

2 Main findings

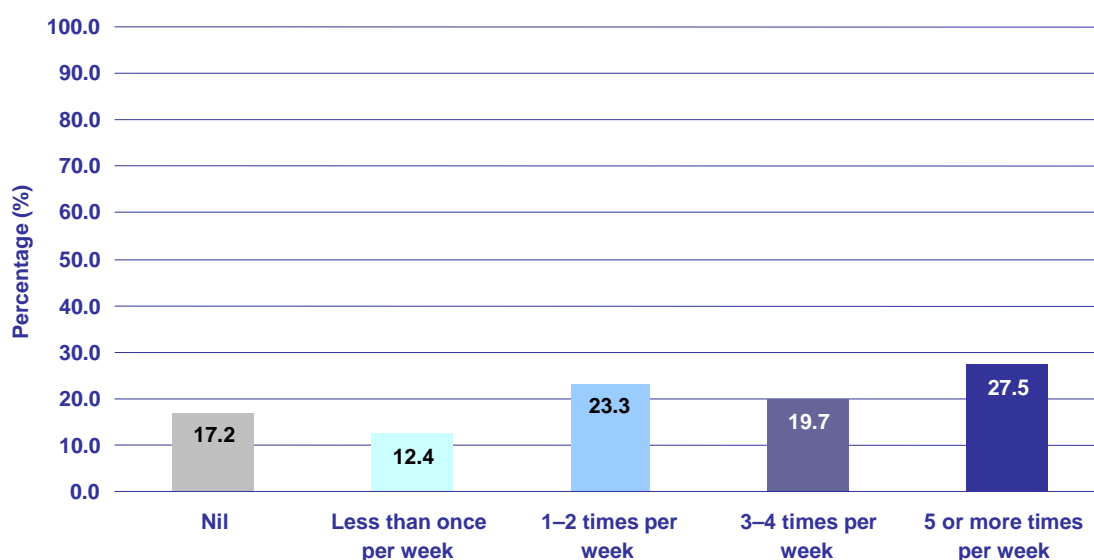
2.1 Overall participation

Overview

During the 12 months prior to interview in 2004, an estimated 13.1 million persons aged 15 years and over participated in at least one physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport, a participation rate of 82.8% (Table 1). Household or garden chores, or activities that were part of work were not included.

However, the participation rate drops markedly when frequency of involvement is considered. An estimated 4.3 million persons aged 15 years and over exercised five or more times per week (27.5%) (Figure 1). A total of 2.7 million persons did not participate in any physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport in the 12 months prior to interview (Table 3). A total of 11.1 million persons (70.5%) participated at least once per week (Table 4).

Figure 1: Weekly frequency of participation



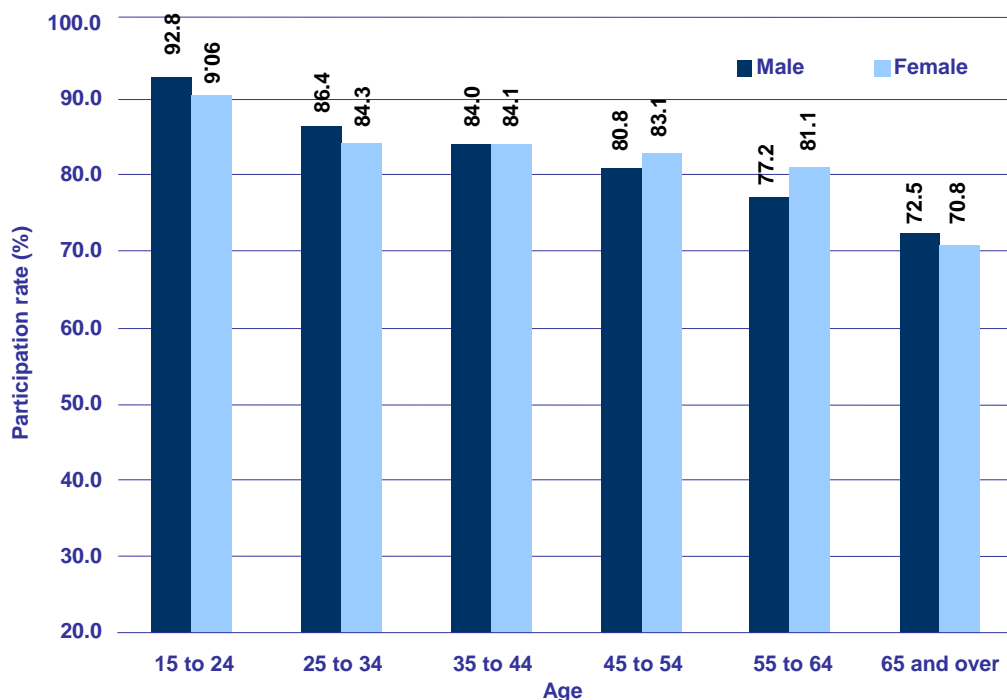
Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,662)

