

SPORTAUS

AusPlay Focus

Older Australians' Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

October 2018

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A focus on Older Australians' participation in sport and physical activity



The Australian Government and Sport Australia are encouraging all Australians to take part in physical activity via the 'Move It Aus - Find Your 30' campaign.

In 2017, over 1 in 7 Australians were aged 65 years and over. The number of Australians aged 65 and over is projected to more than double in the next 40 years.¹

While it is generally accepted that 'Older Australians' means those aged 65 and over, Older Australians are a diverse group, with different ages, socio-economic backgrounds, life experiences and lifestyles. These factors all influence the ageing process. For example, there is a life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, with a lower proportion of Indigenous people aged 65 and over.

Starting earlier with:

40-54 YEARS



55-64 YEARS



65-74 YEARS



75+ YEARS

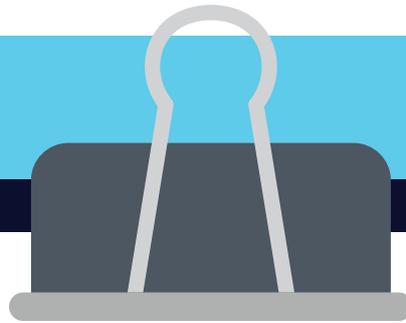


For these reasons and for the purpose of this report, we define 'Older Australians' as 55 years and over. We do, however, also provide valuable comparisons between different age-groups:

¹<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/australias-welfare-2017-in-brief/contents/ageing-and-aged-care>

This report focuses on Older Australians' participation in sport and physical activity using data collected in the AusPlay survey [AusPlay].

All Australian residents are in scope of the survey and data spans all sports and physical activities besides housework and gardening.



Adults who participate in AusPlay are asked about up to 10 physical activities that they participated in over the past 12 months. They are asked a range of questions, including:

The type of physical activities that they participated in
[e.g. walking, swimming]

Whether the activity was organised or took place at a venue or not

If organised, the venue where the activity took place
[e.g. sports club, private studio] and the cost of these activities

The frequency of participation over the past 12 months
[e.g. once a year, once a week]

The duration of the most recent session of each type of activity

The motivations for participation in each activity participated in, and

Any barriers to continued participation in these activities and/or reasons for non-participation.



AusPlay Participation Data

AusPlay is a national telephone survey funded and led by Sport Australia. It commenced in October 2015 and is the largest and most comprehensive survey of its kind ever conducted in Australia.



EACH YEAR AT LEAST
20,000
PEOPLE AGED 15
OR OVER COMPLETE
THIS SURVEY.

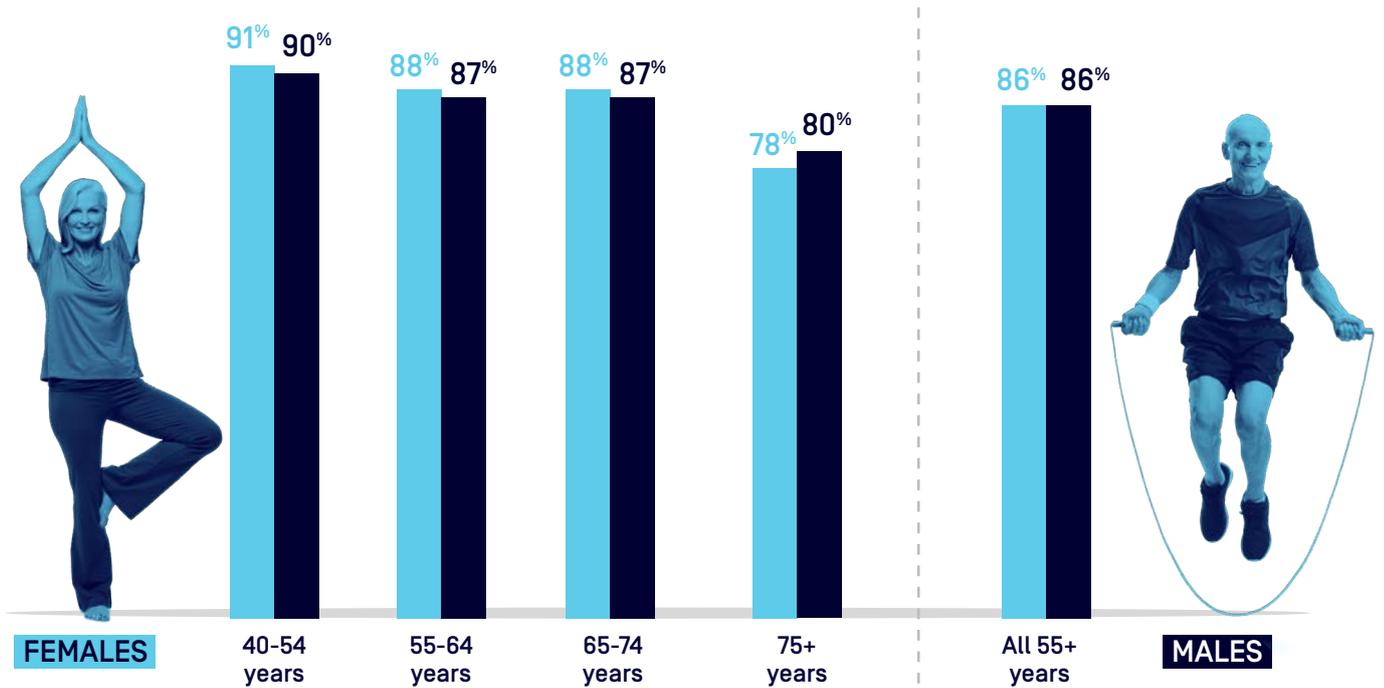


This report aggregates all AusPlay data collected from October 2015 until the end of June 2018 ensuring there is a large sample to conduct meaningful and robust comparisons of Older Australians' participation rates across various population groups of interest.

This aggregated data has been weighted based on population demographics to produce unbiased **yearly estimates** of the number and proportion of Older Australians participating in various types of sports and physical activities.

How active are Older Australians?

Participation tends to decrease with age, although it doesn't drop significantly until the 75 years and over age-group*.



FREQUENCY

44% of Older Australians aged 55 and over are active 5 times or more per week.

*At least once per year

How active are Older Australians?

