

Thursday, 23 March 2018

Football participation stabilises with more women playing

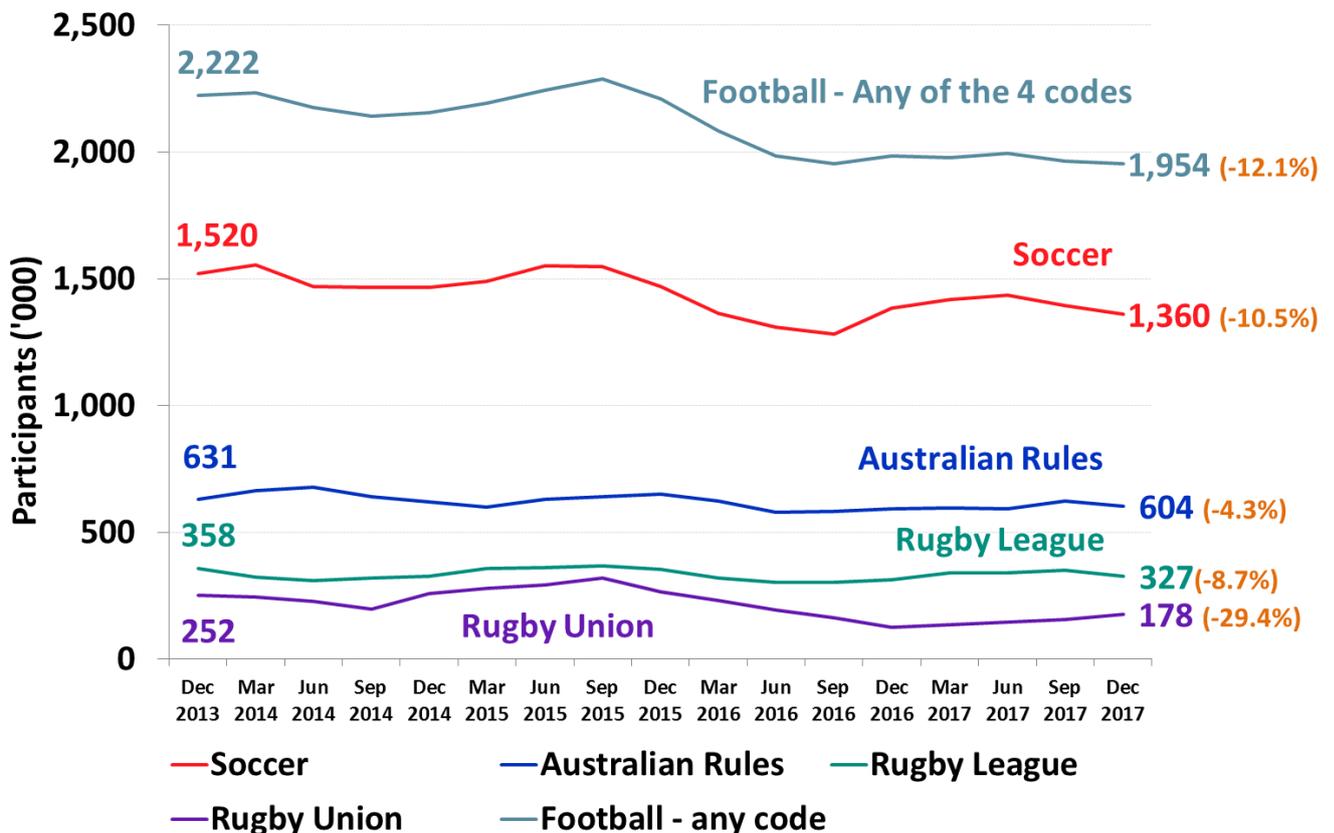
Football of one sort or another is now played by over 1.9 million Aussies. However participation in football has dropped over the past four years from over 2.2 million participants in 2013 and recent stability is down to increasing female participation in the four leading football codes.

In 2013 over 2.2 million Australians participated regularly or occasionally in one of Australia's four leading football codes led by over 1.5 million playing Soccer and over 630,000 playing Australian Rules. The overall figure has dropped by 12.1% over the past four years and has now been under 2 million participants since the middle of 2016.

