



Doing sport differently

Regional Sport Program (2015–18) Summary

About this document

This document provides a high-level overview of the Regional Sport Program's 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 Victorians who are less active in sport.

www.doingsportdifferently.com.au

Related resources include:

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

Introduction

Sporting activities are a great way for people to improve their physical health and mental wellbeing.

While many Victorians play traditional club sport to keep active, it's not the answer for everybody. People who are less active 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, 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 Regional Sport Program

In rural and regional areas, there can be limited choice of sports and physical activity, and sport organisations often aren't able to adequately support the delivery of sporting opportunities.

In Victoria, nine Regional Sports Assemblies (RSAs) aim to improve the health and wellbeing of regional and rural Victorians through sport. They advocate for sport and active recreation in their region and work directly with local government authorities. The RSAs serve a population of more than 1.45 million rural and regional Victorians and support a network of more than 8,500 community-based sport and recreation organisations and partners.

A 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. Between 2015 and 2018, VicHealth provided funding through the Regional Sport Program for RSAs to develop and deliver new regional sport or physical activity programs.

The aims of the Regional Sport Program were to attract and retain less-active participants, deliver quality programs and build a sustainable approach to sports participation for the community.



A partnership approach has greatly enhanced the outcomes for Sport North East. We pooled our skills and resources to identify enablers and barriers to participation, ways to overcome these and new ways and people could take up sporting opportunities. We have worked closely with clubs and stakeholders in developing and piloting ideas, with diverse partners such as community health organisations, University of the Third Age, Men's Sheds and local councils. The partnerships continue into the future to sustain the opportunities. We are very proud of the new junior programs in racquetball and water polo, women's touch football, and a seniors' Finska program that resulted from this partnership approach.

Kerry Strauch, General Manager, Programs and Sport North East



What did VicHealth do?

Through the Regional Sport Program, VicHealth funded nine RSAs across three years to engage and retain people who are less active in sport.

Initiatives included:

- designing and delivering new regional sport or physical activity programs
- delivering existing social, flexible sport programs developed by state sporting associations (SSAs)
- designing, delivering and maintaining their own social, flexible sport programs.

Through the program, 184 individual projects were supported. These included:

- simple variations to a traditional sport model (e.g. a low-cost, social format that allows people to play in a short amount of time)
- projects that engaged under-represented community members (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse groups)
- innovative ways of introducing new people to a sport.

VicHealth supported the RSAs 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.



The data available now (via the dashboards) has given us a much better understanding of what participants value. It has helped us to design successful programs, maximising participation. I recommend that any organisation providing participation opportunities ensure they have timely and reliable feedback mechanisms to adapt programs based on the participants' experience.

Gene Parini
Program Coordinator, GippSport



What was achieved?

THOUSANDS OF VICTORIANS ENGAGED

Nearly 17,000 Victorians were engaged and participated in activities funded by the Regional Sport Program at least once.

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

Most participants (87%) were satisfied with their experience.

Approximately 57% of participants in the Regional Sport Program were defined as 'less active' at registration, compared to 72% of the Victorian population.

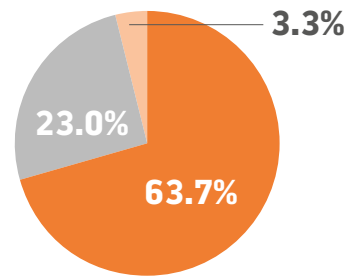
	RSP Programs delivered	SSA Programs supported	Total RSP Programs
Projects	122	62	184
Participants	13,772	3,735	17,507
Regular participants	8,929 (65%)	3,009 (81%)	11,938 (68%)
'Less-active' participants	–	–	57%
Participation opportunities	3,748	908	4,656
Locations	304	129	433
Deliverers	–	–	2,213

- **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

IMPACT ACROSS VICTORIA

Due to the Regional Sport Program's regional and rural focus, a high percentage of participants lived in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of Victoria. The program did not, however, attract high participation from people born overseas.

