



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# PARTICIPATION IN ATHLETICS BY AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN 2003 – 2012

Report prepared by the Australian Sports Commission



# Participation Data for Australian Children 5-14 Year Olds

This report presents data from the *Children's Participation in Cultural & Leisure Activities Survey (CPCLAS)* which was administered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2012.

The **CPCLAS** collected information about participation in *organised sport outside of school hours* for Australian 5-14 year olds as recalled by their parents.

More details on the **CPCLAS** can be found via ABS cat. no. 4901.0 or the following link:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4901.0Main+Features1Apr%202012?OpenDocument>

This report has been prepared by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and includes some data that has not been presented in previous ABS **CPCLAS** publications. The ASC purchased custom data for select sports through the ABS Sports Unit.

# The Children's Participation in Cultural & Leisure Activities Survey

The *Children's Participation in Cultural & Leisure Activities Survey* asked parents:

*Which sports has [Child name] played or trained for outside of school hours since this time last year?*

In each year the survey was administered, a number of parents responded:

*Athletics\**

\* In this report athletics refers to track and field athletics. In 2012, the ABS included running for athletics in the track and field athletics category. In previous years track and field athletics was not explicitly defined by the ABS, but running was likely to be included in this category.

# Explanatory notes for interpreting the Children's Participation Data

Data from the **CPCLAS** should not be directly compared with results from other sport participation surveys, such as the **Exercise Recreation And Sport Survey (ERASS)** or the **ABS adult sport participation surveys**, without considering the difference in methodology, scope and years.

It should be noted that the **CPCLAS** data:

- Is based upon a different data collection process to the ERASS adults' data
- Is not collected in the same years as the ERASS and ABS adults' data
- Reflects parent responses, while the ERASS and ABS adults' data reflects participant responses
- Reflects participation outside of school hours only, while the ERASS and ABS adults' data also included measures of total participation
- Reflects organised participation only, while information on non-organised participation data was also collected for the ERASS and ABS adults
- Reports different participation frequency categories to the ERASS adults data (e.g. Regular participation for the children's data is defined as 27 times or more a year, while for the adults data is defined as 26 times or more a year)

# How to interpret the Children's Participation Data

Some of the data in this report has not been publically released by the ABS. The ASC sourced custom data tables from the ABS containing information relevant for sports. Please note that the ASC did not have access to the raw data. As the ABS reported the total survey sample size (sample size in 2003 = 8,900; sample size in 2006 = 8,682; sample size in 2009 = 5,825; sample size in 2012 = 7,300), it was possible to compare the proportion of Australian children participating in a sport across the four time periods with significance testing. The ABS, however, did not report the sample sizes for the demographic (e.g. age or gender) categories, so it was not possible to conduct significance tests on demographic subgroups. As such, the interpretation of data relating to the demographic subgroups in this report is indicative only.

The ABS does not publically release data with high Relative Standard Errors (RSEs). It is important to note that some of the athletics data was associated with high (25% – 50%) RSEs and therefore should be interpreted with caution. In this report labels for data points have not been included on charts with estimates associated with high RSEs. For further information\* related to RSEs associated with the data please refer to ABS cat. no. 4901.0.

Please note that scales may differ between charts.

Australian children's population (5–14 year olds) by year from ABS population estimates:

2003: 2,647,500	2006: 2,664,700
2009: 2,722,500	2012: 2,786,100

Participation frequency definitions:

- Annual defined as participating in a given sport at least once a year
- Regular defined as participating in a given sport at least 27 times a year
- Non-regular defined as participating in a given sport at least once but less than 27 times a year

\*<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/4901.0Technical%20Note1Apr%202012?opendocument&tabname=Notes&prodno=4901.0&issue=Apr%202012&num=&view=>

# Summary of Trends

# Summary of General Trends in Children's Participation Among 21 Selected Sports

Between 2003 and 2012 there was a significant increase in children's organised participation in the following sports:

- *Gymnastics* and *rugby union* had a significant increase in annual, regular and non-regular participation rates.
- *Rugby union* had a significant increase in annual and non-regular participation rates.
- *Touch football* and *football* had a significant increase in the non-regular participation rate.

Between 2003 and 2012 there was a significant decrease in children's organised participation in the following sports:

- *Hockey* had a significant decrease in annual, regular and non-regular participation rates.
- *Netball*, *tennis* and *softball* had a significant decrease in annual and regular participation rates.
- *Athletics* had a significant decrease in the annual participation rate.
- *Cricket*, *touch football* and *golf* had a significant decrease in the regular participation rate.

For information on general trends in children's organised participation across sports please refer to the following ABS reports:

1. [http://www.ausport.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/276914/ABS - Childrens participation in organised - 2003 - 2006.pdf](http://www.ausport.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/276914/ABS_-_Childrens_participation_in_organised_-_2003_-_2006.pdf)
2. [http://www.ausport.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/197829/childrens participation in organised sport 2003 2006 survey multi-variate analysis.pdf](http://www.ausport.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/197829/childrens_participation_in_organised_sport_2003_2006_survey_multi-variate_analysis.pdf)

# Summary of General Trends in Children's Athletics Participation

## Organised athletics participation

Between 2003 and 2012:

- The ABS estimation of the number of children annually participating in organised athletics varied around 78,000 (in 2006) and 100,000 (in 2003).
- The ABS estimation of the percentage of Australian children annually participating in organised athletics varied between 2.9% (in 2006) and 3.8% (in 2003).
- There was a statistically significant decrease in the annual participation rate for children's organised athletics.

## Comparison of regular v. non-regular organised athletics participation

Across all four time periods, the non-regular participation rate for organised children's athletics was statistically significantly higher than the regular participation rate.

## Demographic analysis of organised athletics participation

The annual organised athletics participation rates for boys and girls followed a similar pattern over the years.

Between 2006 and 2012 the ABS estimated that about two in five annual organised athletics participants were 5-8 years old.



