



Sport and Physical Recreation Participation Among Persons with a Disability

Some Data from the
2002 General Social Survey

National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics

Report prepared for the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport

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Introduction

A physically active lifestyle is associated with many health and social benefits. This is also true for those individuals who have a disability or long term health condition (LTC). Physical activity can not only reduce the risk for secondary health problems but can improve all levels of functioning (Hidde P. van der Pleog et al. 2004). This paper reports on the participation and non-participation levels of people with a disability or LTC in sport and physical recreation. Data for the paper were sourced from the ABS General Social Survey in 2002.

Background

Throughout much of the western world, it has been observed that levels of obesity and inactivity have increased in recent years and have consequently become major issues relating to the health of the general population. According to the ABS National Health Survey 2004-05, 62% of men and 45% of women (Australian population, 15 years and over), were reported to be overweight or obese based on body mass index (BMI). Importantly, these figures have also increased over the previous 10 years, from 52% and 37% respectively. Governments at both Federal and State levels are keen to develop strategies and programs to promote increased physical activity levels for all members of the population.

Of particular interest to policy makers is a greater understanding of the characteristics of non-participants. This may assist in developing strategies to encourage increased participation by sub-groups of the population. One such sub-group is those with a disability or long term health condition (LTC).

For the purposes of this report, a disability or a long-term health condition exists 'if a limitation, restriction, impairment, disease or disorder had lasted or was likely to last, for at least six months and restricted everyday activities'. The extent to which these disabilities affect everyday life is indicated by the degree of the limitation. This relates to a person's ability to perform core activities of self-care, mobility and communication. The degree of limitation was recorded at four levels: profound, severe, moderate, or mild. Further, the nature of the disability was classified into five categories: physical; intellectual; sight, hearing, speech; psychological or type not specified. A person's health condition may have had a combination of illnesses and is then represented in more than one disability category. Definitions detailing the core activity limitations and disability types are included in the glossary.

The Measurement

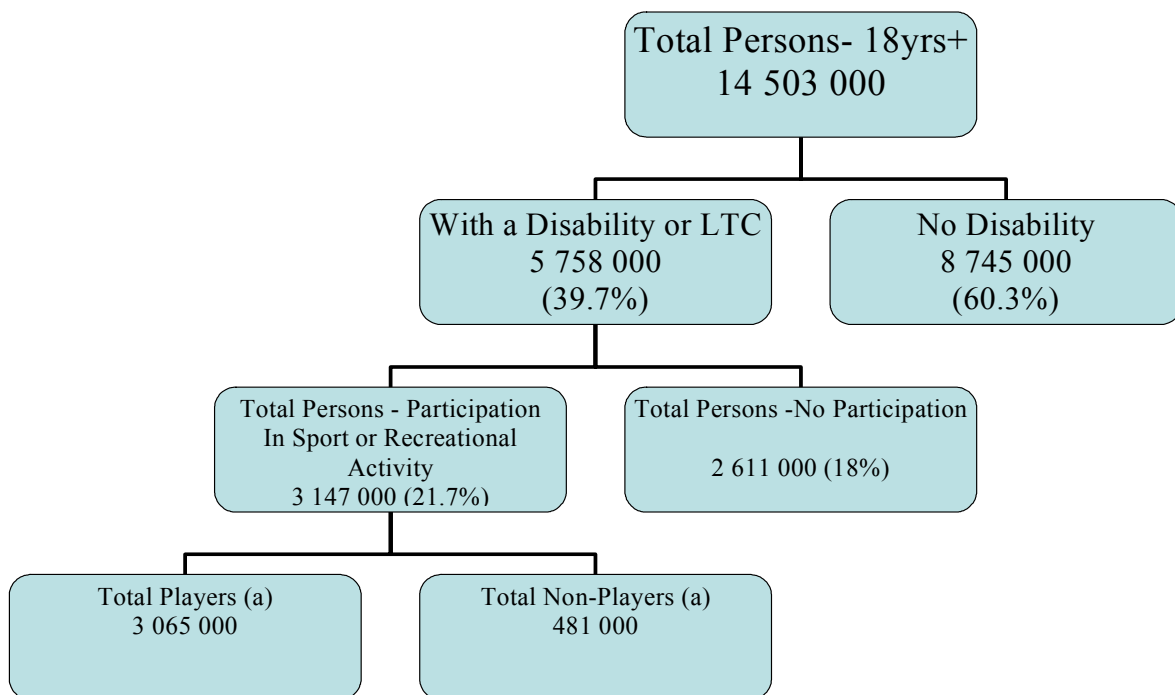
Information collected in the ABS General Social Survey (GSS) 2002 provides a measure of participation in sport or recreational physical activity for the general population, as well as for specific groups of interest such as those with a disability or LTC. This multidimensional social survey questioned respondents as to their involvement (yes/no) and the frequency of physical activity in sport and physical recreation during the previous 12 months prior to interview, in 2002. Further information was gathered across a range of social issues and importantly includes aspects of their self-assessed health status and some indicators of disability. This allows for analysis to be undertaken specifically for those with a reported disability or LTC, investigating both their participation and non-participation rates.

