

COVID-19 Insights Report

Impacts of Covid-19 across the play, active recreation
sector in Aotearoa, New Zealand

April 2020



Introduction

This report covers the time period of April-June 2020, which includes the lead up to Alert Level 4 lockdown, the lockdown period itself, and some time following lockdown.

Insights cover the impact that Covid-19 has had on participants, and come via the following mechanisms:

- Active NZ: Covid-19 survey
- Media analysis.

The identification of findings and considerations in this report involved using existing knowledge of the physical activity barriers and experiences of different population groups. This knowledge coupled with the impacts Covid-19 had on different population groups resulted in key findings and considerations.

When reading this report please consider:

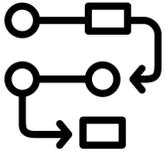
- Participation data was captured during Alert Level 4, while significant activity restrictions were in place.
- The longevity of any changes in behaviour are unknown, however the key findings point to opportunities and challenges that should be considered.
- The overall environment remains uncertain.
- The information in this report will be built upon over time as we learn more about the impacts of the pandemic.

Participant

Active NZ: COVID-19 survey

Adults (18+)

Methodology

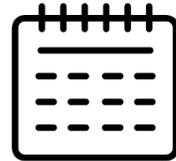


Approach

We surveyed previous Active NZ* respondents, who had given permission to be re-contacted.

We compare April 2020 data with interviews completed via the Active NZ survey in April 2017, 2018 and 2019 combined.

We weighted both datasets to the 2013 census, to ensure national representativeness.



Fieldwork dates

April 16-28, 2020



Sample size

11,242 adults (18+)

2,417 children and young people (5-17)

** Sport New Zealand's Active NZ Survey measures nationwide participation in play, active recreation and sport*

Key findings

The Covid-19 lockdown period had different impacts on population groups across the nation:

- Physical activity was more impacted for adults from high deprivation areas and those aged 18-34.
- Conversely, females and those aged 50+ were less impacted.

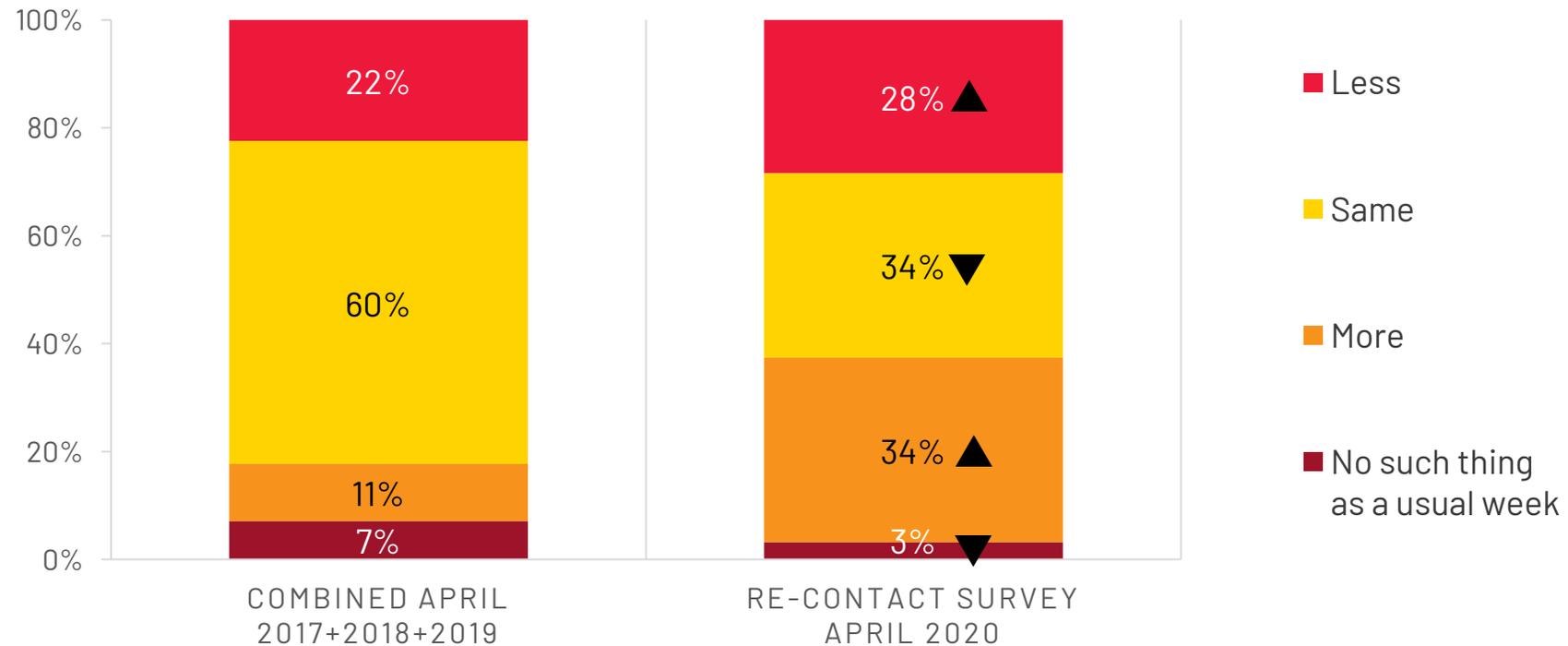
Positively, there was a significant drop in the proportion of the population doing no physical activity.
Further, 4 in 10 adults started or re-started sports and activities.

