

A photograph of children playing in a backyard. In the foreground, a large, out-of-focus blue ball is visible. In the background, a young girl with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt with 'FREE SPIRIT' printed on it and denim shorts, is running and smiling. Other children are partially visible behind her. The setting is a grassy yard with a wooden fence and a house in the background.

# Active all year round

HOW SEASONS AFFECT  
YOUNG PEOPLES'  
PARTICIPATION



# About

Young people between ages 5 and 17 engage in sports and activities in various settings, such as:

- competitions and tournaments
- training with a coach or instructor
- physical education (PE)
- play
- extra exercise.

Some activities are done in one setting, while most are done across multiple settings.

This report shows that young people are more active in specific sports and activities at certain times of the year. Participation fluctuates with the seasons and is influenced by the availability of activities and the locations where young people are active.

It's important to recognise how different settings contribute to young people's activity levels throughout the year. Considering seasonal variations can help ensure steady or increased participation to support Sport NZ's strategic goal of Every Body Active. Strategies or interventions to boost participation should take these seasonal or setting changes into account.

To help organisations in the play, active recreation and sport sector effectively use this research, here are some key questions to consider:

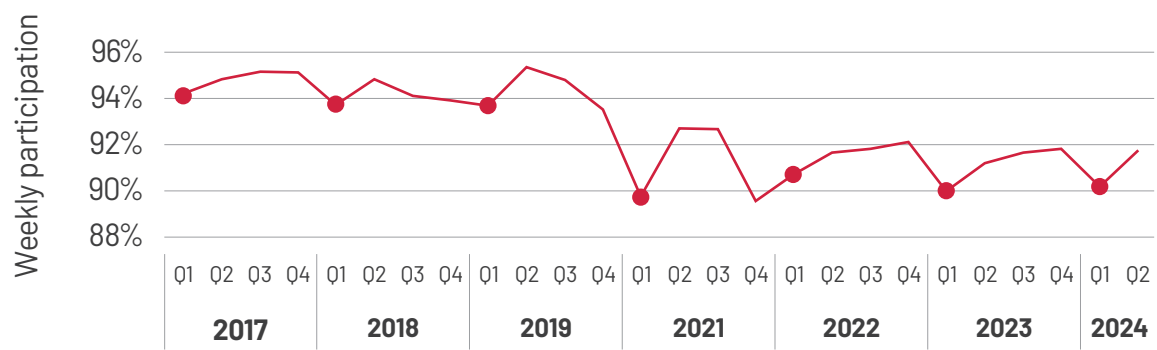
- How can this information guide who to target, where to focus attention, what to focus on and the timing of any interventions or initiatives?
- What opportunities does this present for collaboration between different seasonal sports and activities, promoting choice and opportunity with the aim of fostering a lifelong love of being active?
- What opportunities does this present to collaborate on the use of spaces and places for seasonal sports and activities while promoting a Balance is Better approach?
- What opportunities does this present to collaborate between private and public spaces and places providers to improve participation?
- How can seasonal barriers to participation be overcome?



## How does the time of year affect young people’s activity levels?

Fewer young people are active each week during the warmer months (January to March) when schools are closed for the holidays. This results in a decrease in participation in PE, competitions, tournaments and training with a coach or instructor.

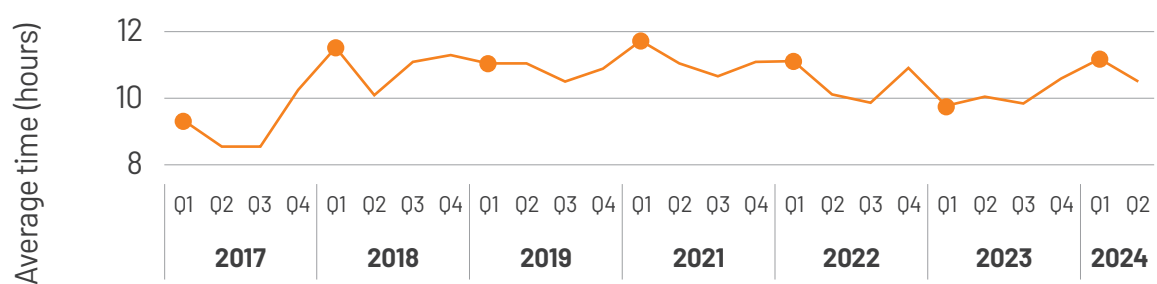
### Weekly participation by season



The year 2020 is not represented in the graphs displayed throughout this report due to a pause in surveying during Covid-19.

