



## **MIGRANTS AND PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

There is growing evidence on how physical inactivity augments the risks for cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases. As such, physical activity programs have become an important factor in health promotion. Although numerous campaigns have been initiated, there are still sub-groups within the population that exhibit lower levels of physical activity. Ethnic minorities, people born in non English-speaking countries, older people, women and people with low levels of education have been identified as more likely to have lower participation rates (ABS cat 4159.0; Crespo et al., 1996). This article will provide a brief overview of the participation of migrants in sport and physical activities. The information presented is sourced from the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) and the 2003 Children's Participation in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities Survey. This paper will also present recent analysis of this data reported to the 2005 National Physical Activity conference and the 2005 Sports Management Association of Australia and New Zealand annual conference.

Australia is one of the most diverse populations in the world. The United Nations 2002 Migration Report stated that Australia has the ninth largest overseas-born population (International Migration Report 2002). As of 30 June 2005, almost one in every four Australians were overseas-born, representing over 4.5 million people with net overseas migration accounting for 46% of Australia's population growth in 2004-05 (ABS cat 3412.0). The impact of migrants on population growth has also influenced the Australian economy (Productivity Commission Report 2006). The Skilled Stream of the Migration Program comprised 43% of all permanent arrivals in Australia for 2004 - 05. Besides meeting the needs of business and industry, migration has also shaped Australian culture and society through its social, political, cultural and linguistic contributions (Wojak 1995).

In order for migration to be successful in both policy and practice, the settlement policy for migrants acknowledges the need to provide opportunities to not only adjust to Australian life but for migrants to become active and vital participants in the community (Multicultural Australia 2003). However, there are a range of institutional or individual barriers that may limit participation, particularly in social or leisure activities. Proficiency in speaking the host country's official language affects the level of success of an immigrants' settlement (Hugo 2001). The 2001 census showed that 15.9% of the national population spoke a language other than English at home. Of migrants who arrived between 1996 – 2001, 60.9% spoke another language other than English at home compared to 45.6% of long standing migrants. There is also a difference in the pattern of English proficiency in migrants born in non-English speaking countries. Of recent migrants who spoke a language other than English, 65.8% reported speaking English well compared to 58.4% of long standing migrants. However, only 15.7% of long standing migrants do not speak English well or at all compared to 22.4% of recent migrants.

Aside from language, there are different factors that exist that may influence social participation. Migrants may prioritise earning a living and caring for their family