Frequency increases slightly from the 40-54 to 55-74 age-groups before decreasing for those aged 75 years and over. This decrease is more pronounced for women than men.



FEMALES	40-54	55-64	65-74	75+	55+
At least once a year	91%	88%	88%	78%	86%
1+ times a week	85%	83%	83%	74%	81%
3+ times a week	66%	68%	67%	57%	65%
5+ times a week	43%	47%	47%	39%	45%



MALES	40-54	55-64	65-74	75+	55+
At least once a year	90%	87%	87%	80%	86%
1+ times a week	78%	78%	78%	74%	78%
3+ times a week	56%	60%	65%	58%	61%
5+ times a week	35%	41%	45%	41%	43%



TOTAL	40-54	55-64	65-74	75+	55+
At least once a year	90%	87%	87%	79%	86%
1+ times a week	80%	80%	82%	74%	80%
3+ times a week	61%	64%	66%	57%	63%
5+ times a week	39%	44%	46%	40%	44%

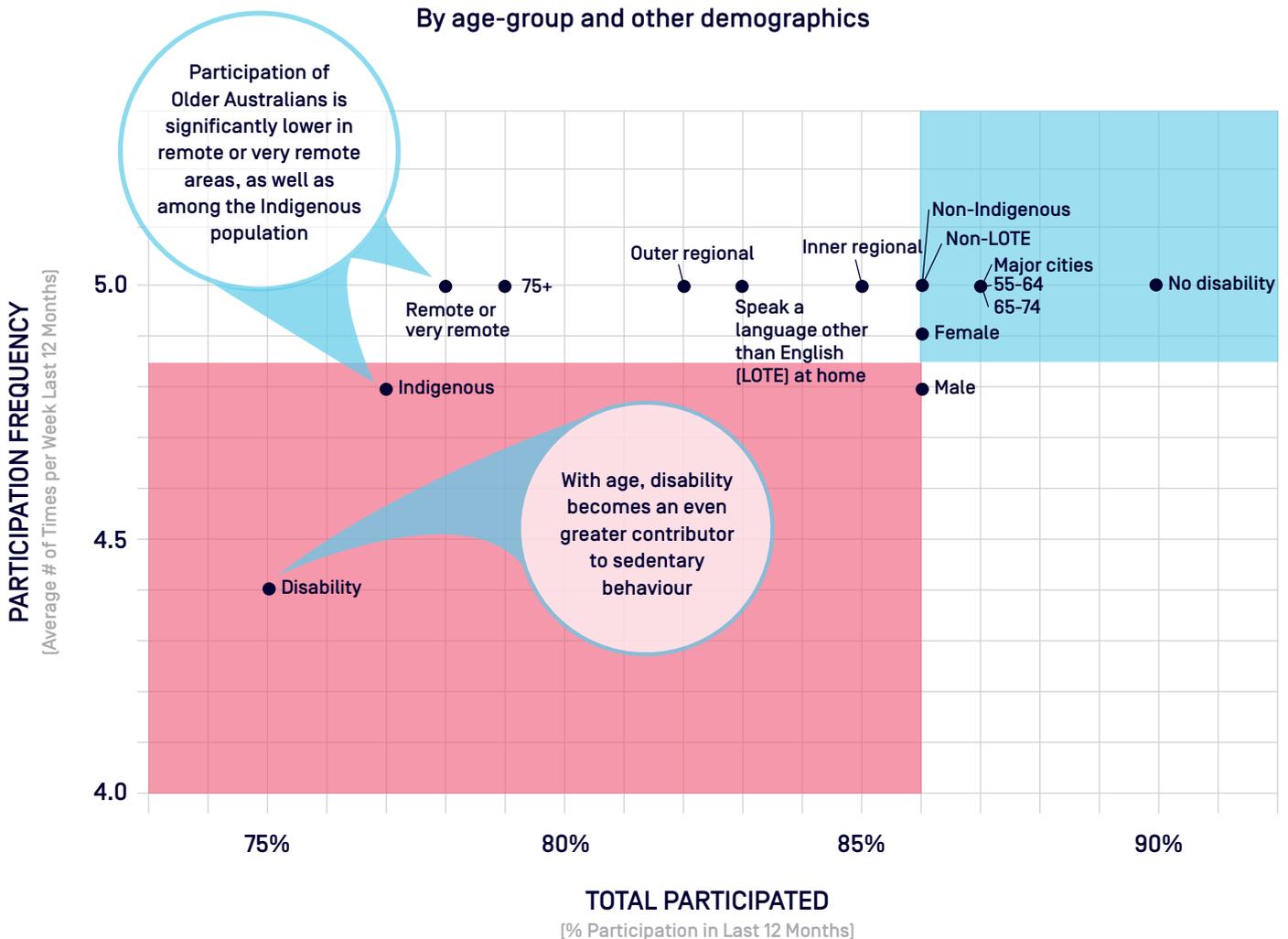
Participation rate and frequency by demographic factors

The following chart shows participation rates and frequencies across a number of population groups.

For each group, it plots:

- the participation rate – the proportion of Older Australians who have participated in sport or physical activity over the past 12 months, and
- average participation frequency – for those Older Australians who do participate, the average number of times per week they participate in sport or physical activity.

Participation and Frequency:
By age-group and other demographics



Meeting the physical activity guidelines

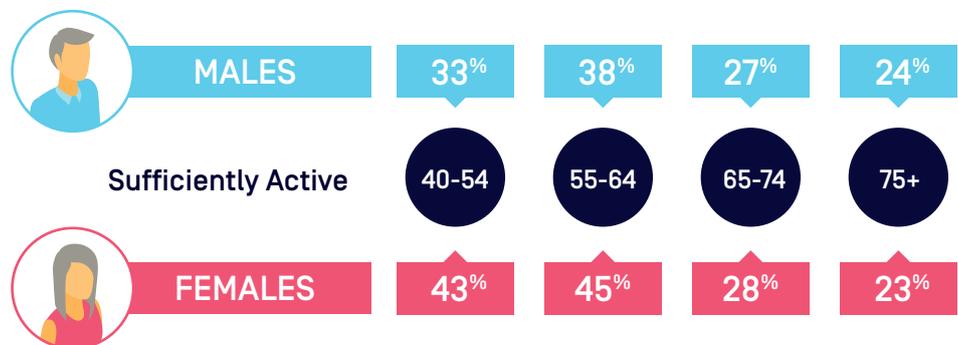
What are the physical activity guidelines*?