# Organised\* Participation in Athletics^

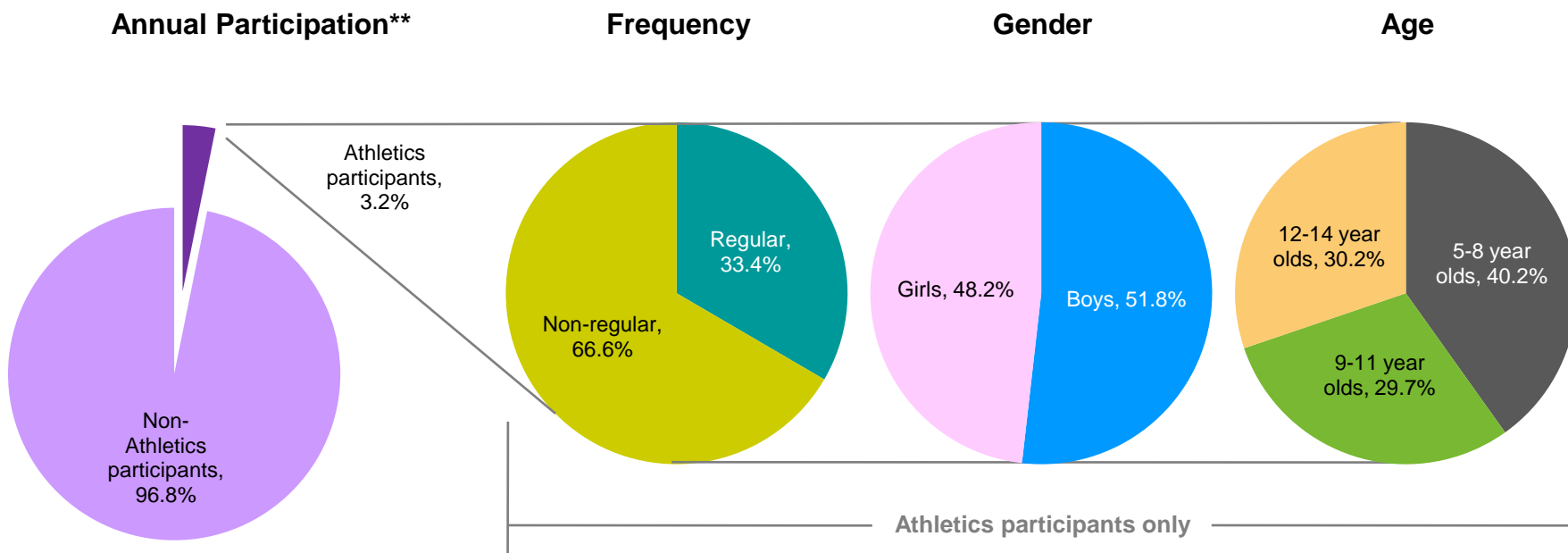
\* The CPCLAS refers to "organised sport" as a sport which is played or trained for outside of school hours and is organised by a school, club or association

^ Includes track and field athletics. In 2012, running for athletics was included in the track and field athletics category. In previous years track and field athletics was not explicitly defined, but running was likely to be included in this category.

# Current Participation Status (2012)

## Interpretive Notes

- 3.2% of the Australian children's population participated in organised athletics at least once in 2012.
- There was a statistically significantly higher proportion of children participating non-regularly in organised athletics (66.6%) than regularly (33.4%).
- A similar proportion of girls and boys participated annually in organised athletics\*.
- Two in five children participating annually in organised athletics were aged 5-8 years (40.2%)\*.

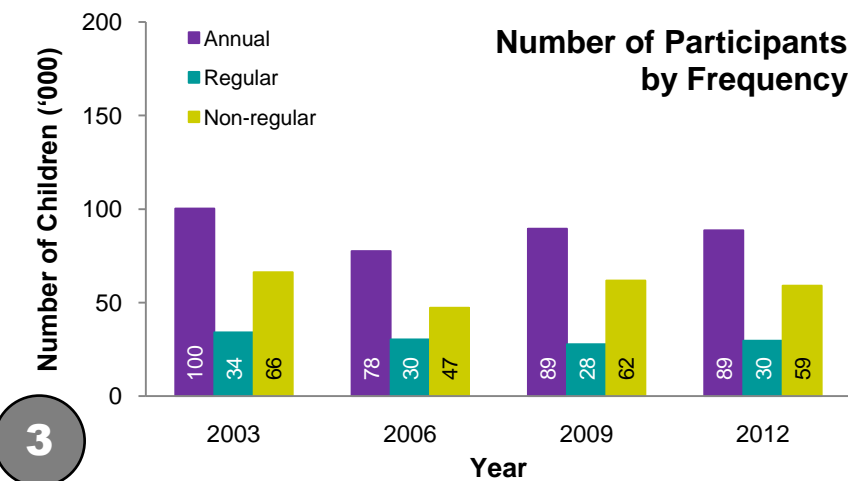
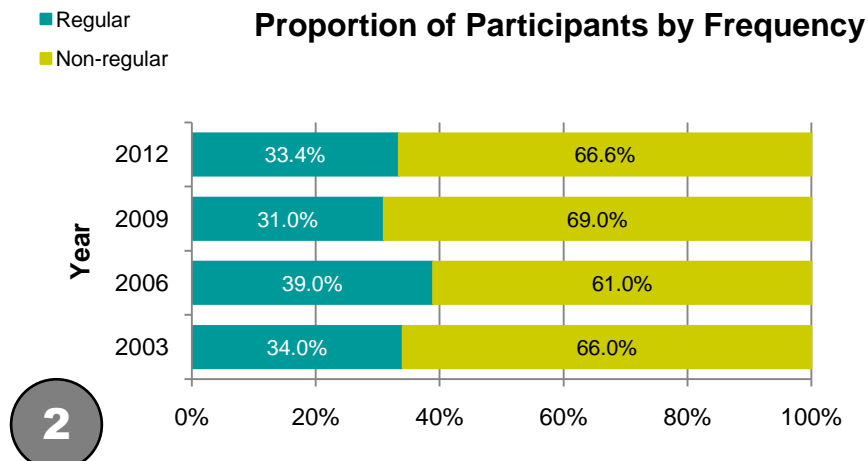
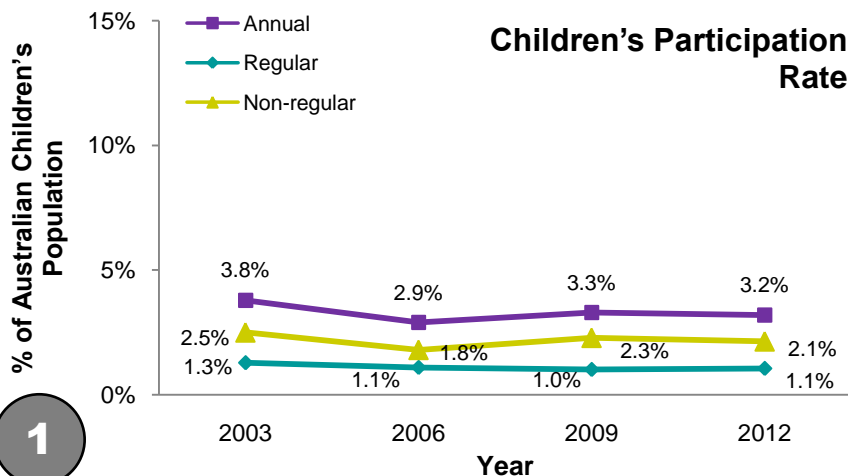