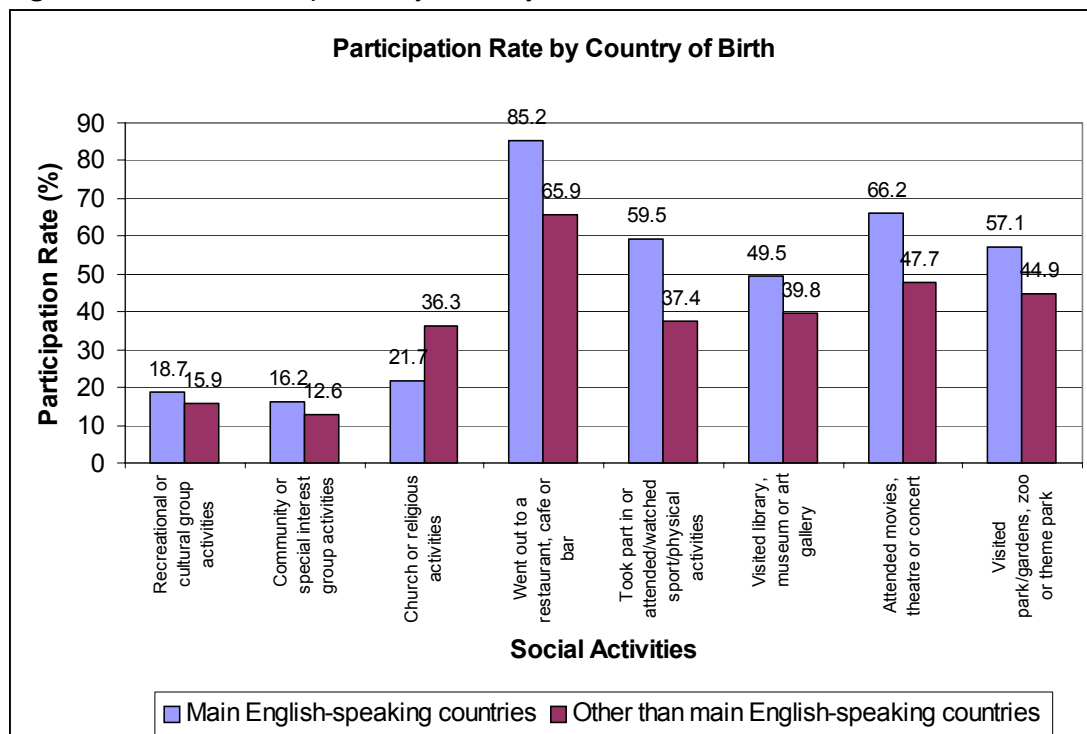
during the process of settlement and as such may choose to focus on learning the language, working long hours or in multiple jobs and not have enough time for social or leisure activities. They may also consider work to be a substitute for physical activity during leisure time (Surguine & Ebrahimi 2004). Priorities placed on education as opposed to recreational and leisure activities may also be relevant and there are environmental and cultural factors to consider as well (Keogh 2002).

The availability of culturally appropriate community programs for migrant groups is important to facilitate social participation and with sport and physical activity in particular, issues such as mixed groupings in exercise classes, swimming pools or the presence of male instructors may be barriers to female migrants from participating in certain activities. And there may be cultural preferences for spending leisure time within the family rather than in a public setting. In this sense, non-participation in sport and physical activity may be a subset of broader non-participation in other at-large community and social activities (Wilson 1998).

### Social Participation

The 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) asked about participation in community and social activities in the previous three months prior to interview. These activities included attendance at or participation in sporting events. The data show that except for church or religious activities, participation levels by people born in main English-speaking countries in social activities were higher than for those born in other than main English-speaking countries (Figure 1) (GSS 2002).

**Figure 1.** Social Participation by Country of Birth.



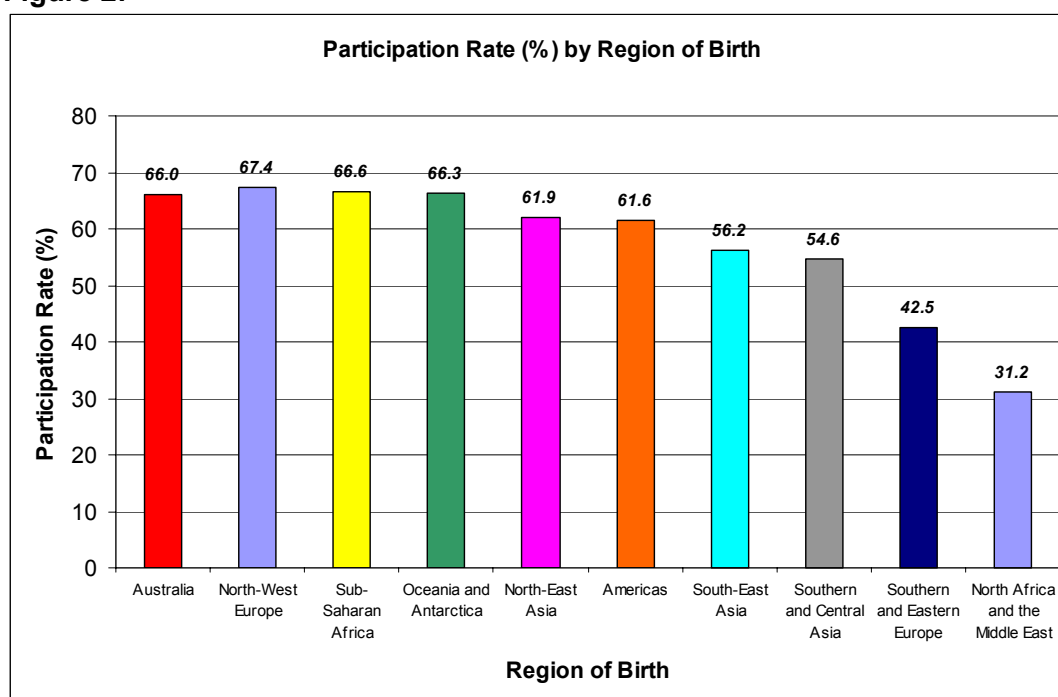
*Data for the variables in Figure 1 are included as Table 1 in the appendix.*

