



**SPORT  
NEW ZEALAND**  
IHI AOTEAROA

# Active NZ

## Snapshot of the Participation Landscape

### The New Zealand Participation Survey 2023

July 2024

## Acknowledgements

Sport New Zealand's Active NZ survey measures nationwide participation in play, active recreation and sport. This is the seventh year of data collection, with data collected continuously from 2017 to 2019, and then from 2021 to 2023. Data collection during 2020 was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic (between April and June) creating a gap in the time series data.

This report provides a snapshot of the 2023 New Zealand participation landscape for ages 5-plus.

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 Sport New Zealand's Research, Evaluation and Insights team, and Verian.

## Citation

Sport New Zealand, 2024

*Active NZ Snapshot of the Participation Landscape: The New Zealand Participation Survey 2023*

Wellington: Sport New Zealand

Active NZ resources are available at [sportnz.org.nz/ActiveNZ](https://sportnz.org.nz/ActiveNZ)

Contact: [activenz@sportnz.org.nz](mailto:activenz@sportnz.org.nz)

# Contents

Glossary	Page 4
About this report	Page 6
Executive summary	Page 7

---

<b>Snapshot of the 2023 participation landscape</b>	Page 10
---	---------

---

<b>How young people are active</b>	Page 20
------------------------------------	---------

---

<b>Competitive and non-competitive participation</b>	Page 23
--	---------

---

<b>Appetite to increase participation</b>	Page 27
---	---------

---

<b>Barriers</b>	Page 32
-----------------	---------

---

<b>Appendices</b>	Page 36
-------------------	---------

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# Glossary

<b>Adult</b>	Respondents aged 18-plus.
<b>Being active</b>	Being physically active in play, active recreation and sport.
<b>Deprivation</b>	NZDep index estimates the relative socioeconomic deprivation of an area and does not directly relate to individuals. Areas are classified as low deprivation 1–3, medium deprivation 4–7 and high deprivation 8–10. A value of 10 indicates the most deprived 10 percent of areas in New Zealand. The reverse is true for a value of 1.
<b>Disabled people</b>	We use disabled people rather than people with disabilities in this report. This references the contemporary social model of disability instead of the traditional model. We are not people with disabilities; individuals have impairments. People with impairments are disabled if society does not provide an environment that does not adequately take their impairments into account. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics short set of questions is used to classify levels of impairment to identify disabled people. <sup>1</sup> In the Active NZ survey, disabled people are people who report at least a lot of difficulty across one or more of six impairment domains. Non-disabled are people who report only some or no difficulty in each of the six domains. This question was added mid-2019, so results are shown for 2021, 2022 and 2023 only.
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Results by ethnicity throughout this report – European, Māori, Pacific (including Samoan) and Asian (including Indian and Chinese) – are based on respondents' self-identification.
<b>Inactive</b>	Adults and young people who are active for less than 30 minutes per week.
<b>Informal participation</b>	Applies to 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.
<b>Meeting the guidelines</b>	Adults who are active for at least 2.5 hours per week. Young people who are active for at least 7 hours per week.
<b>Non-participants</b>	People who have not been physically active in play, exercise, active recreation, or sport in the past seven days.
<b>Organised participation</b>	Applies to 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, sports and activities undertaken in a competition and training or practising with a coach or instructor.

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com), for further information. Note: disability is only reported for 2021, 2022 and 2023 only because of changes to the question used over time.

<b>Participants</b>	People who have been active in play, active recreation or sport in the past seven days. Participation can include physical activity to get to and from places.
<b>Participation in competitive and non-competitive sports or activities</b>	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.
<b>Play, active recreation and sport</b>	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.
<b>Rangatahi</b>	Respondents aged 12 to 17. Younger rangatahi refers to ages 12 to 14 and older rangatahi to ages 15 to 17.
<b>Respondents</b>	People who took part in the survey.
<b>Tamariki</b>	Respondents aged 5 to 11. Younger tamariki refers to ages 5 to 7 and older tamariki to ages 8 to 11.
<b>Weekly participation</b>	Being active in play, active recreation or sport at least once in the past seven days.
<b>Young people</b>	Respondents aged 5 to 17.

# Active NZ

This report provides an update on the main participation indicators in play, active recreation and sport in 2023 for New Zealanders aged 5-plus. It sets out how these indicators vary over the lifespan of New Zealanders through the lenses of age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability.

It should be read alongside the Active NZ Participation trends 2017-2023 report which highlights how activity levels, attitudes and preferences for New Zealanders aged 5-plus have changed over seven years.

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## About this report

The report uses data collected through the Active NZ survey between 13 January 2023 and 4 January 2024 from 5,890 young people and 15,836 adults.

Differences between the demographic subgroups of gender, age, ethnicity, deprivation and disability are highlighted.

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

Within the two datasets, 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. While all statistically significant differences are shown in the figures and tables in this report, the commentary focuses on the significant differences that are meaningful.

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.

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# Executive summary

## Introduction

This report is an up-to-date snapshot of the 2023 New Zealand play, active recreation and sport participation landscape for ages 5-plus. Drawn from the Active NZ survey, it uses data collected during 2023 from 5,890 young people and 15,836 adults.

Selected results are explored through the lenses of age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability.

It should be read alongside the Participation Trends report, which explores how the play, active recreation and sport landscape has changed since 2017.

## Key findings

### Overall participation

In general, young people are more active than adults. In 2023:

1. ninety-two percent of young people participated each week, compared with 74 percent of adults
2. on average, young people spent more than twice the amount of time as adults participating each week (10.2 hours, compared with 4.6 hours)
3. young people also participated in more than twice the number of sports and activities than adults (4.6 young people, compared with 1.9 adults)
4. a similar proportion of adults and young people met the physical activity guidelines.<sup>2</sup> Fifty-four percent of young people spent 7-plus hours being active each week and 58 percent of adults spent 2.5-plus hours being active
5. the proportion of inactive New Zealanders (less than 30 minutes each week) increases as they transition from tamariki to rangatahi, peaking among those aged 15 to 17. The proportion of adults who are inactive is relatively stable up until aged 75-plus where one-third of adults do less than 30 minutes of activity each week.

### By age

1. Tamariki are the most active of all New Zealanders. They are more likely to participate each week, spend more time in more sports and activities and are more likely to meet the physical activity guidelines. The proportion of inactive New Zealanders (less than 30 minutes each week) increases as they transition from tamariki to rangatahi, peaking among those aged 15 to 17.
2. Participation in competitive sports and activities is highest among older tamariki, with lower participation rates among older rangatahi. Participation in non-competitive sports and activities is highest among young people between ages 5 and 7 and lower among older tamariki and all rangatahi.
3. Young tamariki spend most time in informal participation, especially play. As children grow older, their informal participation declines and is counterbalanced by greater participation in organised activity between ages 8 and 14. Between ages 15 and 17 organised and informal participation drops.

<sup>2</sup> Meeting the physical activity guidelines is based on the recommendation of at least 7 hours per week of any intensity for young people and at least 2.5 hours 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](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/physical-activity/how-much-activity-recommended).

4. Sixty-four percent of young people want to increase their participation. This is highest among rangatahi between ages 12 and 14. The main barriers to increasing participation among young people are being too busy and a lack of energy or motivation. One-in-five young people also cites the weather.
5. The proportion of adults participating each week is stable until age 75-plus when fewer people participate each week in fewer sports and activities but continue to spend the same amount of time as all adults.
6. Time spent in weekly participation peaks between ages 18 and 24 and 65 and 74, with the number of sports and activities participated in each week stable from ages 18 to 24 up until 75-plus.
7. Most adults would like to increase their participation. This is particularly the case between ages 18 and 49 when more than 85 percent would like to do more. The main barrier to increasing participation among adults is 'other commitments taking priority', especially for age 18, ages 24 to 35 and age 49. This also applies to rangatahi aged 15 to 17.

### By gender

1. A gender gap can be seen in time spent being active: males spend more time than females being active. While this gap first appears among young tamariki, it remains until late adulthood and only narrows among adults aged 50 to 74.
2. Females aged 15 to 24 and 35 to 64 are more motivated to increase their participation than males of the same age.
3. Females perceive additional barriers to increased participation. They are more likely than males to view being tired, a lack of motivation and lack of confidence as barriers to their participation.

### By ethnicity

1. Across all young people, Māori males spend the most time being active, while Asian females spend the least. This pattern continues into adulthood.
2. Young Asian are more likely to want to increase their participation. European adults are less likely to want to increase their participation, while the opposite is true for Pacific and Asian adults.
3. Asian and Māori adults are more likely to consider being unable to afford their preferred activities, as well as not having the equipment they need, as barriers to further participation.

### By deprivation

4. Young people and adults from high deprivation areas have lower levels of participation than those from low deprivation areas. Further, young people and adults from high deprivation areas spend less time each week being active.
5. No differences can be seen in appetite to increase participation by deprivation for young people and adults.
6. Young people from low deprivation areas are more likely to consider being busy as a barrier, while those from high deprivation areas are more concerned with sports or activities being too expensive.
7. Adults from high deprivation areas are less likely to cite 'other commitments' than adults from low deprivation areas. Instead, they are more likely to view a lack of equipment and motivation as barriers.

### By disability

1. Disabled young people and adults are less likely to participate each week. Time spent being active is comparable between disabled and non-disabled tamariki, however, the gap widens over their lifespan.

2. Disabled young people are more likely to want to increase their participation, compared with non-disabled. No difference is evident in appetite to increase participation between disabled and non-disabled adults.
3. Both disabled young people and adults are more likely to cite being too tired and a lack of motivation as barriers to increasing their participation.

## Conclusion

Results continue to highlight inequities in play, active recreation and sport by age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability.

# Snapshot of the 2023 participation landscape

This section gives an overview of participation in play, active recreation and sport by age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability.

## Insights

### By age

- Tamariki are the most active of all New Zealanders. They are more likely to participate each week, spend more time in more sports and activities and are more likely to meet the physical activity guidelines. The proportion of inactive (less than 30 minutes each week) New Zealanders increases as they transition from tamariki to rangatahi, peaking among those aged 15 to 17.
- For adults, weekly participation is consistent among New Zealanders aged 18 to 74 and lower among those aged 75-plus. However, time spent being active follows a more complex pattern: it is lowest among those aged 35 to 49 and highest among those aged 65 to 74.

### By gender

- A gender gap is evident in time spent being active – with males spending more time than females – that persists over their lifespan. This gap first appears among young tamariki aged 5 to 7 and remains until late adulthood only narrowing among adults aged 75-plus.

### By ethnicity

- Across all young people (both tamariki and rangatahi), Māori males spend the most time being active, while Asian females spend the least. This pattern continues into adulthood.

### By deprivation

- Young people and adults from high deprivation areas have lower levels of weekly participation and spend less time participating than their counterparts from low deprivation areas.

### By disability

- Disabled young people and adults are less likely to be active than non-disabled. Time spent being active is comparable between disabled and non-disabled tamariki, however, the gap widens over their lifespan.

## By age

Ninety-two percent of young people participate each week. On average, young people spend 10.2 hours being active each week, participating in an average of 4.6 sports and activities. However, the amount of time spent being active varies according to age and demographic characteristics: just over half (54 percent) meet the physical activity guidelines of 7-plus hours each week.

Adults are less active than young people. Seventy-four percent of adults participate each week, spending an average of 4.6 hours participating in 1.9 sports and activities. Fifty-eight percent meet the physical activity guidelines of 2.5 or more hours each week. Conversely, 28 percent of adults are inactive (less than 30 minutes being active each week) (table 1).

**Table 1: Key participation indicators**

	Young people	Adults
Weekly participation	92%	74%
Average number of hours being active	10.2	4.6
Average number of sports and activities a week	4.6	1.9
Meeting guidelines (young people: at least 7-plus hours per week; adults: at least 2.5 hours per week)	54%	58%
Inactive (young people and adults: less than 30 minutes per week)	9%	28%

Results are from 2023  
Base: All respondents aged 5-plus

New Zealanders are most active when they are tamariki. The average number of hours spent participating decreases with age, with a steep decline for rangatahi aged 15 to 17. Other significant indicators – including weekly participation, the average number of sports and activities participated in, and the proportion meeting the physical activity guidelines – are higher among tamariki aged 5 to 11 and lower between ages 15 and 17. Conversely, the proportion of inactive (less than 30 minutes each week) New Zealanders increases as they transition from tamariki to rangatahi, peaking among those aged 15 to 17.