AGE GROUPS	FREQUENCY AND DURATION	INTENSITY REQUIREMENTS
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 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



Women 40-64 are more likely to meet the physical activity guidelines compared to men of the same age.

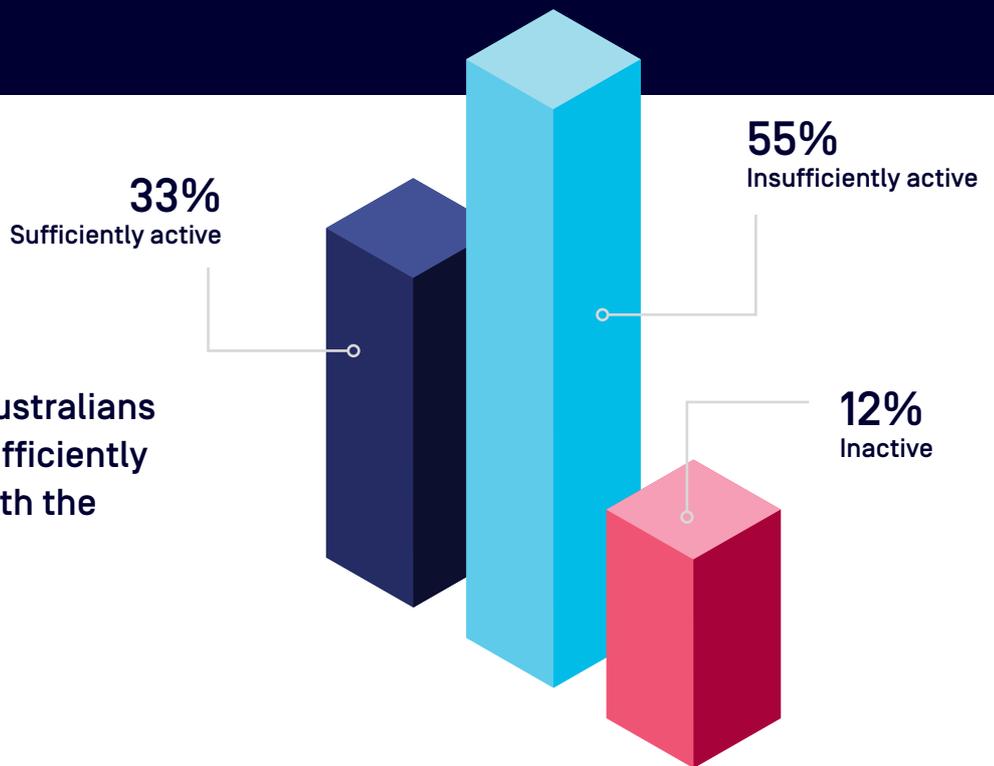
More Australians meet the guidelines at 55-64 years of age, especially men, compared to the younger age-group of 40-54.

The proportion of sufficiently active Older Australians (both men and women) decreases significantly after 64 years of age.

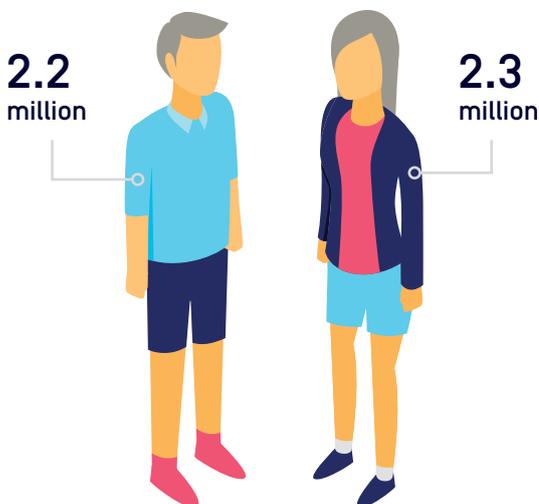
Direct comparisons between the 55-64 and 65+ age-groups must be made with the knowledge that the guidelines are different for these age-groups.

How many Older Australians are active enough according to the guidelines?

Overall only a third of Australians aged 55 and over are sufficiently active in accordance with the simplified guidelines.



An estimated 4.5 million Australians aged 55+ do 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 most recent session;

Sport Australia 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);

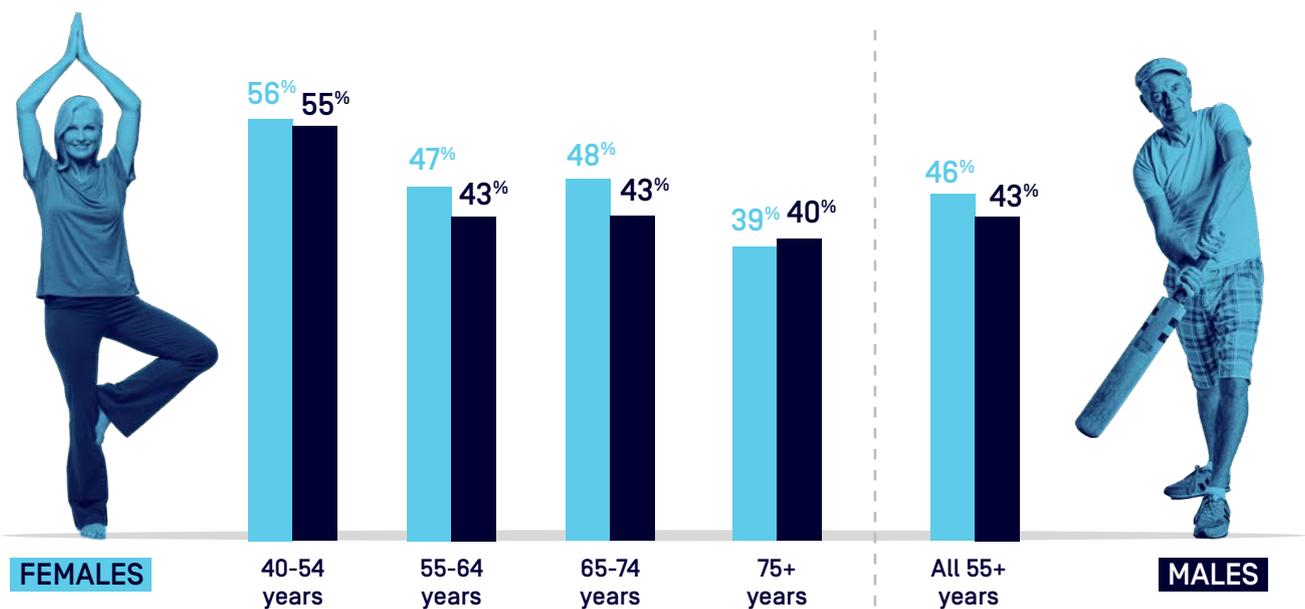
Finally both moderate and vigorous intensity total derived times of physical activity are categorised according to the above simplified guidelines.

