



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

AusPlay Focus

Women and Girls Participation

November, 2017

ausport.gov.au



Participation data for sport

The relationship Australians have with sport and physical activity differs on many variables, including gender.

This publication delves into the participation of Australian women and girls in sport and physical activity, and the difference between male and female patterns of behaviour.

It uses AusPlay data collected from July 2016 to June 2017.

The Government is encouraging young women to take part in physical activity via the inspiring **'Girls - Make Your Move'** campaign. The campaign targets girls aged 12-19 years, promoting physical activity and sport as fun with many positive benefits - inspiring, energising and empowering young women to be more active.

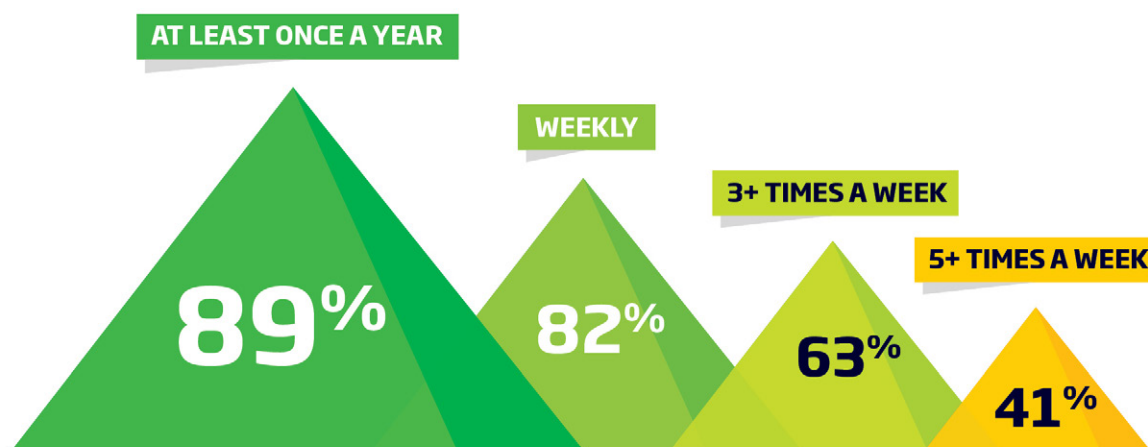
We continue to support more women to participate in sport and physical activity and into leadership positions in sport.

How active are Australian women 15+?

A Snapshot

A quick look at how much time and money adult women (15+) spend on sport and physical activity.

Physical activity frequency



Average time spent per week on sport and physical activity

¹ Average time spent per week on non-sport physical activities by those who participate in non-sport physical activities.

² Average time spent per week on sport-related activities by those who participate in sport-related activities.



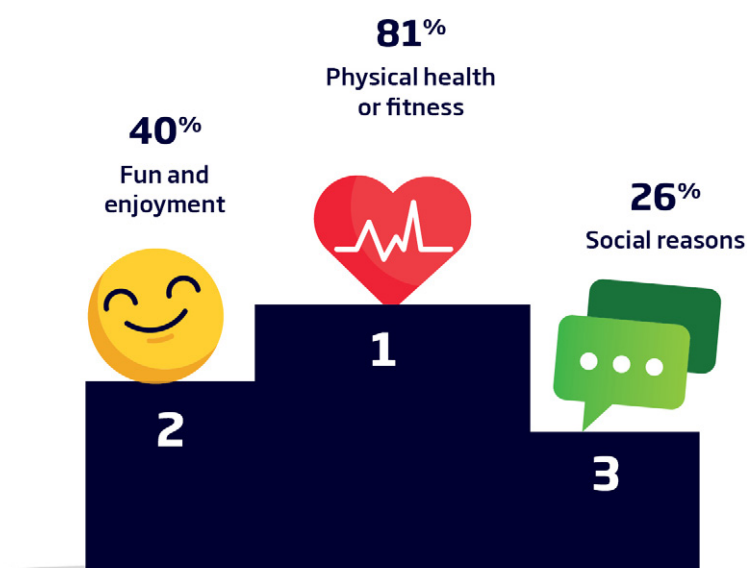
Average annual expenditure on sport and physical activity³

³ Among those women who pay to participate.

How active are Australian women 15+?

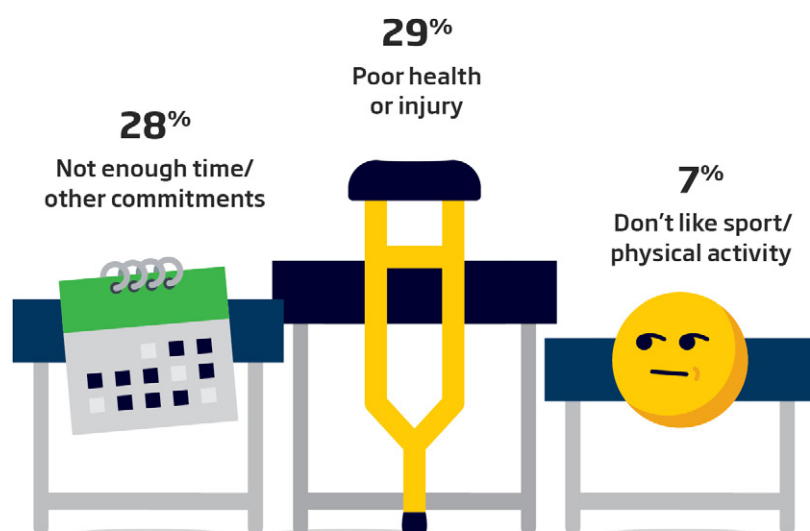
A Snapshot

TOP 10 MOTIVATIONS



Lose or maintain weight/tone	21%
Psychological/ mental health/ therapy	19%
To be outdoors/enjoy nature	16%
Walk the dog	14%
Way of getting around	9%
Physio/rehab/physical therapy/ post op	9%
Hobby	5%