The prevalence of a person with a disability or LTC in the population is now detailed and their reported involvement in sport and physical recreation is then investigated using the GSS 02 data.

Findings

The numbers of persons with a disability or long term health condition (LTC), together with participation in sport and physical activities are shown in figure 1 below. Almost 4 out of every 10 Australians (39.7% or 5.8 million people) aged 18 years and over reported having a disability or LTC, in the 12 months prior to interview in 2002. The rate increases from 23% for people aged 18-24 years to 71.5% for people aged 65 years and over. The 65 years and over age group reported the highest numbers of disability or LTC (1.59 million). A similar proportion of males (50.1%) and females (49.9%) had a disability or LTC in the 12 months prior to interview, with females out-numbering males only in the 65 years and over age group. The states of Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and Northern Territory had higher total females than males reporting a disability or LTC.

Figure 1: Persons with a Disability or Long Term Health Condition (LTC):



(a) The categories of Total Players and Total Non-Players are not mutually exclusive, as some players also have non-playing involvement.

Further analysis of those with a disability or LTC includes:

Type of Condition

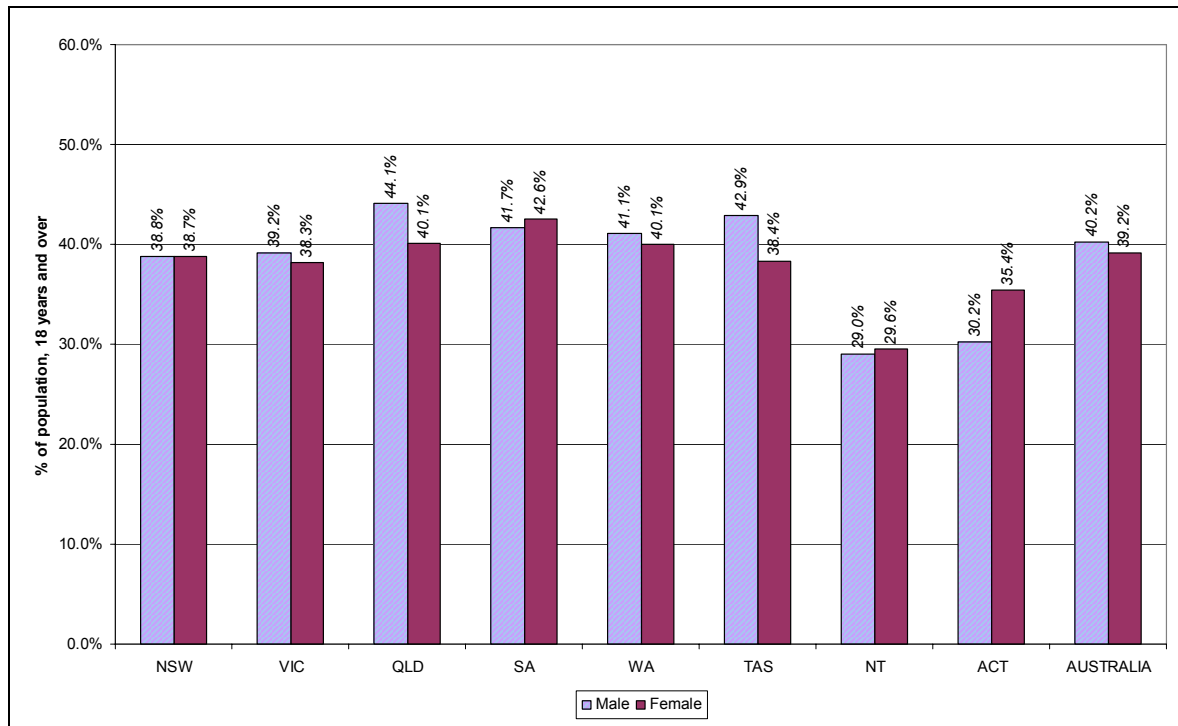
Persons having a disability or LTC may report one or more types of condition to describe their health situation. This lead to the total number of conditions reported (9.8 million) exceeding the total number of those with a disability or LTC. The conditions were classified into five broad category types. The main disability or LTC types were Physical (38.8%) and Sight, hearing and speech (19.3%). Lower levels were reported for Psychological (7.6%) and Intellectual disabilities (3.0%). In addition, other long term conditions such as asthma, arthritis, heart disease, dementia were grouped as 'Type not specified' and accounted for 31.3%. Definitions of each disability type are included in the Glossary.

Of those persons reporting having a disability or LTC, 44.8% had a 'specific limitation or restriction' and 55.2% had 'no specific limitation or restriction'. Having a specific limitation or restriction was then further classified as either a limitation in the person's core activities (31.5%) or a schooling/employment restriction only (13.3%). Definitions of the limitations are included in the Glossary.

