



Doing sport differently

Female Sport Program (2015–17) Summary

About this document

This document provides a high-level overview of the Female Sport Program's (also known as the Change the Game program) objectives, results and learnings for sport organisations, governments, researchers and other interested stakeholders. It is part of a series designed to help the sporting sector 'do sport differently' to attract, engage and retain less-active Victorians in sport.

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Related resources include:

- Designing and delivering sport to engage people who are less active
- A guide for sports clubs
- VicHealth program summaries

Introduction

Recent research shows that just under half of Australian women are not sufficiently active and just over 10% of Victorian women don't do any physical activity in a typical week.

Women and girls participate in sport at half the rate of men and boys (11% of females compared with 20% of males), and the barriers to participation in sport and physical activity are higher for females.

While sporting activities are a great way for women and girls to improve their physical health and mental wellbeing, it's not the answer for everybody. Less-active people need access to other options, such as social sport.

Trends in physical activity and sport participation are shifting. Recent research has shown there is increased participation in social sporting activities and a decline in traditional, club-based sport.

Sport organisations are facing the challenge of how best to grow participation in a changing world. People are increasingly time-poor due to family, work or other commitments, have varied access to sport facilities, and have limited money to spend on participation. Not everyone wants to join a competitive sport team or is able to meet regular training commitments.

The terms 'less active' and 'social sport' are defined on pages 8 and 9.



The Female Sport Program

A current focus for VicHealth is to help sport organisations get ahead of sports participation trends by creating and offering more welcoming and flexible approaches to sport.

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Between 2015 and 2017, VicHealth provided funding through the Female Sport Program to support state sporting associations (SSAs) to develop and deliver activities to address female participation trends, set their sport up for the future and ultimately result in more less-active females being physically active through sport.

More broadly, the Female Sport Program also aimed to raise the profile of female sport and progress towards better gender equality in sport.



What did VicHealth do?

Through the Female Sport Program, VicHealth funded six SSAs across three years to design activities specifically for women who are less active to help them get active through organised social sport.

These activities were not about competition, rules or memberships, but about helping women to move and become more active.

The activities funded were:

- AFL Victoria: AFL Active
- Cycling Victoria: Social Spin
- Gymnastics Victoria: [Move My Way](#)
- Netball Victoria: [Rock Up Netball](#)
- Surfing Victoria: [Coasting](#)
- Tennis Victoria: [Get Into Cardio Tennis](#)

These activities were supported through the four phases of developing a new social sport product:

1. Design the concept
2. Develop strategy and resources
3. Test the concept and full program
4. Deliver at scale

4 PHASES OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

1. Design the concept

2. Develop strategy and resources

3. Test, refine and roll out the program

4. Deliver at scale

SSAs were supported throughout the Female Sport Program to engage participants, deliver quality activities and build a sustainable approach for the sport and community. This support included networking opportunities to share learnings and build the sector's capacity in new ways of providing sport.

La Trobe University's Centre for Sport and Social Impact evaluated the program using pre- and post-participation surveys, and interviews with participants and key people involved in the delivery of the program. This information was given to funded organisations to help them refine their projects.

What was achieved?

THOUSANDS OF 'LESS-ACTIVE' VICTORIAN FEMALES ENGAGED

More than 7,000 Victorian women and girls were engaged and participated in activities funded by the Female Sport Program at least once.

More than half of these were regular participants, attending at least half of the sessions offered for their chosen activity.

Most participants (84%) were satisfied with their experience.

Projects	6
Participants	7,157
Regular participants	4,061 (57%)
'Less-active' participants	80%
Participation opportunities	3,621
Locations	309
Deliverers	359

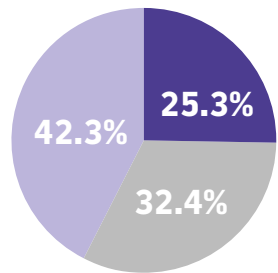
- **Participants:** People who participated in at least one session
- **Regular participants:** People who attended 50% or more of the sessions offered
- **'Less-active' participants:** People who met the 'less active' definition before attending a participation opportunity
- **Participation opportunities:** Individual activity sessions held
- **Locations:** Sites offering a program
- **Deliverers:** People who delivered the program to participants

The Female Sport Program was very successful in reaching its target market, with approximately 80% of participants defined as 'less active' at registration, compared to 72% of the Victorian population.

IMPACT ACROSS VICTORIA

One-quarter of participants lived in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Victoria, and the activities engaged regional communities.

