

# SPORTAUS

## AUSPLAY™

AusPlay Focus

# Australians' participation in Summer Olympic and Paralympic sports

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# A focus on participation in Summer Olympic and Paralympic sports

**The Australian Government invests in sport at all levels, from the grassroots sport that millions of us play in the community to the elite athletes who represent our nation.**

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and Paralympics and athletes have had to adapt and re-set their goals. The pandemic also disrupted sport across Australia, impacting participation at all levels.

Despite this disruption, Australians continue to show an interest and participate in all the Olympic disciplines at their own level, whether this be running in the park, going for a bike ride or playing one of the Olympic team sports. The way Australians participate in Olympic sports varies greatly by sport and this report seeks to show some of these differences and outline the way the Olympics and associated sports impact so many lives.

# About this report

For simplicity, the term Olympics is used in this report to cover both Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games unless otherwise specified.



The data in this report is sourced from two surveys of the Australian community that are funded and led by Sport Australia:

- AusPlay – the only national population survey of adults aged 15+ and children aged 0-14 about their participation in sport and physical activity
- Community Perceptions Monitor – a monthly survey of Australian adults aged 18+ about a range of topics related to sport and physical activity.

## AusPlay

AusPlay commenced in October 2015 and is the largest and most comprehensive survey of its kind ever conducted in Australia. Each year, 20,000 adults aged 15+ complete the survey. Apart from providing information about their own participation, parents/guardians of children under the age of 15 are asked about organised physical activities undertaken by one of their children outside of school hours.\*

Whilst AusPlay collects all physical activity adults have participated in, it is important to appreciate that information is not collected on children's school activities or casual play outside of school as many parents/guardians aren't able to provide this information accurately.

Respondents are asked about their participation in sport and physical activity in the 12 months prior to interview. These interviews are conducted by mobile telephone and were able to continue uninterrupted during COVID-19.

In order to provide sufficient sample size for some of the smaller sports, the AusPlay data in this report is aggregated, using a combined data set from 2016–2020.

\*AusPlay collects data from one randomly selected parent and one randomly selected child in the same household.

## Community Perceptions Monitor

The Community Perceptions Monitor (CPM) captures public attitudes towards various aspects of sport through an ongoing survey of 500 Australians each month. It has been running since February 2020, after an initial one-off survey in July 2019.

The survey is conducted in the first two weeks of each month among adults aged 18+, using an online methodology. Data is weighted to be representative of the Australian adult population.

The CPM data included in this report is aggregated, using combined responses from July 2019 and October 2020 to March 2021 when questions about pride in and inspiration from Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes were asked.

# Glossary

## Participation

Unless otherwise stated, participation means taking part in a sport or physical activity at least once in the previous 12 months.

## Participation rate

The proportion of Australians who self-report that they participated in a sport or physical activity at least once in the previous 12 months.

## Participation estimate

The estimated number of the target population (either adults or children) who would have provided a particular response had all Australian residents been asked.

## Olympic sports

Sports that are associated with a National Sporting Organisation and are scheduled to appear in the Tokyo Olympic or Paralympic Games.

## Non-Olympic sports

Sports that are associated with a National Sporting Organisation but are not scheduled to appear in the Tokyo Olympic or Paralympic Games.

## Non-sport related physical activity

Physical activity that is typically not associated with a National Sporting Organisation, for example, gym/fitness, bushwalking, recreational dance.

## Relative margin of error

The AusPlay results are based on a sample and are therefore subject to sample error. For some of the smaller sports, the relative margin of error is large enough that the estimates should be treated with caution.

## Notes on Sports

### Athletics

In AusPlay, Athletics is collected as Athletics, track and field (including jogging/running).

### Football

In AusPlay, Football is collected as Football/soccer.

### Rugby union

Data in this report includes all forms of Rugby union. In the Olympics the only form played is Rugby sevens.

### Skateboarding

In AusPlay, Skateboarding is collected as part of Skate sports, which includes other activities such as roller skating or roller blading.

### Volleyball

Includes Beach volleyball.



# Almost all Australians connect with the Olympics and Paralympics in one way or another

Australians' involvement in sport and physical activity takes many forms and includes both participation and non-playing roles. The vast majority of us will never be an Olympian or Paralympian (or an Olympic official, team manager or judge), but that doesn't prevent us from taking great pleasure and satisfaction in our own level of sport. As we watch and celebrate the performances (and hopefully successes) of our elite athletes, millions of Australians are involved in Olympic or Paralympic sport at the community level, improving their health, having fun and helping to build social cohesion. Some are more motivated by competition than others and devote more time to training and playing, perhaps even hoping to make the Olympics or Paralympics themselves one day.

Regardless of our level of interest or commitment to sport almost all Australians connect with the Olympics and Paralympics in one way or another.



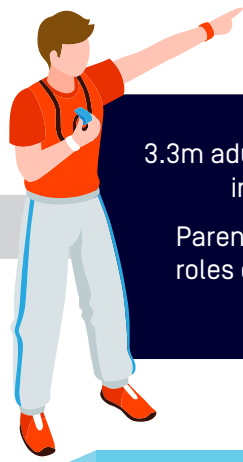
And there is an Olympic or Paralympic sport for everyone.

- While more men than women play Olympic sports overall, some sports attract more women than men and others have an equal gender balance.
- Olympic and Paralympic sports are not just for young Australians – in some Olympic sports the largest participant age group is the over-55s.
- Australians who identify as having a long term disability or physical condition that restricts their life in some way also like to participate in Olympic and Paralympic sports – a third (32%) play an Olympic sport and a quarter (26%) play a Paralympic sport.

Most adult participation in Olympic sports is 'organised' – it involves an organisation or venue at least some of the time. Over 3.5m Australians aged 15+ participate in an Olympic sport through a club or association.



Read on for an in-depth look at the nature of participation in Summer Olympic and Paralympic sports in Australia: which ones we play most often, how that changes for different age groups and why we play them, as well as other ways we are involved.



3.3m adults aged 15+ supporting sport and physical activity in Australia by undertaking non-playing roles

Parents, grandparents, partners, friends taking on the roles of coaches, managers, officials, administrators – among many other volunteer roles

3.2m adult participants also volunteer or take on non-playing roles



### IN THE COMMUNITY

- 18.3m adults aged 15+ participate in sport or physical activity at least once a year
- 10.4m participate in at least one Olympic sport at least once a year
- 7.8m adults 15+ and 2.9m children participate in 'organised' Olympic sport

1.8m adults take on non-playing roles in Olympic sport



### DEDICATION, MOTIVATION & COMMITMENT

- 1.6m adults participate in Olympic sport 5+ times per week
- 1.2m adults participate 5+ times per week and most associate with an Olympic sport
- 240,000 adults participate in Olympic sport 5+ times per week and are motivated by performance/competition/training

Ambassadors for sport, inspiring others in the community



### INVESTMENT AND SUPPORT

- 2,200 athletes provided with investment and support
- Represented Australia in Rio 2016:
  - 419 Olympians – 207 men, 212 women; age range 16-61
  - 346 support staff
  - 178 Paralympians (including six pilots and guides for vision impaired athletes) – 104 men, 74 women; age range 13-74
  - 158 support staff





# The Summer Olympics & Paralympics

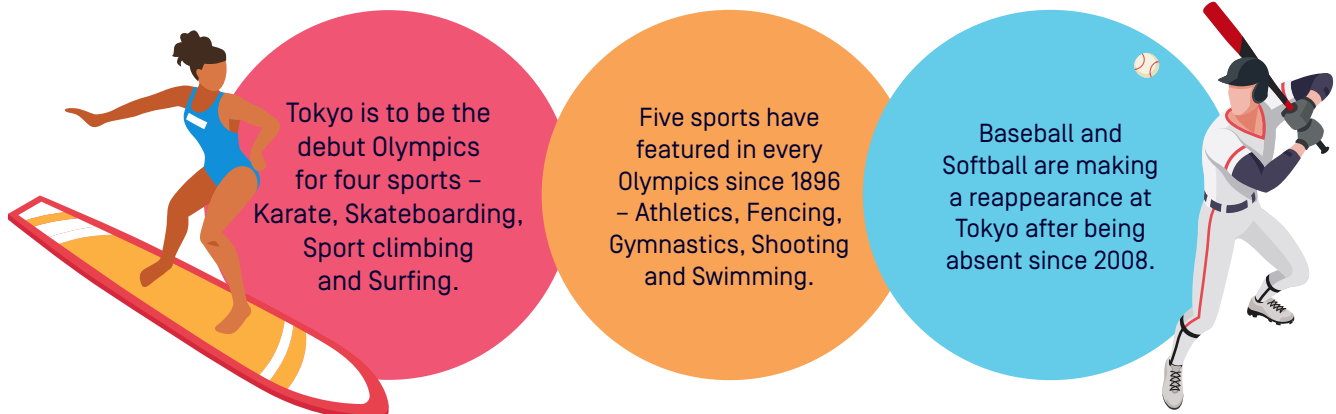
# About the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games

## Olympics

In 1896 the first modern Olympic Games – held in Athens – attracted 241 athletes from 14 countries to compete in 43 events. Fast forward to Rio 2016 and there were over 11,000 athletes from 207 countries competing in 306 events.<sup>1</sup> The number scheduled for Tokyo is larger again, with over 330 events planned across 37 different sports:

 Archery	 Fencing	 Skateboarding
 Artistic swimming	 Football	 Softball
 Athletics	 Golf	 Sport climbing
 Badminton	 Gymnastics	 Surfing
 Baseball	 Handball	 Swimming
 Basketball	 Hockey	 Table tennis
 Boxing	 Judo	 Taekwondo
 Canoeing	 Karate	 Tennis
 Cycling - BMX	 Modern pentathlon	 Triathlon
 Cycling - Mountain biking	 Rowing	 Volleyball (including beach)
 Cycling - Track/road	 Rugby sevens	 Water polo
 Diving	 Sailing	 Weightlifting
 Equestrian	 Shooting	 Wrestling

1. [www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)





## Paralympics

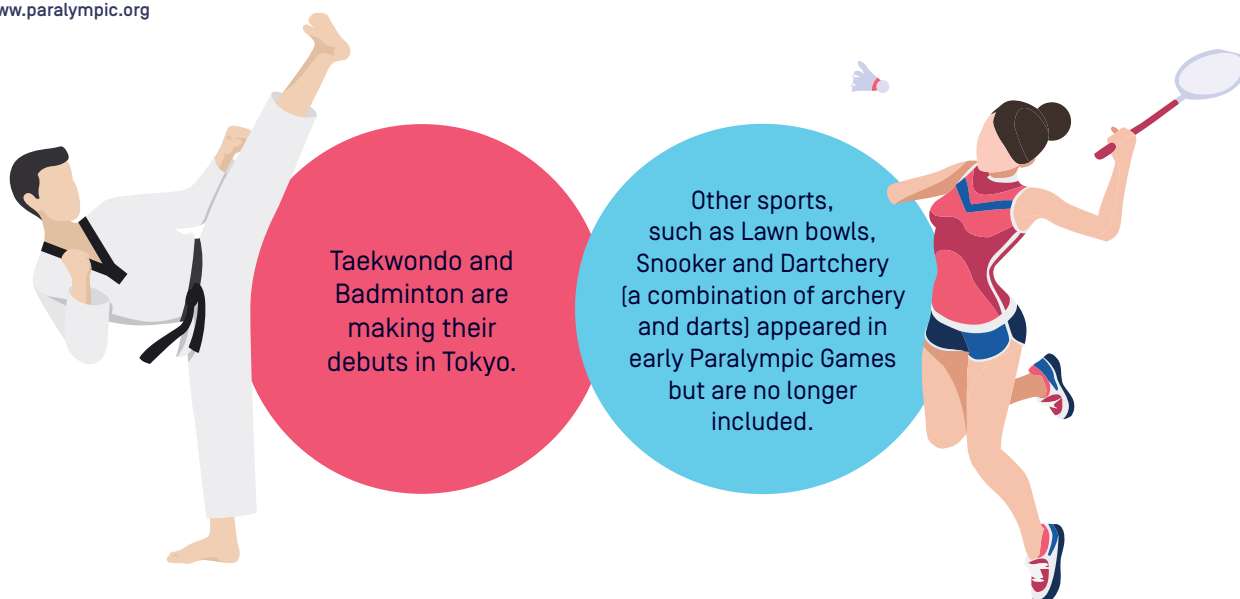
A competition for wheelchair athletes was held in parallel to the Olympic Games for the first time in 1948 in London, although it was called the Stoke Mandeville Games after the newly established spinal injuries centre in Great Britain. It involved 16 injured servicemen and women who took part in archery. The movement grew over the next few years and The Stoke Mandeville Games became the Paralympic Games in Rome in 1960, featuring 400 athletes from 23 countries. In the Rio 2016 Games, there were over 4,000 athletes from 160 countries competing in 22 sports.<sup>2</sup>

To be eligible to compete in the Paralympics, athletes must have a physical, visual or intellectual impairment that leads to permanent activity limitation. Athletes are classified according to their type and level of impairment for competition.

In Tokyo there are 22 sports scheduled:

 Archery	 Rowing
 Athletics	 Shooting
 Badminton	 Sitting volleyball
 Boccia	 Swimming
 Canoeing	 Table tennis
 Cycling [track/road]	 Taekwondo
 Equestrian	 Triathlon
 Football [5-a-side]	 Wheelchair basketball
 Goalball	 Wheelchair fencing
 Judo	 Wheelchair rugby
 Powerlifting	 Wheelchair tennis

2. [www.paralympic.org](http://www.paralympic.org)

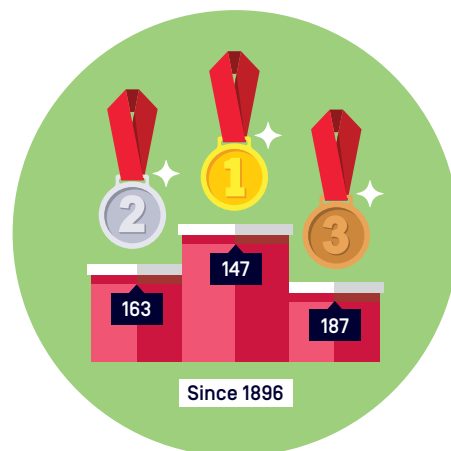


## Australia at the Olympics

Australians have competed at every modern Olympic Games, even though Australia didn't officially become its own country until 1901. The first Australian Olympian was Edwin Flack, an accountant from Melbourne who was also a talented runner and won gold in the 800m and 1500m events, as well as bronze in doubles tennis.<sup>3</sup>

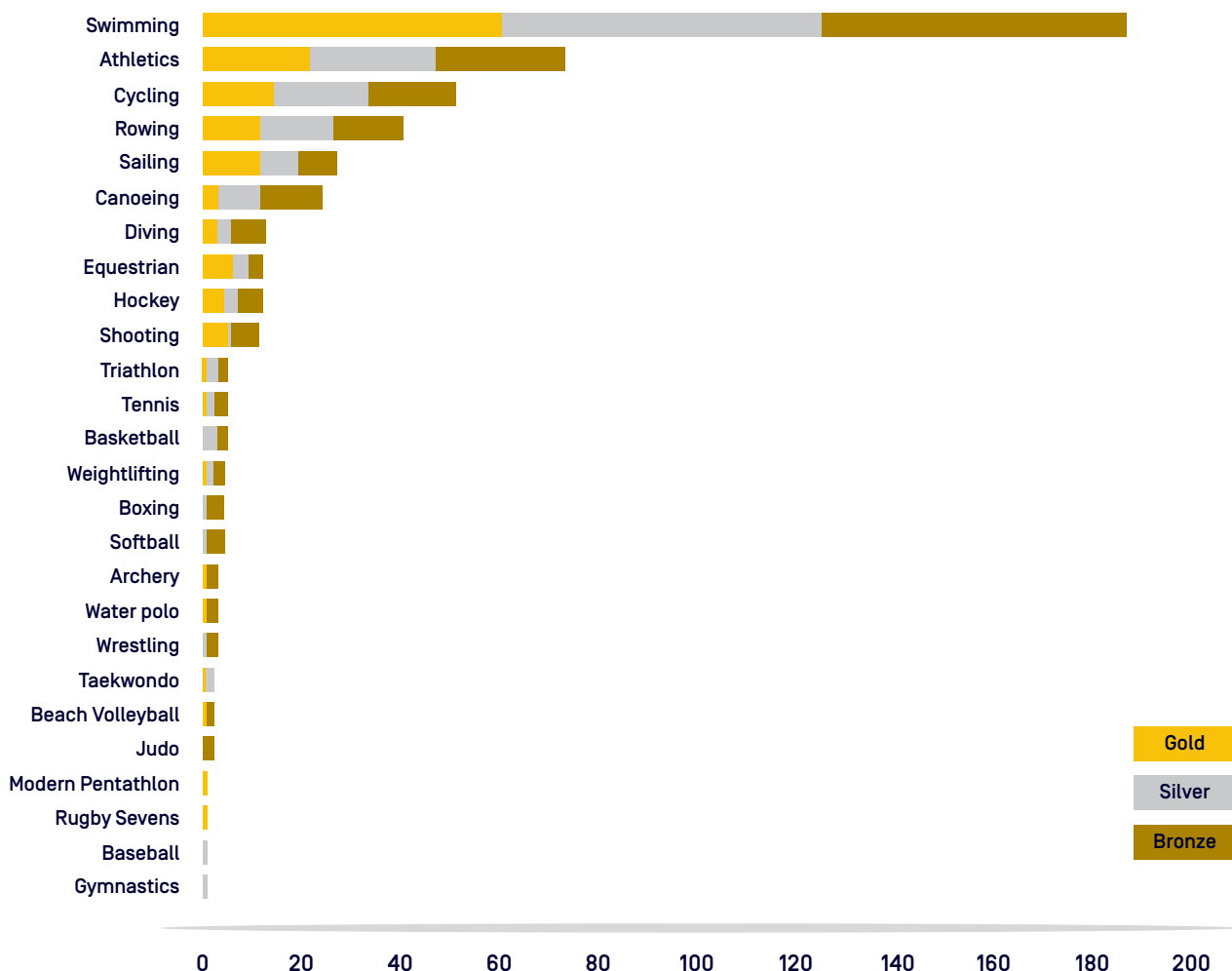
Since 1896, Australians have won 497 Olympic medals – 147 Gold, 163 Silver and 187 Bronze – in 26 different sports.<sup>4</sup> Nearly half of those have been since 2000. Australia's best standing on the medal table was in Melbourne in 1956, when we finished third. Our most successful sports have been Swimming, Athletics and Cycling – almost two-thirds of all medals have been in these three sports, although they are also the sports with the most events and the biggest teams.

