

### 3 Main findings

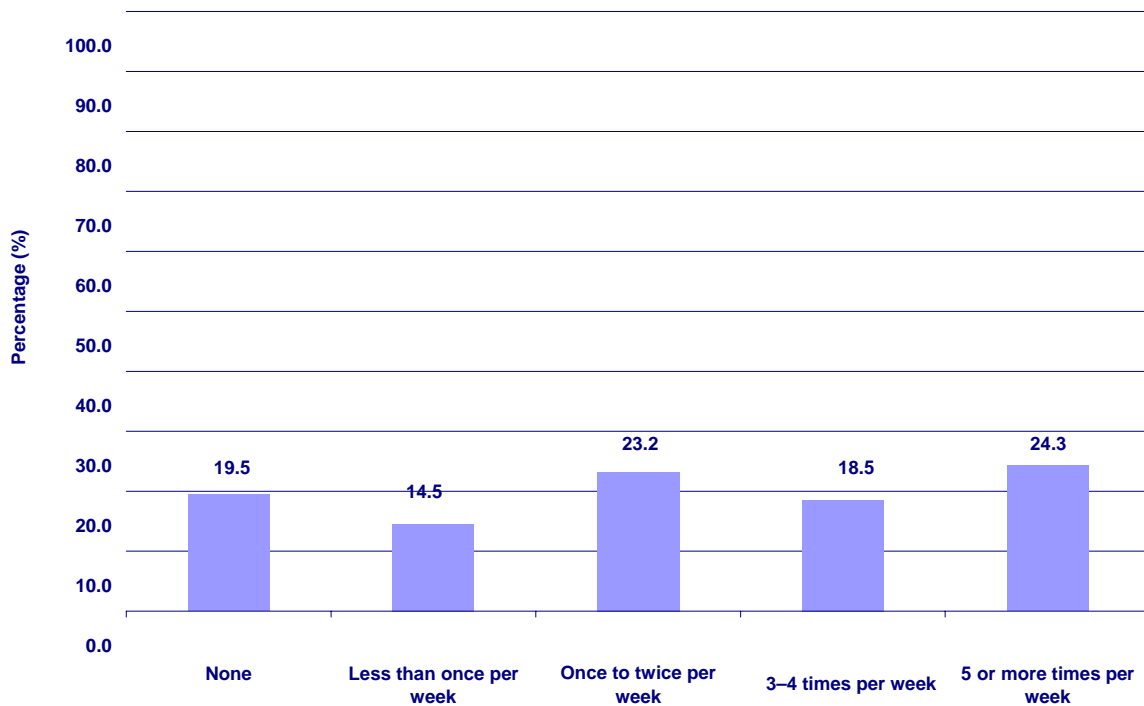
#### 3.1 Overall participation

##### Overview

During the 12 months prior to interview in 2006, an estimated 10.9 million persons aged 15 years and over participated at least once per week<sup>1</sup> in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport, a participation rate of 66.0% (Table 7). Household or garden duties, or activities that were part of work, were not included.

An estimated 7.1 million persons aged 15 years and over exercised three times a week or more (42.8%) (Table 7). A total of 5.6 million persons (34.0%) either did not participate in any activity, or participated less than once per week in the 12 months prior to interview (Figure 1 and Table 5).

**Figure 1: Weekly frequency of overall participation**



*Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)*

Of the people that participated in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport in the two weeks prior to interview, 69.4% participated for two hours or more and 31.1% participated for five hours or more (Table 11).

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the glossary for information about how 'per week' statistics are calculated.

