per week at different prices



3.4.2 Involvement in Aquaerobics/AquaFit

Only a comparatively small proportion of residents are currently involved in aquaerobics and aquafit classes. Of those interviewed, eight percent in total are involved (12 percent of those interviewed at leisure centres and six percent of others). Ninety percent of those who do so attend classes at CCC leisure centres and 17.7 percent attend elsewhere (7.5 percent attend classes at more than one venue). The individual venues at which respondents attend these classes are shown in Table 4.

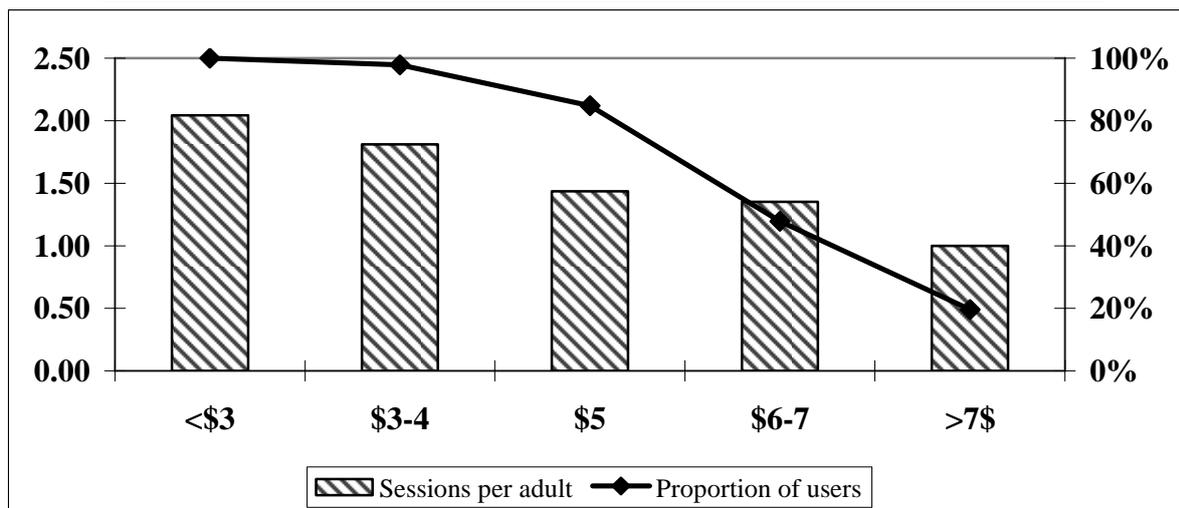
Table 4
Venues attended for aquaerobics/aquaFit

	% of total
Centennial Pool	10.0%
Jellie Park Aqualand	35.0%
QEII Leisure Centre	22.5%
Pioneer Leisure Centre	22.5%
Other Venues	17.5%
Total	107.5%

The average frequency with which those who attend aquaerobics/aquaFit classes do so is 1.6 times per week with 42 percent of who attend doing so once per week, 42 percent attending twice per week, 7.5 percent attending less than once per week and 7.5 percent attending three or more times.

In addition to those who do attend these classes, a further 38 percent of all survey participants reported that they would consider doing so if they were able. Amongst those who said that they would do so, and who gave a reason for not participating at present, 56 percent said time or pressure of work prevented their doing so, 10 percent said they lacked motivation and five percent cited poor health. Although the price of entry to classes was given as a reason for non-participation by less than three percent of those who would consider attending, changes in entry price may be expected to have a significant effect on the level of participation as Figure 5 shows.

Figure 5
Expected average number of classes attended per week at different prices



Although only small increases in the numbers participating in aquaerobics/aquafit classes may be expected from decreasing prices to less than three dollars, increasing them by a similar amount may be expected to lead to a reduction in the numbers participating of almost 60 percent. The decline in the number of sessions per week attended by those who continue is expected to be much smaller.

3.4.3 Involvement in Learn To Swim Programmes

Amongst respondents living in households with children, 27 percent reported that children were attending swimming lessons (30 percent of those interviewed at leisure centres and 25 percent of those interviewed elsewhere). The majority (86 percent) were attending swimming lessons only once per week, with the remainder attending between two and five times per week). A further eight percent reported that they would consider swimming lessons but no consistent reasons were given by these people for not participating at present.

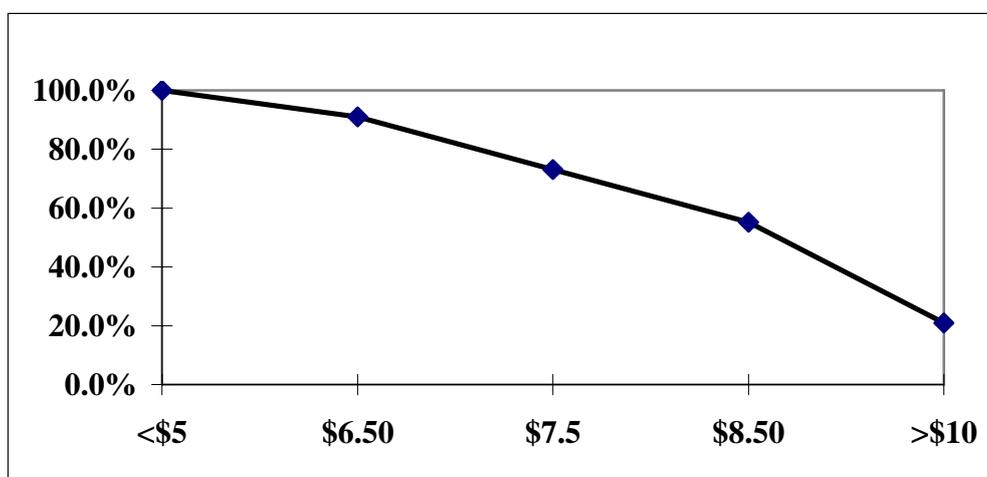
The locations at which participants' children attend swimming lessons are shown in Table 5. There were differences in individual Learn to Swim programmes attended by those who were interviewed at leisure centres and those interviewed elsewhere, but these were not statistically significant. Overall 65 percent of children attending Learn to Swim programmes do so at CCC leisure centres.

Table 5
Learn to Swim programmes attended by survey participants' children

	% of total
Centennial Pool	8.3%
Jellie Park Aqualand	19.4%
QEII Leisure Centre	11.1%
Pioneer Leisure Centre	26.4%
Wharenui Sports Centre	5.6%
Aquagym Pool	5.6%
Kings Swim School	9.7%
Bumble Bees Swim School	5.6%
Other	8.3%
Total	100.0%

Although price was not mentioned as a barrier to attending Learn to Swim programmes at present by any respondents, the level of participation expected at different price levels declines relatively sharply once lessons become more expensive than the current average full price at CCC programmes as Figure 6 shows. Most participants appeared to be unsure of the amount paid for swimming lessons so an average price paid at present could not be estimated. At present CCC programmes cost \$7.50 per lesson (\$6.00 for Community Services Cardholders) for pre-school and school age programmes. An increase in price from \$7.50 per lesson to more than \$10 per lesson is expected to result in a decline in participation level of 71 percent from the level that can be expected if prices were lower than \$5.00 per lesson.

Figure 6
Expected level of participation at different prices



3.4.4 Membership of Fitness Centres

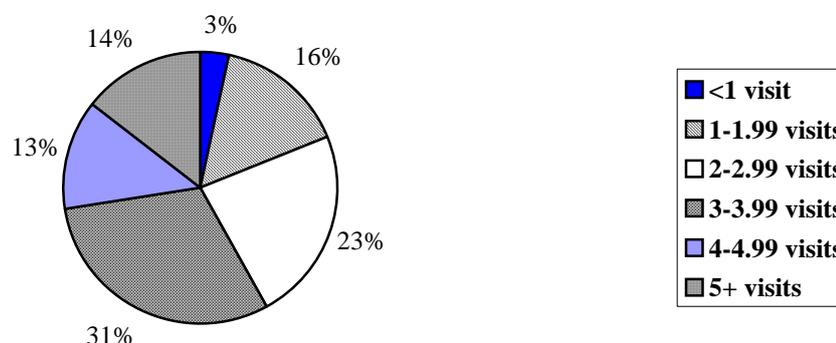
Thirty two percent of those interviewed are members of fitness centres and thirty five percent reported that at least one member of their household was a member. The rate of membership was much higher amongst those interviewed at leisure centres (45 percent) than those interviewed elsewhere (26 percent). The latter figure is a more accurate estimate of the overall membership level amongst Christchurch residents.

While, unsurprisingly, most (79 percent) of those interviewed at leisure centres are members of fitness centres located in CCC leisure centres, in the broader population of those interviewed elsewhere only 17 percent attend these centres. The largest providers to this group are Les Mills and the Universities as Table 6 shows.

Table 6
Fitness centres attended by survey participants and members of their households

	% interviewed at leisure centres	% interviewed elsewhere	% of total
Pioneer Leisure Centre	39%	6%	22%
QE2 Leisure Centre	17%	7%	12%
Universities	8%	14%	11%
Centennial Leisure Centre	13%	2%	8%
Les Mills	2%	11%	7%
Body Tamers – Jellie Park	10%	2%	6%
ProFitness	4%	7%	5%
Other	7%	51%	29%

Figure 7
Frequency (visits per week) of attendance at fitness centres



The average frequency of attendance amongst those who attend fitness centres is three times per week. The frequencies of attendance of all respondents are shown in Figure 7.

