

# Physical activity

## Key points

Results from the 1997–98 Hillary Commission Sport and Physical Activity Survey indicate that 67 percent of adult New Zealanders are active (69 percent of males and 65 percent of females), that is, they spent 2.5 hours or more each week participating in leisure-time physical activity.

These results were slightly higher than results obtained from the 1996–97 Hillary Commission Sport and Physical Activity Survey and the 1996–97 New Zealand Health Survey. However, the current level of physical activity is below the target of 70 percent set for 2000.

Based on the survey results, it is estimated that about 900 000 adults tended to be inactive in 1997–98. The minimum time of two to five hours' physical exercise per week is recommended for a healthy lifestyle.

Sixty-nine percent of young people aged 5–17 years old (74 percent of boys and 64 percent of girls) are active in their leisure time, yet about 200 000 young people remain inactive.

In 1999 Push Play – a nationwide campaign to get all New Zealanders enjoying physical activity as part of their everyday lives – was launched by the Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure.

In 1999 the Minister of Sport, Fitness, and Leisure and the Minister of Health launched the Physical Activity Joint Policy Statement (Ministry of Health 1999).

### Target

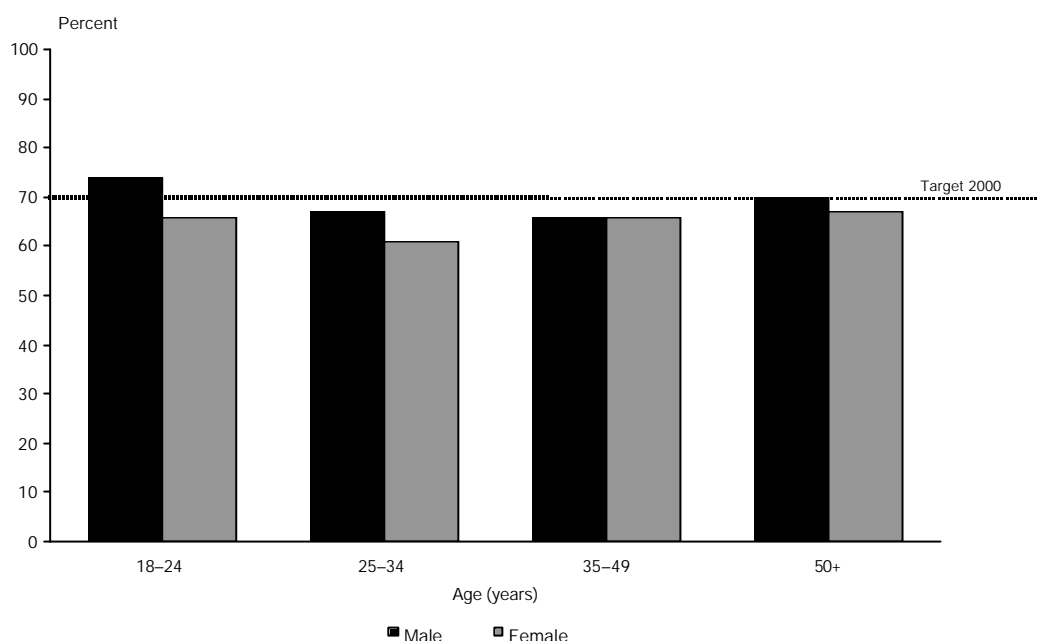
To increase the percentage of adults doing a minimum of 2.5 hours of physical activity per week to 70 percent or more by 2000.

## Progress towards the target

The Hillary Commission Sport and Physical Survey 1997–98 shows that 67 percent of all adult New Zealanders are active. This is slightly higher than the results obtained from the 1996–97 Hillary Commission Sport and Physical Activity Survey (63 percent) and the 1996–97 New Zealand Health Survey (62 percent) (Ministry of Health 1998) and is also higher internationally (Hillary Commission 1999).

Males are slightly more active than females (69 percent versus 65 percent) and are very close to the target level (Hillary Commission 1999). The corresponding figures for 1996–97 were 63 and 66 percent for males and females respectively. Figure 1 shows the proportion of the adult population who were physically active in New Zealand by sex and age in 1997–98.

**Figure 1:** Percentage of adult population who are physically active, by sex and age, 1997–98



Source: Hillary Commission 1999  
 Note: Target is for adult population.