## Sport Participation

The detailed information on participation in sport and physical activities by adults compiled from the GSS reveal the following about participation by migrants. Participation is defined as having taken part in sport or physical activities, but not limited to being a player, on at least one occasion in the 12 months prior to interview. Non-playing roles include coaches, referees, umpires and club officials.

- In the last 12 months prior to the survey, people born in North-West Europe had the highest participation rate (67.4%) in sport and recreational physical activity. Respondents who listed their country of birth as North Africa and the Middle East had the lowest participation rate (31.2%). A comparison of participation rates by country of birth is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:**



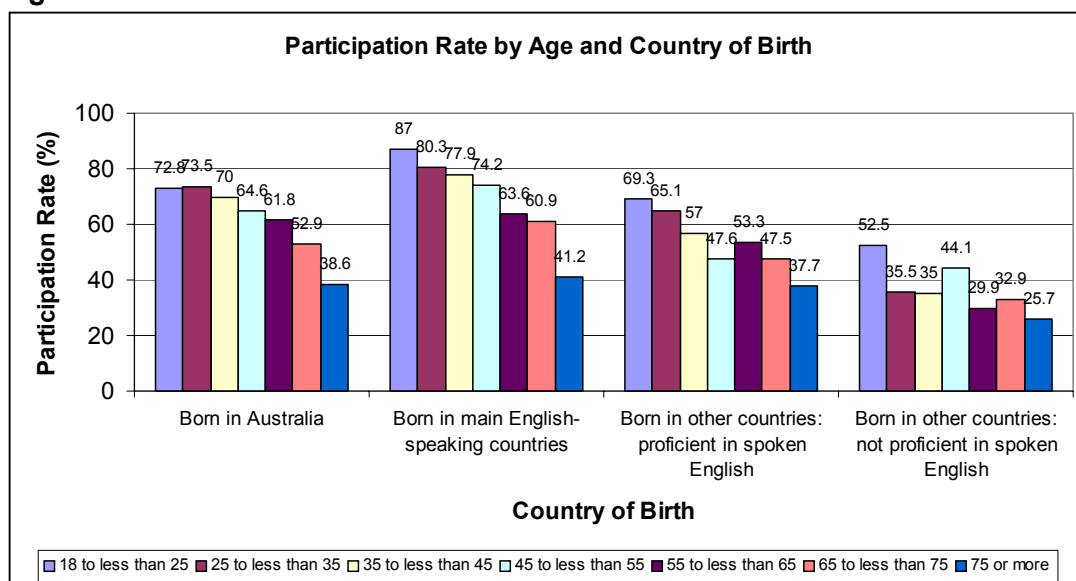
*Data for the variables in Figure 2 are included as Table 2 in the appendix.*