Twenty four percent of respondents indicated that, although they are not presently fitness centre members, they would consider membership. These respondents gave as their dominant reasons for not belonging at present, "pressure of work" (45 percent) and "cost" (28 percent). Amongst all those who do not belong to leisure centres the reason most frequently cited was "lack of interest" (53 percent), 12 percent cited "work pressure" and 12 percent "cost. The membership fitness centres used by respondents are shown in Table 7.

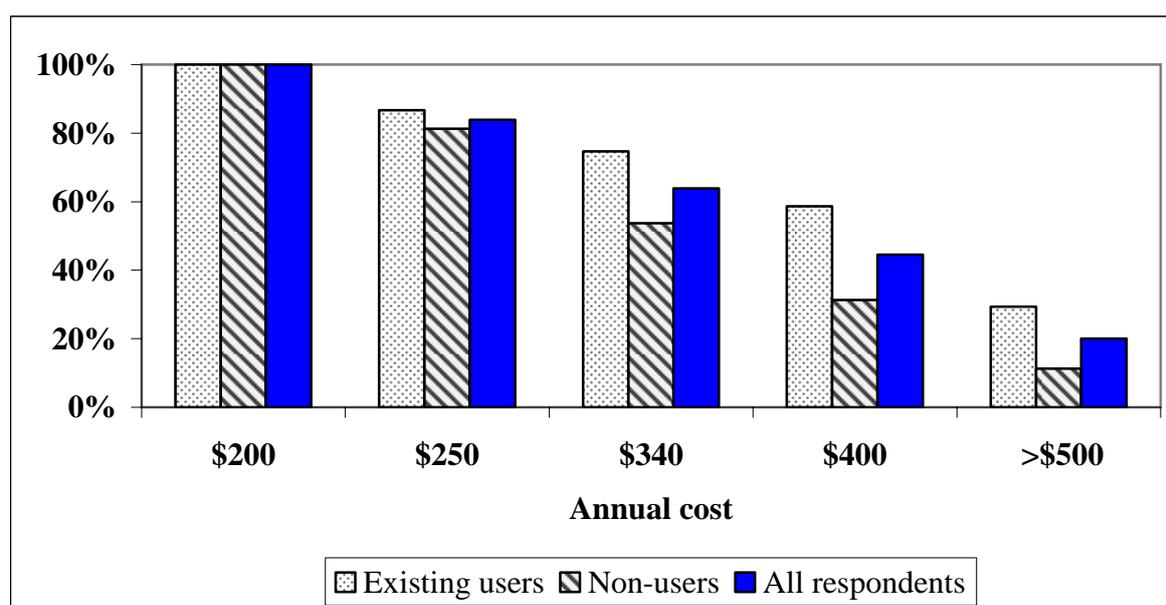
Table 7
Entry costs to fitness centres

	% of respondents	Ticket price	Annual cost
Casual membership	8.5%	\$6	\$579
3 month's membership	21.1%	\$121	\$485
6 month's membership	6.3%	\$247	\$494
12 month's membership	40.1%	\$335	\$335
Multi membership (CCC)	23.9%	\$460	\$460

The average annual membership or attendance cost is \$427, and the median, \$380.

Figure 8 shows the impact of cost on membership levels amongst existing users, non-users prepared to consider membership and all those who are members or would consider membership in future.

Figure 8
Impact of annual cost of fitness centre membership on membership levels



3.4.5 Involvement in Aerobics and Fitness Groups

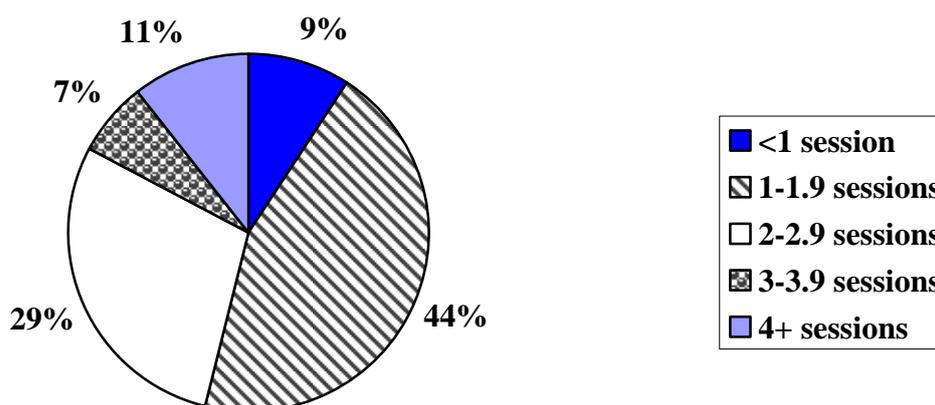
Almost 16 percent of those interviewed reported that they participate in aerobics or fitness activities including yoga and Pilates. The University Recreation Centre is the venue at which the largest group (15.5 percent) of respondents attend these classes as Table 8 shows.

Table 8
Venues of aerobics or fitness classes

Venue	%
Universities	15.5%
QE2 Leisure Centre	9.9%
Pioneer Leisure Centre	8.5%
ProFitness	8.5%
Jellie Park Body Tamers	7.0%
Les Mills	5.6%
Centennial Leisure Centre	2.8%
Home	15.5%
Other Christchurch venues	26.7%

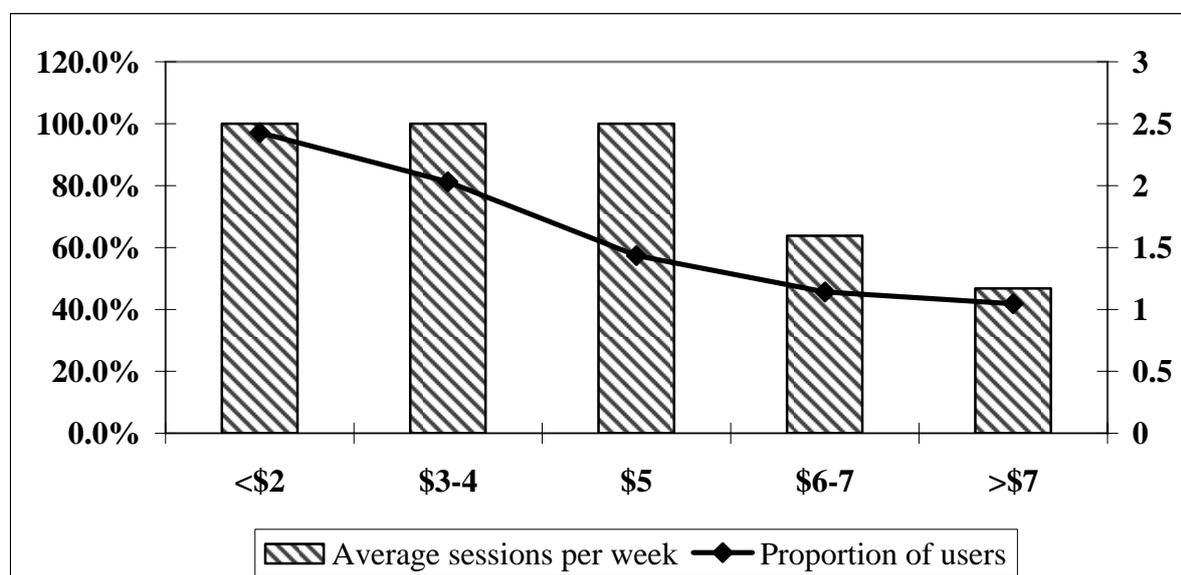
The frequencies with which individual participants attend classes are shown in Figure 9, while the average participant attends classes 1.9 times per week.

Figure 9
Frequency (visits per week) of attendance at aerobics/fitness groups



Another 25 percent of respondents said they would consider attending aerobics or fitness classes, but the largest group of these (70 percent) are presently constrained from doing so by lack of time and/or the pressure of work. Cost was reported as a barrier by 13 percent of this group. Figure 10 shows the reported impact of changing prices on participation in aerobics and fitness classes. The average prices paid at present per class by those who do not attend as part of a fitness centre membership is \$5.77. Relatively little difference in the number of people attending classes may be expected at differing levels of prices below \$6.00, but raising prices from between five and six dollar to between six and seven dollars would result in attendance by 36 percent fewer class members. The number of classes attended per week by those who do attend may be expected to increase sharply if prices were reduced below five dollars per class but to decrease less steeply at higher prices.