There was a decline in time spent being physically active, primarily amongst the most active portion of the population.

Active recreation focused activities saw significant increases in participation, namely walking, cycling and yoga.

Participation in April 2020 was not typical

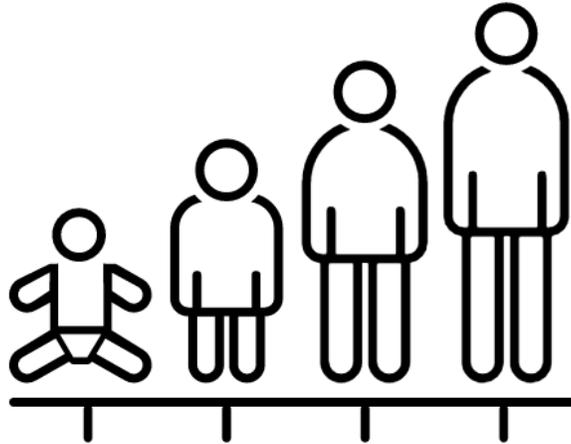
Half as many adults said they did their *usual* amount of physical activity, while those saying they were doing **more** tripled compared with a typical April



Females, 50-64s and those from low deprivation areas said they were doing more



Females



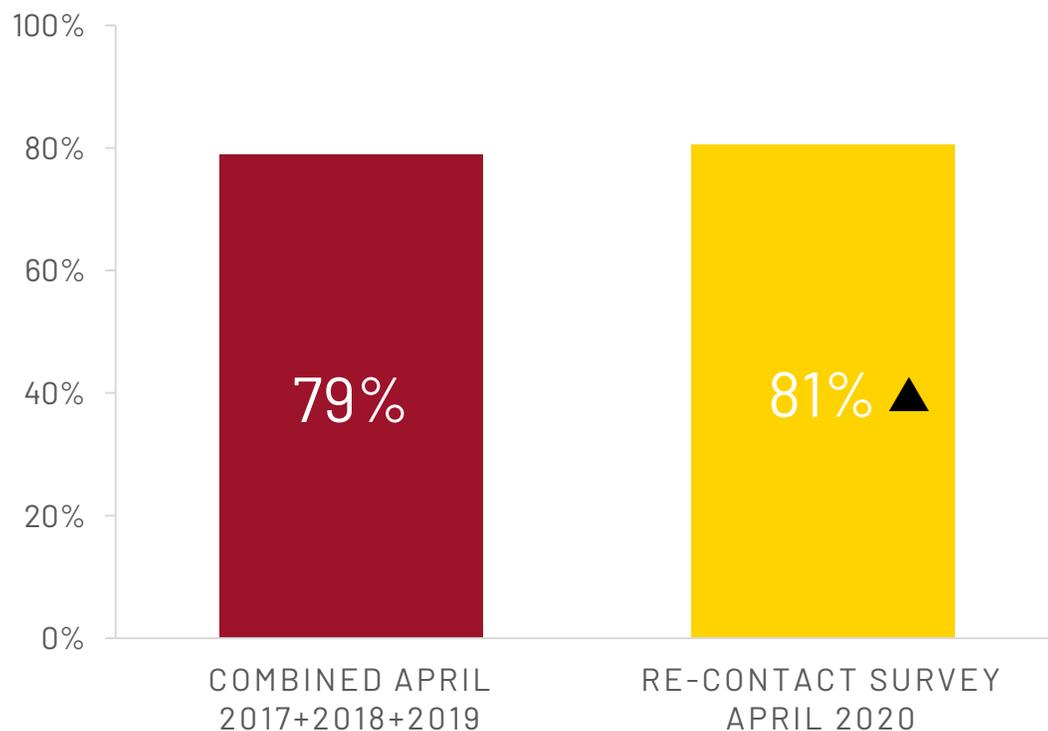
50-64 year olds



Low deprivation areas

Overall weekly participation increased...