Since 1996 Australia has fielded teams of over 400 athletes with our home Olympics in Sydney being the largest [632 athletes].<sup>5</sup>



3. [www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/edwin-flack-first-olympian](http://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/edwin-flack-first-olympian)
4. Gracenote Sports [Olympic sports package], Nielsen
5. [www.olympics.com.au](http://www.olympics.com.au)

### NUMBER OF SUMMER OLYMPIC MEDALS WON BY AUSTRALIANS SINCE 1896



## Australia at the Paralympics

Australia has been incredibly successful at the Paralympic Games, winning over 1,100 medals and being represented on the podium in all but five sports. Athletics, Swimming and Cycling have again been the most successful sports but over 20 medals have also been won in each of Shooting and Lawn Bowls.<sup>6</sup>

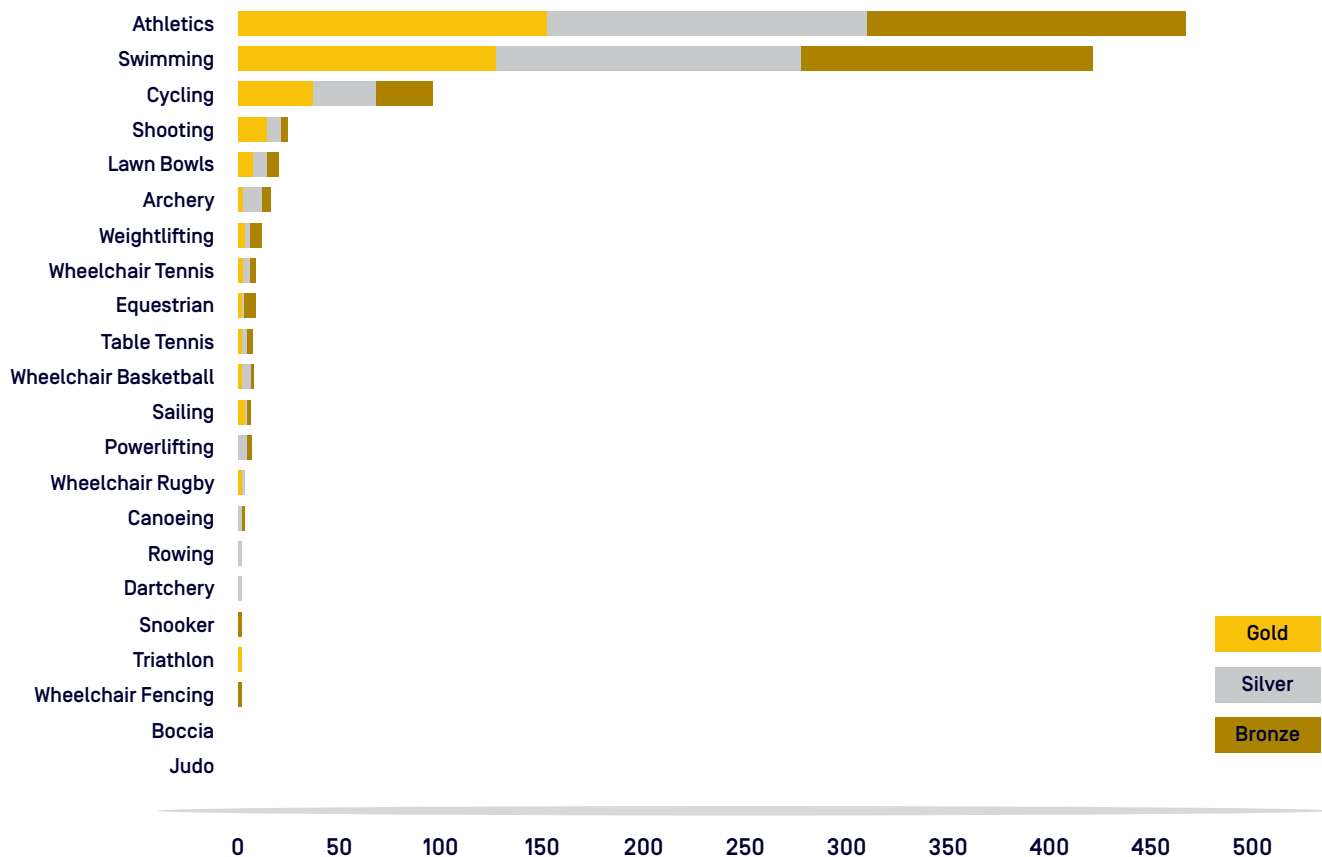
Since 1984, Australia has sent teams of over 100 athletes to the Paralympics, with 178 in 2016 (Rio). The largest team competed in Sydney in 2000 (278 athletes) where we also topped the medal table, with 63 Gold, 39 Silver and 47 Bronze.<sup>7</sup>

Since 2000, Australia has finished fifth on the medal table at every Games.

Our oldest Paralympian was Libby Kosmala, who was 74 when she competed in Shooting in 2016. At the other end of the age spectrum, our youngest competitor – Maddison Elliott – was 13 when she competed in London in 2012.



### NUMBER OF SUMMER PARALYMPIC MEDALS WON BY AUSTRALIANS SINCE 1960



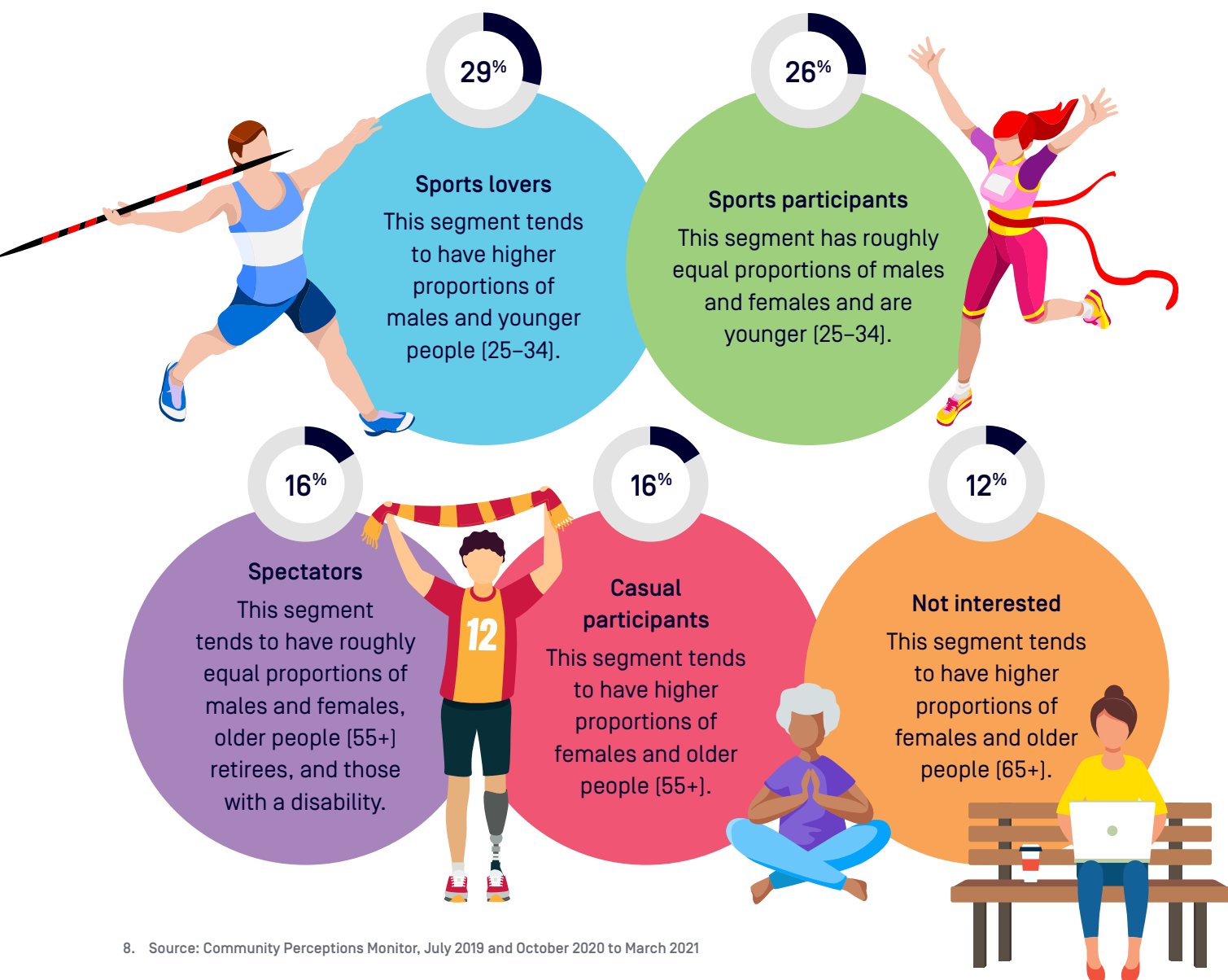
6. Gracenote Sports [Olympic sports package], Nielsen  
 7. [www.paralympic.org.au](http://www.paralympic.org.au)

# Australia has a reputation for being a sport-loving nation

Australia has long been called a sport-loving nation and Sport Australia's research backs this up.

The Community Perceptions Monitor asks Australians about their attitudes to sport, including whether they participate and how much interest in or enjoyment they take from sport generally. Their answers place them into one of five groups or 'segments' ranging from Sports lovers to Not interested.

Over half of Australian adults are either 'Sports lovers' or 'Sports participants', who have high interest and high participation in competitive sport. Sixteen percent are 'Spectators', who are more interested in watching than participating and a further 16% are 'Casual participants' who are more interested in non-competitive physical activity. Only 12% are 'Not interested' – the least active and least interested in any type of sport or physical activity.<sup>8</sup>



8. Source: Community Perceptions Monitor, July 2019 and October 2020 to March 2021


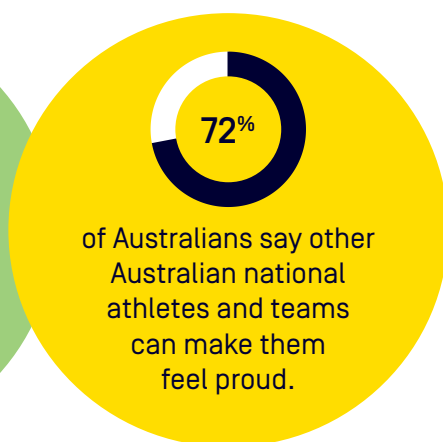
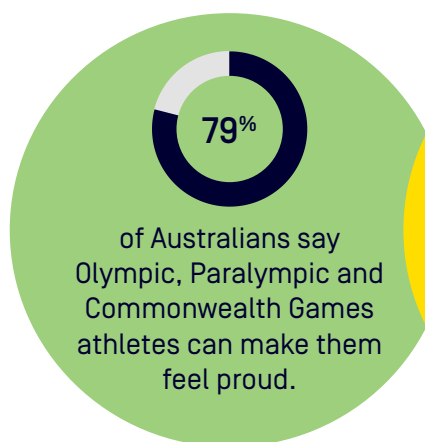
# And we are proud of and inspired by our athletes



## Proud

Four in five Australian adults aged 18+ say Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes can make them feel proud. This includes 23% who say “extremely” proud.<sup>9</sup> This is higher than for other Australian national athletes and teams.

As might be expected, those Australians who love to play and watch sport have the strongest feelings of pride in Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes but our athletes even have an impact on those Australians who are “Not interested” in sport; around a third say they can be made to feel proud.



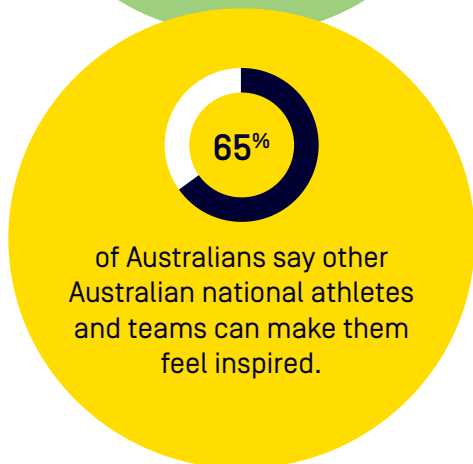
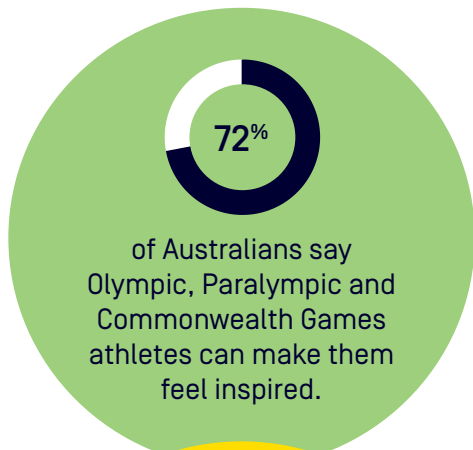
### Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes can make me feel proud

Sports lovers	97%
Spectators	97%
Sport participants	82%
Casual participants	63%
Not interested	32%

9. Source: Community Perceptions Monitor, July 2019 and October 2020 to March 2021

## Inspired

Almost three-quarters of Australian adults aged 18+ say Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes can inspire them, more so than for other Australian national athletes and teams.<sup>10</sup>



Younger Australians are most likely to be inspired, with these feelings declining slightly with age.



### Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games athletes can make me feel inspired

18-34 years	77%
35-54 years	74%
55+ years	66%

10. Source: Community Perceptions Monitor, July 2019 and October 2020 to March 2021

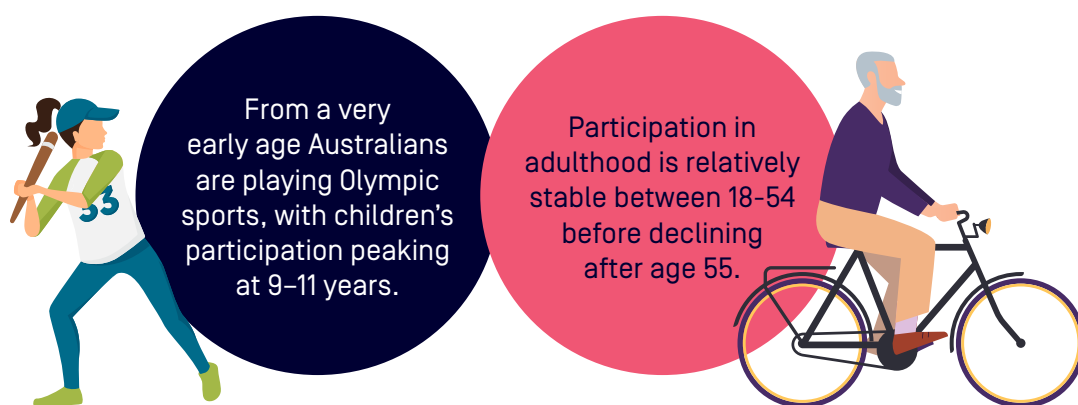




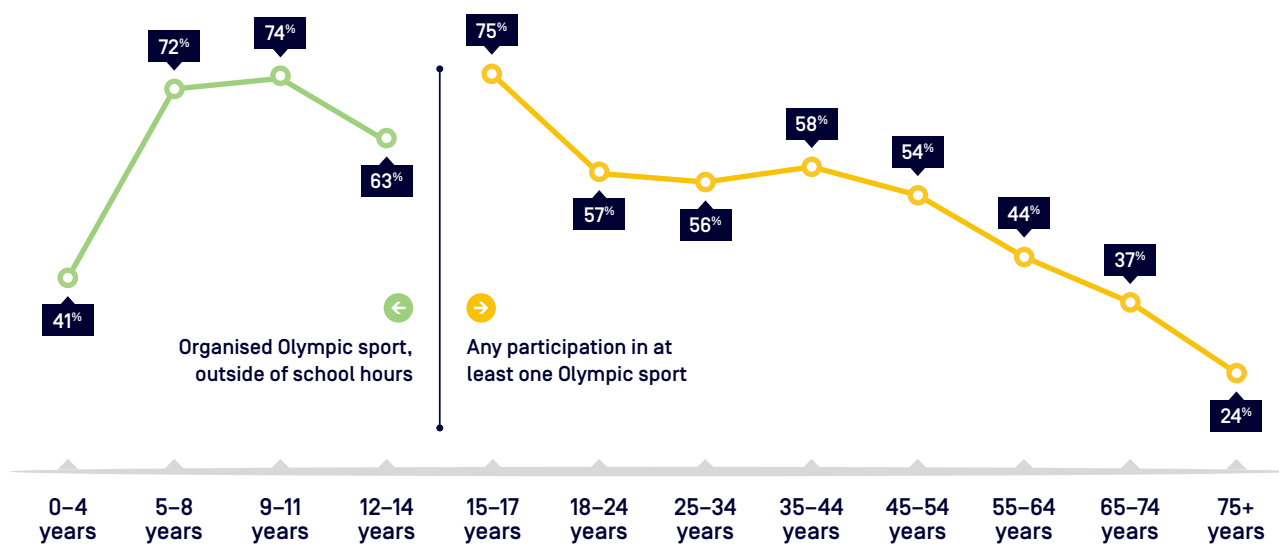
# Adult participation

# Australians also like to participate in Olympic sports

Most of us are at least a little inspired by the amazing performances of our elite Australian athletes at the Olympic Games. But we don't have to be anywhere near that level to enjoy participating in Olympic sports and reap the benefits of being active. These benefits include improvement in physical and mental health, as well as fun, enjoyment and social interaction.