What types of activities do Older Australians engage with?

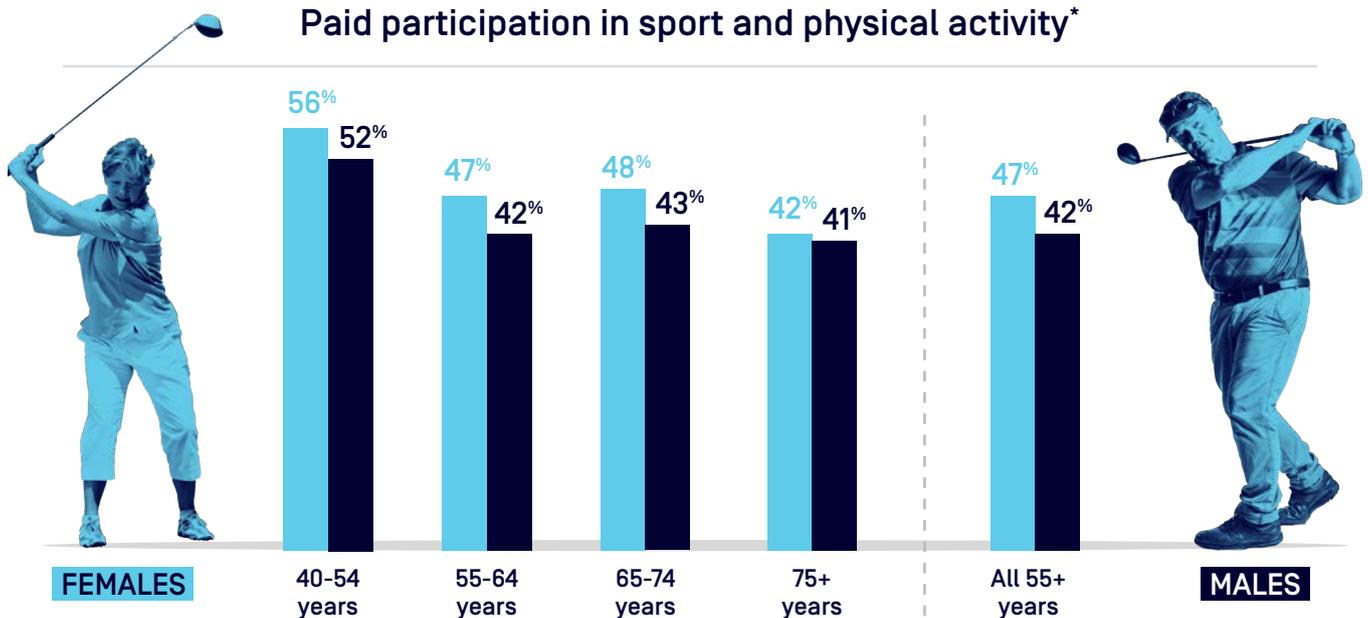
Participation in organised sport and physical activity for Older Australians follows a general pattern whereby they participate less as they age.

Older women are more likely than older men to engage in organised, paid participation.

Participation in organised sport and physical activity*



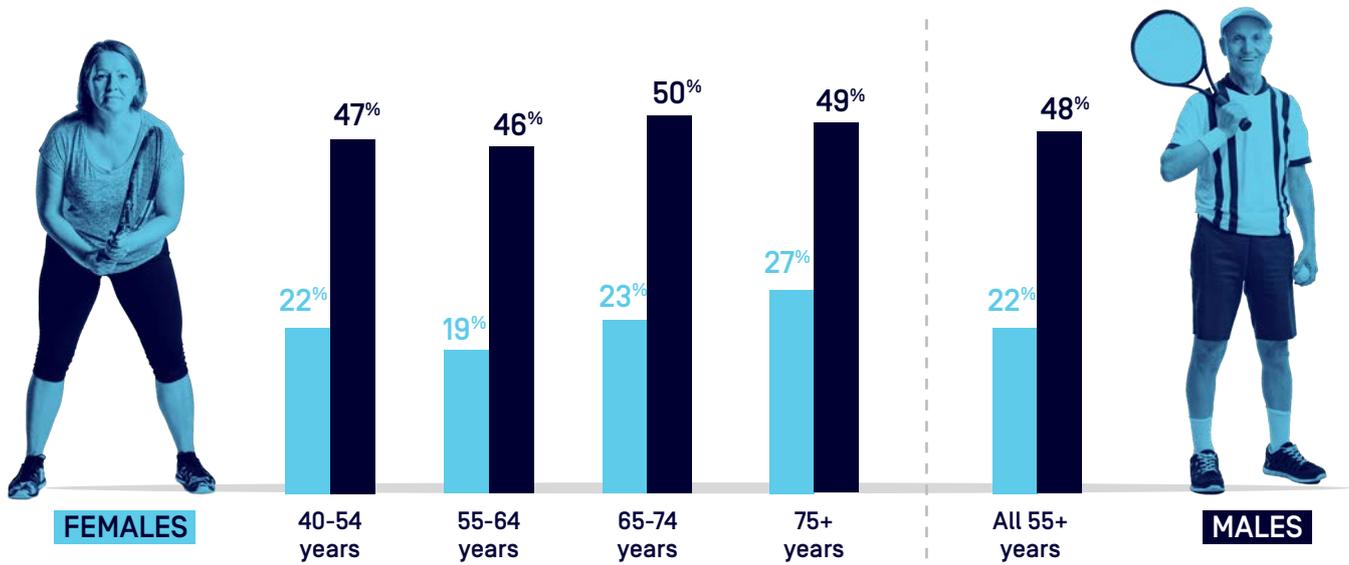
Paid participation in sport and physical activity*



*At least once per year

What types of activities do Older Australians engage with?

