



**SPORT
NEW ZEALAND
IHI AOTEAROA**

Active NZ

Changes in Participation

The New Zealand Participation Survey 2021

June 2022

Acknowledgements

Sport New Zealand's Active NZ survey measures nationwide participation in play, active recreation, and sport. This is the fifth year of data collection, with data collected continuously throughout the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021 years. Continuous data collection during 2020 was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a gap in time series data.

This report updates the main participation statistics for 2021. It highlights changes in participation and barriers, when 2021 results are compared with 2019 results, which preceded the COVID-19 pandemic.

Special thanks go to all those who have provided feedback to guide the development of this report and the thousands of New Zealanders who took part in the Active NZ survey.

Authors

The main authors of this report are NielsenIQ and Sport New Zealand's Intelligence team.

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Active NZ resources are available at sportnz.org.nz/ActiveNZ

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Glossary

Adult	Respondents aged 18-plus.
Being active	Refers to being physically active in play, active recreation, and sport.
Deprivation	Low deprivation 1–3, medium deprivation 4–7, high deprivation 8–10, based on the NZDep index of socioeconomic deprivation. A value of 10 indicates the most deprived 10 percent of areas in New Zealand. Note: NZDep estimates the relative socioeconomic deprivation of an area and does not directly relate to individuals.
Disabled people	The Washington Group on Disability Statistics short set of questions has been used to identify disabled people. ¹ In the Active NZ survey, disabled people are people who self-report at least some difficulty across one or more of six domains of disability. Non-disabled people are people who self-report no difficulty in any of the six domains.
Ethnicity	Results by ethnicity throughout this report – European, Māori, Pacific (including Samoan) and Asian (including Indian and Chinese) – are based on respondents' self-identification.
Informal participation	Applies to children and young people only. Informal sports and activities include being physically active through play with others, playing alone, extra training activities or practising without a coach or instructor.
Non-participants	People who have not been physically active in play, exercise, active recreation or sport in the past seven days.
Organised participation	Applies to children and young people only. Participation in a competition or tournament is one component of organised participation. Other organised sports and activities include being physically active in physical education or class at school, sport and activities undertaken in a competition and training or practising with a coach or instructor.
Participants	People who have been physically active in play, active recreation (including exercise) or sport in the past seven days, where this participation excludes any physical activity undertaken for work or chores. Participation can include physical activity undertaken to get from one place to another if the respondent considers it to be for sport or active recreation.
Participation in competitive and non-competitive sports or activities	Participating through an organised structure, for example, in a league or club competition, tournament or competitive event. Non-competitive participation refers to sports or activities undertaken outside of a league or club competition, tournament, or competitive event.
Play, active recreation and sport	Play, active recreation and sport are used throughout this report for simplicity. However, participation is multi-faceted. Play and active recreation are terms used by Sport New Zealand to capture participation in activities not considered to be sport, for example, playing with friends or alone, dance and tramping. Sport can be undertaken in an organised structure, for example, in a competition or tournament, or informally outside an organised structure. Sport is associated with being competitive, but individuals differ in their degree of competitiveness, irrespective of how they participate.

¹ The Washington Group on Disability Statistics is a United Nations city group with a mandate to promote and coordinate international cooperation in health statistics focusing on disability data collection tools suitable for censuses and national surveys. See www.washingtongroup-disability.com, for further information. Note: disability is not reported because of changes to the question used over time.

Respondents	People who took part in the survey.
Weekly participation	Refers to being physically active in play, exercise, active recreation or sport at least once in the past seven days.
Young people	Respondents between ages 5–17.

Active NZ

This report provides an update on the main participation indicators in play, active recreation, and sport in 2021 for New Zealanders aged 5-plus, focusing on changes between pre-pandemic participation levels in 2019 and 2021 levels. It highlights changes in ways of participating and types of sports and activities participated in, as well as changes in barriers to participating and in selected attitudes.

About this report

The report primarily uses data collected through the Active NZ survey² between 5 January 2021 and 4 January 2022 from 4824 children and young people and 23 239 adults.

It also uses data collected through the Active NZ survey between 5 January 2017 and 4 January 2020 from 74 160 adults aged 18-plus and 16 398 children and young people between ages 5 and 17, to identify any changes in participation over time.

Changes in participation between 2019 and 2021 among children, young people and adults are highlighted, as are changes within the demographic subgroups of gender, age, ethnicity, and deprivation. Analysis of change within the disabled and non-disabled populations is not possible, because the definition used to identify these groups changed during 2019.

Results have been drawn from two separate surveys and data sets: one for children and young people between ages 5 and 17 and one for adults aged 18-plus. Commentary about differences between children, young people and adults is based on observations rather than statistical testing between the two data sets.

Within the two data sets, reported differences between the total result and subgroups are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level, unless noted. Significance testing means we can be highly confident that any differences reported are not random variations due to carrying out a survey among a sample of the population rather than a population census.

Knowing a difference is statistically significant does not mean the difference is important. Only meaningful differences have been commented on in this report.³

Data tables accompanying the report contain all base sizes and highlight all statistically significant differences at the 95 percent confidence level. Please note, in some cases, a significant difference is reported between two numbers that appear to be the same and/or no significant difference is reported when it may appear there should be one. This is due to rounding and variation in sample sizes.

² For further information on method, sample, and objectives, see the Technical Report: <https://sportnz.org.nz/activenz>. *Sport New Zealand. Active NZ Technical Report for Data Collected in 2021*. Wellington: Sport New Zealand, 2021. This will be released in June 2022.

³ For more detail on statistical testing, refer to the Technical Report (above note 2).