Age and sex

The overall participation rate for males and females was similar (83.0% and 82.6%, respectively) (Table 1).

People aged 15 to 24 had the highest participation rate (91.7%), declining to 71.6% for those aged 65 years and over (Figure 2 and Table 1).

Figure 2: Participation rates by age and sex



Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,662)

States and territories

Across Australia and within all states and territories, participation in exercise, recreation and sport has remained stable from 2003 to 2004 (Table 24).

Labour force status

Those not in the labour force, including students and retired persons, had a significantly lower participation rate (76.0%) than those employed (86.1%) and unemployed (83.1%) (Table 1). It is important to consider, however, that almost half (42.7%) of those not in the labour force are aged 65 years and over, which may affect participation rates.

Education

Participation rates increased with level of educational attainment, from 73.3% for those that did not complete secondary school to 91.3% for those with a university degree. The highest participation rate was for those persons still at secondary school (95.7%) and the lowest participation rate was for those persons who never attended school (56.9%)¹ (Table 1).

¹ This estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution. See 'Standard errors and relative standard errors' on page 50 for more information.

Type of activity

The activity with the highest participation rate was walking (39.0%). An estimated 6.2 million persons aged 15 years and over walked at least once for exercise, recreation and sport in the 12 months prior to interview. This does not include bushwalking (the participation rate for this was 5.2%), which ERASS reports as a separate activity. Other sports and physical activities that attracted high participation rates were aerobics/fitness (17.1%), swimming (16.5%), cycling (10.5%) and tennis (8.4%) (Box 1, Table 8 and Table 9).

Box 1: Top ten activities by number of participants 2001, 2003 and 2004

	2001		2003			2004		
	Rank	Number of participants ('000)	Rank	Number of participants ('000)	% change 2001–03	Rank	Number of participants ('000)	% change 2001–04
Walking	1	4,353.7	1	5,900.6	35.5	1	6,168.1	41.7
Aerobics/fitness	3	1,961.0	2	2,487.2	26.8	2	2,698.2	37.6
Swimming	2	2,415.5	3	2,384.5	-1.3	3	2,605.7	7.9
Cycling	4	1,438.3	4	1,470.1	2.2	4	1,658.4	15.3
Tennis	5	1,381.8	5	1,407.0	1.8	5	1,323.2	-4.2
Running	7	1,084.3	7	1,181.5	9.0	6	1,312.0	21.0
Golf	6	1,240.2	6	1,282.0	3.4	7	1,250.6	0.8
Bushwalking	8	794.9	8	902.2	13.5	8	818.0	2.9
Soccer (outdoor)	10	551.3	9	668.5	21.3	9	659.2	19.6
Netball	9	612.4	10	613.3	0.1	10	564.3	-7.9

Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (2001 n=13,424; 2003 n=13,703; 2004 n=13,662)

Walking had the highest participation rate for both males and females (Table 9), and across all age groups with the exception of the 15 to 24 year age group (Table 10).

For males, activities with the highest participation rates were walking (26.6%), swimming (14.7%), cycling (14.0%), golf (13.1%) and aerobics/fitness (12.8%).

For females, activities with the highest participation rates were walking (51.3%), aerobics/fitness (21.3%), swimming (18.3%), tennis (8.0%) and cycling (7.1%).

In the youngest age group, 15 to 24 year olds, the activities that attracted the most participants were aerobics/fitness (22.8%), walking (17.9%) and swimming (17.8%). For the oldest age group, 65 years and over, walking (47.6%), aerobics/fitness (12.1%) and golf (8.6%) attracted the most participants.