Participation (last 7 days):



Significant increases:

	Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019	Re-contact survey April 2020
Females	80%	83%
50-64 year olds	74%	80%
European	80%	82%
Low deprivation areas	81%	85%

Significant decreases:

	Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019	Re-contact survey April 2020
Pacific	80%	66%
High deprivation areas	76%	70%

... but less time was spent being active*

Average number of hours spent being active (last 7 days):

Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019

6.13



Re-contact survey April 2020

5.61



Significant decreases:

	Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019	Re-contact survey April 2020
Males	6.44	5.45
18-24 year olds	6.39	4.33
25-34 year olds	5.78	4.97
European	6.19	5.89
Pacific	7.30	4.15
High deprivation areas	6.27	4.42

**The decline in time spent being physically active is likely being driven by a decrease amongst the most active portion of the population*

Adults participated in fewer sports and activities



Average number of activities
(last 7 days):

Combined April
2017 + 2018 + 2019

2.54

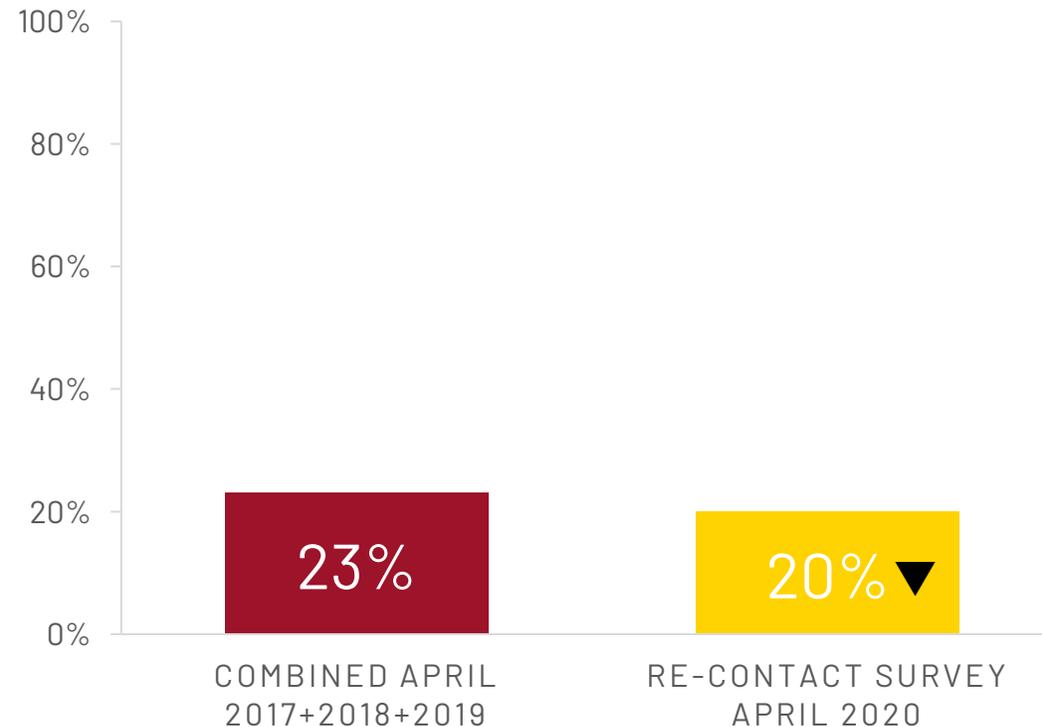


Re-contact survey
April 2020

2.14 ▼

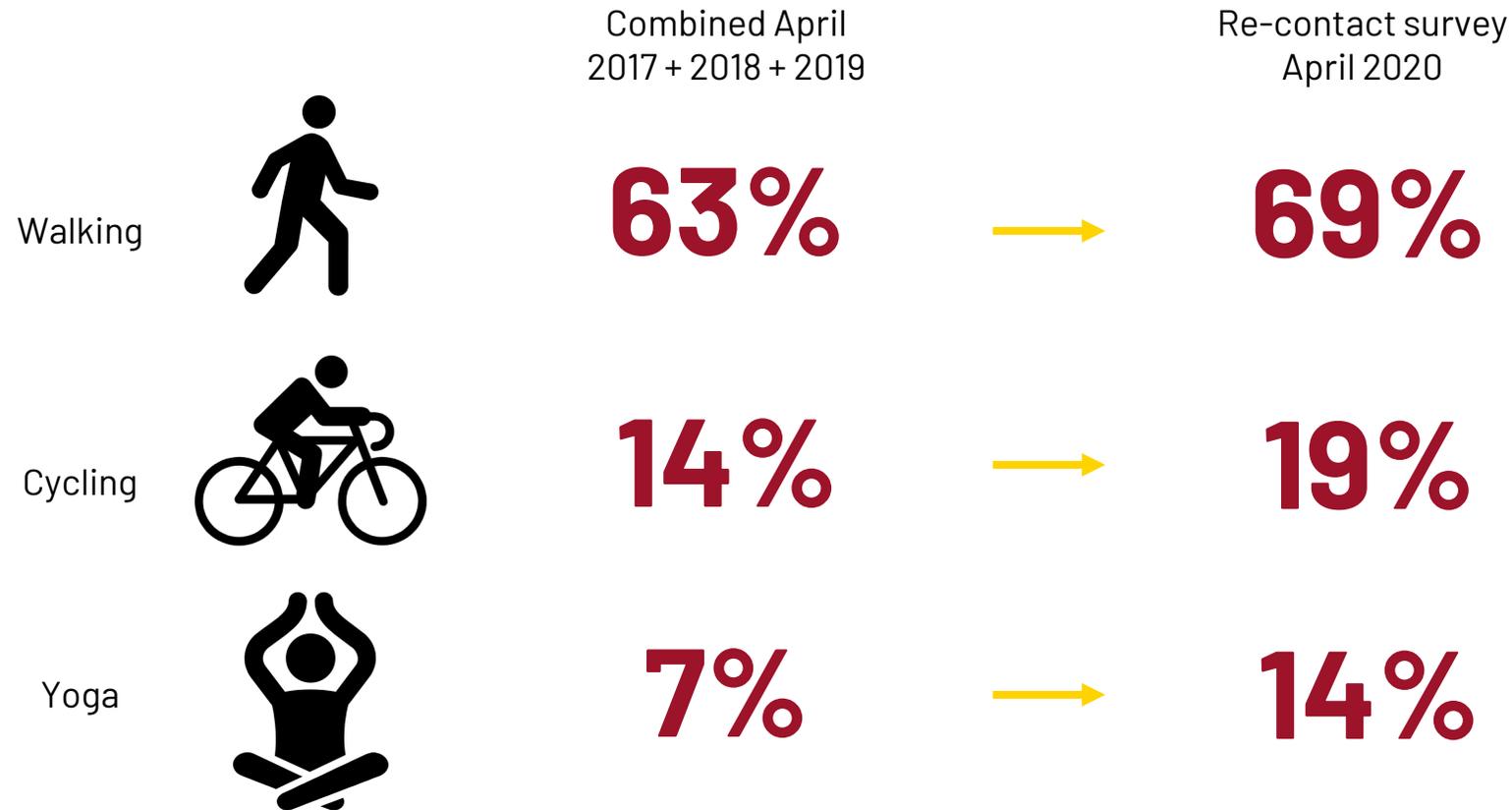
Importantly, the proportion doing less than 30 minutes a week dropped significantly

Less than 30 minutes of
physical activity (last 7 days):



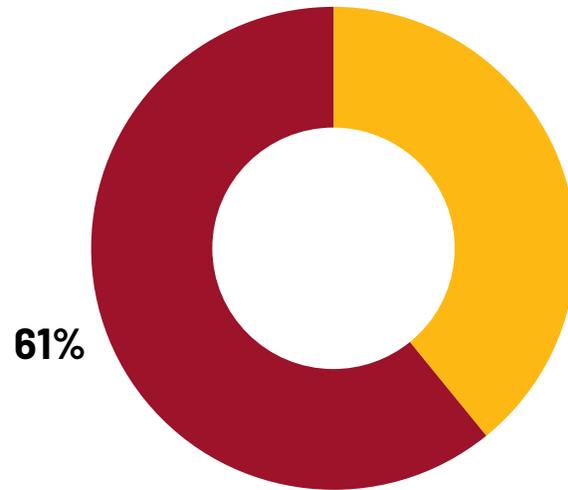
Walking, cycling and yoga saw the greatest increases in participation