COVID-19

Participation during 2021 was affected by restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Alert levels fluctuated throughout the year and regional variations in alert levels also occurred. Organised participation was disrupted, with many competitions and tournaments unable to take place. The results from the 2021 Active NZ survey must be interpreted in this context. While possible trends have been identified from the pattern of responses emerging between 2017 and 2021, these must also be considered in the context of the 2021 participation environment. Results from the Active NZ survey in future years will help distinguish longer term trends from changes due to COVID-19 disruptions. Please visit the New Zealand Government website for the timeline of COVID-19 key events.⁴

⁴ United Against Covid. History of the COVID-19 Alert System: Timeline of key events. *United Against Covid*. 22 February 2022. Retrieved from <https://covid19.govt.nz/about-our-covid-19-response/history-of-the-covid-19-alert-system/#timeline-of-key-events> (12 May 2022).

Executive summary

Introduction

This report highlights changes in participation that have occurred in 2021. The landscape for participation in 2021 was very different compared with 2017 and 2019, due to disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic. This report uses data drawn from the Active NZ survey, collected between 2017 and 2019 and during 2021⁵ from nearly 120 000 New Zealanders aged 5-plus.

Key findings

Young people

Patterns of participation among young people in 2021 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. After being stable across 2017, 2018 and 2019, changes in key indicators were evident between 2019 and 2021.

1. Weekly participation decreased between 2019 and 2021, after a period of stability.
2. The average number of sports and activities participated in was lower in 2021 than in previous years.⁶
3. Conversely, average time spent participating increased between 2019 and 2021. However, this was not consistent, with average time spent increasing among some demographic subgroups and decreasing in others.
4. The proportion of young people meeting the physical activity guidelines increased among some demographic subgroups and decreased, among others.⁷
5. Organised participation decreased between 2019 and 2021. This decrease was evident for all demographic subgroups.
6. The decrease in organised participation was most evident for competitions or tournaments but also occurred in practice and training, with a coach, and in participation in physical education (PE).
7. Weekly informal participation remained comparable with 2019 levels across all demographic subgroups.
8. Specific sport and activities more prominent in 2021 than 2019 were walking for fitness, tramping and bush walks, skateboarding and volleyball.
9. The decrease in organised participation has negatively affected male participation more than female, while the increase in time spent in informal participation has positively affected female participation more than male.
10. Inequity for Māori and Pacific has increased, particularly among males, primarily because of decreased organised participation.
11. Inequity among those living in high deprivation areas has also increased.
12. Decreases in organised participation, particularly in competitions or tournaments were most evident among young people living in Auckland, while participation levels among young people in the South Island remained unchanged.
13. Barriers to participation increased in 2021, with the most notable changes being more young people struggling for motivation and expressing a lack of confidence.

⁵ Data for 2020 is not included because the Active NZ Survey was unable to be carried out for part of that year due to COVID-19 disruptions.

⁶ Average number of sports and activities is significantly lower in 2021 than in 2018 and 2019, while the difference between 2021 and 2019 is not significant.

⁷ Meeting the physical activity guidelines is based on the 7-plus hours per week recommendation for young people and the 2.5 hours per week recommendation for adults. Ministry of Health. *Physical Activity. How much activity is recommended?* 22 November 2021. Retrieved from www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/physical-activity/how-much-activity-recommended (16 May 2022).

14. Additional insights suggest a changing relationship with organised participation among young people, as well as a potential decrease in confidence to participate.

Adults

Adult participation indicators increased slightly from 2019 to 2021. Increases were seen in some population subgroups and not others.

1. Weekly participation did not change significantly among adults overall, or between adults within any subgroup, between 2019 and 2021.
2. The proportion of adults meeting the physical activity guidelines increased in 2021. This increase was seen in some demographic subgroups but not others.
3. The average number of hours spent participating, and the average number of sports and activities, also increased in 2021. Again, changes were seen in some demographic subgroups and not others.
4. The proportion of adults participating in competitive sports and activities decreased.
5. The proportion of adults participating only in non-competitive sports and activities increased.
6. Pacific was the only ethnicity to show no improvement in any of the four key participation indicators.
7. Males and adults between ages 50 and 74 were the groups most likely to show increased time spent being active in 2021, compared with 2019.
8. The activities with increased participation in 2021 were predominantly non-competitive activities, such as walking, individual workouts, Pilates and yoga.
9. Barriers to participation increased in 2021, with more adults feeling too tired, struggling for motivation, falling out of the habit, or feeling too unfit to increase their participation.
10. Additional insights suggest that changes in the participation environment due to the pandemic may be encouraging a move to more individualised, flexible activities and to an increase in the use of technology when physically active.
11. An indication can also be seen of a growing awareness in the value of being active in enhancing wellbeing.

Summary and conclusion

Young people

1. COVID-19 disruptions affected the ways in which children and young people were physically active during 2021.
2. Most notably, participation in organised activity has been negatively affected. An increase in time spent in informal activity has counterbalanced this to an extent, with the outcome being an overall increase in average time spent being active.
3. However, these changes have affected demographic subgroups disproportionately, depending on the extent to which organised participation contributed to their overall levels of physical activity.
4. The decrease in organised sports and activities has increased inequities in the system for Māori and Pacific ethnicities and for young people living in high deprivation areas.
5. This decrease has also affected male participation more negatively than female, while increasing informal activity has affected female participation more positively than male. This has resulted in the gender gap among young people closing in 2021, except for young people between ages 15 and 17 where a gender gap remains.
6. A watching brief will be in place for how well participation in organised activities, especially through competitions or tournaments, recovers. This is particularly important considering a potential weakening of the relationship young people have with organised participation.