However, young people spend more time being active overall during the warmer months (October to March).

### Time being active by season

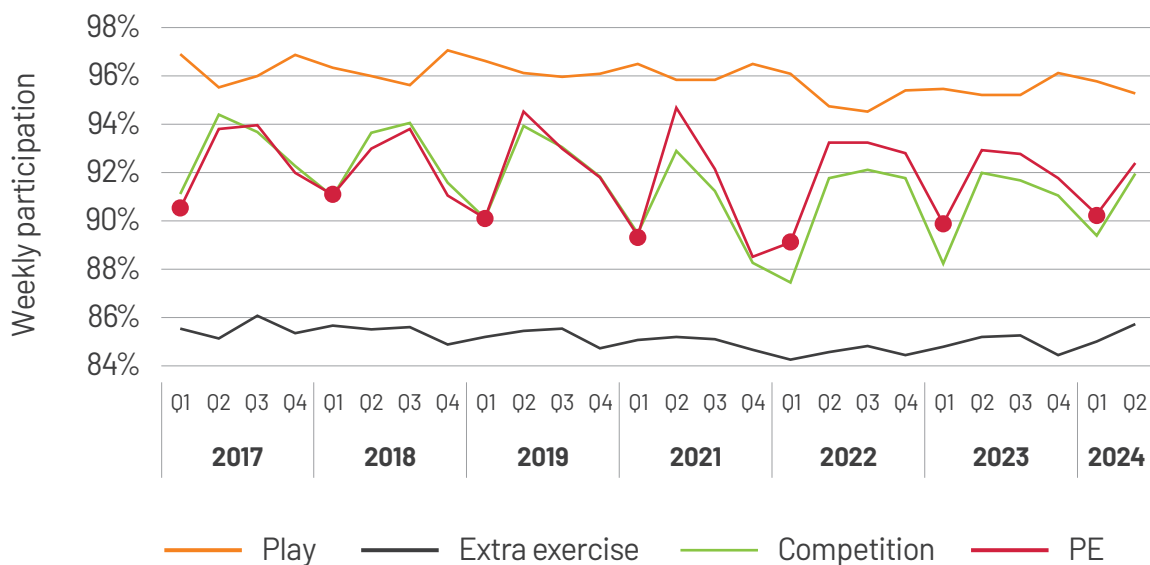


**Key for graphs:** Q1: January to March Q2: April to June Q3: July to September Q4: October to December

## How does the time of year affect where and how young people are active?

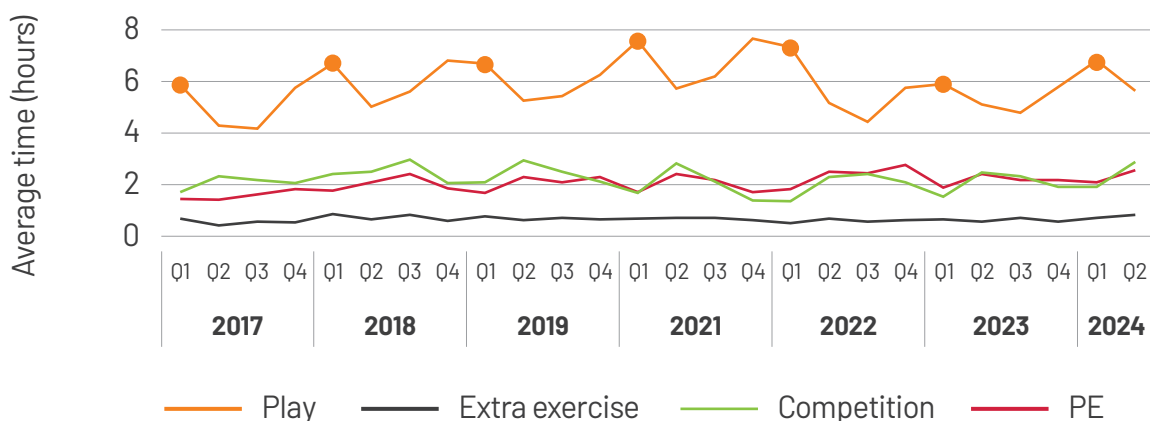
Participation in PE, competition, tournaments and training with a coach or instructor peak in the autumn and winter and drops during the summer.