Figure 10
Expected level of participation in aerobics/fitness classes at different prices



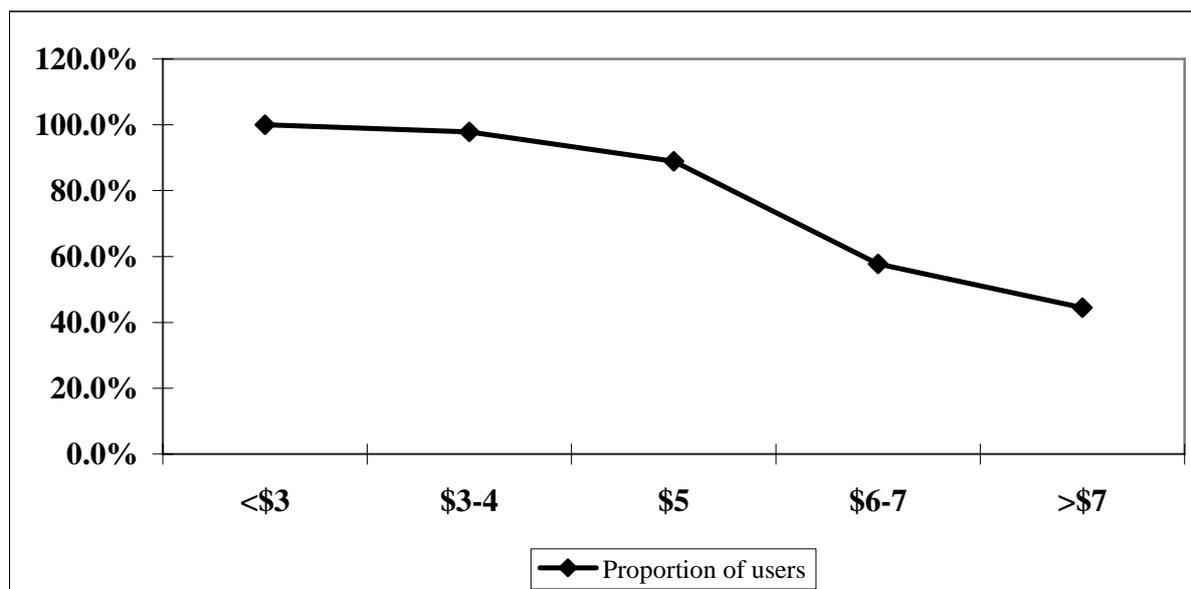
3.4.6 Involvement in Recreational Programmes

Recreational programmes such as gymnastics, jazz dance, etc., provide active recreation for 3.6 percent of the adults interviewed and for the children of 9.7 percent. Forty four percent of those involved attend programmes at CCC leisure centres (50 percent of these at Pioneer) and 35 percent attend dance school programmes, while the remainder use a wide range of programme providers. The majority (78 percent) attend sessions only once per week with ten percent attending twice and the remainder three or more times.

While 62 percent of respondents have no interest in programmes of this type, 17 percent expressed an interest in participating. The most common reason given by these respondents for not doing so was that their health would not allow them to do so (31 percent) followed by lack of time and the pressure of work (28 percent). There was little consistency in the variety of other reasons given for non-participation and cost was cited as a barrier by only 1.7 percent of those interested in recreational programmes.

The average entry price paid per session at recreational programmes was reported as \$4.00 for adults and \$6.00 for children. When respondents were asked whether they would attend recreational programmes at varying prices per session, they indicated that there would be a sharp decline in the numbers who would do so if prices rose to within the \$5.50 to \$6.50 per session range as Figure 11 shows.

Figure 11
Expected level of participation in recreational programmes at different prices



3.4.7 Involvement in Organised Walks

Organised walks are a form of active recreation for six percent of respondents, exactly half of whom walk in groups once per week, while most of the rest (43 percent) walk fewer than once per week. A wide range of walking destinations was reported.

The main reason for not belonging to a walking group was lack of interest (49 percent), while 15 percent reported that they do walk but prefer to do so friends or family. Only six percent of respondents reported that they would consider a joining a walking group, but for most of these lack of time precludes their doing so at present.

The average cost of belonging to a walking group was reported as 40 cents per walk. The number of respondents who replied to the question on involvement at different prices was too small to permit detailed analysis, although a decline of one third of those interested may be expected if prices increase above \$1.50 per walk.

3.4.8 Involvement in Junior Indoor Sports Programmes

The children of ten percent of respondents who have children are involved in junior indoor sports programmes, which the majority (84 percent) attend once per week. Only 20 percent of these attend programmes at CCC facilities while the others play indoor sport at school (30 percent) and a wide range of other venues. A further 18 percent of parents interviewed would consider their children's participation. Of these 74 percent said that their children were too young at present and eight percent that lack of time/pressure of work precluded involvement at present.

The average price paid per session for junior sports programmes is \$2.80 but low respondent numbers preclude detailed evaluation of the response to changing prices. However, respondents indicated that only 40 percent of the children who would be involved at \$2.50-\$3.50 per session would continue to be involved at \$6.50 per session.

3.4.9 Involvement in Children's Holiday Programmes

Children's holiday programmes are attended by the children of 9.3 percent of respondents with children. The majority (61 percent) use these programmes five days a week during the holidays while the second largest group (18 percent) uses them only one day per week. The largest single provider is the CCC (32 percent), followed by schools (20 percent) and community centres and the YMCA (both 16 percent). A further 12 percent of parents would consider using holiday programmes, generally when their children are older. Only seven participants said that cost precluded them from considering holiday programmes (at an average cost of \$12 per day).

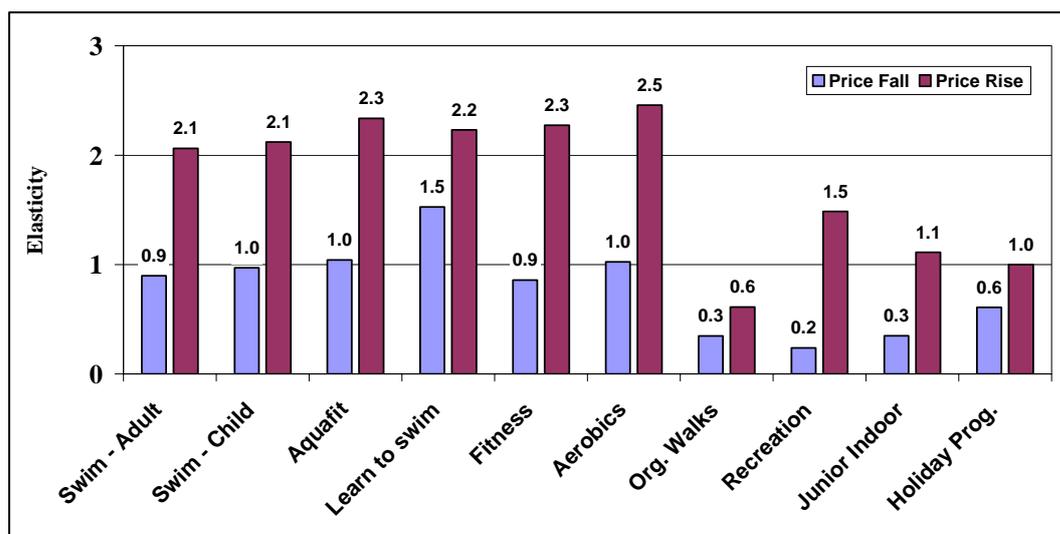
Once again the small number of respondents to the question on involvement at different prices has made detailed analysis impossible but it appears that while increasing prices will have little effect on the average number of session attended by those who do so, the number of people who would send their children to holiday programmes at prices of more than \$20 per day is estimated to be only 25 percent of the number who would do so at \$5 per day.

3.5 Elasticity of Demand

The data obtained from the survey regarding participation at different prices can be used to estimate the sensitivity of participation levels to changes in prices from current levels (either a price rise or a price fall). In particular, survey respondents were asked about their level of patronage at five different price levels. From the midpoint (approximately equal to the current price), it is possible to calculate the price elasticity of demand, defined as the percentage change in quantity demanded divided by the percentage change in the price. If the price elasticity of demand is greater than 1, it means that demand is sensitive to price ('elastic'), and so a reduction in the price leads to a greater percentage increase in patronage, increasing total revenue. If the price elasticity of demand is less than 1, it means that demand is relatively insensitive to price ('inelastic'), and so a reduction in the price would have little effect on demand and total revenue would fall.

Figure 12 shows the calculated values of the price elasticity of demand for both price falls and price rises. In all cases but one, the statistic is 1 or less for price falls, and in all cases but one, the statistic is 1 or greater for price rises. This suggests that it would not be possible to increase total revenue by either lowering or raising prices for all participants. The exceptions are learning to swim (where a lower price would encourage much greater involvement) and organised walks (where a higher price would not have a strong impact on participation).

Figure 12
Price elasticity of demand for CCC leisure facilities and programmes



3.6 Sample Demographic Data

The demographic characteristics of the sample differed significantly from the characteristics of the population as a whole in several aspects. As Figures 13 to 17 show, the sample included a much higher proportion of females than the population as a whole (68 percent compared to 52 percent) and included more people in the middle age groups (30 to 50 years). Respondents' households had much higher incomes than the population of Christchurch as a whole but, probably because a higher proportion of respondents were women with children, were more likely to be in part time employment and less likely to be actively searching for employment than the wider population. New Zealand Europeans were slightly over-represented in the sample, at the expense of Maori and Asians.