## HOW PARTICIPATION IN OLYMPIC SPORT CHANGES WITH AGE



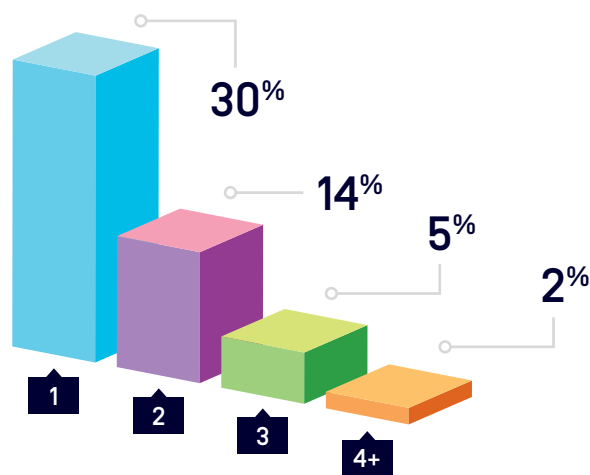
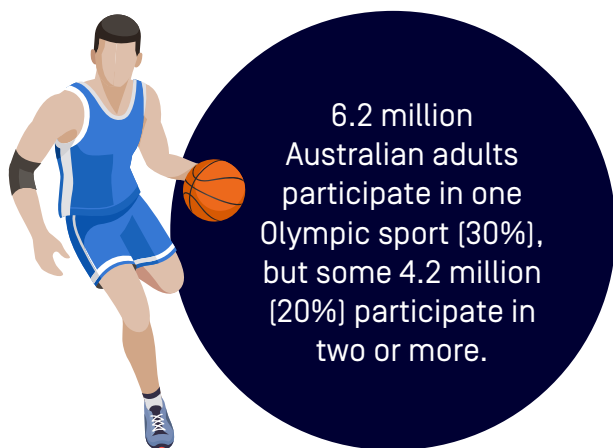
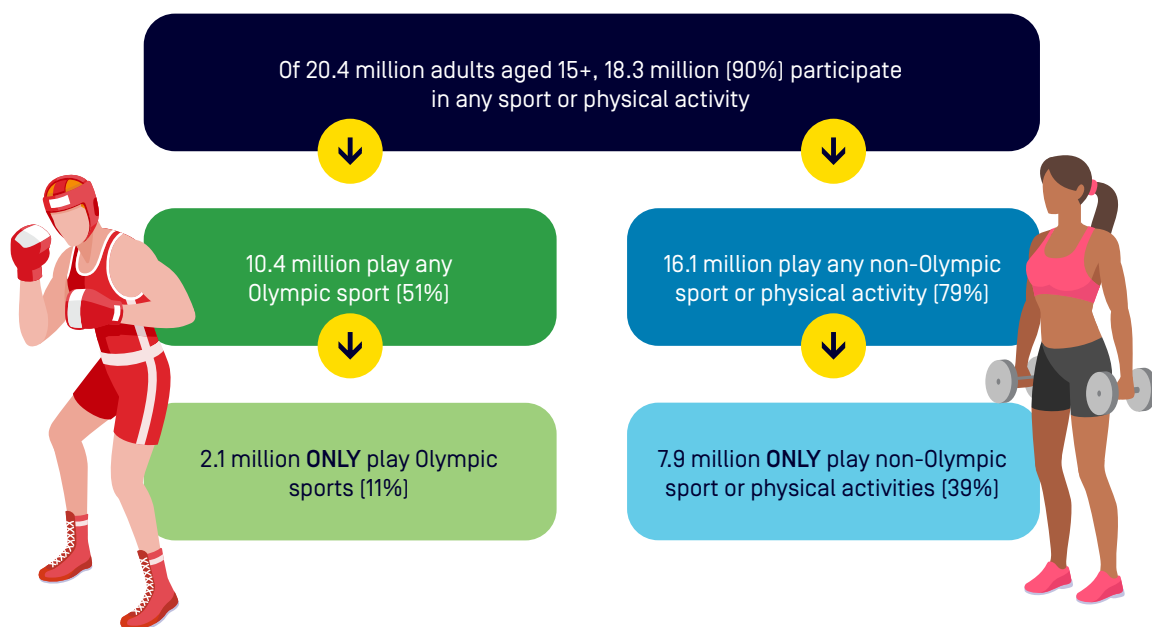
To be counted in the AusPlay survey, a respondent just needs to have played or participated in a sport or physical activity at least once in the last 12 months. For example, someone who rides their bike to work would be counted as having participated in Cycling.



# How many Australian adults participate in an Olympic sport?

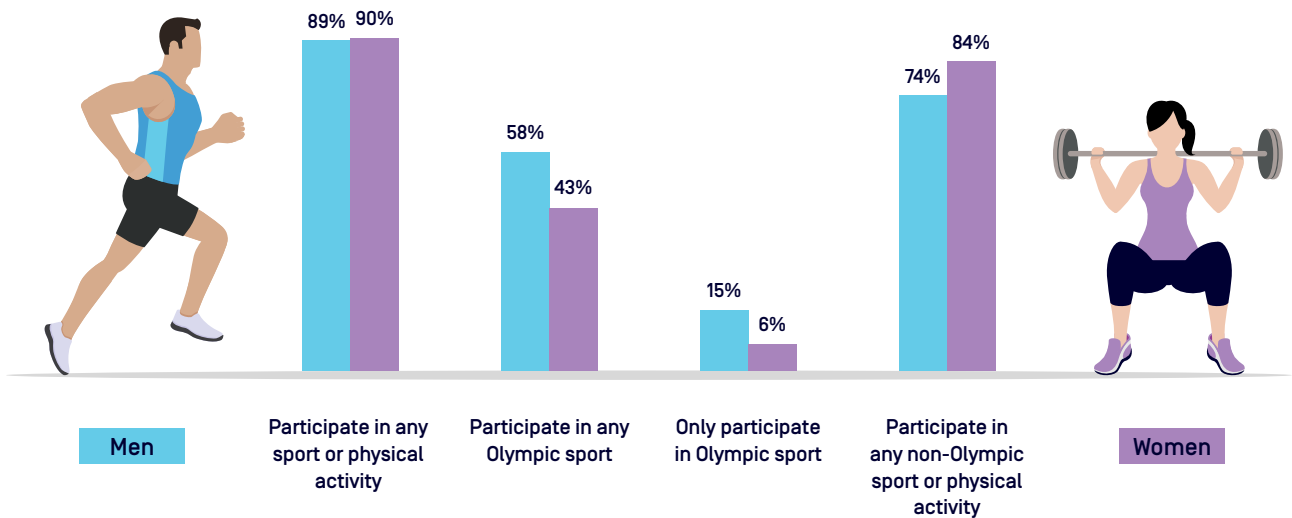
When all participation in any Olympic sport is combined, we find that more than 10 million Australians aged 15+ participate in one or more at least once a year. Furthermore, over 2 million Australian adults **only** participate in Olympic sports. The majority of participation in Olympic sport (76%) is 'organised', that is, it is participated in through an organisation or at a venue.

However, non-Olympic sports or physical activities (such as going to the gym, recreational walking) are more popular among adults than Olympic sports.



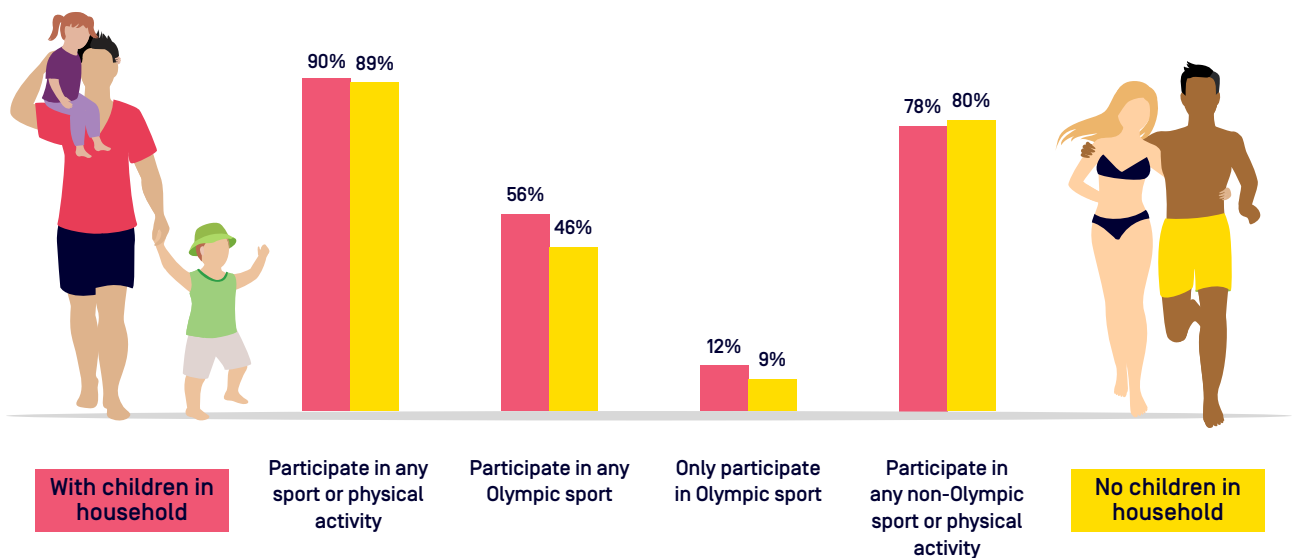
## Men participate in Olympic sports more than women

Men and women participate in sport and physical activity generally in equal measures. But men participate in Olympic sports more than women and the opposite is true for non-Olympic sports and physical activities.



## And having children in the household makes a difference

Adults with children in their household are equally likely to be as active as those without children, but are more likely to play at least one Olympic sport. This may be parents getting involved in sports their children participate in, or vice versa and probably more likely, children starting out in sports their parents already play.

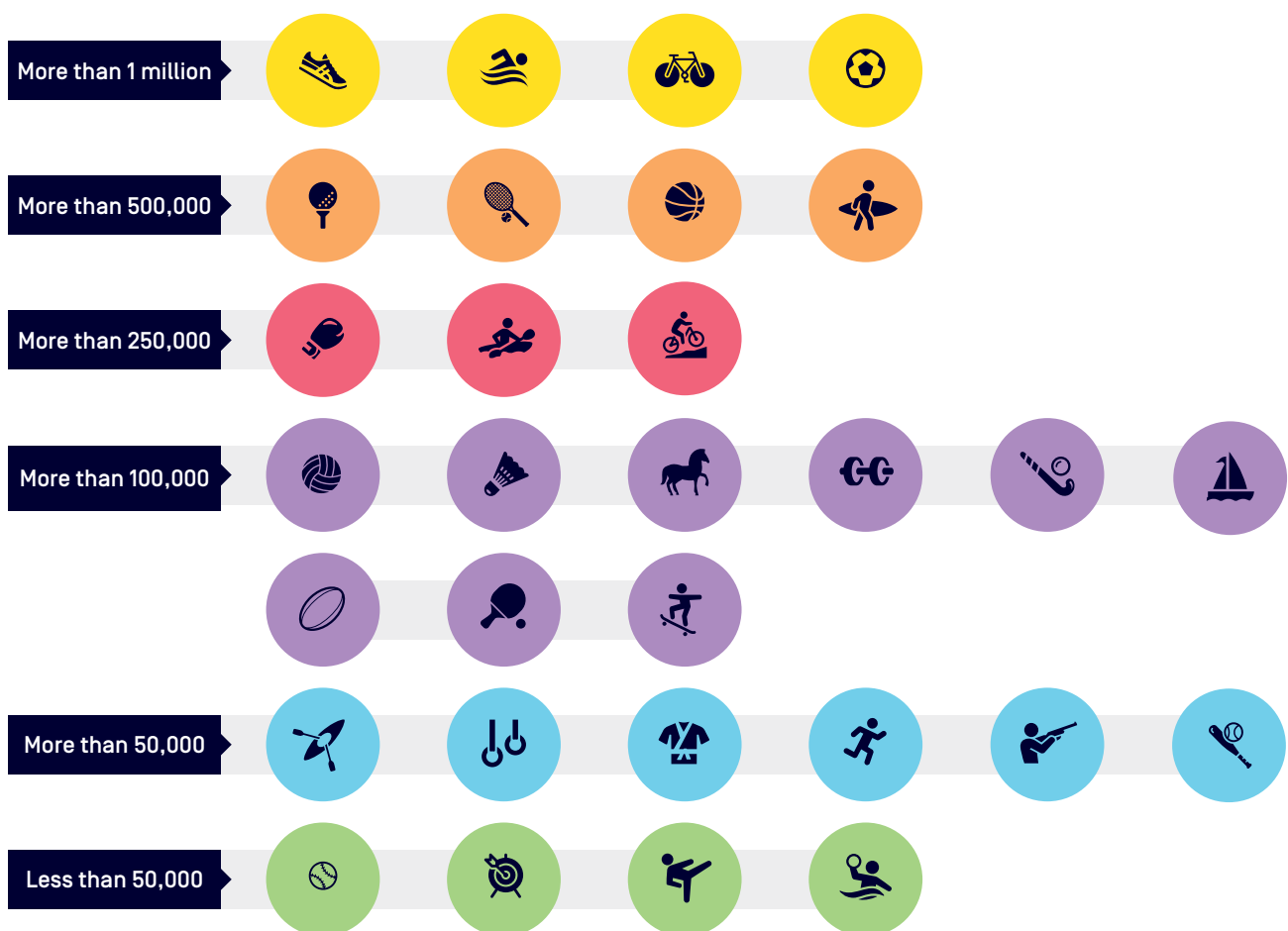


In the AusPlay Survey, people tell us about their participation in up to 10 sports or physical activities over the past 12 months. When Australians tell us what activities they participate in, we bundle them up into groups – for example, someone who runs or jogs would be counted as participating in Athletics, even if they don't go to a track.

# Which Olympic sports do Australian adults participate in the most?

Olympic sports range from the familiar to the more unusual and they are all counted in the AusPlay survey. That's one of the most appealing things about the Olympics – they give us a chance to see sports that we may not know much about and that don't get much publicity at any other time. Athletics, Swimming, Cycling and Football are the Olympic sports that Australians participate in the most, with Athletics and Swimming each attracting over 3 million participants, Cycling over 2 million and Football over 1 million. Of the team sports that are in the Olympics, Football and Basketball are played the most while Tennis and Golf are the most popular non-team ball sports.

## SPORTS PLAYED BY AUSTRALIAN ADULTS – PARTICIPANT NUMBERS



Participation estimates for the following sports are less than 20,000, with small sample sizes and should be treated with caution: Fencing, BMX, Diving, Handball, Judo, Wrestling, Sport climbing, Modern pentathlon, Artistic swimming.  
More detailed data for most sports with more than 100,000 participants is available at the Clearinghouse for Sport.

# The most popular Olympic sports are slightly different for men and women

The three Olympic sports participated in most by men and women are the same, albeit in a different order.

Football also appears in the Top 5 for both genders but Golf is included for men and Tennis for women.