Disability by State

NSW has the highest number of people reporting a disability or LTC (1.9 million) representing 38.8% of its population over 18 years of age (Figure 2). South Australia and Queensland had the highest proportions of their populations reporting a disability or LTC at 42.2% and 42.1% respectively.

Figure 2: Percentage of persons with a Disability or LTC by State



Data for the variables in Figure 2 are included in attached Excel file

Persons with a Disability and Participation:

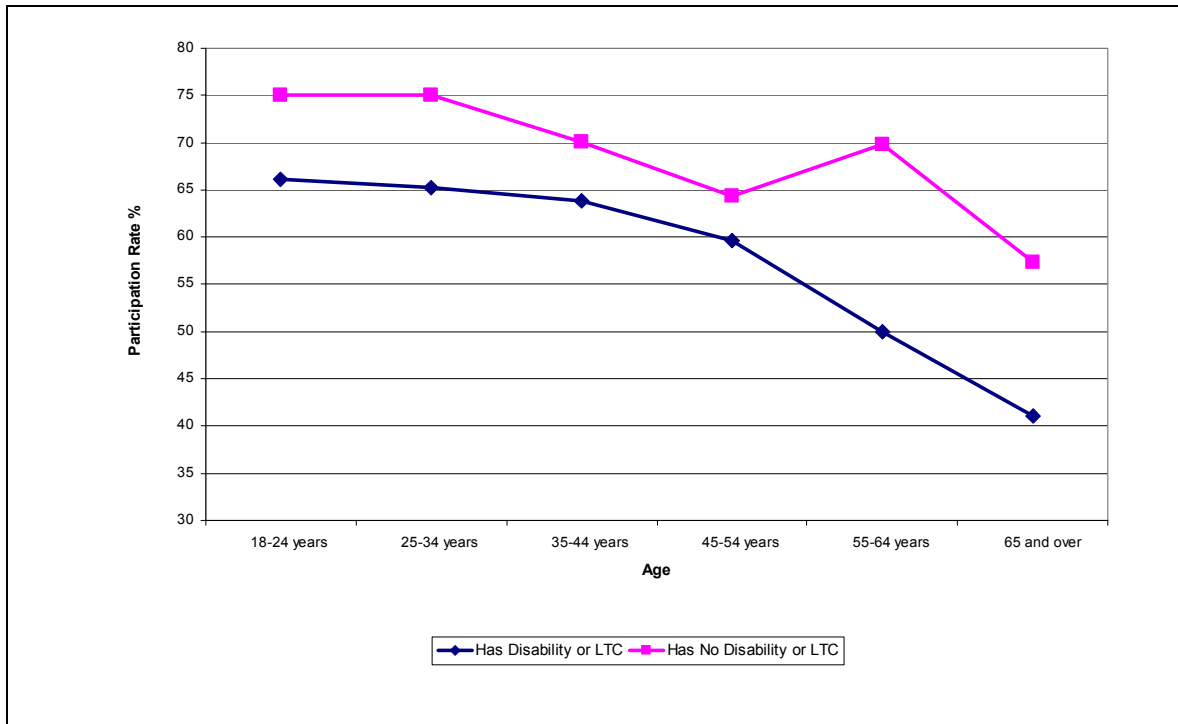
Details are presented on the numbers of persons with a disability or LTC who participated in sport and physical recreation in the previous 12 months, prior to interview. Consideration is firstly given to total participation rates i.e. all participant roles. The term participant is defined as either: a player; coach, instructor or teacher; referee, umpire or club official; committee member or administrator. A person may have a playing and non-playing role and is then represented in more than one role category.

Major findings of total participation include:

Age and Sex

Overall, 3.1 million persons with a disability or LTC participated in sport and physical recreation. The sport participation rate amongst those with a disability or LTC in 2002 is at lower levels (54.6%) than those who did not have a disability or LTC (70.2%). This pattern is irrespective of age (Figure 3). People with a disability or LTC aged 18 to 24 years had the highest rate of participation with 66.1% (285,400 persons) and the rates declined progressively with increasing age to 41.1% (654,700) for people aged 65 years and over. Overall, 57.3% of males with a disability or LTC participated in sports and physical recreation, compared with 52% of females.