Figure 13
Gender comparison: Sample and Christchurch population

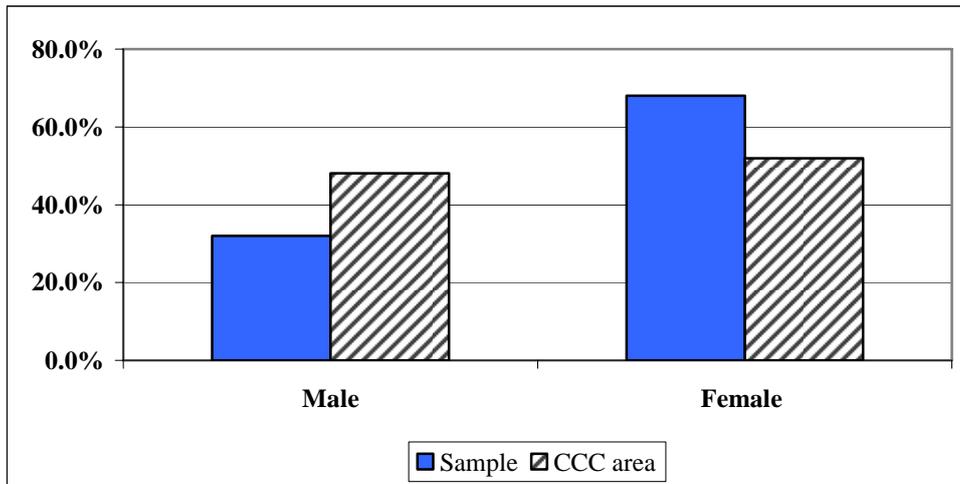


Figure 14
Age comparison: Sample and Christchurch population

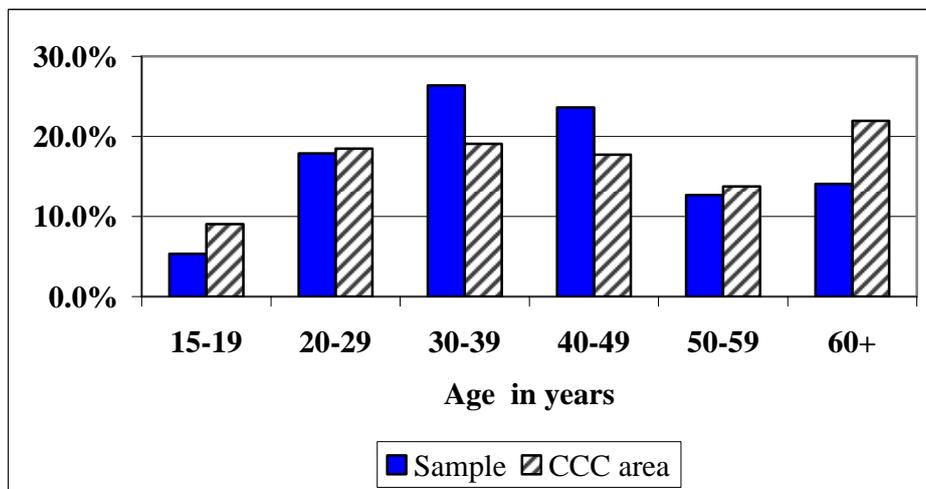


Figure 15
Income comparison: Sample and Christchurch population

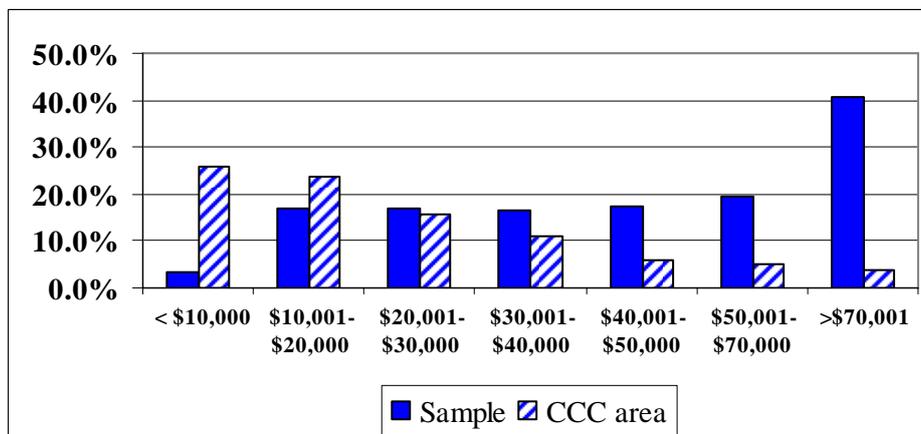


Figure 16
Labour force status comparison: Sample and Christchurch population

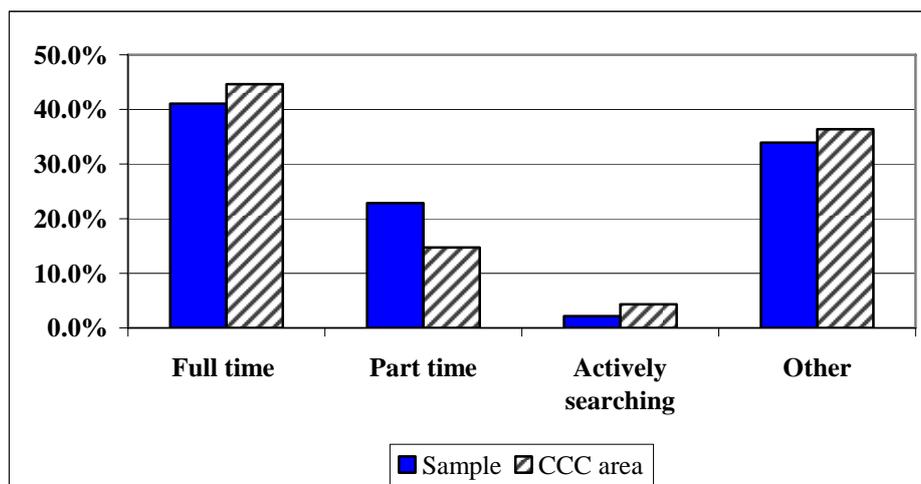
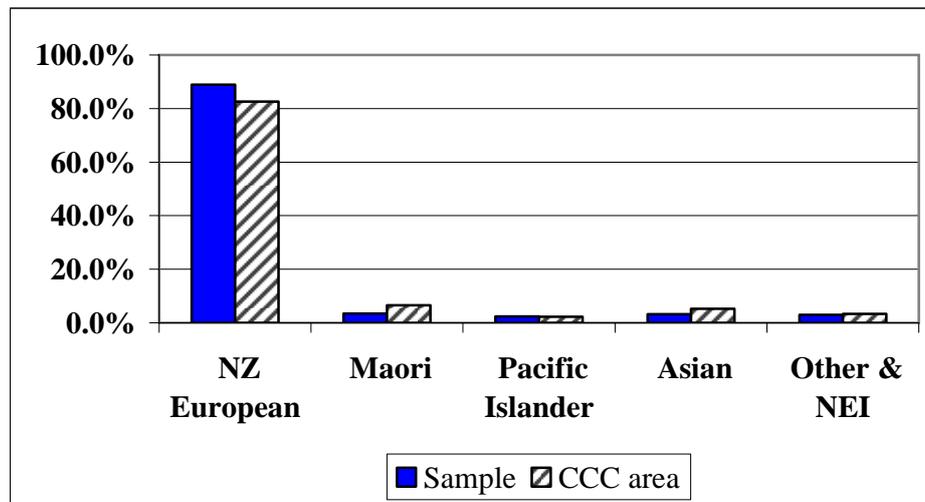


Figure 17
Ethnicity comparison: Sample and Christchurch population



3.7 Summary of Survey Results

All respondents to the survey reported some level of physical activity, while the majority (96 percent) are involved in some form of active recreation including activities provided by CCC or walking, jogging or playing sports once a week. Activities of the type provided by CCC provide active recreation for 77 percent.

Fewer of the children of respondents are engaged in active recreation of these types with only 53 percent involved in the forms of active recreation covered by the survey and 46 percent involved in the types of activities provided by CCC.

Swimming is the leisure pursuit of the type provided by CCC that is undertaken by the largest numbers of adult respondents and their children. For adults, working out at fitness centres is the next most common form of physical recreation followed by membership of fitness groups. None of the other activities covered by the survey are engaged in by as many as 10 percent of respondents. Amongst the children of respondents only swimming and swimming lessons involve more than 10 percent as Figure 18 shows.

The numbers of households who would consider involvement in the activities discussed are shown in Figure 19, which shows that adults are most interested in aquaerobics/aquafit, fitness centre memberships and fitness/aerobics groups. The largest groups of parent respondents are interested in junior sports programmes and recreational programmes for their children.

The main reason why those who would consider involvement are not involved at present is lack of time and pressure of work. Cost is a barrier to fitness centre membership for 28 percent of respondents who would consider membership and constrains 13 percent of those who would consider joining fitness groups but less than five percent of those considering aquaerobics, recreational programmes and other activities.