TOP 10 BARRIERS



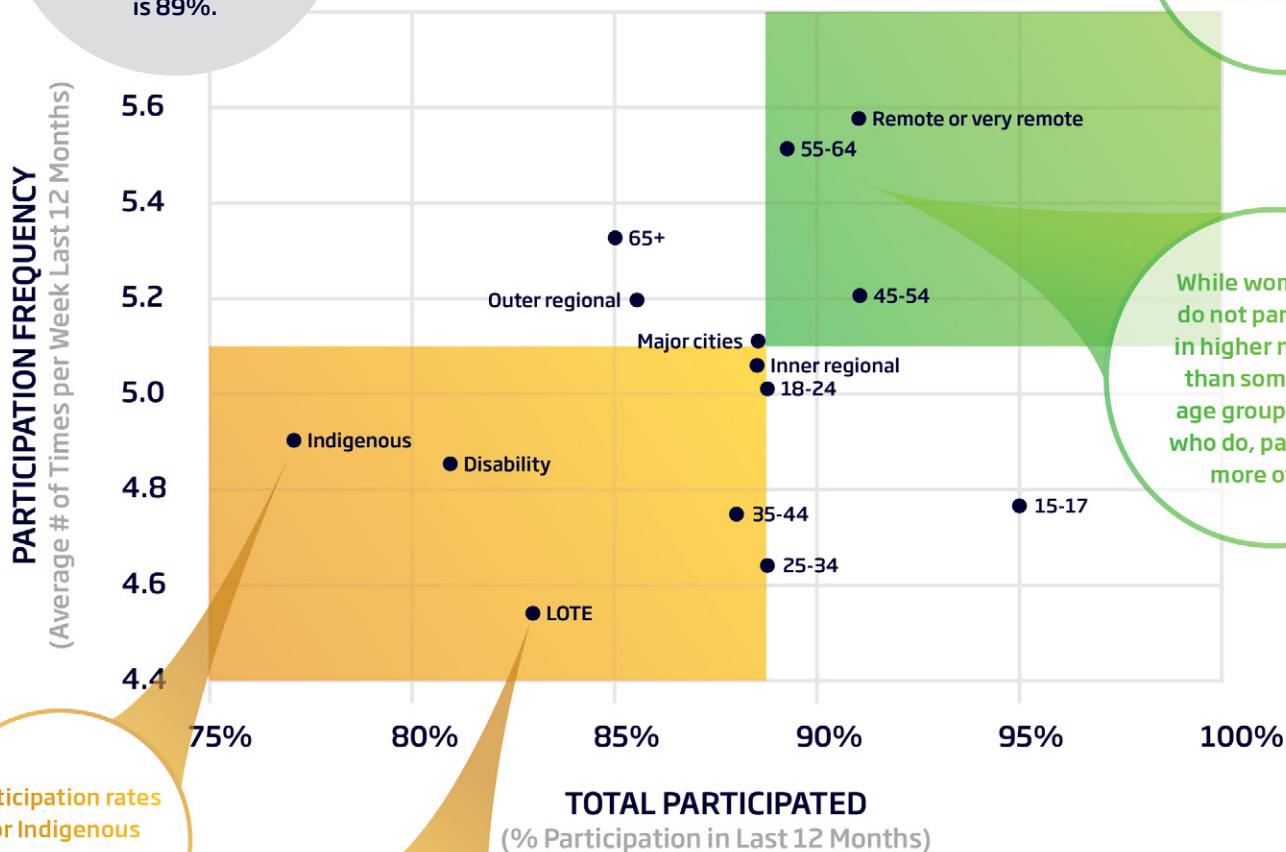
Disability	6%
Not a priority (any more)	6%
Looking after child/infant	5%
Increasing age/too old	5%
Physical job	5%
Too lazy	4%
Can't afford it	3%

How active are Australian women 15+?

A Snapshot

The chart below shows the participation profile across different ages and groups to identify key opportunities - how many females (%) have participated in the last 12 months and the average number of times participated weekly.

Participation and Frequency:
By age-group and other demographics



This document focuses on women and girls participation patterns overall.

More research on the specific population groups of Indigenous, Disability and CaLD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) has been and will be undertaken by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC).

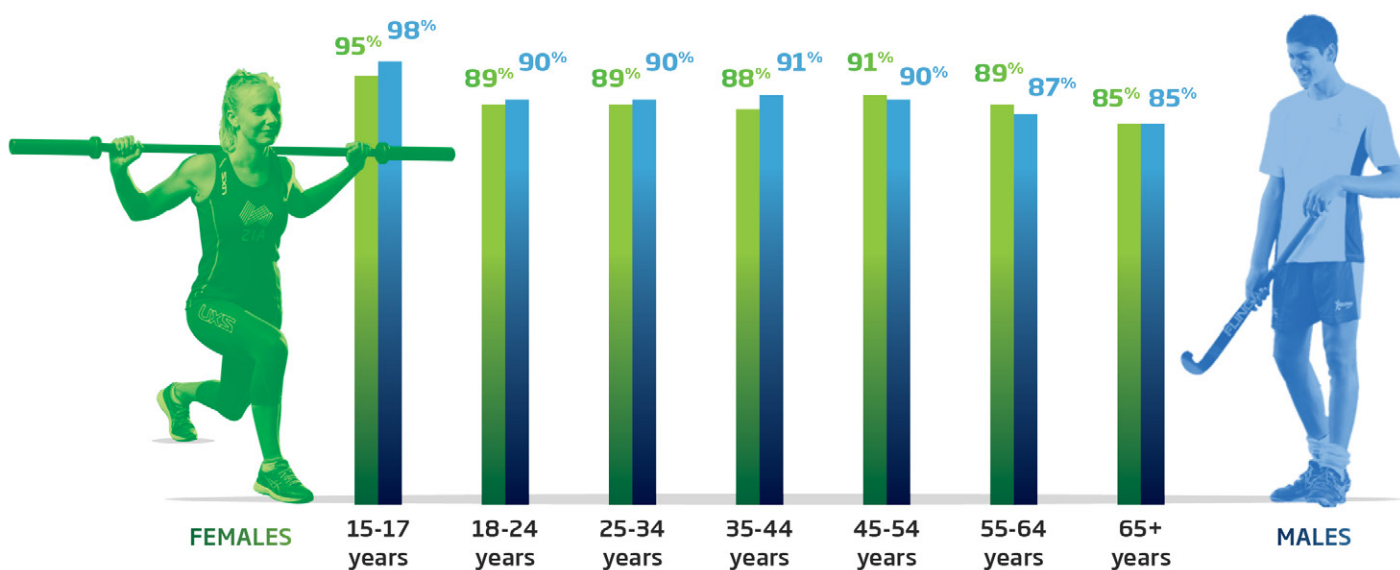
All ASC research data and insights can be found by visiting www.researchinsport.com.au

Overall women are as active as men

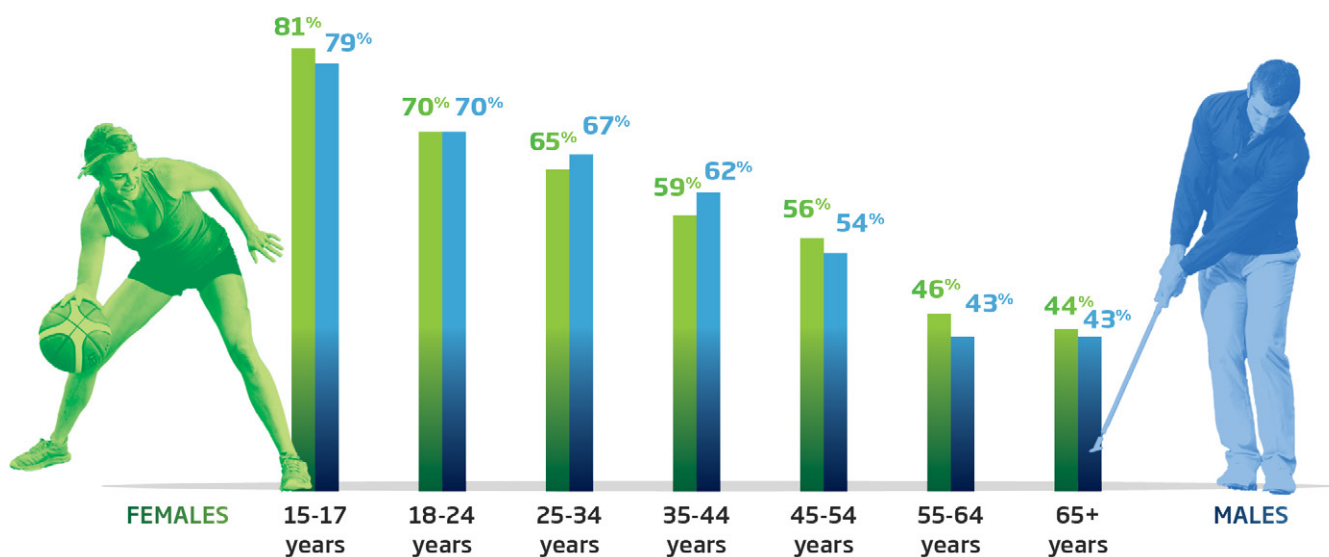
The common perception is that women and/or girls are less active than men and/or boys.

AusPlay data however, shows that girls and women are just as active as boys and men.

