

factsandstats

Junior Participation

Participation in sport and physical activity is fundamental to the health and development of our children and youth. It provides the foundation for a healthy lifestyle and is associated with a range of benefits throughout life including social interaction, increased attentiveness, confidence, health and overall wellbeing. At the same time, we know that being inactive is a cause of many health problems such as obesity and diabetes which have increased in recent years.

Physical activity behaviour patterns are determined early in life and active children are likely to become active adults.¹ Junior participation in sport and physical activity has an important role in ensuring the future health and wellbeing of the Australian population.

Children's participation in organised sport

Organised sport is defined as sport that is organised by a club, association or school and is played outside of school hours.²

Children's participation in organised sport in 2000 and 2003^{3, 4}

The proportion of children aged 5 to 14 years who participated in organised sport outside of school hours in the twelve months prior to being interviewed increased in Western Australia and nationally.

The participation rate was higher in Western Australia than Australia. In 2003, Western Australia had the highest rate of participation of all of the states and territories.

Note: Data on children's participation by regional and metropolitan areas and Indigenous participation was unavailable.

Children's rates of participation in organised sport in 2000 and 2003^{5, 6}

Year	Western Australia (%)	Australia (%)
2000	61.4	59.4
2003	65.8	61.6

- Of the 1 630 400 Australian children who were involved in organised sport outside of school hours in 2003, nearly half (49 per cent) trained or played more than once a week, outside of school hours.⁷
- Australian children aged between 9 and 11 years were the most likely to participate in organised sport outside of school hours (67.6 per cent). This compares to 63.6 per cent of children aged between 12 and 14 years and 55.5 per cent of children aged between 5 and 8 years.⁸

Children's participation in organised sport in 2003 by gender

In Western Australia and Australia, the proportion of males aged 5 to 14 years who participated in organised sport outside of school hours was significantly greater than the proportion of females.⁹

Children's rates of participation in organised sport in 2003 by gender¹⁰

Gender	Western Australia (%)	Australia (%)
Males	72.3	68.6
Females	58.9	54.2
Total	65.8	61.6



Junior Participation

Most frequently played organised sports in Australia

The organised sports that were most frequently played outside of school hours by Australian children aged between 5 and 14 years were swimming (16.6 per cent), outdoor soccer (13.4 per cent) and netball (9.1 per cent). The most popular sport for boys was outdoor soccer and for girls netball. Note that survey respondents could report a maximum of three sports per child.¹¹

Most frequently played organised sports for boys aged 5-14 years¹²

Organised Sport	Participation rate (%)
Soccer (outdoor)	22.2
Swimming	15.7
Australian Rules	13.6
Tennis	9.5
Cricket (outdoor)	9.1
Basketball	8.6
Martial arts	6.2
Rugby league	5.6
Athletics/track and field	3.8
Hockey	2.5

Most frequently played organised sports for girls aged 5-14 years¹³

Organised Sport	Participation rate (%)
Netball	18.1
Swimming	17.5
Tennis	7.8
Basketball	6.9
Gymnastics (trampolining)	5.4
Soccer (outdoor)	4.2
Athletics (track and field)	3.8
Martial arts	3.6
Hockey	2.6
Horse riding and equestrian events	2.2

Number of organised sports played by Australian children

- Nearly one third (29 per cent) of Australian children aged between 5 and 14 years participated in two or more organised sports. Boys were more likely than girls to participate in two or more organised sports (35 per cent compared with 23 per cent).¹⁴

Number of organised sports played by Australian children in 2003¹⁵

Number of organised sports played	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
0	31.4	45.8	38.4
1	33.4	31.3	32.3
2	21.1	14.4	17.9
3 or more	14.1	8.5	11.4
Total	100	100	100

Junior Participation

Motivators and barriers to junior participation in physical activity

Motivators

The majority of Western Australian school students surveyed agreed that being physically active over the next year would 'keep me healthy', 'make me feel good about myself', and 'make or keep me fit'.¹⁶

Main motivators to junior participation in physical activity by gender¹⁷

Reason	Males (%)	Females (%)
Keeps me healthy	95.0	97.0
Keeps me fit	96.0	96.0
Makes me feel good about myself	89.0	88.7

Barriers¹⁸

The main barriers to participation in physical activity for primary and secondary students in Western Australia were:

- Current physical activity perceived to be sufficient;
- No-one to be physically active with;
- A preference for TV/electronic games; and
- Not being very good at physical activity.

