



PARTICIPATION ACROSS LIFE STAGES

Sport Australia is committed to helping sporting organisations deliver services that align to the needs of current and future participants. By building a strong knowledge base about their target audience, sports can design products and experiences that attract and retain more participants.

Use the life stage insights in this report to inform design of participation products and experiences.

This report uses AusPlay data from 2019.



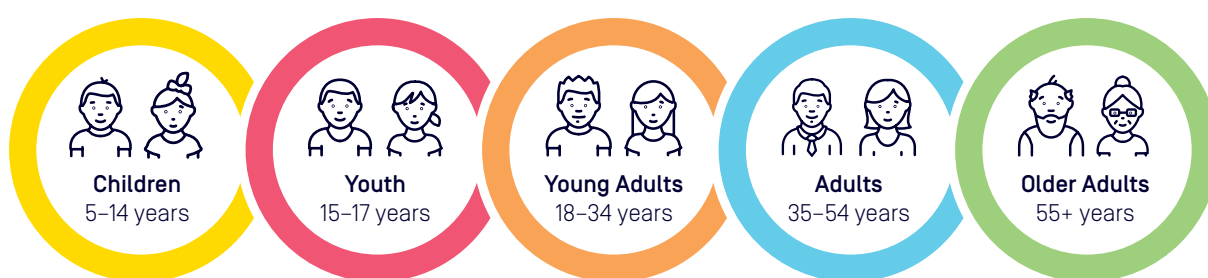
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A LIFE STAGE APPROACH

As we travel through life, our circumstances change and so do our physical activity habits.

Exploring each life stage in detail allows organisations to understand the physical activity levels and behaviours of each age group and target their participation offerings accordingly. It's also important to understand that sports and clubs don't need to have an offer for every age group. It's often more effective to target life stages or market segments when launching a new product or modifying an existing participation experience.



UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS

Australia's **physical activity and 24-hour movement guidelines** tell us how active people should be at different stages of life in order to enjoy good physical and mental health. Data shows us that:

- most Australians are **not** meeting the physical activity guidelines for their age;
- teenagers are the least likely to reach their required 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each day; and
- after the teenage years, the proportion of people meeting physical activity guidelines gradually increases up to 65 years of age.

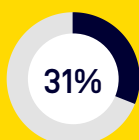
With millions of insufficiently active Australians at all life stages, sports have an opportunity to help people find and continue to participate in a sport they enjoy.



CHILDREN 5–11 YEARS

Many children's first interactions with sport occur during this life stage. These experiences are crucial to creating a lifelong interest and connection with sport and physical activity.

Every child should have the opportunity to enjoy participating in sport and physical activity throughout these formative years.



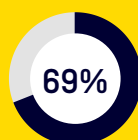
ACTIVE

31% of 5-11 year olds participate in organised sport or physical activity outside of school three times or more per week.

When children reach school age, they are exposed to many participation opportunities. Some children are more likely to embrace these opportunities and develop strong physical literacy skills. **Physical literacy** is the knowledge, skills and behaviours that give us the confidence and motivation to lead active lives.

Characteristics

- More likely to have higher physical literacy levels
- See club sport as a big part of their life
- Tend to love everything about the sport and physical activity experience including the physical, social, competitive and mental aspects
- Often participate to socialise with peers, improve skills or to try a new sport
- Fun and enjoyment is the key driver for ongoing participation and activity
- Parents are often involved in the club and it is a joint decision to participate
- Parents are active themselves participating in sport or physical activity.



LESS ACTIVE

69% of 5-11 year olds participate in organised sport or physical activity outside of school two times or less per week.

This cohort may already be starting to exhibit negative attitudes to sport and physical activity. This may be due to lower levels of physical literacy and capability, as well as the influences around them, including a lack of family participation in sport and physical activity.

At this age, many children are not confident in a sporting environment. Lifelong attitudes to sport and physical activity emerge through experiences in this critical early stage. If the experience is negative, children tend to avoid sport and physical activity. This is reflected in a steep decline in participation from age 13.

