

Aotearoa's changing face

Our communities are increasingly diverse. Increasingly aging, NEW New Zealanders, and those experiencing financial hard ship all have unique needs and require different planning and provision.

How are we changing? What is the impact on recreation and sport?

Aging Population

Our aging population has a growing proportion of people aged over 65 – 25% now and growing to more than 33% by 2040. ([Stats NZ population projections 2023](#))

Many people aged 65 years and older:

- Are in paid work (33%)
- Live in one-person households (25%)
- Have Government Superannuation as their sole source of income (40% have no other income besides NZ Super
- Increasing numbers of others raising grandchildren (for example).
- One in 6 of all NZers live with disability and of those aged those aged 65 and over, 35% are living with disability, visible or not ([Household Disability Survey 2023](#))

Providers must avoid grouping “older adults” as homogenous. Consider the key barriers and enablers to participation according to needs and preferences.

Preferences for activity will vary according to age, interests, ability and affordability. Some will be active and in good health, others may have compounding health issues that impact on participation.

For more info see:

[Insights #27 Over 65 Not out!](#)

[Sport NZ - Inclusivity Hub](#)

[Insights #37 Principles of Inclusion](#)

[Insights #39 Water Safety](#) for more info on impact of culture on water experiences



Figure 1 Auckland Skipping club. Source: www.facebook.com/people/AKL-Skipping-Club/100071134855305/

Economic factors

Economic factors influence participation in recreation and sport. Increasing income and wealth disparity significantly influences participation. NZ data tells us that:

- [One in every 8 children live in households with less than half the median disposable income](#)
- Many adults/families are struggling to meet basic needs due to rising housing costs and other living expenses.
- Lack of money is a key barrier to participation beyond the ‘actual cost’ of a programme or event.

Financial hardship influences:

- Actual and perceived free time, constraints on parental time
- economic stress, limiting recreation resources
- limited access to opportunities
- health and wellbeing considerations directly resulting from hardship.

[Insights #12 Equity and Leisure](#) explores the impact of poverty on participation

Diversity

New Zealand's population is diverse, with increasing numbers of different ethnic backgrounds.

- [Increased proportion of Asian, Pasifika and MELAA citizens.](#)
- (eg) [Most recent Census data](#) shows a 47% increase in Filipino immigrants in the preceding 5 years.

Considerations for relevant recreation opportunities:

- A lack of fundamental principles of physical activity can impact participation.
- Cultural and social mores may have a positive or negative impact on participation .
- Offer programmes that cater for specific needs and preferences, involving people in the co-design of programmes.

Community Wellbeing

There is a growing recognition of the role that physical activity plays in improving mental health and reducing stress.

- About 1 in 3 adults (34.8%) report experiencing anxiety or depression with a large increase in young people having these experiences
- A large body of research tells us that being outdoors, either actively or in reflective mode, is beneficial in myriad ways for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Opportunities for play and [connection to culture](#) (in particular for Māori) are also paramount for mental wellbeing

Read about the impact of recreation on wellbeing in [Insights #24 Well minds](#) ; [Insights #32 Mental Wellbeing Mindsets](#)

A mobile population

NZ is increasingly an urbanised population, with more people living in cities than previously.

- Around 87% of all New Zealanders live in urban areas, (i.e. 1,000+ inhabitants).
- [Kiwis are shifting from cities to the regions](#), a trend driven by factors such as affordability, lifestyle preferences, and the ability to work remotely.
- People make connections through recreation. Opportunities vary according to the physical environment, local resources, transport, and affordability
- Urbanisation has led to a rise in activities like parkour, 3x3 basketball, and scootering. [Good urban design](#) creates flexible spaces able to be used in myriad ways.
- Greenspace is under threat, but [the importance of green and blue spaces](#) is paramount.

See [Insights #28 Refuge, restoration and renewal in urban Aotearoa](#)



Figure 2 <https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/26692/older-pacific-women>

Insights into Action

Principle	Action
Acknowledge similarities and differences	<p>Identify specific needs across a diverse range of groups</p> <p>Tailor offerings to the specific needs of groups</p> <p>Recognise common motivations across different groups - such as wellbeing, social engagement and learning</p>
Intersectionality	<p>Identify the multiple factors that contribute to participation barriers - social, geographical, physical, cultural, economic</p> <p>Design offerings that meet a range of needs and barriers</p>
Accessibility	<p>Consider all dimensions of accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affordability • time • health • proximity • access <p>Recognise that fundamental movement skills are an essential precondition of participation</p>
Wellbeing	<p>Promote recreation and its contribution to wellbeing: personal, family, community and societal</p> <p>Celebrate the cultural value of active recreation</p>
Design of spaces and places	<p>Consider safety, gathering spaces, accessibility, toilets, shade in spatial design</p> <p>Bring spaces and places alive through activations</p>

Further Reading

[Sport NZ Futures on Demographic change](#)

[Sport NZ Asian Participation](#)