### Weekly participation by activities and settings



Play activities peak in the warmer months, while activities done for extra exercise show less seasonal variation.

### Time young people spend playing

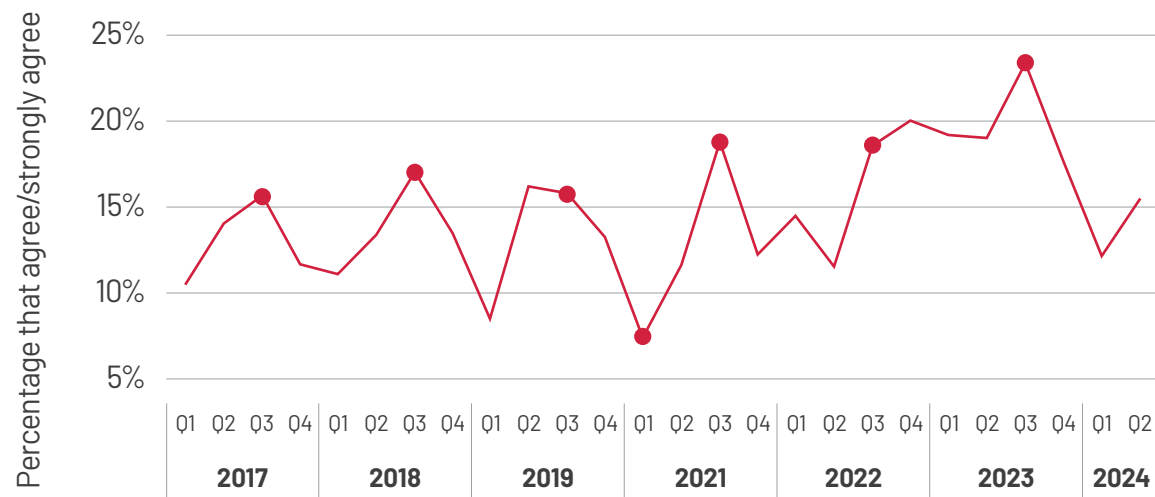


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Bad weather during winter makes it harder for young people to do organised activities like PE, competitions, tournaments and training with a coach or instructor. This graph shows agreement that the weather is a barrier to participation in winter months, which lines up with participation in organised sports and activities.