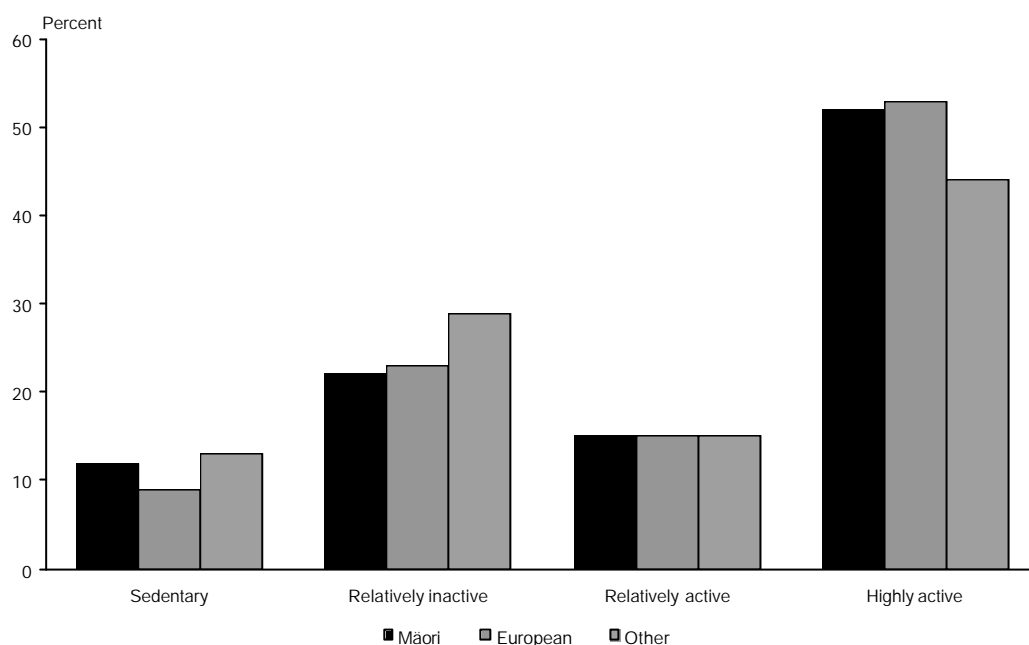
Although activity levels are similar for adults of all ages, adults aged 25–49 years appear to be slightly less active than others. This is true for both males and females. However, females aged 25–34 years are least active (61 percent) (Hillary Commission 1999). Besides this middle-aged (35–49 years) group, older adults (50 years and over) are almost as active as young adults (18–24 years) (Hillary Commission 1999).

About two-thirds of Māori and Europeans are active (66 and 68 percent) compared to little over half (59 percent) of the Other group, which is made up of Pacific, Asian and others (Hillary Commission 1999). Figure 2 presents the distribution of the adult population with different levels of physical activity, by ethnicity.

An equal proportion of people from all different cultures are relatively active (15 percent). While a little over half of all people from European (53 percent) and Māori (52 percent) backgrounds are highly active, only 44 percent of the Other group are highly active (see Figure 2).

In the 1997–98 survey, respondents were asked about the amount of time spent each week on sport and leisure activities. On average, adults spend a little over nine hours a week (males 10 hours, females 8 hours). Although two-thirds of adults are active for 2.5 hours or more each week, only 40 percent are active on five or more days (Hillary Commission 1999). An annual increase of 2 percent in the proportion of active people is required to achieve the target set for 2000. Based on the current level of progress, the target is likely to be achieved by 2000.