For adults, the proportion participating each week is consistent by age, except for being higher between ages 35 and 49 and lower for adults aged 75-plus. In contrast, the amount of time spent being active varies more by age. It is lower between ages 25 and 49 then increases with age, peaking among those aged 65 to 74. Adults between ages 18 and 24 also spend more time in weekly participation than all adults.

The proportion of adults who are inactive is stable up until age 75-plus where one-third of adults do less than 30 minutes of activity each week (figure 1 and figure 2).

Figure 1: Participation indicators by age

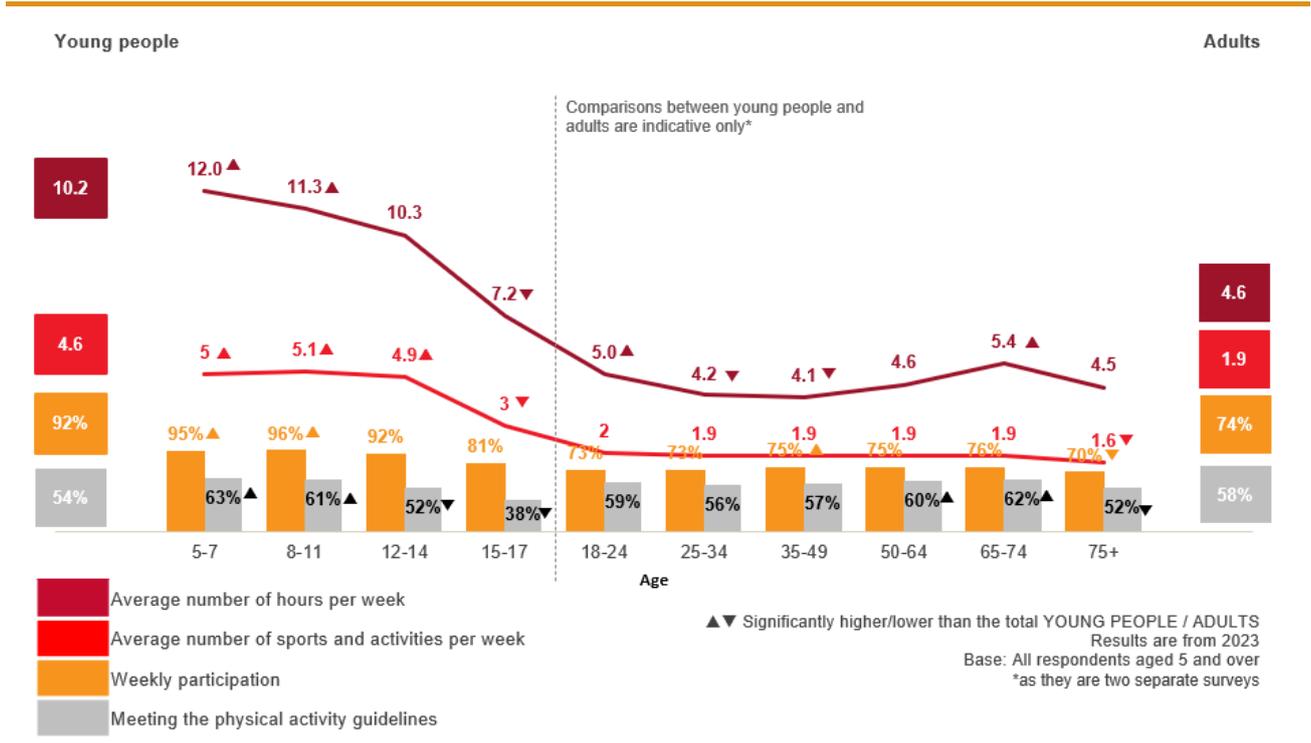
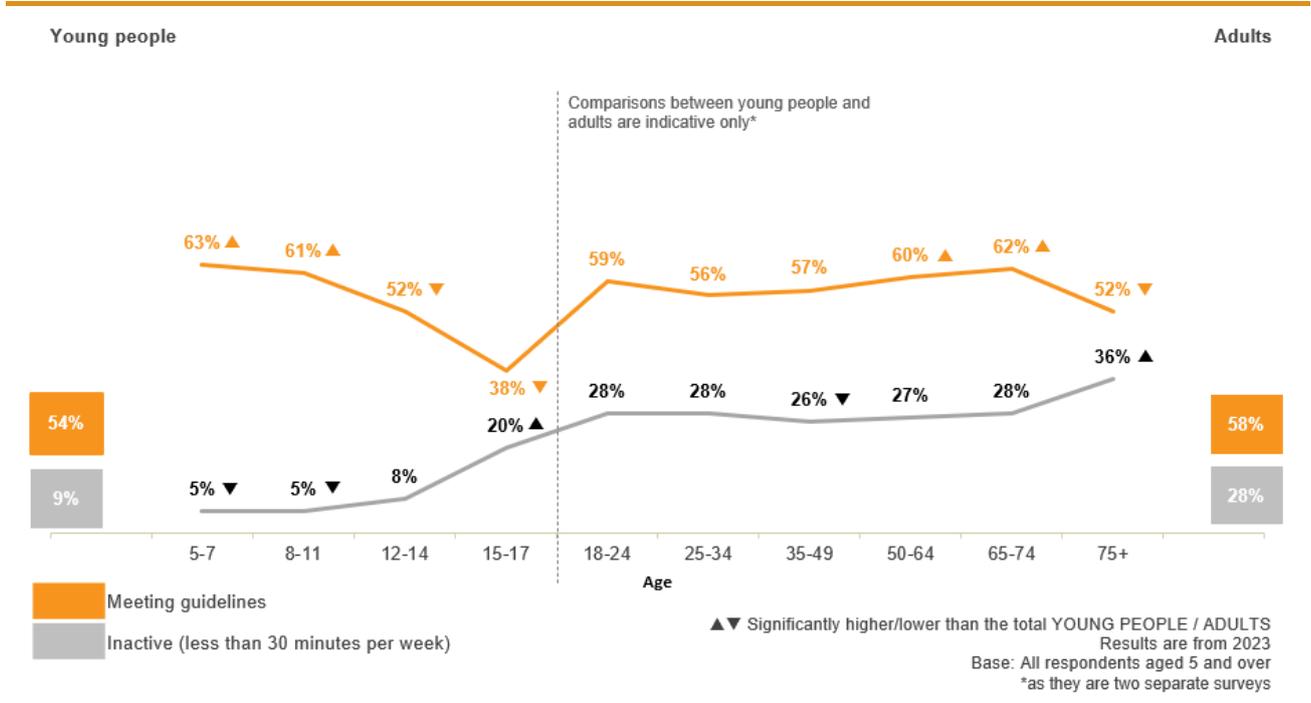


Figure 2: Meeting guidelines and inactive proportions by age

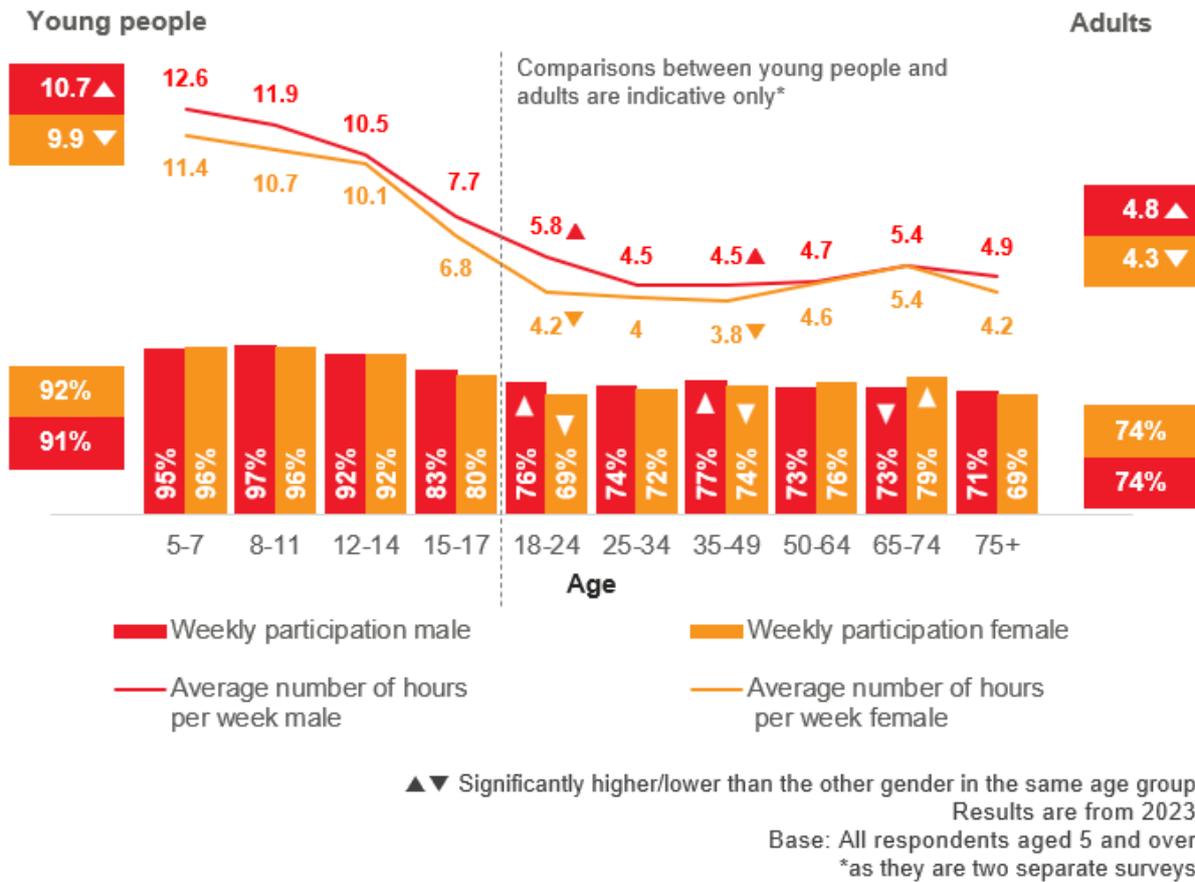


## By age and gender

Between ages 8 and 17, a similar proportion of females (91 percent) and males (92 percent) participate each week, but females spend less time participating (figure 3). Young males spend around an extra hour being active each week, compared with young females.

Among adults, weekly participation is similar for males and females by age. However, on average, males spend half an hour more each week being active than females, the exception is for adults aged 65 to 74 where females and males spend the same amount of time being active.

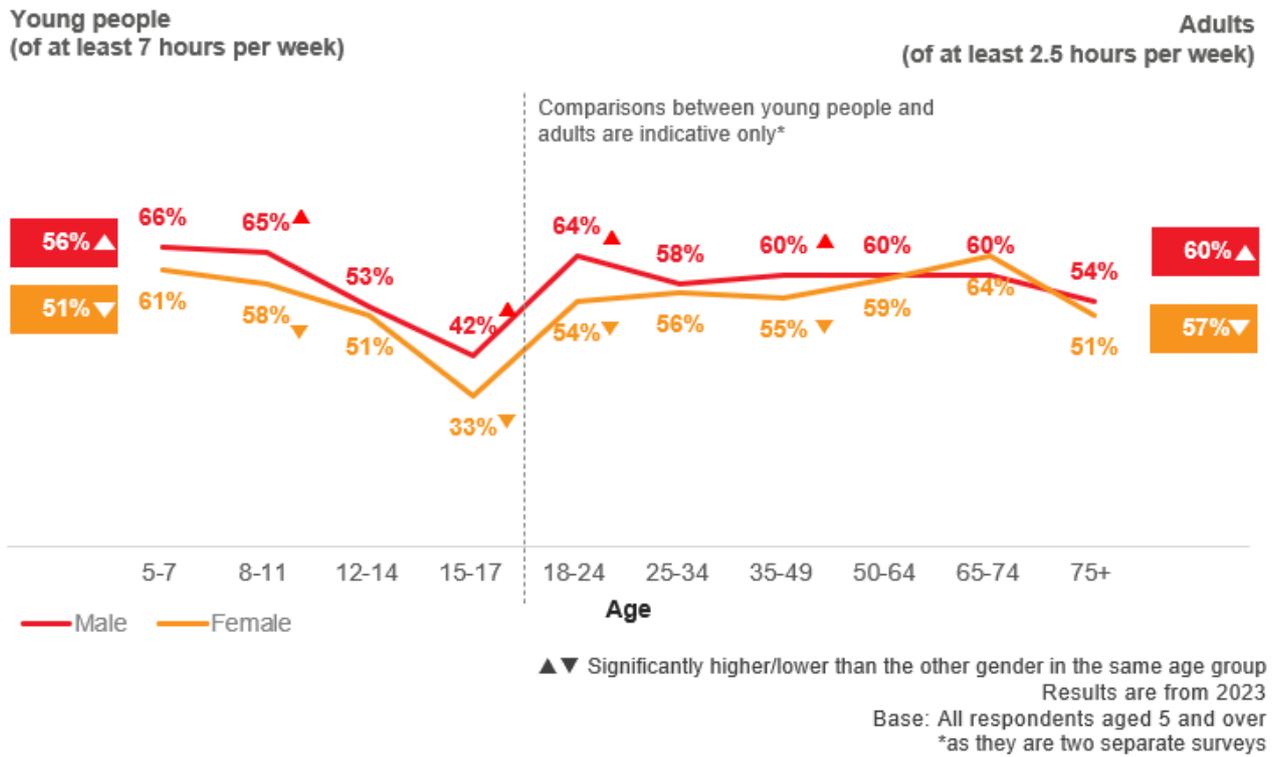
**Figure 3: Participation indicators by age and gender**



A gender gap is evident in the proportion of young people who meet the physical activity guidelines of 7-plus hours each week. Overall, young males are consistently more likely to meet the guidelines than females. This pattern is evident among both older tamariki and rangatahi.