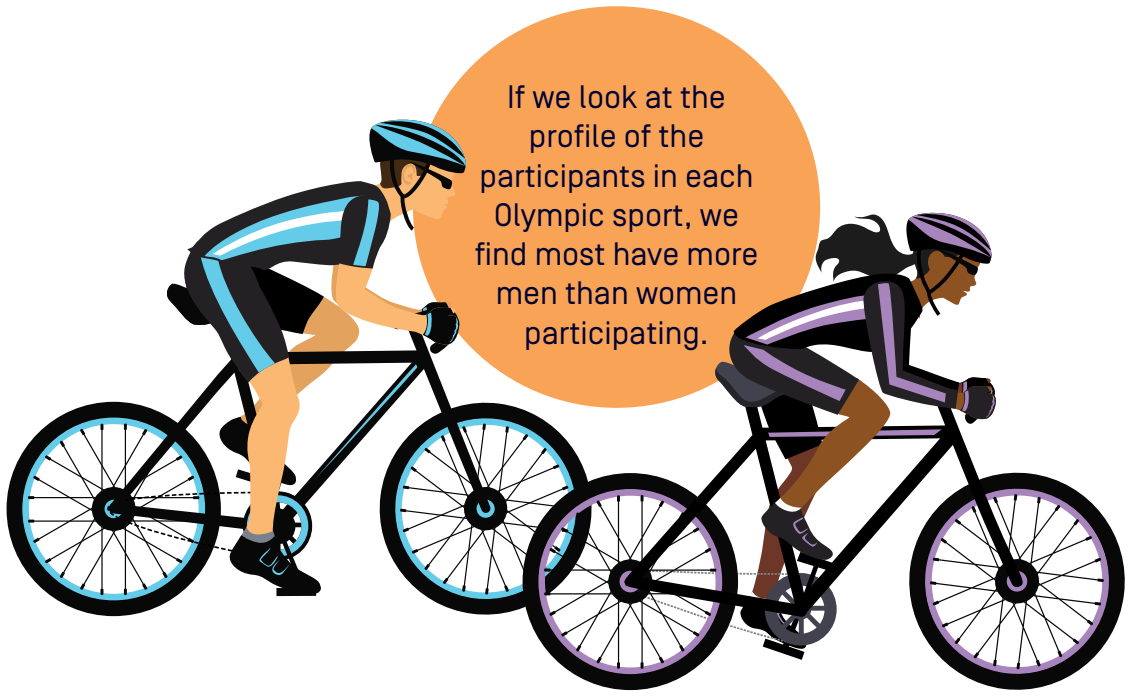
## TOP 5 OLYMPIC SPORTS FOR MEN

 Athletics	18%
 Cycling	15%
 Swimming	14%
 Football	8%
 Golf	8%

## TOP 5 OLYMPIC SPORTS FOR WOMEN

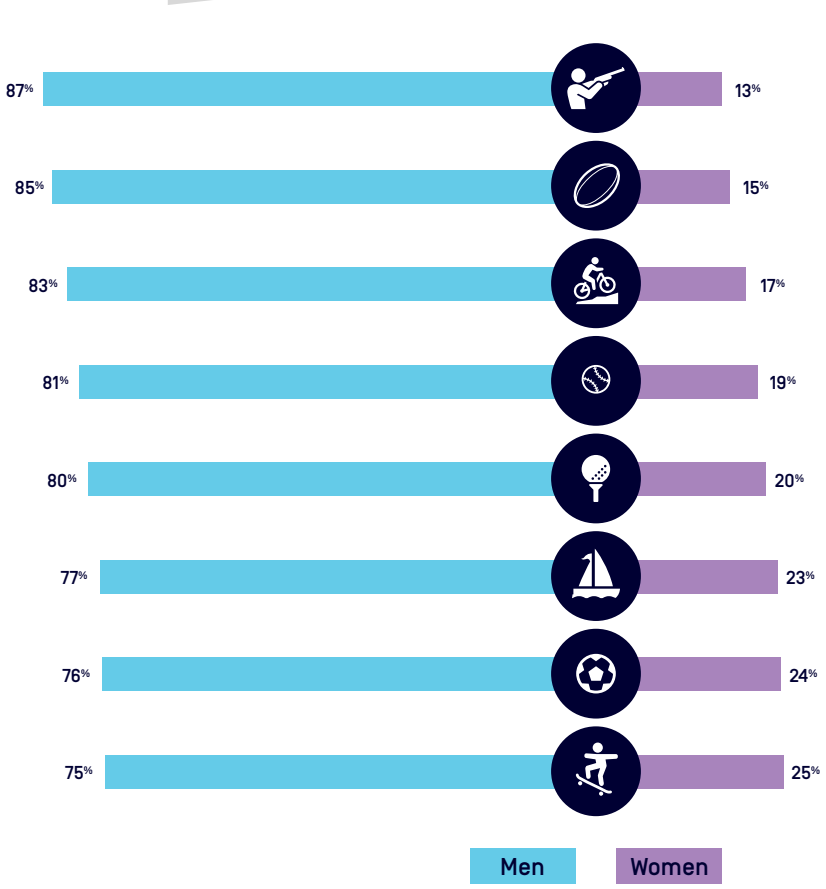
 Swimming	17%
 Athletics	15%
 Cycling	9%
 Tennis	4%
 Football	3%

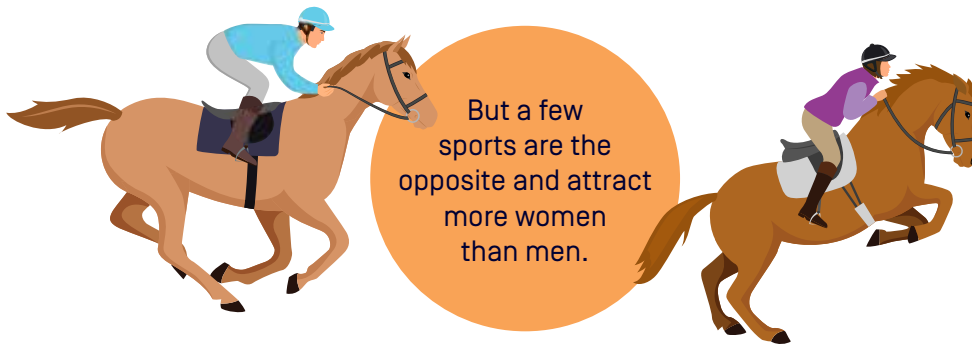




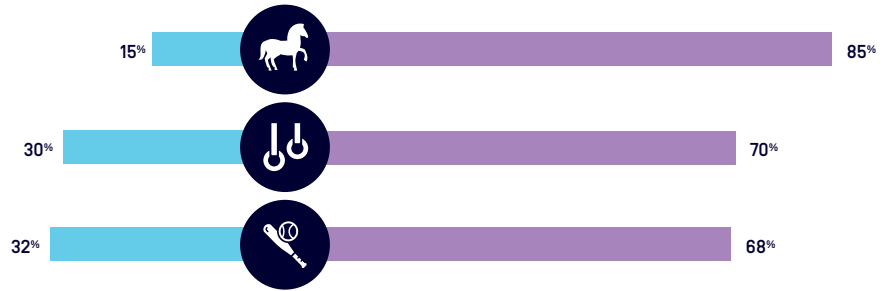
If we look at the profile of the participants in each Olympic sport, we find most have more men than women participating.

**SPORTS WHERE AT LEAST 75% OF PARTICIPANTS ARE MALE**

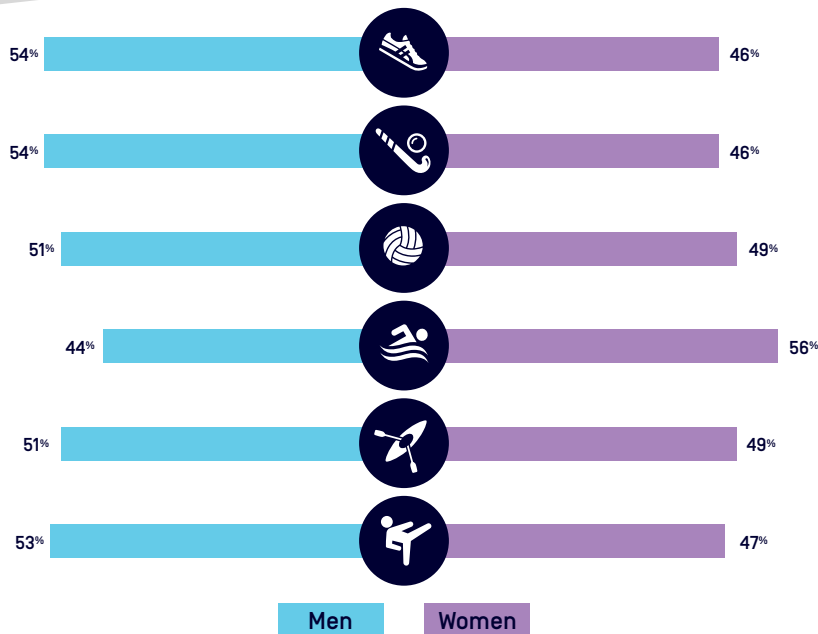




### SPORTS THAT ATTRACT MORE WOMEN THAN MEN

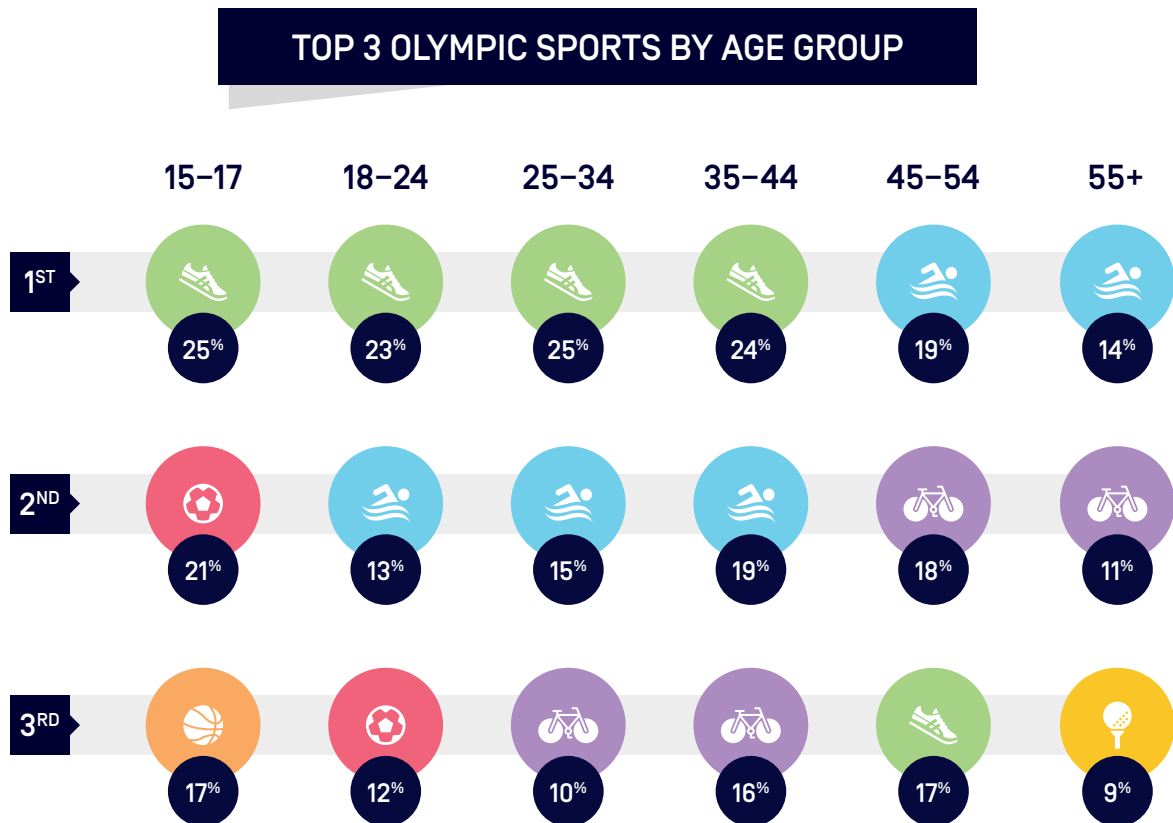


### SPORTS THAT ATTRACT MEN AND WOMEN EQUALLY



# There is an Olympic sport for adults of all ages

Athletics is dominant as the most popular Olympic sport among under-45s but is overtaken by Cycling and Swimming as Australians get older. Golf makes an appearance in the Top 3 among the over-55s.



Australia's oldest summer Olympian – Mary Hanna – was 61 years old when she competed in Equestrian in Rio 2016.

And our youngest was Ellie Carpenter, who was only 16 when she was selected for the women's soccer team in 2016.

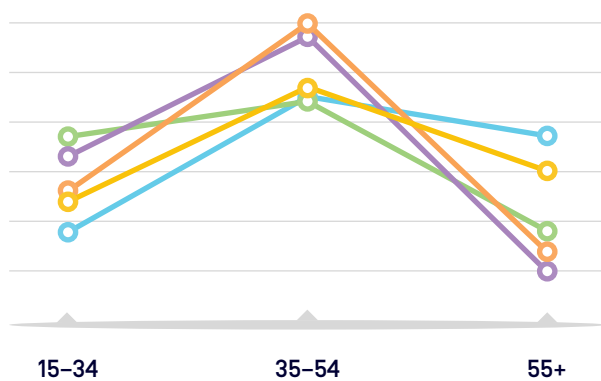


Most sports have younger profiles, with 15-34 year-olds being the predominant participants. Equestrian, Swimming and Tennis stand out as having the most evenly distributed age profile – for these sports around a third of participants fit into each age group.

Along with Cycling and Triathlon, some lifestyle sports have their largest group of participants in the 35-54 age group.

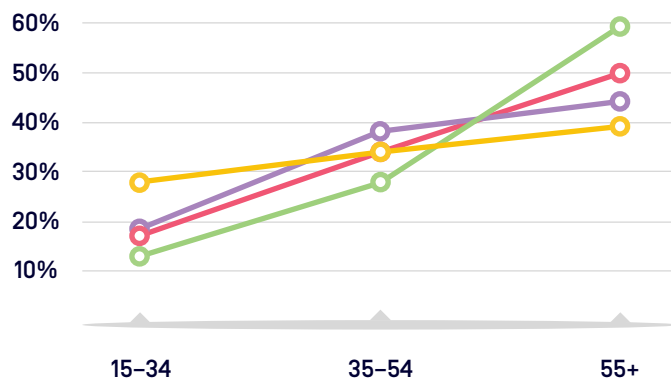
Aside from Golf, there are other sports that have an older player profile. Sailing, Shooting and Table tennis all have over-55s as their biggest participant age group.

**AGE PROFILE — OLYMPIC SPORTS WITH 35-54 AS THE LARGEST PARTICIPANT GROUP**



- Mountain biking
- Triathlon
- Cycling
- Surfing
- Canoeing/kayaking

**AGE PROFILE — OLYMPIC SPORTS WITH 55+ AS THE LARGEST PARTICIPANT GROUP**



- Golf
- Sailing
- Shooting
- Table tennis





# What makes Australian adults want to participate in Olympic sports?
















Playing Olympic sports is fun! Most Olympic sports are primarily played for fun/enjoyment or physical health/fitness. Those most often played for fun/enjoyment include many team sports while those most often played for physical health/fitness are generally individual activities.



The AusPlay Survey asks participants what motivates them to play sport. If they play more than one sport, they are asked for their motivation for up to three, focusing on the ones they play most often. Participants don't have to choose just one motivation – they can say they are motivated by lots of things.