Adults

1. COVID-19 disruptions have not affected adult participation to the same extent as young people.
2. Adult participation showed a slight improvement in 2021, compared with 2019 pre-pandemic. Changes in lifestyle because of the pandemic (eg, lockdowns, working from home, restricted social gatherings) have likely contributed by facilitating increased participation in activities such as walking and individual workouts.
3. While participation in competitive activities dropped among adults and young people, the effect of this on adult overall participation levels was minimal due to the small proportion of adults who take part in competitive activities.
4. While the gender gap closed among young people, inequity increased for adult females in time spent being active and in competitive participation.
5. Inequity increased further for Pacific adults, with Pacific being the only ethnicity to show no increase in any of the four key participation indicators.
6. The negative participation trend from 2017 to 2019, apparent for adults between 18 and 24 years, has not continued in 2021.
7. The context for participation in 2021 appears to have stimulated an increasing preference for, and participation in, more individualised and flexible activities and self-monitoring using technology.

How participation for young people has changed

This section updates key participation statistics for young people in play, active recreation, and sport over time.

Patterns of participation among young people in 2021 were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and were more variable than in previous years.

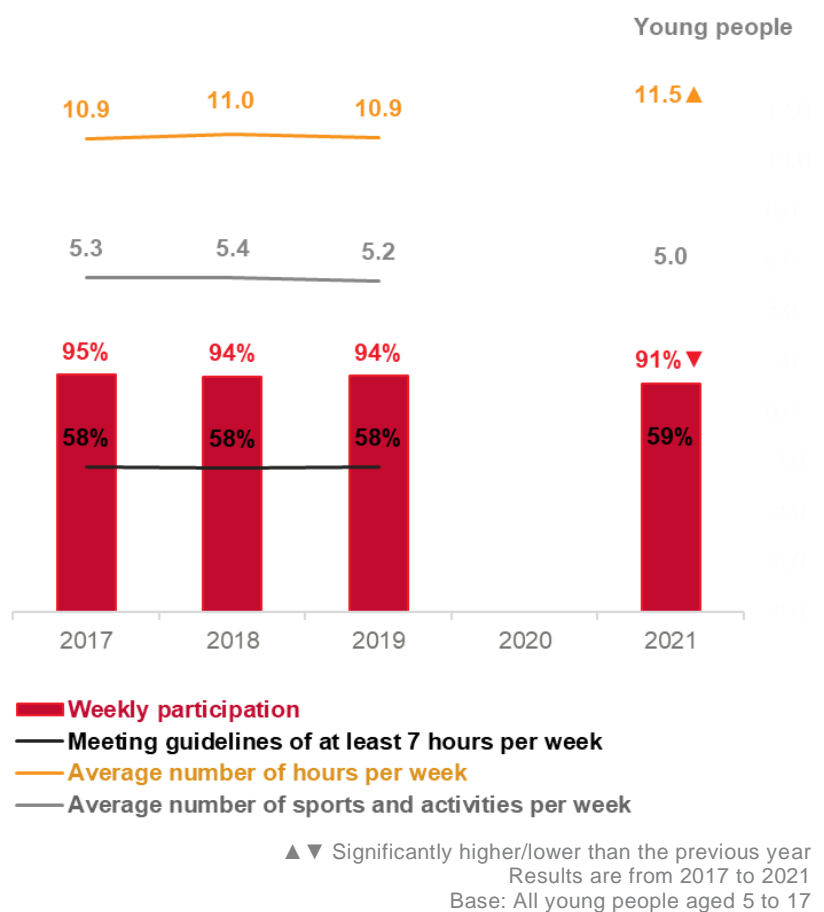
1. Weekly participation decreased between 2019 and 2021 after a period of stability.
2. The average number of sports and activities participated in was significantly lower in 2021 than in previous years.
3. Conversely, average time spent participating increased between 2019 and 2021. However, this was not consistent, with the average time spent increasing among some demographic subgroups and decreasing in others.
4. The proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines⁸ increased among some demographic subgroups and decreased, among others.

Figure 1: Young people – key participation statistics over time

Between 2017 and 2019, no significant changes occurred in participation indicators.

Between 2019 and 2021:

- weekly participation dropped by 3.2 percent
- time spent in weekly participation increased by 5.5 percent
- no significant change occurred in the proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines no significant change occurred in the average number of sports and activities participated in. However, between 2017 and 2018 and 2021, a significant drop of 6 percent occurred.



⁸ Meeting the physical activity guidelines is based on the recommendation of at least seven hours per week of any intensity. Ministry of Health. Physical Activity. How much activity is recommended? 22 November 2021. Retrieved from www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/physical-activity/how-much-activity-recommended (16 May 2022).

Key demographic differences

By gender

- Weekly participation dropped for both males and females.
- The average time spent being active increased for females but not males.
- The average number of sports and activities decreased for males but not for females.

By age

- Weekly participation dropped across all age groups except between 12 and 14 years, where participation held to 2019 levels.
- Between the ages of 5 and 7, the proportion who were non-participants doubled, from 6 percent to 12 percent. This was more evident among males in this age group, where 15 percent were non-participants.
- Average time spent participating increased between ages 5 and 11 but not between ages 12 and 17.
- The proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines increased for females between ages 8 and 11, from 56 percent in 2019 to 63 percent in 2021, reducing the gender gap among young people overall. However, it did not increase for females between ages 15 and 17, with a gender gap still evident in this age group (38 percent of females compared with 49 percent of males meeting the guidelines).
- All key indicators for young people between ages 15 and 17 dropped.⁹

By ethnicity

- Weekly participation decreased across all ethnicities.¹⁰
- Average time spent increased for young European.
- Average time spent and average number of sports and activities decreased among Pacific, particularly Pacific males.¹¹ The proportion of Pacific males meeting the physical activity guidelines decreased from 60 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2021.
- For Māori males, the average time spent participating and average number of sports and activities decreased, but not for Māori females. The proportion of Māori males meeting the physical activity guidelines decreased from 69 percent to 59 percent.

By deprivation

- Weekly participation among young people from high deprivation areas dropped by 7 percent between 2019 and 2021. Weekly participation among young people from low and medium deprivation areas was not significantly different between 2019 and 2021

By region

- Weekly participation decreased among young people living in Auckland, and in the North Island outside of Auckland, but did not decrease significantly in the South Island.