Adult males are more likely to meet the guidelines than females, but this gap closes among adults aged 50-plus (figure 4).

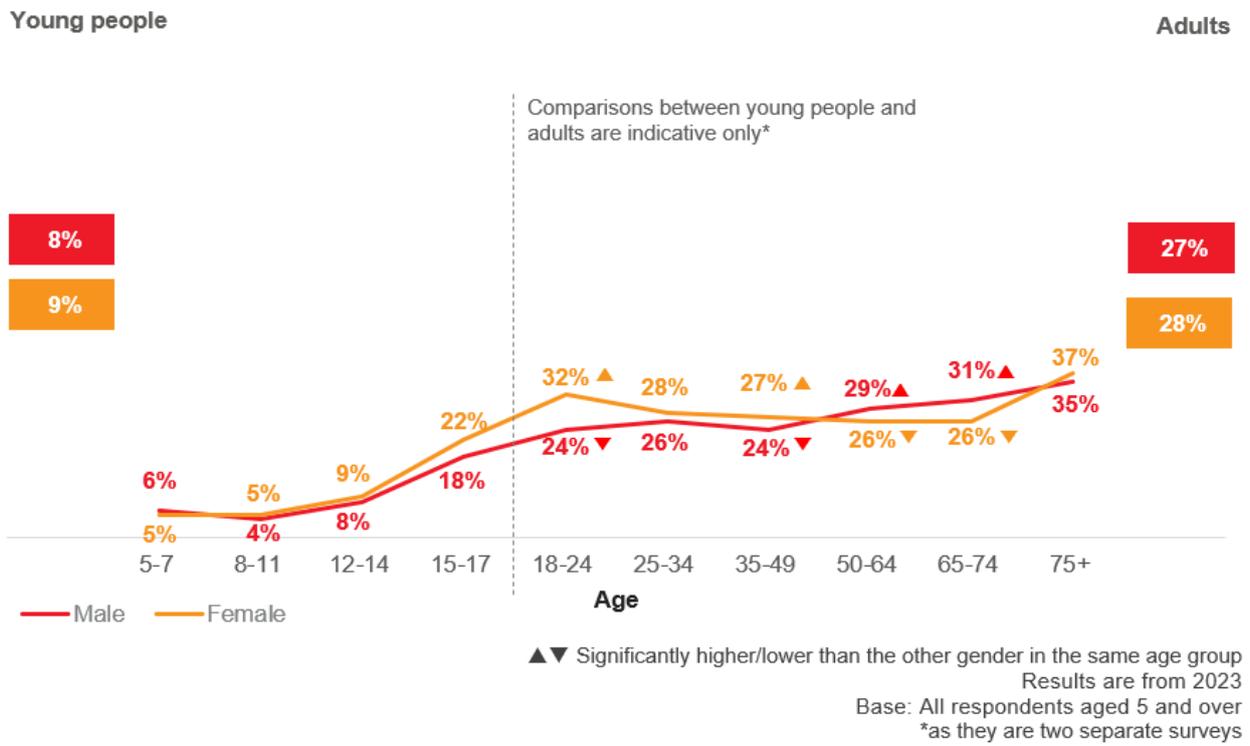
**Figure 4: Meeting physical activity guidelines by age and gender**



In general, inactivity increases with age. However, this is a more consistent trend for males. For females, inactivity is high between ages 18 and 24 (32 percent). It then drops, reaching a low (for female adults) of 26 percent between ages 50 and 74, after which inactivity increases steeply up until aged 75-plus (37 percent). For males, aged 75-plus inactivity is also highest (35 percent).

Males are significantly more inactive than females between ages 50 and 74, while females are significantly more inactive than males between ages 18 to 24 and 35 to 49 (figure 5).

**Figure 5: Proportion inactive by age and gender**



### By ethnicity

Differences can be seen in weekly participation by ethnicity for young people and adults.

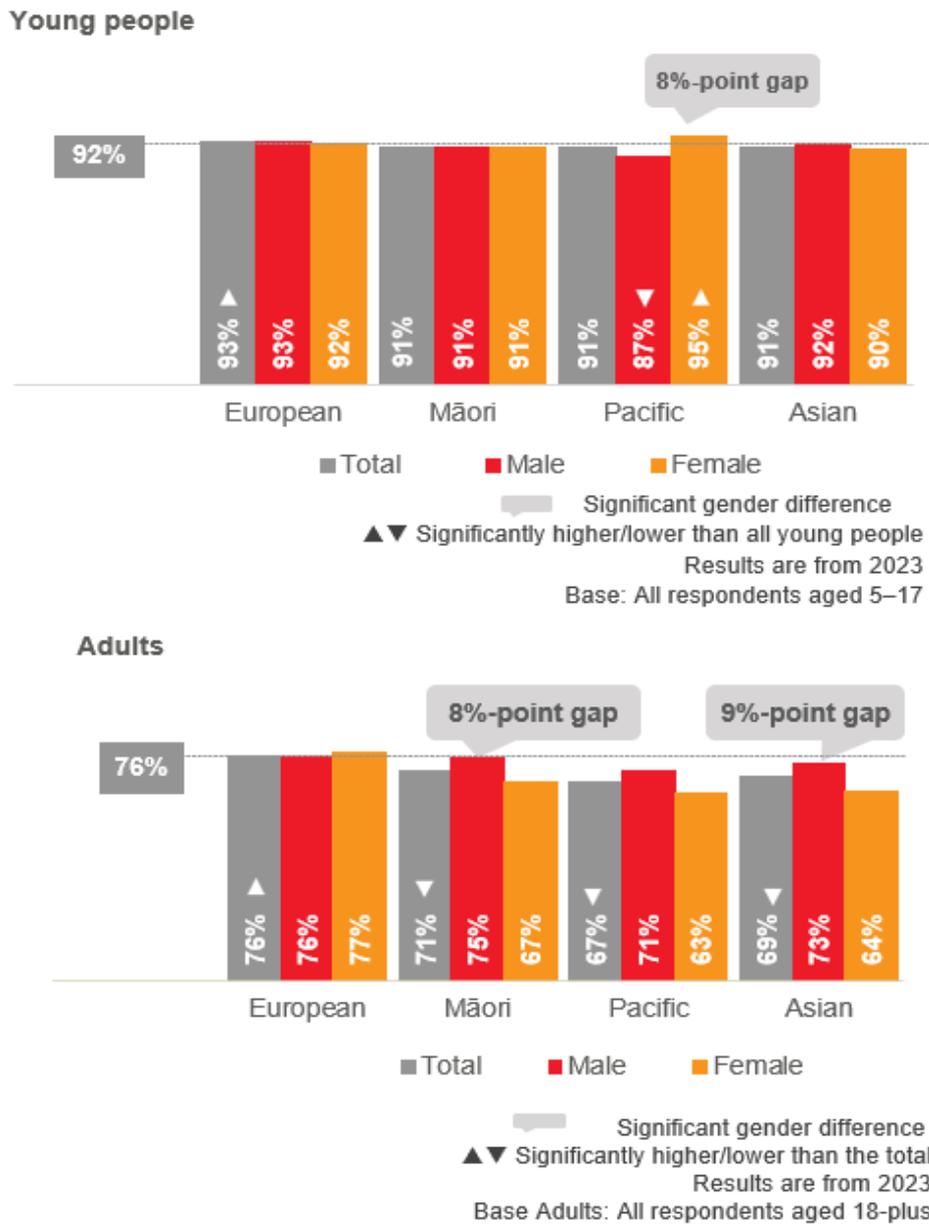
Compared with all young people, young European have higher weekly participation (93 percent, 92 percent all young people).

Adult European also have higher levels of weekly participation, while Māori, Pacific and Asian adults are less likely to participate each week.

Young Pacific females are more likely to participate each week, compared with young Pacific males.

In contrast to young people, Asian and Māori male adults are more likely to participate each week than females of the same ethnicity (Asian males 9 percentage points higher, Māori males 8 percentage points higher) (figure 6).

**Figure 6: Weekly participation by ethnicity and gender**



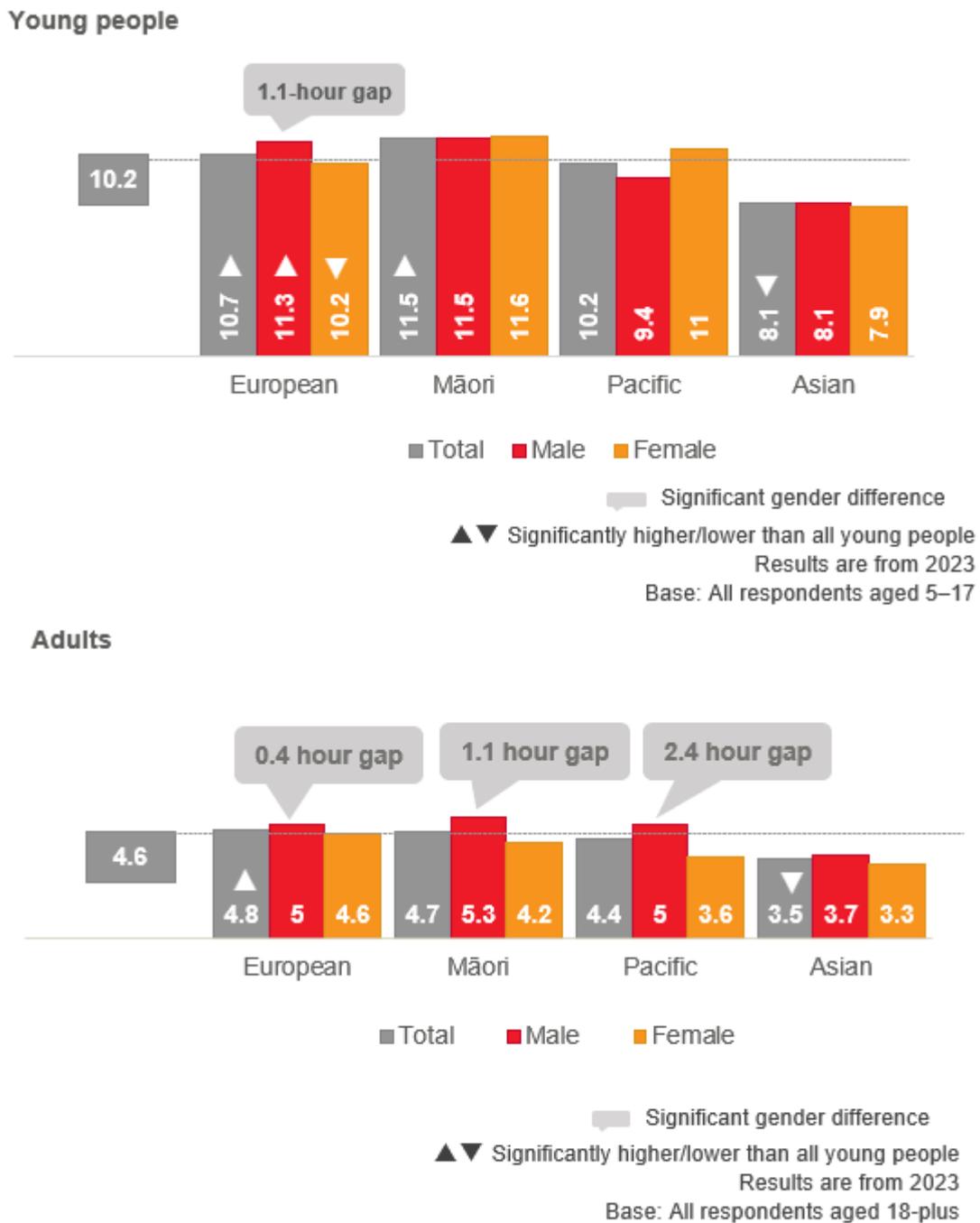
Differences are also evident in time spent in weekly participation by ethnicity.