## SPORTS WITH FUN/ENJOYMENT AS THEIR TOP MOTIVATION

Proportion of participants in each sport giving it as a reason for participating\*

 Surfing	81%	 Table tennis	66%	 Hockey	63%
 Sailing	77%	 Mountain biking	65%	 Football	63%
 Skate sports	76%	 Golf	65%	 Volleyball	61%
 Equestrian	74%	 Rugby union	65%	 Tennis	57%
 Canoeing/kayaking	66%	 Basketball	64%	 Badminton	55%

## SPORTS WITH PHYSICAL FITNESS/HEALTH AS THEIR TOP MOTIVATION

Proportion of participants in each sport giving it as a reason for participating\*

 Weightlifting	83%	 Boxing	75%	 Cycling	65%
 Athletics	82%	 Rowing	74%	 Swimming	61%

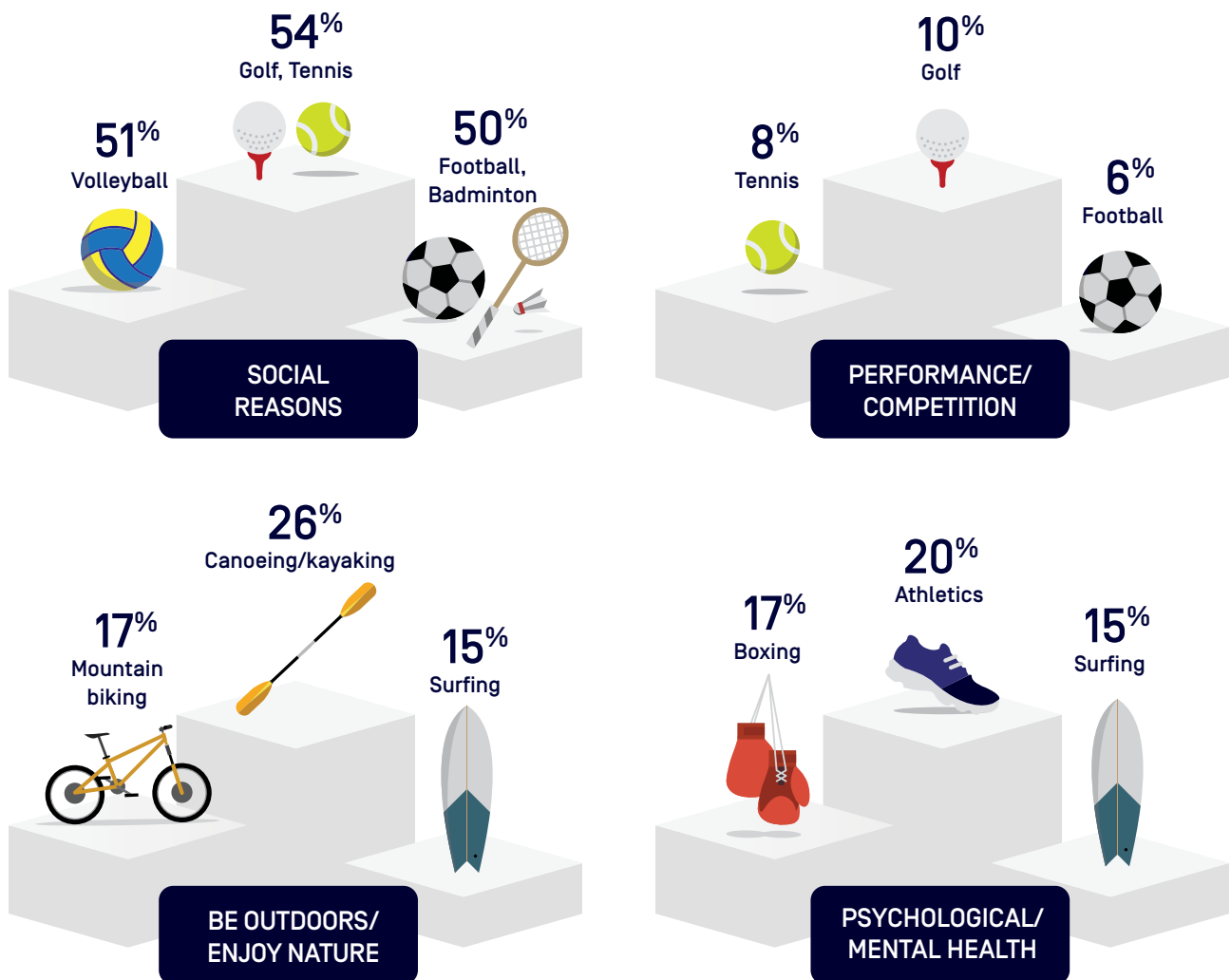
\*Who answered motivation questions for that sport

The following sports had sample sizes too small for reliable reporting of motivations:  
Archery, Baseball, BMX, Diving, Fencing, Gymnastics, Judo, Karate, Shooting, Softball, Taekwondo, Triathlon, Water polo, Weightlifting



## SPORTS WITH OTHER MOTIVATIONS TO PLAY OR PARTICIPATE

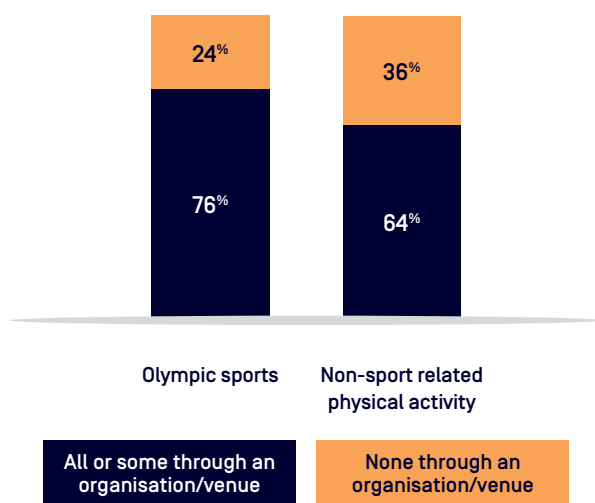
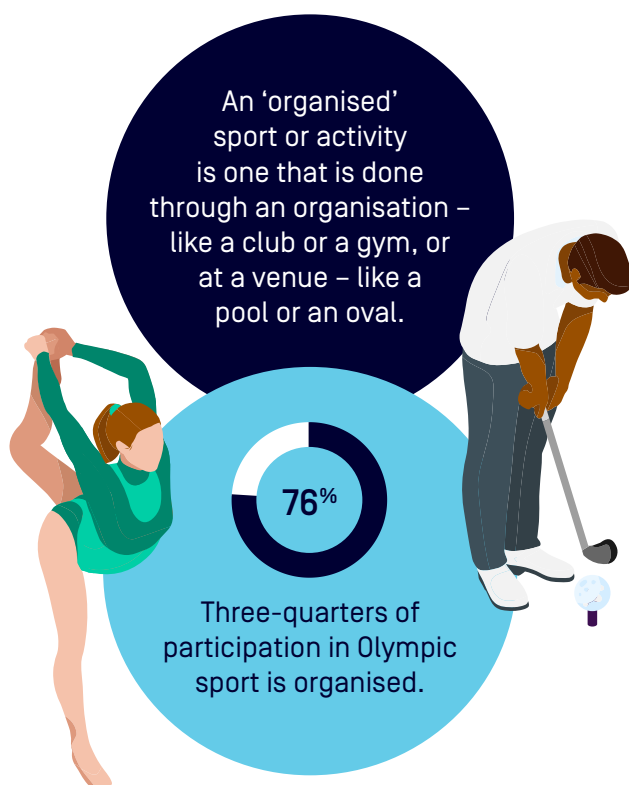
Proportion of participants in each sport giving it as a reason for participating\*



\*Who answered motivation questions for that sport

# How do Australian adults participate in Olympic sports?








Compared with non-sport related physical activity, Olympic sports are more likely to be 'organised'. This makes sense given that many of them are team sports or need specialist locations or facilities.



Not surprisingly, the Olympic sports that Australians most often play outside of any organisation or venue are all outdoor recreational activities that can be participated in individually and at any time.

## NOT THROUGH AN ORGANISATION OR VENUE








% of participants in each sport

	Cycling	92%
	Surfing	86%
	Mountain biking	83%
	Canoeing/kayaking	82%
	Skate sports	78%
	Athletics	78%
	Equestrian	57%

Participation in many Olympic sports involves visiting a venue or belonging to a club or association. Sport or recreation clubs/associations are the most common organisation type, with seven sports having at least half of their participants participating in this way.

## THROUGH A SPORT OR RECREATION CLUB/ASSOCIATION

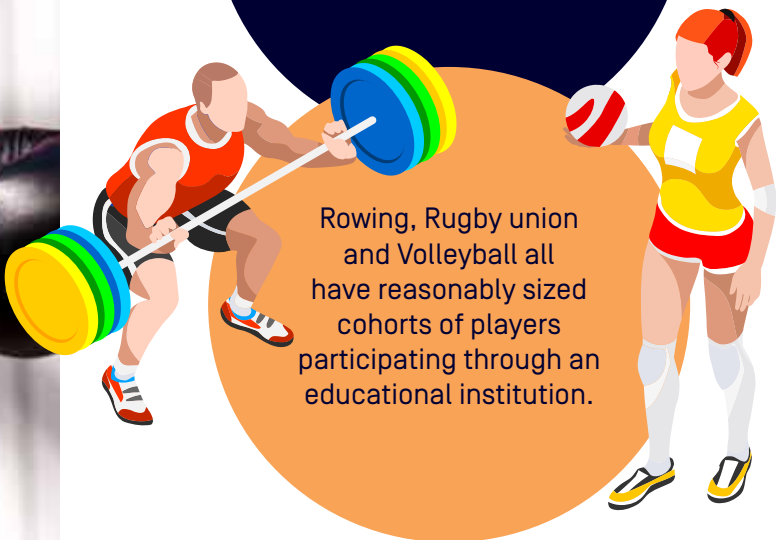
% of participants in each sport

	Baseball	83%
	Hockey	82%
	Softball	76%
	Golf	69%
	Rugby union	68%
	Shooting	65%
	Football	50%






Some sports are participated in through other venues. Weightlifting, Boxing and Swimming are the sports that are more often accessed at a gym/fitness club/sports or leisure centre.

Rowing, Rugby union and Volleyball all have reasonably sized cohorts of players participating through an educational institution.



### AT A GYM/FITNESS CLUB/ SPORTS OR LEISURE CENTRE

% of participants in each sport

	Weightlifting	50%
	Boxing	39%
	Swimming	33%

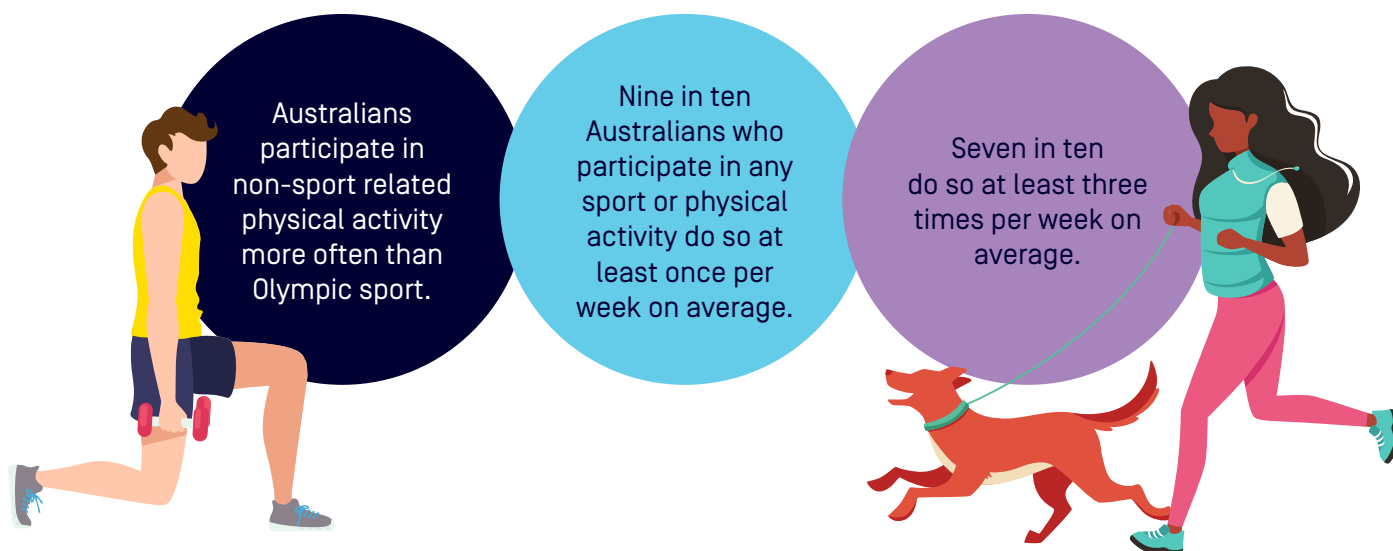
### AT AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

% of participants in each sport

	Volleyball	22%
	Rugby union	19%
	Rowing*	15%

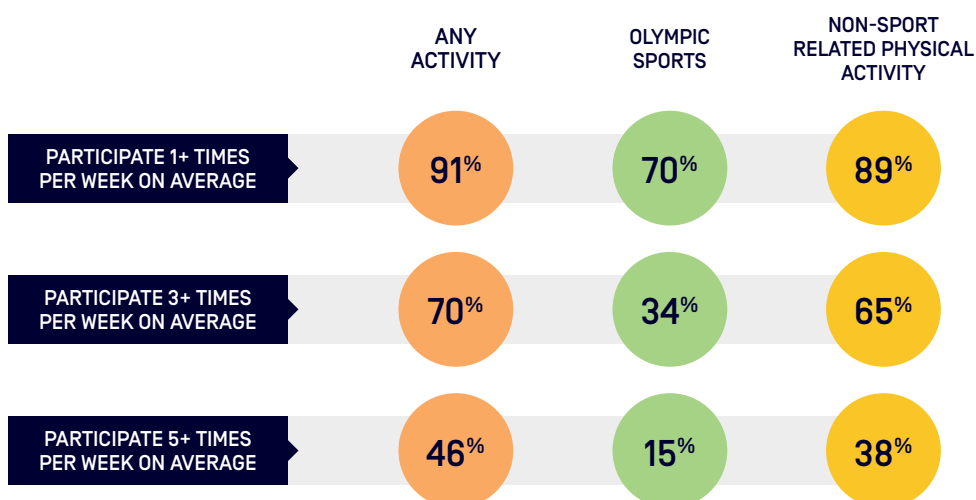
\*Small sample size – use with caution

# How often do Australian adults aged 15+ participate in Olympic sports?



In comparison, participation in Olympic sports is less frequent, perhaps reflecting their more organised nature where participation only happens when the team trains or competes, or when the venue is available. The seasonality of some Olympic sports may also affect frequency, with participation in popular sports like Football or Hockey being restricted to six months of the year.

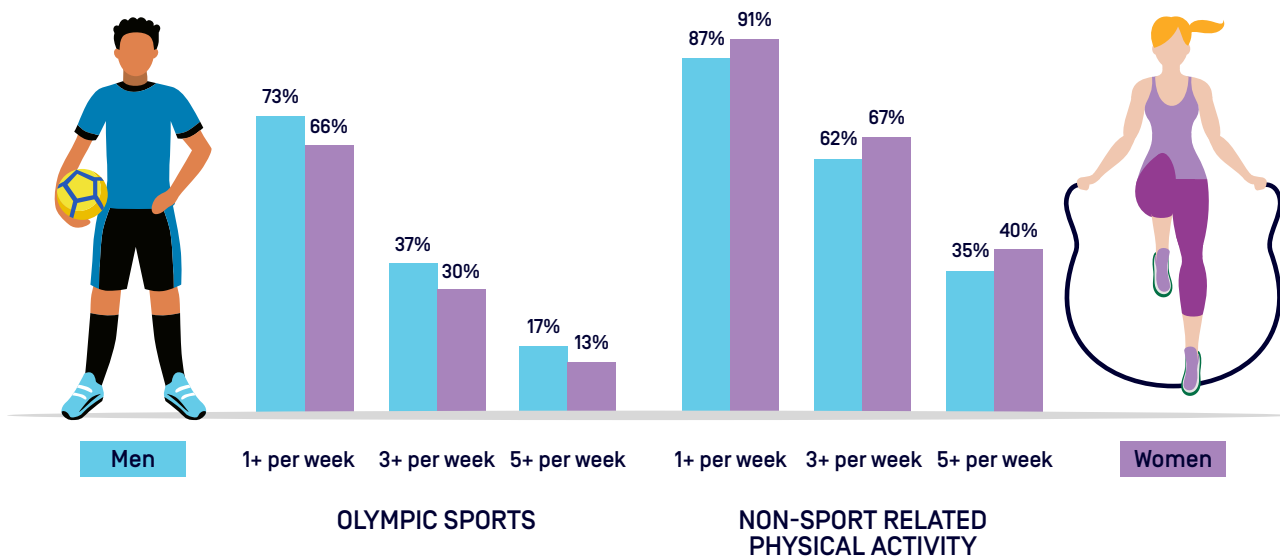
## PARTICIPATION FREQUENCY – ADULTS AGED 15+



Based on those who participate in each type of activity

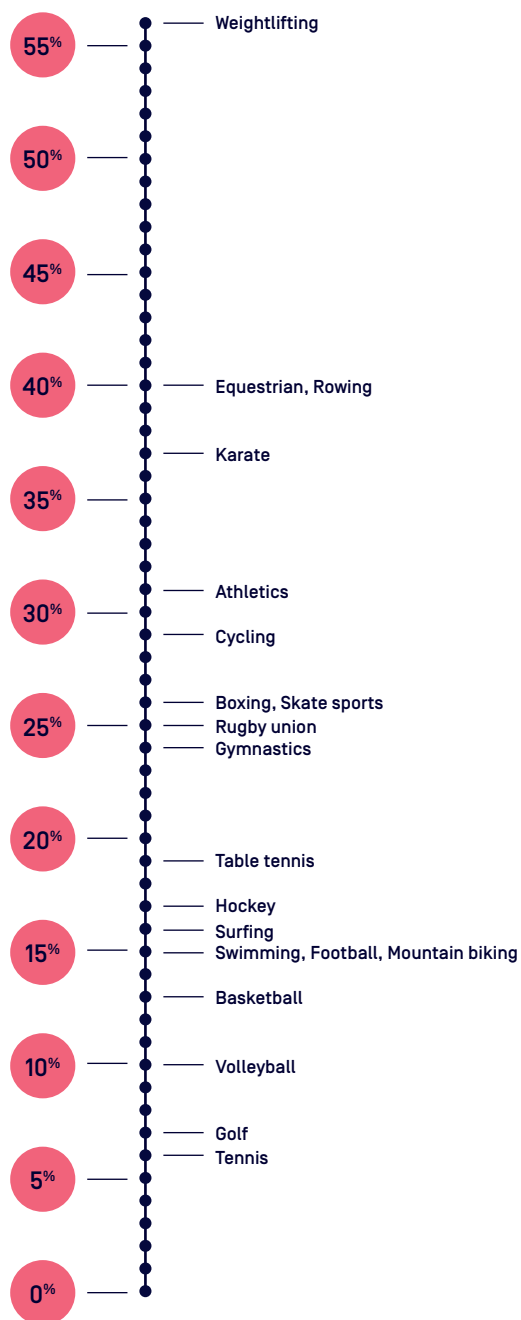
We saw earlier that men were more likely than women to play Olympic sports. This pattern also flows through to how often they play Olympic sport – men who play Olympic sports do so more often than women, on average. The opposite is true for non-sport related physical activity, with women participating more often than men.