\*As the ABS did not report the survey sample sizes for the demographic (e.g. age or gender) categories it was not possible to conduct a significance test on the demographic subgroups

\*\*Based on the 2012 ABS population estimate for Australian 5-14 year olds

A one sample Difference in Proportions T-Test at 95% confidence level was used to compare regular and non-regular participation rates

# 2003 – 2012 Participation by Frequency



## Interpretive Notes

Between 2003 and 2012, the ABS estimation of the number of children annually participating in organised athletics varied around 78,000 (in 2006) and 100,000 (in 2003).

Between 2003 and 2012, the ABS estimation of the percentage of Australian children annually participating in organised athletics varied between 2.9% (in 2006) and 3.8% (in 2003).

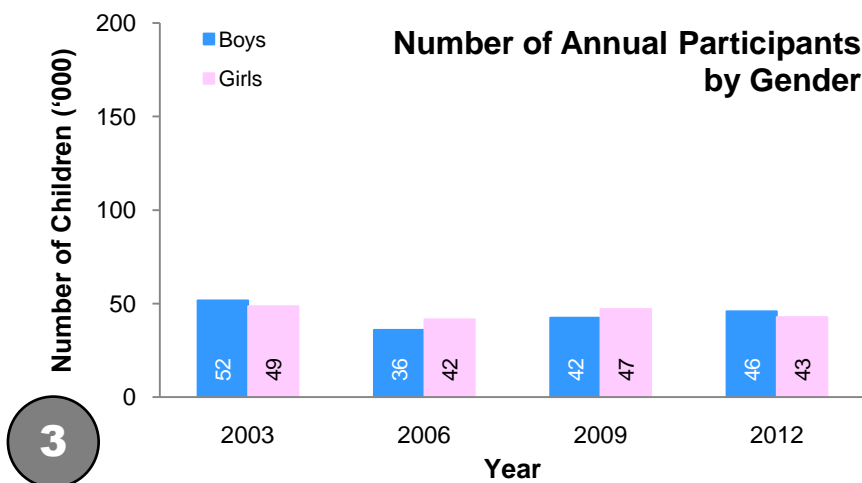
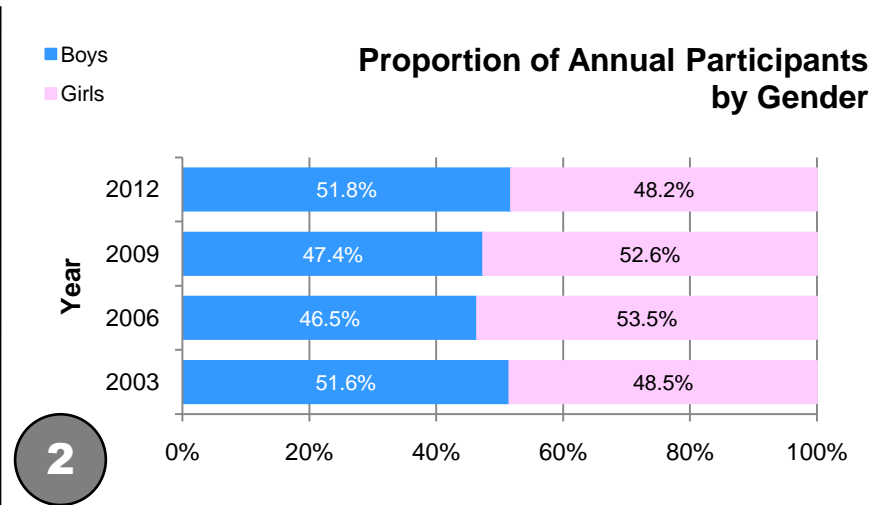
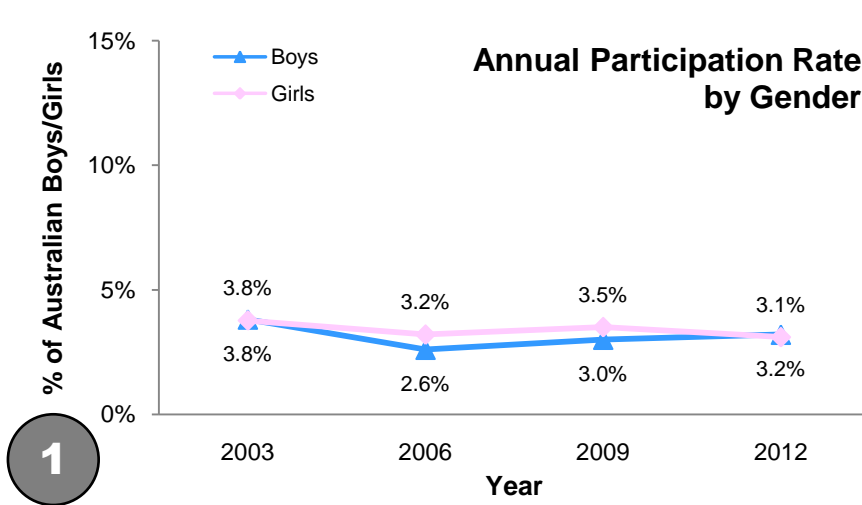
Between 2003 and 2012, there was a statistically significant decrease in the annual participation rate for children's organised athletics.

Across all four time periods, the non-regular participation rate for organised children's athletics was statistically significantly higher than the regular participation rate.

**Note:** A two sample Difference in Proportions T-Test at 95% confidence level was used to compare the percentage of Australian 5-14 year olds participating across the four time periods. A one sample Difference in Proportions T-Test at 95% confidence level was used to compare regular and non-regular participation rates.