Figure 3: Participation for Those with or without a Disability

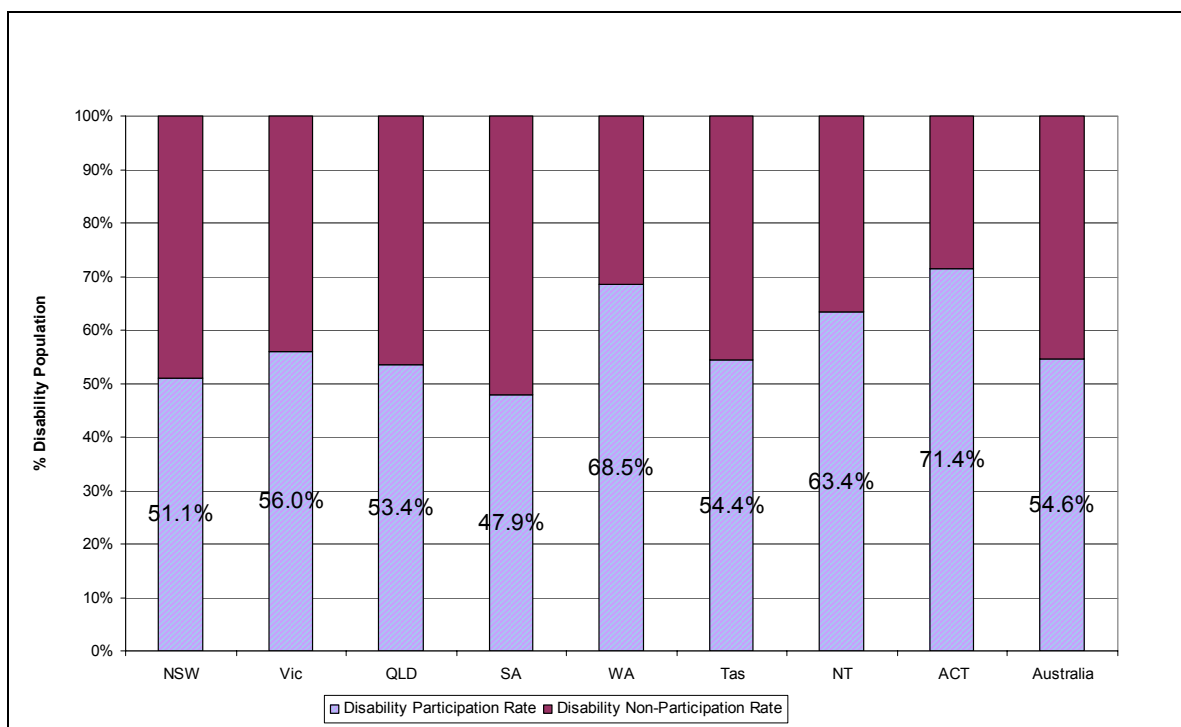


Data for the variables in Figure 3 are included in attached Excel file

State rates of participation

The rates of participation for those with a disability or LTC varied by state (Figure 4), and the highest rates reported were for ACT (71.4%) and WA (68.5%). With the national average at 54.6%, N.S.W., Queensland, S.A. and Tasmania all recorded rates lower than the national average.

