

# 1 Executive summary

## Background

The Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) collected information on the frequency, duration, nature and type of activities of persons aged 15 years and over for exercise, recreation and sport during the 12 months prior to interview. The survey was conducted quarterly in 2006 with total of 13,710 respondents. A summary of key findings is provided below.

## Findings — overall participation (including organised and non-organised activities)

Overall, 66.0% of people aged 15 years and over (10.9 million) participated in exercise at least once a week, down from 69.2% in 2005. The proportion of people participating in sport three or more times a week remained relatively steady (42.8% compared with 44.2% in 2005).

Females continued to be more likely to participate more often than males (with half of all females undertaking 2.5 sessions or more per week for all females (that is, median), compared with 2.0 sessions for all males). However, male participants were more likely to participate for five hours or more in the two weeks prior to their interview (35.7% compared with 26.7% of female participants).

The activities with the highest participation (at least once in the year) in 2006, in participation rate order, were: walking (36.2%); aerobics/ fitness activities (19.1%); swimming (13.6%); cycling (10.1%); and running (7.4%, replacing tennis which now has the eighth highest participation rate with 6.8%).

## Findings — organised participation

An estimated 1.6 million persons aged 15 years and over participated three or more times per week in a physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport that was organised by a club, association, fitness centre or other type of organisation. This represented a participation rate of 9.7%, compared with 11.3% in 2006. A further 2.6 million persons participated once or twice a week, resulting in one quarter all of participants (25.3%) participating in organised activity at least once per week.

Males were more likely to participate in organised sport compared to females (40.8% and 37.4% respectively). Females were more likely to participate in sports organised by fitness, leisure or indoor sports centres (14.6% compared with 12.7% of males), while males were more likely to participate at a sports and recreation club or association (30.8% compared with 23.5% for females).

In 2006, the organised activity with the highest participation rate (at least once in the year) was aerobics/fitness activities (8.0%), followed by golf (3.8%), netball (3.1%), outdoor football<sup>1</sup> (2.7%) and tennis (2.7%). Activities participated in predominantly through activities organised by a club, association, fitness centre or other organisation included triathlons (96.9%), outdoor hockey (94.7%) and lawn bowls (93.3%).

## **Findings — non-organised participation**

In 2006, the non-organised activity with the highest participation rate (at least once in the year) was walking (other than bushwalking) (35.6%), followed by aerobics/fitness activities (12.1%), swimming (12.1%), cycling (9.7%) and running (6.9%). Activities most likely to be non-organised included walking (98.5% of all walking is non-organised), cycling (95.7%), running (94.2%), bushwalking (91.9%) and swimming (88.9%).

## **Findings — Commonwealth Games**

Questions on change in peoples' choice of activities showed that before and after the Games around one quarter of participants (26.0% and 25.0% respectively) were doing an activity that they were not doing 12 months earlier. The main reason provided for taking up a new activity was health or age — 58% of people before and after the Games said these things had led them to take up a new activity.

Questions on changes to participation showed that more a quarter of participants increased their participation (29% before the Games, 28% afterwards). Of those people who increased their participation, the majority (58% before the Games, 60% afterwards) said they did this because of their health or age.

ERASS allowed people who spent more time participating to nominate not only the main reason for the increase, but also to indicate if the Commonwealth Games had influenced their decision. Before the Games, 6% of those who had increased the time spent participating said the Commonwealth Games influenced that decision. This rose to 8% in the period after the Games.

Similarly, around 5% of participants (5.0% pre-Games and 6.0% afterwards) who took up a new activity said that the Commonwealth Games had influenced their decision, although the Games had not been the main reason for taking up that activity.

In the post-Games period, one in three participants (32.0%) indicated that the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne made participants feel more positive about Australia, up from 29.0% before the Games.

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<sup>1</sup> Football was referred to as soccer in ERASS reports from 2001 to 2004.