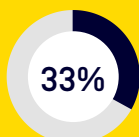
Characteristics

- Often believe sport is too competitive and not fun
- Don't like sport or physical activity due to poor introductory experiences
- More likely to have lower levels of physical literacy than the active 5 – 11 year olds
- Have a perception that you have to be good at sport to be part of a club
- Negative attitudes towards sport often stem from parents
- Impacted by protective parenting behaviours i.e. safety concerns preventing children from participating.



CHILDREN 12–14 YEARS

Participation in organised sport participation peaks from 9 to 11 years. By the age of 12, when children start to transition to high school, participation in organised sport and physical activity outside of school decreases dramatically.



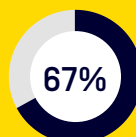
ACTIVE

33% of 12–14 year olds participate in organised sport outside of school three times or more per week.

Active children are in the minority and have continued their involvement in sport and physical activity while many of their peers drop out. They stay involved because they find it fun, enjoy competing and are confident in a sport and physical activity environment. Evidence also suggests this cohort is the most physically literate and competent at sport throughout their childhood.

Characteristics

- Enjoy being a valued member of a team
- Higher levels of physical literacy/capability
- Enjoy spending time with friends and doing a fun activity
- Find challenges and rewards appealing
- Like trying new things
- More likely to have active parents.



LESS ACTIVE

67% of 12–14 year olds participate in organised sport of school two times or less per week.

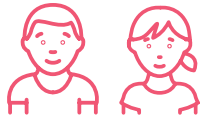
This is a key transition point for ongoing involvement in organised sport and the age when the most significant drop out occurs.

At this age, children are starting to make their own decisions about how they spend their time. They are heavily influenced by their peers and their own self-image, which can make them less confident in a competitive environment. As this group starts high school, they are often exposed to a many new outside factors for attention and time.

Characteristics

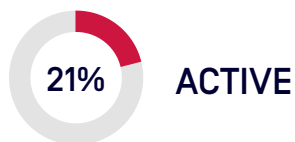
- Find that sport causes mental stress and pressure
- Put off by the involvement of other parents i.e. favouritism
- Increasing time commitments, including work, study, family, friends and new interests
- Decreasing levels of support from parents who value other commitments over sport i.e. study
- More likely to have parents who aren't active or participating in sport.

For more information on overcoming barriers, motivating and engaging young people in sport, visit the [Sport Australia website](#).



YOUTH 15–17 YEARS

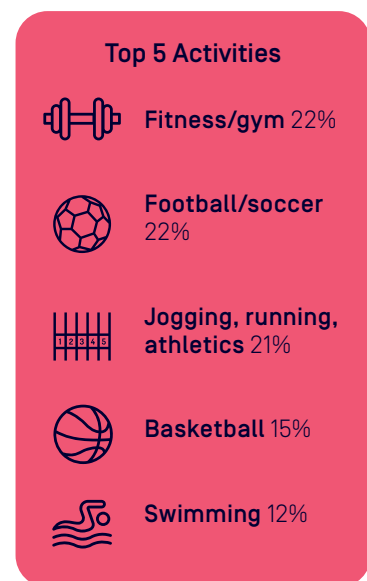
Less than a quarter of 15–17 year olds are sufficiently active during this critical life stage. Sports can help turn this around by better understanding and adapting to the changing needs of this segment.



These teenagers love being active and they don't just meet the guidelines – on average, they smash them! More than a session a day and 3.5 different activities means the enjoyment they get from sport and physical activity has them trying new things and socialising through sport.



These teenagers are a bit more ambivalent toward sports and physical activity. They participate, but they are only active every second day. A bad experience is likely to put this cohort off doing more, because they have less confidence in their ability.

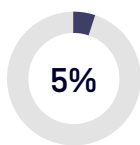


Characteristics

- enjoy being a valued member of a team
- want to improve health, fitness, wellbeing, and mental health
- enjoy spending time with friends and doing a fun activity
- find challenges and rewards appealing
- like trying new thing

Characteristics

- fear being judged and are put off by team selection processes
- lack fitness and skills, worry they can't keep up
- find that sport causes mental stress and added pressure
- are put off by the involvement of other parents i.e. favouritism
- have increasing time commitments, including work, study, family, friends and new interests
- have decreasing levels of support from parents who value other commitments over sport e.g. study.



