

Equity and leisure

'As long as me and mine eat, I'm all right'

The benefits of participation in recreation are well understood - but are they available to all New Zealanders? And if not, what stands in the way?

We know that poverty affects peoples' ability to access quality recreation experiences, but how? The barriers to good leisure experiences are complex. As well as the challenges of time, transport and equipment, people living in poverty may lack confidence, an 'ethos of self-care', and a history of participation and skill development.

People and poverty in NZ

There is poverty amidst prosperity – one in seven households (682,500 people) are in poverty in this country. Many children in New Zealand are missing out on the potential recreation benefits: almost one third (290,000) live in poverty¹ and 7% (80,000) live in **severe** hardship. Judge Andrew Becroft, talking about the Child Poverty Monitor² says:

[poverty] combines to produce a poverty of opportunity for children which we want to undo.³

Some groups are more likely than others to be in poverty: beneficiaries, children, Māori and Pacific peoples, and sole parents.⁴

Poverty also makes it more difficult for families to access essential resources needed to support healthy childhood development—including leisure and recreation activities.⁵

Research on social fragmentation found that 'Inequalities in wellbeing ... are associated with deprivation of local communities' and recommends actions to improve wellbeing across deprived communities. Life expectancy rates for people in high deprivation areas are lower than for the general population.

Understanding Leisure

Leisure is the quality of activity defined by relative freedom and intrinsic satisfaction.⁶

Agreed definitions of leisure include: free time activity voluntarily undertaken; rest and recovery



<https://medium.com/@UNICEFNZ/decision-17-ending-child-poverty-in-nz-d0064d07e81c>

from work; a perception of freedom from obligation and is primarily for pleasure. Leisure activities may be a means to an end (health, fitness, therapy) or an 'end in itself' (fun, satisfaction, self-expression). But for many, even the *idea* of taking time out for themselves is a luxury they feel they can't afford.

Socio-economic status and leisure time activity levels

The recent Active NZ survey found that people in high deprivation areas have lower levels of participation in all leisure time activities. The lower the socio-economic status of the group, the lower the levels of leisure time physical activity. Adults from high deprivation areas may be active through work and caregiving – but the nature of this activity (repetitive, hard and often without recovery time) means it doesn't have the health benefits of leisure time activity.

Young People

- spend less time being active in other organised sports and activities
- Are less likely to participate for fun or because they 'have to'
- more likely to have cost and transport barriers
- are more likely to lack confidence and fitness
- + more likely to participate because they are 'good at it' or to lose or maintain weight

Adults

- + more likely to participate in home-based activity involving family
- struggle with self-motivation
- have no one to participate with
- lack fitness, have poor health or an injury
- barriers include lack of equipment, cost and transport.

Why focus on low-income groups?

It's a low-income issue	Poverty extracts a toll on people and <u>costs money</u> It is a waste of potential productivity and engagement in our citizens
It's a family issue	<u>Almost 1/3 of NZ children</u> live in families whose incomes are below the poverty line
It's a health issue	Lack of physical activity leads to poor physical <i>and</i> mental health AND is a major health risk across all age groups
It's a community issue	Active communities cost less in terms of health care at all life stages.
It's a service equity issue	The right of every individual to equal opportunity, access and participation in cultural life leisure and sport, is enshrined in legislation

Case Study



'it seems almost insensitive to ask people who are worrying about getting their fridge fixed about what you want to do recreationally' Ali Whitton, Health and Wellbeing Partnerships Leader, Wellington City Council

Wellington City Council are trailblazers, getting groups *less likely to access recreation services* more involved.

A review and refresh of the LeisureCard, which offers holders a 50% discount on casual entry to recreational facilities, ensures it reaches the people who need it most – those in vulnerable positions or financial hardship. The review found that interventions at different levels are needed in order to affect participation.

A 2019 *pilot programme* with the Wellington Homeless Women's Trust informed the LeisureCard review.

Thirteen partnerships have been formed with organisations that support people who would benefit from discounted access, with the aim of encouraging greater use of facilities and programmes.

The review investigated what would happen if cost, transport, and having the right equipment – were removed as barriers completely. Taking time out for recreation or a swim at the pool 'felt like a luxury' said one of the participants. Barriers for these women included literacy, self-confidence, and no ethos of 'self-care'. What worked for some was guided recreational opportunities accompanied by their support worker.

Principles into action

Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove cost as a barrier; improve the wellbeing of marginalised groups Identify barriers to access – equipment, fees, transport
Guided access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guided free access to facilities to identified groups Leisure education
Co-design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-design to eliminate/reduce additional barriers
Develop partnerships/ collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower/support others who already have the relationship with targeted group/groups
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financially sustainable funding for programmes Target low income or low retention groups

References

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