Participation in sport and physical activity overall*



Participation in organised sport and physical activity*

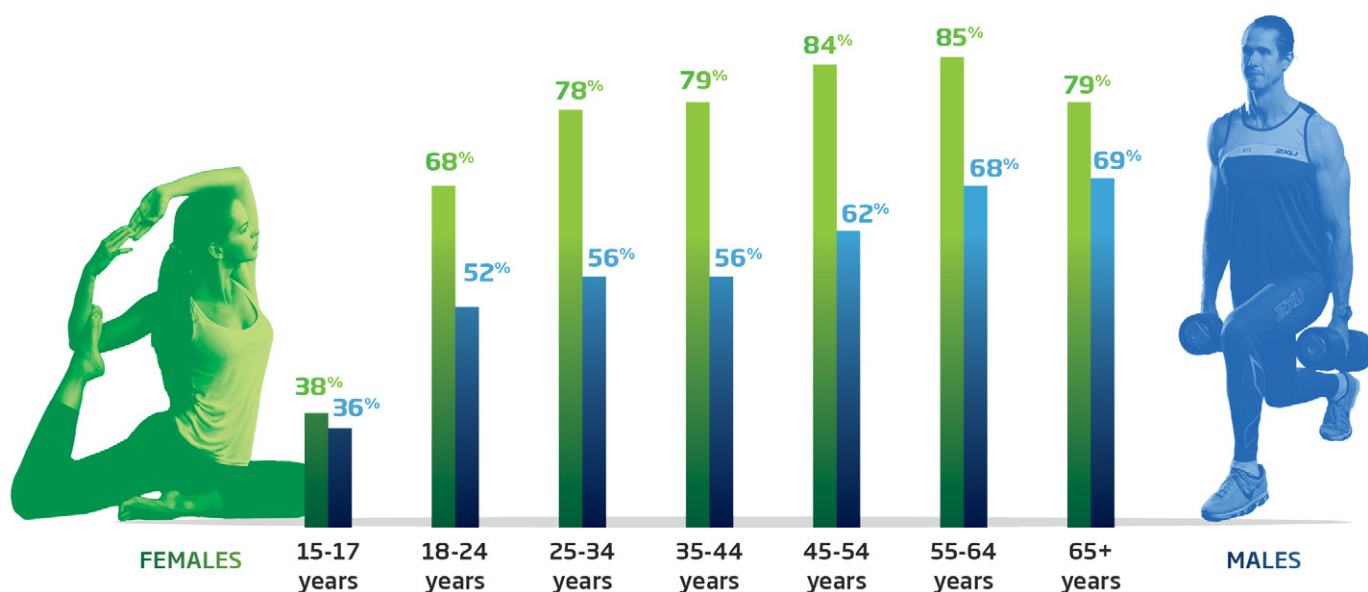


*At least once per year

Women are more active in some areas

In fact, when it comes to non-sport-related physical activity, women have a higher participation rate than men.

Participation in non-sport-related physical activity*



*At least once per year

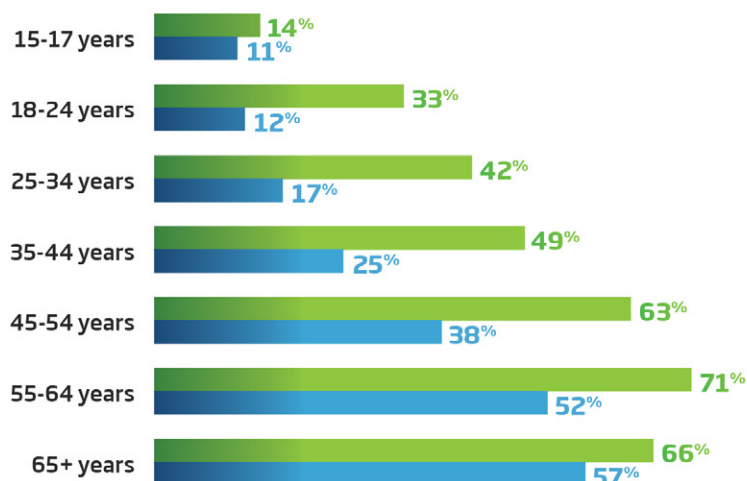


Campaigns encouraging more women to take part in physical activity are welcomed and encouraged. The opportunity for sports is to understand women's motivations and better cater to their needs.

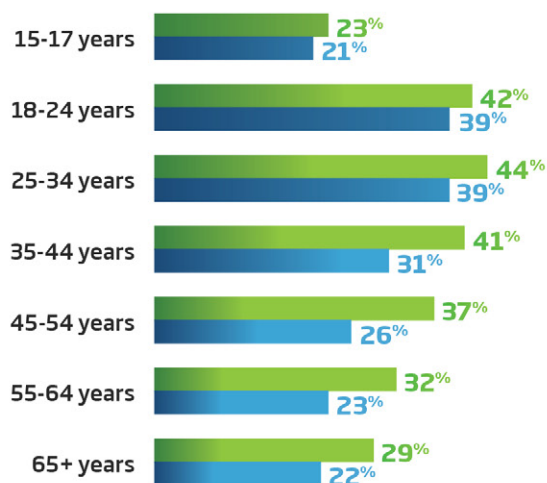
Women are more active in some areas

Women are much more likely to take part in non-sport-related activities such as gym/fitness and walking.