INACTIVE

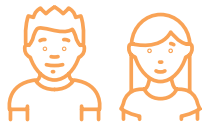
Characteristics

- don't like sport or physical activity
- have had poor previous experiences with sport
- lack of fitness and skills.

DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

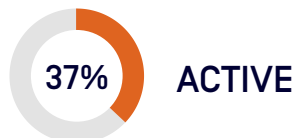
Physical activity level Refer to Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Young People [5-17 years] .	Male	Female	Major cities	Regional
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, involving mainly aerobic activities	22%	19%	21%	19%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	74%	74%	74%	77%
Inactive Not doing any activity	4%	7%	5%	4%

For more information on overcoming barriers, motivating and engaging young people in sport, visit the [Sport Australia website](#).



YOUNG ADULTS 18-24 YEARS

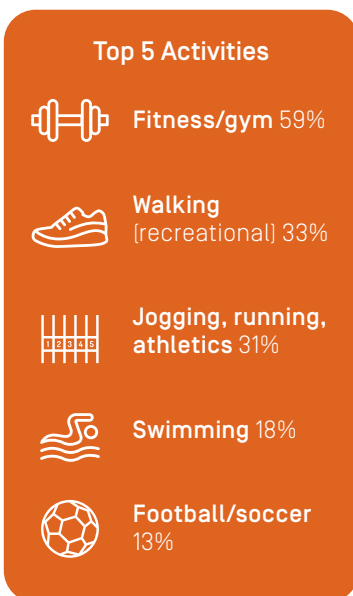
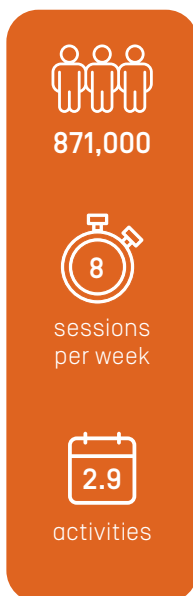
This life stage sees increased independence and transitions such as finishing school, starting study, working full time and leaving home. These transitions can impact activity choices and should be considered in sport participation offerings.



Most active 18-24 year olds play sport and do other physical activity in their suite of activities that keep them moving. They're doing slightly less sessions and activities than active 15-17 year olds but still significantly exceed the physical activity guidelines and see physical activity as a critical part of their routines.

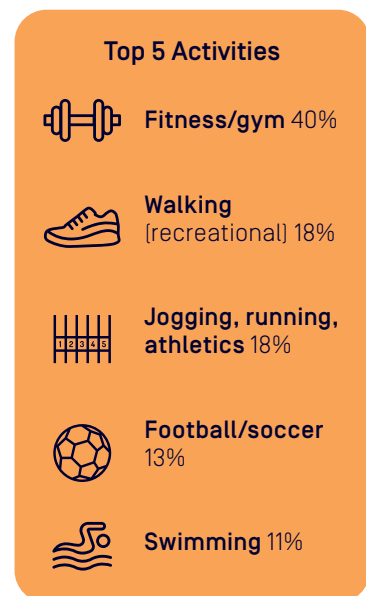


Insufficiently active 18-24 year olds are more likely to stick to just sport or physical activity. They are developing other interests, which they feel are more important than being active every day. They are capable of doing more, but are choosing not to. Sport and physical activity is less likely to be part of their daily or weekly routine.



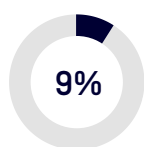
Characteristics

- are driven by fun and enjoyment, the thrill of competition and the will to win
- were likely to be active as children and enjoy staying involved in sport and physical activity
- are motivated to be more physically active and fit for themselves
- see the benefits of good mental health, positive body image and good physical health to prevent illness
- consider their daily or weekly sport and physical activity routine is critical and 'must-do'.



Characteristics

- claimed that time and money were their two biggest barriers
- admitted their true barrier was a lack of motivation
- said the sport offer didn't meet their needs i.e. unclear pathways, not offered at the right time and focused on performance.



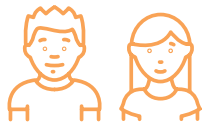
INACTIVE

Characteristics

- admitted the true barrier was a lack of motivation
- reduced free time and 'busyness' that comes with having a family
- feel they would have to sacrifice personal time to exercise
- consider the cost of gyms and organised sport as a major barrier, particularly for women.