European and Māori young people spend more time being active than all young people (10.7 hours and 11.7 hours respectively), while young Asian spend less time (8.1 hours, compared with 10.2 hours).

Young European males spend 1.1 hours more time being active each week than females (11.3 hours for males, compared with 10.2 hours for females).

Compared with all adults, European adults spend more time being active while Asian adults spend less time. European, Māori and Pacific adult males spend more time being active than their female counterparts (European: 0.4 hours, Māori: 1.1 hours and Pacific: 2.4 hours) (figure 7).

**Figure 7: Average hours spent being active each week by ethnicity and gender**

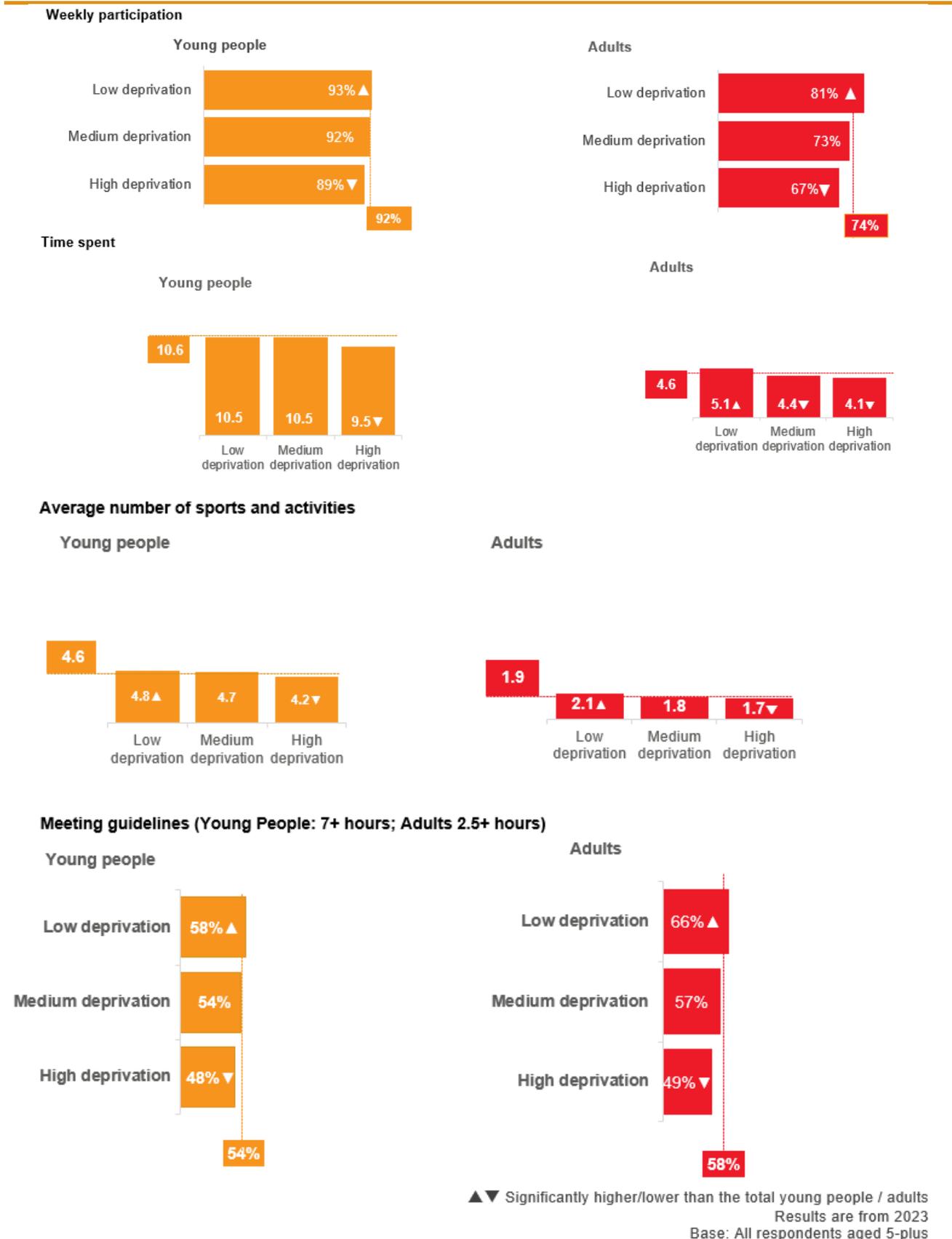


**By deprivation**

Compared with all young people, those from high deprivation areas have lower levels of weekly participation (89 percent, compared with 93 percent); they also spend less time being active (9.5 hours, compared with 10.5 hours) and participate in fewer sports and activities (4.2, compared with 4.8 sports and activities).

A similar but more pronounced pattern is observed for adults. Adults from high deprivation areas are less likely to participate weekly (67 percent, compared with 81 percent for all adults), to spend less time being active (4.1 hours, compared with 5.1 hours in total) and participate in fewer sports and activities (1.7, compared with 2.1 sports and activities) (figure 8).

**Figure 8: Participation by deprivation<sup>3</sup>**

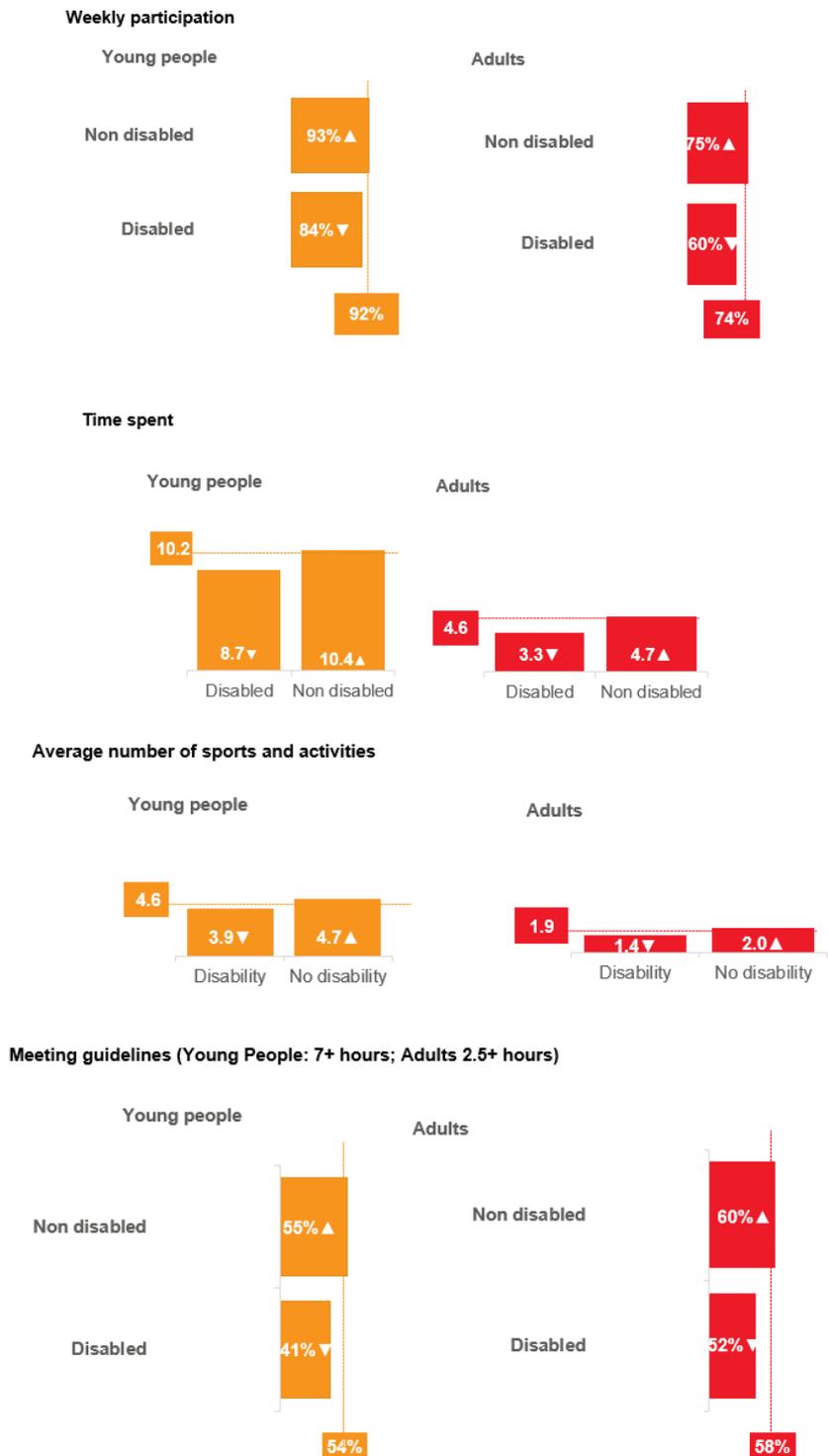


<sup>3</sup> NZDep2018 combines census data relating to income, home ownership, employment, qualifications, family structure, housing, access to transport and communications. NZDep2018 groups deprivation scores into deciles, where 1 represents the areas with the least deprived scores and 10 the areas with the most deprived scores. Note: Deprivation Index: Low 1–3, Medium 4–7, High 8–10.

## By disability

Disabled young people and adults are less active than non-disabled. Fewer disabled people participate each week and meet the recommended guidelines for physical activity. Furthermore, on average, disabled people spend less time in fewer sports and activities. This pattern is consistent across both young people and adults (figure 9).

**Figure 9: Participation by disability**



▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than the total young people/adults  
 Results are from 2023  
 Base: All respondents aged 5-plus

## How young people are active

This section describes levels of informal and organised participation among young people. Informal participation includes playing alone and with others, and extra training or practising without a coach or instructor. Organised participation includes participation in competitions or tournaments, practising with a coach or instructor and physical education (PE). Differences by age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability are highlighted.

### Insights

#### By age

- Time spent in informal participation decreases as young people age. It is at its highest between ages 5 and 7 and at its lowest between ages 15 and 17. Organised participation peaks between ages 8 and 14 and is at its lowest between ages 15 and 17.
- The drop in time spent in organised participation between ages 15 and 17 is driven by lower levels of participation in PE (not competition), compared with all young people, while the drop in time spent in informal participation is attributed to less time spent in play (alone or with others).

#### By gender

- Weekly informal participation is higher for young males than females, driven largely by more young males playing alone.
- No difference is evident in participation in organised activity by gender, but young females are more likely than young males to train or practise with a coach or instructor.

#### By ethnicity

- Weekly informal and organised participation is higher for young European. This is largely due to higher weekly play and through training with a coach or instructor.
- Weekly informal participation is lower for young Asians, mainly due to lower levels of playing or hanging out with family and friends.
- Young Pacific have higher levels of organised participation, driven by a higher participation in PE.

#### By deprivation

- Weekly informal and organised participation is lower for young people from high deprivation areas, driven by lower levels of participation in competitions and tournaments and through training with a coach or instructor.

#### By disability

- Both weekly informal and organised participation is lower for disabled young people.

### By age

The balance of how young people spend their active time changes with age. Young tamariki spend most of their time in informal participation, particularly play (8.4 hours per week). Time spent in informal participation decreases as young people age. It is at its highest between ages 5 and 7 and at its lowest between ages 15 and 17. Organised participation peaks between ages 8 and 14 and is at its lowest between ages 15 and 17.

The drop in time spent in organised participation between ages 15 and 17 is driven by lower levels of participation in PE (not competition), compared with all young people. The drop in time spent in informal participation is attributed to less time spent in play (alone or hanging out with family and friends) (table 2).