## PARTICIPATION FREQUENCY – MEN AND WOMEN



The proportion of participants who participate at least three times per week varies widely across Olympic sports, from 6% for Tennis to 56% for Weightlifting.

### PARTICIPANTS OF EACH SPORT PARTICIPATING AT LEAST 3 TIMES PER WEEK ON AVERAGE

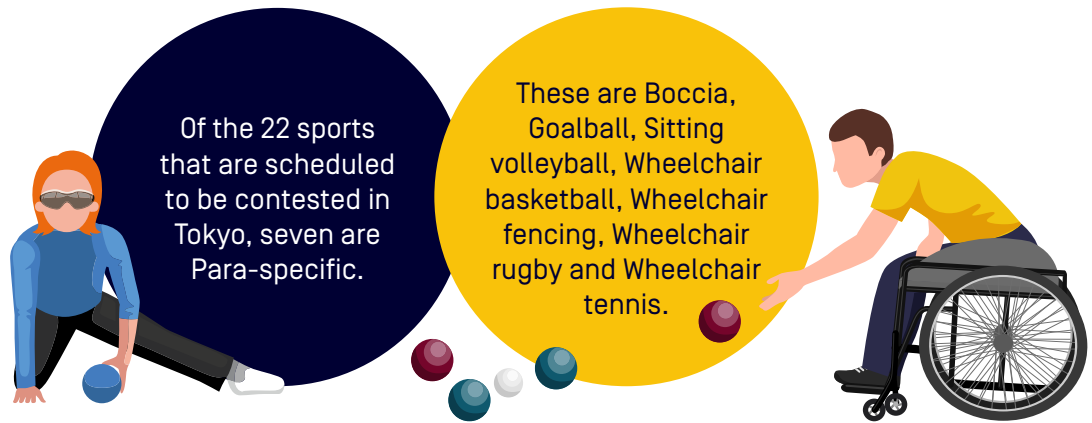


Note: some sports are excluded from this analysis due to high relative margins of error for 3+ times per week





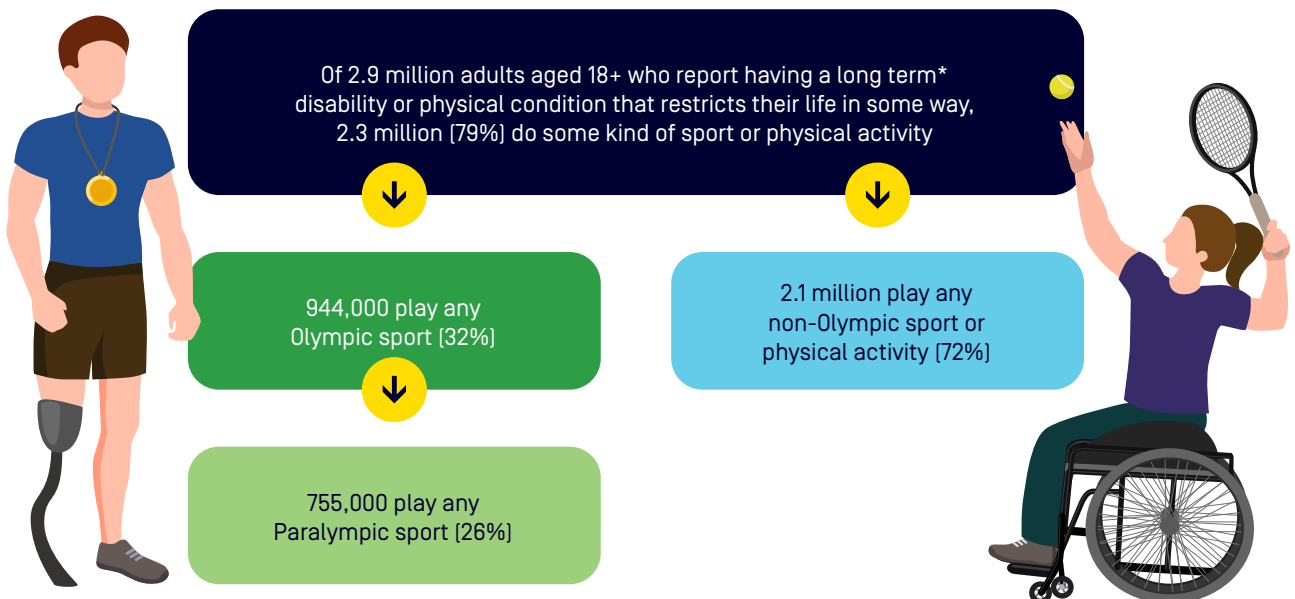
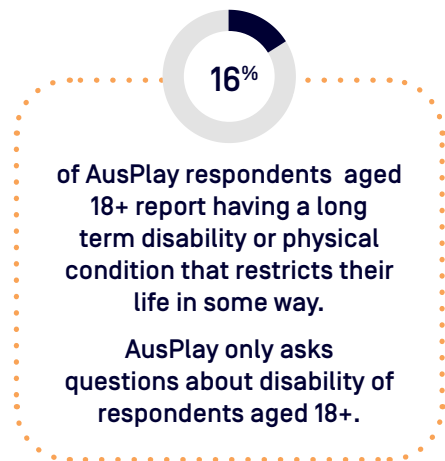
# Participation in Paralympic sports



Because Para-specific sports are so specialist, they are not often picked up in AusPlay, making it difficult to provide reliable estimates of participation.

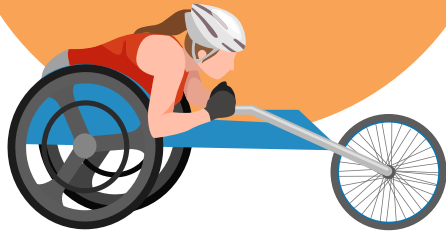
What we can do is look at participation in sport and physical activity by Australian adults aged 18+ who identify as having some level of disability or physical condition that restricts their life in some way.

Having a long term disability\* doesn't stop Australians being active; around four in five [79%] participate in some kind of sport or physical activity at least once a year, a third [32%] play at least one Olympic sport and a quarter [26%] play at least one Paralympic sport.




\*Lasting for 6 months or more






The Paralympic sports that Australians with a long term disability or physical condition most often participate in are the same as for those with no disability, although Swimming and Cycling are ahead of Athletics.



### TOP 5 PARALYMPIC SPORTS – ADULTS AGED 18+ WITH A LONG TERM DISABILITY

	% who participate
 Swimming	<b>13%</b>
 Cycling	<b>8%</b>
 Athletics	<b>6%</b>
 Football	<b>2%</b>
 Canoeing/kayaking	<b>1%</b>

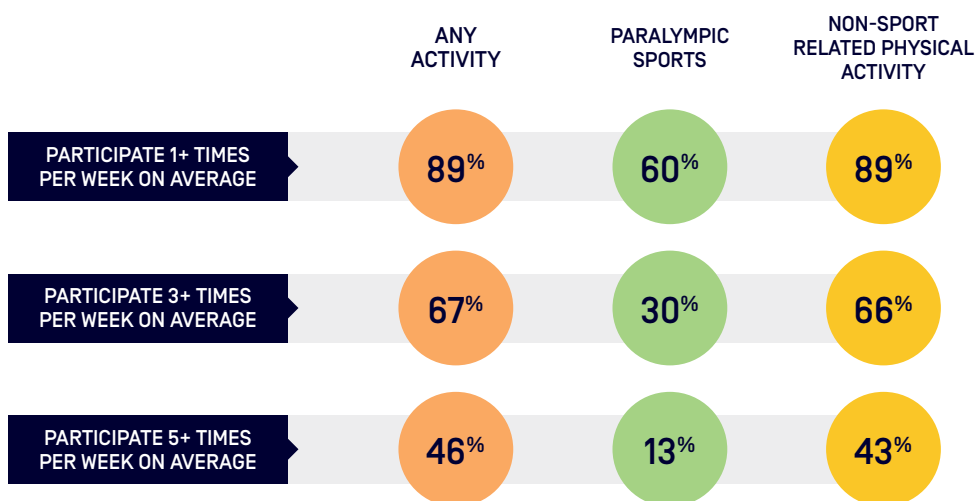
### TOP 5 PARALYMPIC SPORTS – ADULTS AGED 18+ WITH NO DISABILITY

	% who participate
 Athletics	<b>18%</b>
 Swimming	<b>16%</b>
 Cycling	<b>13%</b>
 Football	<b>5%</b>
 Canoeing/kayaking	<b>2%</b>



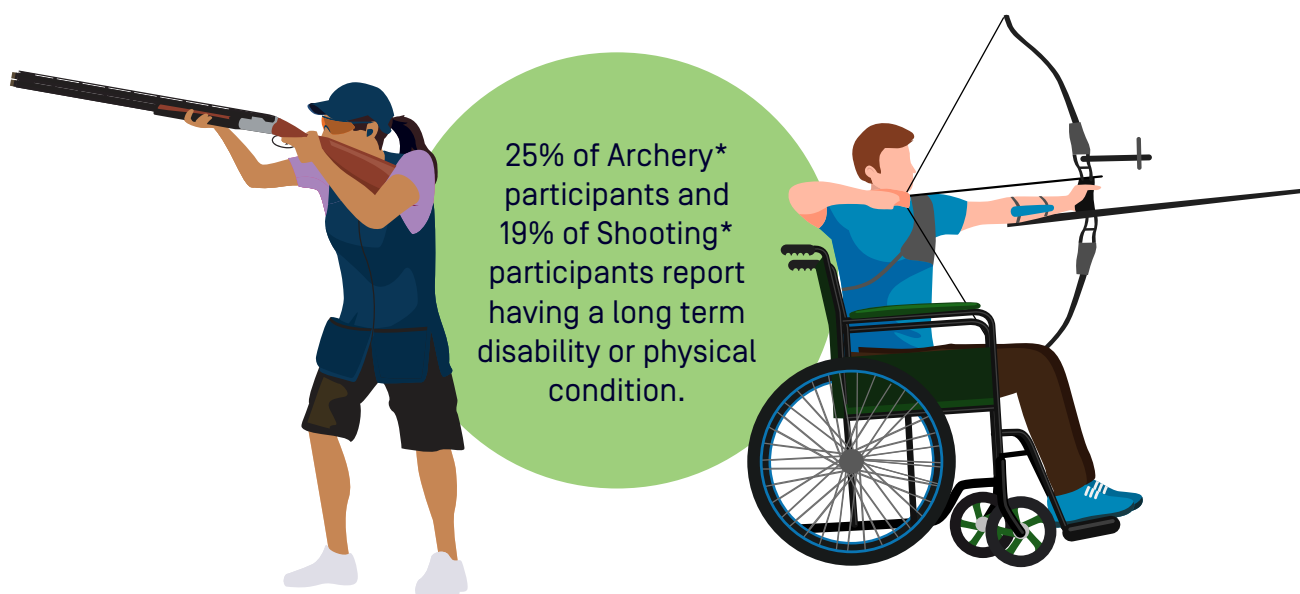
When people with a long term disability are active, they participate as often as all Australians, with around two-thirds participating in any activity 3+ times per week and around a third participating in Paralympic sports 3+ times per week. Also like all Australians, non-sport related physical activity is participated in more often than Paralympic sports.

## PARTICIPATION FREQUENCY – ADULTS AGED 18+ WITH A LONG TERM DISABILITY



Based on those who participate in each type of activity

Some Paralympic sports naturally lend themselves to be more accessible to people with a disability. This is reflected in the participant profile of Archery and Shooting, which both have higher than average proportions of participants with a disability or physical condition. In contrast, the Paralympic sports that require greater all-round physical fitness, such as Athletics have lower than average participants with a long term disability [5%].



\*Small sample size – use with caution

A woman with curly grey hair, wearing a blue t-shirt, is smiling and looking down at a clipboard she is holding. The background is a solid purple color.

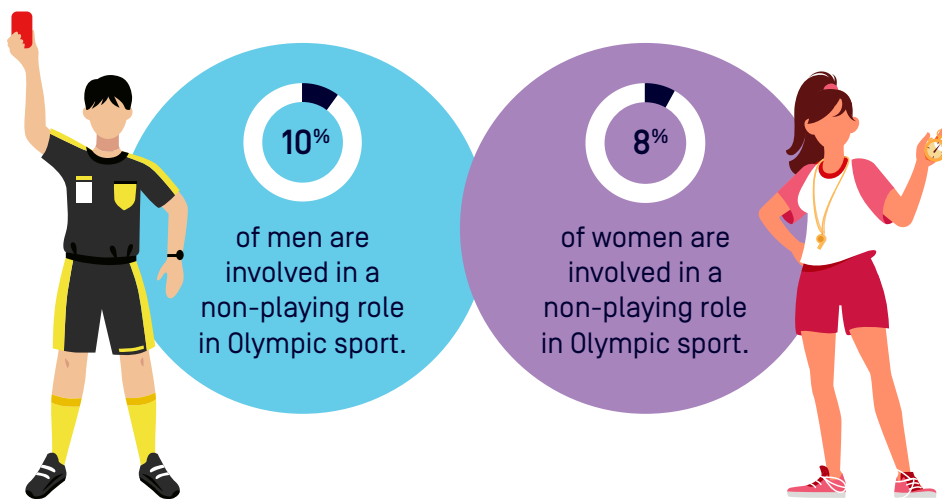
# Volunteer participation

# There are also other ways to be involved in Olympic sports






Across the country, sport is supported by a vast number of people who are involved through non-playing roles. These roles allow sport to happen and include officials, team managers, club committee members and coaches to name but a few. While many of the roles are carried out by people who also participate in the sport, there is also an army of parents, friends, grandparents or non-players with an interest in the sport who contribute to our sporting culture.

Some 1.8 million Australians are involved in non-playing roles in Olympic sports each year – that equates to about 9% of adults aged 15+. If we include all sport and non-sport related physical activity, the number increases to 3.3 million. The majority of these non-playing roles are carried out by volunteers, who give up their time freely, with only a small proportion being paid or recompensed in some way.

In line with their greater participation in Olympic sport, men are also slightly more likely to be involved in a non-playing role than women.



## OLYMPIC SPORTS WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS OVERALL

	Number of volunteers
 Football	515,000
 Basketball	298,000
 Athletics	151,000
 Swimming	114,000
 Hockey	98,000



AusPlay collects information about non-playing involvement in sport. This includes those who are recompensed in some way for their time and contribution [such as being paid to umpire] as well as those who fully donate their time and labour. In this section, we refer to both types of non-playing roles as 'volunteers'.

Most of the time, volunteers in Olympic sports are also participants in that sport.

Some sports however, attract more non-participants to non-playing roles than others.