Greatest increases:



Almost 4 in 10 adults started or re-started sports and activities

Started or re-started an activity (last 7 days):



■ Yes
■ No

39% →

- Walking
- Running/Jogging
- Yoga
- Cycling (Net)*
- Individual workout using equipment
- Group fitness class (e.g. aerobics, crossfit)

Re-contact Survey April 2020	
Walking	13%
Running/Jogging	7%
Yoga	6%
Cycling (Net)*	5%
Individual workout using equipment	5%
Group fitness class (e.g. aerobics, crossfit)	3%

* Cycling (Net) includes road cycling and mountain biking (it excludes BMX and e-biking)

Active NZ: COVID-19 survey

Children and Young People (5-17 year olds)

Key findings

Similar to adults, the Covid-19 lockdown period had different impacts on population groups across the nation:

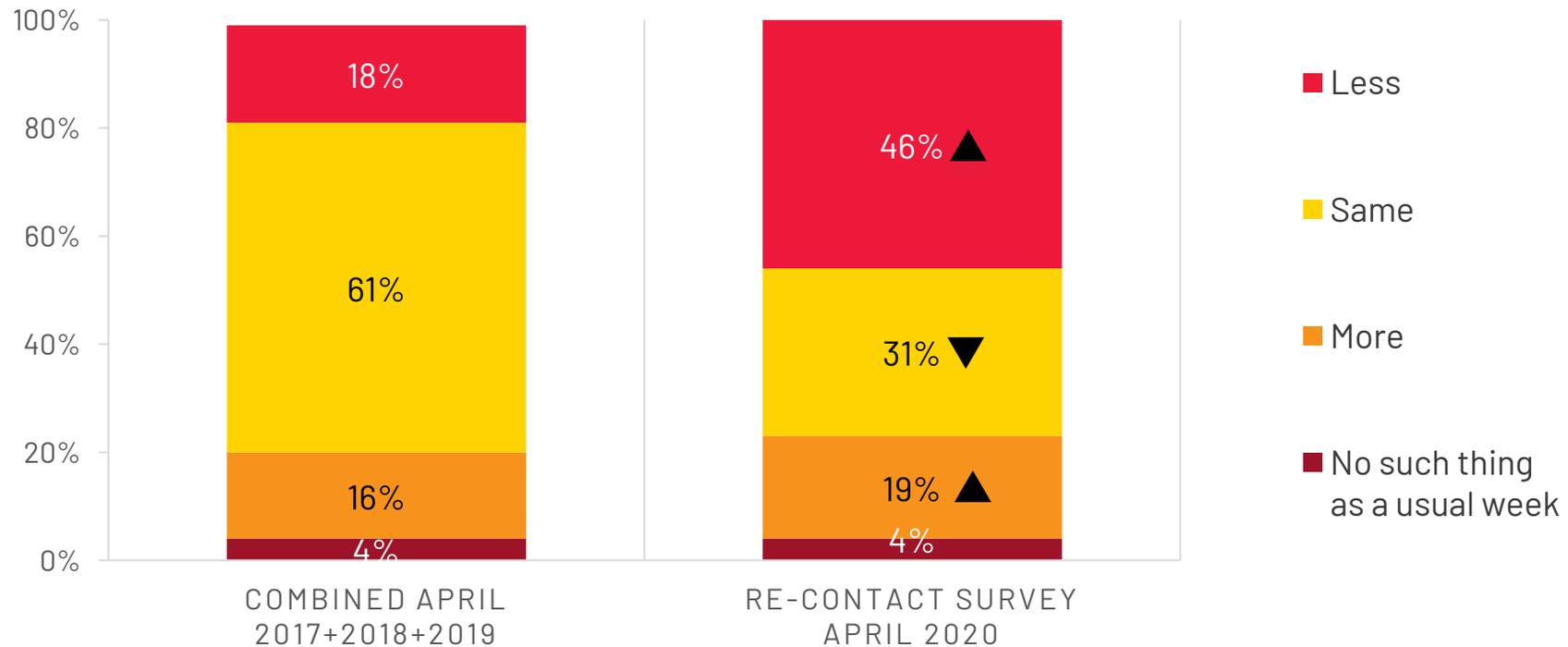
- Physical activity behaviours were more impacted for 15-17 year olds and young Asian people (5-17)
- Conversely, 5-7 year olds were less impacted.