# **Annual Participation Demographic Analysis**

# Annual Participation by Gender

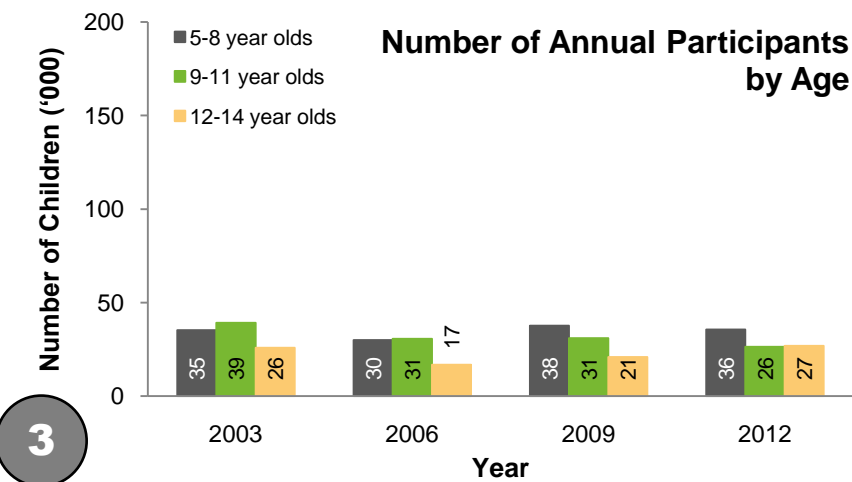
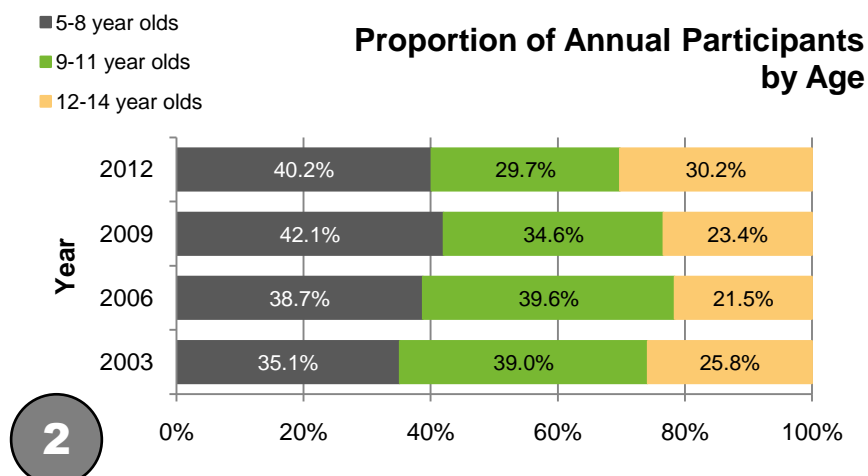
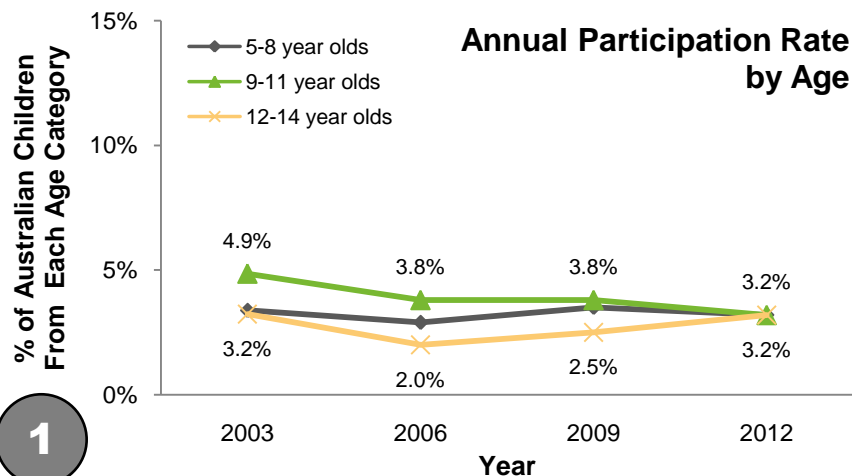


## Interpretive Notes

The data presented on this slide appears to indicate the following:

- The boys and girls annual participation rates for organised athletics followed a similar pattern over the years.
- The proportion of girls to boys involved in organised athletics was similar over the years with there being an approximately even split between each gender.