- Males had higher participation rate when compared to females (67% and 61.1% respectively). Males who were born in Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest participation rates (72.0%) while females whose country of birth is in North Africa and the Middle East had the lowest participation (19.5%).
- Respondents who reported their proficiency in spoken English as very well had a higher participation rate (63.0%) than those who did not speak English well (36.9%) or who did not speak English at all (17.4%).
- Participation rates for people who were born in main English-speaking countries were higher (70.7%) than those of people whose country of birth is classified as "Other than main English speaking country" (51.4%). The participation rates for people born in "Other than main English speaking country" increases depending on their year of arrival. People who arrived between 1998 - 2002 had a high participation rate (61.3%) than those who arrived between 1991 - 1997 (52.4%) and those who arrived before 1990 (49.6%).
- A lower proportion of respondents who did not speak English participated in sport and recreational physical activity in the 12 months leading to the survey

compared to respondents who can speak English very well (17.4% and 63% respectively). When participation rates are derived from both country of birth and proficiency in spoken English, people born in non-English speaking countries had a lower participation rate (51.4%) than those born in Main English-speaking countries (70.7%).

- Walking for exercise, swimming and aerobics/fitness were three of the most popular physical activities with Australians regardless of country of birth. The activities that had the highest participation rates for males born in a country not proficient in spoken English were Walking for exercise (14.4%), Soccer - outdoor (6.7%), Swimming (5.2%). For females the top three activities were: Walking for exercise (24.7%), Swimming (5.6%) and Aerobics/fitness (2.8%).
- Rates of participation declined with increasing age regardless of country of birth. However, people born in Main English-speaking countries had a higher participation rate across all age ranges compared to people born in non English-speaking countries. People aged between 65 - 74 years and born in North Africa and the Middle East had the lowest participation rate (4.8%). The data are presented in Figure 3.
- When age was standardised across the country of birth, the participation rate for people born in countries not proficient in English increased by 10 percentage points. This indicates that age may not be a major factor for participation in sport and physical activity.

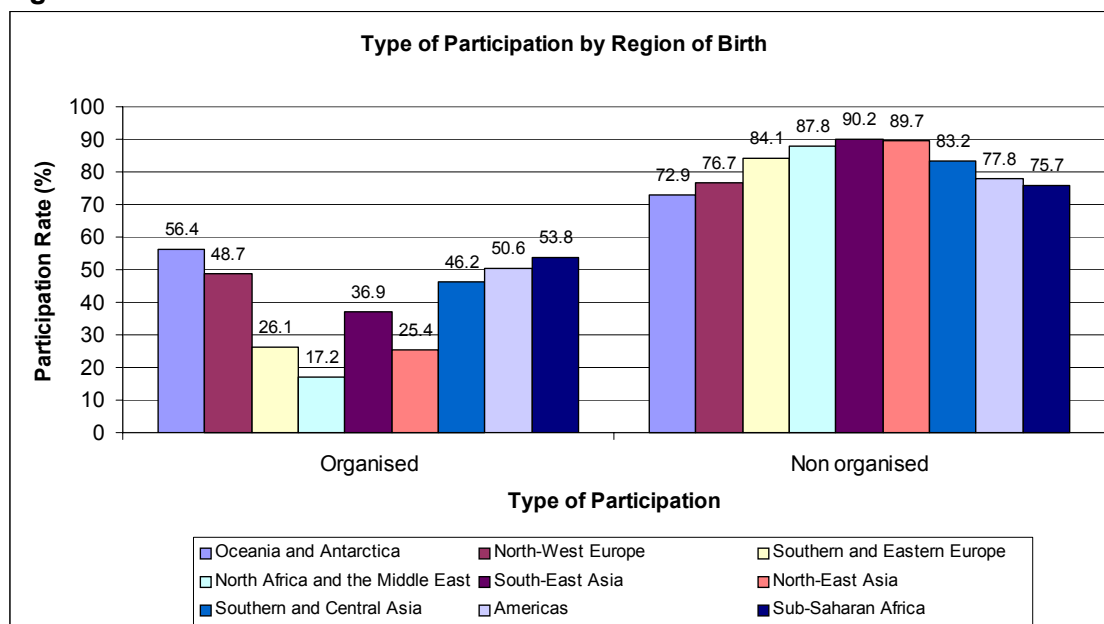
**Figure 3:**



Data for the variables in Figure 3 are included as Table 3 in the appendix.