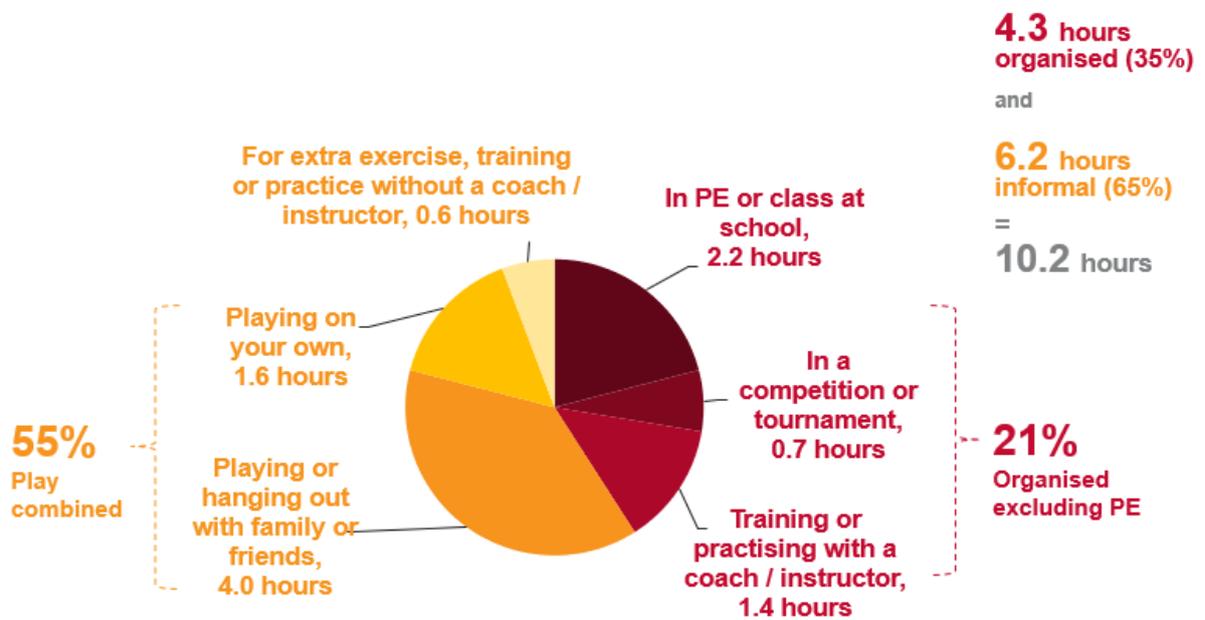
**Table 2: Average hours spent per week in organised and informal activity by age**

2023	All young people	5-7	8-11	12-14	15-17
<b>Organised</b>					
• Physical Education (PE) or class at school	2.2	2.4	2.6▲	2.6▲	1.1▼
• Total competition (organised excluding PE)	2.1	1.2▼	2.4▲	2.5▲	1.9▼
<b>Informal</b>					
• Total play (hanging out with friends or family + on your own)	5.6	8.4▲	6.3▲	5.0▼	3.2▼
• Extra exercise, training, practice without a coach or instructor	0.6	0.2▼	0.3▼	0.8▲	1.1▲
<b>Total time</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>12.0▲</b>	<b>11.3▲</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>7.2▼</b>
<b>Organised combined</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>4.9▲</b>	<b>5.1▲</b>	<b>2.9▼</b>
<b>Informal combined</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>8.6▲</b>	<b>6.6▲</b>	<b>5.6▼</b>	<b>4.3▼</b>

▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than all young people  
 Results are from 2023  
 Base: All respondents aged 5 to 17

Of the hours young people spend participating weekly, 65 percent are spent in informal participation and 35 percent are in organised participation (figure 10).

**Figure 10: Time spent being physically active per week in organised and informal sports and activities (hours)<sup>4</sup>**



Results are from 2023  
 Base: All respondents aged 5 to 17

<sup>4</sup> Hours for the individual types organised and informal may not match total due to rounding and outliers.

## By gender

- Weekly informal participation is higher for young males than females (83 percent, compared with 80 percent). This difference is largely accounted for by more playing alone (54 percent for males, compared with 50 percent for females).
- Overall, no difference can be seen in organised participation by gender. However, young females are more likely than young males to train or practise with a coach or instructor (51 percent, compared with 46 percent among males).

## By ethnicity

- Weekly organised and informal participation is higher for young European, compared with all young people. Young European are more likely to train with a coach or instructor (52 percent, compared with 48 percent) and play or hang out with family and friends (73 percent, compared with 70 percent).
- Young Pacific have higher levels of organised participation (82 percent, compared with 75 percent of all young people). This is driven by a higher participation in PE (67 percent, compared with 60 percent of all young people).
- Both young Pacific and young Asian have lower levels of informal participation (75 percent and 77 percent, respectively, compared with 81 percent among all young people). For young Asian, this is driven by lower levels of playing or hanging out with family and friends (61 percent, compared with 70 percent for all young people).

## By deprivation

- Weekly organised and informal participation for young people from high deprivation areas is lower, compared with their counterparts from low deprivation areas. They are less likely to participate in competitions or tournaments (20 percent, compared with 30 percent for young people from low deprivation areas) or to train with a coach or instructor (36 percent, compared with 54 percent).
- No difference is evident in time spent in informal participation across low, medium and high deprivation areas. However, time spent in organised participation is significantly lower among those from high deprivation areas, compared with all young people.

## By disability

- Weekly organised and informal participation for disabled young people is lower than for non-disabled young people (organised participation 69 percent, compared with 76 percent; informal participation 71 percent, compared with 82 percent).

# Competitive and non-competitive participation

This section describes levels of competitive and non-competitive participation for young people and adults. For young people, competitive participation is a subset of the past seven days of organised participation (excludes PE). For adults, this is derived from participation in competitive sports and activities over the past 12 months. Direct comparison of the magnitude of difference between young people and adults cannot be made. Differences by age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability are highlighted.

## Insights

### By age

- Most young people participate only in non-competitive sports or activities (66 percent), while 25 percent participate in both competitive and non-competitive activities, and only 1 percent participate exclusively in competitive activities. Eight percent of all young people do not participate in any sports or activities.
- Participation in competitive sports and activities peaks among older tamariki and is lower for older rangatahi.
- In contrast, participation in non-competitive sports and activities (only) is highest among young people between ages 5 and 7 and lower among older tamariki and all rangatahi.

### By gender

- Competitive weekly participation is higher for male tamariki, compared with females, while participation in non-competitive sports and activities (only) is higher for female tamariki, compared with males.

### By ethnicity

- Young European have higher levels of non-competitive weekly participation, compared with all young people.

### By deprivation

- Young people from low deprivation areas have higher levels of weekly competitive and non-competitive participation, while young people from high deprivation areas are over-represented among non-participants.

### By disability

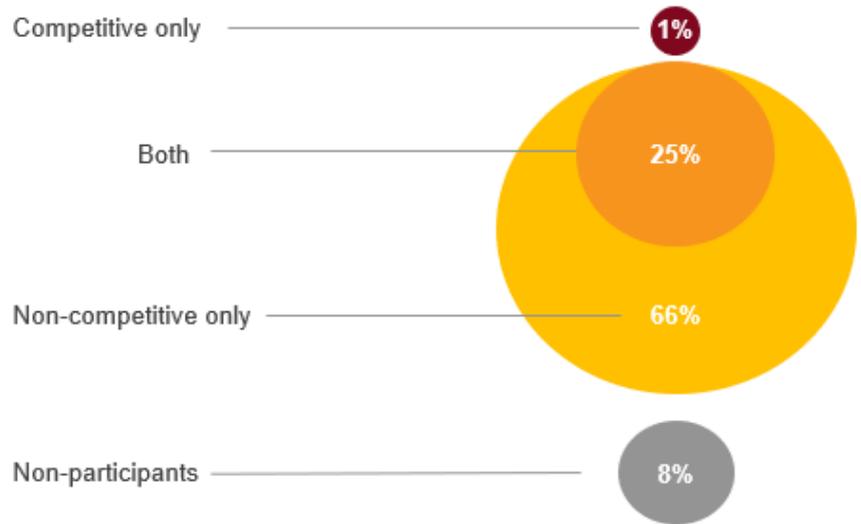
- Disabled young people are more likely to be non-participants. This is particularly the case for disabled young rangatahi.

## By age

Most young people participate in non-competitive sports and activities.

Sixty-six percent exclusively participate non-competitively, while 25 percent participate in both competitive and non-competitive sports and activities. Only 1 percent participate solely in competitive sports and activities (figure 11).

**Figure 11: Young people – participation in competitive and non-competitive sports and activities in the past 7 days**

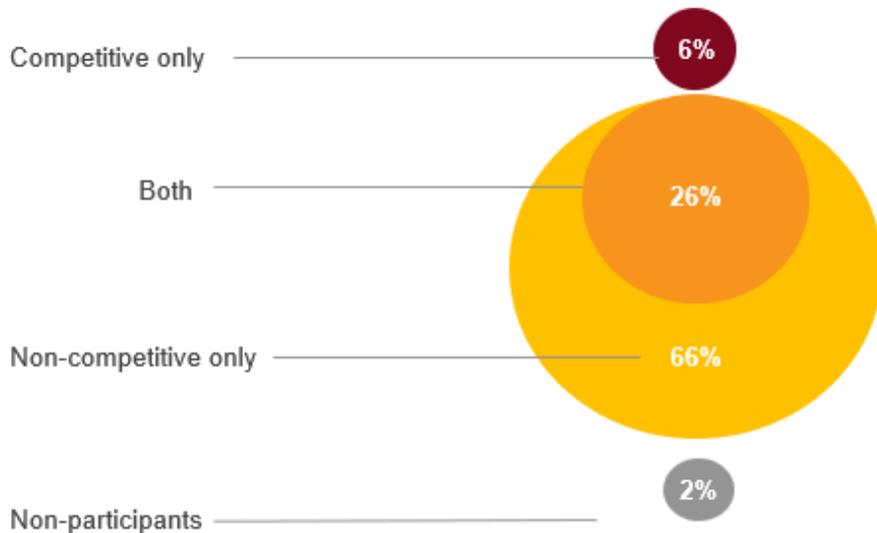


Results are from 2023  
Base: All respondents aged 5 to 17

In the past 12 months, most adults have participated in competitive and non-competitive sports and activities.

Sixty-six percent exclusively participate non-competitively, while 26 percent participate in both competitive and non-competitive sports and activities. Six percent of adults have participated exclusively in competitive sports (figure 12).

**Figure 12: Adults – participation in competitive and non-competitive sports and activities in the past 12 months**



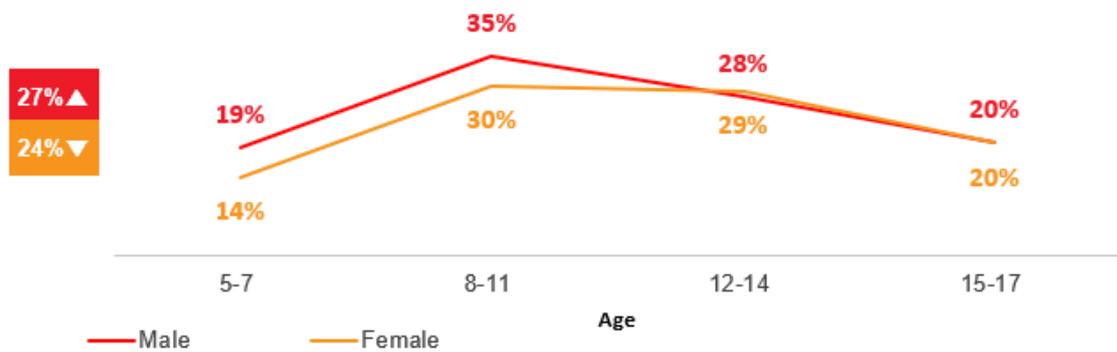
Results are from 2023  
Base: All respondents aged 18-plus

## By age and gender

Weekly participation in competitive sports and activities peaks at 35 percent among male tamariki between ages 8 and 11.

Males are more likely than females to participate in competitive sports and activities (19 percent among males between ages 8 and 11, compared with 14 percent among females, and 35 percent among males between ages 8 and 11, compared with 30 percent among females). This gender gap is not present for rangatahi (figure 13).

