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Top 20 sports led by walking, swimming and gym training

Walking for exercise is the most popular sport or activity which Australians regularly participate in. Nearly half of adult Australians, or 47.9%, regularly go for a vigorous stroll. This is an increase of 2.6ppts, or around 800,000 participants, since 2014.

Combining data for the year to December 2017 from the Single Source survey of Australians aged 14+ and the Young Australians survey of kids aged six to 13 shows the next most popular activity is swimming with 14% of Australians six years or older swimming regularly. Over 1.2 million Australians aged six to 13 and more than 1.9 million adults now swim.

Going to the gym/weight training is Australia's third most popular sporting activity with over 3 million Australians regularly participating. Like walking gym/weight training was only asked of adults.

These are the top-line findings from the latest National Sports Participation report from Roy Morgan.

Just under 10% of Australians regularly go cycling and soccer is Australia's most widely played team sport with 7.8% of Australians playing regularly.

Nearly half of kids aged six to 13 regularly go swimming (47.7%) or play soccer (45.7%). These leading sports are followed in popularity by cycling (37.4%), basketball (33.0%), athletics/track & field (31.7%) and dancing (29.2%). Just under a quarter of kids play cricket regularly (23.5%) and just over a fifth play netball (21.6%) or do gymnastics (20.7%).

Top 20 Sports and Activities by regular participation rate

	Ages 6-13	('000s)	%	Ages 14+	('000s)	%	Aged 6+
1	Swimming	1,217	47.7%	Walking for exercise (A)*	9,631	47.9%	Walking for exercise (A)
2	Soccer	1,166	45.7%	Gym/Weight training (A)	3,096	15.4%	Swimming
3	Cycling	953	37.4%	Jogging (A)	2,022	10.1%	Gym/Weight training (A)
4	Basketball	843	33.0%	Swimming	1,942	9.7%	Cycling
5	Athletics/Track & field	809	31.7%	Cycling	1,173	5.8%	Jogging (A)
6	Dancing	745	29.2%	Yoga (A)	1,004	5.0%	Soccer
7	Cricket	601	23.5%	Hiking/Bushwalking	888	4.4%	Basketball
8	Netball	550	21.6%	Fishing (A)	772	3.8%	Dancing
9	Gymnastics	529	20.7%	Aerobics	645	3.2%	Hiking/Bushwalking
10	Tennis	468	18.3%	Pilates (A)	636	3.2%	Yoga (A)
11	Australian Football	464	18.2%	Soccer	595	3.0%	Athletics/Track & field
12	Hiking/Bushwalking	295	11.6%	Golf (A)	576	2.9%	Tennis
13	Rugby League	279	11.0%	Dancing	458	2.3%	Netball
14	T Ball (K)*	270	10.6%	Tennis	437	2.2%	Cricket
15	Combative Sports	246	9.7%	Combative Sports	419	2.1%	Fishing (A)
16	Skateboarding (K)	241	9.4%	Basketball	386	1.9%	Aerobics
17	Volleyball	206	8.1%	Marathons/Running (A)	327	1.6%	Australian Football
18	Softball	191	7.5%	Netball	319	1.6%	Gymnastics
19	Baseball	161	6.3%	Surfing	278	1.4%	Combative Sports
20	Field Hockey	143	5.6%	Pool/Snooker/Billiards (A)	273	1.4%	Pilates (A)

Sources: Roy Morgan Single Source, January 2017 – December 2017, sample n = 15,169 Australians aged 14+; Roy Morgan Young Australians Survey, January 2017 – December 2017, sample n = 2,563 Australians aged 6-13.*Sports marked with an (A) were only asked of Australians aged 14 and over and (K) were only asked of kids aged six to 13.

Australian kids are far more likely to participate regularly in sporting activities than older Australians. Aussie kids are nearly five times as likely to swim regularly and over six times as likely to cycle. The

starkest difference is for regular participation in soccer for which kids are over 15 times more likely to play than adults.

A glance at the table shows there are several sports and activities with high regular participation for adults that don't appear for kids. Marked (A) are sports and activities we ask only for those aged 14 and over as part of the Single Source survey include walking for exercise, gym/weight training, jogging, yoga, fishing, pilates, golf, marathons/running and pool/snooker/billiards.

Nearly 10 million Australians aged 14 and over, or 47.9%, regularly go walking for exercise making this activity more than three times as popular as gym/weight training (15.4%). Jogging is the third most popular activity for Australians aged 14 and over with 10.1% regularly participating ahead of swimming on 9.7% and cycling on 5.8%.

The only sporting activities that we ask kids aged six to 13 years old about, but not older Australians, are the fourteenth most popular t-ball (10.6%) and sixteenth most popular skateboarding (9.4%).

Michele Levine, CEO, Roy Morgan, says walking for exercise is easily the most popular sport or activity undertaken regularly by Australians more than three times as popular as going swimming or going for gym/weight training:

“Nearly half of Australian adults regularly go walking for exercise. The activity ranks far ahead of swimming and gym/weight training as activities Australians undertake to maintain their fitness. In fact walking for exercise has increased in popularity over the last three years with over 9.6 million Australians now walking, up around 800,000 from 2014.

“For younger Australians aged between six to 13 years old swimming (47.7%) marginally pips soccer (45.7%) as the most regular sport or activity undertaken. The world game is ranked far ahead of rivals Australian football (18.2%), rugby league (11.0%) and rugby union (4.8%).

“Team sports dominate for Aussie kids with ten of the top 20 sports reliant on the involvement of a team. In contrast, only three of the top 20 sports Australians aged 14 and over regularly participate in are distinctly team sports – soccer (3.0%), basketball (1.9%) and netball (1.6%).

“There is also a huge gap between the levels of participation between the different age groups. Virtually all sports and activities measured on both surveys show higher rates of participation for kids aged six to 13 years old than those aged 14 and over.

“Of the sports and activities measured on both surveys it is swimming that ranks highest and Australia’s penchant for swimming was covered extensively in a release that looked in-depth at swimming and other Commonwealth Games sports [available here](#).

“Roy Morgan’s extensive demographic, attitudinal and behavioural data allows sporting organisations to gain deeper insight into the trends for participation in their respective sports and also develop an understanding of the other interests and activities that drive participants.”

For more information about [Roy Morgan’s Single Source](#) and [Young Australians surveys](#), and our latest [sports and activities participation data](#), please contact:

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Related research findings

Compiled with data from Roy Morgan’s Single Source survey (the largest of its kind in the world, with 50,000 respondents p.a), these ready-made profiles provide a broad understanding of the target audience, in terms of demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage in Australia.

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%
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2

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