

Media Release

28 November 2016

ANALYSIS SHOWS BOYS PARTICIPATE IN ORGANISED SPORT MORE THAN GIRLS

Men and boys participate in organised sport at twice the rate of women and girls according to a new study that analysed participation data across 11 different sports.

AFL, basketball, bowls, cricket, football (soccer), golf, gymnastics, hockey, netball, sailing and tennis player membership databases from 2015 were analysed to gain insights into community participation in organised sport in Victoria.

Across the 11 sports overall, 20.4% of boys and men participated across the 11 sports compared with 10.5% of women and girls. The gap widened in the 5-14 year age bracket where 30% more males participated (80% v 50%) than females.

The participation rates in the Metropolitan Growth Areas were the lowest in the state for 5-19 year olds with girls in the growth areas having significantly lower participation than girls elsewhere in the State.

The research, undertaken by Associate Professor Rochelle Eime, Dr Jack Harvey and Melanie Charity, included collaboration between VicHealth, Sport and Recreation Victoria, Federation University and Victoria University.

The research found a range of participation trends across the 11 sports including:

- Overall, sport participation rates peaked among those aged 5 to 14 years, with more than two-thirds of Victorians within this age group (67%) participating in the eleven sports
- From the age of 15, participation rates dropped significantly: participation rates among the 15-19 year age group was less than half of that among children aged 5 to 14 (29% compared with 67%).
- By age 30 participation rates were below 8% for all sports in total
- For most ages, participation rates were higher in regional areas than metropolitan areas with the largest difference in participation rates in the 5-14 year-old group where there was 80% participation in non-growth regional areas compared with 45% in metropolitan growth areas
- Participation rates for children 14 years and under are much lower in the metropolitan growth areas than Melbourne's established areas

Sports Minister John Eren said the findings would help efforts to attract more young people to grassroots sport.

"Understanding sport participation trends in Victoria helps us plan for the future and make informed decisions to ensure more Victorians than ever before are turning to grassroots sport," Minister Eren said.

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“Good data allows the government to work closely with major sports to target sections of our community missing out on participation, such as children in the growth areas of Melbourne and young girls across the State.”

“Boosting the participation of young girls is a particular focus of the Government.”

Associate Professor Rochelle Eime said the research provided state sporting associations with unique insights on participations trends and influences and provided them with the opportunity to design and develop new programs to attract and retain key population groups.

“This research is unique in that it captures sport club participants across the lifespan from 4-100 years in one integrated sports database,” A/Prof Eime said.

“While participation rates were high for younger children, rates declined considerably during adolescence which could suggest that we need to explore the role of other types of sport programs including social programs, in parallel with the competition model which is offered through clubs.

“That only half the proportion of women and girls take part in current, predominantly competitive organised sport programs compared to men and boys also suggests that clubs that offer social and flexible programs for all skill levels in safe and welcoming environments may be able to better attract and retain female players.”

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said findings that more men participated in sport than women were consistent with existing VicHealth research on female participation in sport and physical activity.

“More than two-thirds of Australian women are classified as being sedentary or having low levels of exercise,” Ms Rechter said.

“Through our Changing the Game initiative to get more women and girls physically active and our Active Club Grants, which funds clubs focussed on growing female membership with grants of up to \$10,000, VicHealth is working hard to improve participation opportunities for women.

“This research provides valuable insights into organised sport participation trends in Victoria to allow us to work with policymakers, local councils, governments and sporting organisations and clubs to support more Victorians to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of being physically active.”

A copy of the research highlights can be found at <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/victorian-participation-in-organised-sport>

To view a short film about the research project visit <http://www.sportandrecreationspatial.com.au/>

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NOTE TO EDITOR

This analysis captures 899,349 participants aged 4-100 years and older who were registered with a Victorian community sporting club or program affiliated with one of the 11 state sporting associations involved in the research. This includes participants in club competitions, junior or modified sport programs, social programs and casual participation opportunities. Individuals who played multiple sports are included in the data for each individual sport, and are therefore counted multiple times within the overall total.

The data excludes participants registered in school programs or school competitions.

Participation rates are expressed as a percentage of the estimated resident population for each age group as at 30 June 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).

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