Figure 18
Adult and child involvement in active recreational activities

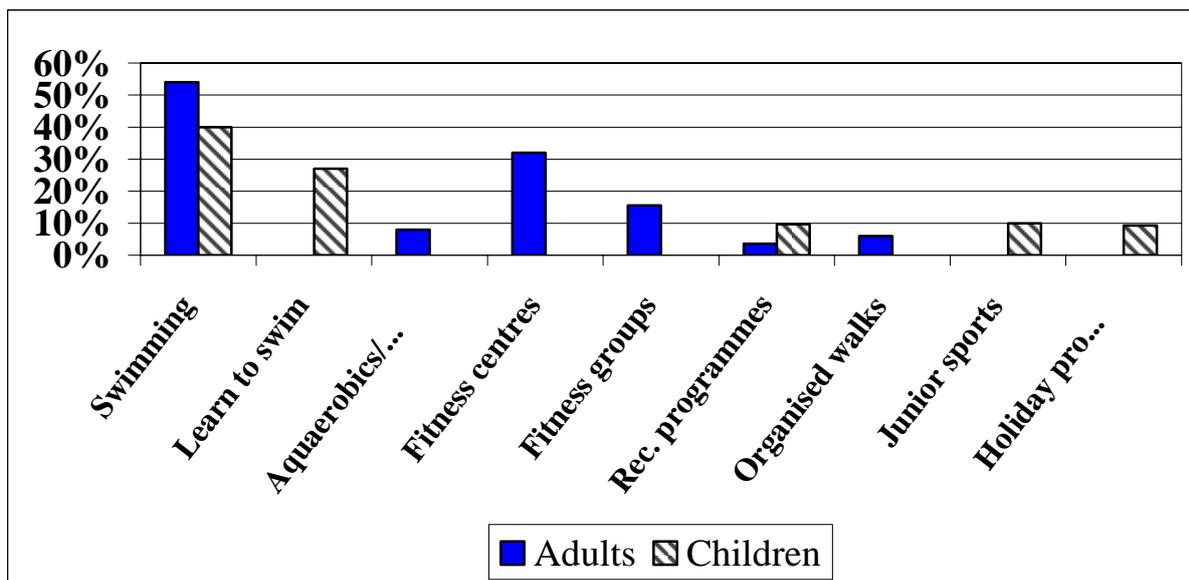
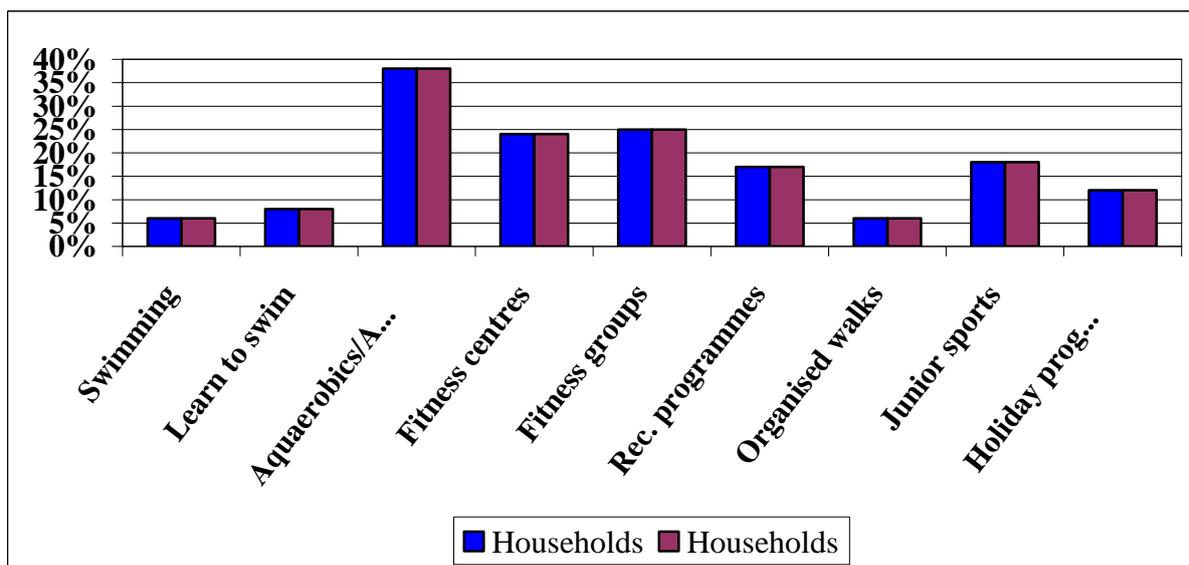


Figure 19
Household consideration of future involvements



CCC facilities are the most common venues for swimming (98 percent), aquaerobics/aquafit (90percent), swimming lesson (65 percent) and recreational programmes (50 percent).

The analysis of the price elasticity of demand for leisure services indicates that the current pricing policy is sensible if one of its objectives is to maximise the contribution of users to meeting the costs of the facilities. With only a couple of (minor) exceptions, general price increases would have a greater percentage impact on demand, reducing total revenue, while general reductions in price would not stimulate enough extra patronage to compensate for the lost revenue.

SECTION 4

RESULTS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

4.1 The Structure of the Focus Groups

The six focus groups were held in October and early November 2004 and, although the format of each of the groups was essentially similar, the aspects discussed were tailored to the characteristics of each individual group. It was intended that twelve members be recruited for each group in the expectation that ten would attend, which was achieved in all but one case.

Broadly, members of each group discussed their existing levels of participation in active recreation activities, the reasons why they chose the activities they were involved in and the barriers to further participation if any had been encountered. Approaches to reducing the importance of cost as a barrier to participation, were explored in some detail before other actions that might be taken by the CCC to overcome barriers to participation were examined and interest in Council programmes gauged. Finally the relative importance of active recreation amongst other spending choices was discussed.

4.1.1 The Average Participants Focus Groups

This group comprised regular users of CCC leisure centres, who were to have been recruited by the managers of the four leisure centres. However, as only six members were recruited by this method, two additional members were approached directly and agreed to attend, taking the total to eight. The meeting was held on the evening of October 14, 2004 at QEII Leisure Centre. It comprised seven women and one man.

All except two members hold "multi-memberships" to fitness centres that entitle them to use the aerobics and weight training gyms at QEII, Pioneer, Centennial and Sockburn Leisure Centres. One belongs only to QEII and the other is a regular pool user but does not use the gym. All attend the leisure centres several times each week. Going to the gym was the only form of regular physical exercise reported by three group members who are mothers of young children, but other group members are involved in a diverse range of other activities including cycling and mountain biking, skiing and snow-boarding, roller-blading and triathlons. Most engaged in at least two, and often more, different activities and were happy with their current level of physical activity.

4.1.2 The Older Non-participants Focus Group

The Third Age Centre, whose membership is older adults, helped CCC recruit 12 group members, who are all over 55 years of age and use CCC leisure facilities irregularly or not at all. A limitation of this approach that applied to most groups was that because participants were members of at least one social organisation, individuals who are not members of such groups are not captured and the views expressed by the group are those of "more involved" members of the Christchurch community. The group comprised seven women and five men. The meeting was held during the afternoon of October 18, 2004 at the Canterbury Horticultural Society Hall.

Most group members are involved in regular exercise, generally walking (ten participants), while five reported cycling or mountain biking and four dance regularly. Only two swim

occasionally and another had done so before her recent hip replacement. Several considered gardening to be an important form of active recreation for them.

Use of CCC facilities was limited to two group members who swim at CCC leisure centres and two who belong to walking groups run by the CCC. A number of participants would like to be involved in more activity if the barriers discussed in Section 4.3 could be overcome.

4.1.3 The Families from a Low Decile School Focus Groups

The third group, comprising twelve parents, four men and eight women, from a low decile school was assembled by the South Hornby School Parent Teacher Association. South Hornby is a decile 3 school on the east side of Christchurch. All group members have at least one child at primary/intermediate school and at least one at secondary school. The group met in the school staffroom on the evening of October 19, 2004.

All members of this group go to considerable effort to ensure their children are physically active, at least during their primary and early secondary school years, although some older children are no longer actively involved. Most of their children play at least one team sport, of which soccer and touch are the most frequently played, while eight families numbered swimming among the activities their families undertook regularly, at least in summer. The children of one family take swimming lessons at a CCC facility and two families are involved in swimming lessons at a non-CCC facility. Several families walk and/or tramp regularly. Three of the female group members reported their own active recreation is limited at present to irregular walking, but all others are actively involved. In two cases this involvement is solely through coaching children's sports teams, while another two coach children's teams as well as participating in other activities. Three play team sports themselves and the others are involved in a range of activities. The activities with which this group and their families are involved do not generally involve costly equipment or lessons. Most were satisfied with their level of physical activity although three women acknowledged that they should do more.

The only use of CCC facilities reported by this group is that three families swim regularly at CCC pools. CCC holiday programmes and recreation programmes have not been used.

4.1.4 The Families from a Medium/High Decile School Focus Groups

The Kirkwood Intermediate School Parent Teacher Association recruited members for this group, which met in the staffroom on the evening of October 26. Kirkwood is a decile 7 intermediate school in Riccarton, which takes pupils from many areas of Christchurch and surrounding districts as well as its main local contributing schools. Members of this group also have children currently at both primary/intermediate school and secondary school. Five men and seven women were participants.