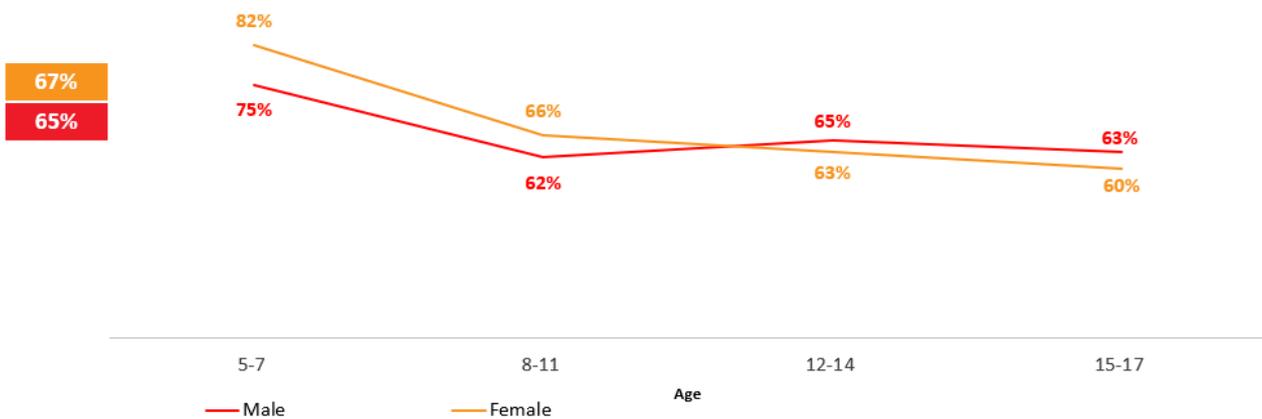
**Figure 13: Young people – participation in competitive sports and activities by age and gender**



▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than the other gender in the same age group  
Results are from 2023  
Base: All respondents aged 5 to 17

Participation in non-competitive sports and activities is at its highest between ages 5 and 7. In contrast with competitive sports and activities, the gender gap is reversed: female tamariki are more likely to participate in non-competitive sports and activities than males. The gender gap then closes for rangatahi (figure 14).

**Figure 14: Young people – Participation in non-competitive sports and activities only by age and gender**



▲▼ Significantly higher/lower than the other gender in the same age group  
Results are from 2023  
Base: All respondents aged 5 to 17

## By ethnicity

- Young European are more likely to participate in non-competitive sports and activities (92 percent, compared with 91 percent for all young people).

## By deprivation

- Young people from low deprivation areas are more likely to participate in both competitive and non-competitive sports and activities (30 percent in competitive and 93 percent in non-competitive, compared with 25 percent and 91 percent for all young people). Young people from high deprivation areas are more likely to be non-participants (11 percent, compared with 8 percent among all young people) and less likely to participate in competitive and non-competitive sports and activities.

## By disability

- Disabled young people are more likely to be non-participants (17 percent, compared with 8 percent among all young people). Non-participation is higher among disabled rangatahi than disabled tamariki.

# Appetite to increase participation

This section looks at the extent to which New Zealanders wish to increase their participation in play, active recreation and sport. Differences by age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability are noted.

## Insights

### By age and gender

- Motivation differs across the lifespan of New Zealanders. While two-thirds of young people would like to increase their participation, this peaks among adults aged 18 to 49.
- Females between ages 15 and 24 and 35 to 64 have a greater appetite to increase their participation than males.
- Aside from later in life, appetite to increase participation is inversely associated with the amount of time spent being active per week. For example, young people spend more time being active and are less likely to want to increase their participation. Adults aged 18 to 49 spend less time being active and are more likely to want to increase their participation.

### By ethnicity and gender

- Young Asian and adults, and Pacific adults are more likely to want to increase their participation, compared with all young people or adults.
- Young European females and European, Māori and Asian females are more likely to want to increase their participation than their male counterparts.

### By deprivation

- No differences can be seen in appetite to increase participation by deprivation.

### By disability

- Disabled young people are more likely to want to increase participation, while the reverse is true for disabled adults.

## By age and gender

Most New Zealanders want to be more active. This aspiration is noticeable among adults: 80 percent of adults and 64 percent of young people want to increase their participation (figure 15).

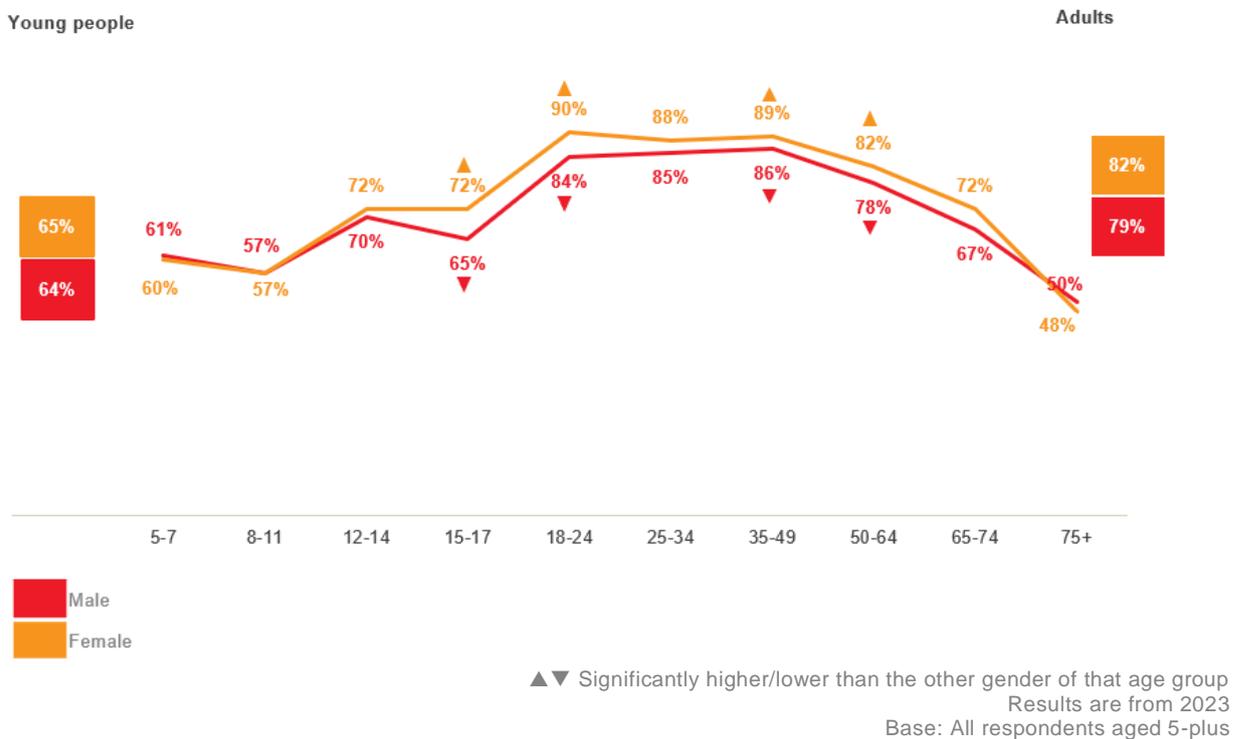
**Figure 15: Proportion who want to increase participation**



Appetite to increase participation varies by age and gender. No overall gender difference is evident in appetite to increase participation for young people and adults. Appetite to increase participation is at its highest between ages 18 and 49.

Females are more likely to want to do more than males between ages 15 and 24 and 35 and 64 (figure 16).

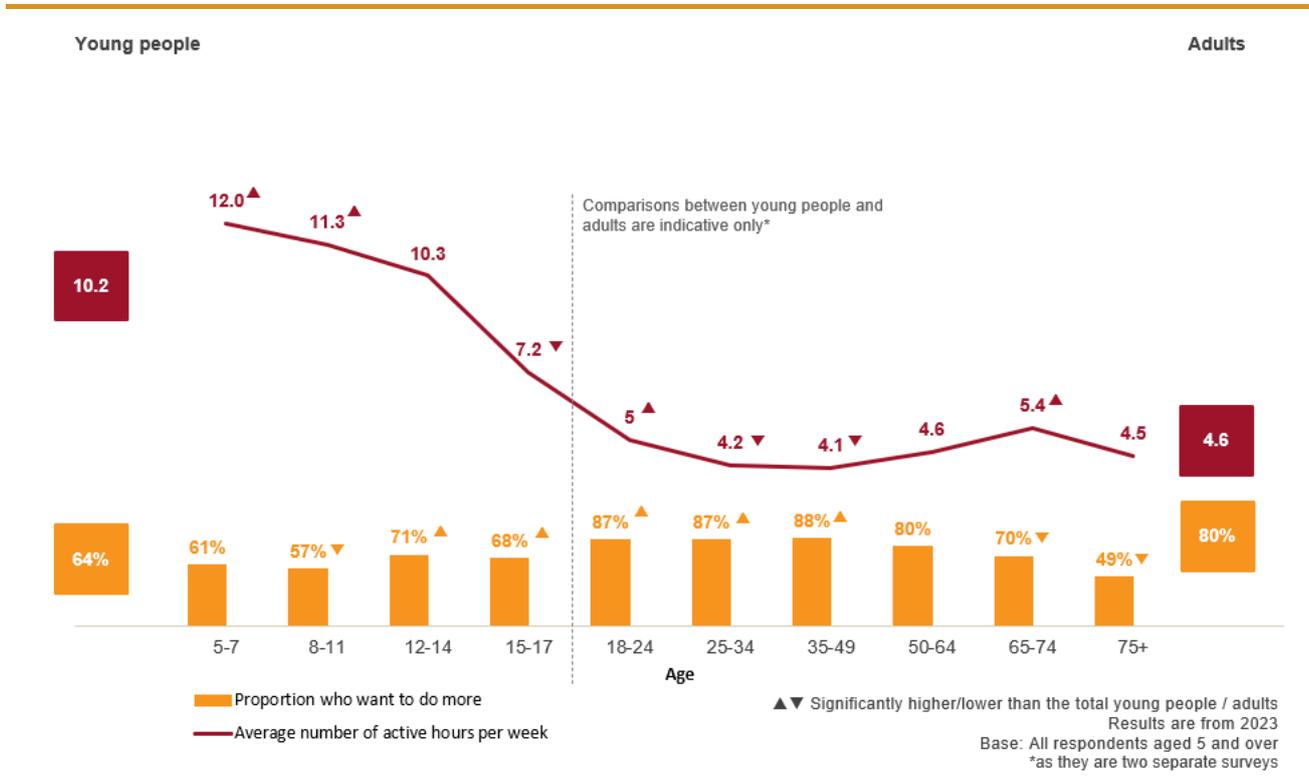
**Figure 16: Proportion who want to increase participation by gender within age**



In general, the appetite to be more active is inversely related to the amount of time spent being active per week. Young people spend the most time participating – an average of 10.2 hours each week – and are the least likely to want to increase their participation, aside from adults aged 75-plus. However, for rangatahi, the pattern is slightly different. Specifically, younger rangatahi tend to want to increase their activity while spending an average amount of time being physically active, while older rangatahi have a lower appetite to increase their activity and spend less time being active.

Appetite to increase activity starts to decline among those aged 50 to 64, with a more noticeable decrease for those aged 65-plus (figure 17).

**Figure 17: Time spent being active and proportion who want to increase participation by age (hours)**



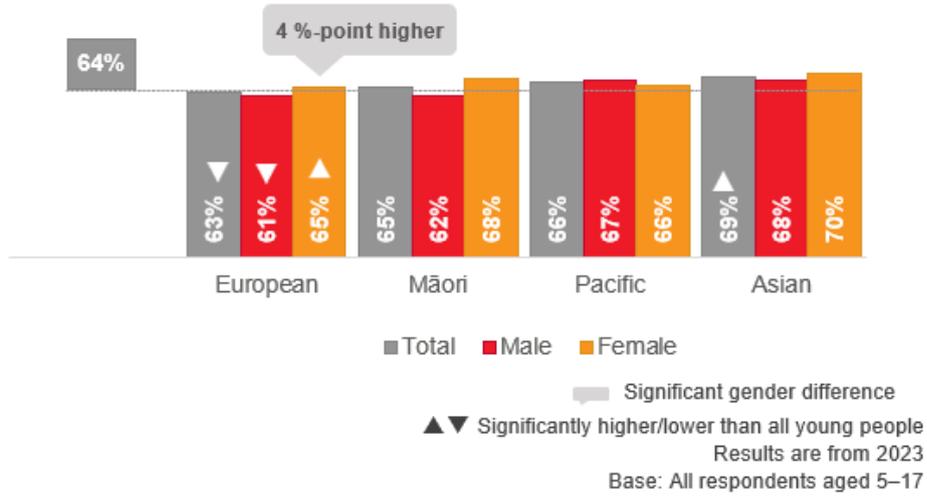
### By ethnicity and gender

Young Asian are significantly more likely to want to increase their participation (69 percent, compared with 64 percent among all young people). Young European females are significantly more likely to want to increase their participation, compared with young European males (65 percent, compared with 61 percent).