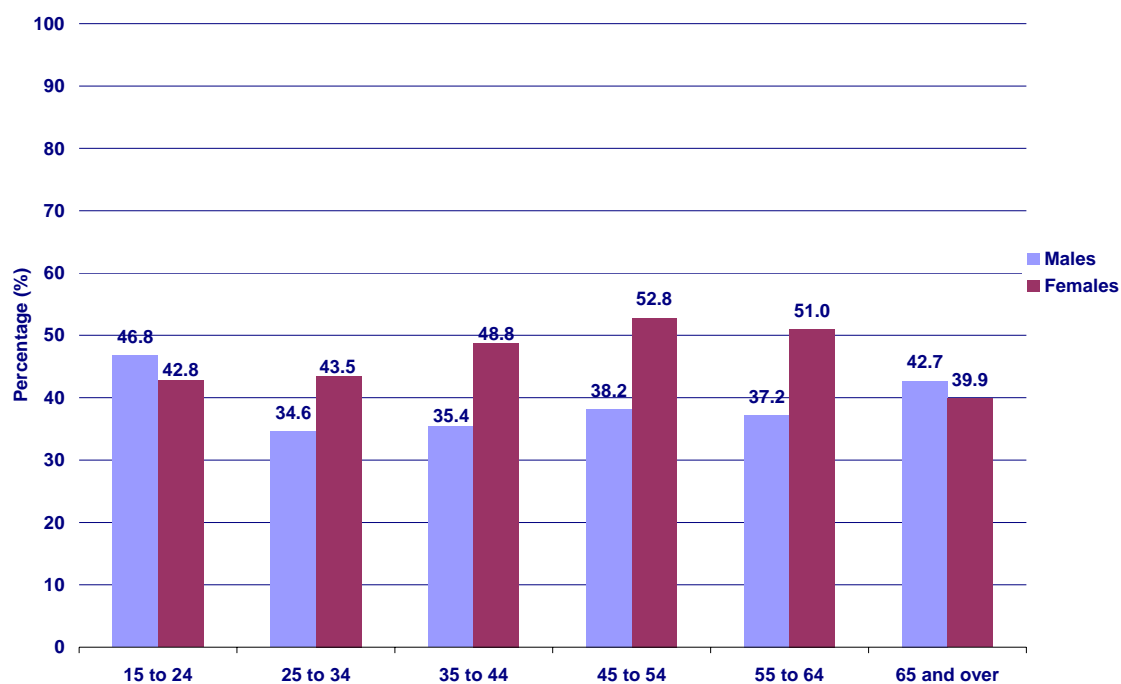
## Age and sex

In 2006, females were more likely than males to participate three times a week or more in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport (46.3% and 39.1% respectively) (Table 7).

People aged 25 to 34 were least likely to participate three times a week or more (39.1%) (Table 7).

While both sexes were fairly active in the 15 to 24-year-old age bracket, women were gradually more likely to be active as they get older, until participation rates drop significantly for females aged 65 years or older (39.9%). Conversely, males were most likely to be active between the ages of 15 and 24 (46.8%), followed by those aged 65 years and over (42.7%) (Figure 2 and Table 7).

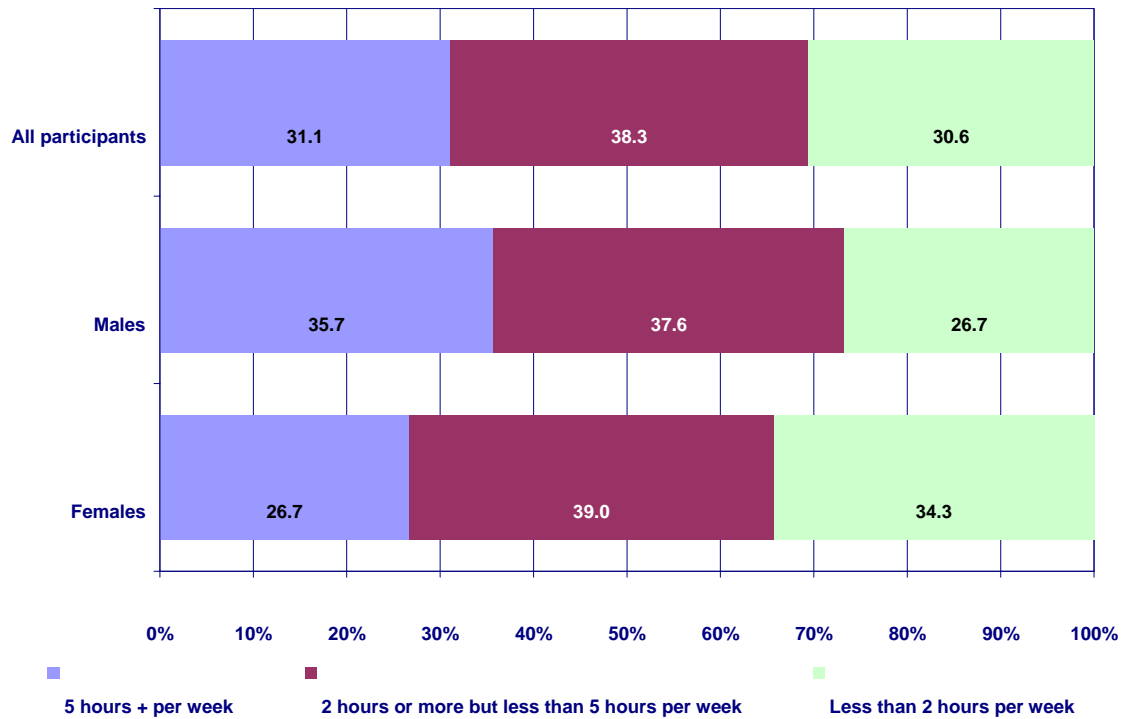
**Figure 2: Overall participation (three times a week or more) by age and sex**



Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

While females were more likely to participate more often than males, males who participated were more likely to participate for longer periods than females. Almost 36% of males who participated during the two weeks prior to interview, did so for five hours or more, compared to 26.7% of females (Figure 3 and Tables 14 and 15).

**Figure 3: Duration of overall participation in the two weeks prior to interview by age and sex — participants only**



*Base: All participants in two weeks prior to interview*

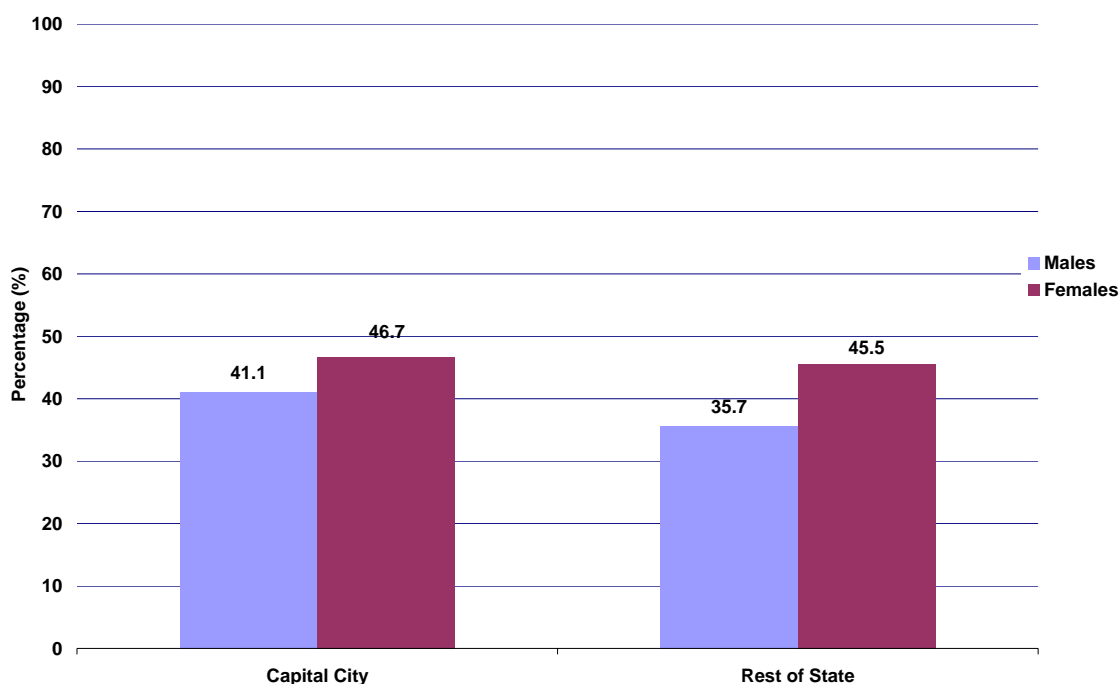
### Labour force status

Those not in the labour force, including students and retired persons, had the lowest participation rate for participating three or more times per week (41.7%), compared to those employed (43.2%) and those who were unemployed (43.1%) (Table 2). The main difference in the participation rate between males and females was among those employed full time (36.6% for males, compared with 51.1% for females).

### Regional status

Persons living in capital cities were more likely to participate in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three times a week or more, compared to those living in the rest of the state (44.0% and 40.6% respectively) (Table 2). In both areas, however, the likelihood of participation was higher for females than for males, reflecting the national pattern (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Overall participation (three times a week or more) by region and sex**



Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

## Education

The likelihood of participation three times a week was highest for those with a university degree (50.9%) or still at secondary school (50.5%). Participation was lowest (31.2%<sup>1</sup>) for those that never went to school (Table 2).

## Indigenous status

Statistics on the Indigenous population are subject to a range of data quality issues. In addition to cultural considerations in relation to statistical matters, data quality issues arise from the relatively small size of the Indigenous population in comparison with the total population of Australia, the high level of dispersion of the Indigenous population, particularly across remote areas of Australia, and the way in which Indigenous persons are identified in statistical collections (ABS 2006a).