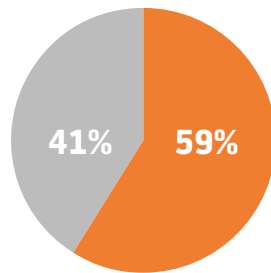
SOCIOECONOMIC AREAS*



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

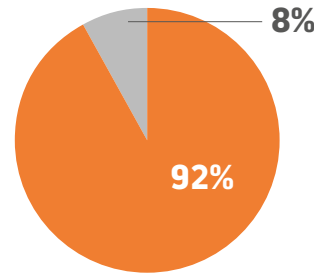
* People from lower socioeconomic circumstances generally have a greater risk of poor health. The Australian Bureau of Statistics ranks geographic areas from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged (deciles 1-4) to the least socioeconomically disadvantaged (deciles 8-10).

GENDER



- Female
- Male

PLACE OF BIRTH



- Australia
- Overseas

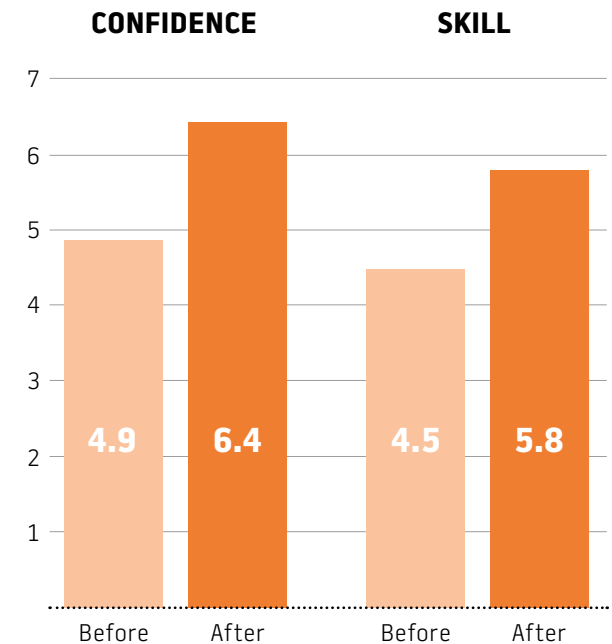


Sports Central had a three-year vision to address gaps in the market that prevented people from participating in their sport of choice, within an environment that suited their needs. We partnered with many organisations across the Central Highlands and established programs specifically for these people who were missing out, including the Ballarat Cricket Association (Girls Cricket Competition) and Ballarat District Golf (Girls Development Squad). By building a sustainable delivery model, these programs continue to grow and evolve.

Andrew Milligan, Programs Manager, Sports Central

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 Regional 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

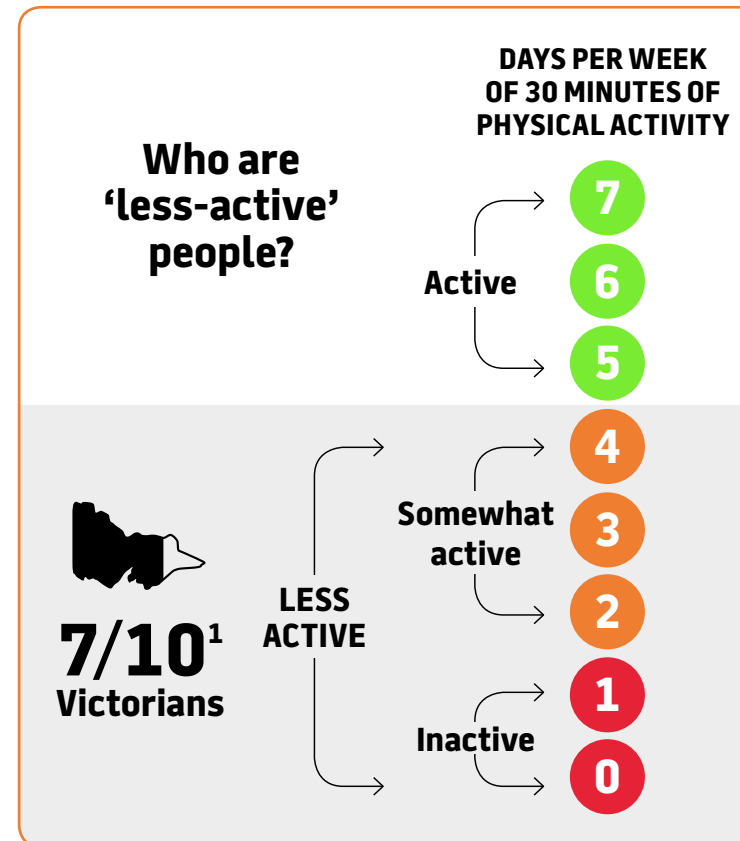
WHO ARE 'LESS-ACTIVE' PEOPLE?