The main barrier to physical activity over this time was reasons relating to Covid-19 itself.

While, lack of motivation and being too tired/lack of energy were more likely to be cited by girls and 15-17 year olds, supporting our existing knowledge of barriers amongst this group.

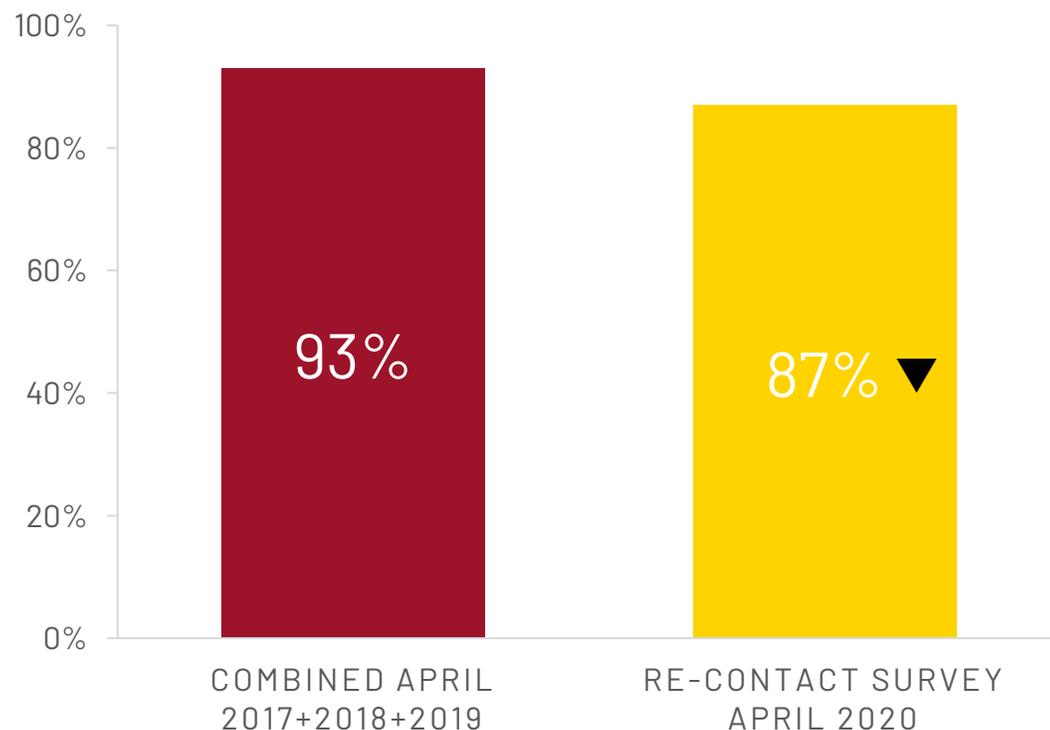
Participation in April 2020 was not typical

While the proportion of children and young people doing more than a normal week increased, the proportion doing **less** more than doubled compared to a typical April.



Overall weekly participation decreased for children and young people

Participation (last 7 days):



Significant decreases:

	Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019	Re-contact survey April 2020
Boys	94%	87%
Girls	92%	87%
8-11 year olds	95%	89%
12-14 year olds	93%	85%
15-17 year olds	91%	82%
European	94%	90%
Asian	90%	63%
Low deprivation areas	94%	88%
High deprivation areas	91%	81%

Less time was spent being active

Average number of hours spent
being active (last 7 days):

Combined April
2017 + 2018 + 2019

11.27



Re-contact survey
April 2020

8.14 ▼

Significant decreases:

	Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019	Re-contact survey April 2020
Boys	11.35	8.29
Girls	11.22	8.00
8-11 year olds	10.75	8.81
12-14 year olds	12.91	7.26
15-17 year olds	10.01	6.22
European	11.66	8.53
Asian	6.50	3.72
Low deprivation areas	10.50	7.64
High deprivation areas	10.49	8.07

Children and young people participated in fewer sports and activities

Average number of activities
(last 7 days):

Combined April
2017 + 2018 + 2019

5.45



Re-contact survey
April 2020

3.5 ▼

They were spending less time on organised activities

	Combined April 2017 + 2018 + 2019	Re-contact survey April 2020
Playing with friends	4.48	4.40
PE (or class at school)	1.97	0.06 ▼
Training with a coach	1.84	0.24 ▼
Playing alone	1.82	2.12
Extra training	0.73	1.44 ▲
Competition	0.62	0.01 ▼