In addition, ERASS collects information via telephone interviews targeted at occupied dwellings. Given that the Indigenous population is less likely to have access to a working home

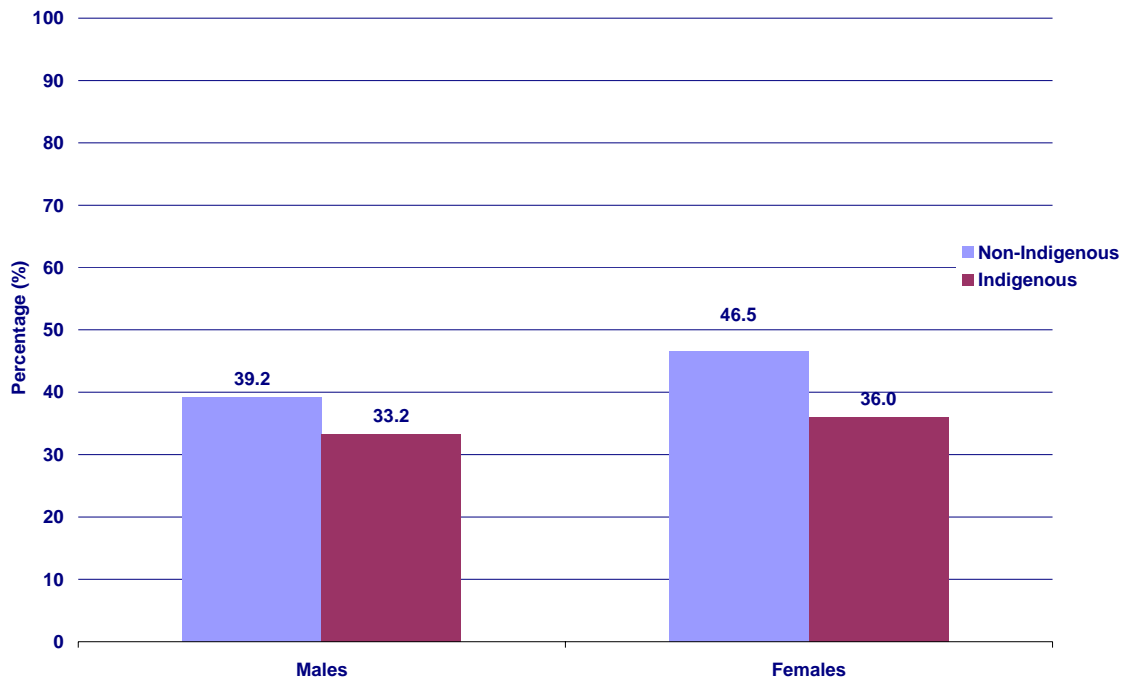
---

<sup>1</sup> This estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be used with caution. See 'Standard errors and relative standard errors' on page 100 for more information.

telephone<sup>1</sup>, it is difficult to establish if this survey adequately represents the true participation of the Indigenous population in exercise, recreation and sport. Therefore, rather than considering these statistics as absolute, readers should consider the general patterns they illustrate as approximations of the Indigenous population's participation in exercise, recreation and sport.

A lower proportion of Indigenous persons (34.6%) participated in exercise, recreation and sport in 2006 three times a week or more, compared to non-Indigenous persons (42.9%) (Table 2). This applied to both Indigenous males and Indigenous females (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Overall participation (three times a week or more) by Indigenous status and sex**



Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

## Language spoken at home

As ERASS collects information via telephone, persons who do not speak English well may have been less likely to participate in this survey. However, given that a large majority of persons who speak a language other than English at home speak English well<sup>2</sup>, it is reasonable to assume