The activity that participants most frequently participate in is walking, where half of all persons who participated in walking did so 156 times or more a year — equating to 3.0 times per week. Other activities² participated in frequently were aerobics/fitness, boxing, rowing and weight training (2.0 times per week) and running (1.9 times per week) (Table 8).

Participants took part in an average (mean) of 2.2 different sports or activities in the 12 months prior to interview. This ranged from 2.6 different activities for the 15 to 24 year age group to 1.6 different activities for those aged 65 years and over. Males participated in an average of 2.3 different activities compared to an average of 2.1 different activities for female participants (Table 7).

² Activities included in this analysis refer only to those activities that were participated in by 50,000 or more persons in 2004.

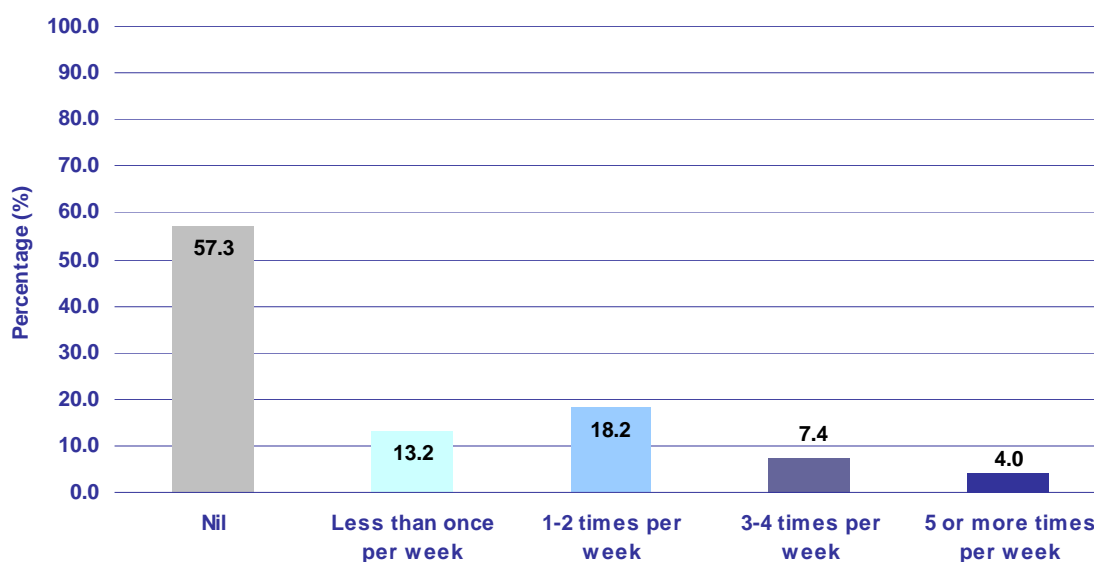
2.2 Organised participation

Overview

During the 12 months prior to interview in 2004, an estimated 6.8 million persons aged 15 years and over participated in at least one activity that was organised by a club, association, fitness centre or other type of organisation. This represents a participation rate of 42.7% (Table 5). It also represents over half (51.6%) of the 13.1 million persons who participated in a physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport.

In terms of frequency, 9 million persons (57.3%) did not participate in organised physical activities during 2004, while 2.1 million (13.2%) participated less than once a week, 2.9 million (18.2%) participated once or twice a week, 1.2 million (7.4%) participated three or four times and 625,300 (4.0%) participated five times or more (Figure 3 and Table 3).