Participation in club sport*



Older men are more likely than older women to participate via sports clubs or associations.

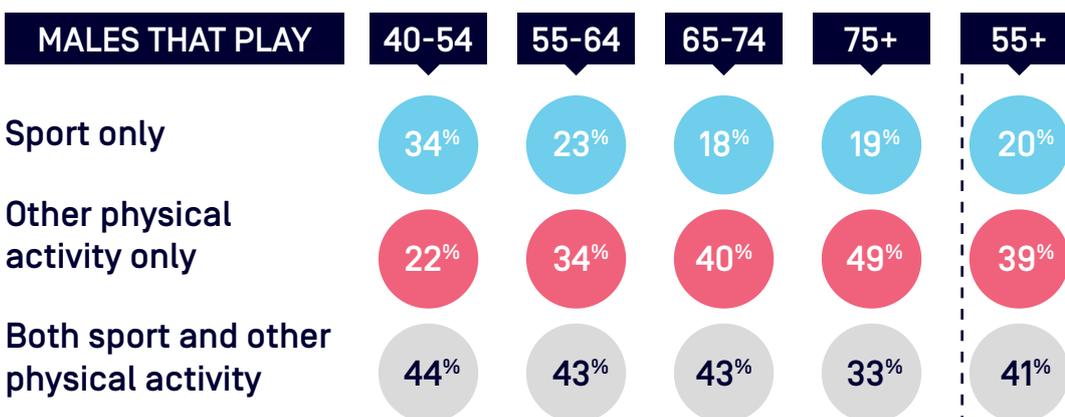
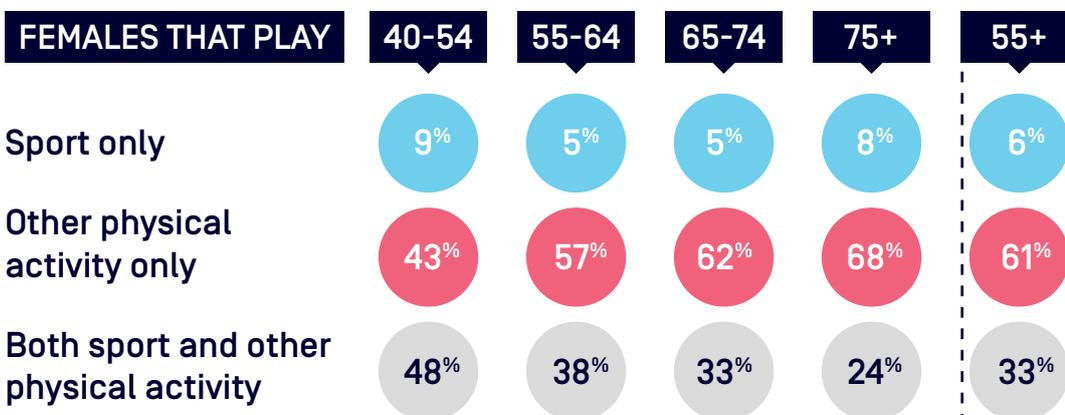
*At least once per year

What types of activities do Older Australians engage with?

From 55 years of age, participation in sport-related activities decreases.

This is more pronounced among men, as women are already involved in more non-sport-related physical activity (such as walking, yoga or fitness/gym) at the younger ages of 40-54.

Participation in sport and/or physical activity*



Significantly less Older Australian men aged 55 years and over (compared to the younger age-group of 40-54) play sport-related activities only. The proportion of men who participate in both sport and physical activity remains stable until around 74 years of age, before declining among the oldest age-group when more men aged 75 years and over switch to non-sport-related physical activities only.

*At least once per year

What types of activities do Older Australians engage with?

Duration of activity (most recent session) is longer on average for sport-related activities and provides a health benefit for Older Australians who can maintain their participation in sport.

Overall though, Australians participate in more non-sport-related activities, and at increasingly shorter durations, as they age.

Average duration (in minutes) of last session



	40-54	55-64	65-74	75+	55+
Sport only	60	63	98	120	90
Other physical activity only	47	45	45	38	45
Both sport and other physical activity	55	53	54	45	53

Average number of sessions per year



	40-54	55-64	65-74	75+	55+
Sport only	100	99	88	90	83
Other physical activity only	174	208	208	209	208
Both sport and other physical activity	205	236	236	241	238

The top 10 sports and physical activities for Older Australians

The following charts show the top 10 sports and physical activities for all Older Australians aged 55 years and over.



Top 10 activities for men – overall*



54%
Walking
[recreational]



22%
Fitness/Gym



14%
Cycling



14%
Golf



12%
Swimming



6%
Running
[incl. athletics]



6%
Bush
Walking



5%
Fishing
[recreational]



4%
Bowls



4%
Tennis



Top 10 activities for women – overall*



67%
Walking
[recreational]



31%
Fitness/Gym



14%
Swimming



6%
Yoga



6%
Cycling



5%
Pilates



4%
Bush
Walking



4%
Golf



4%
Tennis



3%
Running
[incl. athletics]

Among Older Australians, fishing is unique to men while pilates and yoga are unique to women

*At least once per year

The top 10 sports and physical activities for Older Australians

Among Older Australians, participation in organised cycling, sailing, cricket, running/jogging/athletics is unique to men while organised yoga, pilates, dancing and martial arts is unique to women.



Top 10 activities for men – organised*



14%
Fitness/Gym



12%
Golf



5%
Swimming



4%
Bowls



3%
Tennis



2%
Walking
[recreational]



1%
Cycling



1%
Sailing



1%
Running
[incl. athletics]



1%
Cricket



Top 10 activities for women – organised*



23%
Fitness/Gym



7%
Swimming



5%
Yoga



4%
Pilates



4%
Golf



3%
Walking
[recreational]



3%
Tennis



2%
Bowls



2%
Dancing
[recreational]



2%
Martial Arts

*At least once per year

Different activities for different life stages

The following table lists the top 10 sports or physical activities, by age-group and gender*.