# Annual Participation by Age



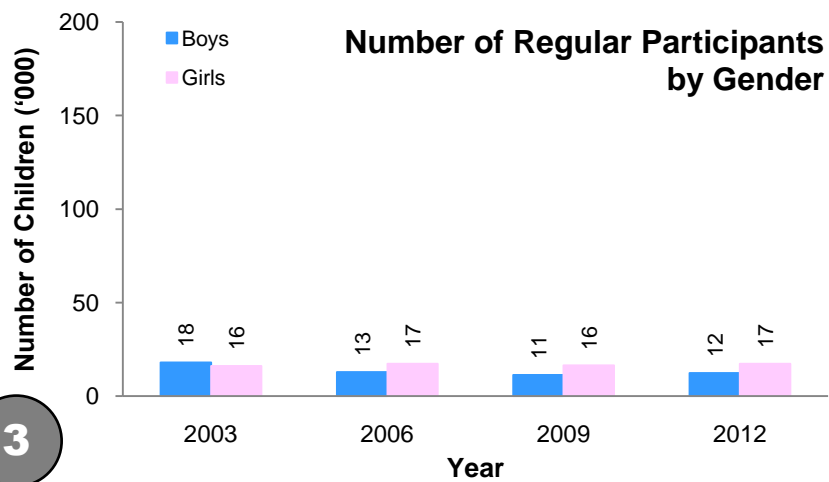
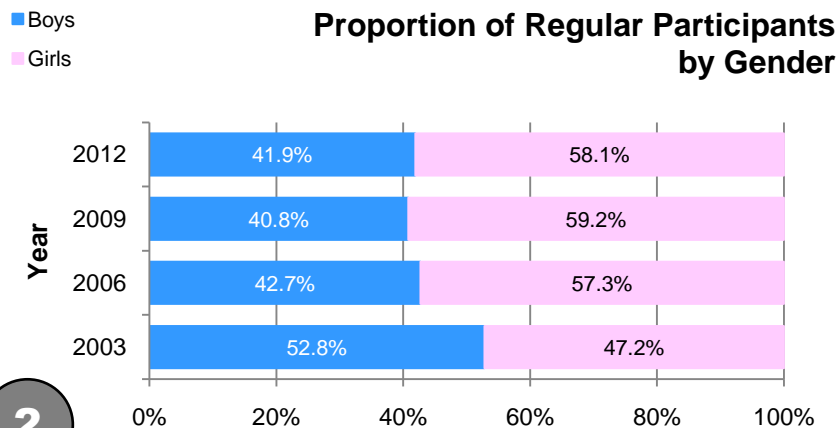
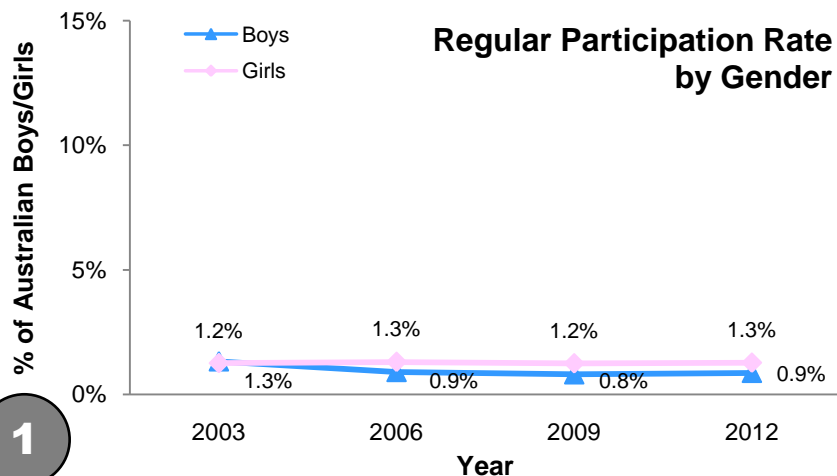
## Interpretive Notes

The data presented on this slide appears to indicate the following:

- Between 2006 and 2012 the ABS estimated that about two in five children participating annually in organised athletics were 5-8 years old.
- From 2003 to 2009 the annual organised athletics participation rate for 9-11 year olds was higher than the annual participation rates for 5-8 and 12-14 year olds. However, in 2012 the participation rate for each of the age groups had a similar annual participation rate.
- There is some evidence of a decline in the annual participation rate for 9-11 year olds. It was not possible, however, to statistically examine this claim with the data provided to the ASC by the ABS.

# **Regular Participation Demographic Analysis**

# Regular Participation by Gender



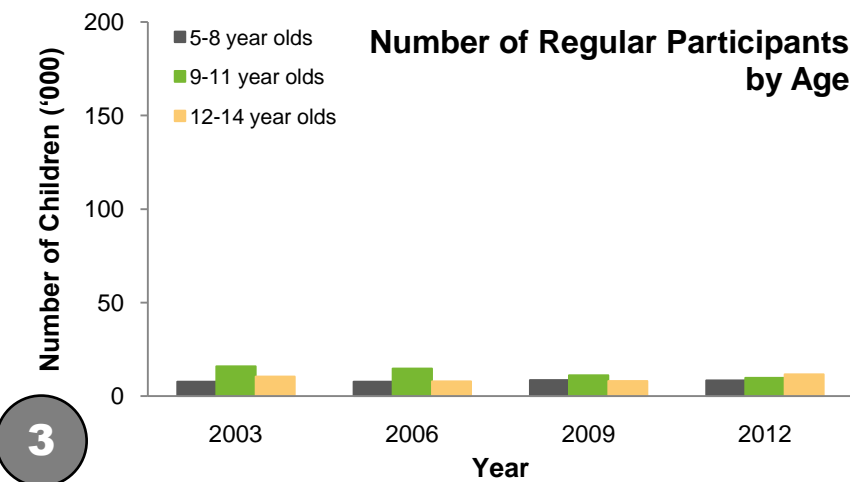
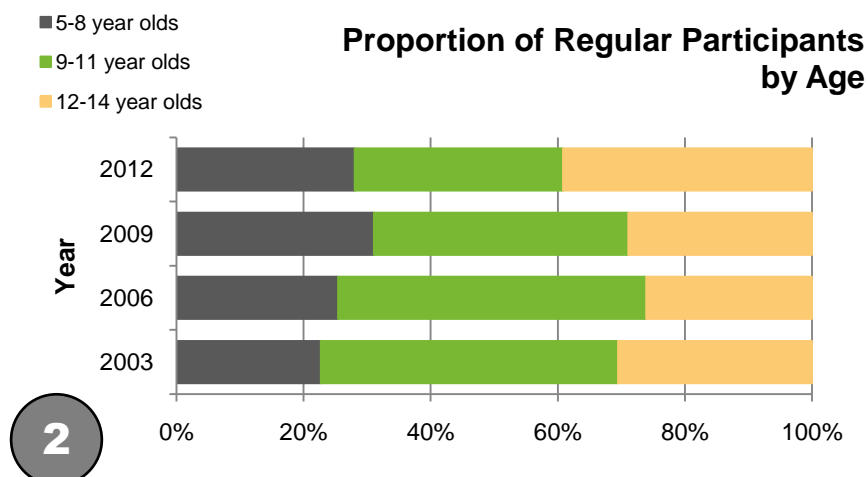
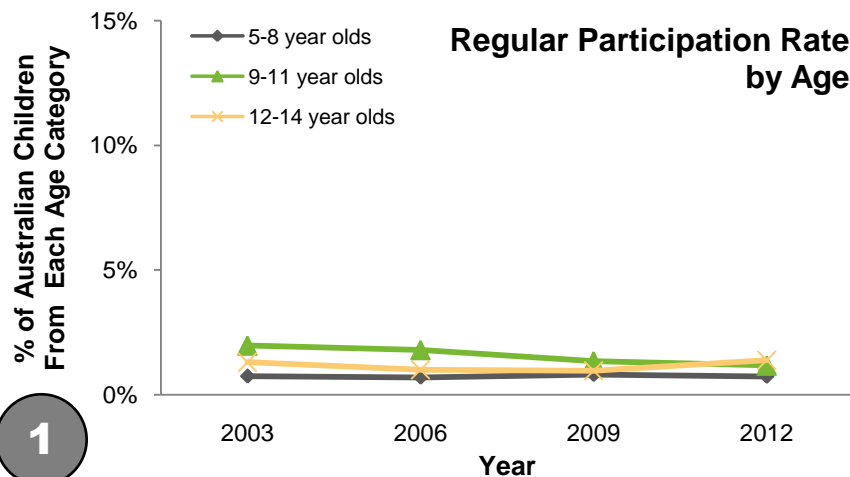
## Interpretive Notes

The data presented on this slide appears to indicate the following:

- Over the years, the regular organised athletics participation rate for boys and girls was similar.
- Apart from in 2003, the ABS estimated that more girls than boys participated regularly in organised athletics. Due to gender RSEs being in the range of 16%-21% for regular organised athletics participation, these fluctuations should be treated with caution.