Participation in recreational walking*



Participation in gym/fitness*

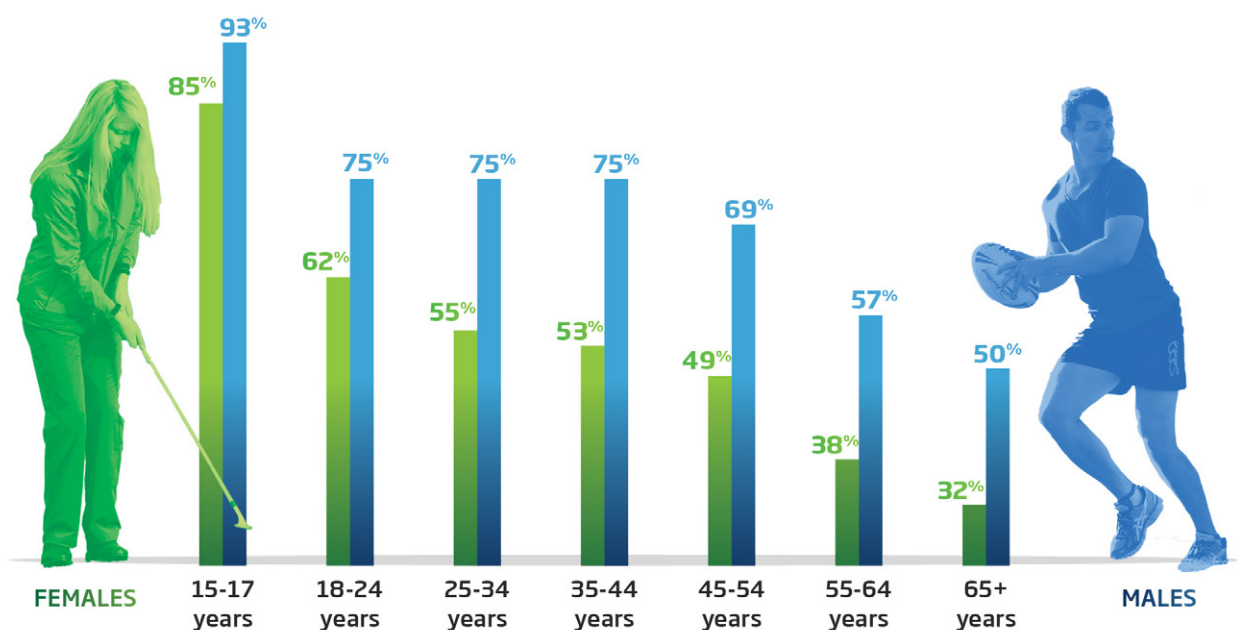


*At least once per year

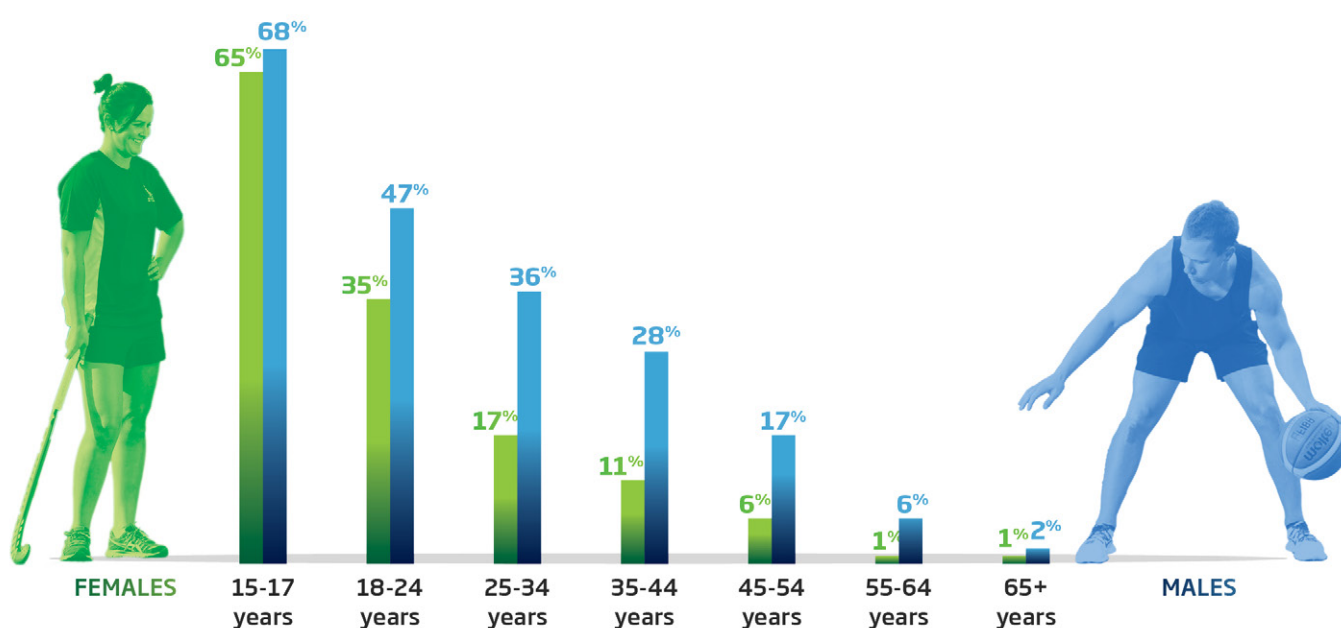
Women are less active in sport

However, it is true that women are less active than men when it comes to sport-related activities.

Participation in sport-related activities (sport)*



Participation in team sport*

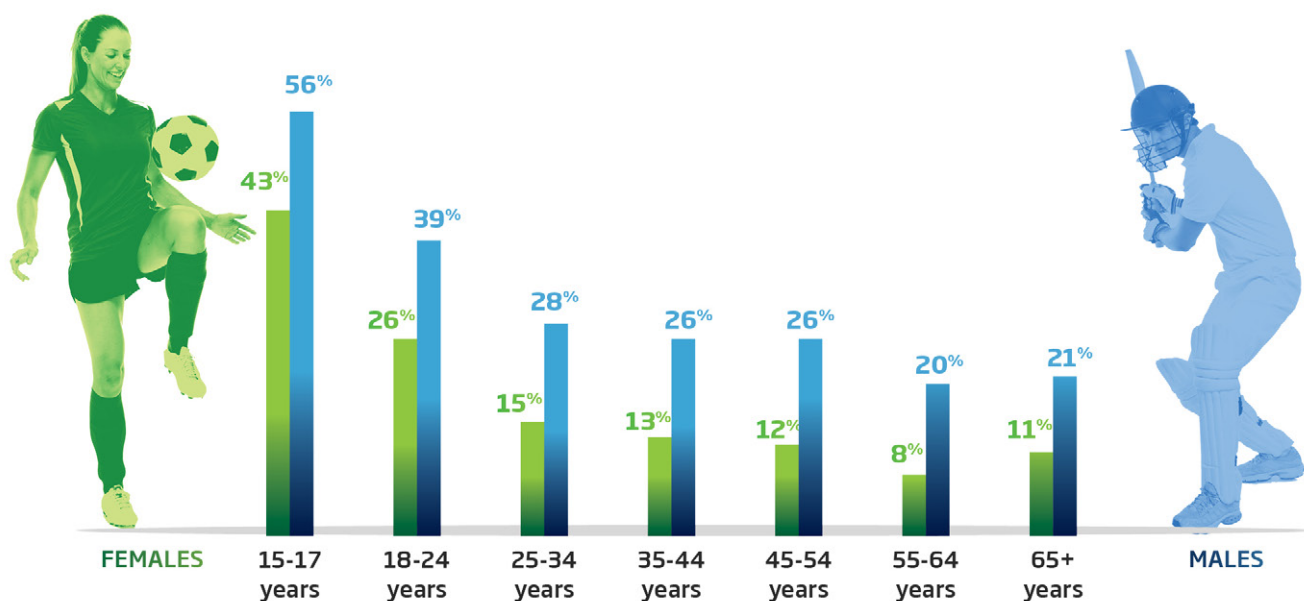


*At least once per year

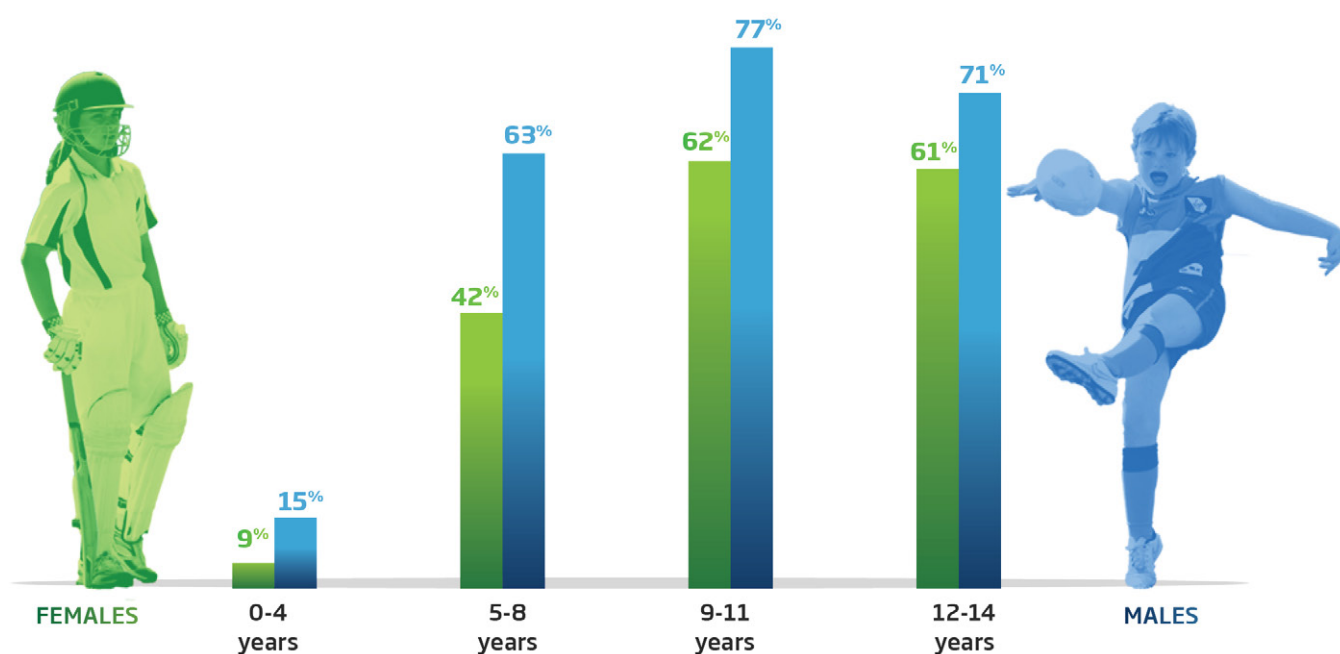
Women are less active in sport

In particular both women and girls are also less active than men and boys in club sport.