Participants that agree weather is a barrier to participation, by season



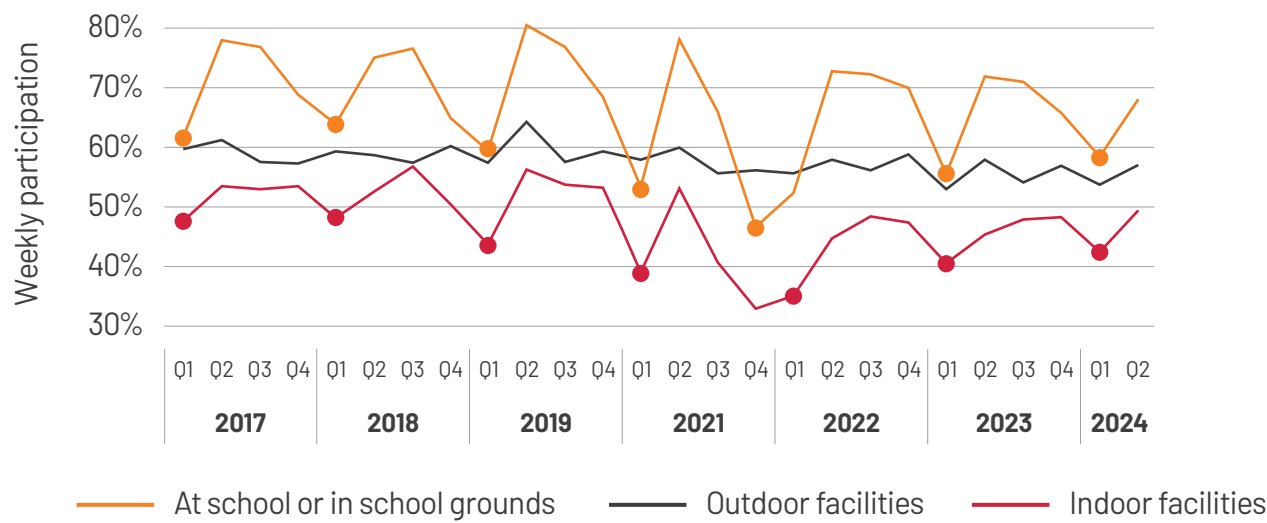
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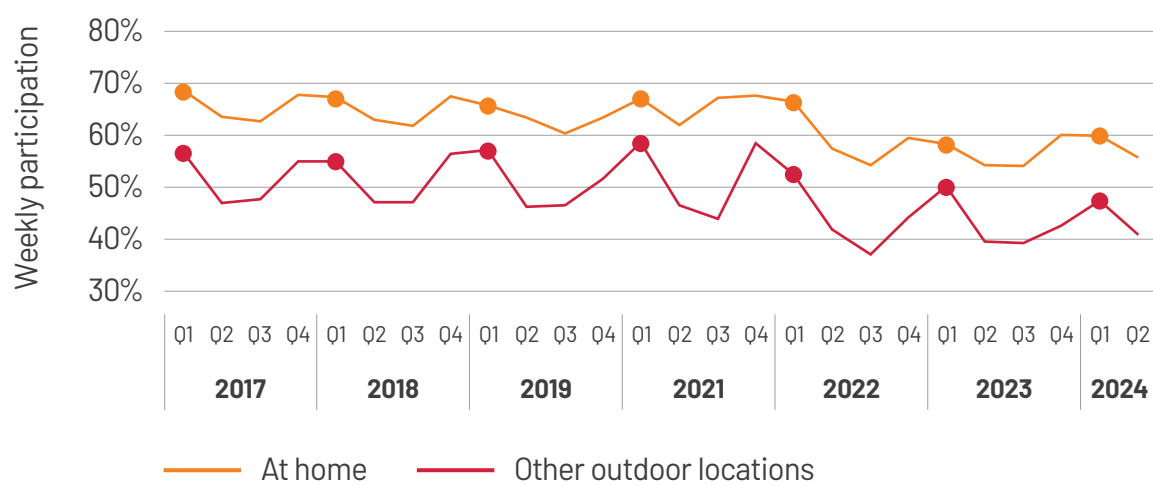
There is also seasonal variation in locations where young people are active.

During the summer, participation at school and in indoor facilities is lower when schools are closed. Instead, young people are more active at home and in outdoor locations such as the beach, lake, bush and footpaths. However, the use of outdoor facilities like playgrounds, parks, fields, astroturf and outdoor pools remains consistent throughout the year.

Participation at school and indoor facilities



Participation at home and other outdoor locations

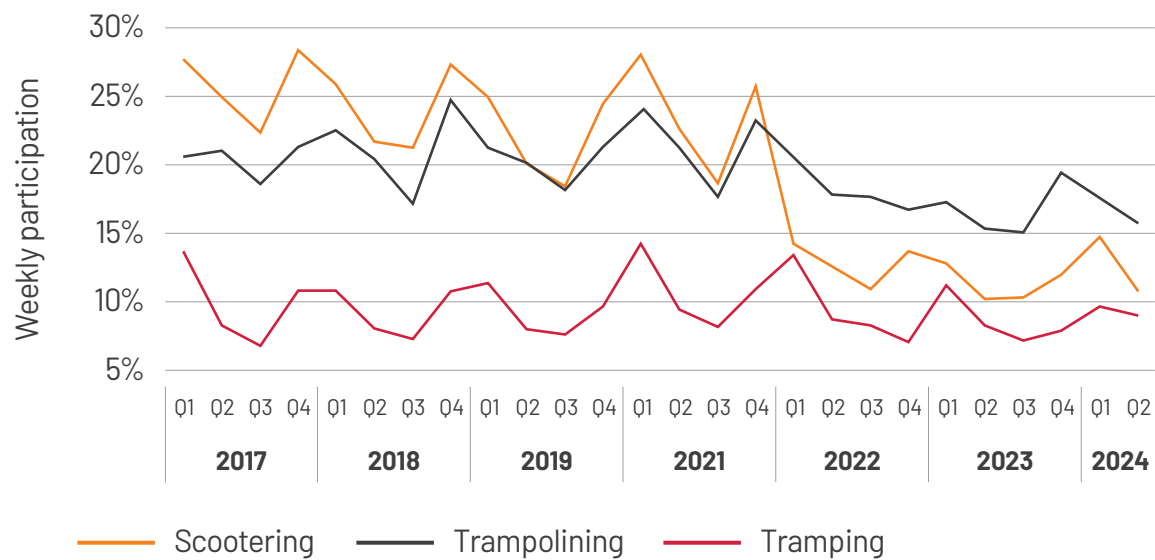


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## How does time of year affect different sports and activities?