All four codes have lost ground since 2013 with Rugby Union down the most significantly by 29.4% to 178,000 participants while Soccer has lost of 10% of its participants since 2013 despite still being clearly the most widely participated football code in Australia.

Australia's two most watched football codes – covered extensively in a recent Roy Morgan release analysing [TV sports viewing habits of Australians available here](#) – have experienced the most modest declines over the past five years with Australian Rules down just 4.3% to 604,000 participants and Rugby League down 8.7% to 327,000 participants.

Football code participation 2013 to 2017



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), January – December 2013 through to January – December 2017
 Australians aged 14+, n averages 15,663 per 12 month period.

Women participating in Football up over 4% since 2013

Against the trend of the overall decline in participation is the rising number of women participating in all forms of football. Analysis shows there are now 548,000 women participating regularly or occasionally in any of the four leading football codes, up 4.4% since 2013.

Analysing participation figures for the four leading football codes shows Soccer has a clear lead in participation although is virtually unchanged from four years ago with 402,000 female participants. It should be noted that is up nearly 10% from a year ago.

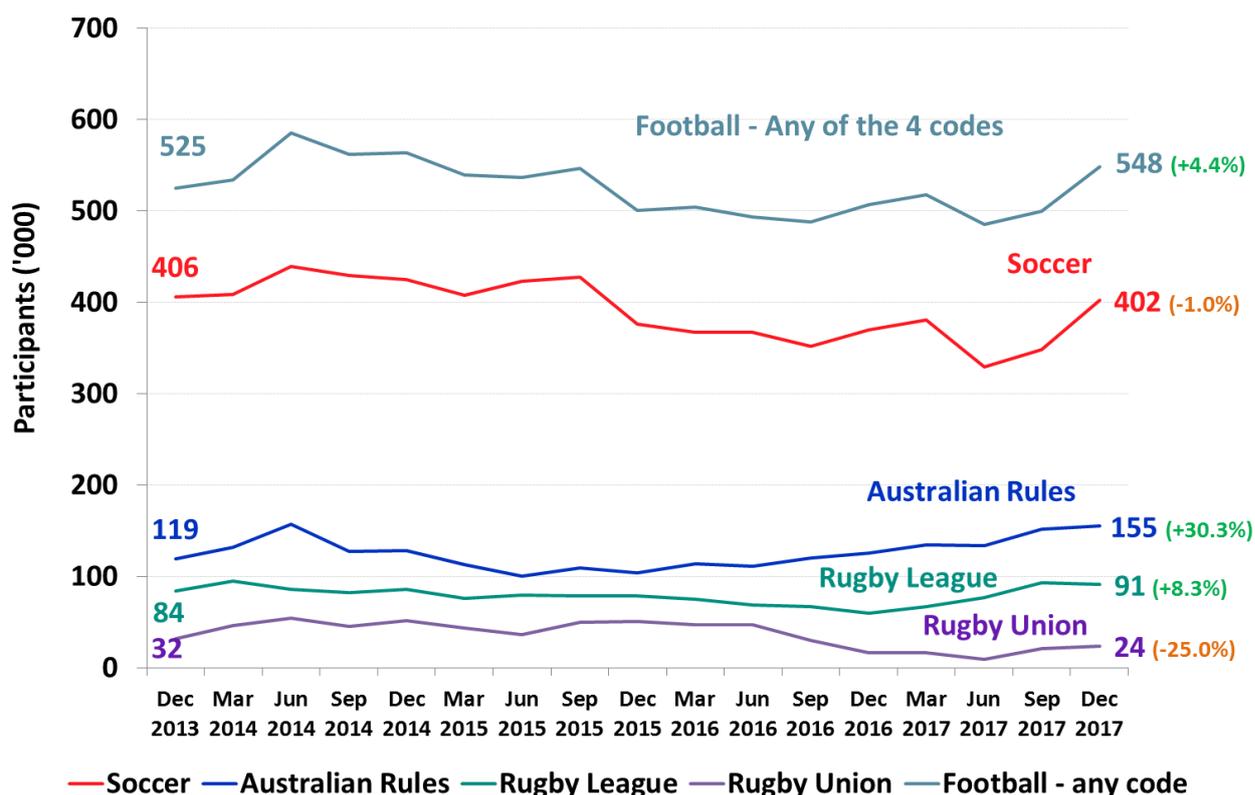
Australian Rules is clearly the second preferred football code for women with a record 155,000 women now participating regularly or occasionally in Australia's game, up a stunning 30.3% from four years ago and up 23% from a year ago when the AFLW was first launched.