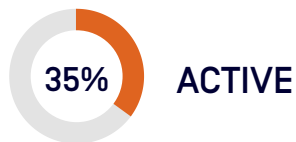
DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

Physical activity guidelines <small>Refer to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults.</small>	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	Country of birth not Australia	Speaks language other than English at home	People with disability	Male	Female
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (activity) or equivalent each week and active on 5 or more days each week	33%	30%	31%	35%	38%	36%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	48%	54%	55%	53%	53%	55%
Inactive Not doing any activity	19%	16%	14%	12%	9%	9%



YOUNG ADULTS 25-34 YEARS

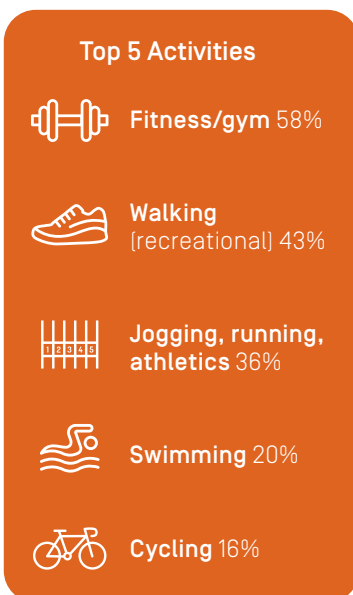
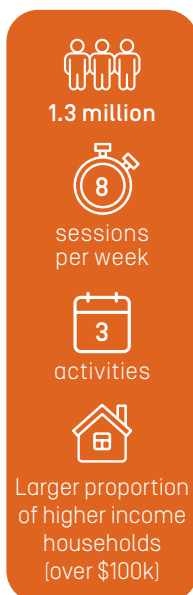
As career and parental responsibilities increase, commitment to organised sport and physical activity levels decline slightly.



While life can change significantly during this stage, those who are active maintain their activity level and consider it a 'must-do' in their daily routine. They are twice as likely to participate in both sport and physical activity.

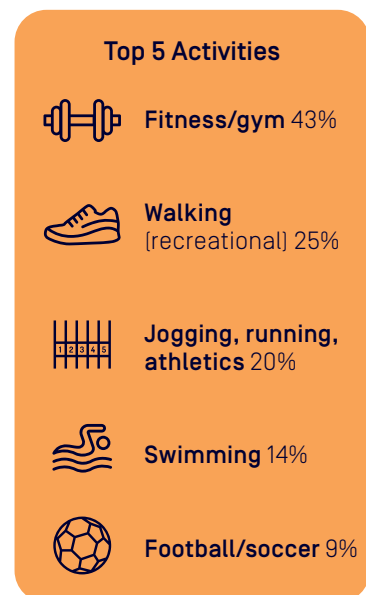
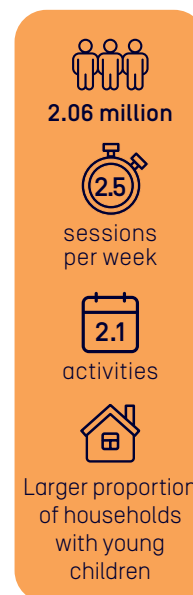


At this life stage, many people tend to place less importance on sport and physical activity due to other priorities such as starting a family and/or establishing a career. Although it's not part of their daily routine, they tend to participate a couple of times a week and more likely in either sport or physical activity, not both.



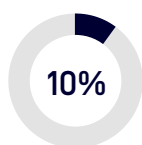
Characteristics

- were active as children and enjoy staying involved
- are motivated to be more physically active and fit for themselves
- are driven by fun and enjoyment, thrill of competition and will to win
- want to be a good role models and to promote the principles of a healthy and active lifestyle to their children
- see the benefits of good mental health, positive body image and good physical health to prevent illness
- consider their daily or weekly physical activity routine is critical and 'must-do'.



Characteristics

- claimed that time and money were their two biggest barriers
- admitted their true barrier was a lack of motivation
- said the sport offer didn't meet their needs i.e. unclear pathways, not offered at the right time and focused on performance
- have less free time and are too busy when they start a family
- are focused on work and career and feel they are unable to make a firm commitment to turning up to every game and training and don't want to let the team down
- less likely to have a daily or weekly physical activity routine.