**Figure 2:** Percentage of adult population with different levels of physical activity, by ethnicity, 1997–98



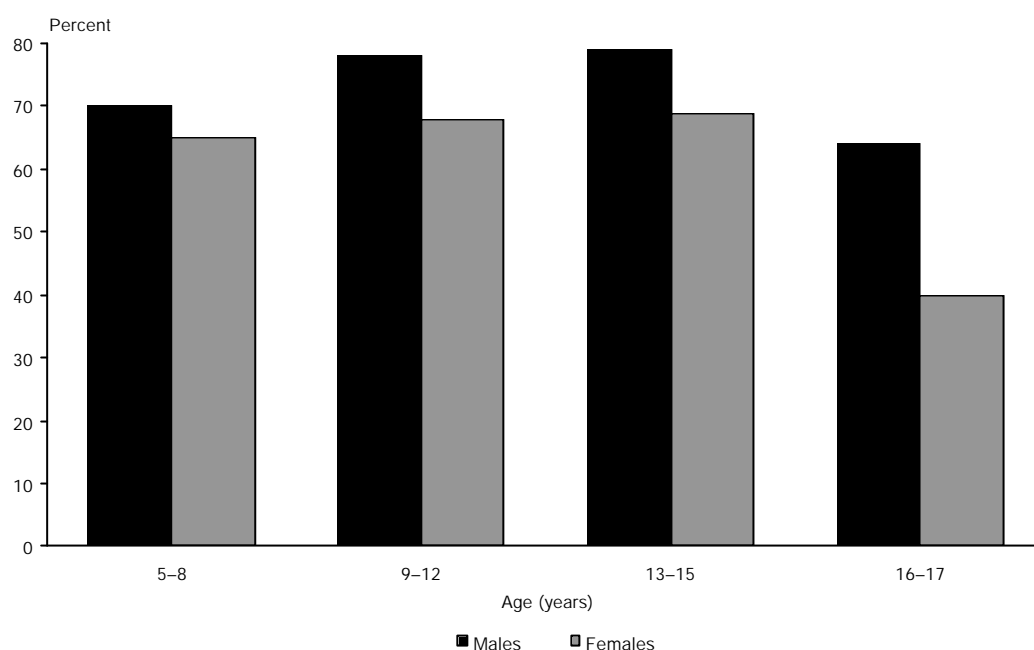
Source: Hillary Commission 1999  
 Note: Rates are age and sex standardised.

In all age groups, people who are sedentary are least interested in being more active. Those who are doing some activity but are still classed as inactive are most interested in becoming more active (Hillary Commission 1999).

Young adults (under the age of 35) express the most interest in becoming more active (seven out of 10 people). Likewise, six out of 10 adults (57 percent) want to be more active while most older adults are content with their current level of activity: only four out of 10 older people say they would like to be more active (Hillary Commission 1999).

Of all the young people surveyed (5–17 years old), 69 percent were active. In all age groups males (74 percent) were relatively more active than females (64 percent).

**Figure 3:** Percentage of young people who are physically active, by sex and age, 1997–98



Source: Hillary Commission 1999

## Indicator

The self-reported number of hours spent participating in leisure-time physical activities in the week prior to the survey being undertaken.

Leisure-time physical activity refers to sport and recreational physical activity including gardening but not activity at work or looking after a home. Those adults who take part in 2.5 hours or more of leisure-time physical activity are considered to be active. The following chart illustrates different categories of physical activity.

**Table 1:** Categories of physical activity

Category	Amount of leisure-time physical activity
Highly active	Five hours or more (in the last seven days)
Relatively active	Between 2.5 hours and 5 hours (in the last seven days)
Relatively inactive	Less than 2.5 hours (in the last seven days) or some activity in the last four weeks (but not necessarily in the last seven days)
Sedentary	No activity in the last four weeks

## Data source

*Push Play Facts* provides a summary of the 1997–98 Sport and Physical Activity Survey led by the Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure.

Unlike the 1996–97 survey, the 1997–98 survey data were collected every month from May 1997 to April 1998. This avoided chances of seasonal bias occurring when reporting physical activity levels.

A random sample of 5470 adults (18 years and over) and 1769 young people (5–17 years) was interviewed. Questions were asked about participation in sports and physical activities during the last 12 months, four weeks and two weeks to provide annual, four-week and two-week participation rates. The participants were also asked about the time they spent taking part in their chosen sports and activities in the last seven days, and, during these seven days, when they were active for at least 30 minutes.

## References

- Hillary Commission. 1999. *Push Play Facts*. Wellington: Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure.
- Ministry of Health. 1998. *Progress on Health Outcome Targets: Te Haere Whakamua ki ngā Whāinga Hua mö te Hauora. The state of the public health in New Zealand 1998*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- Ministry of Health. 1999. *Physical Activity Joint Policy Statement by the Minister of Sport, Fitness and Leisure and the Minister of Health*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.