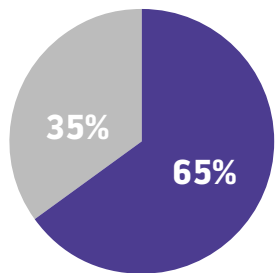
SOCIOECONOMIC AREAS*



- Deciles 1-4 (Most disadvantaged)
- Deciles 5-7
- Deciles 8-10 (Least disadvantaged)

* People from lower socioeconomic circumstances generally have a greater risk of poor health. The Australian Bureau of Statistics ranks geographic areas from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged (deciles 1-4) to the least socioeconomically disadvantaged (deciles 8-10).

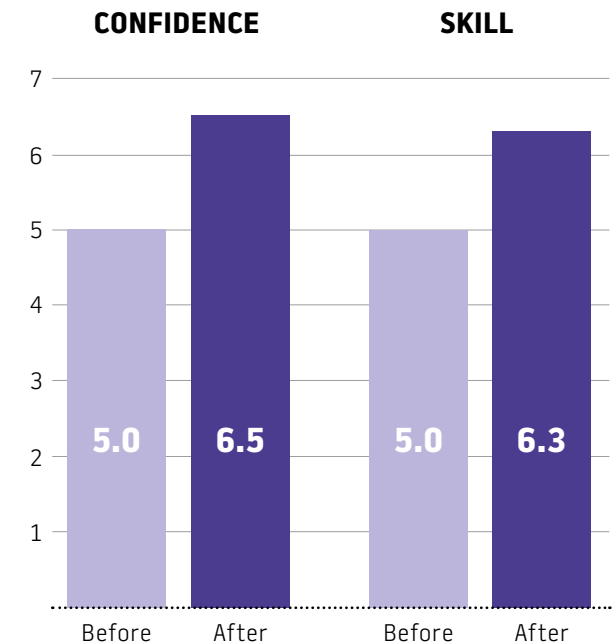
LOCATION



- Metro
- Regional

CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS BOOSTED

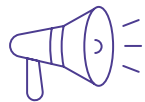
A person's skill and confidence in their ability to do an activity are strong drivers of future participation and maintaining physical activity levels. Overall, participants reported an increase in skill and confidence after participating in program activities.



What did we learn?

Through the Female Sport Program and other initiatives aimed at involving people who are less active in sports, VicHealth has gained valuable insight into 'doing sport differently'. Six key principles have been developed to guide the sporting sector and others in future initiatives.

The six key principles are discussed in more details in **Doing sport differently: Designing and delivering sport to engage people who are less active**



Principle 1

Engage with the target market throughout the design process to reduce barriers and fulfil motivations



Principle 2

Think about participants as customers and consider their total experience



Principle 3

Participation should cater to different levels of skill, ability and fitness



Principle 4

The deliverer is the most vital person to participants' experience and retention



Principle 5

Participants need a clear pathway for retention or transition as their skill, fitness or interest changes



Principle 6

Best-practice project management and delivery will enable scale and sustainability

Definitions

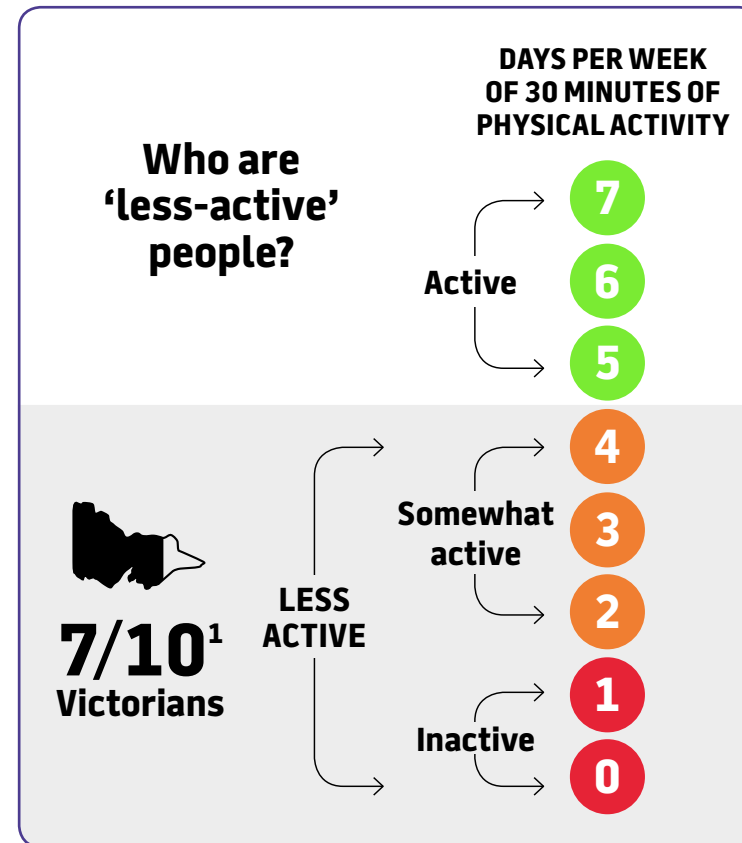
WHO ARE 'LESS-ACTIVE' PEOPLE?