Scootering, trampolining and tramping are done for play and follow the same seasonal pattern as other play activities, peaking in warmer months.

### Participation in activities does mainly for play



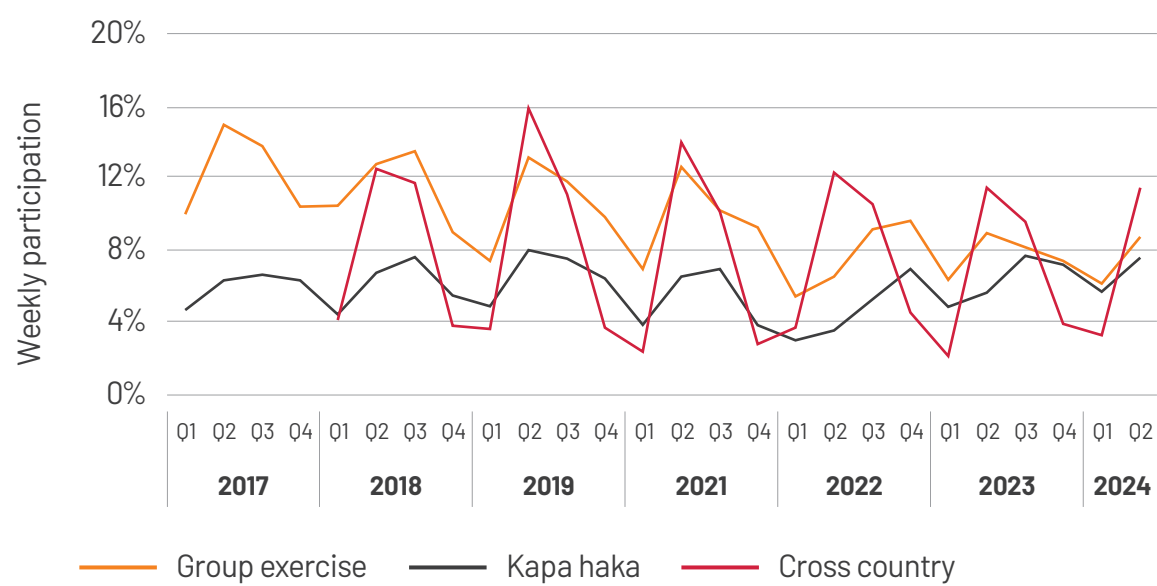
**Key for graphs:** Q1: January to March Q2: April to June Q3: July to September Q4: October to December





Group exercise, kapa haka and cross country are mostly done during PE. These activities follow the overall PE participation pattern, which decreases in the summer during school holidays.

Participation in activities done mainly for PE



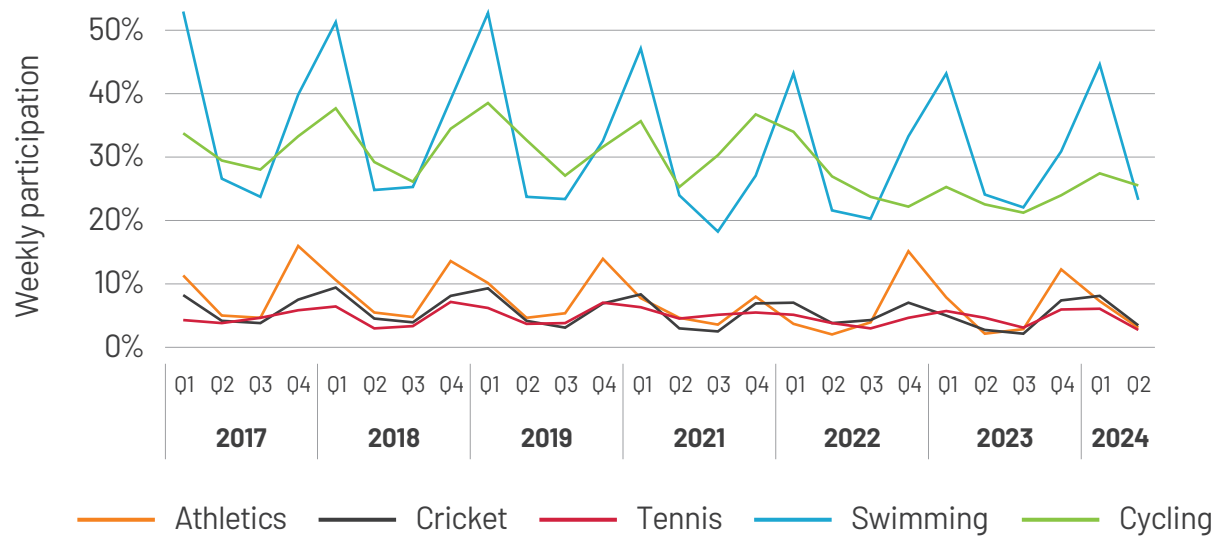
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Weekly participation in sports and activities follows a seasonal pattern, influenced by when these activities are most commonly available and when they are most likely to take place.