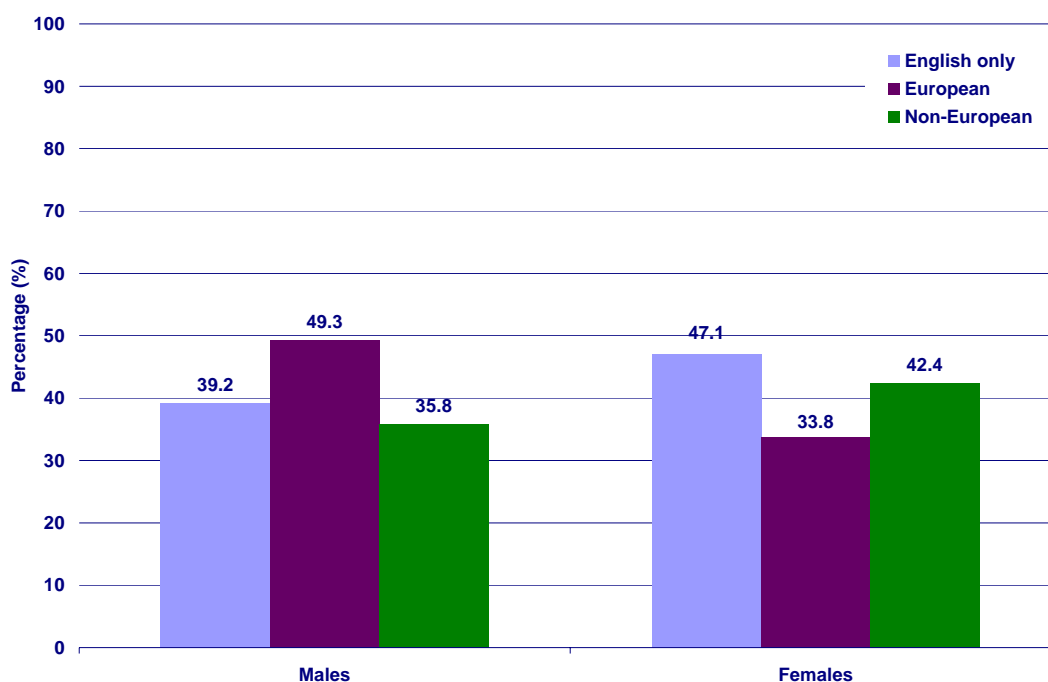
<sup>1</sup> Approximately 97% of the Australian population have access to a working telephone in their home (ACNielsen 2006). This compares to just 71% of the Indigenous population. Indigenous persons living in remote areas were considerably less likely than those living in non-remote areas to have access to a working telephone in their home (43% compared to 82%) (ABS 2002).

<sup>2</sup> In 2001, 81.6% of the population who spoke a language other than English at home spoke English well or very well. The balance did not speak English well or spoke it not at all (14.9% and 3.5% respectively). This equates to 2.9% of the total population not speaking English well in 2001 (ABS 2006b).

that these statistics represent an accurate estimation of their participation in exercise, recreation and sport.

Participation rates for participating three or more times per week were highest among males speaking a European language other than English (49.3%), followed by females that speak English only (47.1%). Conversely, participation rates were lowest among females speaking a European language other than English (33.8%) and males speaking a non-European language (35.8%) (Figure 7 and Table 2).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 6: Overall participation (three times a week or more) by language spoken at home and sex**



Base: All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

## Type of activity

The activity with the highest participation rate was walking (36.2%). An estimated 6.0 million persons aged 15 years and over walked at least once for exercise, recreation and sport in the 12 months prior to interview. This excluded bushwalking, which is categorised separately and has a participation rate of 4.7%. Other sports and physical activities that attracted high participation rates were aerobics/fitness activities (19.1%), swimming (13.6%), cycling (10.1%) and running (7.4%) (Table 23).

Walking had the highest participation rate for both males (26.2%) and females (45.9%) (Table 16), and across all age groups with the exception of the 15 to 24 year age group where participation in aerobics/fitness activities was 25.1% compared with 13.7% for walking (Table

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the glossary for definitions of European and non-European languages.

17). However, the proportion of people participating in walking alone was relatively low — only 25.9% of participants reported that their physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport in the last two weeks was limited to walking (Table 12). The remainder participated in either walking and another activity (20.4%) or a non-walking activity exclusively (53.7%).

For males, activities with the highest participation rates were walking (26.2%), aerobics/fitness activities (14.8%), cycling (13.2%), swimming (12.1%) and golf (10.9%) (Table 16).

For females, activities with the highest participation rates were walking (45.9%), aerobics/fitness activities (23.2%), swimming (15.1%) and cycling (7.2%) (Table 16).

In the youngest age group (15 to 24 year olds) the activities that attracted the most participants were aerobics/fitness activities (25.1%), outdoor football (13.7%), walking (13.7%) and swimming (13.6%) (Table 17). Participation in outdoor football tapered quickly with only 3.9% of people aged 25 to 34 years participating, while participating in walking increased with age, peaking at 49.5% of people aged 55 to 64 years.

