

# Open Space

## What this is about...

Access to play areas and open space for sport and recreation is an important ingredient in how people feel about where they live, play and enjoy their leisure time. Open space is a contributor to the general health and well-being of a community. Measuring public open space highlights the availability of parks and reserves for the city's population and can indicate how urban sprawl is encroaching on parks and reserves by showing whether the ratio is being maintained as the population increases.

The indicator shows the ratio of public open space per 1,000 residents. Public open space includes neighbourhood and metropolitan parks and reserves, but excludes regional parks and Department of Conservation (DoC) land. The space may be passive or recreational.

Although a standard of four hectares per 1,000 population is often used to provide neighbourhood parks and sports fields in new suburbs, there are no recognised standards for larger district parks, sub-regional or regional park systems, or for other areas like esplanade reserves and ecological corridors which fulfil both conservation and recreational roles.

## What did we find ?

- All of the six cities have a ratio of open space greater than four hectare (ha) per 1,000 people.

OPEN SPACE PER 1,000 POPULATION, BY CITY (1999)

	Public open space (ha)	Population	Public open space per 1,000 population (ha)	Regional parks (ha)	DoC land (ha)
Auckland	2,179	354,532	6.2	295	21,864
Manukau	1,557	254,603	6.1	3,780	573
North Shore	1,341	171,494	7.8	113	52
Waitakere	1,089	154,386	7.1	16,259	101
Wellington	2,881	166,800	17.3	289	6
Christchurch	1,459	324,300	4.5	n/a	n/a

Data Sources: Auckland Regional Council State of the Auckland Region Report 1999, Wellington Regional Council State of the Region Report 1999, Christchurch State of the Environment Report 1999. Population figures are estimates from Statistics New Zealand.  
n/a - data not available

Large areas of regional parks and Department of Conservation land are available in the Auckland Region.

The indicator doesn't track additions of open space, but instead tracks the net effect of additions and conversions to other uses.

The data doesn't recognise the availability of open space in adjacent territorial authorities, although residents enjoy open space in neighbouring areas. Other factors to consider are the quality of the open space and ease of access, for example whether a quality neighbourhood park is within walking distance.

Results may be skewed at the ward level. The average for a city may be reasonable, but some wards may not have so much open space, for example in Manukau City there is a large area of open space in the rural ward of Clevedon which affects the average for the city.

The availability of open space may affect people's satisfaction with the way the city looks and feels, air quality, access to leisure and recreation. Even if there is no change in the amount of open space, the enjoyment of that open space can be affected by increased numbers using it through changes in population, increased housing density, and the availability of other leisure and recreational opportunities. The use of public open space for leisure or recreation purposes can have positive benefits on the health of a city's residents.