Participation in club sport (Adults 15+)*



Participation in club sport (Children 0-14)*



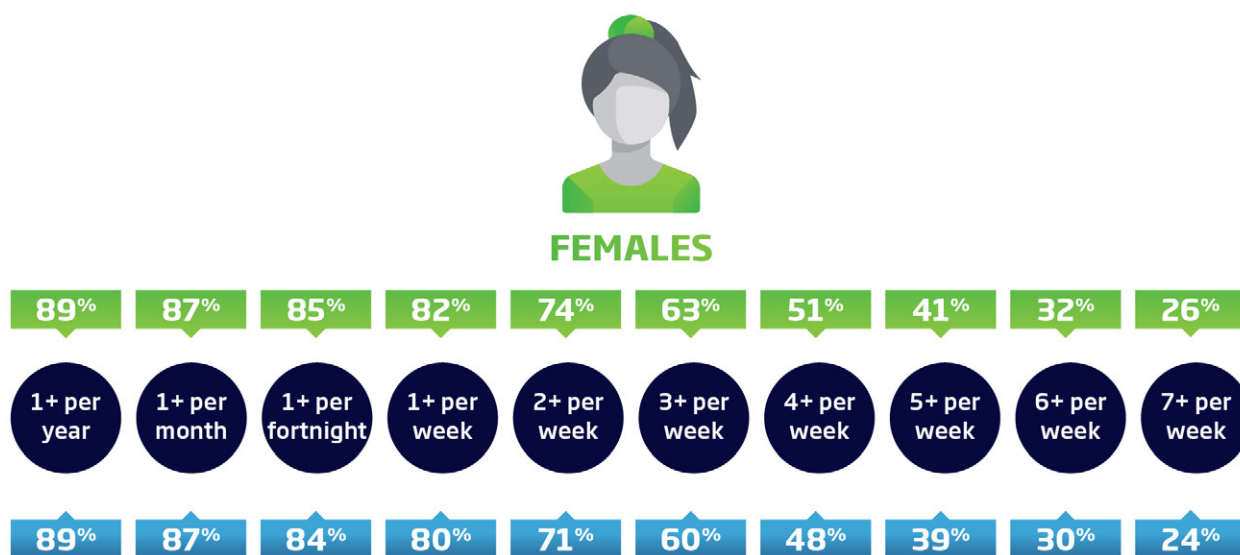
*At least once per year

So, are women less active?

Frequency

Women are just as active and participate as frequently as men overall.

Participation frequency by gender (Adults 15+)



Average
Participation
per week

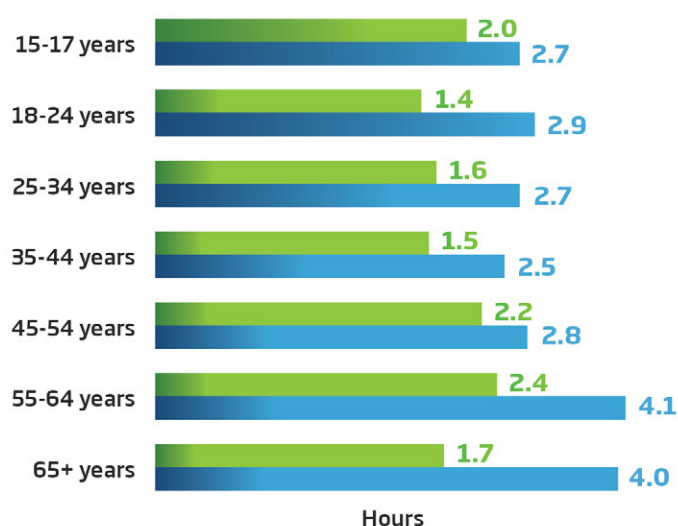
So, are women less active?

Duration

The main difference lies in the fact that women's active sessions tend to be much shorter on average.

This could be linked to the types of activities they most participate in (e.g. fitness classes, walking) and is a reflection of their lack of time for activities especially during the most busy periods of parenthood.

Average duration (in hours) of last session by gender



Non-sport-related physical activities tend to be less intensive than sport-related activities. Women could benefit from more targeted sport products, given the more intensive and longer nature of sport-related physical activity.

What sports/activities are women (15+) playing?

A large majority of women are active in Endurance/Health or Fitness activities, such as walking, fitness/gym, swimming, running/jogging, cycling, yoga, bush walking or pilates.

Top 10 activities for women (15+)*

By population numbers and percentages

■ SPORT ■ NON-SPORT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



53.6%

Walking
(recreational)

Population estimate
5,405,226



36.8%
**Fitness/
Gym**

Population estimate
3,714,331



17.0%

Swimming

Population estimate
1,719,598



13.7%

Running
(incl. athletics)

Population estimate
1,378,585



8.5%

Cycling

Population estimate
855,231



7.6%

Yoga

Population estimate
766,241



6.4%

Bush Walking

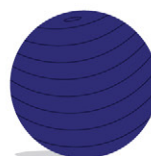
Population estimate
644,906



5.5%

Netball

Population estimate
553,687



5.0%

Pilates

Population estimate
505,410



3.9%

Tennis

Population estimate
395,757

*At least once per year

Meeting the physical activity guidelines (15+)

Frequency, duration and intensity

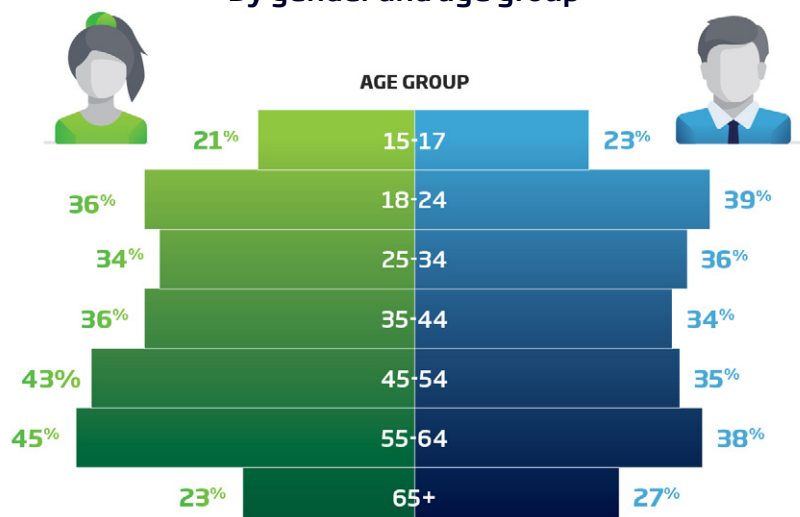
What are the physical activity guidelines?*

AGE GROUPS	FREQUENCY AND DURATION	INTENSITY REQUIREMENTS
15-17 years	60 minutes+ every day (at least 7 times a week on average was used for our calculations)	moderate to vigorous intensity
18-64 years	Accumulate 150 to 300 minutes (2 ½ to 5 hours) of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 to 150 minutes (1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours) of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both moderate and vigorous activities, each week. Be active on most, preferably all, days every week (at least 5 times a week on average was used for our calculations)	
65+ years	30 minutes+ every day (at least 7 times a week on average was used for our calculations)	moderate intensity recommended

*This is a simplified version of the Guidelines (focused on frequency, duration and intensity). It does not include guidelines for children aged 0 to 14, or guidelines revolving around muscle and bone strengthening activities. The detailed Guidelines can be found at: health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines

Who is meeting the guidelines?

