



Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission

July 2022 AusPlay Focus:

# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES SPORTS

## From then to now

The 22nd Commonwealth Games are taking place in Birmingham, UK between 28 July and 8 August 2022. The Games have come a long way from the first event (the British Empire Games) in 1930.



1930

### HAMILTON

11 teams  
400 athletes



2002

### MANCHESTER

Para sports included as part of the main program



2022

### BIRMINGHAM

72 teams  
6,500+ athletes

In the 21 Games between 1930 and 2018 Australia has:



Won **2,102** medals  
[818 Gold, 667 Silver, 617 Bronze]<sup>1</sup>



Placed **1st** on the medal table **13 times**



Never ranked **lower than 5th** on the medal table

## Sports included in the 2022 Games

Athletics  
(inc running/jogging)\*

Badminton

Basketball 3x3\*

Beach volleyball

Boxing

Cricket T20

Cycling\*

Diving

Gymnastics

Hockey

Judo

Bowls\*

Mountain biking

Netball

Powerlifting\*

Rugby 7s

Squash

Swimming\*

Table tennis\*

Triathlon\*

Weightlifting

Wrestling

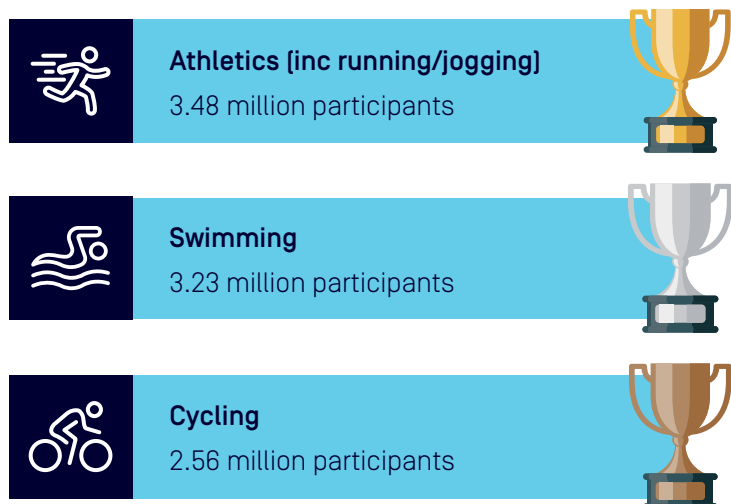
\*Para-sport or para version included

1. Extracted from GraceNote 20 June 2022

## PARTICIPATION IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES SPORTS BY AUSTRALIANS 15+

Overall, **9.37 million** Australians aged 15+ participate in at least one of the sports that will feature at the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Athletics (including running/jogging), Swimming and Cycling are the sports that Australians participate in the most. These top three don't change by gender, age, location or those who speak a language other than English at home (LOTE).



Beneath the top three, we do see differences. Most noticeably, Badminton is popular among the LOTE community and Bowls and Table tennis are popular among over-55s.

Largely driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to find activities that lend themselves to physical-distancing, many sports have increased in popularity since the Gold Coast Games were held in 2018. Across all population groups these included Athletics (inc running/jogging), Basketball, Cycling, Mountain biking and Swimming.

**Notes:**

In order to provide the most reliable estimates possible, the participation information presented in this report is generated using an aggregated dataset of all AusPlay survey results from October 2015 to December 2021.

Participation estimates are based on all forms of the sports included in the Commonwealth Games. For example, the estimates for Cricket include all forms, not just Twenty20.



**Most popular after Athletics,  
Swimming and Cycling – by gender**

**MALES 15+**



**Basketball**  
561,000



**Cricket**  
481,000



**Mountain biking**  
244,000



**Bowls**  
180,000



**Weightlifting**  
170,000

**FEMALES 15+**



**Netball**  
525,000



**Basketball**  
230,000



**Boxing**  
122,000



**Volleyball**  
121,000



**Bowls**  
109,000

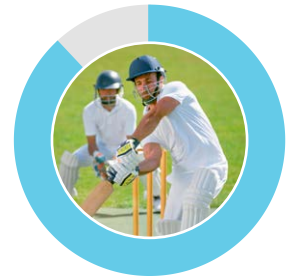
Since the 2018 Gold Coast Games:



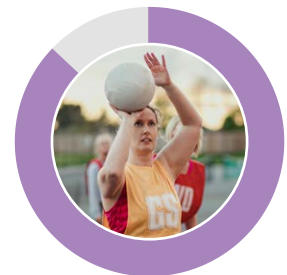
**Netball** has seen an increase in male participants



**Boxing** has seen an increase in female participants



**Cricket** has the highest proportion of male players (88%)



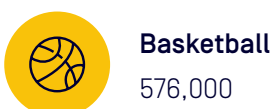
**Netball** has the highest proportion of female players (87%)



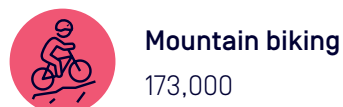
**Volleyball** has the most even profile of participants by gender (51% male, 49% female)