AGE GROUP	FEMALES		MALES		
40-54	 Walking [recreational]	60.4%	 Walking [recreational]	35.5%	While Walking and Fitness/Gym are the dominant activities at these ages, men especially are still involved in sports such as Football, Tennis, and Cricket.
	 Fitness/Gym	37.0%	 Fitness/Gym	26.2%	
	 Swimming	20.9%	 Cycling	21.6%	
	 Running [incl. athletics]	15.8%	 Running [incl. athletics]	20.1%	
	 Cycling	14.5%	 Swimming	16.3%	
	 Yoga	9.6%	 Golf	8.3%	
	 Bush walking	6.9%	 Football/soccer	6.8%	
	 Pilates	5.9%	 Bush walking	6.8%	
	 Tennis	4.1%	 Tennis	6.5%	
	 Netball	3.1%	 Cricket	5.7%	
55-64	 Walking [recreational]	69.9%	 Walking [recreational]	50.8%	Most women 55-64 have dropped out of sport altogether, except for low impact activities like Swimming and Cycling. Running has reduced significantly, while half of men and more than 2/3 of women are now taking part in Walking.
	 Fitness/Gym	31.4%	 Fitness/Gym	22.5%	
	 Swimming	16.9%	 Cycling	17.7%	
	 Cycling	8.0%	 Swimming	13.5%	
	 Yoga	7.7%	 Golf	11.7%	
	 Pilates	6.3%	 Running [incl. athletics]	8.9%	
	 Bush walking	5.9%	 Bush walking	7.4%	
	 Running [incl. athletics]	4.7%	 Fishing [recreational]	5.3%	
	 Tennis	4.0%	 Tennis	4.6%	
	 Golf	3.2%	 Surfing	3.6%	

*At least once per year

Different activities for different life stages

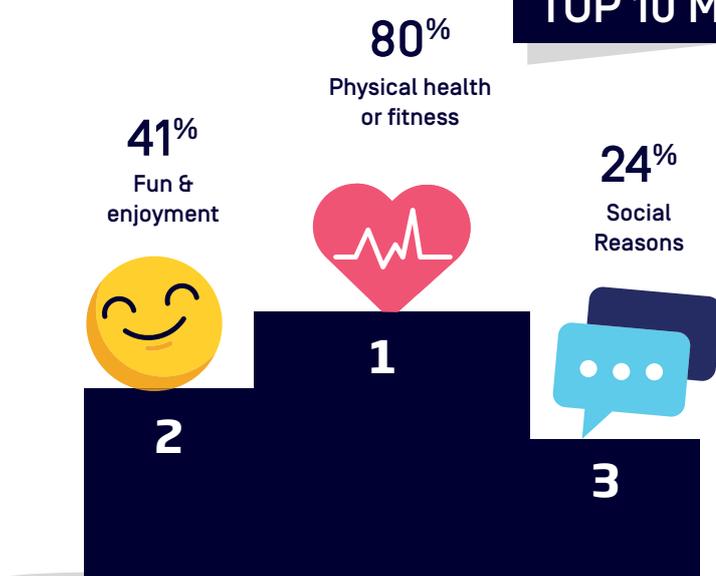
AGE GROUP	FEMALES	MALES	
65-74	 Walking (recreational) 69.4%	 Walking (recreational) 59.2%	Cycling is still a popular activity among men of these ages. Walking has reached peak levels among men. Except for Golf growing among both males and females, and Martial arts now appealing to women 65+, all other activities have lower levels of participation at these ages.
	 Fitness/Gym 31.3%	 Fitness/Gym 21.4%	
	 Swimming 12.4%	 Golf 16.0%	
	 Yoga 5.2%	 Cycling 13.7%	
	 Cycling 5.0%	 Swimming 12.8%	
	 Pilates 4.9%	 Bowls 5.3%	
	 Golf 4.7%	 Bush walking 5.1%	
	 Tennis 3.8%	 Fishing (recreational) 4.4%	
	 Bush walking 3.7%	 Running (incl. athletics) 4.1%	
 Martial arts 3.2%	 Tennis 3.6%		
75+	 Walking (recreational) 58.1%	 Walking (recreational) 51.8%	Bowls reaches peak participation in both genders. Very few women and less than 2% of men are still involved in Running past 75 years of age. Participation in Walking has also started to decline.
	 Fitness/Gym 28.4%	 Fitness/Gym 22.0%	
	 Swimming 8.5%	 Golf 13.4%	
	 Bowls 5.2%	 Bowls 8.5%	
	 Golf 4.1%	 Swimming 8.3%	
	 Martial arts 2.9%	 Cycling 5.7%	
	 Tennis 2.5%	 Tennis 3.0%	
	 Yoga 2.4%	 Bush walking 2.7%	
	 Dancing (recreational) 2.3%	 Fishing (recreational) 2.7%	
 Pilates 2.1%	 Running (incl. athletics) 1.6%		

*At least once per year

Motivations for and barriers to participation of Older Australians

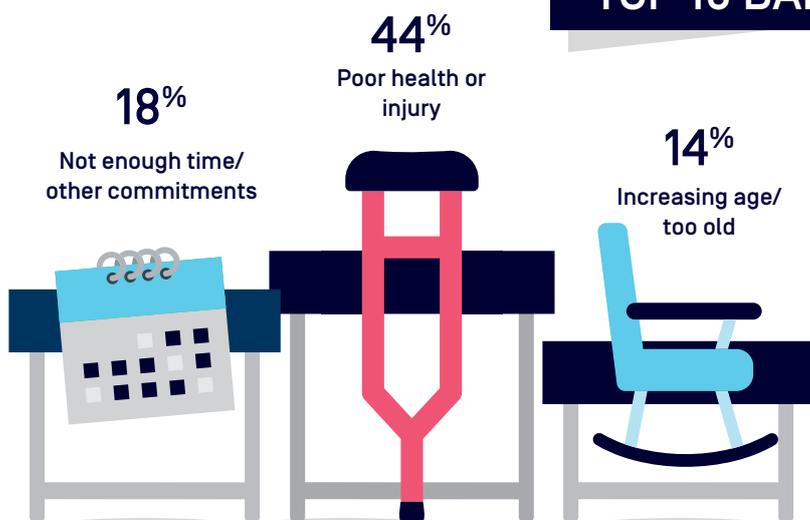
Health related reasons (including physical and mental health as well as disability or poor health or injury) are the main reasons for Older Australians choosing to participate or not participate in sports or physical activities.