Socio-economic status and junior participation in Western Australia

- Socio-economic status is strongly related to participation in organised physical activity outside school. Gender, non-English speaking background, unemployment and single parent families are all important factors in children's participation in out of school organised physical activity.¹⁹
- Australian children from households in the top 20 per cent of overall socio-economic status, as measured by the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) were much more likely to participate in an organised sport or dancing than those in the lowest 20 per cent (81 per cent compared with 52 per cent).²⁰
- Almost 70 per cent of Western Australian children born in Australia participated in organised sport, compared to 55.6 per cent of those born overseas. In addition, children with a parent born in Australia or a main English speaking country were more likely to participate than those born in an overseas non-English speaking country.²²
- Western Australian children living in couple families were more likely to participate in organised sport outside of school hours than Western Australian children living in one-parent families (67.6 per cent compared with 59 per cent).²³
- Western Australian children living in couple families with both parents employed were the most likely to participate in organised sport.²⁴

Western Australian junior rates of participation in organised sport in 2003 by employment status of parents²⁵

Employment status of parents	Participation rate (%)
One Parent Families	
Parent employed	68.5
Parent not employed	49.5
Couple families	
Both parents employed	75.7
One parent employed	59.3
Neither parent employed	28.7

Junior Participation

Where students play sport²⁶

Fifty three per cent of Western Australian students surveyed in years 7 to 12 who participated in sport played their 'first nominated' (that is, their 'priority' or 'first choice') sport in a community competition (42 per cent for a club and 11 per cent for their school). Although fewer identified a socially played sport as their 'first nominated' sport, it was the most common form of sport among 'second' and 'third' nominated sports, and tends to be played more frequently.²⁷

Western Australian participation rates of sports played in 1997 by organisational structure²⁸

Organisational structure	Sport 1 (%)	Sport 2 (%)	Sport 3 (%)
Community sport (for a club)	42	14	5
Social sport	31	29	19
School sport (excludes physical education)	15	11	7
Community sport (for school)	11	4	2

In addition to the above, 93 per cent of the students surveyed saw social sport as being important/very important while 76 per cent shared a similar preference for organised sport.²⁹

Benefits of junior participation in physical activity³⁰

It has been demonstrated that active children have:

- Better managed weight;
- Lower blood pressure;
- Healthier blood cholesterol levels;
- Fewer mental health problems; and
- Increased energy, attention and wellbeing.

Physical activity also provides important opportunities for physical and social skill development in children and youth.

Footnotes

- ¹ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. (2001). Getting Western Australians more active: a strategic direction report from the Premier's physical activity taskforce. Premier's physical activity taskforce: Perth, Western Australia. p14.
- ² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003). Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. (No. 4901.0). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author. p49.
- ³ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2000). Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. (No. 4901.0). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author. p21.
- ⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003). Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. op. cit. p21.
- ⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2000). Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. op. cit. p21.
- ⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003). Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. op. cit. p21.
- ⁷ Ibid. p6.
- ⁸ Ibid. p21.
- ⁹ Ibid. p21.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. p21.
- ¹¹ Ibid. p24.
- ¹² Ibid p24.
- ¹³ Ibid. p24.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p5.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. p22.
- ¹⁶ Hands, B., Parker, H., Glasson, C., Brinkman, S. & Read, H. (2004). Physical activity and nutrition levels in Western Australian children and adolescents: summary. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Hands, B., Parker, H., Glasson, C., Brinkman, S. & Read, H. (2004). Physical activity and nutrition levels in Western Australian children and adolescents: report. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p13.
- ¹⁹ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. (2001). op. cit. p14.
- ²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics. The young and the restful – the effects of recreational choices and demographic factors on children's participation in sport. (unpublished).
- ²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. Western Australian data (unpublished).
- ²² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003). Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. op. cit. p21.
- ²³ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. Western Australian data (unpublished).
- ²⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics. Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities. Western Australian data (unpublished).
- ²⁵ Ibid. unpublished data.
- ²⁶ Taggart, A. and Sharp, S. (1997). Adolescents & sport: determinants of current and future participation. Perth, Western Australia: Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre, Edith Cowan University. p19.
- ²⁷ Ibid. p19.
- ²⁸ Taggart, A. and Sharp, S. op. cit. p19.
- ²⁹ Ibid. p30.
- ³⁰ Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce. op. cit. pp14-15.