⁹ The drop in weekly participation is statistically significant. The changes in time spent, number of activities and proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines are not statistically significant but show a consistent pattern.

¹⁰ The drop in participation for Asian young people is not statistically significant.

¹¹ The drops for Pacific are not statistically significant, except for in the proportion of Pacific males meeting the physical activity guidelines.

Changes in types of participation between 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2021

This section focuses on changes in the types of sports and activities young people participated in.

Organised

1. Organised participation decreased between 2019 and 2021, and this was evident for all demographic subgroups.
2. The decrease in organised participation was most evident for competitions and tournaments, but also occurred in training/practising with a coach, and in participation in PE.

Table 1: Young people – Organised participation

	Pre-pandemic 2019	2021	Difference (%)
Physical education (PE) or class at school			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	62%	56% ▼	-9.7
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	2.13	2.1	-1.4
Competition or tournament			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	31%	24% ▼	-23.3
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	0.79	0.59 ▼	-25.3
Training/practising with a coach			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	55%	47% ▼	-13.4
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	1.68	1.52 ▼	-9.5
Total competition (organised excl. PE)			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	61%	52% ▼	-14.9
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	2.46	2.11	-14.2
Total organised			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	81%	71% ▼	-11.8
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	4.57	4.2 ▼	-8.1

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Results are from 2019 and 2021
Base: All young people aged 5 to 17

Informal

3. Informal participation remained comparable with 2019 levels across all demographic subgroups.

Table 2: Young people – Informal participation

	Pre-pandemic 2019	2021	Difference (%)
Playing or hanging out with friends or family			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	74%	73%	-1.5
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	4.3	5.03 ▲	+17
Playing on my own			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	54%	58% ▲	+6.8
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	1.63	2.31 ▲	+41.7
Extra exercise without a coach or instructor			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	26%	25%	-4.3
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	0.71	0.75	+5.6
Total play¹²			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	81%	81%	-0.2
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	5.93	7.33 ▲	+23.6
Total informal			
<i>Weekly participation (%)</i>	85%	84%	-0.6
<i>Time spent (hrs)</i>	6.53	7.81 ▲	+19.6

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Results are from 2019 and 2021
Base: All young people aged 5 to 17

4. The specific activities more prominent in 2021 than 2019 were walking for fitness, tramping and bush walks, skateboarding and volleyball.

¹² The proportion 'Total play' has not changed significantly between 2019 and 2021, but the proportion mentioning each of the three specific aspects of play (table 2) have decreased slightly. This could be because, previously, fewer young people participated in many of the ways of play, while currently more young people are participating in fewer of the ways of play.

Participation in sports and activities changed between 2019 and 2021

The specific sports and activities more prominent in 2021 than 2019 were walking for fitness, tramping and bush walks.

Participation in many sports and activities decreased in 2021, including each of the specific types of play measured in the Active NZ survey (table 3).

However, note from table 1 that the proportion participating in at least one form of play (net play) remained stable and time spent in play overall increased.

Table 3: Young people – Participation in sports and activities¹³

	Pre-pandemic 2019	2021
Increases		
Walking for fitness	25%	33%▲
Tramping or bush walks	9%	11%▲
Skateboarding	5%	6%▲
Volleyball or KiwiVolley	4%	5%▲
Decreases		
NET: Running / jogging / cross country	57%	53%▼
Playing (eg, running around, climbing trees, make believe)	39%	36%▼
Games (eg, four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)	34%	32%▼
Playing on playground (eg, jungle gym)	34%	32%▼
Swimming	33%	29%▼
NET: Football/ soccer/ futsal	17%	15%▼
Rugby or rippa rugby	9%	7%▼
Touch	9%	7%▼
Athletics or track and field	9%	6%▼
Gymnastics (eg, rhythmic, artistic)	7%	6%▼
Kapa haka	7%	5%▼

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Results are from 2019 and 2021
Base: All young people aged 5 to 17

Key demographic differences

Organised participation dropped within all demographic subgroups, while informal participation did not change significantly.

By gender

- Decreases occurred for both males and females in all three categories of organised participation: PE, participating through competitions or tournaments, and training or practising with a coach.
- Females spent more time in informal participation in 2021 than in 2019, while the time they spent in organised participation was consistent with 2019.
- Males also spent more time in informal participation in 2021, but the time they spent in organised participation decreased.

¹³ Please refer to appendix A for a more extensive list of sports and activities.

By age

- Time spent in informal participation increased across all age groups, with the largest increases being seen between ages 5 and 11.
- Time spent in organised participation decreased between ages 12 and 17.
- Participation in competitions or tournaments decreased across all age groups. Change was most evident among males between ages 8 and 11, males between ages 12 and 14 and females between ages 15 and 17, with decreases in participation in competition or tournaments between 2019 and 2021 of 28 percent, 30 percent, and 37 percent, respectively.
- Participation in PE decreased between ages 5 and 11.

By ethnicity

- The only subgroup not showing a decrease in organised participation was Māori females.
- Participation in competitions or tournaments decreased across all ethnicities.¹⁴ The most notable changes between 2019 and 2021 were for Māori and Pacific males, with decreases of 38 percent and 46 percent, respectively.
- Participation in PE decreased among young European, Pacific, and Asian, with the largest drop seen among Pacific.
- Average time spent in organised participation decreased most among Pacific, from 5.3 hours to 3.6 hours.
- Average time spent in informal participation increased for young European and Asian but not for Pacific. It also increased for female Māori but not male Māori.

By deprivation

- Organised participation decreased among young people from low, medium, and high deprivation areas, while informal participation levels were not significantly different between 2019 and 2021.
- Participation in competitions or tournaments also dropped in all three deprivation areas.
- Participation in PE dropped most among young people from high deprivation areas, from 69 percent in 2019 to 54 percent in 2021.