The activity that people participated in most frequently was walking, where half of all persons walked 156<sup>1</sup> times or more a year, equating to a median of 3.0 times per week. Other activities<sup>2</sup> participated in frequently were aerobics/fitness activities (median of 104 times a year which equates to 2.0 times per week), running (1.9 times per week) and cycling (1.0 time per week) (Table 19).

Participants took part in an average (mean) of 2.1 different sports or activities in the 12 months prior to interview. This peaked at 2.6 different activities for the 15 to 24 year age group and decreased with age to 1.5 different activities for those aged 65 and over.

Males participated in an average of 3.8 different activities (4.4 if 65 years or over) compared to an average of 2.0 different activities for females (Table 10).

## 3.2 Organised participation

### Overview

During the 12 months prior to interview in 2006, an estimated 4.2 million persons aged 15 years and over participated at least once 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 25.3% (Table 8). It also represented 38.3% of the 10.9 million persons who participated at least once per week in a physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport.

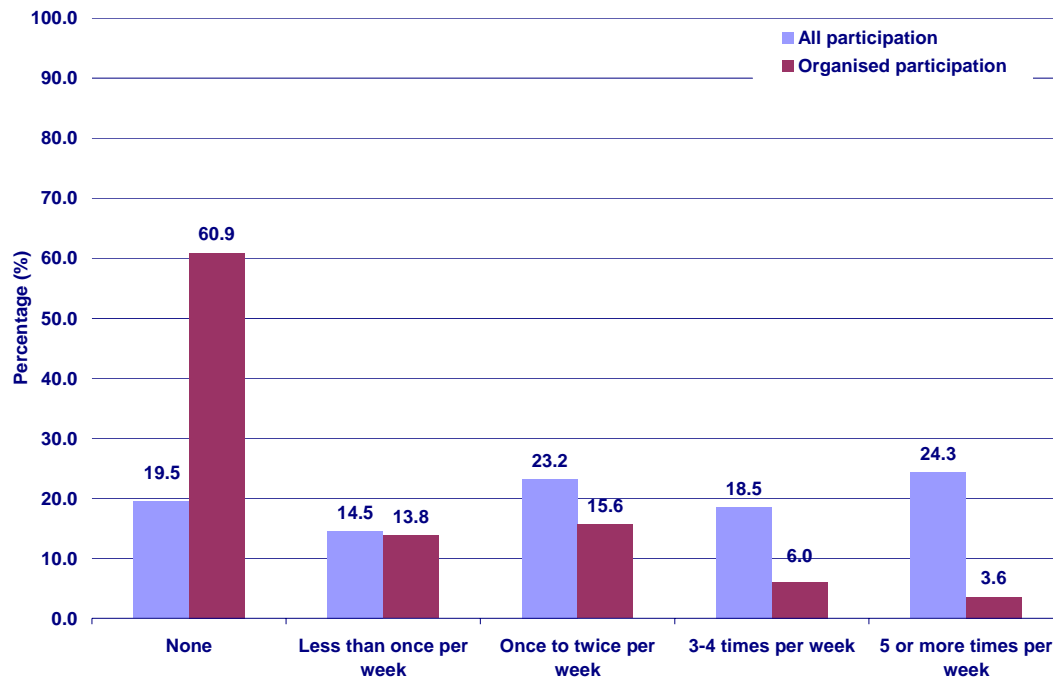
---

<sup>1</sup> Median value

<sup>2</sup> Activities included in this analysis refer only to those activities that are participated in by 50,000 or more persons in 2006.

Over half of all participating persons (60.9%) did not participate in any organised physical activities during the 12 months prior to interview in 2006 (Table 6 and Figure 7), while 9.7% participated in organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three times a week or more (Table 8).