The term 'less active' includes people defined by the Australian physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines as 'inactive' and 'somewhat active'.

People who are less active are those who do not undertake at least 30 minutes of physical activity on at least 5 days of the week. Children who are less active are people under 18 who haven't participated in organised sport (outside school) in the past 3 months.

People might be less active because they have dropped out of sport or decreased their activity levels as their life circumstances changed, or they may never have been active enough. Some people may not like sport, or might have had bad experiences in the past.

Some people may face particular barriers that prevent them from being active (e.g. a lack of confidence, financial difficulty, limited time).

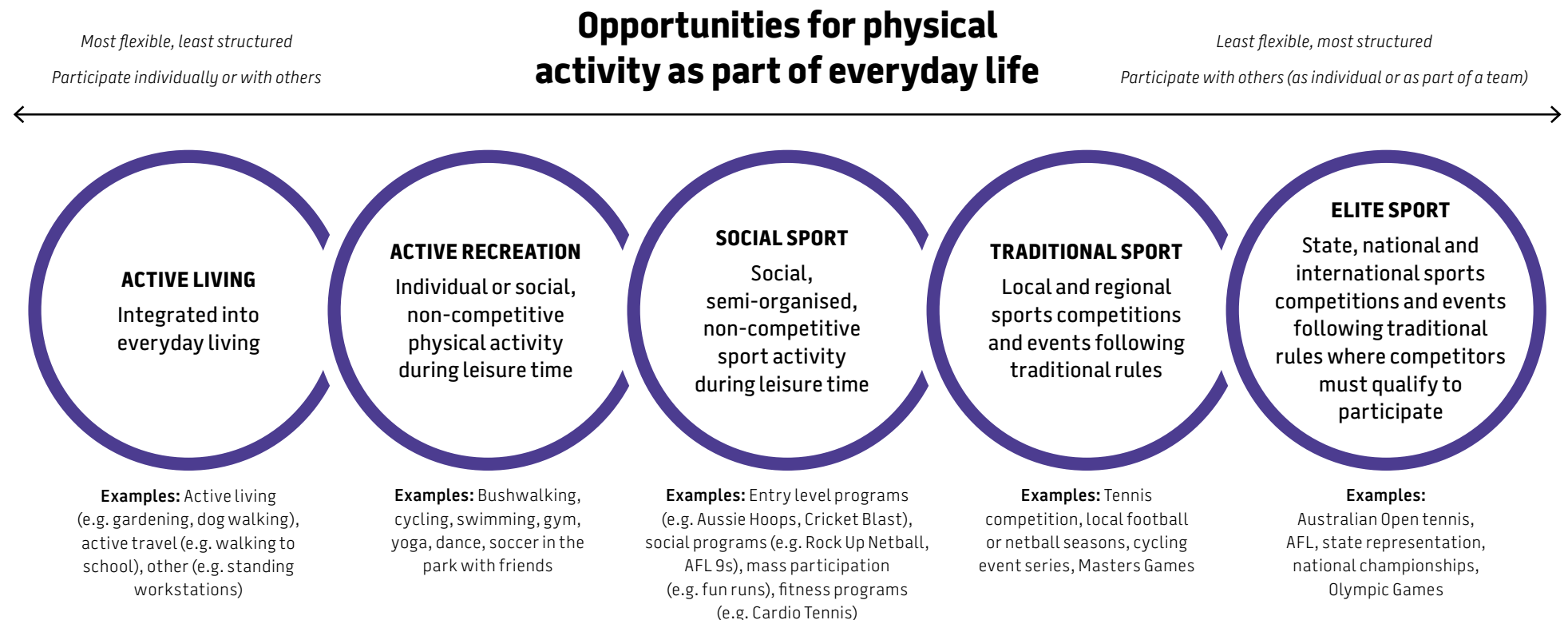


¹ ABS 4364055001D0021_20172018 National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18 — Victoria.

WHAT IS 'SOCIAL SPORT'?

Social sport is less structured than traditional sport. It has fewer rules and more flexibility, but is more structured than active recreation activities. Social sport can be designed and delivered by an organisation (e.g. state sporting association), sport club, local council or other individuals and groups. Social sport places a greater emphasis on fun, social interaction and enjoyment than on performance, results and competition.

A current focus for VicHealth is to help sporting organisations get ahead of sports participation trends by creating and offering more welcoming and flexible approaches to sport.



More information

You can find more information at www.doingsportdifferently.com.au

This Girl Can – Helping women and girls get active guide provides tips for engaging and retaining women who are less active.

Participating state sporting associations



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