All members of this focus group both ensure that their children are physically active and are physically active themselves. Most are involved in at least one active recreational activity with their children (such as tennis, skiing, or swimming) as well as undertaking at least one activity of their own and supporting their children in their activities. The range of activities undertaken by families from this group is much more diverse than the activities reported by the South Hornby group, and includes lessons in activities such as swimming, trampolining, dancing, and martial arts. The children of this group play team sports such as rugby and soccer but these do not comprise their only sporting activities. Most were satisfied with the level of activity in which they and their families engage.

Most group members' families swim at CCC pools and there was some discussion over whether local tennis courts, which are used by several families, are maintained by CCC. Group member's families had not attended CCC holiday programmes or recreation programmes.

4.15 The Independent Youth Focus Group

For purposes of the study, "independent youth" was defined as young people of between 18 and 25 years of age who have left school. Members were recruited from a database, held by CCC, of young people prepared to be involved in consultation on local issues and comprised both students and young working people who had recently completed tertiary education. Of the eleven group members, seven were female and four were male. The group met in the early evening on November 4 at the Christchurch South Library.

Five group members reported that they are not regularly involved in active recreation and several recognised that a higher level of physical activity would be desirable. Three of these were male group members who play only games of social sport (such as touch or cricket) with friends on an ad-hoc basis, two were women who had attended a gym in the recent past but were at present only walking when time allowed. One group member swims daily at QEII and is also involved in a wide range of active recreational activities, and the remaining participants exercise regularly by walking, swimming and other individual activities.

Those group members who swim do so at CCC pools and also use the spa facilities there. The gyms attended in the past were not operated by CCC.

4.1.6 The Low Income Non-Participants Focus Group

The final focus group also met at the Christchurch South Library, at lunchtime on November 10. Its ten members were recruited by Anglican Care social workers based at three community cottages in lower income areas of the city. Four group members were women and seven were men. Some were beneficiaries and the remainder were in part-time work only.

With the exception of one group member whose physical disability often limits his ability to exercise all members of this group are involved in active recreation. Walking is the most common activity, with six members reporting that they walk regularly and two others that they walk sometimes. Four attend a gymnasium (three as part of fully-funded or subsidised programmes and one as part of a team) and three group members cycle. Only one group member reported that he swims regularly at a CCC pool and members of this group do not use other CCC facilities for active recreation. Most would like to be involved in a wider range of activities if the barriers discussed in section 4.3 could be overcome.

4.2 Reasons for Participation

There was no consistency in the reasons given for their involvement in active recreation by those who are members of CCC facilities. Their reasons include weight loss, time-out from family commitments, health maintenance, training for other sport and enjoyment. Three mothers of young children have selected using the gym as a means of keeping fit because it involves "the minimum time for the maximum effect" and is flexible in terms of time of attendance. Others have chosen activities they enjoy or which fit into a specific training or rehabilitation programmes. Two women who attend the QEII gym spoke of the high quality

of personal trainers as a reason for using that facility, although they held multi-memberships and could have used other CCC gyms.

Members of the older group are particularly aware of the need to keep active in order to maintain their health and to regain or maintain mobility. They also spoke of the need to keep busy in old age and of the social aspects of walking with friends. Most have chosen walking as their main physical activity because it is low cost and can be done at any time, almost anywhere. Three have been forced by health problems to give up more vigorous activities such as line-dancing and consider walking to be one of the activities they can do despite their disabilities. Not only those who choose to swim, but the group as a whole regard aquatic exercise as an extremely valuable form of exercise for older people, particularly those with some level of physical disability, such as arthritis, because of its low impact and because it is relaxing.

Amongst the South Hornby group, parents recognise the need to involve their children in physical activity at an early age to establish healthy patterns for their later life. Soccer and touch are particularly strong in this area and their peers draw many children into these sports. Parents' own recreational choices are governed by convenience, with a number agreeing that structured activities are difficult to fit in at this stage of their lives, so walking the children to school and perhaps continuing further or walking in odd spare moments is the most satisfactory means of being physically active for them. The other major reason for selection of particular activities is the desire to be actively involved in their children's activities. There was a strong commitment amongst some group members to ensuring that team sports remained accessible to as many children as possible in the area. One group member had coached several teams at the start of the soccer season because of the difficulty of finding enough coaches and his reluctance to turn any child away.

Members of the group held at the mid-to-high decile school also recognise their responsibility to involve their children in physical recreation for the benefit of their health now, and in later life. They also discussed the importance of team sports in developing self discipline and responsibility to others as well as providing valuable social interaction and enjoyment. Physical activity is seen by some as an excellent way of keeping children out of trouble. For themselves physical activity is seen as an important component of a healthy lifestyle, as a means of expanding their social circles, and as fun. Their personal choices of individual activities have been governed by their personal preferences for different types of activity.

For most members of the independent youth focus group, physical activity is strongly linked to social activity. They want to have fun with their friends and have little patience with activities they consider to be good for them but boring. They are aware that physical activity is important for health but this is not an over-riding concern for most at this stage.

Low-income focus group members recognise the physical and mental health benefits of physical activity but must make their active recreation choices primarily on the basis of their ability to pay. Unless they are part of a subsidised programme, their choices are generally limited to walking or biking, which have the added benefit of reducing transport costs.

4.3 Barriers to Participation

The barriers to participation encountered by the participants group are time, and limitations imposed by the facilities themselves. Those with young children spoke of lack of time and the difficulties of co-ordinating family activities and their own exercise time, and of obtaining childcare. Two others consider lack of time because of work commitments an issue.

A number of participants feel that CCC leisure centre use levels are too high at many times of the day. Long delays in accessing exercise equipment, because of heavy usage and the failure of leisure centre staff to ensure booking systems are adhered to, make it difficult to complete their programmes in the time available. At Centennial Leisure Centre early closing compounds this problem. The difficulties of accessing a 50 metre pool were discussed as this facility is available only at QEII and the bulkhead is frequently in place in the competition pool without advance warning, reducing the length to 25 metres. The lack of access to CCC facilities near Sumner and to the West of Christchurch is also considered to be a barrier to participation.

For the members of the older group the costs of fitness centre membership or regular entry to pools or aqua-jogging are seen as a serious barrier to use of CCC facilities. Although the costs are lower if long-term memberships or pool concessions are purchased, those on low fixed incomes are unable to find the money “up-front” to purchase these. Several participants have given up swimming or are swimming much less frequently because of the costs of entry, and two who would like to attend a fitness centre abandoned plans to join after discovering the costs of membership.

Personal barriers to participation include health problems that preclude more vigorous forms of exercise or make it difficult to keep up with able-bodied people in walking groups, and lack of time because of the range of other activities with which they are involved. Two admitted that lack of motivation constrains their participation.

Like the previous group, older participants identified features of the facilities that were barriers to participation. Several arthritic group members regard the water temperature in pools other than toddlers’ pools as too low for comfortable exercise. One discussed the fact that in Dunedin, access to the warm hospital pool meant that she swam regularly but since moving to Christchurch she has had to give up. Group members also spoke about overcrowding in the pools and the lack of lane space for slower lap swimmers. Overcrowding, particularly by children, in the spas was also discussed as a disincentive to using leisure centres. Several participants felt that spas could be a valuable resource for those suffering from arthritis.

The South Hornby parents saw relatively few barriers to their younger children’s involvement in team sports. They did not consider that the club subscriptions paid for team sports in the area were excessive and the ready availability of second-hand equipment kept the other costs of participation to a manageable level. However, two families had discouraged daughters from playing netball because of the parking problems at Hagley Park on Saturday. There are significant barriers to use of leisure centre facilities, particularly for families with several children. The entry costs to pools for those with several children are considered by some to be too high, although others feel that pool entry charges are reasonable but that “add-ons” such as the hydrosides at QEII and Jellie Park, which children inevitably want to use, are a

barrier. Spectator entry charges are regarded as unreasonable since they penalise parents who do not expect the CCC to “act as a babysitter”. Secondly, the lack of such facilities in this area means that it is necessary to drive some distance to access these facilities. Gymnasium membership for children and adults is regarded by most to be too expensive to consider but this was not an issue that concerned the majority of participants.

There are considered to be too few active recreation opportunities for older children in the area and this group was identified as being at risk of “dropping out” of physical activity in favour of computers, playstations, etc. Some discussion was held on the types of activities that might encourage a higher level of participation amongst this group (see Section 4.4). CCC holiday programmes were considered to be too expensive for families with several children, although other groups in the area, particularly a programme run at Gilberthorpe were considered to be of value, although spaces are very limited.

Amongst group members themselves, personal barriers to increased participation for the few people who do not feel they do sufficient physical exercise were time, because of work and family demands, and motivation. In addition, the lack of pleasant places to walk in the area was seen as a significant disincentive. Participants felt that in many areas of Christchurch such places are close at hand but in the Hornby and Hei Hei areas it is necessary to take the car to find open spaces to walk in. While there are open spaces towards Templeton and Halswell, there are no footpaths in these directions and it is necessary to walk close to fast moving traffic.