**Most popular after Athletics,  
Swimming and Cycling – by age**

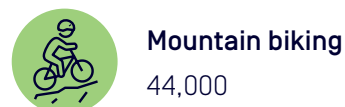
**15-34**



**35-54**



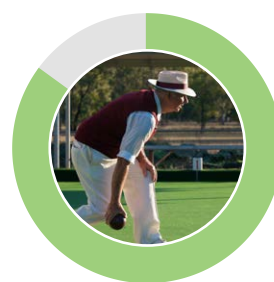
**55+**



**Rugby union** has the highest proportion of younger players:  
**81% are age 15-34**



**Mountain biking** has the highest proportion of middle-age participants:  
**59% are age 35-54**



**Bowls** has the highest proportion of older players:  
**85% are over 55**

Since the 2018 Gold Coast Games, the number of participants in **Mountain biking** has **more than doubled in all age groups**. Other sports have also seen a 2x increase in participation numbers in some age groups including **Badminton** and **Table tennis** among 15-34 year olds and **Weightlifting** among 15-34 and 35-54 year olds.

**Most popular after Athletics,  
Swimming and Cycling – by LOTE\* status**

**SPEAK LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH**



**Basketball**  
163,000



**Volleyball**  
60,000



**Badminton**  
131,000



**Weightlifting**  
45,000

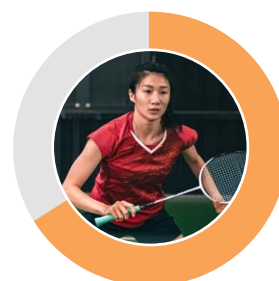


**Cricket**  
117,000

Since the 2018 Gold Coast Games, the number of participants in **Basketball, Mountain biking** and **Weightlifting** has **more than doubled** among the LOTE community.



**Badminton** has the highest proportion of players from the LOTE community:



**66%** speak a **language other than English** at home

This is followed by **Table tennis**:



**34%** speak a **language other than English** at home

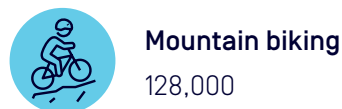
\* LOTE: Speaks a language other than English at home

**Most popular after Athletics,  
Swimming and Cycling – by location**

**CAPITAL CITIES**



**REST OF STATE**



Since the 2018 Gold Coast Games, participation in **Boxing**, **Netball** and **Table tennis** has **grown more strongly in capital cities** than in the regions. Looking forward to 2026, when the Games are coming to regional Victoria, perhaps the investment in facilities and the anticipation of seeing an international event in their local area will encourage more regional Australians to try these, as well as other, Commonwealth sports.



**Badminton** has the highest proportion of urban players:



83% live in capital cities

**Bowls** has the highest proportion of players from regional areas:



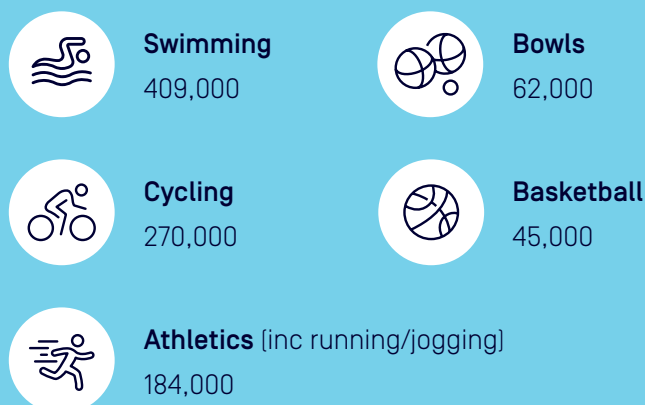
52% live outside of the capital cities

## Australians with disability

Australians who live with disability are less likely to participate in any sport and physical activity (78% compared with 91% of those without disability) and the same is true for participation in Commonwealth Games sports (29% compared with 47%).

Like other Australians, Swimming, Cycling and Athletics (inc running/jogging) are the most popular Commonwealth Games activities, although participation rates are lower.

### TOP 5 COMMONWEALTH GAMES SPORTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY



People living with disability are under-represented in most Commonwealth Games sports. **Bowls** is the exception; the **participation rate among people with disability is slightly higher [2%]** than those among those without disability [1%].

Since the 2018 Gold Coast Games, the numbers of participants in **Cycling, Swimming** and **Weightlifting** who live with disability have **increased significantly**.

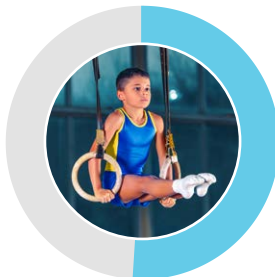


## PARTICIPATION IN COMMONWEALTH GAMES SPORTS BY AUSTRALIANS AGED 0-14

AusPlay collects information about children's participation in organised sport and physical activity outside of school hours. Unlike adults, it doesn't include non-organised activity such as going for a casual bike ride or playing football in the park with friends.