# Regular Participation by Age



## Interpretive Notes

The age category regular participation estimates were associated with high RSEs (in the range of 25%-50%). Therefore, fluctuations across the four time periods and comparisons of the different age categories should be interpreted with caution.

# Sport Comparison

# Ranking of Selected Sports According to Annual Participation

2012 Ranking	SPORT	2003 Ranking	↑ ↓
1	Swimming	1	-
2	Football	2	-
3	Australian Football	6	↑ 3
4	Netball	3	↓ 1
5	Basketball	5	-
6	Tennis	4	↓ 2
7	Gymnastics	9	↑ 2
8	Cricket	7	↓ 1
9	Rugby League	10	↑ 1
10	Track and Field Athletics	8	↓ 2
11	Rugby Union	14	↑ 3

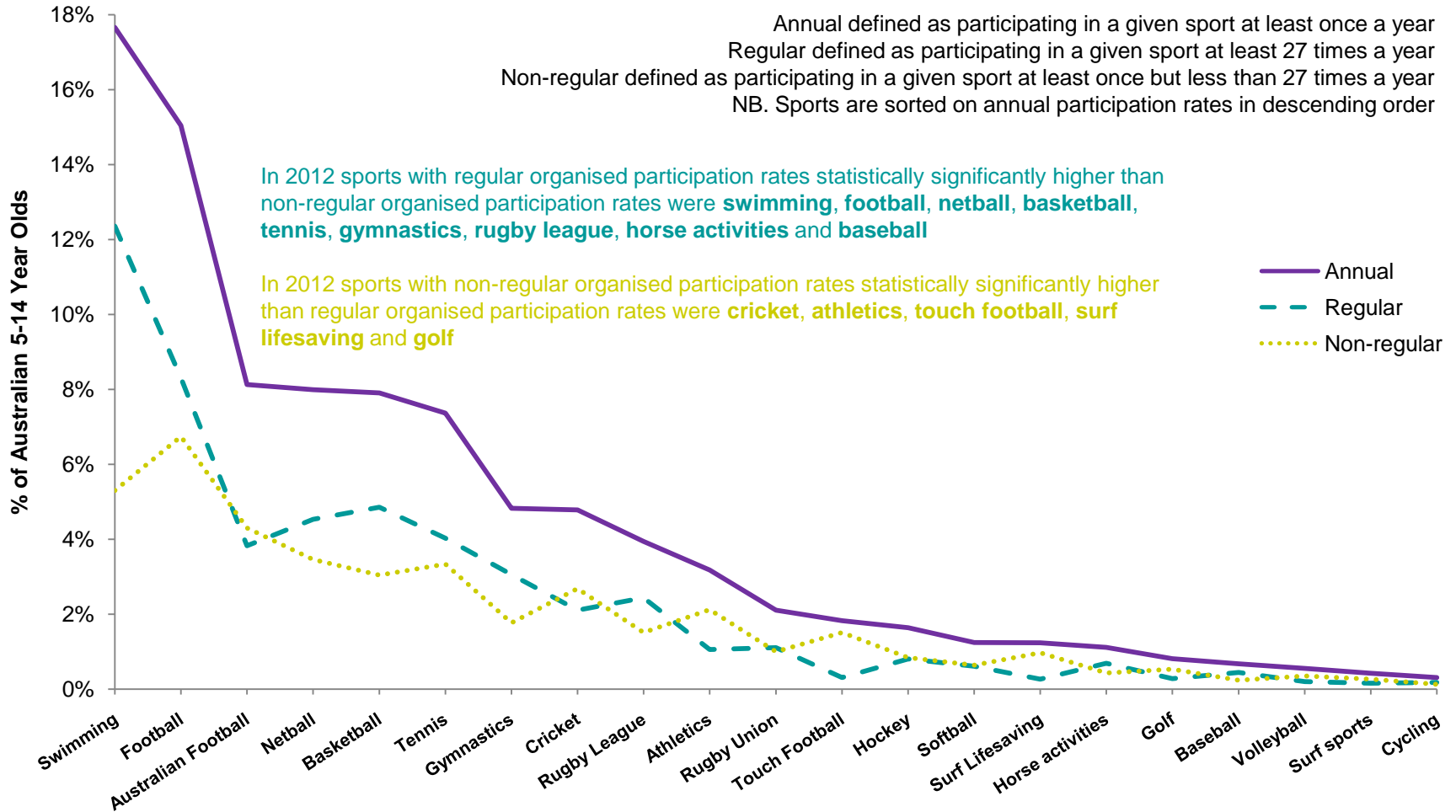
2012 Ranking	SPORT	2003 Ranking	↑ ↓
12	Touch Football	13	↑ 1
13	Hockey	11	↓ 2
14	Softball	12	↓ 2
15	Surf Lifesaving	16	↑ 1
16	Horse activities	15	↓ 1
17	Golf	17	-
18	Baseball	18	-
19	Volleyball	19	-
20	Surf sports	21	↑ 1
21	Cycling	20	↓ 1