## OLYMPIC SPORTS WITH THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF VOLUNTEERS WHO DO NOT PLAY THE SPORT

% of volunteers who are not participants

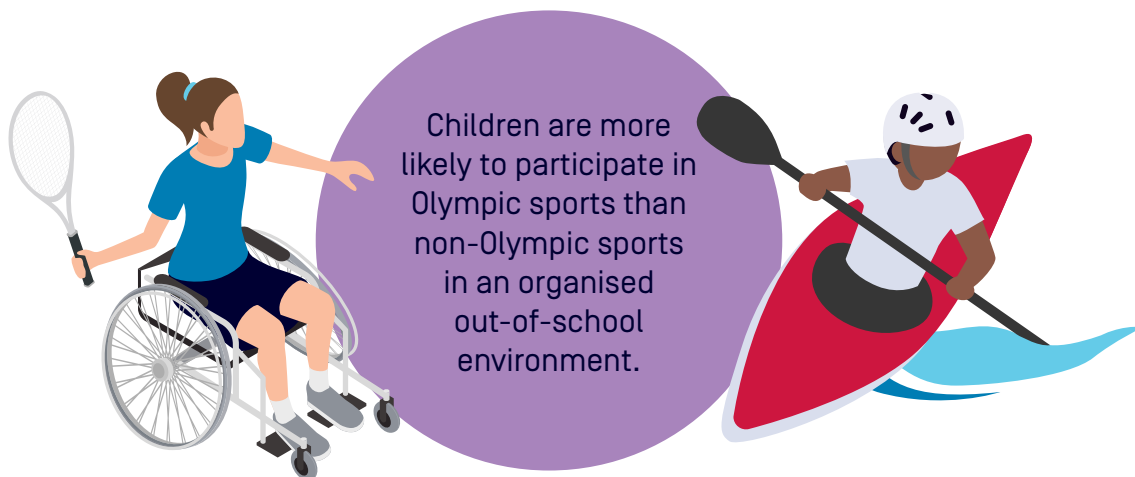
	Rugby union	71%
	Football	59%
	Gymnastics	59%
	Basketball	58%



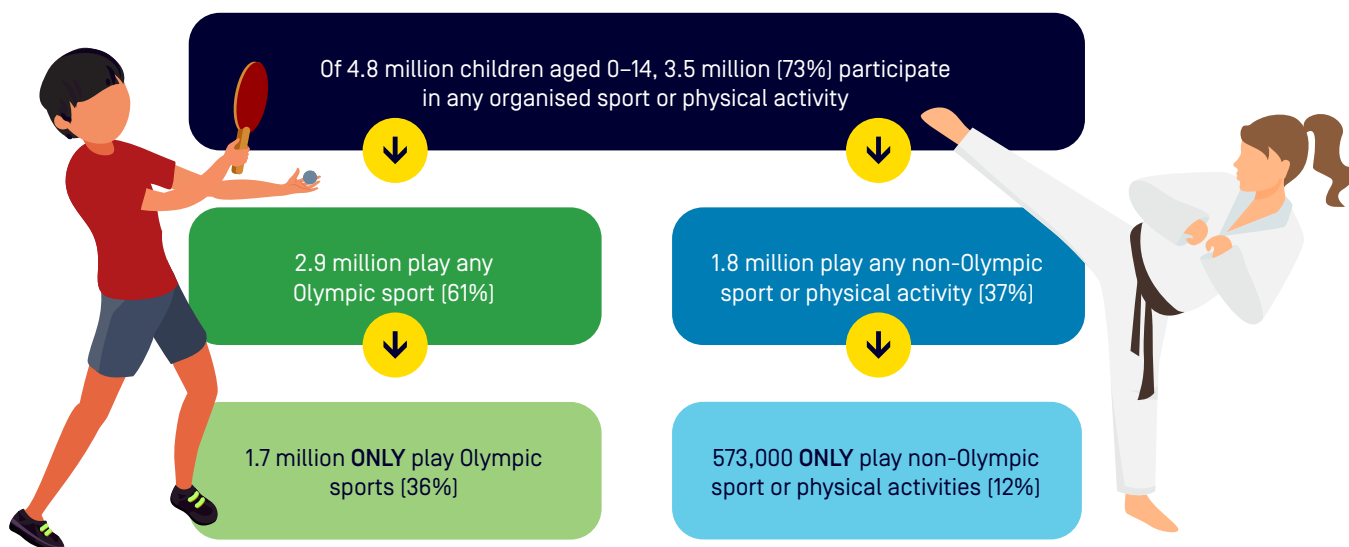
A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a teal t-shirt and dark shorts, is smiling broadly. He is holding a white and black soccer ball in his left hand and has his right arm raised high in the air. The background is a solid blue color with a diagonal split between a lighter and a darker shade.

# Children's participation

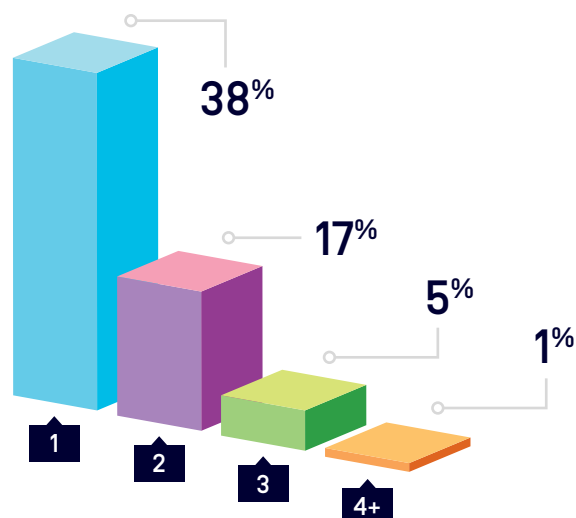
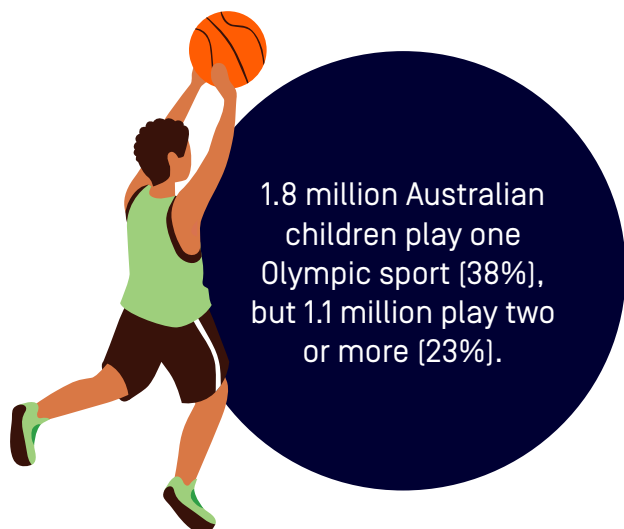
# How many Australian children participate in organised out-of-school Olympic sports



In AusPlay, children's participation is collected by asking respondents who were a parent/guardian of a child or children in their household about any out-of-school organised sport or physical activities of one randomly selected child in the last 12 months.



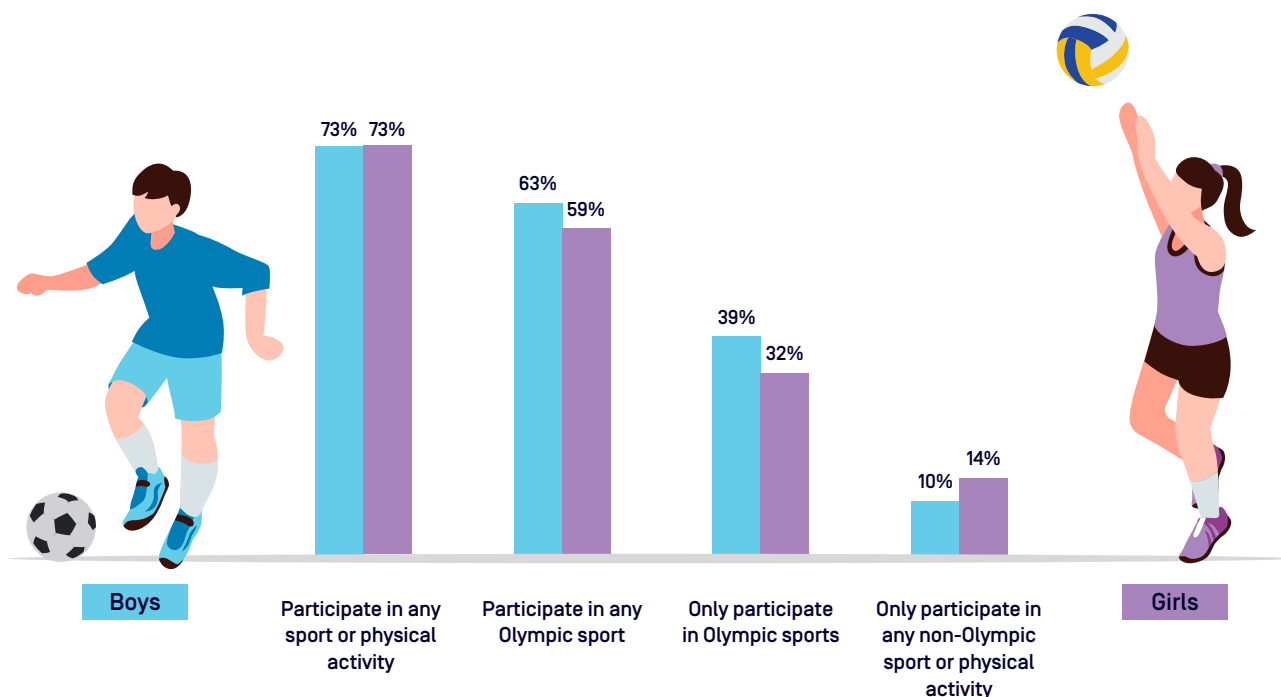




Of the top 10 sports or physical activities that Australian children participate in, six – Swimming, Football, Gymnastics, Basketball, Tennis and Athletics – are Olympic sports. Rounding out the top 10 activities for children are Dancing [Recreational], Australian Football, Netball and Cricket.

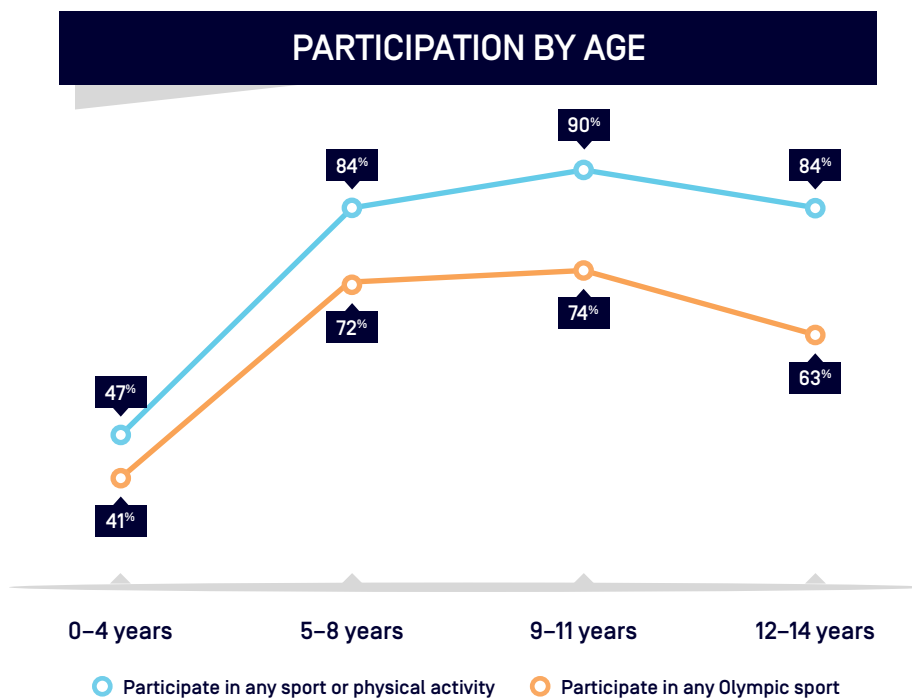
As with adults, participation in any sport or physical activity is equal for boys and girls but slightly skewed towards boys when they only play Olympic sports and towards girls when they only play non-Olympic sports or physical activity.

### Boys participate in Olympic sports more than girls

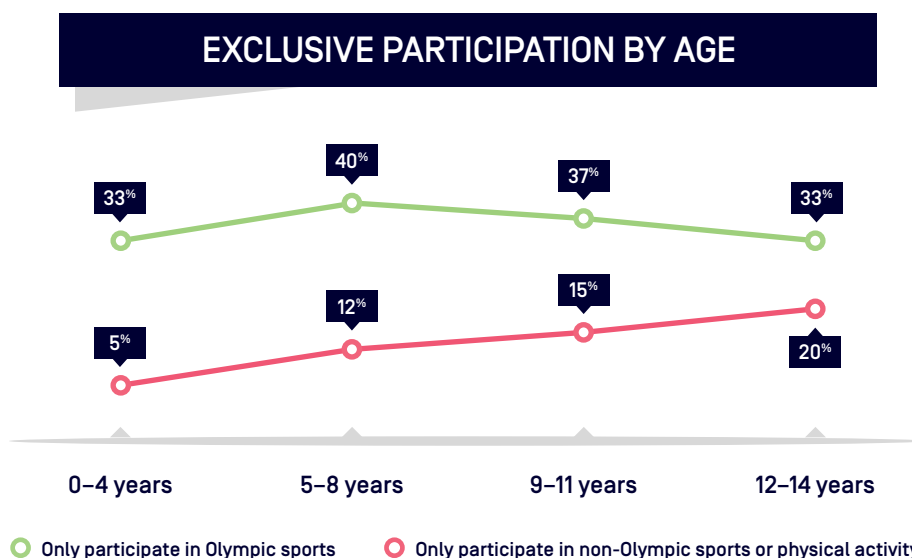


# Children's participation in organised out-of-school Olympic sports by age

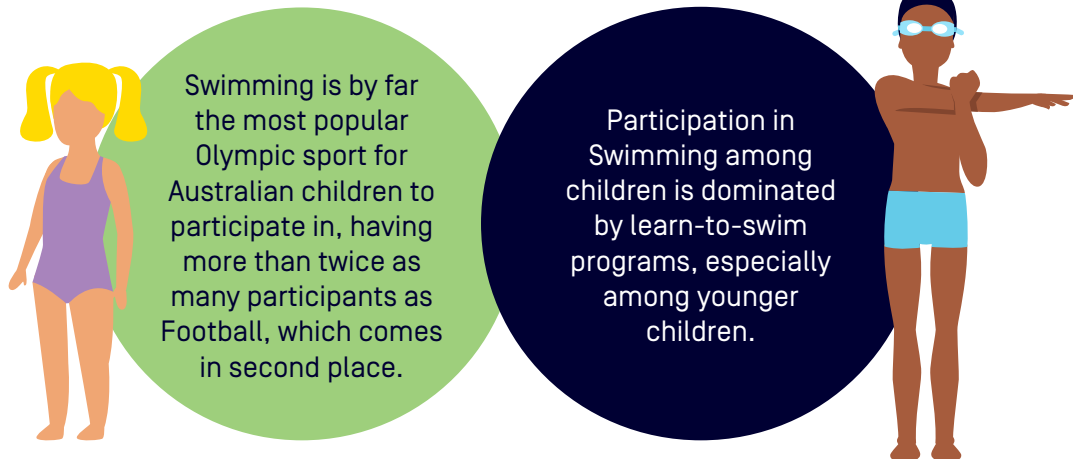
Participation in Olympic sports remains high as children grow up, with almost two-thirds still participating at least once a year by the time they are 12-14 years. As with participation in any sport or physical activity, the peak age group for participation in Olympic sports is 9-11 years.



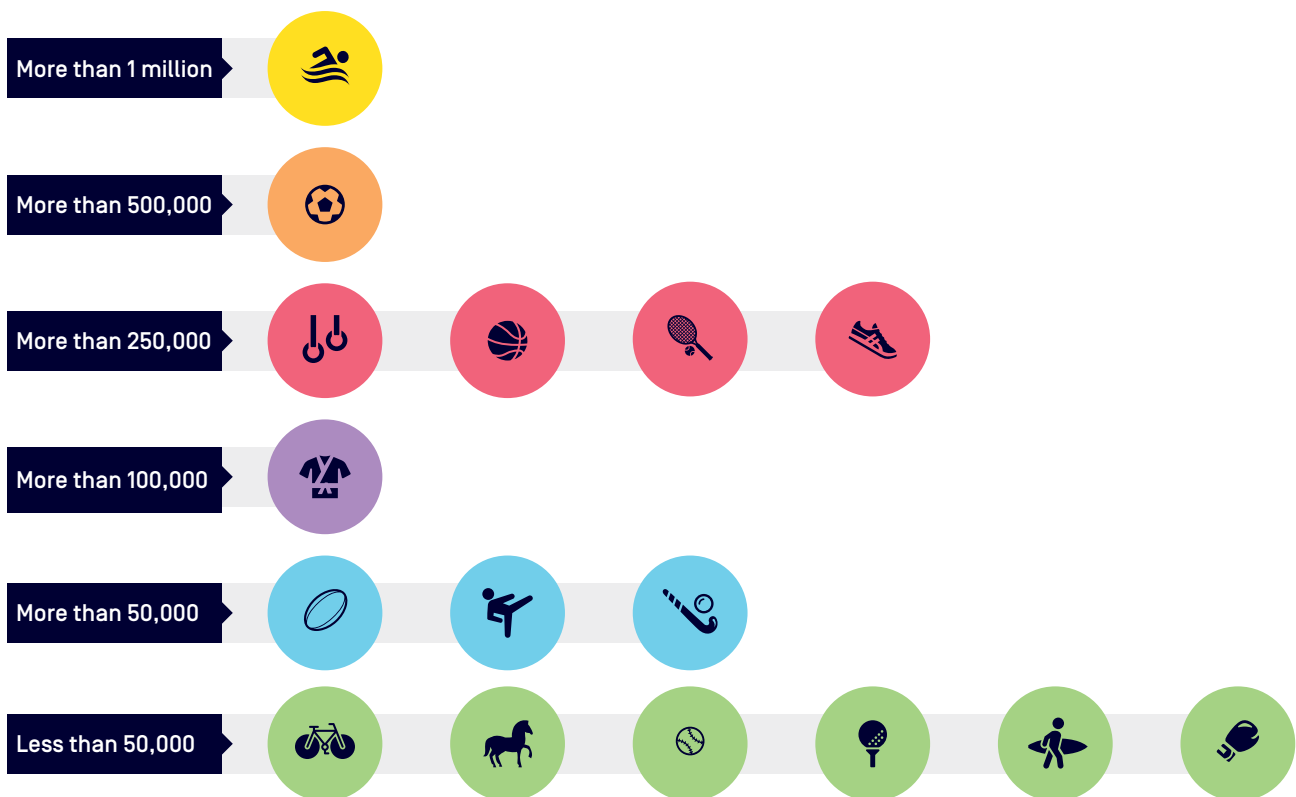
The proportion of Australian children who only participate in Olympic sports declines slightly with age. In contrast, exclusive participation in non-Olympic sports or physical activities increases.