**Figure 7: Weekly frequency of participation — overall and organised**



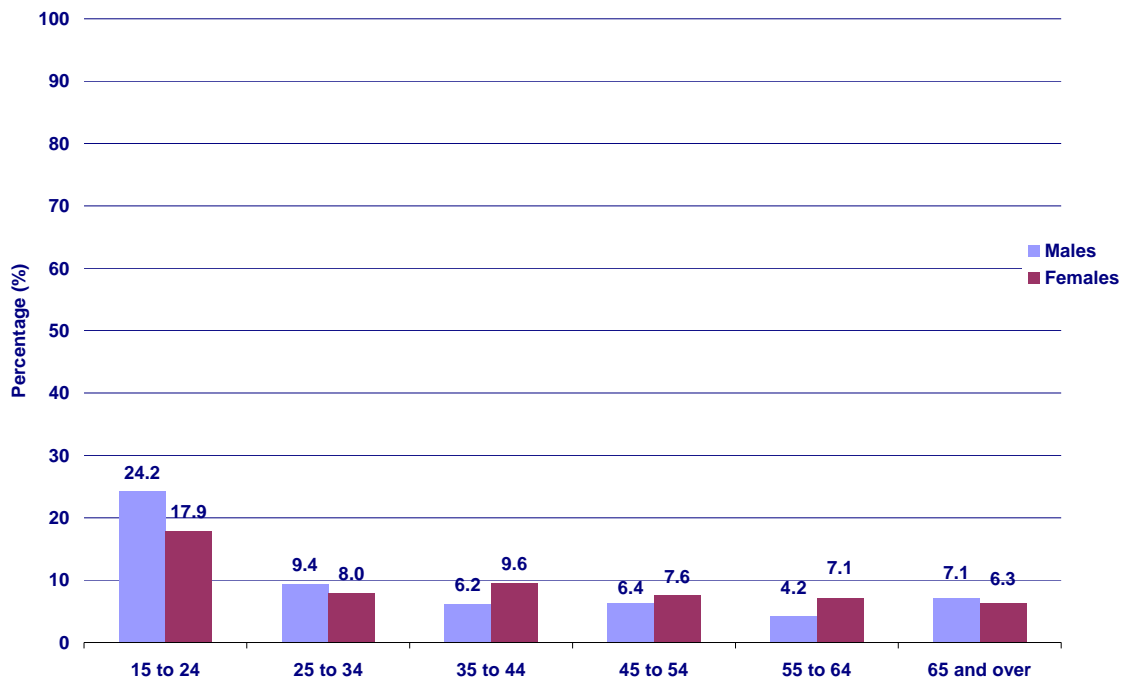
All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

## Age and sex

Overall, males and females were equally likely to participate in organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three times a week or more (9.9% and 9.4% respectively) (Table 8). Participation three times a week or more was more common among those aged 15 to 24 years (21.1%). Participation in organised sport three times per week or more was higher for males compared with females in the 15 to 34 age groups and higher for females in the 35 to 64 age groups (Figure 8 and Table 8).



**Figure 8: Participation rates (three times a week or more) by age and sex — organised activities**



All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

Non-participation in organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport showed a marked pattern with age — non-participation rates were lowest for the 15 to 24 age group (37.3%) and highest for the 65 and over age group (72.3%) (Table 6 and Figure 9). Non-participation was higher for females across all age groups, except the 55-and-over age group.

**Figure 9: Non-participation in organised activity by age and sex**



All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

## **Labour force status**

Those who were employed part time or unemployed had the highest participation rate for organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three or more times per week (12.6% and 11.9% respectively), particularly males (16.3% for part-time males versus 11.2% for part-time females, and 15.0% for unemployed males versus 8.0% for unemployed females).

## **Regional status**

Organised participation three or more times per week was higher in the capital cities (10.2% compared with 8.6% elsewhere). Male participation outside the capital cities was higher than for females (9.2% compared with 8.0% for females).

## **Education**

Those who were still at secondary school were the most likely to have participated in organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three or more times per week (32.4%). Participation in organised physical activities three or more times per week was higher among people with university degrees or higher (9.6%) and those whose highest qualification was secondary school (9.7%), compared with people with trade qualifications or apprenticeships (6.9%) or people who did not complete secondary school (6.6%).

## **Indigenous status**

Indigenous persons had a higher participation rate for organised physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport three or more times per week (13.0%) than non-Indigenous persons (9.6%). Male Indigenous persons were more likely than females to participate in organised activities three times per week or more (15.7% versus 10.4% respectively).