TOP 10 MOTIVATIONS



To be outdoors/to enjoy nature	14%
To lose weight/keep weight off/tone	14%
Walk the dog	13%
Psychological/mental health/therapy	12%
Way of getting around	10%
Physio/rehab/physical therapy/post op	10%
Hobby	4%

TOP 10 BARRIERS



Physical job	10%
Disability	9%
Not a priority [any more]	5%
Don't like sport/physical activity	4%
Too lazy	4%
No reason in particular	3%
Fear of injury	1%

Motivations for and barriers to participation of Older Australians

Some barriers to participation such as ‘increasing age/too old’ and ‘no opportunities/facilities/clubs in my area’ [the latter not in the top 10 barriers for Older Australians aged 55 years and over] are unique to the 64-74 and 75 years and over age-groups.

There are also some differences in motivations between age-groups.

While mental health is a motivation for Older Australians, it is less prominent from 65 years of age, where ‘physio/rehab/physical therapy/post op’ increasingly become reasons for engaging in physical activity.

Older Australians aged 75 years and over are more likely to use physical activity as a ‘way of getting around’. ‘To lose weight/keep weight off/tone’ loses importance in this age-group.

40-54

Physical health or fitness	Psychological/mental health/therapy
Fun/enjoyment	Walk the dog
Social reasons	To be outdoors/to enjoy nature
Other	Way of getting around
To lose weight/keep weight off/tone	Physio/rehab/physical therapy/post op

55-64

Physical health or fitness	Psychological/mental health/therapy
Fun/enjoyment	Walk the dog
Social reasons	To be outdoors/to enjoy nature
Other	Way of getting around
To lose weight/keep weight off/tone	Physio/rehab/physical therapy/post op

65-74

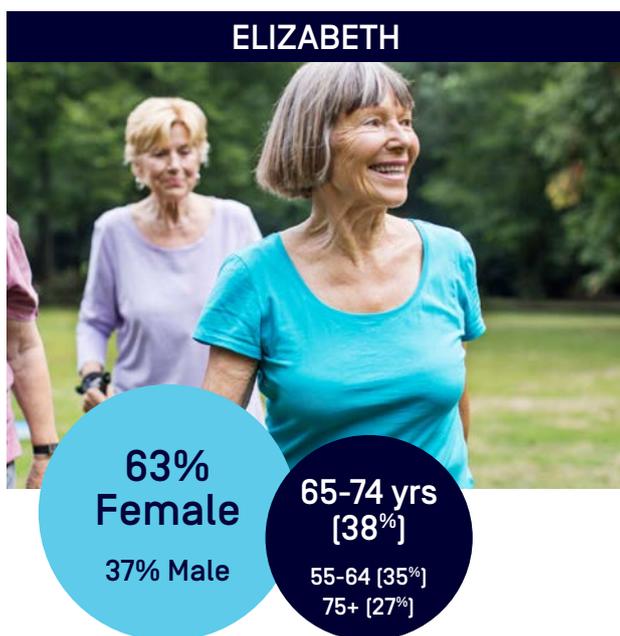
Physical health or fitness	To lose weight/keep weight off/tone
Fun/enjoyment	Walk the dog
Social reasons	Psychological/mental health/therapy
Other	Physio/rehab/physical therapy/post op
To be outdoors/to enjoy nature	Way of getting around

75+

Physical health or fitness	Physio/rehab/physical therapy/post op
Fun/enjoyment	To be outdoors/to enjoy nature
Social reasons	Walk the dog
Other	Psychological/mental health/therapy
Way of getting around	To lose weight/keep weight off/tone

Older Australians and physical activity: one size doesn't fit all

Cluster analysis of AusPlay data has produced 6 personas that represent the different types of Older Australians aged 55 years and over when it comes to participation in sport and physical activity.



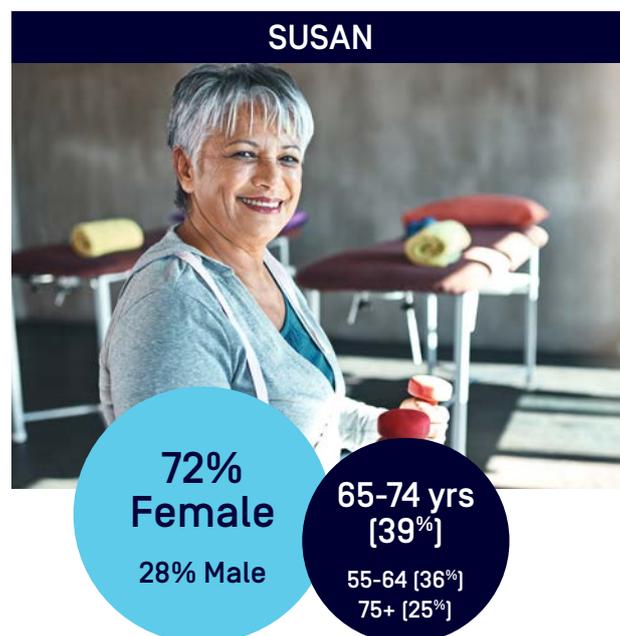
26% of the population of Older Australians 55+ (or 1.7 million)

Participates in non-sport-related physical activity only

Regularly active on average 5 times per week

Mostly participates in walking

Motivated by physical health or fitness primarily



18% of the population of Older Australians 55+ (or 1.2 million)