The Table represents a ranking of 21 selected sports

Table sorted on 2012 rankings

#1 ranking = sport with the highest participation among the 21 selected sports

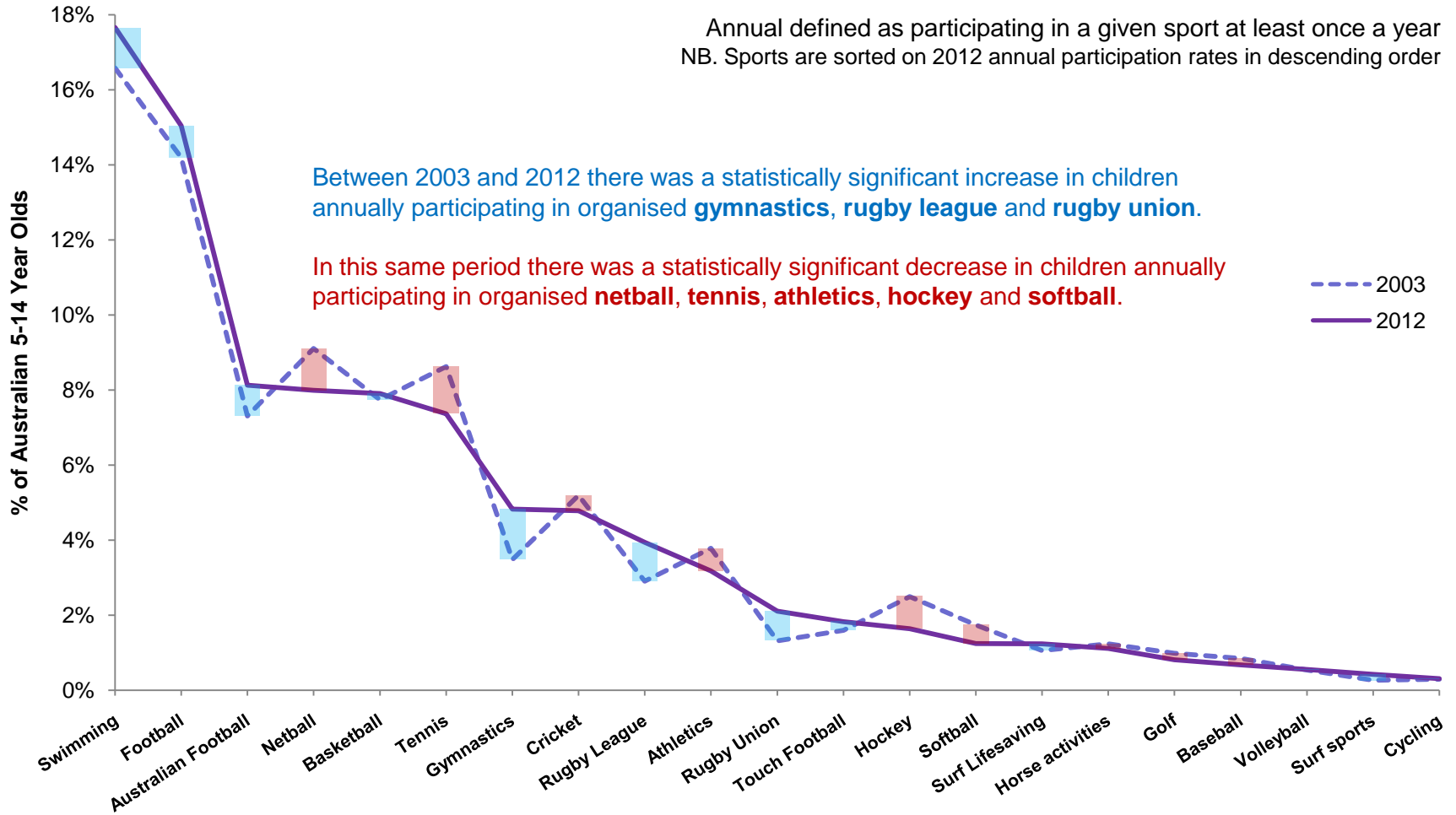
# 2012 Annual v. Regular v. Non-regular Participation Rates for Selected Sports



**Note:** A one sample Difference in Proportions T-Test at 95% confidence level was used to compare regular and non-regular participation rates.

# 2003 v. 2012 Annual Participation Rates for Selected Sports

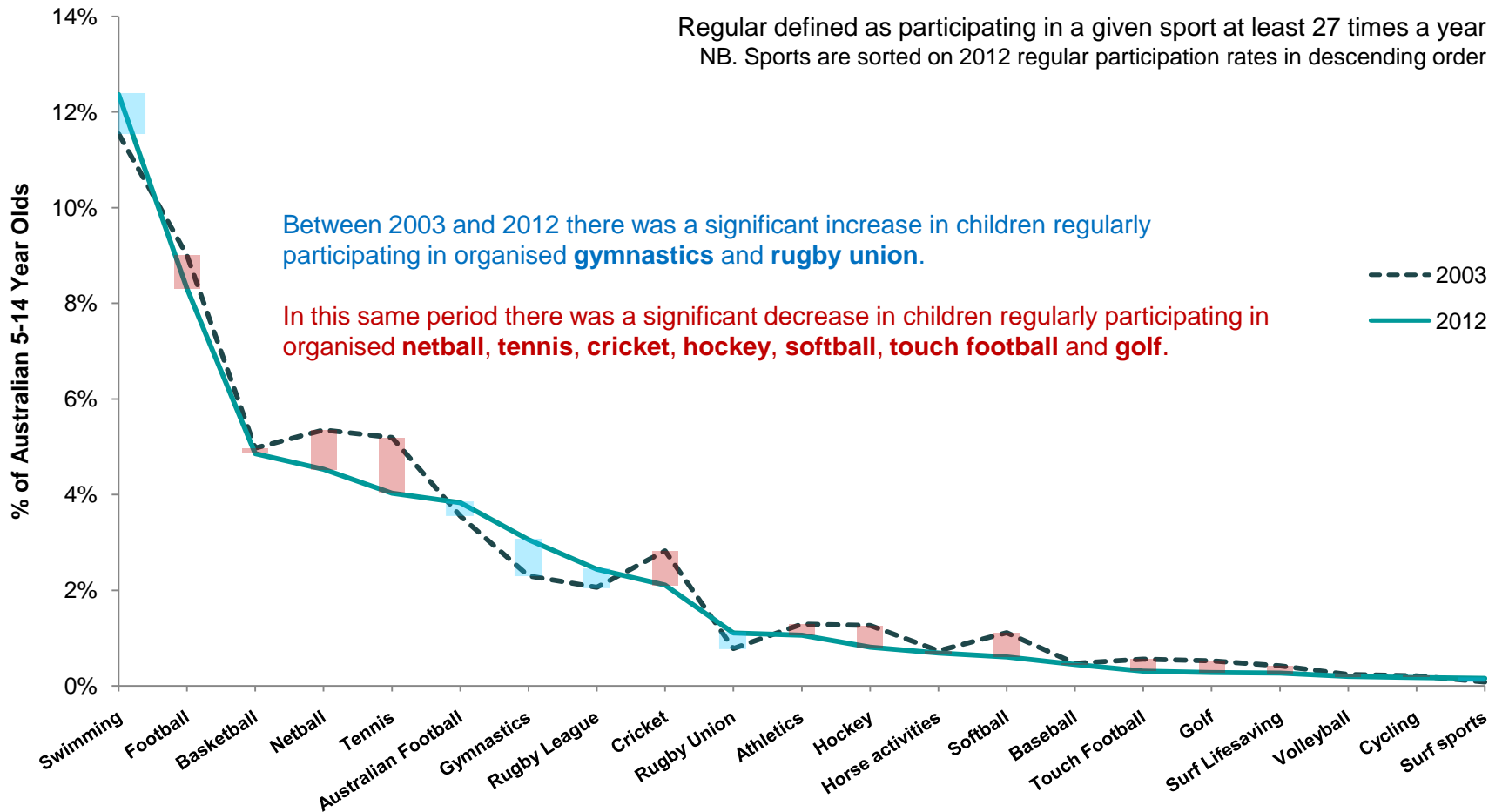
Annual defined as participating in a given sport at least once a year  
 NB. Sports are sorted on 2012 annual participation rates in descending order