Covid-19 was the main barrier to physical activity

While lack of motivation and lack of equipment were more prominent barriers compared to a normal April



Because of Covid-19

67%



Too hard to motivate myself

20% ▲



Too busy

14% ▼



Prefer to do other things

13%



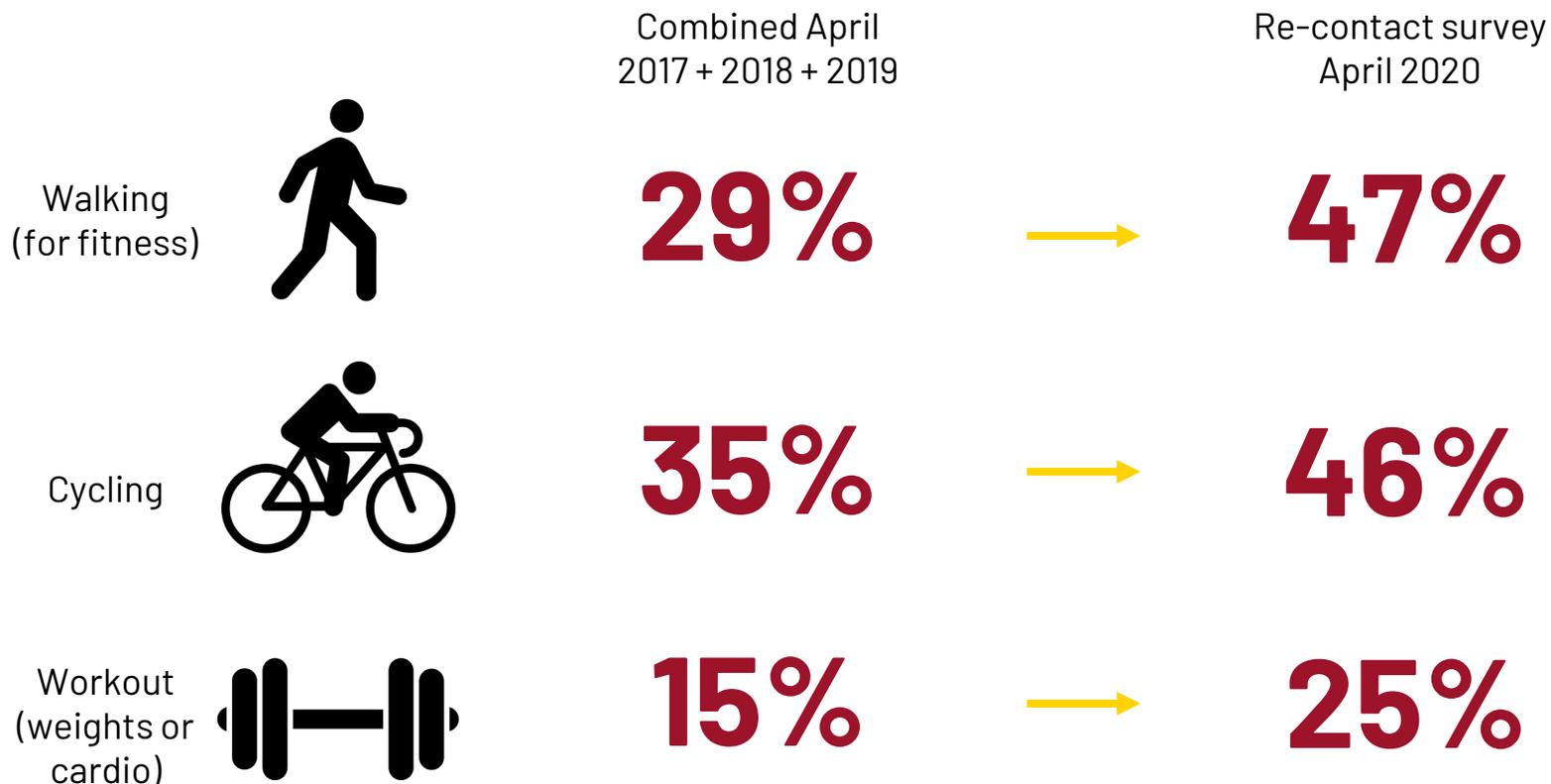
Don't have the equipment I need

12% ▲

'Too hard to motivate myself' and 'Too tired/don't have the energy' (#6 reason at 11%) were more likely to be mentioned by girls and 15-17 year olds