By gender and age group



Direct comparisons between age-groups must be made with the knowledge that the Guidelines are different for different age-groups.

Meeting the physical activity guidelines (Adults 15+)

Frequency, duration and intensity

How many Australian women 15+ are active enough according to the guidelines?



An estimated 13.1 million Australian adults overall did not meet the guidelines



Please note that meeting the guidelines (or not) is derived from AusPlay data using a number of assumptions and calculations:

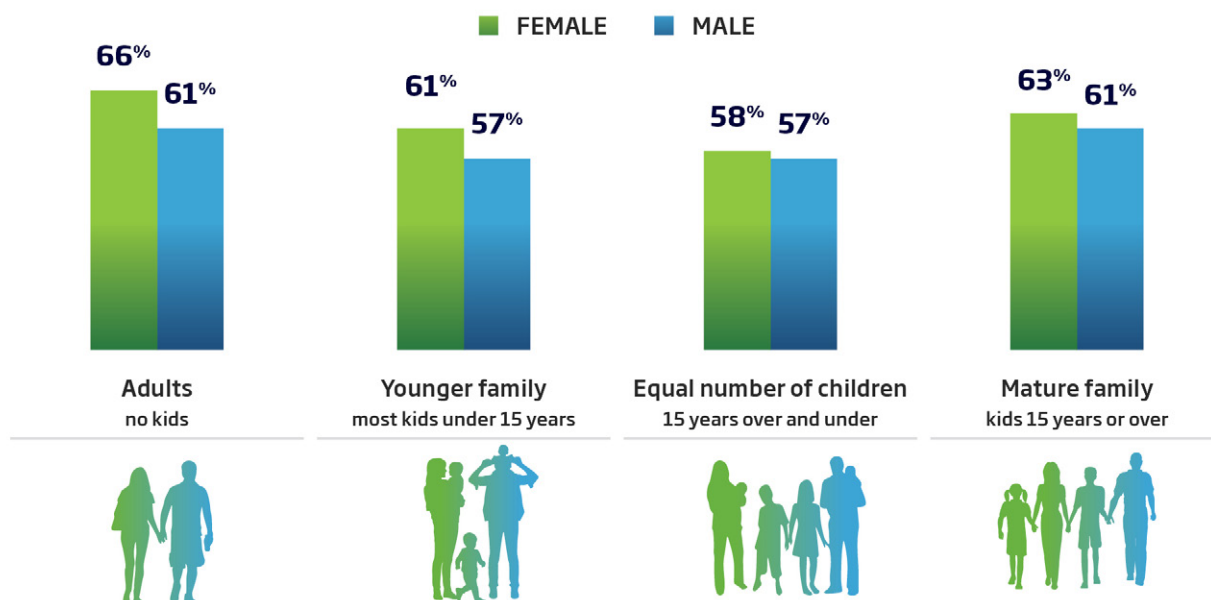
- AusPlay collects participation data for more than 380 activities, including frequency of participation in the activity and duration of the last session;
- The ASC has classified all activities by level of intensity (moderate or vigorous). For example, 'walking' was classified as a moderate activity while 'running/jogging' was classified as a vigorous activity;
- Total time participated in each intensity category can then be derived, converted into a weekly form and standardised for comparison (10 minutes of vigorous intensity is equal to 20 minutes of moderate intensity activity);
- Finally both moderate and vigorous intensity total derived times of physical activity are categorised according to the above simplified guidelines.

How parenthood affects activity levels

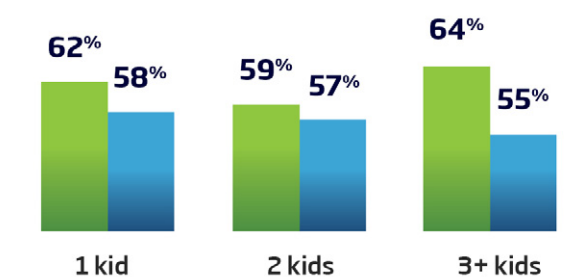
Having a child affects many parents' ability to lead an active lifestyle, particularly whilst their children are young. Perhaps surprisingly, the effect of parenthood on physical activity seems to be just as pronounced (if not more so) for men.

This may be because men are more likely to be involved in sport-related activities, and those activities tend to be of longer average duration.

How does parenthood affect activity levels? (participate at least 3 times per week)



Younger family breakdown

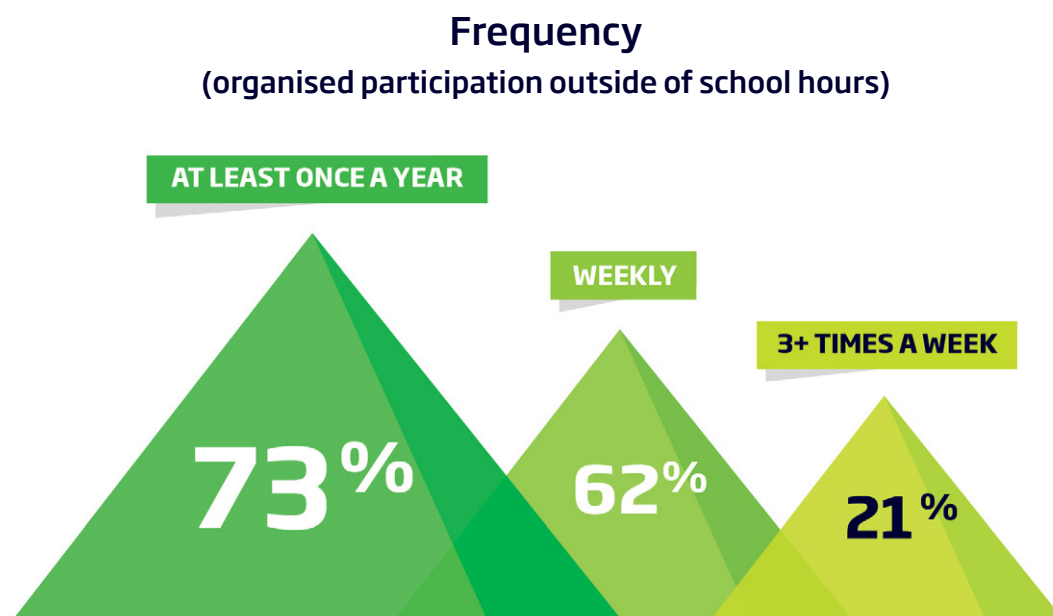


How can sports modify products for parents to alleviate this negative effect?
How can sports be provided in a more flexible format to allow time-poor parents to continue playing their sports?