# Which Olympic sports do Australian children participate in the most?



## SPORTS PLAYED BY AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN – PARTICIPANT NUMBERS









Participation estimates for the following sports are less than 20,000, with small sample sizes and should be treated with caution: BMX, Skate sports, Volleyball, Triathlon, Mountain biking, Softball, Sailing, Water polo, Judo

The same six Olympic sports are the most popular among both boys and girls, but the order is different.

Swimming is top for both boys and girls. Girls are more likely to participate in Gymnastics than boys, and boys more likely to play Football than girls.



### TOP 6 OLYMPIC SPORTS FOR BOYS

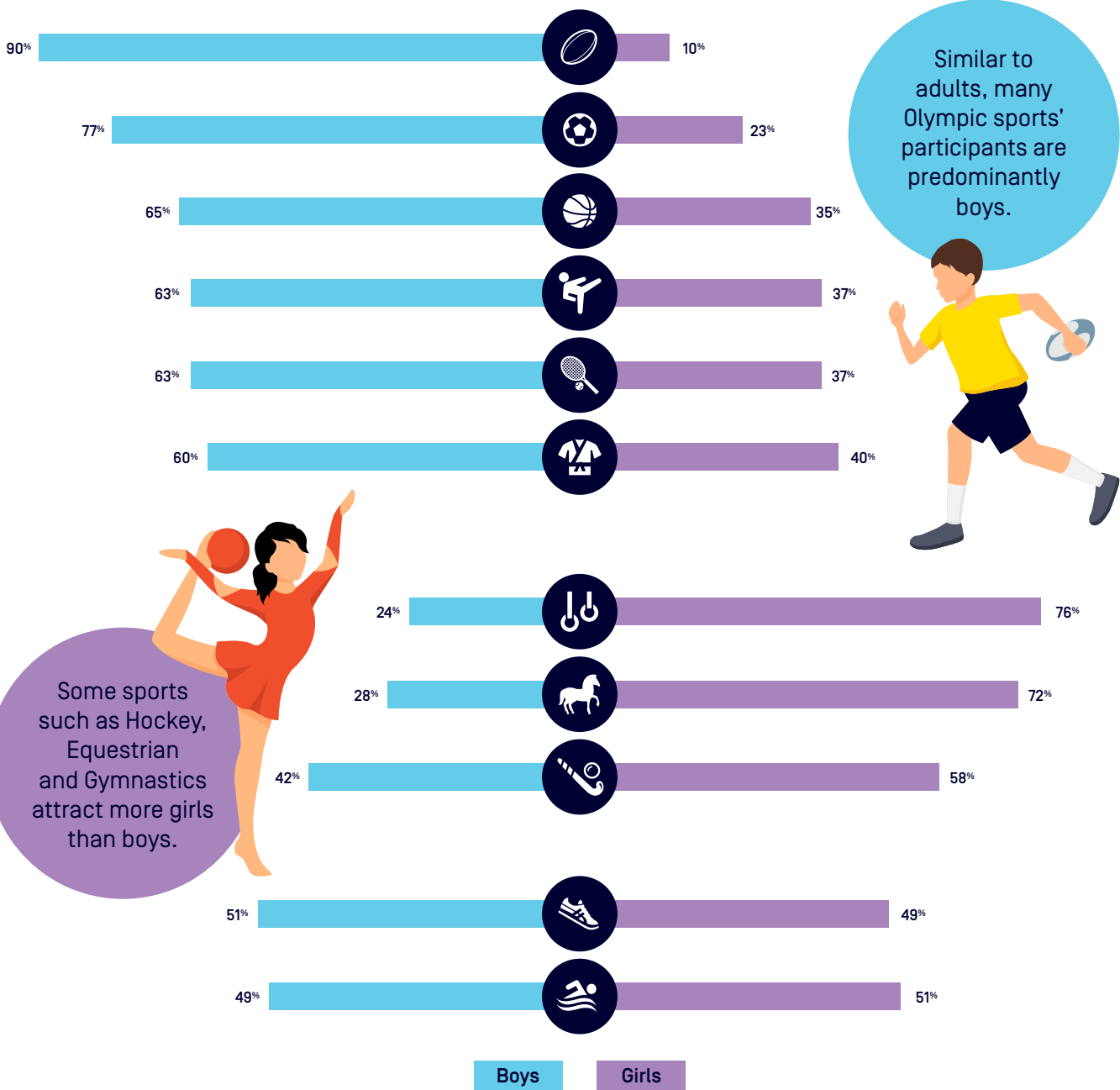
	Swimming	32%
	Football	22%
	Basketball	9%
	Tennis	7%
	Athletics	5%
	Gymnastics	4%

### TOP 6 OLYMPIC SPORTS FOR GIRLS

	Swimming	35%
	Gymnastics	15%
	Football	7%
	Athletics	5%
	Basketball	5%
	Tennis	5%



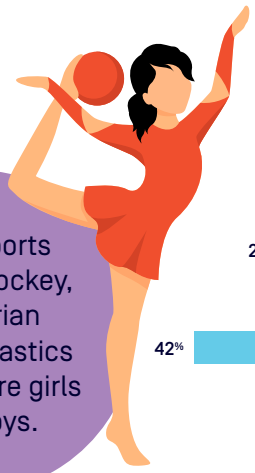
# CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED OLYMPIC SPORT – GENDER PROFILES



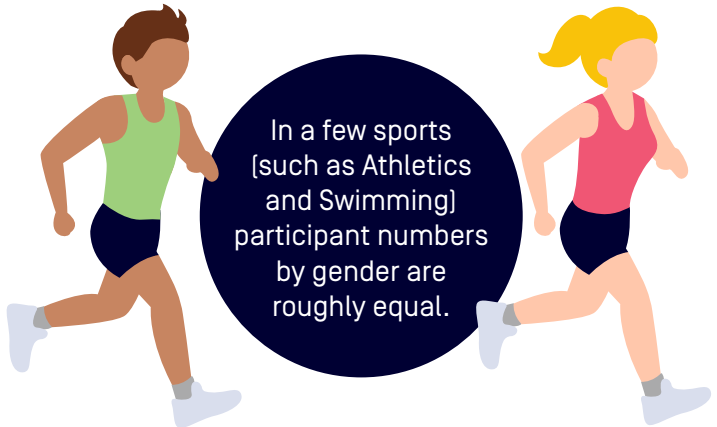
Similar to adults, many Olympic sports' participants are predominantly boys.



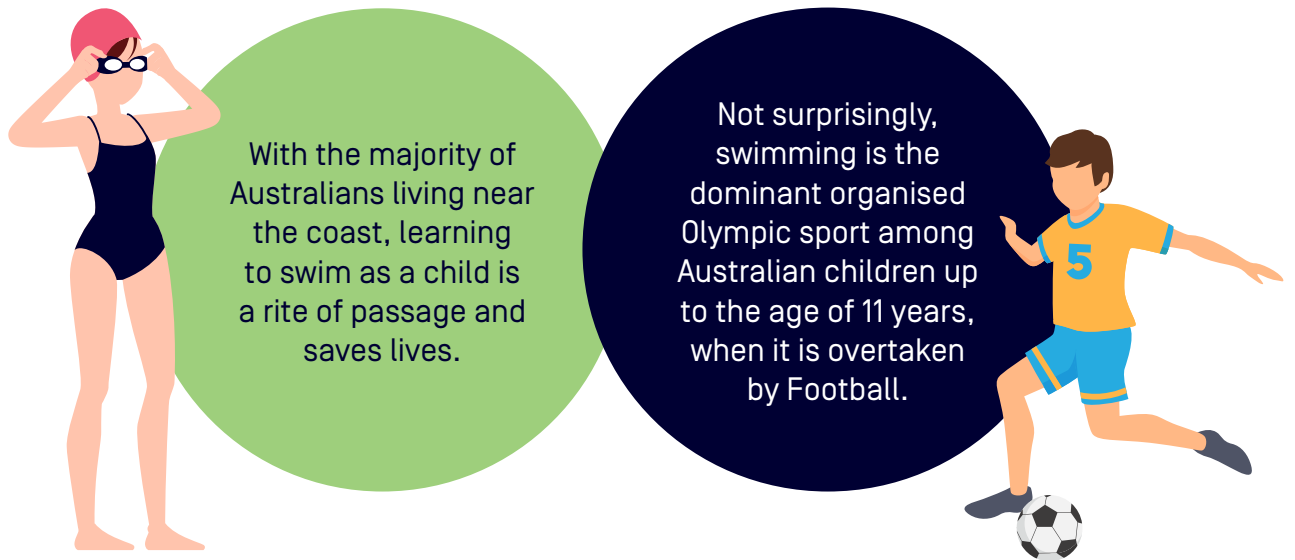
Some sports such as Hockey, Equestrian and Gymnastics attract more girls than boys.



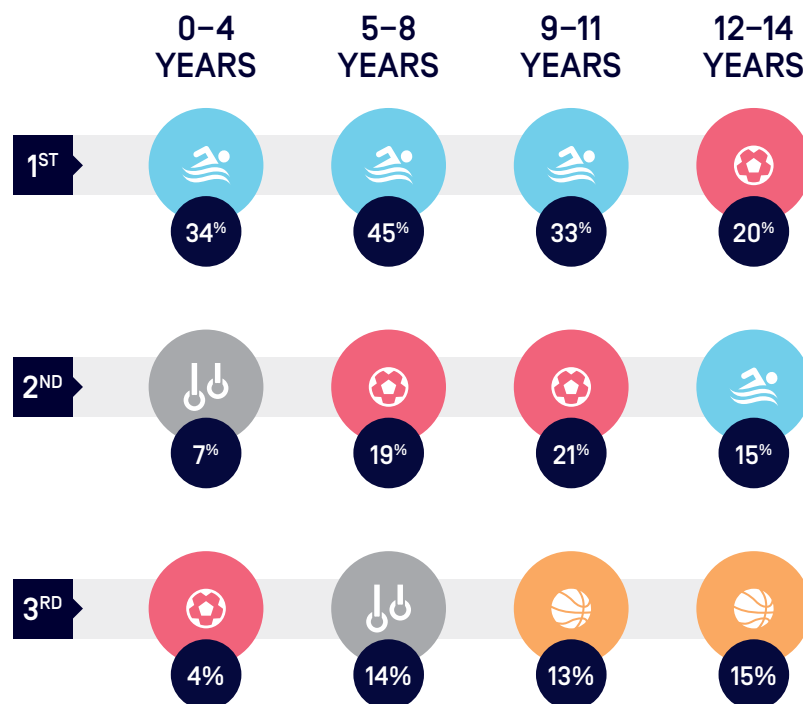
In a few sports [such as Athletics and Swimming] participant numbers by gender are roughly equal.



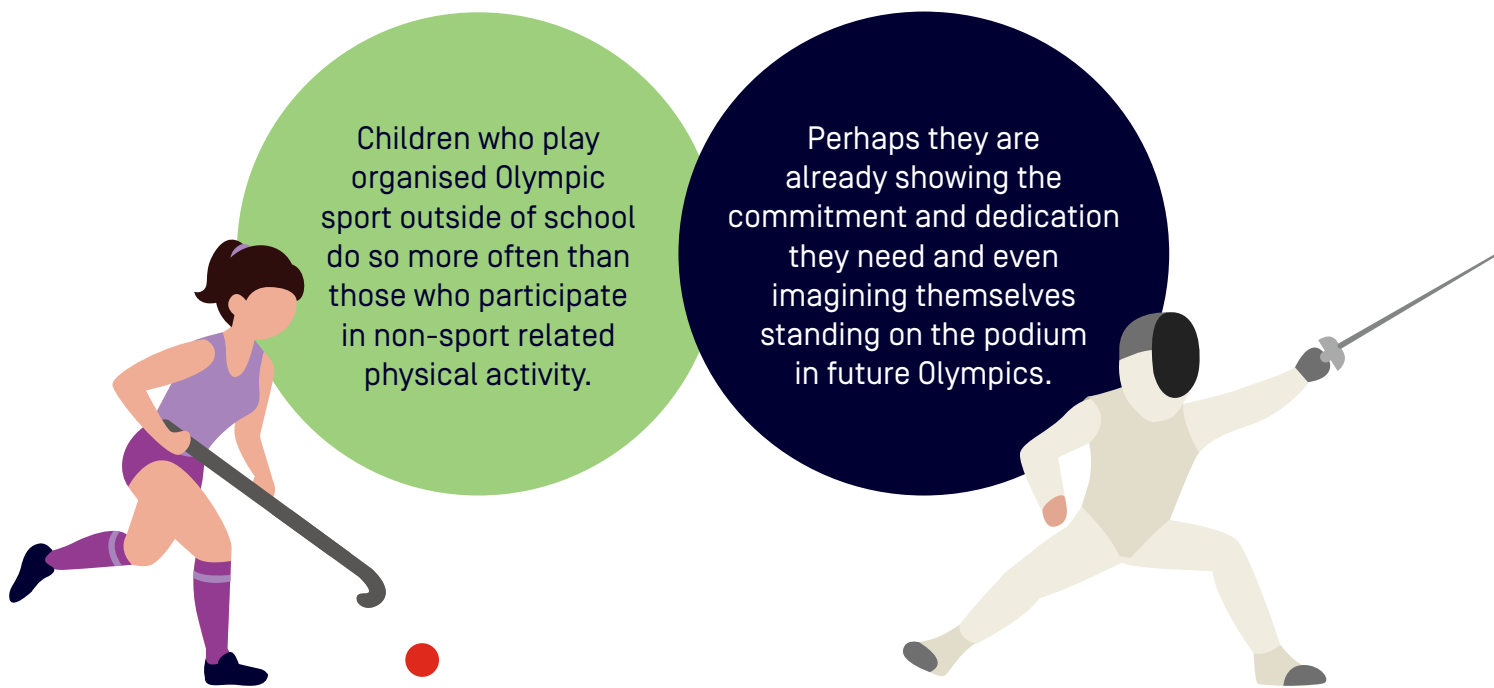
# Swimming is dominant until age 12



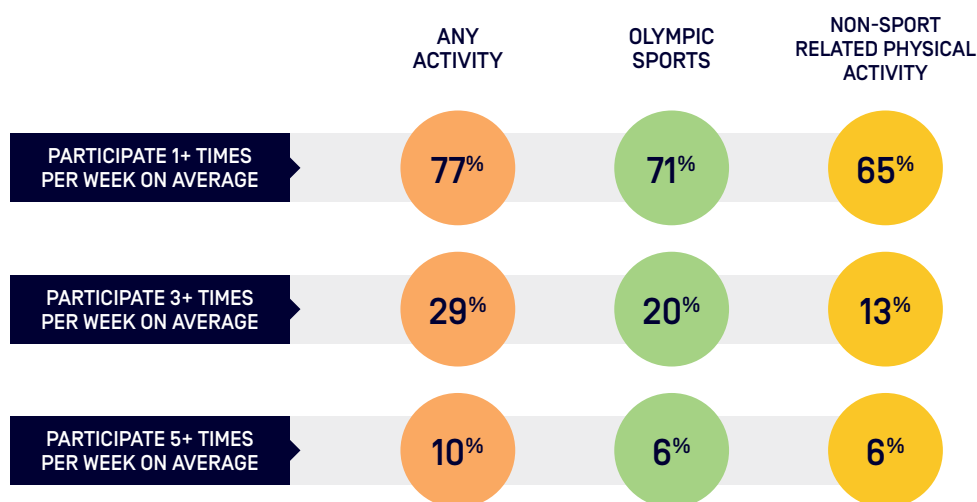
## TOP THREE ORGANISED OLYMPIC SPORTS FOR CHILDREN BY AGE GROUP



# How often do Australian children participate in Olympic sports?



## PARTICIPATION FREQUENCY – CHILDREN AGED 0-14



Based on those who participate in each type of activity

# Looking to Tokyo and beyond

Qualification events for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are well under way, but the full team won't be announced until nearer the time and it remains to be seen how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact both the number of competitors and the event itself.

What we can be sure of is that the Games will continue to have an impact on many Australians, either because they play an Olympic or Paralympic sport, are involved in volunteering or simply like to watch. Where else can we see sports as diverse as Fencing, Modern Pentathlon or Wrestling alongside more mainstream sports like Football, Swimming or Cycling? How many of us have watched these more niche sports and wondered what it would be like to have a go?

With 10.7 million adults aged 15+ being involved, either as a participant or in a non-playing role, there is an Olympic sport for everyone.

And who knows how many of the 1.5 million boys and 1.4 million girls aged 0-14 who are already participating in organised Olympic sports will be champions of the future? Some of them may already have their eyes set on a possible home Games in Queensland in 2032.



For further information about the AusPlay survey and to view the latest results, visit the **Clearinghouse for Sport**.







**Australian Government**  

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**Australian Sports Commission**

**SPORTAUS**  
**AUSPLAY™**

Any further questions about AusPlay  
[or queries for additional customised reporting/  
further analysis of the dataset] can be directed  
to the Insights team at Sport Australia via:

**[AusPlay@sportaus.gov.au](mailto:AusPlay@sportaus.gov.au)**