- Participation in sport or physical activity organised by a club, association or other organisation was highest among people born in the Oceania & Antarctica region (56%); a lower proportion of people born in North Africa and the Middle East participated in organised sport or physical activity (17%). Non-organised sport or physical activity had higher participation rates regardless of country of birth; with people born in North-East and South-East Asia having the highest participation rates (90% for both). The trend in participation is presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4:**



Data for the variables in Figure 4 are included as Table 4 in the appendix.

Previous analysis of the 2002 GSS data and data from 2003 Children's Participation in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities showed that birthplace and proficiency in speaking English had a consistent relationship with participation in children and adults (Stratton et al. 2005<sup>1,2</sup>).

- Children who were born overseas or born to parents whose country of birth is non English-speaking make up 16% and 12% of the child population respectively. Although they represent a relatively small number, their overall participation in organised sporting or physical activities are relatively low (49% for overseas born and 39% for children whose parents were born in a non English-speaking country). The overall child participation rate is 62%. As such, children born overseas are less likely to participate than Australian born children and those whose parents were born overseas in a non-English speaking country are less likely to participate than children whose parents were born in mainly English speaking countries. These variables are associated with children being less likely to participate in sport and physical activity.
- Adult respondents who reported to speak some English were less likely to participate in sport and physical activity. People who spoke no English at all were less likely to participate in sport or physical activities.

### Summary

- The overall lower levels of participation in sport and physical activity by the migrant population is also reflected in nearly all other social and community activities. The inclusion of non-playing roles in calculating participation rates did not affect overall participation levels. This only amounted to approximately 2 % increase from the participation rates that only took into account playing roles.
- Age and gender have a major impact on levels of participation across all groups regardless of country of birth. Participation rates progressively

- decrease as age increases; Males have a higher participation rate in sport and physical activity than females.
- Birthplace is associated with lower participation rates in sport and physical activity:
    - People who reported their birthplace to be "Other than Main English-speaking" had lower participation rates in sport and physical activities (51.4%) than those born in English speaking countries (70.7%).
    - Amongst people born in "Other than Main English-speaking" countries, those who arrived between 1998 - 2002 had the highest participation rates (61.3%).
    - The lowest participation rates in sport and physical activity were most evident in people reporting their place of birth as North Africa and the Middle East. This group had the lowest overall participation (31.2%). Females from this group also had the lowest participation (19.7%). This group also had the lowest participation rates in organised sport and physical activity (17%) but had a high participation in non-organised activities (88%).
  - Proficiency in spoken English influence participation with people who can speak English very well having a higher participation rate (63%) than those who did not speak English (17.4%).
  - Walking, swimming and aerobics/fitness were the most popular activities across all the groups regardless of country of birth.

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## Appendix

**Table 1.** Participation rate in social activities in last 3 months by Country of Birth (COB) by MESC (Main English-Speaking Countries) classification by year of arrival.