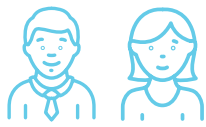
INACTIVE

Characteristics

- admitted the true barrier was a lack of motivation
- reduced free time and 'busyness' that comes with having a family
- who are parents are less likely to recognise the role they play in how physically active their children are
- feel they would have to sacrifice personal time to exercise
- consider the cost of gyms and organised sport as a major barrier, particularly for women.

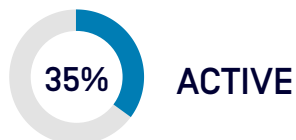
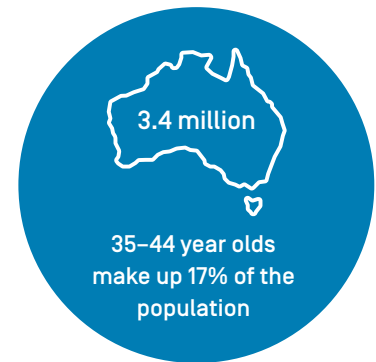
DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

Physical activity level <small>Refer to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults.</small>	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	Country of birth not Australia	Speaks language other than English at home	People with disability	Major cities	Regional
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity [activity] or equivalent each week and active on 5 or more days each week	37%	29%	27%	31%	35%	34%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	49%	57%	57%	53%	56%	55%
Inactive Not doing any activity	14%	14%	16%	16%	9%	11%



ADULTS 35-44 YEARS

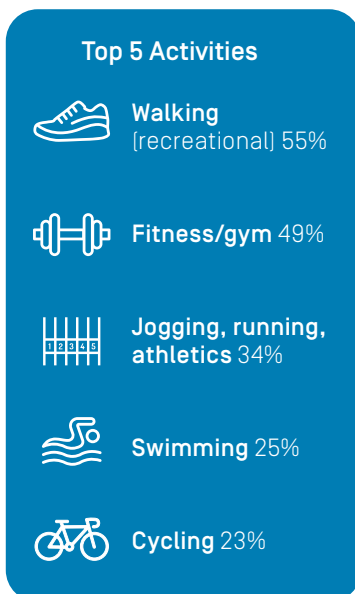
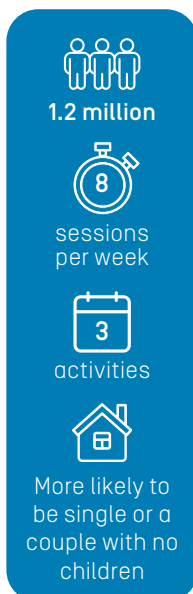
This life stage is often a very busy one, whether it is due to work pressures, busy social lives or caring for young children. Consider how your sport can adapt its products for this market.



The active cohort in this life stage considers being active every day important. They are choosing three different activities in a combination of sport and physical activity, to ensure they are being active every day. Social interaction in their choice of activity becomes less critical at this age, compared to appealing/appropriate facilities and ease of use. They want to be active, but it has to be quick and easy. Individual pursuits are becoming more relevant at this life stage.

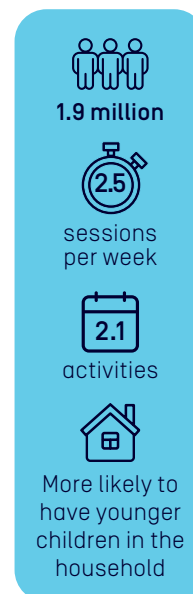


Having younger children in the household leads to lower activity levels and activity on half the days per week. This group are less competitive than their 'active' counterparts, so their drive to be active is lower and trend towards participating in only physical activity. Some members of this group have long been not active enough and may be starting to become self-conscious about being physically active in public.



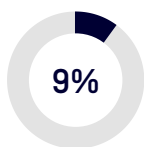
Characteristics

- like feeling good about themselves
- want to be good role models and to promote the principles of a healthy and active lifestyle to their children
- value facilities and ease of use over social interaction
- move away from team based sport and towards walking, gym, running, swimming, cycling
- consider their daily or weekly physical activity routine to be critical.