Sports and activities like athletics, cricket, tennis, swimming and cycling peak in the warmer months.

Sports and activities that peak in warmer months

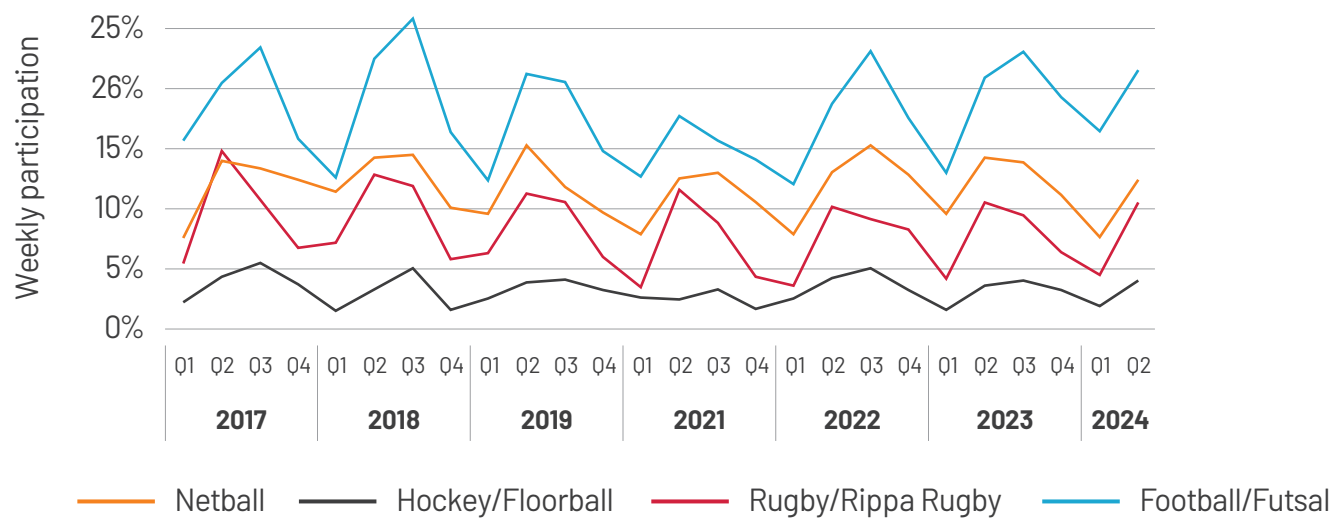


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On the other hand, netball, hockey/floorball, rugby/rippa rugby and football/futsal peak in the cooler months when competition structures for these sports are offered.

Sports and activities that peak in the cooler months



Key for graphs: Q1: January to March Q2: April to June Q3: July to September Q4: October to December

Many sports are played mainly in winter or summer, however a number of young people still participate in these sports throughout the year. For example, more than 10% of young people continue playing football or futsal after the main winter season ends.