By region

- Organised participation decreased in Auckland, from 81 percent in 2019 to 61 percent in 2021, while informal participation increased slightly from 82 percent to 85 percent.
- Participation in PE also decreased in Auckland, from 61 percent in 2019 to 45 percent in 2021, while participation in competitions or tournaments decreased from 30 percent to 17 percent.
- Organised participation also decreased in the North Island outside of Auckland but held to 2019 levels in the South Island.

¹⁴ The drop was not statistically significant for young Asian.

Watching briefs: Attitudes and behaviours affected by COVID-19

Changes occurred in other indicators when comparing 2019 pre-pandemic with 2021. This section highlights these changes. A watching brief will be in place to see how they evolve in 2022 and beyond.

Changing relationship with organised sport and activities

Organised participation decreased significantly between 2019 and 2021, primarily because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, other indicators also suggest a weakening relationship over time:

- a decrease in agreement between ages 12 and 17 that 'I want to represent my country or region'
- a decrease in agreement between ages 12 and 17 that 'I have learnt many essential life skills through playing sport (eg, teamwork and cooperation)
- an increase in the proportion of young people who do not belong to any sports teams or recreation groups or clubs at school or outside of school, particularly noticeable among males
- a decrease in the proportion of young people who agree 'I like/liked PE classes at school'
- an increase in the proportion of young people in year 11 and above who stopped doing PE as soon as it was not compulsory (table 4).

Table 4: Indicators that suggest a weakening relationship with organised participation over time

	Year			
	2017	2018	2019	2021
Agreement between ages 12–17 that 'I want to represent my country or region'	59%	58%	56%	50%▼
Agreement between ages 12–17 that 'I have learnt many essential life skills through playing sport (eg, teamwork and cooperation)'	80%	79%	77%	73%▼
Proportion of young people who do not belong to any sports teams or recreation groups or clubs at school or outside of school	15%	16%	18%	20%▲
Proportion of young people who agree 'I like/liked PE classes at school'	79%	76%	77%	73%▼
Proportion of young people in year 11 and above who stopped doing PE as soon as it wasn't compulsory	41%	43%	44%	48%▲

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Results are from 2019 to 2021
Base: All young people aged 5 to 17

Potential decrease in confidence

Confidence is a critical component of physical literacy. An indication can be seen of a potential decrease in confidence among young people likely to have been affected by the 2021 environment:

- a decrease in agreement that 'I am confident to take part in lots of different activities,' from 73 percent in 2017 to 70 percent in 2018 and 2019 to 67 percent in 2021
- an increase in the proportion of young people indicating a lack of confidence as a reason they are not doing more physical activity (from 9 percent in 2019 to 13 percent in 2021).

Changing barriers to participation

In 2021, young people identified an average of 3.0 barriers to increasing their participation in physical activity, an increase from 2.7 barriers in 2019.

Barriers have changed in the following ways.

- Struggles with motivation, a lack of confidence, a fear of failure, and friends not being physically active were mentioned by a higher proportion of young people in 2021.
- Several less prevalent barriers also increased in mention in 2021, including not wanting to be seen by others while being physically active, finding physical activity boring, not knowing how to be physically active and not feeling welcome.
- Being too busy remained the most prevalent barrier in 2021 but was mentioned by a lower proportion of young people than in 2019.

How participation for adults has changed

This section contains key participation statistics for adults in active recreation and sport over time.

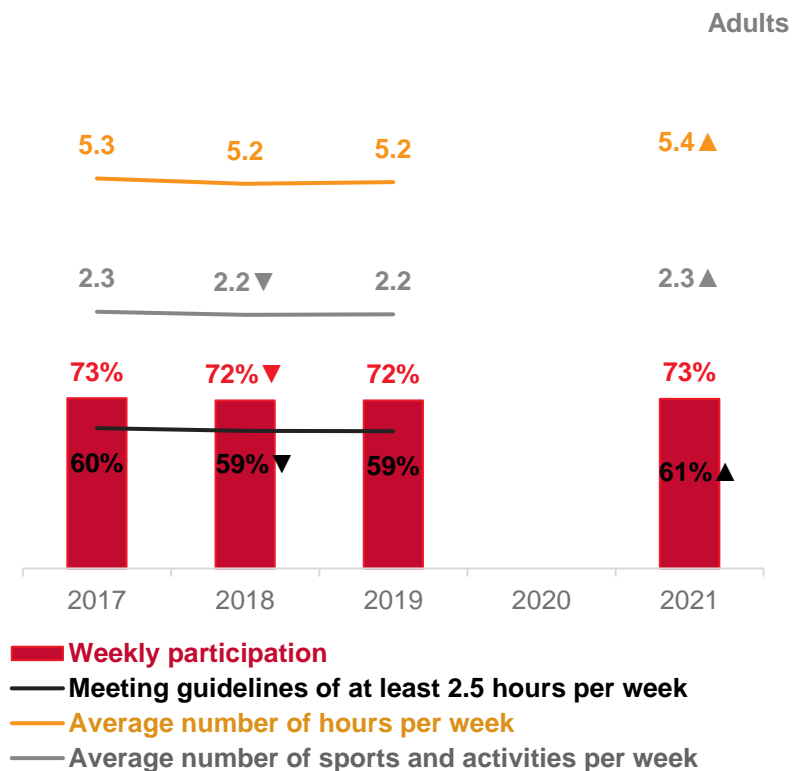
Adult participation indicators increased slightly from 2019 to 2021. Increases were seen in some population subgroups and not others.

1. Weekly participation did not change significantly among adults overall, or between adults within any subgroup, between 2019 and 2021.
2. The proportion of adults meeting the physical activity guidelines increased in 2021. This increase was seen in some demographic subgroups but not others.
3. The average number of hours spent participating, and the average number of sports and activities, also increased in 2021. Again, changes were seen in some demographic subgroups and not others.