Figure 4: State Rates of Participation for those with a Disability or LTC



Data for the variables in Figure 4 are included in attached Excel file

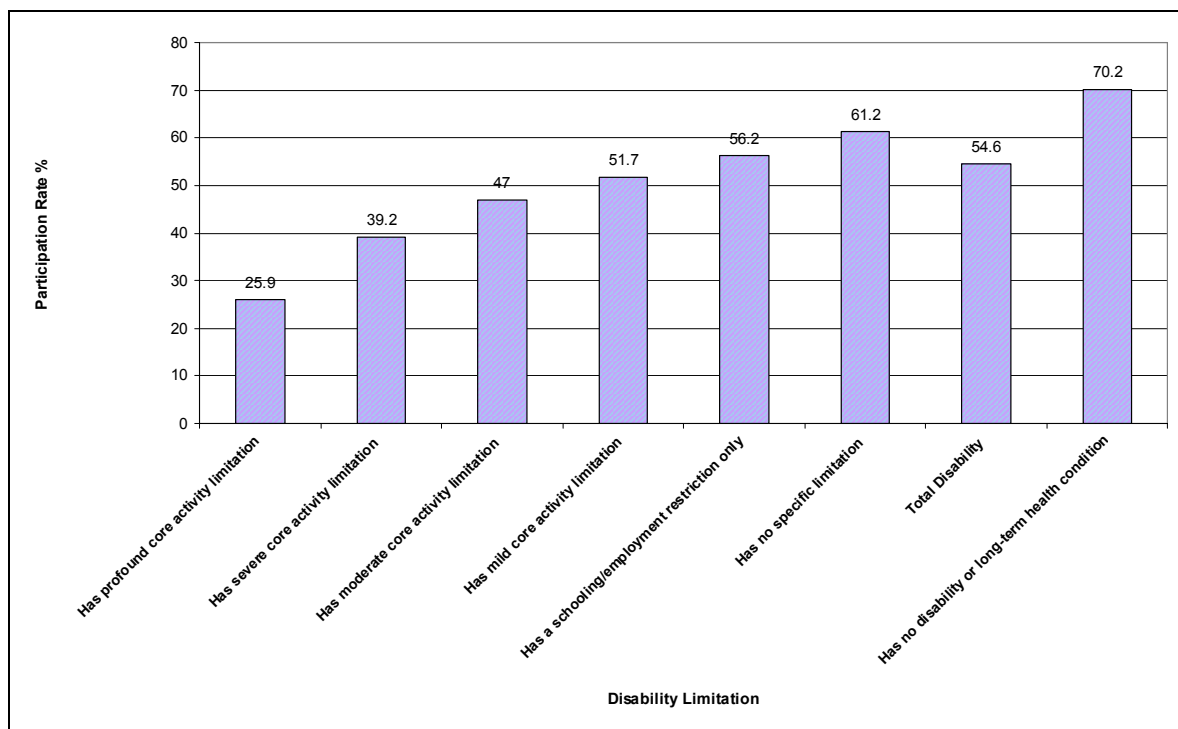
Type of Participation

The vast majority of the persons reporting that they were involved in sport and physical recreation in the last 12 months were players (97% or 3.065 million persons). Non-playing involvement (coach, instructor etc) were at much lower levels (7.1%); referee, umpire, or official (6.3%); and committee or administrator (5.9%). Note that the total numbers of player and non-players are not mutually exclusive as some players may also have non-playing involvement.

Degree of Limitation of Disability

Of all the disability categories, the lowest levels of participation were observed for those with a profound core activity limitation (26% or 70,900). As could be expected, the rates increased as the degree of disability reduced to the highest reported participation level of 61.2% (1.9 million), for those with no specific limitation (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Participation by Degree of Disability Limitation



Data for the variables in Figure 5 are included in attached Excel file

Player Participation:

More than half of all persons with a disability or LTC (53.2% or 3.065 million), report their involvement as a player, competitor or the person who physically undertakes the activity. This compares to 68.5% for those without a disability. The demographic characteristics of players with a disability or LTC are included in Appendix 1.

Types of Participation

Almost one-quarter (25% or 1.4 million persons) of those players with a disability or LTC, participated in sport and physical recreation that was organised by a club, association or another organisation. Both males and females had similar proportions (26.1% and 23.5% respectively). While over 42% of players participated in some non-organised sport, almost one-third of these (836,000) had also participated in sport and physical recreation organised by a club or association.

Main Sport and physical recreation

Walking for exercise was the most popular of all sports and physical activities for those with a disability or LTC. About 1.38 million persons walked for exercise during this period, a participation rate of 24.0%. Swimming had the second highest numbers of participants with about 505,500, a participation rate of 8.8%. Other sport and recreational activities included Aerobics/fitness (425,600 or 7.4%), golf (350,200 or 6.1%), cycling (238,100 or 4.1%), fishing (230,200 or 4.0%) and tennis (222,900 or 3.9%).

Main Sports and activity by sex

While walking ranked as the number one activity for both genders (table 1), many more females (836,700) walked for exercise in the 12-month period than males (544,700). Similarly for swimming, the second ranked activity, females outnumbered males (286,700 and 218,800). Participation in golf however, was dominated by males (283,500) with much smaller numbers for females (66,700). Likewise male participation in fishing was dominated by males (193,600 compared to 36,600), cycling (164,500 compared to 73,700), lawn bowls (122,000 compared to 46,800), and running (96,700 compared to 45,600). However for females, participation was dominant in aerobics/fitness (250,000 compared to 175,600), yoga (78,800 compared to 15,800), netball (72,900 compared to 24,400) and dancing (63,900 compared to 14,200).

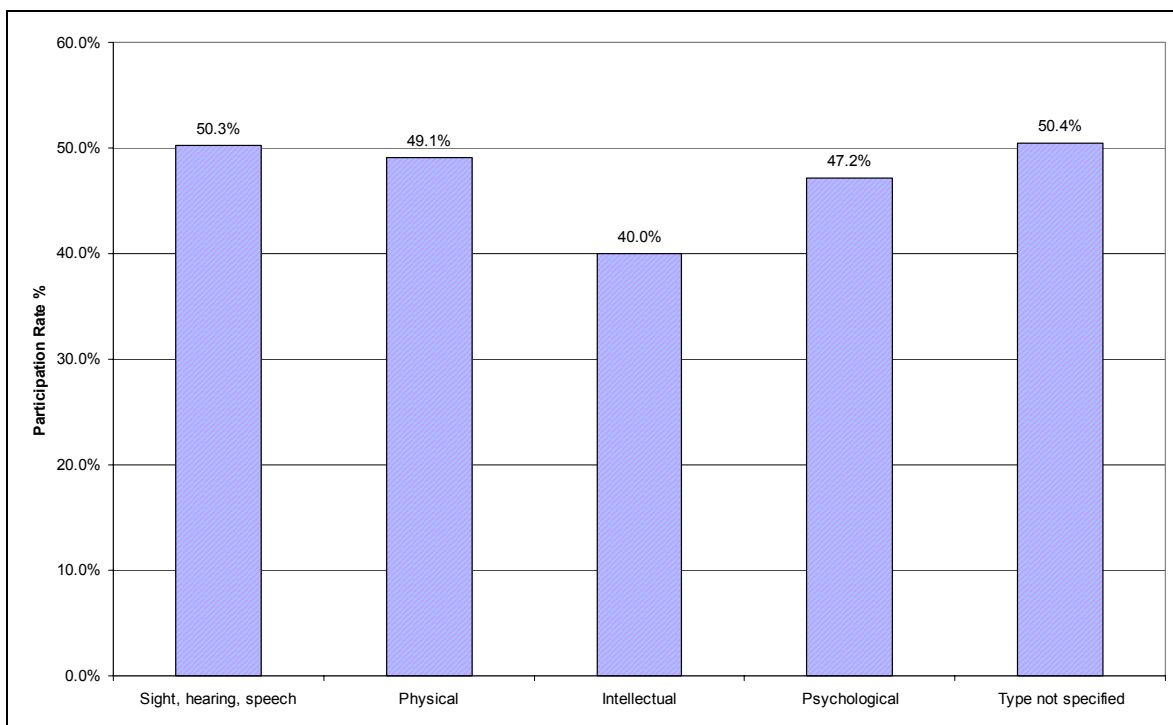
Table 1: Top 10 sport and physical recreational activities