Figure 3: Weekly frequency of participation — organised activities



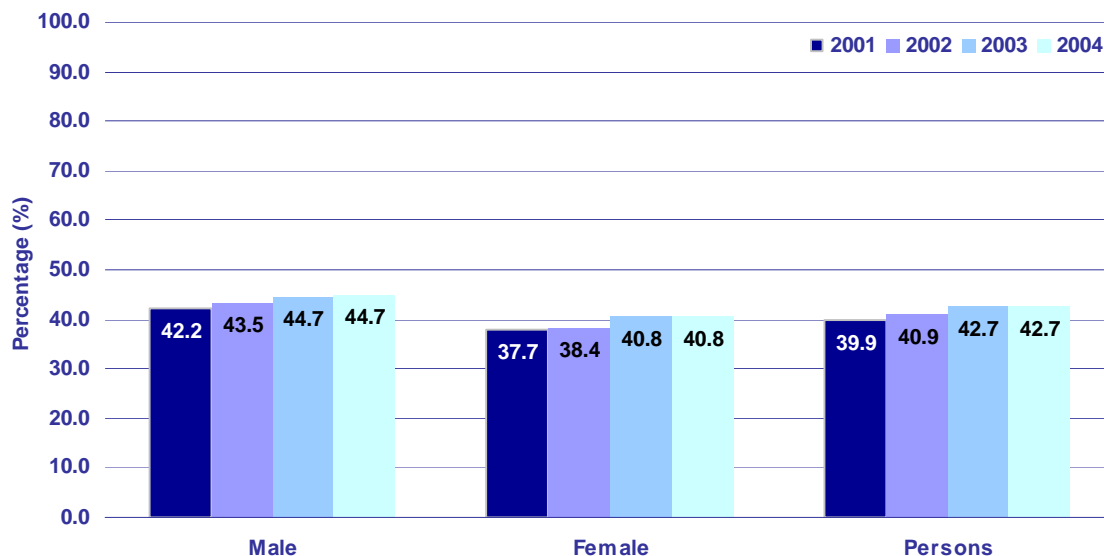
Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,662)

Age and sex

Of the 6.8 million persons who participated in organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport, participation was higher for males (44.7%) than for females (40.8%) (Figure 4 and Table 14).

Organised participation rates were highest in the 15 to 24 year age group (66.1%), and declined steadily with age to 30.7% for persons aged 65 years and over.

Figure 4: Organised activity participation rates by sex and year



Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (2001 n=13,424; 2002 n=13,632; 2003 n=13,703; 2004 n=13,662)

States and territories

Across Australia, the participation rate for organised sport and physical activities remained stable from 2003 to 2004 in all states and territories (Table 25).

Type of activity

The organised activity with the highest participation rate was aerobics/fitness (8.8%). An estimated 1.4 million persons aged 15 years and over participated in this activity in an organised environment at least once in the 12 months prior to interview. Other sports and physical activities that had high numbers of people participating in an organised environment were golf (4.3%), tennis (3.8%), netball (3.2%), soccer — outdoor (2.8%) and swimming (2.8%) (Box 2 and Table 13).

Participants in organised physical activities for exercise, recreation and sport engaged in an average (mean) of 1.5 different organised activities in the 12 months prior to interview (Table 12).

Box 2: Top ten organised activities by number of participants 2001, 2003 and 2004

	2001		2003			2004		
	Rank	Number of participants ('000)	Rank	Number of participants ('000)	% change	Rank	Number of participants ('000)	% change
					2001—03			2001—04
Aerobics/fitness	1	982.9	1	1,309.1	33.2	1	1,393.3	41.8
Golf	2	655.1	2	728.7	11.2	2	678.8	3.6
Tennis	3	548.6	3	588.9	7.3	3	597.8	9.0
Netball	4	533.2	4	545.6	2.3	4	509.9	—4.4
Soccer (outdoor)	5	381.9	5	429.0	12.3	5	447.5	17.2
Swimming	8	334.0	6	435.6	30.4	6	442.8	32.6
Yoga	15	153.1	7	321.5	110.0	7	380.5	148.5
Cricket (outdoor)	10	279.6	8	332.4	18.9	8	346.3	23.9
Lawn bowls	9	280.3	9	353.9	26.3	9	343.4	22.5
Australian football	11	272.5	10	319.1	17.1	10	342.1	25.5

Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (2001 n=13,424; 2003 n=13,703; 2004 n=13,662)

Organisation of the activity

An estimated 4.7 million persons participated in activities that were organised by a 'sport or recreation club or association'. An estimated 2.7 million persons participated in activities that were organised by a 'fitness, leisure or indoor sports centre' (Table 15).

2.3 Organised versus non-organised participation

Activities that were commonly participated in where participation is most often organised by a club, association, fitness centre or other organisation include softball (97% of softball participants engaged at least once in organised softball), lawn bowls (95%), rugby union (92%), outdoor hockey (91%), netball and triathlon (90%) (Table 13).³

Activities least likely to be organised include walking (only 2% of walking participants engaged in organised walking), waterskiing/power boating and fishing (4%), cycling (8%), roller sports and surf sports (9%).

³ Activities 'commonly participated in' refer to all those activities that were participated in by 50,000 or more persons in 2004.