	Recreational or cultural group activities	Community or special interest group activities	Church or religious activities	Went out to a restaurant, cafe or bar	Participated in or attended 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	Total
<b>Birthplace</b>	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)	No ('000)
<b>Australia</b>	1760.9	1707.8	2163.9	8655.2	6490.4	4245.1	6455.9	5386.0	764.5	10501.3
<b>Main English-speaking countries</b>										
<i>Arrived before 1990</i>	241.9	209.3	290.1	1077.2	736.2	628.0	821.8	684.7	68.5	1285.1
<i>Arrived 1991 – 1997</i>	17.1	21.3	18.6	119.1	88.3	66.3	90.1	89.4	4.7	130.0
<i>Arrived 1998 – 2002</i>	28.7	18.2	28.9	124.4	97.3	71.6	112.4	108.9	2.4	135.2
<i>Total (incl not stated)</i>	290.5	251.8	337.6	1325.1	925.8	770.3	1028.7	887.0	75.6	1554.7
<b>Other than main English-speaking countries</b>										
<i>Arrived before 1990</i>	278.7	239.4	638.0	1199.6	669.5	635.4	837.6	757.0	238.8	1813.5
<i>Arrived 1991 – 1997</i>	50.1	35.6	145.8	221.3	122.3	172.2	180.2	187.5	34.4	350.5
<i>Arrived 1998 – 2002</i>	59.4	32.3	105.2	190.9	123.1	166.5	150.6	153.5	21.3	283.1
<i>Total (incl not stated)</i>	388.2	307.3	888.9	1612.0	914.9	974.1	1168.4	1098.2	294.4	2447.2
<b>Total</b>										
<i>Aust born</i>	1760.9	1707.8	2163.9	8655.2	6490.4	4245.1	6455.9	5386.0	764.5	10501.3
<i>Arrived before 1990</i>	520.6	448.6	928.1	2276.8	1405.7	1263.4	1659.4	1441.7	307.2	3098.6
<i>Arrived 1991 – 1997</i>	67.2	56.9	164.4	340.4	210.6	238.5	270.3	276.9	39.1	480.5
<i>Arrived 1998 – 2002</i>	88.2	50.5	134.1	315.3	220.4	238.1	263.0	262.4	23.7	418.3
<i>Total (incl not stated)</i>	2439.5	2266.9	3390.5	11592.3	8331.1	5989.5	8653.0	7371.3	1134.5	14503.3



Participation Rate (%)	Recreational or cultural group activities	Community or special interest group activities	Church or religious activities	Went out to a restaurant, cafe or bar	Participated in or attended 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	Total
<b>Birthplace</b>	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
<b>Australia</b>	16.8	16.3	20.6	82.4	61.8	40.4	61.5	51.3	7.3	100.0
<b>Main English-speaking countries</b>										
<i>Arrived before 1990</i>	18.8	16.3	22.6	83.8	57.3	48.9	63.9	53.3	5.3	100.0
<i>Arrived 1991 – 1997</i>	13.2	16.4	14.3	91.6	67.9	51.0	69.3	68.8	3.6	100.0
<i>Arrived 1998 – 2002</i>	21.2	13.5	21.4	92.0	72.0	53.0	83.1	80.5	1.8	100.0
<i>Total (incl not stated)</i>	18.7	16.2	21.7	85.2	59.5	49.5	66.2	57.1	4.9	100.0
<b>Other than main English-speaking countries</b>										
<i>Arrived before 1990</i>	15.4	13.2	35.2	66.1	36.9	35.0	46.2	41.7	13.2	100.0
<i>Arrived 1991 – 1997</i>	14.3	10.2	41.6	63.1	34.9	49.1	51.4	53.5	9.8	100.0
<i>Arrived 1998 – 2002</i>	21.0	11.4	37.2	67.4	43.5	58.8	53.2	54.2	7.5	100.0
<i>Total (incl not stated)</i>	15.9	12.6	36.3	65.9	37.4	39.8	47.7	44.9	12.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>										
<i>Aust born</i>	16.8	16.3	20.6	82.4	61.8	40.4	61.5	51.3	7.3	100.0
<i>Arrived before 1990</i>	16.8	14.5	30.0	73.5	45.4	40.8	53.6	46.5	9.9	100.0
<i>Arrived 1991 – 1997</i>	14.0	11.8	34.2	70.8	43.8	49.6	56.3	57.6	8.1	100.0
<i>Arrived 1998 – 2002</i>	21.1	12.1	32.1	75.4	52.7	56.9	62.9	62.7	5.7	100.0
<i>Total (incl not stated)</i>	16.8	15.6	23.4	79.9	57.4	41.3	59.7	50.8	7.8	100.0