	Male '000	Participation Rate	Female '000	Participation Rate	Total '000	Participation Rate
Walking for exercise	544.7	18.9%	836.7	29.1%	1381.5	24.0%
Swimming	218.8	7.6%	286.7	10.0%	505.5	8.8%
Aerobics / fitness	175.6	6.1%	250	8.7%	425.6	7.4%
Golf	283.5	9.8%	66.7	2.3%	350.2	6.1%
Cycling	164.5	5.7%	73.7	2.6%	238.1	4.1%
Fishing	193.6	6.7%	36.6	1.3%	230.2	4.0%
Tennis	115.7	4.0%	107.2	3.7%	222.9	3.9%
Lawn bowls	122	4.2%	46.8	1.6%	168.9	2.9%
Bush walking	77.7	2.7%	83	2.9%	160.6	2.8%
Running	96.7	3.3%	45.6	1.6%	142.3	2.5%

Participation Rates by Type of Disability

Player participation rates (Figure 6) were of similar levels for those reporting disability types of 'Sight, hearing, speech', 'Physical', and 'Type Not specified' being (50.3%, 49.1%, and 50.4% respectively). There were lower participation levels for 'Psychological' (47.2%) and 'Intellectual' (40%).

Figure 6: Player Participation Rate by Type of Disability



Data for the variables in Figure 6 are included in attached Excel file

Selected Sports by Type of Disability

Walking for exercise was consistently the number one activity for all disability types. The ranking of the top-ten activities however varied for each disability type but typically included swimming, aerobics/fitness, fishing, lawn bowls, cycling, tennis and running. Table 2 ranks the top ten activities for all disability types.

Table 2: Disability Type and Top 10 Selected Activities

Ranking	Sight, Hearing, Speech	Type Not Specified	Physical	Intellectual	Psychological
1	Walking for exercise	Walking for exercise	Walking for exercise	Walking for exercise	Walking for exercise
2	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Aerobics/fitness	Swimming
3	Golf	Aerobics/fitness	Aerobics /fitness	Swimming	Aerobics/fitness
4	Aerobics/fitness	Golf	Golf	Fishing	Cycling
5	Fishing	Fishing	Fishing	Tenpin bowling	Fishing
6	Lawn bowls	Lawn bowls	Cycling	Basketball	Bush walking
7	Cycling	Cycling	Tennis	Cycling	Yoga
8	Tennis	Tennis	Lawn bowls	Lawn bowls	Tennis
9	Bush walking	Running	Bush walking	Martial arts	Golf
10	Surf sports	Bush walking	Running	Dancing	Lawn bowls

Disability and Non-participation:

It may be expected that those with a disability or LTC would have higher levels of non-participation in sport and physical activities than those without a disability. In fact some 2.6 million people with a disability or LTC reportedly do not participate, representing a non-participation rate of 45.4%, a much higher non-participation rate than for those without a disability, (29.8%).

Research undertaken in the United Kingdom (Sport England, 2001) identified that the main limitation to participation was the respondent's health. It is also reported in research that 'the degree of participation in physical activity by those with a disability is affected by a multi-factorial set of barriers and facilitators that are unique to this population' (Rimmer J.H. et al 2004). Identified themes relating to participation for the disabled include: access; physical, emotional and psychological barriers; professional knowledge, education and training issues; policy and procedures; codes and regulations; and availability of resources.

The GSS collected a number of other indicators that may relate to these themes and the data can be explored to identify any such associations.