Women's participation in Rugby League has increased by an impressive 8.3% over the past four years to 91,000 while women's participation in Rugby Union is down significantly by 25% on four years ago at 24,000 although these figures are in line with wider trends within the sport.

However, it is worth noting that women's participation has increased strongly over the past year in both Rugby League and Rugby Union as part of the strong overall lift across all four sports – women's participation in any of the four major football codes is up 8.1% from a year ago.

It is the strong recent increases in women's participation in football in particular that have arrested the broader declines seen over the past four years.

Football code participation of Women from 2013 to 2017



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), January – December 2013 through to January – December 2017
Women aged 14+, n averages 8,903 per 12 month period.

Michele Levine, CEO, Roy Morgan, says Australians love of football is well known and with nearly two million playing one of Australia's leading football codes the market for football leagues and football clubs as well as sporting apparel shops is vast:

"Football – whether Australian Rules, Soccer, Rugby League or Rugby Union is played by over 1.9 million Australians regularly or occasionally comprising of over 1.4 million men and nearly 550,000 women.

"The AFL season kicked off this weekend. With 604,000 participants Australian Rules is well behind rival Soccer, played by 1.36 million Australians, as the most widely played football code

in the country. Trailing well behind the two leading codes for participation are Rugby League on 327,000 participants and Rugby Union with 178,000 participants.

“All four codes have traditionally been heavily slanted towards male participation, however there has been a clear recent push to increase female participation in football. The push to increase female participation is in fact vital to the continued health of all four sports as long-term trends show a declining rate of male participation.

“Analysing female participation in the four leading football codes shows mixed fortunes over the last four years with female participation rising strongly in Australian Rules and Rugby League, virtually unchanged in Soccer and down in Rugby Union.

“However, narrowing the time scale to the last year shows strong growth across all four codes as the push to increase female participation has really intensified. This weekend the focus on women’s football is at Ikon Park as the AFLW Grand Final between the Western Bulldogs and Brisbane Lions takes place on Saturday.

“Other football codes are not being left behind with Melbourne City crowned W-League Premiers for the third year in a row in February, the Australian Women’s Sevens Rugby team winning gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics and the inaugural NRL Women’s competition being launched in August this year to provide a pathway to top level Rugby League for women.

“The increasing market of women playing football of all types in recent years provides an opportunity for Australia’s leading sporting goods retailers [Rebel](#), [Sports Power](#), [Sportsco](#) and [new entrant Decathlon](#) to ‘get in on the ground floor’ with targeted sponsorship and advertising opportunities.

“[Roy Morgan 2017 Annual Customer Satisfaction for Sports Store winner Rebel](#) has shown its willingness to get behind this growing market with its sponsorship of the Women’s Big Bash League (WBBL) over summer putting the sports store on the front foot, but there are plenty of opportunities coming up for their rivals to get in on the action.

“The signs are clear that women’s sport has arrived and it is here to stay.”

To learn more about Roy Morgan’s [Sporting Player profiles](#) including [Australian Rules](#), [Soccer](#) and [Rugby](#) and profiles on Australia’s leading [sports stores](#) including [Rebel](#), and [Sports Power](#) call (+61) (3) 9224 5309 or email askroymorgan@roymorgan.com.

Roy Morgan Enquiries

Office: +61 (3) 9224 5309

askroymorgan@roymorgan.com

About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan 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 has over 75 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
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2