The Kirkwood group did not identify many barriers to active recreation. While there was discussion on the problems of finding time to transport children to a wide range of activities, this did not appear to constrain their children’s involvement. Two people spoke of the difficulty of finding motivation for their own physical activity at this stage of their lives. While cost was identified as a barrier by a small number of group members, others acknowledged that costs of lessons, tennis club subscriptions and skiing were high but they were not imposing a barrier to their families’ involvement in the activities they enjoy.

The main barriers identified by the independent youth group were the lack of access to facilities at the times they generally undertake recreation activities, and the difficulties of getting involved with social, rather than competitive sports. Active recreation for many of this group must also be a social event and the social lives of people in this age group do not begin until late evening. It was felt that by the time they could be organised to go for a swim with their friends, followed by a spa, leisure centres were within minutes of closing. For those who would enjoy playing social sport on a regular basis the problems associated with attempting to get teams together, obtain sponsorship for tee-shirts, etc., appear to be an overwhelming barrier. As one participant said, and others agreed, “...we go from school where absolutely everything is organised for us into a kind of vacuum”.

For lower income group members, cost and access are insuperable barriers to forms of active recreation other than walking and cycling unless they are involved in heavily subsidised programmes.

The costs of entry to pools and aqua-jogging, particularly as this group cannot meet the “up-front” costs of cheaper concession cards or pool memberships mean that seven group members are unable to participate in a form of activity they particularly enjoy, and which

would be beneficial for their physical and mental health. They noted that while subsidies are available for some fitness centre programmes for people with disabilities, this is not so for swimming. Gym membership is even less accessible to most on low incomes, although six group members expressed an interest in this form of recreation. In addition, access to leisure centres often involves taking two buses and the limit of two hours on the bus transfer system means that it is difficult to get into facilities, change and exercise without incurring the costs of two separate fares.

A number of members of the group had weight problems or physical disabilities and said that they feel uncomfortable in leisure centres, which they view as a “higher socio-economic environment”. There was general agreement with the participant who said “...they don’t want people like us in places like that.” The “they” referred to appeared to include both management and other patrons. Group members felt that their needs are ignored because of economic and/or health problems.

4.4 Price Changes as an Incentive/Disincentive to Participation

When discussing prices, members of three groups (older, low-income and South Hornby) independently suggested that pool entry prices should be about \$2.00 to be easily manageable for those on low incomes. The low-income group members appeared to see \$2.00 as the maximum sum for any extra item that could be accommodated in their already strained budgets. Although group members were not able to suggest appropriate price reductions for gym memberships, members of the older group felt that being able to pay a casual rate that equated to existing annual membership fees for those who used the gym twice per week would be manageable. Each group discussed a range of potential pricing strategies for increasing participation for themselves or other groups in the community.

4.4.1 Increasing Entry Prices or Rates

Although cost was not a barrier to participation for members of the average participants focus group, it was acknowledged that finding membership fees, even for those on comparatively high salaries, is not easy. If prices increased even by ten percent for any reason a number of participants felt that they would certainly look at other options. This group was totally opposed to increasing rates to subsidise facility use by those on low incomes, as they did not feel that such social objectives are part of the core business of local government. The Kirkwood group felt that existing prices were already high enough but were divided in their views on whether a rates increase to help subsidise those on low income would be warranted. Members of the older non-participants group felt that prices are already too high for them. As they believe that there is already a subsidy from the CCC to leisure centre operations they consider that they are already subsidising participation by those who, unlike themselves, can afford to use leisure centres at current prices. For that reason this group was strongly opposed to any increase in rates for this purpose. Independent youth focus group members also consider that prices are already too high, although not a barrier to participation for them, and would be opposed to any increase. As non-rate-payers they did not have views on increasing rates for this purpose.

4.4.2 Introduction of Off-Peak Prices

Current users support the introduction of lower off-peak prices as a means of reducing congestion by others, but not as a means of increasing their own participation levels. In fact this group believes that increased participation should not be encouraged unless new facilities are built as they consider that existing leisure centres are overcrowded much of the time. Neither of the parents groups considered that off-peak pricing would increase participation by people in their situations, since work and school commitments would prevent working parents or their children from using facilities during the times when leisure centres are less busy. Independent youth felt that off-peak pricing after 9.00 pm would encourage people of their age group to use leisure centres, while some members of both the older and low-income groups, who are not in employment, would use the facilities more if off-peak pricing applied during school hours.

4.4.3 Discounted Family Prices

Both groups of parents, parents in the current users group, and a number of members of the older focus group felt that discounted family passes would make it easier for families, particularly those on lower incomes, to use pool facilities and would, therefore, increase participation.

4.4.4 Lower Prices for Community Services Card or a Leisure Passport System

Members of the older, low income and independent youth focus groups supported the idea of price reductions for those on community services cards as a means of increasing participation. Members of the older group, however, felt that the difference between full and discounted prices would have to be much greater than existing community services card reductions to make much difference. Existing users felt that such reductions would have to be funded through price increases for others or through increases in local authority rates and were, consequently opposed to the idea. Members of the South Hornby focus group were also opposed to this approach because of their concern that many families on incomes only slightly higher than the cut-off or Community Services Card eligibility are worse off than those who receive significant discounts on a range of services because they do qualify. They consider that such schemes are inequitable. Kirkwood parents were divided on this issue too. Some members agreed that discounts of this type should be available for pool entry, but not for gym membership, which they regard as a “luxury item” for which other, less costly forms of active recreation (walking, exercises) can be substituted. Swimming they considered to be very beneficial for all, and as having no real substitutes. The independent youth group discussed the fact that not all students have Community Services Cards although most are on very low incomes. A leisure passport system that has broader criteria may well increase participation amongst this group.

4.5 Non-Price Incentives to Increase Participation

The group comprising current users of leisure centres identified three areas in which CCC could work to increase or maintain participation levels. For mothers of young children a major barrier to participation is the lack of availability of childcare on a casual basis. It is their perception that although crèche facilities are available at QEII, obtaining places for

children while their mothers exercise is virtually impossible. The availability of casual crèche facilities at low or no cost as a membership benefit would, they consider, increase participation by this section of the community. It is also important that advance bookings can be made for places in the childcare centre so mothers can plan their exercise sessions, but bookings should be limited to 60 minutes.

Their other suggestions related to keeping existing users rather than attracting new ones. Group members believed that entry to the pools should be part of multi memberships at no extra charge and that there should be rewards for loyalty. A system that allow members' visits to be recorded and allocations reward points that could be offset against membership costs, the costs of bringing friends, etc., would be very much appreciated. They consider that numbers using the centres should be capped as over-crowding in both pools and fitness centres is becoming a serious issue. More aqua-jogging facilities are required in Christchurch.

Members of the older non-participants focus groups considered that programmes of low impact exercise such as Tai Chi, preferably run by CCC in local facilities, would motivate older members of the community to be more active. They also consider that low-cost or free assessment of needs, and assistance with the design of individual exercise programmes that meet the health needs of the elderly, as well their preferences for individual and group activity, would be of value. Access to a warm (more than 30° C) swimming pool for people with arthritis, and other health problems exacerbated by cold, was regarded as important by several as very important. One group member described walking tracks seen in a city overseas which had distances marked at regular intervals and incorporated routes of different lengths, which group members felt would assist them in planning their daily exercise regimes. They felt that this structured approach would enable people to meet and walk with others who have similar abilities and intentions.

The South Hornby focus group also supported the concept of CCC running active recreation programmes in local venues particularly, but not exclusively, for teenagers. However, group members felt strongly that it would be necessary to consult widely with teens in the area to discover which activities would interest them and to provide opportunities to sample a range of activities as part of the consultation process. All group members were emphatic that it is essential that a leisure centre be built in or near this area, which they consider particularly disadvantaged in terms of active recreation facilities. That centre, and other CCC facilities, should charge a single entry price that covers all activities in the centre as is common in Australia. Other incentives to increase use of CCC facilities, particularly by parents with small children, included better maintenance of local parks and provision of adequate toilet facilities in parks and playgrounds. A number of participants also considered that provision by CCC of access to subsidised holiday programmes that offer children with the opportunity to try new physical activities would be of considerable value to the area's families.

Community participation in active recreation could be increased if CCC provided opportunities for residents to try new activities, in the opinion of Kirkwood focus group members. Suggestions included the development of cycle hire facilities at places like Bottle Lake so that visitors can make spontaneous decisions to exercise. Programmes that offered children the opportunity to try sports such as surfing or rock-climbing at low cost during weekends or school holidays, using equipment owned by CCC would enable them to make informed decisions on active recreation without involving their parents in capital outlay that may be wasted. Similarly, encouraging and assisting sporting groups to run programmes such

as the development bike programme run by Canterbury cycling, which hires cycles for one year to potential members would encourage participation.

This group also suggested that making the development of facilities such as tennis courts, areas for basketball hoops etc., mandatory in all new subdivisions would encourage children to see active recreation as a normal part of daily life. Improvements in existing CCC facilities suggested included the provision of a wider range of play equipment in parks and playgrounds. Almost all parks now have the same range of safe but unchallenging equipment that does not encourage children to develop their physical abilities. Like the South Hornby group, parents at this focus group recognise the difficulty of keeping secondary school age children actively involved in physical recreation when they get to the age when involvement in school teams is for the elite rather than the average sports person. Provision of lower cost gym memberships for teenagers, even if they were limited to particular times of day are seen as a way of establishing good patterns for later life. While there are excellent, relatively low-cost facilities at the Hornby Working Men's Club, families did not want teenagers spending their leisure time in "a drinking, smoky, gambling environment."