Access to transport and Perceived level of transport difficulty

One potential barrier for those with a disability relates to a person's access to transport. For those with 'No Access' to transport, the levels of those not participating in sports was higher at 30.3%, when compared to those who did participate 14.4%. Similarly, in relation to a person's 'perceived level of transport difficulty', the levels of non-participation were higher than participation rates for those reporting 'sometimes have difficulty getting to places needed' (16.9% compared to 12.5%) and 'often have difficulty getting to places needed' (7.6% compared to 3.2%).

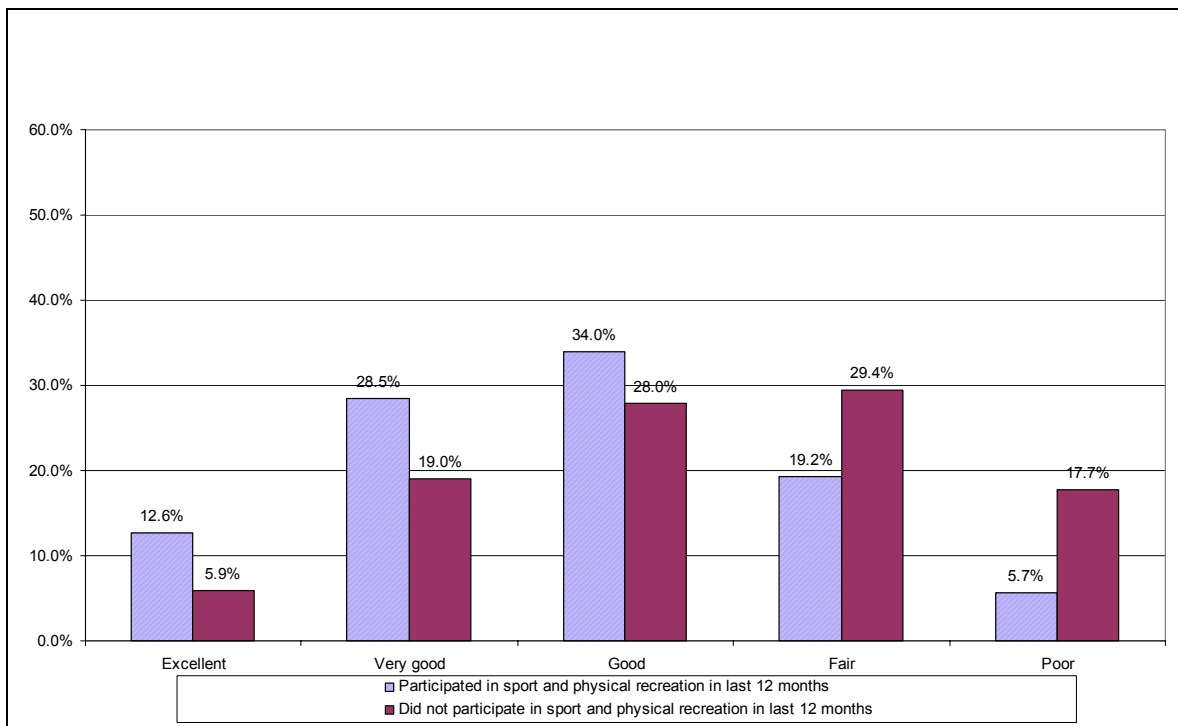
Degree of disability and Social activity

As noted earlier, the levels of sport non-participation are higher for those with a disability than for those without a disability. And the rates are higher, as the degree of limitation of the disability increases. To put this in some context, participation in sport can be considered as a sub-set of participation (or attendance) at other community and social activities. Attendance at community and social activities, during the previous three months prior to the 2002 interview is listed by activities in the glossary.

For those who did not participate in sport and had a core activity limitation (1.04 million persons), the most popular social activities undertaken was 'went out to cafe, restaurant or bar' (556,155 events), 'attended movie, theatre or concert (280,198 events), and 'visited park/garden, zoo or theme park' (255,402 events). Notably, over a quarter (27%) of those with a core activity limitation reported attendance 'at none of these activities'. Similarly, for those sport non-participants with no specific limitation (1.2 million persons), the most popular social activity was also 'went out to cafe, restaurant or bar' (823,422 events), followed by 'attended movie, theatre or concert (469,586 events), then 'visited park/garden, zoo or theme park' (401,035). In this case, 17.5% reported attendance 'at none of these activities'.

The level of participation in sport and physical activity is directly related to self health status, with 24.9% of those in poor or fair health participating compared to 75.1% of those in good, very good and in excellent health. This is shown in more detail in figure 7.

Figure 7: Participation and Self-Assessed Health Status



Data for the variables in Figure 7 are included in attached Excel file

Summary

The overall participation rate in sport and physical recreation for those with a disability or long term health condition (LTC), is at lower levels when compared to those without a disability or LTC (54.6% in contrast to 70.2%). Age appears to be a major influence on participation levels, as rates of participation declined with increasing age.

Males with a disability or LTC aged 18-24 years were most likely to have participated in sport and physical recreation with the highest participation rate of 68%. Gender also appears to be associated with participation as overall more males (57.3%) participated than females (52%). This is true for all age groups from 18 years to 65 years and over.