**1.34 million girls**  
 participate in any  
 Commonwealth Games  
 sport (58% of girls 0-14)



**1.26 million boys**  
 participate in any  
 Commonwealth Games  
 sport (51% of boys 0-14)

### TOP 5 COMMONWEALTH GAMES SPORTS FOR CHILDREN



**Swimming**  
 1,611,000



**Netball**  
 318,000



**Gymnastics**  
 457,000



**Athletics**  
 (inc running/jogging)  
 242,000



**Basketball**  
 345,000

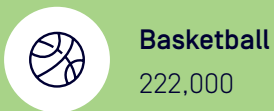
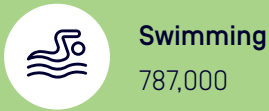
Children living in households where a **language other than English** is spoken are under-represented in four of these five sports. Swimming is the exception, where the profile of participants matches the profile of the population.



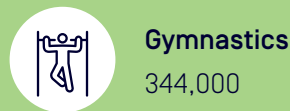
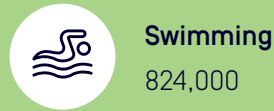


**Most popular Commonwealth Games sports for children – by gender**

**MALES 0-14**



**FEMALES 0-14**



**Cricket and Rugby union** have the highest proportion of male players (89%)



**Netball** has the highest proportion of female players (97%)



**Athletics (inc running/jogging)** and **Swimming** have the most even number of participants by gender [Athletics 51% male, 49% female; Swimming 49% male, 51% female]

**Most popular Commonwealth Games sports for children – by age**

**0–8**



**Swimming**  
1,158,000



**Gymnastics**  
302,000



**Athletics**  
(inc running/jogging)  
94,000



**Basketball**  
88,000



**Cricket**  
85,000

**9–11**



**Swimming**  
315,000



**Netball**  
125,000



**Basketball**  
125,000



**Gymnastics**  
104,000



**Athletics**  
(inc running/jogging)  
85,000

**12–14**



**Swimming**  
138,000



**Basketball**  
132,000



**Netball**  
124,000



**Cricket**  
72,000



**Athletics**  
(inc running/jogging)  
63,000



**Swimming** is the top Commonwealth Games sport for all age groups



**Gymnastics** is a popular activity for our youngest Australians. It provides a wide range of physical skills for many other activities later in life

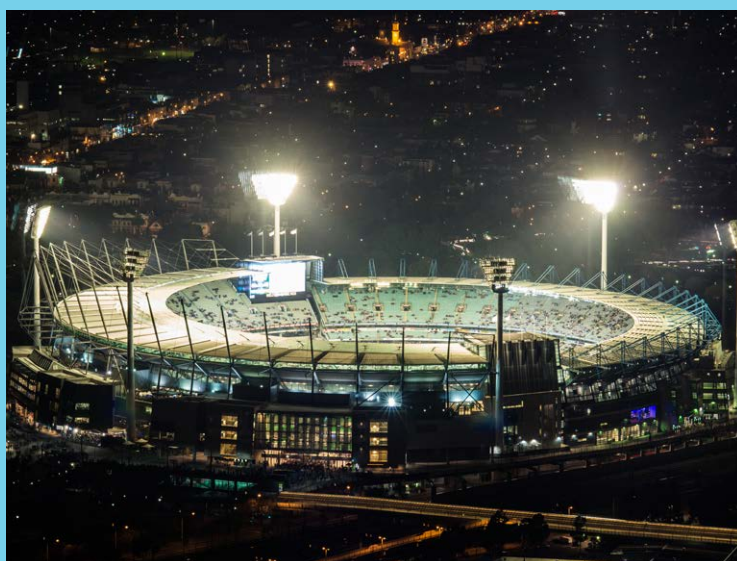
## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026

In 2026 the Commonwealth Games is coming back to Australia, with the state of Victoria taking a new multi-city approach to hosting the event. The Games will run from 17–29 March 2026.

The 2026 Games will be based in four regional hubs – Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat and Gippsland – with each hub having its own athlete village.

As in the previous Australian Games in Melbourne (2006) and Gold Coast (2018) there will be plenty of opportunity for the community to not only watch our athletes but also get involved in the action through volunteering.

Australians are known for their love of sport and our elite athletes provide us with a sense of pride and can inspire us to be more active. After the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, the majority of Australians who watched the action said they saw something that made them feel proud. Feelings of pride were most often related to our athletes showing good sportsmanship and determination. We'll be using our Community Perceptions Monitor\* to measure pride and inspiration from our athletes in Birmingham too.



\*The ASC's Community Perceptions Monitor is a monthly survey that measures Australian adults' attitudes to a range of topics relating to both high performance and community sport.





**Australian Government**  
**Australian Sports Commission**

**SPORTAUS**  
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Any further questions about AusPlay  
(or queries for additional customised reporting/  
further analysis of the dataset) can be directed  
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**[AusPlay@SportAus.gov.au](mailto:AusPlay@SportAus.gov.au)**