**Table 2.** Participation rate in sport or recreational physical activity in last 12 months by COB by sex of person.

	Total		Male		Female	
	('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)	Participation Rate (%)
Australia	6926.0	66.0	3491.3	68.5	3434.6	63.6
Oceania and Antarctica	7266.7	66.3	3675.7	69.1	3591	63.6
North-West Europe	902.1	67.4	497	69.8	405.1	64.7
Southern and Eastern Europe	345.0	42.5	196	44.1	149.0	40.7
North Africa and the Middle East	59.5	31.2	41	42.7	18.5	19.5
South-East Asia	240.6	56.2	114.1	61.1	126.5	52.3
North-East Asia	171.5	61.9	104.7	68.8	66.8	53.5
Southern and Central Asia	113.5	54.6	74.2	63.0	39.2	43.6
Americas	98.3	61.6	52.6	67.5	45.7	56.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	86.1	66.6	50.8	72.0	35.3	60.0

**Table 3.** Participation rate by sex of person and age groups and country of birth.

		Born in Australia		Born in main English-speaking countries		Born in other countries: proficient in spoken English		Born in other countries: not proficient in spoken English	
		('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)	Participation Rate (%)
<b>Male</b>	18 to less than 25	613.5	77.1	41.3	94.1	98.7	78.8	0.4**	10.4
	25 to less than 35	878.7	76.7	123.6	86.6	104.5	68.7	8.4**	56.6
	35 to less than 45	736.7	71.5	135.6	79.2	152.6	66.0	11.1*	41.1
	45 to less than 55	561.0	64.7	139.2	76.2	112.5	50.3	21.4*	43.3
	55 to less than 65	368.2	60.1	81.1	62.9	88.7	52.9	10.9*	26.0
	65 to less than 75	197.9	53.2	53.6	66.6	61.8	52.7	15*	30.7
	75 or more	135.3	49.2	27.7	48.7	20.1	44.6	6.7*	28.1
	Total	3491.3	68.5	602.1	74.6	638.9	60.2	73.8	35.2
<b>Female</b>	18 to less than 25	537.6	68.5	36.1*	80.2	58.8*	57.6	3.5**	100.0
	25 to less than 35	813.3	70.4	79.2	72.0	93.7	61.4	9*	26.3
	35 to less than 45	711.8	68.5	130.2	76.7	109.0	47.8	10.8*	30.3
	45 to less than 55	599.6	64.5	109.9	71.9	79.5	44.3	26.8*	44.7
	55 to less than 65	409.0	63.5	74.5	64.4	65.6	53.8	17*	33.1
	65 to less than 75	242.4	52.7	35.3	54.0	31.3	39.8	20.6*	34.6
	75 or more	120.9	31.0	32.5	36.4	12.9*	30.4	6.1*	23.6
	Total	3434.6	63.6	497.7	66.5	450.9	49.8	93.8	34.7
<b>Total</b>	18 to less than 25	1151.1	72.8	77.4	87.0	157.5	69.3	3.9**	52.5
	25 to less than 35	1692.1	73.5	202.9	80.3	198.2	65.1	17.4*	35.5
	35 to less than 45	1448.4	70.0	265.8	77.9	261.7	57.0	22.0	35.0
	45 to less than 55	1160.7	64.6	249.2	74.2	192.0	47.6	48.2	44.1
	55 to less than 65	777.2	61.8	155.6	63.6	154.3	53.3	27.9*	29.9
	65 to less than 75	440.3	52.9	88.8	60.9	93.0	47.5	35.5	32.9
	75 or more	256.2	38.6	60.2	41.2	33.1	37.7	12.8*	25.7
	Total	6926.0	66.0	1099.8	70.7	1089.8	55.4	167.7	35.0

\* estimate has relative standard of error between 25% - 50% and should be used with caution

\*\* estimate has relative standard of error greater than 50% and is considered unreliable for general use