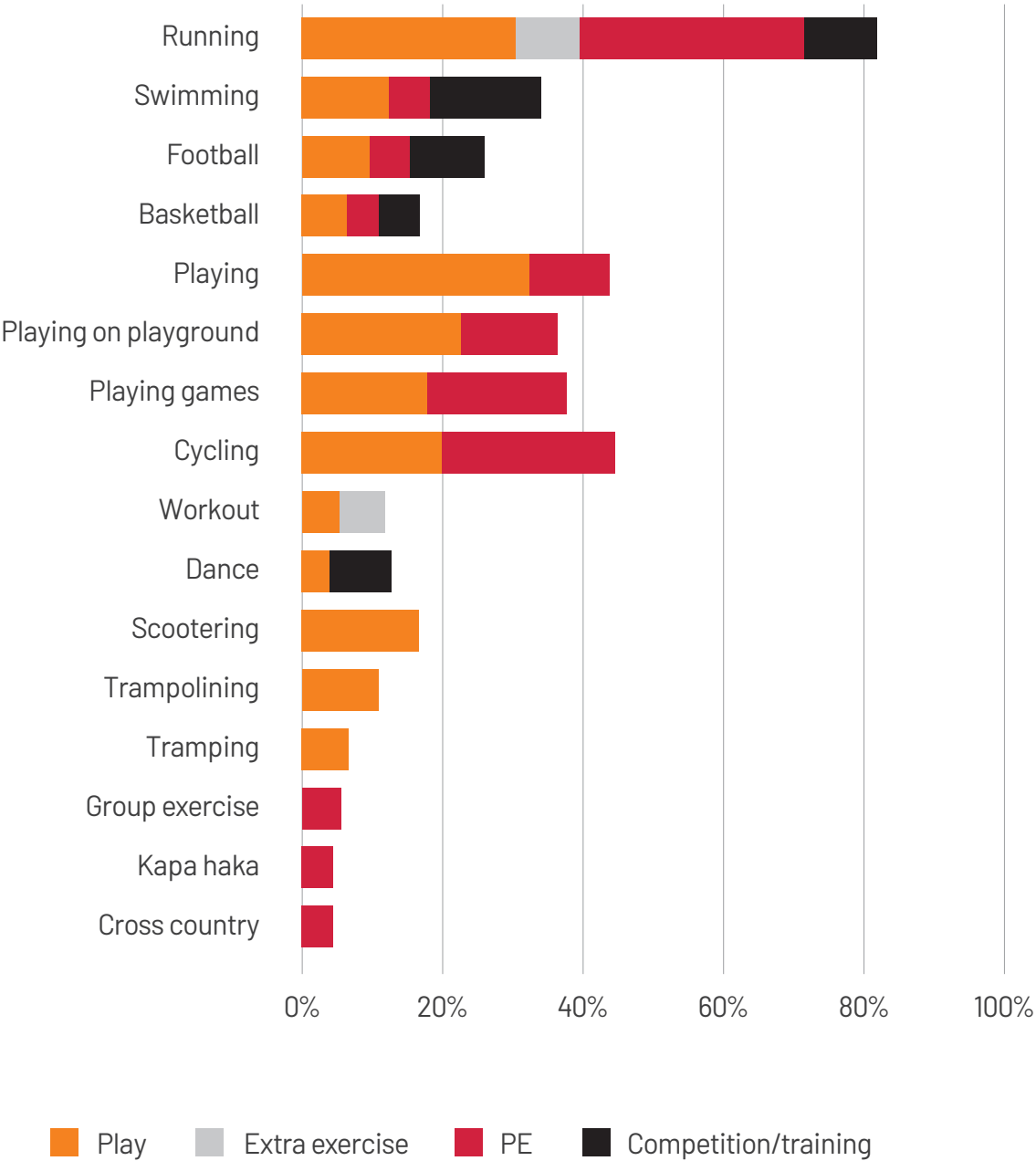
Throughout the year, there is a seasonal pattern in how many young people are active and how much time they spend being active. Participation in PE, competitions, tournaments and training with a coach or instructor is higher in winter and spring, while extra exercise shows less seasonal variation.





The chart below highlights a selection of sports and activities and where they are mainly played.<sup>1</sup> The colours represent the different settings: black for competitions, tournaments and training with a coach or instructor, red for PE, grey for extra exercise and orange for play.

Sports and activities are mostly done in more than one setting



<sup>1</sup> This figure is based on sports and activities with  $\geq 5\%$  weekly participation in each context.





## Applying these insights

Understanding how seasons and settings affect young people's activity is crucial. By considering these variations, we can help keep participation levels steady or increase them throughout the year, supporting Sport NZ's goal of Every Body Active.

To achieve this, organisations can:

- create targeted programmes to overcome various barriers to participation
- collaborate with different sports and organisations
- use these insights in policy-making and strategic planning.

Regularly monitoring and evaluating participation trends will help refine these strategies and ensure they are effective in keeping young people active all year round.



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