

Physical Activity

What this is about...

The importance of being active has been well documented, with some of the attributes of an active life being identified as:

- A better quality of life - getting more people active saves lives and money. In New Zealand, around a third (just over 7,800) of adult deaths in 1994 were from coronary heart disease, colon cancer and diabetes. Around a fifth of these deaths can be attributed to physical inactivity. Even a modest increase (10%) in physical activity levels among adults could prevent over 300 of these premature deaths and save around \$55 million a year in health costs.
- Young people who are active are healthier and perform better at school.
- Active communities are more unified, more likely to share an identity, and experience less anti-social behaviour, especially among young people.
- Active lifestyles bring tangible benefits to the economy. The sport and active leisure sector contributes over \$1.7 billion to GDP and supports 31,000 people in employment.⁹⁹

This indicator presents the percentage of active adults and young people within New Zealand, on a regional basis ('activity' is defined as doing 2.5 hours or more of sport and active leisure a week). Data for this indicator is drawn from research conducted for the Hillary Commission's Push Play Campaign which aims to get all New Zealanders enjoying the benefits of healthy active lifestyles.¹⁰⁰

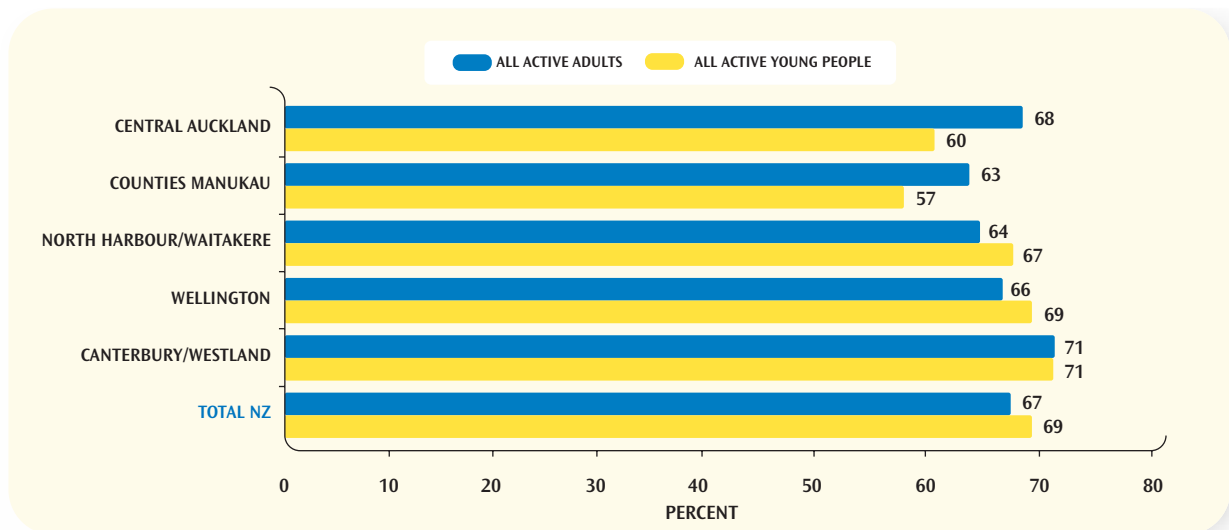
What did we find ?

- Young people's involvement in sport and active leisure is high in all areas of the country, but there are differences in their activity levels and the way they play sport. Young people in the Auckland region were less active than those in the rest of the country, while those in the far south are the most active. Their involvement in club sport varies. Almost a half of the young people in the Canterbury/Westland area play sport with a club, compared with only 30% of those in Wellington and Auckland.
- Adults living in different parts of the country are equally active and have similar rates of participation in sport and active leisure. For adults regional figures reflect national ones.
- In all regions, more than 50% of the population is engaged in physical activity of some type. Types of activity may range from gardening and fishing to netball and badminton.

99 Hillary Commission. 1999. Push Play Facts. Report published by Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure.

100 Regional data was available from the Sport and Physical Activity Survey carried out by the Hillary Commission (1999) which formed the basis of their Push Play campaign. The survey was carried out from May 1997 to April 1998 during which over 5,400 adults and 1,700 5 to 17 year olds living in 12 regions of New Zealand were surveyed.

PERCENTAGE OF ACTIVE YOUNG PEOPLE (AGED 5 TO 17 YEARS) AND ACTIVE ADULTS (1997 TO 1998)



Data Source: Hillary Commission, Sport and Physical Activity Survey

One of the trends currently occurring in relation to sports clubs is amalgamation, especially in the Auckland Region. As a result, a range of small clubs offering particular sports are being replaced by multi-sport facilities. This will increase the range of sports opportunities for people. However, accessibility and affordability of such facilities may need to be monitored to ensure they provide sporting opportunities for a range of community members.

By international standards, New Zealand is an active nation. However, inactivity and obesity are on the increase in the western world, and the number of people who are obese or overweight is increasing in New Zealand. Obesity is influenced by poor diet and physical inactivity.¹⁰¹