All CCC facilities should make it easy for parents to supervise children and be involved in their activities. At present the lack of poolside space at Pioneer Leisure Centre makes it very difficult for parents to supervise and encourage children. Parents in this group also consider that CCC parks should be better maintained with respect to litter and dog control specifically, and that the lack of parking in the vicinity of the Hagley Park netball courts should be addressed urgently. There was little interest in the provision of CCC programmes in local facilities amongst this group of focus group participants.

Members of the independent youth focus group suggested several approaches to increasing participation by members of their age group. These included combining sports events such as fun runs with social events like concerts in Hagley Park or barbeques at the beach, as well as facilitating regular opportunities for activities such as outdoor rock climbing trips with access to equipment. There appeared to be a clear preference for activities targeted at this age group rather than encouraging them to join in events with "lots of little kids"

Members of the 18 to 24 age group see later closing of CCC leisure centres as the key to increasing their use by this age group. It was noted that Moana Pool, operated by the Dunedin City Council, is open until 10.30pm and is extensively used by young people between 9.00 and 10.30pm.

The development of social sports competitions for young people is also regarded by the members of this focus group as an initiative likely to increase participation by members of a group that tends to drop out of activities in which they have been involved while younger. They feel that CCC could provide assistance with coordination, obtaining sponsorship from city businesses for tee-shirts and equipment, and a system of registration, probably via the CCC website, and publicity.

Members of the low-income focus group reflected that people in their situation frequently have very low expectations and are reluctant to ask for things. If CCC wants to increase their participation it will be necessary to "get out and ask them what they need and keep doing it". Suggested non-price incentives for increased participation included setting up group transport from locations easy for people on low incomes to reach (community cottages, city centre,

etc.) to leisure centres at regular times each week. This could be extended to regular trips out of town to allow people to walk in pleasanter environments. It was noted that church groups provide these services to members but there is no provision of similar services to others. Other types of programmes run in local facilities would also increase participation if they were tailored to meet the needs of each individual local community.

Provided the costs can be lowered sufficiently for low-income people to use leisure centre facilities, developing loyalty or reward schemes may encourage increased participation in activities at leisure centres. Several participants agreed that for those who are overweight, or have mild disabilities, attending sessions where they feel that "...the dolly birds are laughing at us" makes them feel self-conscious. The possibility of providing free, or heavily subsidised, access for people such as mental health patients whose doctors have recommended "green prescriptions" but who do not have the type of specific disability that enables them to get special concessions, was also endorsed by group members.

4.6 The Place of Active Recreation in Expenditure Priorities

The current users group regards expenditure on active recreation as an item of essential rather than discretionary spending and, with one exception, ranked it more highly than any of the goods and services on which they spend discretionary income. The three parents in the group agreed that they would sacrifice their own leisure centre memberships before cancelling children's swimming lessons or other activities but in general group members could not envisage reducing their participation levels for any reason.

While members of the older focus group were agreed about the importance of active recreation for health, most were spending little on it at present, preferring low cost activities such as walking. Most of them have little money over after necessities and expenditure on active recreation would be no more important than expenditure on cultural activities, holidays, etc.

Although members of the South Hornby group try to select low cost active recreation activities, they rate the spending on sports club subscriptions and pool entry as more important than other areas of discretionary expenditure – well ahead of movies and other forms of family entertainment. Some defer payment for necessities in order to pay club subscriptions for their children when these are due.

Most members of the Kirkwood group generally felt that their expenditure in this area was comparatively low compared to other areas of discretionary expenditure and that they were not giving up anything else in order to pursue the activities their families enjoyed.

Working members of the independent youth focus group felt that if they really wanted to be involved in an expensive active recreation activity such as gym membership, they would just class it with other bills and manage to pay it. Student members of this group did not appear to draw clear lines between "stable" expenditure patterns and said that if they wanted to do something they would just work a few extra hours.

Members of the low-income group class active recreation as an essential but are still unable to manage more than minimal expenditure. The concept of discretionary expenditure is not relevant to this group.

4.7 Provision of Information on CCC Initiatives to Increase Participation

It is clear than information on CCC initiatives to increase participation in active recreation will need to be distributed as widely as possible if it is to be accessed by all non-participant groups. Pamphlets available in libraries will reach many families and older group members but will be of little value in promoting activities for independent youth. Information at schools is also readily available to families. Most groups mentioned the City Scene magazine produced by CCC as a useful source of information, but only the independent youth group and a few members of other groups would automatically turn to websites for information of this nature. Members of the low-income group felt that community cottages could be a valuable source of information on new initiatives by CCC. While pamphlets and posters in tertiary education institutes may attract the attention of some independent youth, members of this group consider that word of mouth is the best way to get their peers involved in any activity. An initial advertising campaign using radio stations, buses, and student newspapers would be necessary to attract an initial group of users. If initiatives are successful, word of mouth would then draw in much larger numbers of this age group. Members of the low-income group also consider that supermarket notice boards would be a useful source of information about new initiatives.

4.8 Conclusions from the Focus Groups

While the structure of the focus groups was designed to capture a number of target groups within the community, the method used to recruit focus group members resulted in the omission from the groups of many individuals who do not engage in some form of physical exercise or who lack motivation.

The type of active recreation in which respondents engage and the importance they place on it varies by stage of life and economic status. Members of the independent youth group were all aware of the need for exercise for a healthy life style, and felt they could afford whatever form of exercise they chose if they really wanted to do it but a number place more emphasis on other aspects of life at present. Parents from both groups were very conscious of the need to establish healthy exercise patterns in their children's lives, and concerned about the difficulty of maintaining those patterns into the teen years. Their own exercise preferences are often set aside in favour of participating in activities with their children at this time in their lives and if forced to make a choice they would place more emphasis on their children's needs. Both the older group members and those on low incomes are very conscious of the importance of exercise in maintaining their health and many members of these two groups had physical or mental disabilities for which exercise would be beneficial. Almost all are exercising regularly but have encountered a number of barriers to participation.

Amongst the target groups the low-income group and the group of older non-participants were most severely constrained by barriers to active recreation outside their own motivation

or family circumstances. For both these groups the costs of swimming and gym membership meant that a high proportion of members are unable to participate in exercises that would be beneficial for their health and enjoyable for them. The need to pay for concessions or memberships “up-front” to take advantage of lower prices rules out leisure centre use for many of these people. Water temperature and overcrowding were barriers to aquatic exercise for some members of the older group while low-income group members felt unwanted in the “higher socio economic environment” of CCC leisure centres. Members of the family groups had encountered relatively few barriers to participation in the types of active recreation in which their families had elected to participate and appeared to be happy with the choices open to them. However, it was apparent that families from the lower decile school had ruled out many of the more costly activities pursued by the higher income families, perhaps without consciously considering them. For the parents in these groups their commitment to their families’ activities appeared to rule out consideration of highly individual, relatively costly options such as gym membership at this stage. While cost was not a major barrier to participation for the less affluent family group, group members were from working families not beneficiaries and it is probable that many low income families without two working parents face similar barriers to members of the low-income group. Independent youth do not face significant barriers to recreation but feel that existing opportunities are not tailored to the needs of their age group, which requires integration of exercise and social life.

According to group members the key to increasing leisure centre membership and increasing pool usage by the elderly and low-income people is a reduction in the costs of entry, and facilitating access by building facilities in areas not presently well served. For low-income people, reducing the costs of transport by providing regular bus or van services from locations such as community cottages or ensuring that bus transfer allow time for exercise.

While the older, low-income and independent youth groups supported the idea of lower prices for those holding Community Services Cards or leisure passports, other groups are generally opposed to paying higher entry prices to subsidise those on low incomes and most are opposed to any increase in rates for this purpose. Increasing gym membership prices by even 10 percent is likely to result in a loss of existing members. In addition, existing leisure centre members feel that these facilities are already overcrowded and that encouraging increased membership will reduce the quality of service to existing members. Members of the older group and low-income groups consider that, to make much difference, the discounted prices would have to be considerably lower than the present discounts available to Community Services Card holders, and the need to pay “up-front” removed.

The implementation by CCC of exercise programs in local venues is supported by both those on low incomes and older people, provided programmes are tailored specifically to their needs. The lower income family group felt that local programmes designed to introduce activities for teenagers no longer interested in the activities with which they have been involved in childhood would be of value but stress that consultation on appropriate activities will be essential if participation is to be increased by this method.

Active recreation is regarded by most group members as a necessity, or at least as very important, and most of those who do pay for their recreation activities or those of their families) would maintain that expenditure at the expense of most or all other discretionary items if necessary. However, for those on low incomes it must be managed with little or no expenditure and is not, therefore, a significant budget item at present.

Overall, it appears that there are a number of initiatives that CCC could use to increase participation in active recreation amongst target groups. However, many of these would require a substantial effort in terms of facilitation to this and a decision to commit substantial resources to achieve the objective of increased participation.

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