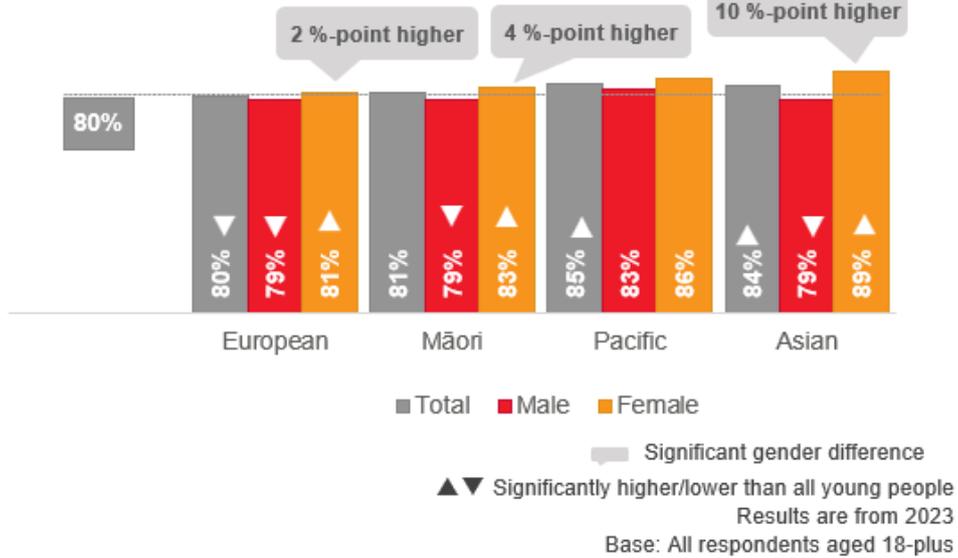
European adults are less likely to want to increase their participation, while the opposite is true for Pacific and Asian adults. European, Māori and Asian females are more likely to want to increase their participation than their male counterparts. For Pacific adults, no gender difference can be seen in wanting to do more (figure 18).

**Figure 18: Proportion of young people and adults who want to increase participation by gender within ethnicity**

**Young people**



**Adults**

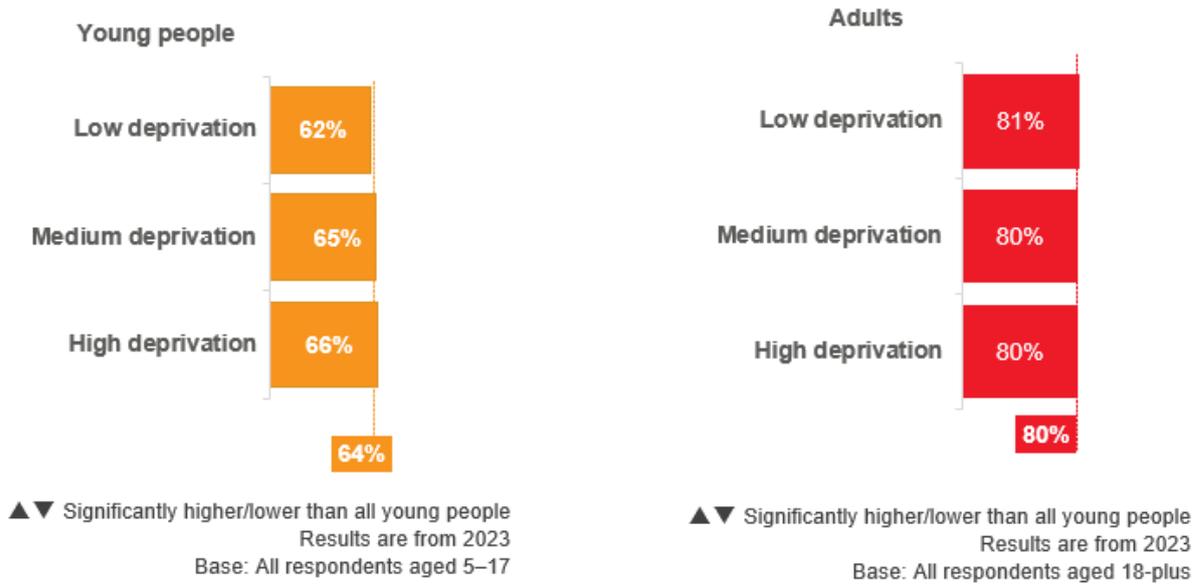


## By deprivation and disability

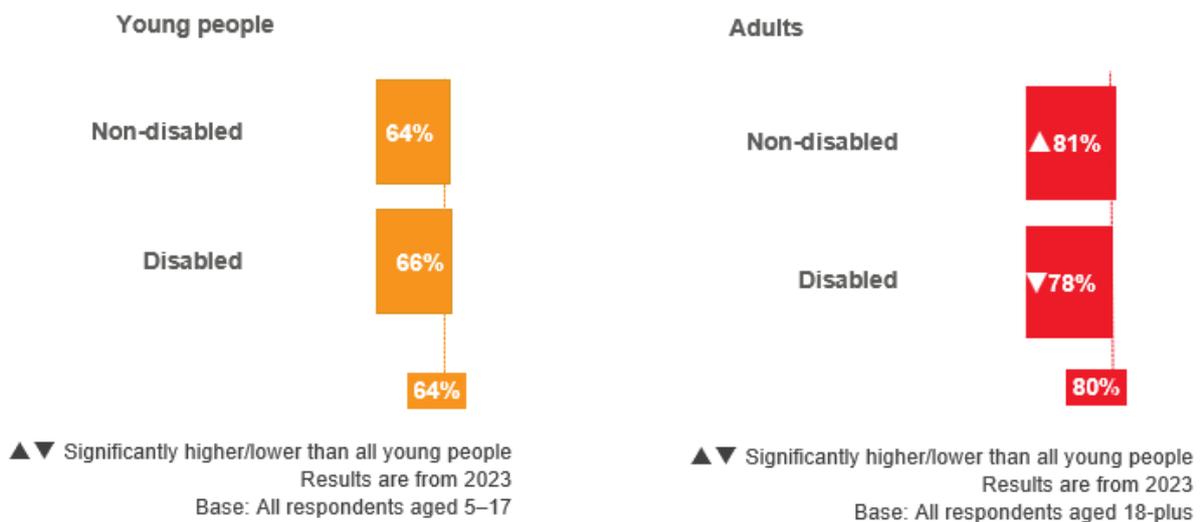
No differences can be seen in appetite to increase participation by deprivation (figure 19).

In contrast, greater differences are evident by disability. Disabled young people are more likely to want to increase their participation than non-disabled (66 percent, compared with 64 percent), although this difference is not significant (figure 19). Disabled adults are less likely to want to increase their participation, compared with non-disabled adults (78 percent versus 81 percent) (figure 20).

**Figure 19: Proportion who want to increase participation by deprivation**



**Figure 20: Proportion who want to increase participation by disability**



# Barriers

This section explores barriers to increasing participation for New Zealanders aged 8-plus. Differences by age, gender, ethnicity, deprivation and disability are highlighted.

## Insights

### Overall comment

- The most prevalent barrier to increasing participation for New Zealanders aged 8-plus is being too busy or other commitments taking priority. This is evident for one in three young people, increasing to three in five adults.
- For young people, being too busy is higher for females, ages 15 to 17 (where it peaks at two in five), young people from low deprivation areas and those more likely to meet the physical activity guidelines.
- Being too busy is lower for males, ages 8 to 11, Māori, Pacific, young people from high deprivation areas and young people who are less likely to meet the physical activity guidelines.
- For adults, other commitments taking priority is higher between ages 25 to 49, for European, adults from low deprivation areas, non-disabled and those more likely to meet the physical activity guidelines.
- Other commitments taking priority is lower for adults aged 65-plus, Māori, those from high deprivation areas, disabled and those less likely to meet the physical activity guidelines.

### By age

- Prominent barriers vary by age. Between ages 8 and 11, not being able to fit in with other family members' schedules, too hard to get to training and games and affordability are higher, while between ages 12 and 14, judgement barriers begin to emerge: not wanting to fail, not fit enough, as well as having no one to be active with, PE no longer being fun and injury. Between ages 15 to 17, some barriers are even more noticeable especially not having the energy, lack of motivation, fitness, confidence, PE no longer fun and friends not being active.
- Adults aged 65-plus are less likely to say other commitments are a barrier but are more likely to consider their poor health or existing injuries as a barrier.

### By gender

- Females are more likely than males to have barriers of being too tired, struggling with motivation and a lack of confidence.
- In contrast, males are more likely to consider they are already doing a good amount of physical activity or prefer to spend time doing other things.

### By ethnicity

- For young Asian, their parents preferring a focus on schoolwork and having friends who are not active are stronger barriers to increasing their participation, compared with all young people. Asian and Māori adults are more likely to see affordability as a barrier, compared with all adults.

### By deprivation

- For young people from high deprivation areas, cost is more of a barrier.
- A similar pattern follows through for adults, with lack of equipment or motivation more prominent.

### By disability

- Both disabled young people and adults are more likely to not have the energy or motivation to increase their participation.

## By age

The most prevalent barrier to increasing participation for New Zealanders aged 8-plus is being too busy or other commitments taking priority. This is evident for one in three young people and increases to three in five adults.

This is followed by barriers such as the weather (20 percent), difficulties with motivation (19 percent), lacking energy (19 percent) and preferring to do other things (17 percent). Other commitments taking priority is the dominant barrier for adults (64 percent) (table 3).

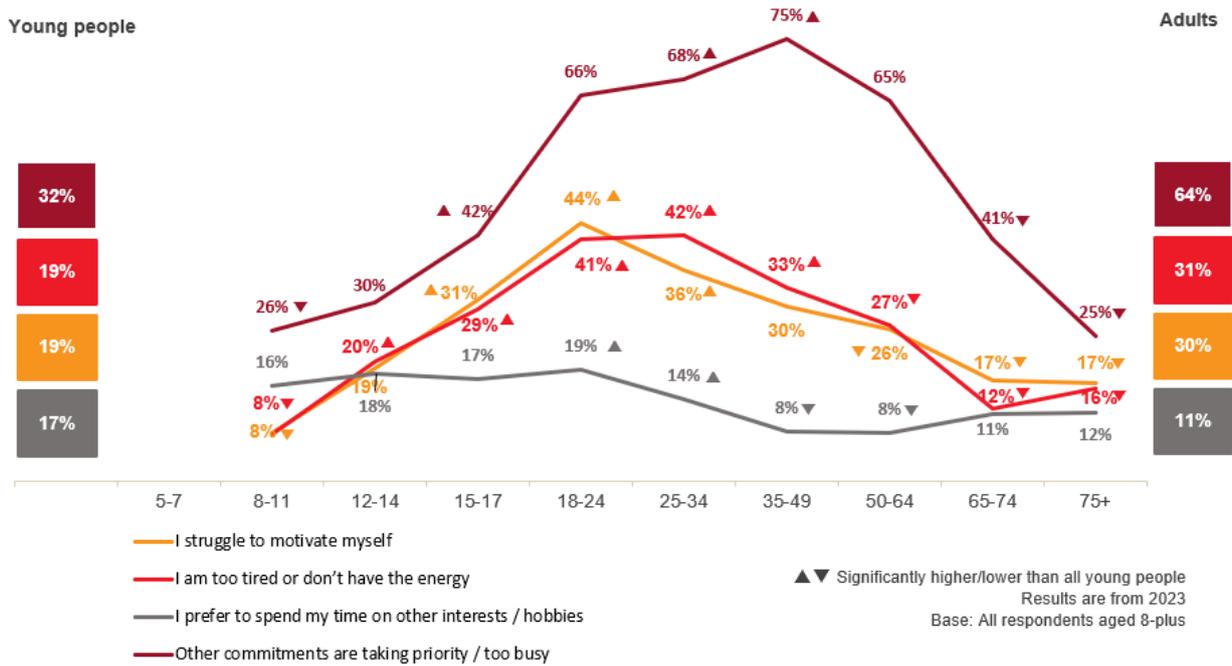
**Table 3: Most prevalent barriers to increasing participation among those who want to do more**

Young people aged 8 to 17		Adults	
<b>32%</b>	<b>Too busy</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>Other commitments are taking priority (e.g., work, family)</b>
<b>20%</b>	<b>The weather</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>I am too tired/don't have the energy</b>
<b>19%</b>	<b>It's too hard to motivate myself</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>I struggle to motivate myself</b>
<b>19%</b>	<b>Too tired/don't have the energy</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>I've got out of the habit</b>
<b>17%</b>	<b>I prefer to do other things</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>The weather</b>
<b>2.6 barriers on average</b>		<b>3.2 barriers on average</b>	

With increasing age, the most common barrier progressively becomes 'other commitments taking priority', peaking between ages 35 to 49 (75 percent).