## **Language spoken at home**

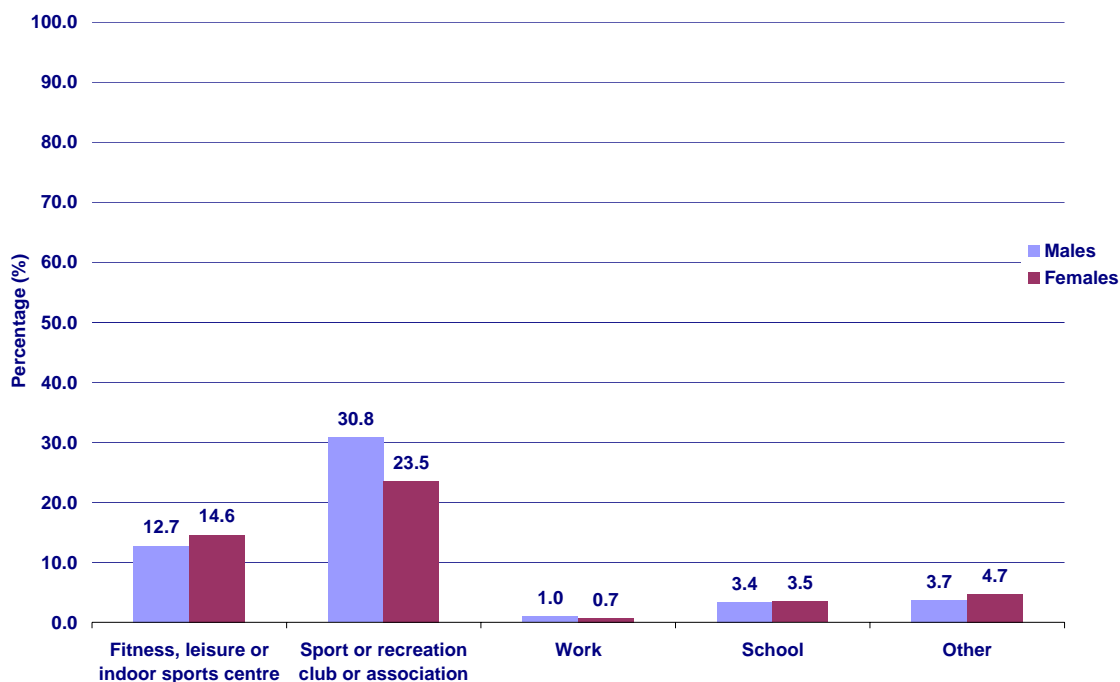
Participation rates for organised activities three times per week or more were highest among males speaking a non-English European language at home (12.2%) and was lowest among females speaking a non-English European language at home (6.8%). Participation in organised activities three times per week or more among those speaking a non-European language at home was slightly lower (9.3%) than for those only speaking English at home (9.7%).

## **Organisation of the activity**

An estimated 4.5 million persons participated at least once in activities that were organised by a 'sport or recreation club or association'. An estimated 2.3 million persons participated in activities that were organised by a 'fitness, leisure or indoor sports centre'. In comparison, relatively few people participated in activities that were organised by school or work (572,400 and 137,600 respectively) (Table 24).

Females participating in organised physical activity were more likely than men to choose activities organised by a fitness, leisure or indoor sports centre (14.6% and 12.7% respectively). Meanwhile, far more males participated in activities organised by a sport or recreation club or association than females (30.8% and 23.5% respectively) (Figure 10 and Table 24). Participation through clubs was highest among the 15 to 24 age group (43.3%).

**Figure 10: Participation in organised activity by type of organisation**



All persons aged 15 years and over (n=13,710)

### Type of activity

The organised activity with the highest participation rate was aerobics/fitness activities (8.0%). An estimated 1.3 million persons aged 15 years and over participated in this activity in an organised environment at least once in the 12 months prior to interview. Other sports and physical activities that had high numbers of participants involved in an organised environment were golf (3.8%), netball (3.1%), outdoor football (2.7%), tennis (2.7%), outdoor cricket (2.4%) and basketball (2.3%) (Box 2 and Table 23).

Participants in organised physical activities for exercise, recreation and sport engaged in an average (mean) of 1.5 different organised activities in the 12 months prior to interview (Table 21). This was highest among 15 to 24 year olds who engaged in an average of 1.9 different organised activities.

### 3.3 Organised versus non-organised participation

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%) (Table 23)<sup>1</sup>. Activities least likely to be organised included walking (2.8%), cycling (8.5%), fishing (10.5%), running (10.8%), surf sports (12.7%), swimming (14.0%) and bushwalking (14.5%).

One quarter of participants (24.8%) spent five hours or more on non-organised physical activities in the two weeks prior to interview, while a further third of participants (31.5%) spent two to five hours per week in non-organised activities. In the case of organised activities, 17.8% participated for five hours or more, while a further 14.8% participated for more than two hours but less than five hours (Table 22).

---

<sup>1</sup> Activities '*commonly participated in*' refer to all those activities that 50,000 or more Australians participated in during 2006.