**Table 4.** Participation rate by COB and whether activity was organised by a club/ association or other organisation.

Country of Birth	Organised		Non organised		Total
	('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)	Participation Rate (%)	('000)
Oceania and Antarctica	4101.2	56.4	5300.7	72.9	7266.7
North-West Europe	439.5	48.7	691.9	76.7	902.1
Southern and Eastern Europe	90.2	26.1	290.2	84.1	345
North Africa and the Middle East	10.2*	17.2	52.2	87.8	59.5
South-East Asia	88.8	36.9	217.1	90.2	240.6
North-East Asia	43.5	25.4	153.8	89.7	171.5
Southern and Central Asia	52.4	46.2	94.4	83.2	113.5
Americas	49.7	50.6	76.5	77.8	98.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	46.3	53.8	65.1	75.7	86.1

\* estimate has relative standard of error between 25% - 50% and should be used with caution

**Table 5.** Participation rate in sport or recreational physical activity in last 12 months by proficiency in spoken English.

Proficiency in Spoken English	<i>Participated in sport or recreational physical activity in last 12 months</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>('000)</i>	<i>Participation rate (%)</i>	
<i>Very well</i>	674.9	63.0	1070.9
<i>Well</i>	377.3	48.8	773.5
<i>Not well</i>	160.9	36.9	435.6
<i>Not at all</i>	7.9**	17.4	45.1
<i>Total</i>	1220.9	52.5	2325.1

\*\* estimate has relative standard of error greater than 50% and is considered unreliable for general use

**Table 6.** Participation Rate in sport or recreational physical activity in last 12 months by COB and Age

	Oceania and Antarctica		North-West Europe		Southern and Eastern Europe		North Africa and the Middle East		South-East Asia	
	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)
<i>18 to less than 25</i>	1196.5	73.3	33.0	79.9	4.2**	32.3	12.9**	47.8	67.1	87.0
<i>25 to less than 35</i>	1782.5	73.7	141.3	82.0	22.2	50.3	9.9*	35.3	47.4	56.8
<i>35 to less than 45</i>	1538.1	70.2	201.0	77.0	58.6	50.8	24.7	40.7	55.1	48.7
<i>45 to less than 55</i>	1241.5	65.1	197.2	70.1	71.2	43.6	7.1*	22.3	35.5	43.1
<i>55 to less than 65</i>	796.2	61.8	171.7	64.6	90.5	43.1	3.2**	21.7	19.9*	54.5
<i>65 to less than 75</i>	444.1	52.7	104.7	61.0	74.9	40.8	0.9**	4.8	10.2**	43.6
<i>75 or more</i>	267.8	39.4	53.2	36.6	23.3	28.7	0.8**	8.4	5.4**	43.8
<i>Total</i>	7266.7	66.3	902.1	67.4	345.0	42.5	59.5	31.2	240.6	56.2
	North-East Asia		Southern and Central Asia		Americas		Sub-Saharan Africa			
	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)	('000)	Participation rate (%)		
<i>18 to less than 25</i>	42.0*	65.3	14.2*	66.6	10.3*	77.3	9.8*	65.4		
<i>25 to less than 35</i>	33.3	66.6	16.6*	46.0	28.9	70.4	28.2	87.7		
<i>35 to less than 45</i>	41.0	69.0	29.7*	45.9	22.1*	70.7	27.4	78.9		
<i>45 to less than 55</i>	28.3*	55.8	37*	61.2	23.7*	54.7	8.5*	34.4		
<i>55 to less than 65</i>	9.0*	39.5	9.1*	66.4	8.8*	48.5	6.6*	45.4		
<i>65 to less than 75</i>	11.3*	62.9	5.4*	56.3	1.5**	16.0	4.8*	100.0		
<i>75 or more</i>	6.6**	55.1	1.5**	74.3	2.9**	100.0	0.7**	21.1		
<i>Total</i>	171.5	61.9	113.5	54.6	98.3	61.6	86.1	66.6		

\* estimate has relative standard of error between 25% - 50% and should be used with caution

\*\* estimate has relative standard of error greater than 50% and is considered unreliable for general use