Later in life, the pattern of barriers begins to change. While other commitments remain the top barrier for all age groups, older people are more likely to consider 'poor health' or 'existing injuries' as barriers (figure 21).

**Figure 21: Most prevalent barriers for those who want to do more (by age)**



### By age and gender

Both young and adult females are more likely than their male counterparts to struggle with motivation (22 percent, compared with 15 percent, and 33 percent, compared with 27 percent, respectively) and tiredness (25 percent, compared with 13 percent, and 37 percent, compared with 25 percent, respectively).

While young females and those aged between 18 and 24 are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to say they are too busy (with other commitments), no difference can be seen between males and females aged 25 or over (table 4).

**Table 4: Most prevalent barriers to those who want to do more (by gender)**

	Young males	Young females	Adult males	Adult females
Too busy/other commitments takes priority	28% ▼	36% ▲	64%	64%
The weather	20%	20%	21%	22%
Too hard to motivate myself	15% ▼	22% ▲	27% ▼	33% ▲
Too tired/don't have the energy	13% ▼	25% ▲	25% ▼	37% ▲

▲ ▼ Significantly higher/lower than the other gender  
 Results are from 2023  
 Base: All respondents aged 5 and over who want to do more

### By ethnicity

- For young people and adults, being too busy or prioritising other commitments is the top barrier, compared with all young people and adults (66 percent and 34 percent, respectively). Māori adults (61 percent) and young Māori and Pacific are less likely to view this as a barrier (26 percent and 22 percent respectively).
- Young Asian are more likely to say their parents prefer them to focus on schoolwork (16 percent versus 9 percent for all young people) and that their friends are not physically active (11 percent versus 8 percent for all young people).

- Difficulties with motivation (34 percent versus 30 percent) and lacking fitness (18 percent versus 14 percent for all adults) are more prevalent barriers for Māori adults (34 percent versus 18 percent for all adults).
- Asian and Māori adults are more likely to be unable to afford their preferred activity of choice (21 percent and 20 percent, respectively). For European adults, affordability is less of a barrier (15 percent). Pacific (18 percent), Māori (16 percent) and Asian adults (15 percent) are more likely to lack the equipment while this is less of a barrier for European adults (8 percent).

### By deprivation

- Young people from low deprivation areas are more likely to consider being too busy as a barrier than young people from high deprivation areas (37 percent, compared with 26 percent). Young people from high deprivation areas are more likely than their counterparts from low deprivation areas to consider not being able to afford physical activities (16 percent, compared with 8 percent) as a barrier.
- Adults from high deprivation areas are less likely to list 'other commitments taking priority' as a barrier than adults from low deprivation areas (58 percent, compared with 68 percent), although it is the most common barrier for both groups. Adults from high deprivation areas are more likely to cite an inability to motivate themselves (33 percent) and a lack of equipment (14 percent) as barriers (27 percent and 7 percent in low deprivation areas, respectively).

### By disability

- For disabled young people, preferring to do other things (37 percent), being too tired (28 percent), a lack of confidence (20 percent) and lack of motivation (18 percent) are barriers to increasing physical activity (27 percent, 13 percent, 6 percent and 8 percent among non-disabled young people).
- For disabled adults, being too tired (38 percent), a lack of motivation (34 percent) and not being healthy enough (23 percent) are the most common barriers to increasing participation, compared with non-disabled adults. This is driven mainly by female disabled adults.

# Appendices

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A	<b>Regional differences</b>	Page 37
B	<b>Research objectives and method</b>	Page 38
C	<b>Question wording and base descriptions</b>	Page 40

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# Appendix A: Regional differences

Figure 22: Weekly participation by region

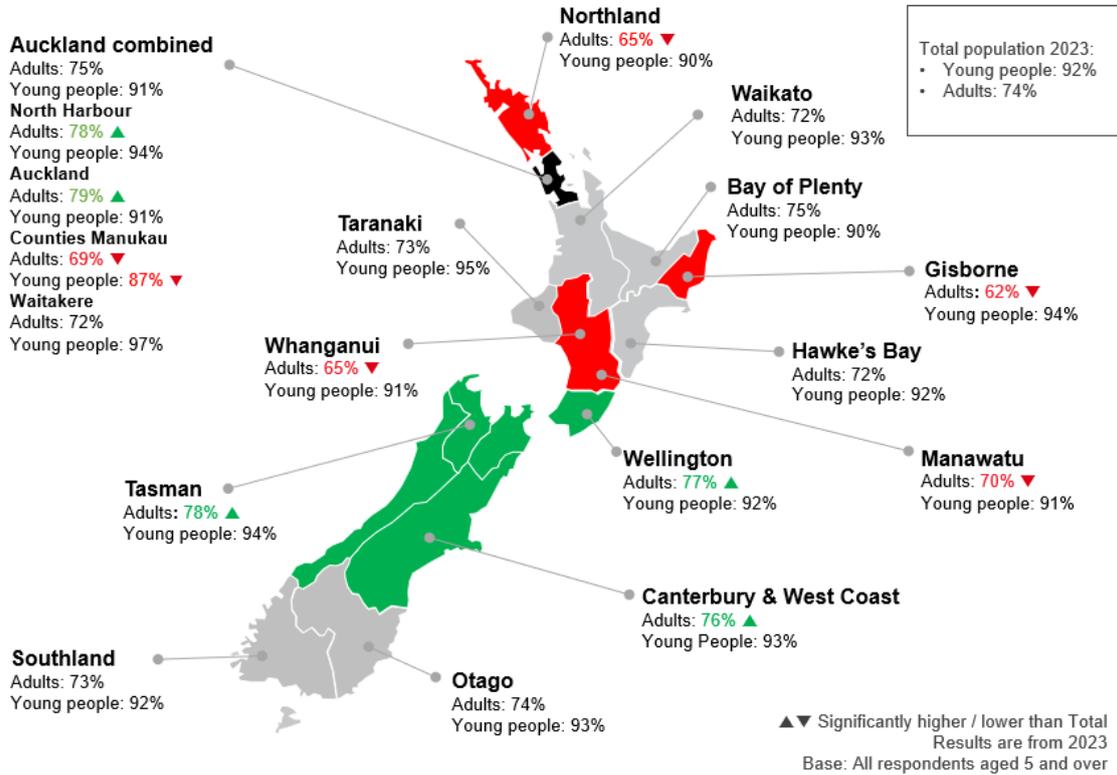
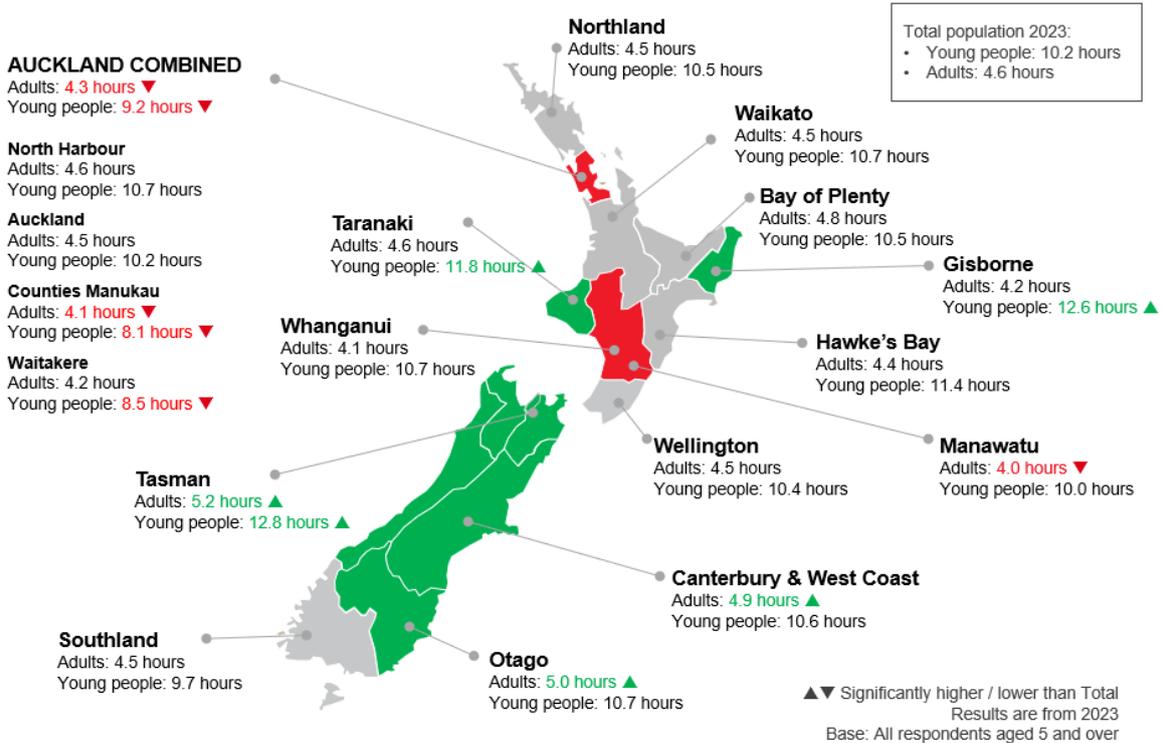


Figure 23: Time spent participating by region



## Appendix B: 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, and 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 in play, active recreation and sport by people in New Zealand.

### Survey method

Target respondents are selected at random from the Electoral Roll. Mailings are then sent inviting them to complete the survey online. Before 2022, non-responders were subsequently sent a paper copy of the survey. However, following analysis that demonstrated the low take-up of paper copies by younger people, those aged 18 to 49 no longer received paper copies from 2022.

A summary of the two approaches for those aged 18 to 49 and 50-plus is presented below.

#### Respondents aged 18 to 49

ELECTORAL ROLL	INVITATION LETTER	REMINDER POSTCARD 1	REMINDER LETTER
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>An 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 reminder letter to complete the survey online.</p> <p>A flyer is included for ages 12 to 17 to complete the survey online.</p>

#### Respondents aged 50-plus

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>An 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 hard copy of the questionnaire, letter and 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>	<p>A final reminder is sent to adults who have not yet taken part in the survey.</p>

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

## Fieldwork period

Fieldwork dates for the surveys are as follows:

- 2017 survey: 5 January 2017 to 4 January 2018
- 2018 survey: 5 January 2018 to 4 January 2019
- 2019 survey: 5 January 2019 to 4 January 2020
- 2021 survey: 5 January 2021 to 4 January 2022
- 2022 survey: 13 January 2022 to 4 January 2023
- 2023 survey: 12 January 2023 to 4 January 2024.

## Completed responses

Across the five years, responses have been received from n=128,293 adults aged 18-plus and n=31,127 young people aged between 5 and 17.

Using online and postal self-completion sequential mixed methods, we target 20,000 adults and 5,000 young people per year. Unfortunately, it was not possible to meet these targets (despite sending more mailings than has been the case) due to a lower-than-expected response rate. The number of responses in 2023 was 5,890 young people and 15,836 adults.

## 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 between 2021 and 2023.

## Appendix C: Question wording and base descriptions

### Figures 1 to 12 (aged 5-plus) and tables 9 to 12 (aged 5 to 17)

#### Table 1 (aged 5-plus) and table 2 (aged 5 to 17)

**Base: All respondents aged 5-plus**

**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 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.

**Q8** (18+) Which of the following have you done in the last 12 months?

**Q11** (18+) In the last 12 months, have you done this as a competitive sport or competitive activity?

**Q16** (5–17) Where or how did <you/name> do <activity> in the last 7 days?

**Q16b** (5–17) About how many minutes did <you/name> spend doing <insert activity> in the last 7 days (not including today) when...?

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

**Q13a** (5–17) Please tick all the ways <you/name> have been physically active for sport, PE, exercise, or fun in the last 7 days (not including today).

**Q8a** (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.

### Figures 13 to 18 (aged 5-plus)

**Base: All respondents aged 5-plus**

**Q22** (5–17) Would <you/name> like to be doing more physical activity for sport, PE, exercise or fun than what <you/they> do now?

**Q31** (18+) Overall, would you like to be doing more physical activity for sport, exercise, or recreation than you are currently doing?

### Figure 19 (aged 5-plus)

#### Tables 3 and 4 (aged 5-plus)

**Base: All respondents aged 5-plus**

**Q23** (5–17) Why are <you/name> not doing as much physical activity as <you/they> would like?

Note: reporting is based on those who want to be doing more.

**Q32** (18+) For what reasons are you not doing as much physical activity as you would like?

Note: reporting is based on those who want to be doing more.