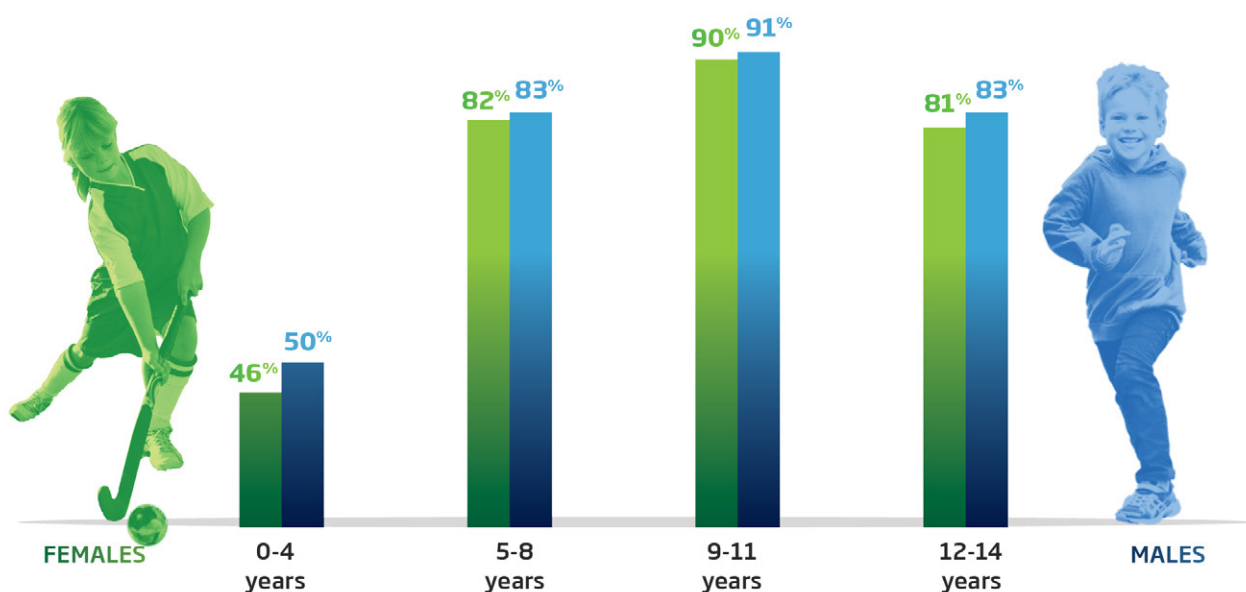


How active are Australian girls 0-14?

A Snapshot



Participation in organised sport and physical activity outside of school hours*

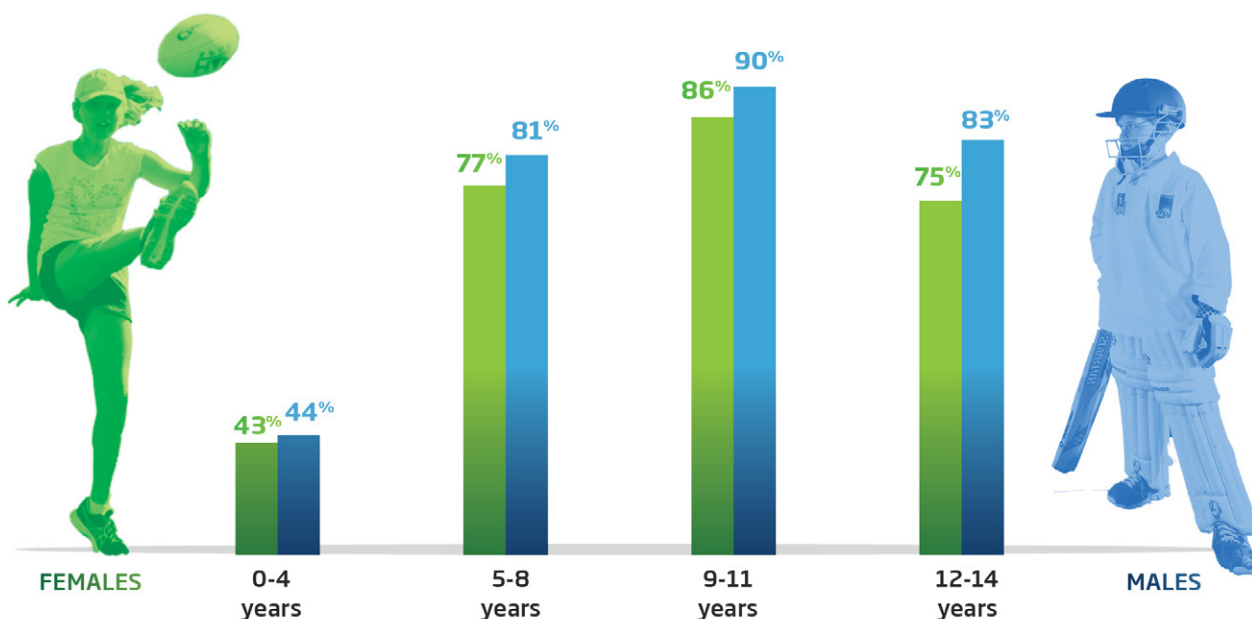


*At least once per year

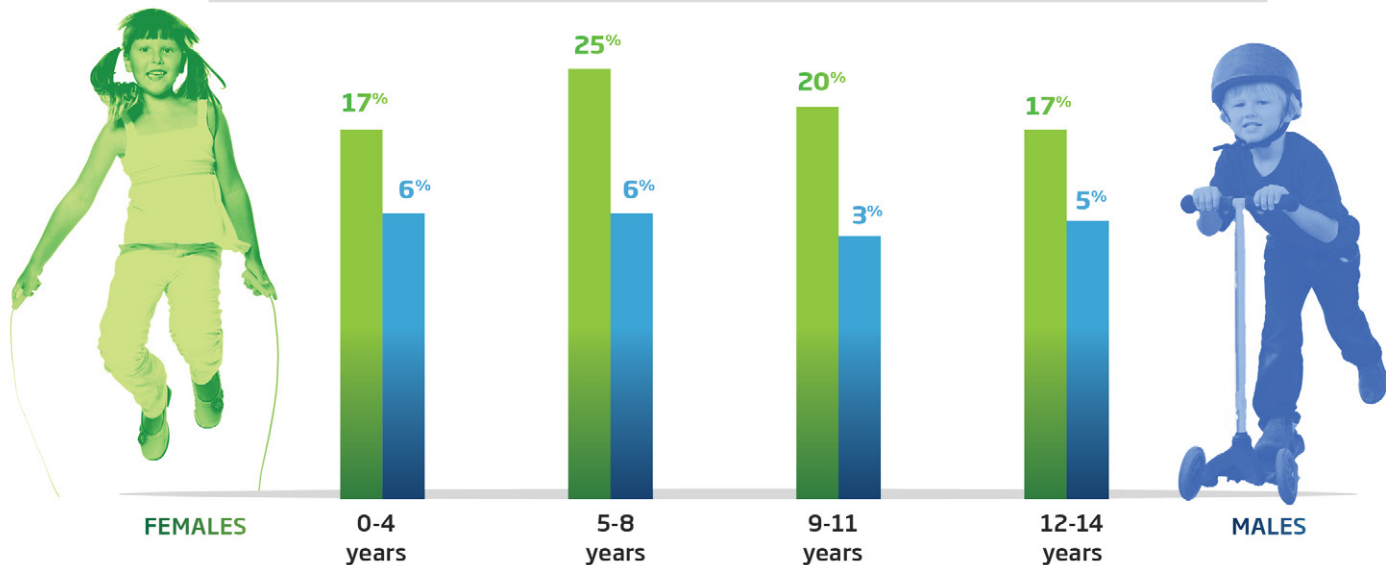
Are girls less active than boys?

The participation levels of girls and boys in sport-related activities are almost the same. However, as is the case with adult women, girls are much more likely to take part in non-sport-related physical activities.