Characteristics

- are not overly competitive
- are self-conscious being physically active in public
- say cost and other commitments are factors in their sport and physical activity choices
- say they will increase their activity when their children are older and they have more time
- are less likely to have a weekly physical activity routine.



INACTIVE

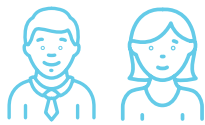
In this life stage, inactivity is more common for people with disability, people of Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander origin and people who speak a language other than English at home.

Characteristics

- say they are inactive due to lack of time and other commitments
- sometimes have prohibitive injuries, conditions or disabilities that stop them being active
- feeling inadequate or unable to fit in
- lack the motivation to be active
- do not identify with sport and are less like to see the benefits of physical activity
- tend to have low household income.

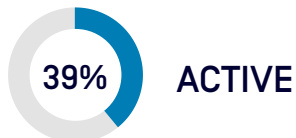
DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

Physical activity level Refer to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults.	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	Country of birth not Australia	Speaks language other than English at home	People with disability	Male	Female
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (activity) or equivalent each week and active on 5 or more days each week	37%	32%	30%	29%	32%	37%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	48%	55%	55%	53%	59%	53%
Inactive Not doing any activity	15%	13%	15%	18%	9%	10%



ADULTS 45-54 YEARS

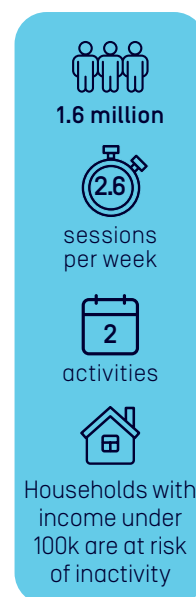
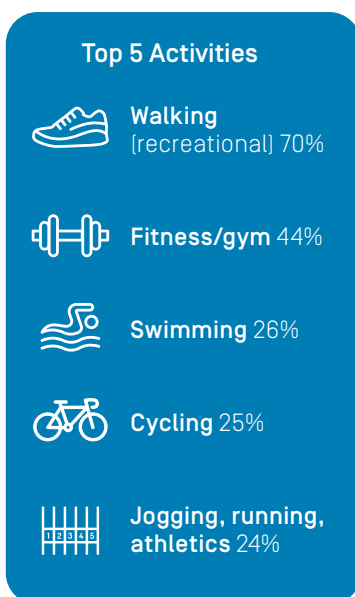
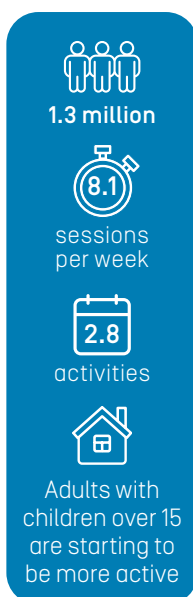
While career and family are still a significant focus in this life stage, it becomes increasingly important to prioritise health. This is an opportunity for sports to promote the benefits of sport.



This active cohort are still significantly exceeding the recommended guidelines. As their children get older it becomes easier to fit even more activity in. Individual sport and physical activity pursuits are still most relevant although, it's more likely physical activity pursuits driving them to be active, rather than sports at this life stage.



This group is not committed to being active every day. They are more consumed by other factors, such as family and career. Cost is a factor and lower income households are at risk of dropping their activity levels further.

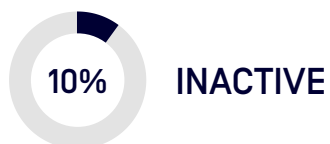


Characteristics

- like feeling good about themselves
- want to be good role models and to promote the principles of a healthy and active lifestyle to their children
- value facilities and ease of use over social interaction
- consider their daily or weekly physical activity routine to be critical.

Characteristics

- are not overly competitive
- are self-conscious being physically active in public
- say cost and other commitments are factors in their sport and physical activity choices
- are less likely to have a weekly physical activity routine
- have strong resistance to being committed to set times and a routine
- want to be able to change plans without guilt
- feel embarrassed by exercising in public [mostly women].