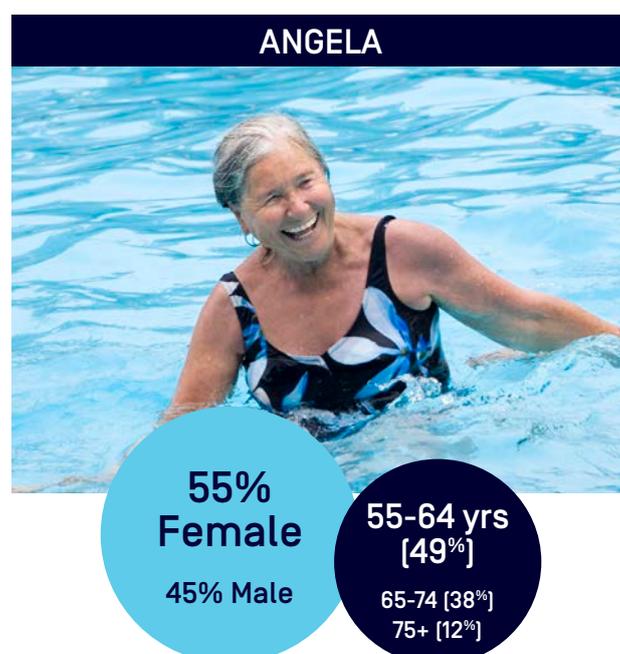
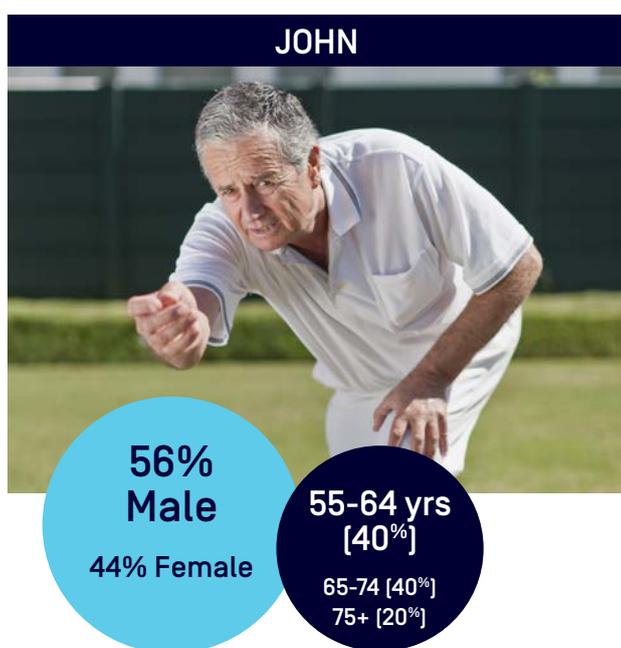
Participates in non-sport-related physical activity only

Active on average 4 times per week

Participates in walking and fitness/gym activities

Motivated by physical health or fitness

Older Australians and physical activity: one size doesn't fit all



16% of the population of Older Australians 55+ (or 1.1 million)

Participates in both sport and physical activity

Regularly active on average 5 times per week

Walks a lot but also participates in sport through a sport club or association

Motivated by fun/enjoyment, social reasons and physical health or fitness

16% of the population of Older Australians 55+ (or 1.0 million)

Participates in both sport and physical activity

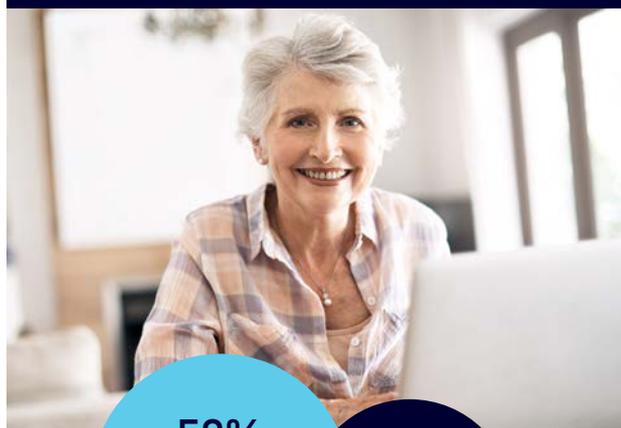
Very active on average 7 times per week

Mostly participates in swimming and walking

Motivated by fun/enjoyment and physical health or fitness

Older Australians and physical activity: one size doesn't fit all

MARY



56%
Female

44% Male

75+ yrs
[34%]

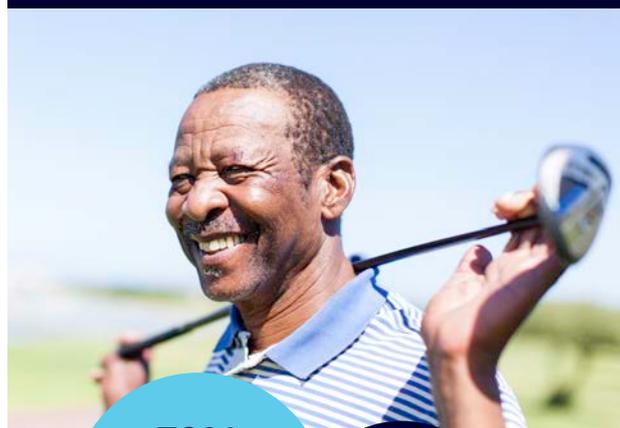
55-64 [33%]
65-74 [33%]

14% of the population of Older Australians 55+
[or 0.9 million]

Is not active at all

Strong chance the lack of activity is due to
health-related reasons [61%]

STEVE



73%
Male

27% Female

55-64 yrs
[44%]

65-74 [34%]
75+ [22%]

11% of the population of Older Australians 55+
[or 0.7 million]

Participates in sport only

Plays sport on average 2 times per week

Motivated by fun/enjoyment and physical
health or fitness

In Summary

The health of the increasing number of Older Australians is an important social and economic challenge facing Australia.



It is also an opportunity, as extending a lifetime of good health enables Older Australians to continue to contribute socially, culturally and economically to the wider community. Sport and physical activity offers physical and mental health benefits for Older Australians and can be an enabler of their on-going community engagement.

In Summary



Analysis of AusPlay data shows that...

While **86%**

of Older Australians aged 55 years and over are participating in physical activity



and **44%**

are active 5 times or more per week

only

1/3

meet the physical activity recommendations.



In Summary

Challenges remain with increasing access to, and participation in, sports and physical activities amongst some cohorts of the Older Australian population:

- With age, disability becomes an even greater contributor to sedentary behaviour; and
- Participation of Older Australians is significantly lower in remote or very remote areas, as well as among the Indigenous population.

While social and community connectedness can be a challenge as we age, regular physical activity, in particular sport, can provide opportunity for social engagement. However, Older Australians participate less in organised sport or physical activity as they age.



Achieving sustained improvements in Older Australians' participation in sport and physical activity more generally will require strategies that address their barriers to participation and help them stay active in spite of ageing, poor health and injury concerns.

Sport Australia's 2018 'Move It Aus – Better Ageing' grants program is an important step to encourage sport and physical activity providers to adapt and offer more options for Older Australians to be active.

AusPlay will continue to track, on a continuous basis throughout the year, the participation of Older Australians in sport and physical activity in Australia.



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 the Insights team at Sport Australia via:

AusPlay@sportaus.gov.au