

# SATISFACTION WITH LEISURE TIME

## What is this?

*Leisure is a time when people can do what they want to away from work and other commitments. Studies across many different cultures have found that leisure is an important factor in bringing meaning to people's lives and therefore a key contributor to quality of life.<sup>1</sup> The type of leisure activities that people choose are influenced by personality differences, personal circumstances, and culture.<sup>2</sup>*

People's self-reported satisfaction with their leisure time provides a measure of how well their need for leisure is being met.



## Why is it important?

Leisure provides an opportunity to rest, regain balance in life, and facilitate growth and development at personal and social levels. Six different types of satisfaction from leisure activities have been identified: psychological, educational, social, relaxation, physiological, and aesthetic.<sup>3</sup> Sports and other physical activities are known to improve health, and reduce tiredness, anger, tension, and depression and give participants more energy and improved self-esteem. Cultural activities such as music and the arts provide entertainment, and satisfaction from participating in shared performances, meeting challenges and successful achievement. Many leisure activities provide a strong sense of social connectedness and enjoyable interaction with others. Even watching television, though passive, has been found to be a source of entertainment, distraction from worry, and a means of enjoying the company of others present.<sup>4</sup>

## Data

The Social Report 2010<sup>5</sup> report draws on data for this issue from the Quality of Life Survey 2008<sup>6</sup> (data was not available from the 2010 Quality of Life Survey). The Social Report identified that in 2008 75% of New Zealanders were satisfied overall (41% satisfied and 34% very satisfied) with their leisure time. There were no significant differences in satisfaction by gender or ethnicity in this survey.

People aged 25-34 years and 35-44 years were slightly less satisfied overall (68% and 70% respectively satisfied or very satisfied) compared to New Zealanders overall, which the reported suggested may be because people in those age groups have larger work and family commitments and less time to pursue their own interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Iwasaki, Y. 2007. Leisure and quality of life in an international and multicultural context: what are major pathways linking leisure to quality of life. *Social Indicators Research* 82, 233-264.

<sup>2</sup> Hills, P., Argyle, M. 1998. Positive moods derived from leisure and their relationship to happiness and personality. *Personality and Individual Differences* 25, 523-535.

<sup>3</sup> Spiers, A., Walker, G.J. 2009. The effects of ethnicity and leisure satisfaction on happiness, peacefulness, and quality of life. *Leisure Sciences* 31, 84-99.

<sup>4</sup> Hills, P., Argyle, M. 1998. Op cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Social Development. 2010. The social report 2010: satisfaction with leisure time. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development. <http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/leisure-recreation/satisfaction-leisure.html> Accessed 21.05.11.

<sup>6</sup> AC Nielson. 2008. Quality of Life Survey. [http://www.bigcities.govt.nz/pdfs/Quality\\_of\\_Life\\_2008.pdf](http://www.bigcities.govt.nz/pdfs/Quality_of_Life_2008.pdf) Accessed 17.07.11.

People with children under the age of 18 years, and people in full time employment reported slightly lower levels of satisfaction with leisure time than others. Income was not found to be a barrier to satisfaction with leisure time as the highest levels of satisfaction (79%) were reported by people with a household income under \$30,000. The report suggests this reflects the high proportion of young people 15-24 years, and retired people in this age range.

The Christchurch specific data from the 2008 Quality of Life Survey<sup>7</sup> showed very similar results to the rest of New Zealand for overall satisfaction, as well as results for gender, and age groups. However, this survey found that Maori were significantly more likely to report that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (19% compared to 8% for the Christchurch average). This same survey also found that being in the highest income bracket (over \$100,000 household income) was negatively correlated with satisfaction with leisure time (14% compared to 8% Christchurch average).

### **Impact on inequalities**

Without adequate leisure time, mental and physical health and wellbeing may be affected. Dissatisfaction with leisure time can be linked to factors such as work-life balance, and educational, financial and family commitments. While it could be suggested that people on low incomes can have restricted choices for leisure pursuits because of limited transport options and costs involved in accessing sporting and cultural amenities, this was not reflected in satisfaction scores.

In the Christchurch Quality of Life Survey Maori reported a higher level of dissatisfaction with leisure time but the specific reasons for this are unclear. Income levels are unlikely to explain this. It should also be noted, however, that those people in the highest income bracket had higher levels of dissatisfaction than others. The inter-relationship of inequalities and satisfaction with leisure time is not clear with this measure.

### **Solutions**

Some of the suggestions from the Work/Life Balance measure will also be relevant here. Urban planning for developments that enable people to access sporting and cultural activities near to where they live is also important.<sup>8</sup> Christchurch is a culturally diverse community with members of around 161 ethnic groups,<sup>9</sup> and, as noted above, culture has been shown to be directly related to the kind of activities which people find satisfying to pursue in their leisure time.<sup>10</sup> It is important to take this into account in wide consultation with communities about planned leisure opportunities in the city that will enable all residents to derive satisfaction from their leisure time.

### **Data limitations**

The 'satisfaction with leisure time' question was not asked in the 2010 Quality of Life Survey, so 2008 data is the most up-to-date available. The question will be asked again in 2012.

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<sup>7</sup> Quality of Life Survey Team. 2009. Quality of Life Survey 2008 Christchurch. Wellington: AC Nielsen. [http://www.bigcities.govt.nz/pdfs/2008/Quality\\_of\\_Life\\_2008\\_Christchurch.pdf](http://www.bigcities.govt.nz/pdfs/2008/Quality_of_Life_2008_Christchurch.pdf) Accessed 31.08.10.

<sup>8</sup> Badland, H.M., Keam, R., Witten, K., Kearns, R.A. 2009. Examining public open spaces by neighbourhood-level walkability and deprivation. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, published online ahead of print JPAH\_2009\_0067.R1

<sup>9</sup> Thorpe, F., Marr, J. Richardson, J. 2007. The migrants report 2007: a demographic profile of ethnic minority groups in Christchurch. Christchurch: Christchurch City Council. <http://resources.ccc.govt.nz/files/TheMigrantsReport2007-docs.pdf> Accessed 15.09.10.

<sup>10</sup> Iwasaki, Y. 2007. Op. cit.

### ***Connections with other issues***

Activity levels and exercise, Open and green spaces, Recreational Water Quality, Arts and Culture, Social Connectedness; Religious Organisations, Social and Sports Clubs.

### ***Impact of the earthquakes***

*As time passes and these papers are updated the initial sections on the impact of the earthquake are going to be kept as an archive. Updates are provided where possible.*

'Satisfaction with leisure time' may well be reduced since the February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 earthquake for those relying on recreational facilities that have closed down or are severely damaged. Those in the eastern suburbs are disproportionately affected, as QEII Park is closed and many do not have access to transport to travel to a recreational facility. Additionally some parks have either been subject to liquefaction, or they are becoming the site for temporary housing, making some inaccessible to people wishing to play sport.

Leisure time in some situations may have increased as people have changed working situations and schools in site sharing modes – whether this is rated positively by people is unknown as the situation surrounding this is still likely to be increasing general stress levels.

**This paper will be updated when new information becomes available neither the 2010 or 2012 Quality of Life surveys repeated the relevant questions to update this paper at this time.**

*Compiled by Community and Public Health.*