Participation in organised out of school hours sport-related activities (sport)*



Participation in organised outside of school hours non-sport-related physical activities*



*At least once per year

What sports/activities are girls (0-14) playing?

Swimming is by far the most popular activity for girls. However, this is mostly learn to swim classes. Agility activities such as dancing and gymnastics are also very popular with girls.

Compared to women, girls are more likely to participate in sport-related activities including team sports such as netball, football and basketball.

Top 10 activities for girls (0-14)* By population numbers and percentages

■ SPORT

■ NON-SPORT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



35.0%

Swimming

Population estimate
795,778



15.4%

Dancing
(recreational)

Population estimate
350,858



14.0%

Netball

Population estimate
318,967



12.1%

Gymnastics

Population estimate
275,492



6.4%

Football

Population estimate
146,061



5.7%

Running
(incl. athletics)

Population estimate
128,651



5.3%

Basketball

Population estimate
119,301



4.9%

Tennis

Population estimate
111,738



4.7%

Dance Sport

Population estimate
106,814



2.6%


























Australian Football

Population estimate
59,899

*At least once per year

Different activities for different life stages

Top 5 activities (by age group and gender)*

AGE GROUP	FEMALES	MALES	
0-4 years	 Swimming 36.9%  Dancing (recreational) 12.7%  Gymnastics 6.5%  Dance sport 2.3%  Running (incl. athletics) 2.0%	 Swimming 34.2%  Football/soccer 9.6%  Gymnastics 5.1%  Fitness/gym 2.0%  Running (incl. athletics) 2.0%	Swimming (learn to swim) is the dominant activity for very young children. Girls of this age are also participating in other activities such as gymnastics and dancing.
5-8 years	 Swimming 46.1%  Gymnastics 21.0%  Dancing (recreational) 20.9%  Netball 8.9%  Running (incl. athletics) 8.6%	 Swimming 39.5%  Football/soccer 26.2%  Australian Football 19.5%  Cricket 10.7%  Rugby League 8.6%	Girls 5-8 years old are still learning how to swim, and doing agility activities, but other sport-related activities like netball or tennis are starting to feature.
9-11 years	 Swimming 34.3%  Netball 26.7%  Dancing (recreational) 17.0%  Gymnastics 14.0%  Tennis 9.1%	 Swimming 32.0%  Football/soccer 31.4%  Cricket 20.2%  Australian Football 19.6%  Tennis 13.4%	The peak of participation for girls is when they are 9-11 years old, with the variety of activities expanding to other team sports such as basketball, hockey, and cricket.


* At least once per year

69% of parents of non-participating children aged 0 to 8 tell us that the reason their children are not participating in any activity is because they are too young.

Is this an opportunity to create more products adapted to these younger age groups?

Different activities for different life stages

Top 5 activities (by age group and gender)*

AGE GROUP	FEMALES	MALES	
12-14 years	 Netball 33.4%  Swimming 16.4%  Football/soccer 12.7%  Basketball 12.1%  Dancing (recreational) 11.0%	 Football/soccer 29.7%  Australian Football 19.1%  Basketball 16.1%  Cricket 15.6%  Swimming 12.9%	<p>In high school, swimming loses its dominant position, albeit less among girls than boys. Netball is the most participated in activity for girls at this point by far. Fitness/gym makes its first appearance (although not in the top 5 activities).</p>
15-17 years	 Netball 28.1%  Running (incl. athletics) 25.5%  Fitness/gym 22.9%  Swimming 18.4%  Football/soccer 15.8%	 Football/soccer 28.6%  Fitness/gym 20.9%  Australian Football 19.7%  Basketball 18.9%  Running (incl. athletics) 17.6%	<p>In the mid to late teens, fitness/gym starts to become a dominant activity for girls. Team sports such as netball, football, basketball still enjoy high uptake, but endurance/health activities such as running/jogging, walking, bush walking are starting to gain much greater importance.</p>
18-24 years	 Fitness/gym 42.0%  Walking (recreational) 32.9%  Running (incl. athletics) 20.9%  Netball 16.0%  Swimming 14.7%	 Fitness/gym 39.1%  Running (incl. athletics) 19.6%  Football/soccer 17.9%  Basketball 12.2%  Walking (recreational) 12.0%	<p>By early adulthood, team sport participation has been drastically reduced. It's mostly about health/endurance activities and fitness through gym memberships, yoga and pilates.</p>

*At least once per year

Different activities for different life stages

25-34, 35-44 and 45-54*

By this stage, women seldom participate in team sports.



55+*

More than 2/3rd of women at this stage are walking recreationally.



*At least once per year

In summary



WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE **AS ACTIVE AS** MEN AND BOYS...

... both in overall participation and frequency of participation.



The types of activities that women undertake are, on average, slightly less intense and shorter in duration than men.

Any form of physical activity is good

- messages on encouraging women's participation could focus on investing a bit more time or to consider a wider range of activity options that suit their exercise needs.

In summary



AusPlay data indicates that overall...

GIRLS ARE ALMOST AS LIKELY AS BOYS TO PLAY SPORT.

However when they grow up, women are less likely to participate in sport than men.

Governments and the sport sector need to continue the **positive and empowering messages** to girls that they are capable of doing any activities or sports that boys can¹.

It is important that sports understand the reasons why women are less active in sport and modify their products to better cater to this important audience.

¹Australian Government Department of Health's evaluation of the 2017 'Girls Make Your Move' Campaign, GfK Research Report, 17 August 2017.



In summary



The key motivations for women to be active are...

PHYSICAL HEALTH, FUN AND SOCIALISING.



Aside from young women participating in netball, women generally have low participation rates in team sports.

If team sports want to encourage more women participating, they need to review how they offer a quality experience that better meets women's needs and create opportunities for women to exercise with friends in a fun environment. The social benefits of sport and physical activity are increasingly resonating.

Results from the Australian Government Department of Health's evaluation of the 2017 **'Girls Make Your Move' Campaign**¹

recommend that a focus on the 'how' and the **'why'** will be important for helping motivate young adult women (where the exodus from sport and team sports happens) who want to keep or increase their activity levels in the face of other growing priorities and interests. To counter strong motivational barriers, the 'why' needs to be expressed in terms which resonate at a more personal level to boost relevance and reduce 'distancing' of themselves from the message. Given they are not always keen to try new things, their 'how' messages should focus on activities they already know but which may have been re-invented with new formats.

¹Australian Government Department of Health's evaluation of the 2017 'Girls Make Your Move' Campaign, GfK Research Report, 17 August 2017.

About AusPlay

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) aims to make Australian sport stronger.

The AusPlay survey (AusPlay) is a key pillar of the ASC's game plan to get more Australians participating in organised sport more often.

The ASC is helping sports to thrive in a rapidly changing environment. This starts with research and insights into participation trends.

AusPlay is a national population tracking survey funded and led by the ASC. It provides the sport sector with accurate and reliable information on Australia's participation trends in sport and physical activity. AusPlay is an independent research project at the population level which measures all types of activities in a consistent and comparable way.

The three main objectives of AusPlay are to:

- Provide insights to help sports grow participation and track trends.
- Provide data that informs government investment, policy and program delivery.
- Identify and describe links between sport participation and other influential factors.

More information about AusPlay, including the methodology summary, survey questions, key terms and definitions, national tables etc., can be accessed via the **ASC's Sport Market Insights** on the Clearinghouse for Sport website with direct access through researchinsport.com.au. Please use your Clearinghouse for Sport login for full access.



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

Any further questions about AusPlay
(or queries for additional customised reporting/
further analysis of the dataset) can be directed
to Sport Market Insights at the ASC via:

AusPlay@ausport.gov.au