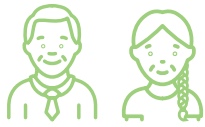
In this life stage, people with disability are twice as likely to be an inactive as people who don't have a disability.

Characteristics

- often have a disability or injury or have health related reasons to not participate
- feel embarrassed by exercising in public, mostly women
- find gyms and clubs intimidating
- say they are inactive due to lack of time and other commitments.

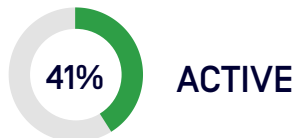
DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

Physical activity level Refer to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults.	Country of birth not Australia	People with disability	Major cities	Regional	Male	Female
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity [activity] or equivalent each week and active on 5 or more days each week	41%	34%	41%	35%	35%	44%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	49%	45%	51%	52%	55%	47%
Inactive Not doing any activity	10%	21%	8%	13%	10%	9%



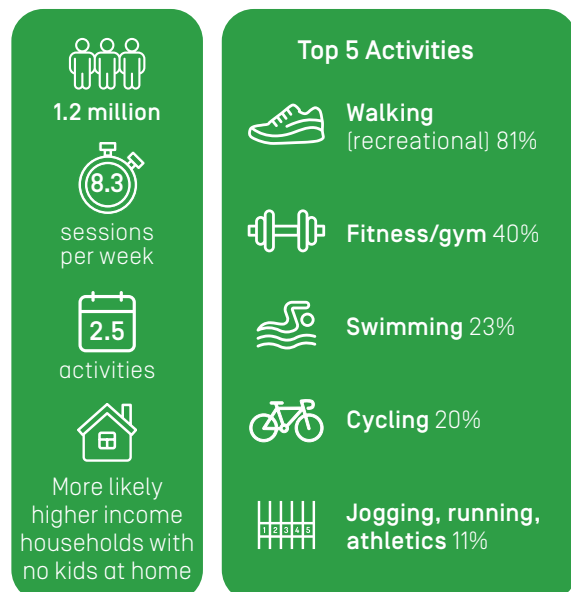
OLDER ADULTS 55-64 YEARS

There is an opportunity for sports to re-engage people who have been sidelined by their busy lives or that of their children. An increased desire to focus on themselves and their health could be used to reset behaviours around physical activity.



While still being classified as active, the people in this life stage are starting to do less activities.

Most of them walk (82%) and do at least one other activity, more likely a sport. Social interaction starts to become important again in this life stage and men trend towards doing another activity as part of a sporting club or association, such as joining a swimming, cycling or running club or group. Households where children have left home, are likely to be more active.

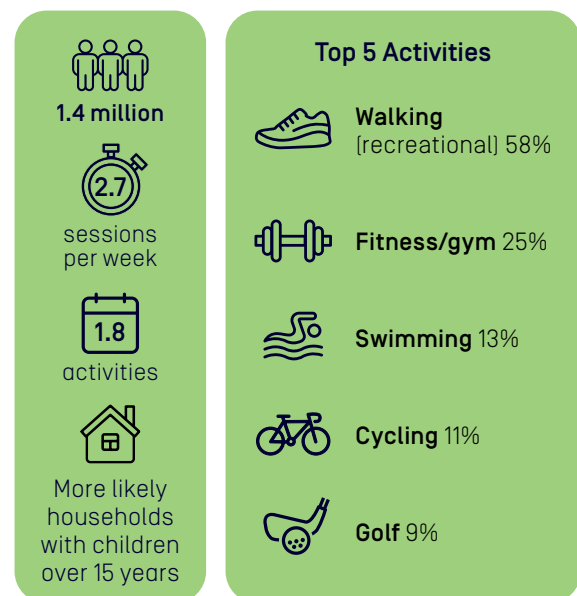


Characteristics

- are motivated to improve their physical health or fitness, have fun and engage socially
- participate in both sport and physical activity
- regularly look after grandchildren
- participate via sporting clubs or associations (mostly men).

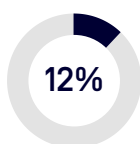


At this life stage the insufficiently active cohort drops below two activities for the first time. Looking after grandchildren and doing house/garden work starts to substitute for an activity.