Note: A two sample Difference in Proportions T-Tests at 95% confidence level was used to compare the percentage of Australian 5-14 year olds participating in 2003 and 2012.

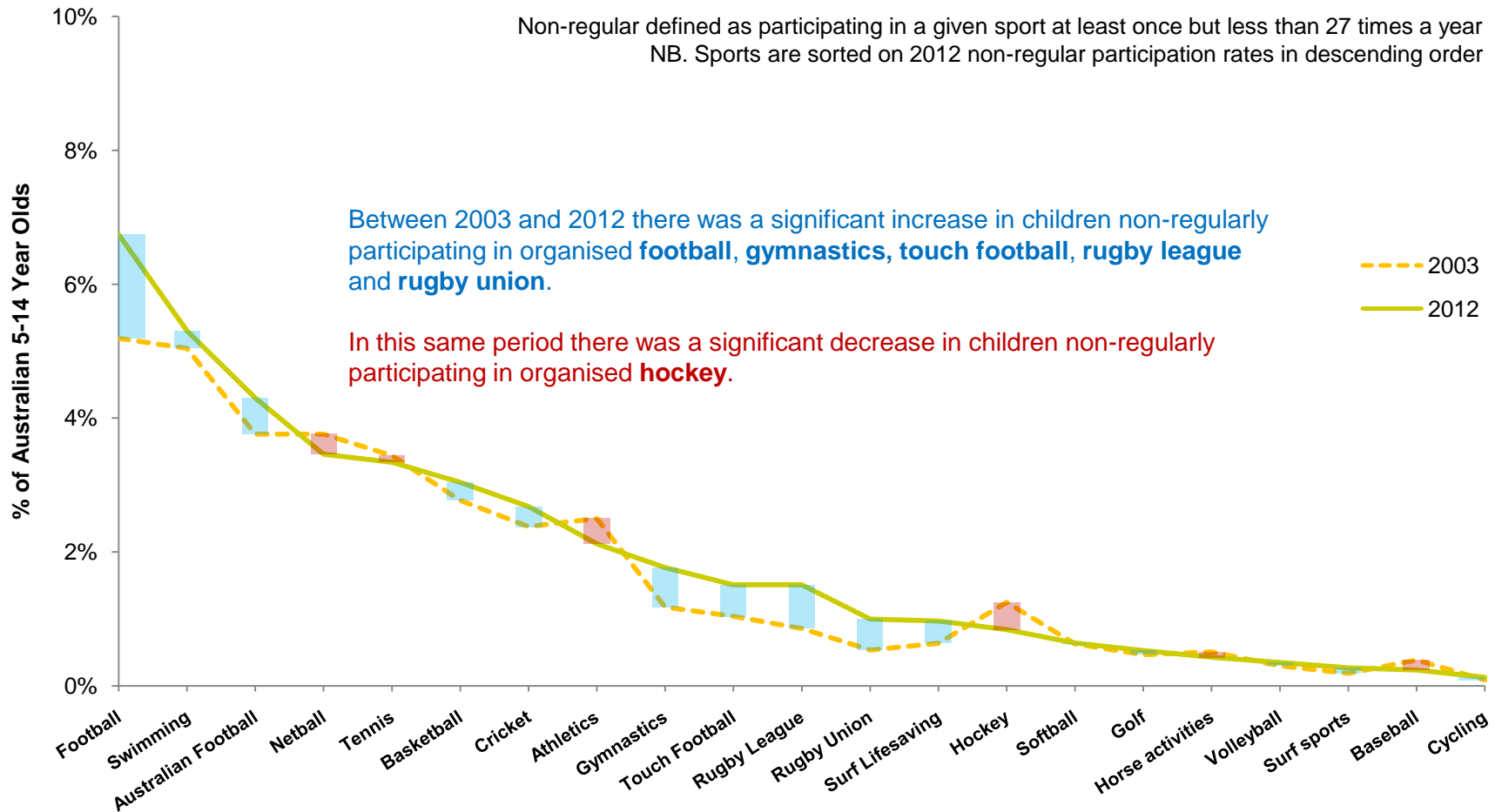
# 2003 v. 2012 Regular Participation Rates for Selected Sports

Regular defined as participating in a given sport at least 27 times a year  
 NB. Sports are sorted on 2012 regular participation rates in descending order



**Note:** A two sample Difference in Proportions T-Tests at 95% confidence level was used to compare the percentage of Australian 5-14 year olds participating in 2003 and 2012.

# 2003 v. 2012 Non-regular Participation Rates for Selected Sports



**Note:** A two sample Difference in Proportions T-Tests at 95% confidence level was used to compare the percentage of Australian 5-14 year olds participating in 2003 and 2012.