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).

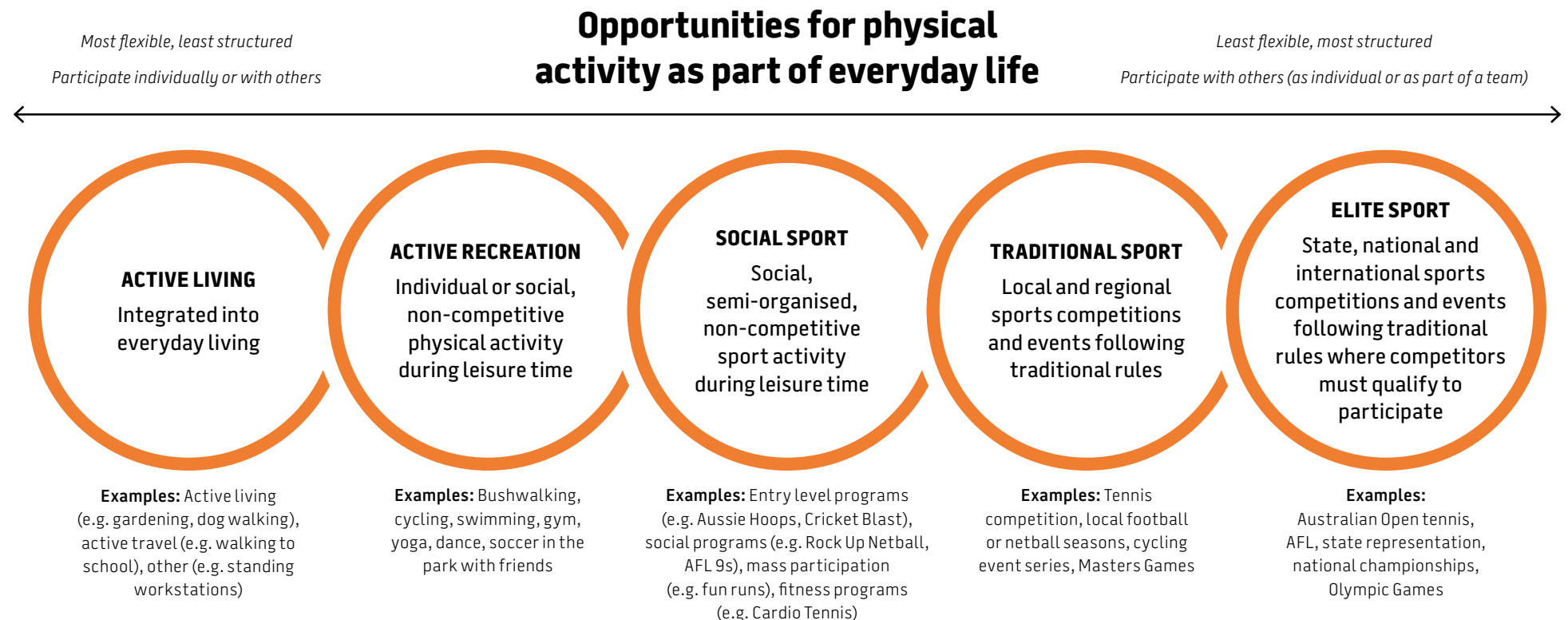


¹ ABS 4364055001D0021_20172018 National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18 — Victoria.

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

Participating Regional Sports Assemblies



Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
PO Box 154 Carlton South
Victoria 3053 Australia
T +61 3 9667 1333 F +61 3 9667 1375

vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au
vichealth.vic.gov.au
twitter.com/vichealth
facebook.com/vichealth

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