Figure 2: Adults – key participation statistics over time

Between 2018 and 2019, no significant changes occurred in participation indicators for adults, following drops in weekly participation and average number of sports and activities between 2017 and 2018. Between 2019 and 2021:

- the proportion of adults participating weekly did not significantly change
- time spent in weekly participation increased by 3.1 percent
- the average number of sports and activities participated in weekly increased by 3.6 percent
- the proportion of adults meeting the physical activity guidelines increased by 3.6 percent.



▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than the previous year
 Results are from 2017 to 2021
 Base: All adults aged 18 and over

Key demographic differences

By gender

- Weekly participation did not change significantly for either males or females.
- The average time spent increased among males (from 5.5 hours to 5.8 hours) but not females.
- The average number of activities increased for both males and females (from 2.2 to 2.3).

By age

- Weekly participation did not change significantly for any age group.
- Between 2017 and 2019, a downward trend occurred in participation among those between ages 18 and 24, particularly females. This did not continue in 2021, with participation rates for this age group back in line with the levels for all adults.
- The average number of activities increased between ages 35 and 64, primarily among males.
- The average number of activities also increased among females between ages 18 and 24.
- The proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines increased between ages 50 and 64 (from 60 percent to 64 percent) and between ages 65 and 74 (from 57 percent to 62 percent).

By ethnicity

- No significant change occurred in weekly participation across ethnicities.
- Pacific adults spent less time being active in 2021 than 2019 (from 4.7 hours to 3.9 hours), the only group with a decrease in this indicator.¹⁵
- The proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines increased for European, Māori and Asian adults but not for Pacific.
- The average number of activities increased for European males and females, as well as for Māori females.
- Māori participation was lower than total adult participation in 2019 but was more in line with total adult participation in 2021.

By deprivation

- The average time spent increased among adults from medium deprivation areas.
- The average number of activities increased among adults from high deprivation areas.

¹⁵ This drop is not statistically significant.

Changes in type of participation between 2019 (pre-pandemic) and 2021

This section focuses on changes in the types of activities adults participated in.

1. The proportion of adults participating in competitive sports and activities decreased.

Table 5: Adults – Competitive and non-competitive participation

	Pre-pandemic 2019	2021	Difference (%)
Weekly competitive participation	12%	11%▼	-11.1
Weekly non-competitive only participation	60%	62%	+3.1
Weekly non-competitive participation (net)	70%	71%	+0.9

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Results are from 2019 and 2021
Base: All adults aged 18 and over

2. The proportion of adults participating **only** in non-competitive sports and activities increased.
3. The activities with increased participation in 2021 were predominantly non-competitive activities such as walking, individual workouts, Pilates, and yoga.

Table 6: Adults – Participation in sports and activities¹⁶

	Pre-pandemic 2019	2021
Increases		
Walking	57%	60%▲
Individual workout using equipment	22%	24%▲
Yoga	17%	20%▲
Pilates	8%	9%▲
NET: Tramping	4%	5%▲
Golf	3%	4%▲
Decreases		
Playing games (eg, with kids)	15%	13%▼
Swimming	9%	8%▼

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Results are from 2019 and 2021
Base: All adults aged 18 and over

By gender

- The average time spent increased among males but not females, particularly males between ages 50 and 64.
- Competitive participation decreased among females.

¹⁶ Please refer to appendix A for a more extensive list of sports and activities.

By age

- Competitive participation decreased most between ages 35 and 64 for males and females.

By ethnicity

- Competitive participation decreased most for Pacific males, from 27 percent to 20 percent.¹⁷

By deprivation

- There were no significant changes in competitive and non-competitive changes by deprivation between 2019 and 2022.

Watching briefs: Attitudes and behaviours affected by COVID-19

Changes occurred in other indicators when comparing 2019 pre-pandemic with 2021. This section highlights some of these changes. A watching brief will be in place to see how these evolve in 2022 and beyond.

Move to more individualised and flexible activities

- An increase in the proportion of adults who agree 'I choose physical activity that suits my mood at the time', from 55 percent in 2019 to 63 percent in 2021.
- An increase in the proportion who agree 'I prefer to do physical activity that is more flexible and less structured', from 64 percent to 67 percent.
- A decrease in the proportion of adults engaging in competitive sports and activities, 11 percent of adults in 2021.
- An increase in more individualised, flexible forms of physical activity including walking and individual workouts.

Increase in use of technology

- The proportion of adults who used technology (Fitbits, smartphone apps, pedometers and so on) when physically active increased from 31 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2021. Use of technology has increased year on year from 2017, with a 48 percent increase between 2017 and 2021.
- Increase in the use of technology can be observed across all genders, age groups, ethnicities, and deprivation levels.

Growing awareness of value of physical activity for wellbeing

- Between 2018 and 2021, an increase occurred in the proportion of adults agreeing that 'being physically active is very important for my physical health', from 87 percent in 2018 to 89 percent in 2019 and 91 percent in 2021.
- An increase also occurred in the proportion of adults agreeing that 'being physically active is very important for my mental and emotional wellbeing', from 84 percent in 2018 to 86 percent in 2019 to 88 percent in 2021.

¹⁷ This difference is not statistically significant.

- Agreement that 'after doing physical activity, I find it easier to concentrate' increased from 56 percent in 2018 to 57 percent in 2019 to 61 percent in 2021.

Changing barriers to participation

In 2021, adults identified an average of 3.2 barriers to increasing their participation in physical activity, an increase from 3.0 barriers in 2019.

Barriers have changed in the following ways.

- Being too tired, struggles with motivation, falling out of the habit and a lack of fitness were mentioned by higher proportions of adults in 2021.
- Several less prevalent barriers also increased in mention in 2021, including not having the equipment needed, a lack of conveniently located appropriate facilities, and a lack of people to do activities with.
- Other commitments taking priority remained the most prevalent barrier in 2021 but was mentioned by a lower proportion of adults than in 2019.