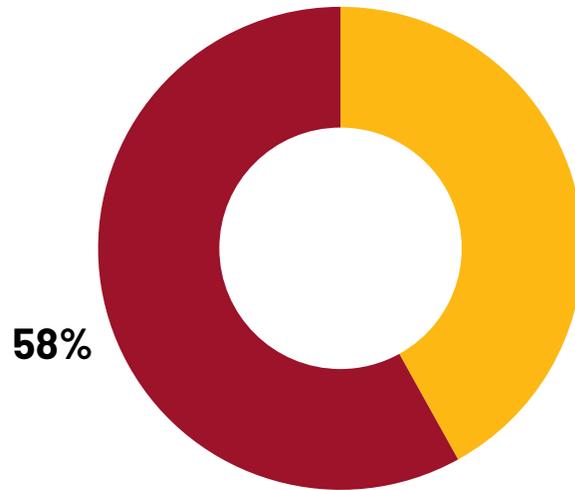
Walking, cycling and working out saw the greatest increases in participation

Greatest increases:



Almost 4 in 10 children and young people started or re-started sports and activities

Started or re-started an activity (last 7 days):



Yes

No

42%



- Running, jogging or cross country (net)
- Workout (weights or cardio)
- Cycling (Net)
- Walking for fitness
- Group exercise class (e.g. aerobics, CrossFit, Jump Jam)

Re-contact Survey April 2020	
Running, jogging or cross country (net)	10%
Workout (weights or cardio)	9%
Cycling (Net)	8%
Walking for fitness	8%
Group exercise class (e.g. aerobics, CrossFit, Jump Jam)	6%

* Cycling (Net) includes road cycling and mountain biking (it excludes BMX and e-biking)

Media analysis

Key themes

Walking was a leading theme throughout all Alert Levels, while both walking and running are still more prominent themes than in the lead up to alert level 4.

More recently, some activities such as exercising at home, cycling and running are being seen less – this could be a sign of lockdown-inspired routines tapering.

When talking about walking, for most people it was in the context of getting out with whānau, enjoying nature and going on 'bear hunts' – a generally positive sentiment surrounds walking.

Again, more recently, a loss of motivation for being active is on the rise.

Mental health/ wellbeing benefits of being physically active came through strongly

There is a level of anxiety relating to physical activity and shared public spaces

Sport NZ commentary

- These results support our assumption that “Lower socio-economic communities will see greater negative impacts from Covid-19”.
- The decline in physical activity for 18-34 year olds, and the forecast impact of unemployment and existing high rates of adult mental illness, may increase the relevance and importance of physical activity interventions for this demographic.
- The reduction in activity of rangatahi 15-17 years old requires further insights to understand what has impacted this change. From the Active NZ 2018 results we know that approximately 40% of time young people spend being active is in organised context, which did not occur through Alert Level 4.
- The significant decline in Asian young people’s activity reinforces existing information that shows Asian populations are overall less active, and have a significantly poorer experiences within the sport system .
- Long-term changes in physical activity behaviours are less clear; future research will help identify if there are opportunities to sustain/mitigate these behaviours.
- Going from no activity to some activity has well-evidenced wellbeing benefits (i.e. the 2% decline of inactive adults at a population level is important).
- Walking is low cost and has low barriers for participation and has played an important part in individuals physical activity through lockdown (see paragraph 47 regarding sector concerns regarding re-joining costs and unemployment).
- The positive public conversation on being ‘active locally’, ‘with whanau’, ‘in nature’, represents an opportunity for Sport NZ to continue to reinforce messages (through media, investment, etc...) which we know are an important to maximising the wellbeing benefits of being active.
- The public recognition of ‘health and wellbeing’ benefits of being physically active is an opportunity for Sport NZ, and its partners, to continue emphasising how physical activity improves wellbeing.
- It is unclear the extent to which concerns regarding the hygiene risk of being active will affect participation in group/team activities. The speed at which New Zealand returns to normal, and the inherent ‘short memories’ of individuals may result in a minimal impact.

Next steps

This is the first of a series of insights and intelligence reports. As more information becomes available and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on physical activity become clearer, further opportunities and challenges will be identified.

The following are additional pieces of insights and intelligence that will help inform decisions going forward:

- Active NZ: Covid-19 repeat surveys to understand participation changes.
- Wellbeing analysis to recommend the focus and emphasis for short- and medium-term elements of the recovery phase.
- Systems mapping to identify areas where interventions are likely to have greatest impact.

Thank You