Characteristics

- have strong resistance to being committed to set times and a routine
- want to be able to change plans without guilt
- feel embarrassed by exercising in public (mostly women)
- sometimes find gyms and clubs intimidating
- regularly look after grandchildren
- believe physical activity around the house and garden is exercise, even if you are not puffing and sweating.



INACTIVE

In this life stage, inactivity is significantly more common for people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin and people with disability.

Characteristics

- often have health related reasons to not participate
- feel embarrassed by exercising in public (mostly women)
- find gyms and clubs intimidating
- say they are inactive due to lack of time and other commitments.

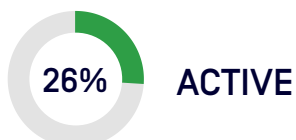
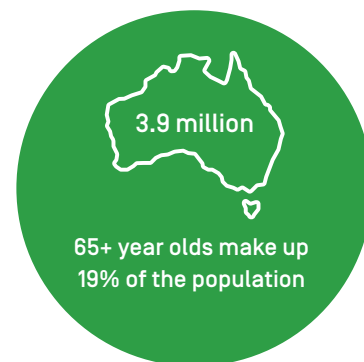
DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

Physical activity level <small>Refer to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults.</small>	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	Country of birth not Australia	Speaks language other than English at home	People with disability	Male	Female
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (activity) or equivalent each week and active on 5 or more days each week	37%	43%	38%	33%	38%	45%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	43%	45%	46%	45%	49%	44%
Inactive Not doing any activity	20%	12%	16%	22%	13%	11%



OLDER ADULTS 65+

With an ageing population, there is an opportunity to provide modified sport participation products and increase the physical activity and social connection of older Australians.



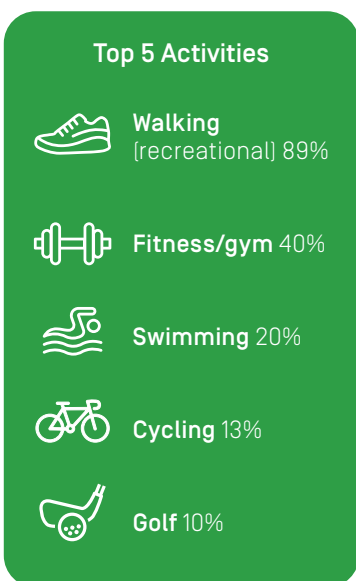
The over 65s continue the trend of less variety in their chosen activities, but they are doing these activities more often than their younger counterparts.

In fact, at an average of 9.6 sessions per week, the active over 65s are active more often than any other adult life stage. Taking up a sport as well as walking and other physical activity is critical to this group.



While not active enough to meet the guidelines for their age, this group is active more often than insufficiently active groups at other life stages.

They engage in less activities and they are more likely to participate in non-sport related physical activities. This is particularly the case for women in this life stage.

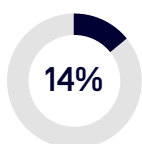


Characteristics

- likely to participate in both sport and physical activity
- are motivated to improve physical health or fitness, have fun and engage socially
- are more likely to participate via sporting clubs and associations (mostly men).

Characteristics

- are influenced by their local neighbourhood and surroundings i.e. are less likely to be active if the paths are uneven
- can feel embarrassed by exercising in public, particularly so for women
- believe physical activity around the house and garden is strenuous enough, even if not puffing and sweating.



INACTIVE

In this life stage, inactivity is significantly more common for indigenous Australians and people with disability.

Characteristics

- are often inactive due to health-related reasons
- lack confidence and willingness to participation due to health issues and illness
- feel embarrassed exercising in public (mostly women)
- find gyms and clubs intimidating.

DEMOGRAPHICS BY ACTIVITY LEVEL

Physical activity level Refer to Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults.	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	Country of birth not Australia	People with disability	Major cities	Regional	Remote
Active Meeting the guidelines, by achieving 30 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day, incorporating fitness, strength, balance and flexibility	22%	27%	20%	26%	25%	19%
Insufficiently active Active each week but not enough to meet the guidelines	50%	59%	54%	61%	59%	59%
Inactive Not doing any activity	28%	14%	26%	13%	16%	22%

MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about participation design on the [Sport Australia](#) website or contact us at participation@sportaus.gov.au.

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