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Appendix A: Participation in sports and activities

Table 7: Young people – Top 25 sports and activities (last 7 days) over time

	Year				
	Total (%)	2017 (%)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2021 (%)
NET: Running / jogging / cross country	55	52	59 ▲	57	53 ▼
Playing (eg, running around, climbing trees, make-believe)	39	41	40	39	36 ▼
Playing on playground (eg, jungle gym)	34	36	36	34	32 ▼
Games (eg, four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)	34	36	36	34	32 ▼
Swimming	33	36	35	33	29 ▼
NET: Cycling	32	31	32	32	32
Walking for fitness	28	29	25 ▼	25	33 ▲
Trampoline	24	26	24	22 ▼	24
Scootering	21	20	21	20	21
NET: Football/ soccer/ futsal	17	19	19	17 ▼	15 ▼
Dance/dancing (eg, ballet, hip hop and so on)	15	16	15	14	15
Workout (weights or cardio)	14	14	14	13	14
Basketball or mini-ball	12	12	13	12	11
Group exercise class (eg, aerobics, crossfit, jump jam)	11	12	11	11	10
Netball	10	11	10	10	9
Tramping or bush walks	10	10	9	9	11 ▲
Rugby or rippa rugby	9	10	10	9	7 ▼
Athletics or track and field	8	9	9	9	6 ▼
Touch	8	8	8	9	7 ▼
Gymnastics (eg, rhythmic, artistic)	7	8	8	7	6 ▼
Cricket	6	6	7	6	5
Kapa haka	6	6	6	7	5 ▼
Skateboarding	6	6	5	5	6 ▲
Hockey or floorball	6	6	6	6	6
Mountain biking	5	5	5	6	5

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than previous year
Base: All young people aged 5 to 17

Table 8: Adults – Top 25 sports and activities (last 7 days) over time

	Year				
	Total (%)	2017 (%)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2021 (%)
Walking	58	59	57 ▼	57	60 ▲
Gardening	24	25	24 ▼	23 ▼	24
Individual workout using equipment	22	22	21	22	24 ▲
Running / jogging	20	20	19 ▼	20	21
Playing games (eg, with kids)	15	16	16	15	13 ▼
NET: Cycling (incl BMX, excl e-bikes)	11	11	11	11	11
NET: Cycling (excl BMX)	11	10	10	11	11
Group fitness class (eg, aerobics, crossfit)	9	9	9	9	9
NET: Pilates/yoga	9	8	8	8	10 ▲
Swimming	9	9	9	9	8 ▼
NET: Tramping	4	4	4	4	5 ▲
Dance / dancing (eg, ballet, hip hop and so on)	4	4	4	4	4
Golf	4	4	3	3	4 ▲
NET: Fishing	3	3	3 ▼	3	3
Mountain biking	2	4	4	2 ▼	–
Football (soccer)	2	2	2	2	2
Tennis	2	2	2	2	2
Boxing	1	2	1 ▼	1	1
Table tennis	1	1	1	1	2 ▲
Surfing / body boarding	1	1	1	2 ▲	1
Netball	1	1	1	1	1
Basketball	1	1	1	1	1
NET: Rugby / touch rugby	1	1	1	1	1
NET: Bowls	1	2	1 ▼	1	1
Motorcycling	1	2	1	1	1

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than previous year
Base: All adults aged 18 and over

Appendix B: Regional differences

Table 9: Weekly participation by region over time

	Young people				Adults			
	2017 (%)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2021 (%)	2017 (%)	2018 (%)	2019 (%)	2021 (%)
Northland	93	93	94	92	69	67	69	68
Auckland combined	94	92	94	90 ▼	73	72	73	74
North Harbour	95	93	96	92	77	75	76	76
Auckland	94	94	94	93	77	78	75	78
Counties Manukau	93	91	93	89	67	66	68	69
Waitakere	93	91	95	89	68	69	70	71
Waikato	96	96	94	93	71	70	70	70
Bay of Plenty	95	92	94	92	76	73	74	72
Gisborne	96	92	95	88	71	67	69	71
Taranaki	95	95	93	90	74	69	69	69
Whanganui	96	94	94	95	65	66	66	70
Hawke's Bay	98	95	96	84 ▼	71	69	70	72
Manawatu	93	91	93	89	71	68	65	68
Wellington	96	96	95	91	77	75	75	76
Tasman	97	97	94	94	76	74	74	78
Canterbury and West Coast	94	98	94	93	75	74	75	73
Otago	97	99	94	92	75	73	74	74
Southland	96	94	97	93	67	65	66	68

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Table 10: Average time spent in weekly participation by region (hours) over time

	Young people				Adults			
	2017	2018	2019	2021	2017	2018	2019	2021
Northland	12.0	11.6	12.3	11.5	5.1	4.8	5.3	5.2
Auckland combined	10.3	10.2	9.9	10.5	4.8	4.8	4.9	5.1
North Harbour	12.2	9.6	10.7	10.2	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.5
Auckland	9.3	10.0	9.6	10.4	5.0	5.2	5.0	5.5
Counties Manukau	10.1	10.4	9.2	10.6	4.4	4.3	4.7	4.6
Waitakere	9.7	10.7	10.7	10.7	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.7
Waikato	11.1	10.3	12.1	12.8	5.4	5.3	4.9	5.3
Bay of Plenty	11.9	11.5	11.7	12.1	5.9	5.5	5.5	5.5
Gisborne	11.6	13.6	11.1	11.7	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.1
Taranaki	11.8	11.8	11.6	13.6	6.0	5.1	5.0	6.1▲
Whanganui	11.3	11.1	13.5	14.6	5.1	5.2	4.9	5.2
Hawke's Bay	11.2	12.7	11.2	11.5	5.3	4.9	5.3	5.8
Manawatu	9.7	10.6	10.3	11.0	5.3	5.0	4.8	5.1
Wellington	10.3	11.5	11.1	11.2	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.5
Tasman	12.3	12.5	12.7	12.6	6.1	5.9	5.7	6.8▲
Canterbury and West Coast	10.8	11.4	10.4	11.4	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.4
Otago	12.2	12.6	12.0	13.2	5.8	5.9	5.8	5.7
Southland	12.2	11.3	12.1	12.4	5.0	4.8	4.9	5.1

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than 2019
Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Appendix C: Research objectives and method

This research aims to:

- collect information on the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘where’ young people and adults participate
- identify and describe links between participation (and non-participation) and other influential factors; the ‘why’ and ‘why not’ people participate
- measure the quality of participation and the contribution participation makes to an individual’s health and wellbeing
- understand the value placed on participation by people in New Zealand.

