

Discover your *edge*

Thursday, 23 April 2015

Surf's up! (For young women and 50+ folks, at least)

Boasting iconic surf beaches such as Bells Beach, Margaret River and Snapper Rocks, not to mention a veritable roll-call of surfing greats, Australia's reputation as one of the world's great surfing nations is undisputed. And for every Stephanie Gilmore and Taj Burrow, there are thousands of everyday Aussies riding the waves, with participation growing by the year. In fact, in the last five years, the number of Australians 14+ who surf either regularly or occasionally has risen from 702,000 to 746,000.

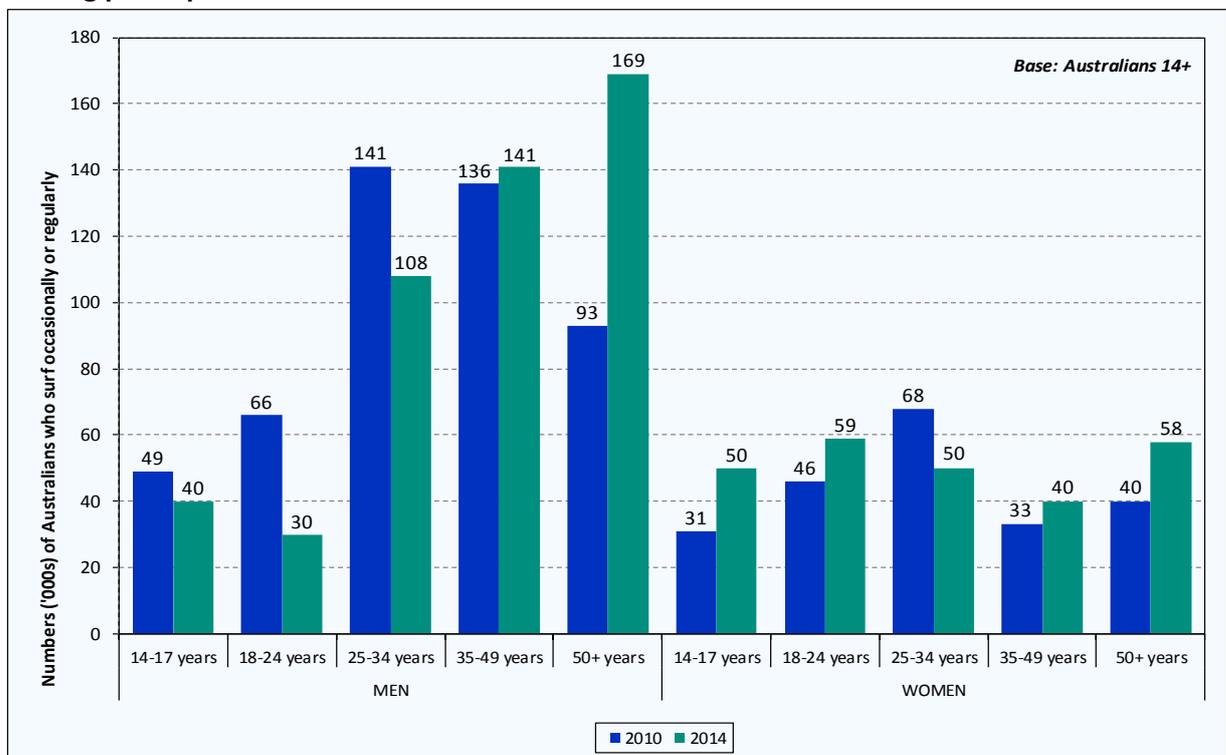
And the groups driving the growth? Men and women aged 50+ and young women under 25.

Gidget would be proud

Between 2010 and 2014, the number of Aussie women taking part in surfing rose from 218,000 to 258,000, an increase of almost 20%. The number of teenage girls aged 14-17 who surf regularly or occasionally grew from 31,000 to 50,000 over that time, while the number of 18-24 year-old women rose from 46,000 to 59,000.

The sport is also experiencing a boom among women aged 50+, 58,000 of whom hit the surf last year, up from 40,000 in 2010 – a 45% increase in participation.

Surfing participation in Australia: 2010 vs 2014



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), January–December 2010 (n=18,817) and January–December 2014 (n=15,944).

Decline of the surfer dude?

While men still outnumber women when it comes to overall participation in surfing (488,000 surfed in 2014, virtually unchanged from 484,000 in 2010), the substantial decline among men aged under-35 suggests that the gender balance is gradually shifting.

Whereas 66,000 Aussie men aged 18-24 surfed occasionally or regularly in 2010, that figure has since plummeted to 30,000: almost half the amount of women the same age who surf. Declining participation among teenage boys aged between 14 and 17 means that they too are now outnumbered by their female peers.

In contrast, men aged 50+ are taking to the waves in ever-increasing numbers: up from 93,000 in 2010 to 169,000 in 2014.

Norman Morris, Industry Communications Director, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“While surfing in Australia has always been – and remains -- a male-dominated sport, the overall number of Aussie men surfing either regularly or occasionally has barely changed over the last five years. Fewer young men are surfing, turning instead towards niche sports like motorcycle racing, clay/target shooting and archery (under-25s); and yoga and badminton (25-34 year-olds).

“But as the popularity of surfing wanes among young men, it is steadily climbing among young women. With home-grown superstars such as Layne Beachley, Stephanie Gilmore and Sally Fitzgibbons setting the pace, young Aussie women are following suit into the waves.

“Meanwhile, make way for a new breed of Silver Surfers! Increasing numbers of men and women from the 50-64 and 65+ age groups are surfing: a demographic that would have witnessed Australia’s surfing boom during the 1960s and 70s, when legends like Midget Farrelly, Michael Peterson and Phyllis O’Donnell were at their peak. Perhaps their increased participation is a way of recapturing their youth? Or perhaps they’re simply making the most of their newfound freedom now that the kids are grown and work responsibilities are winding down.

“No matter what their age, Australia’s surfing community will no doubt be hoping for Taj Burrow to blitz the finals of the Margaret River Pro this weekend...”

For comments or more information about Roy Morgan Research’s sport data, please contact:

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Related research findings

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About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years' experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2