The severity or degree of disability appears to be related to the levels of sports participation. The lowest levels of participation were observed for those reporting a disability with 'severe' core activity limitation. Participation levels increased as the degree of limitation reduced.

There were similar rates of participation amongst disability types classified as 'Sight, hearing, speech' (51.3%) and 'Physical conditions' (50.7%). A lower rate was reported for those with an Intellectual disability condition (40.0%).

Summary cont'd

The vast majority of persons stating they participated in sports and physical recreation had a playing role (97.0%).

Walking for exercise ranked as the number one activity for both genders. Activities with high male participation were golf, cycling and fishing. Females were more likely to participate in swimming, aerobics/fitness and tennis.

Higher levels of non-participation were observed for those who reported-

- 'No access' to transport
- Perceived level of transport difficulty as 'sometimes have difficulty getting to places needed' or 'often have difficulty getting to places needed'
- Their self-rated health status as fair and poor.

Glossary

Conditions for reporting Disability or Long Term health condition-

CONDITION	DESCRIPTION
Physical	Limited use of arms or fingers Difficulty gripping things Limited use of legs or feet Any condition that restricts physical activity or physical work Any disfigurement or deformity Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing Chronic or recurring pain Blackouts, fits or loss of consciousness
Intellectual	Difficulty learning or understanding things
Sight-hearing-speech	Sight problems not corrected by glasses or contact lenses Hearing problems Speech problems
Psychological	Any mental health condition for which help or supervision required A nervous or emotional condition
Type not specified	Any other long-term condition that requires treatment or medication Any other long-term condition such as arthritis, asthma, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, dementia etc. Long-term effects as a result of a head injury, stroke or other brain damage

Disability or LTC- Degree of Limitations:

A person's disability or LTC can be classified by whether or not the condition caused a restriction. If so, then the limitation could further affect core or non-core activities, as described below.

Core Activity Limitations-

There are four levels of core activity limitation; profound, severe, moderate, and mild which relate to whether a person requires help, has difficulty or uses aids or equipment with any of the core activities described as self care, mobility or communication.

Core Activity Descriptions-

Self-Care	Mobility	Communication in own language
Bathing/showering	Moving around away from home	Understanding/being understood by strangers, friends or family, including use of sign/ lip reading
Dressing/undressing	Moving around at home	
Eating/feeding	Getting in or out of a bed or car	
Going to toilet		
Bladder/bowel control		

A person's overall level of core activity limitation is then determined by their highest level of limitation in these activities.

The four levels are:

- Profound- always needs help/supervise with core activities
- Severe- does not always need help with core activities
- Moderate- has difficulty with core activities
- Mild- uses aids to assist with core activities

Non-core Limitations-

A person's disability or LTC may result in difficulties with education or employment only.

Difficulties with Education

Not attending school/further study due to condition
Need time off school/study
Attend special classes/school
Other related difficulties

Difficulties with Employment

Type of job could do
Number of hours that can be worked
Finding suitable work
Permanently unable to work

Listing of Social Activities attended during the 3 months prior to interview

Recreational or cultural group activities
Community or special interest group activities
Church or religious activities
Went out to a restaurant, cafe or bar
Took part in or attended/watched sport/physical activities
Visited library, museum or art gallery
Attended movies, theatre or concert
Visited park/gardens, zoo or theme park
None of these activities

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Appendix 1

PLAYERS, with a Disability or LTC	Male	Female	Persons
	'000	'000	'000
<i>Age groups (years)</i>			
18 to less than 25	151.2	134.3	285.4
25 to less than 35	241	218.7	459.7
35 to less than 45	312.2	257	569.1
45 to less than 55	298.4	306	604.4
55 to less than 65	254.5	239.4	493.9
65 or more	346.1	306.5	652.6
<i>State or Territory</i>			
New South Wales	479.5	464.2	943.7
Victoria	406.3	370.4	776.7
Queensland	326.3	265	591.4
South Australia	110.2	111.6	221.8
Western Australia	206.7	179.7	386.4
Tasmania	40.1	33.6	73.7
Northern Territory	9.4	9.4	18.8
Australian Capital Territory	24.8	27.8	52.7
<i>Labour force status</i>			
Employed Full-time	834.1	330.3	1164.5
Employed Part-time	167.3	385.2	552.5
Unemployed	59.4	52.8	112.2
NILF - Retired	427.1	476.5	903.5
NILF - Other	115.5	216.9	332.5
<i>Household Composition</i>			
Couple only, one family households	579.4	440.8	1020.3
One family households with dependent child/ren: Couple family	438.6	368.7	807.4
One family households with dependent child/ren: One parent family	21.8	94.7	116.6
Lone person households	209.4	259.7	469
Other households	354.1	297.8	651.9
All players with a Disability, aged 18 years or over	1603.3	1461.8	3065.1