Survey method

Online and postal self-completion using sequential mixed methods, we are targeting 20 000 adults and 5000 young people per annum.

Fieldwork period

The 2017 survey was conducted between 5 January 2017 and 4 January 2018. The 2018 survey was conducted between 5 January 2018 and 4 January 2019. The 2019 survey was conducted between 5 January 2019 and 4 January 2020. The 2021 survey was conducted between 5 January 2021 and 4 January 2022.

Completed responses

Across the four years, responses have been received from n=97 399 adults aged 18-plus and n=21 222 young people aged between 5 and 17.

Weighting

Results have been weighted to the total New Zealand Regional Sports Trust population using 2013 Census statistics for the data between 2017 and 2019, and 2018 Census statistics for the data of 2021.

A sequential mixed method is used for this research

ELECTORAL ROLL	INVITATION LETTER	REMINDER POSTCARD 1	SURVEY PACK	REMINDER POSTCARD 2
Sample selected from Electoral Roll	<p>Invitation letters are sent to the named adults (aged 18-plus) inviting them to complete the questionnaire online (with instructions and log-in provided).</p> <p>A postcard is included to encourage young people aged 12 to 17 to complete the children and young people’s questionnaire online.</p> <p>A 0800 number and email address are provided for questions.</p>	<p>About a week later, a reminder postcard is sent thanking respondents and acting as a reminder to those still to respond.</p> <p>This communication is targeted to adults only.</p>	<p>A week after the postcard, non-respondents are sent a survey pack with a hardcopy of the questionnaire, letter, and a reply-paid envelope.</p> <p>A flyer is included for ages 12 to 17 to complete the survey online (no paper questionnaire is available for the children and young people’s survey).</p>	A final reminder is sent to adults who have not yet taken part in the survey.

Note: Parents or caregivers are asked to respond on behalf of ages 5 to 11 in their household (and encouraged to do the survey with their child and/or check responses with them).

Appendix D: Question wording and base descriptions

Figure 1 & 2

Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Q12 (5–17) In the last 7 days (not including today) have you done any physical activity specifically for sport, physical education (PE), exercise or fun?

Q7 (18+) Thinking back over the last 7 days (not including today) have you done any physical activity that was specifically for the purpose of sport, exercise, or recreation?

Note: The Physical Activity Guidelines were agreed to by the Ministry of Health and Sport NZ and they outline the minimum levels of physical activity required to gain physical health benefits:

- young people need to do at least 7 hours of activity per week at any intensity.
- adults need to do at least 150 minutes of activity per week at any intensity.

Q16b (5–17) About how many minutes did you spend doing <insert activity> in the last 7 days in <this way / these ways>?

Q19 (18+) Still thinking about the physical activity you have done in the last 7 days, in total how many hours did you spend being physically active for sport, exercise or recreation?

Q13 (5–17) Please tick all the ways you have been physically active for sport, PE, exercise, or fun in the last 7 days (not including today).

Q8 (18+) Which of the following have you done in the last 7 days and which have you done in the last 12 months? Please only select the activities where you have been physically active specifically for sport, exercise, or recreation. Note: reporting is based on responses to the 7 days component of the question. AND Q97 Please select the additional activities you have done in the last 7 days.

Table 1 & 2 & 5

Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Q16a (5–17) Where or how did <you/name> do <activity> in the last 7 days?

Q16b (5–17) About how many minutes did you spend doing <insert activity> in the last 7 days in <this way / these ways>?

Q15 (18+) In the last 7 days, have you done this as a competitive sport or a competitive activity?

Table 3 & 6 & 7 & 8

Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Q13 (5–17) Please tick all the ways you have been physically active for sport, PE, exercise, or fun in the last 7 days (not including today).

Q8 (18+) Which of the following have you done in the last 7 days? Please only select the activities where you have been physically active specifically for sport, exercise, or recreation. Note: reporting is based on responses to the 7 days component of the question. AND Q97 Please select the additional activities you have done in the last 7 days.

Table 4

Base: All respondents aged 5 to 17

Q39a (5–17) Please select a box on each line to show how much <you agree or disagree / <name agrees or disagrees> with each statement.

Q39b (5–17) Please select a box on each line to show how much <you agree or disagree / <name agrees or disagrees> with each statement.

Q29 (517) In the last 12 months, how many (if any) sports teams, or recreation clubs/groups have you been in at school? And how many have you been in outside of school?

Q74 (those in year 11/12/13 or who have left school) Which of the following best describes when you participated in Physical Education (PE) or fitness classes at school?

Table 9

Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Q12 (5–17) In the last 7 days (not including today) have you done any physical activity specifically for sport, physical education (PE), exercise or fun?

Q7 (18+) Thinking back over the last 7 days (not including today) have you done any physical activity that was specifically for the purpose of sport, exercise, or recreation?

Table 10

Base: All respondents aged 5 and over

Q16b (5–17) About how many minutes did you spend doing <insert activity> in the last 7 days in <this way / these ways>?

Q19 (18+) Still thinking about the physical activity you have done in the last 7 days, in total how many hours did you spend being physically active for sport, exercise or recreation?