

Latest trends in sport participation

Professor Rochelle Eime

@R_Eime

PASIGlobal.com



Sport Participation Research Project 2011-2021

- Longitudinal study of sport participants in Victoria
- Funded by SRV and VicHealth
- All registered club participants
- 12 major sports, and with longitudinal data for 10
- Largest research study of sport participation data in Australia
- Australian football, basketball, bowls, cricket, soccer, golf, gymnastics, hockey, netball, sailing, swimming and tennis

Trends in participation pre-COVID-19 2015-2019

- Increase of 119,229 participants
- Rate of increase twice as high for females than males
- Increases in participation for women and girls across all age groups (4-84 years)

-4%

**5-9 year old
Males**

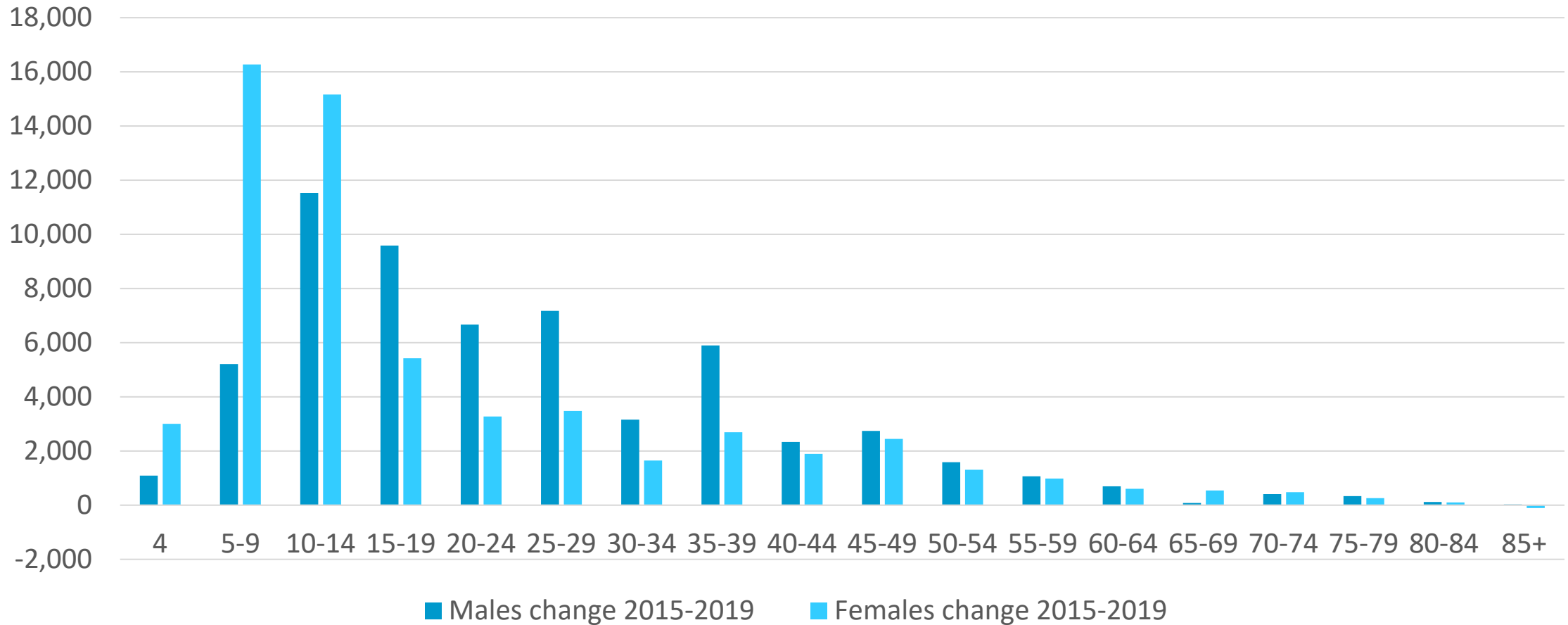
+5%

**5-9 year old
Females**



Sport participation by gender

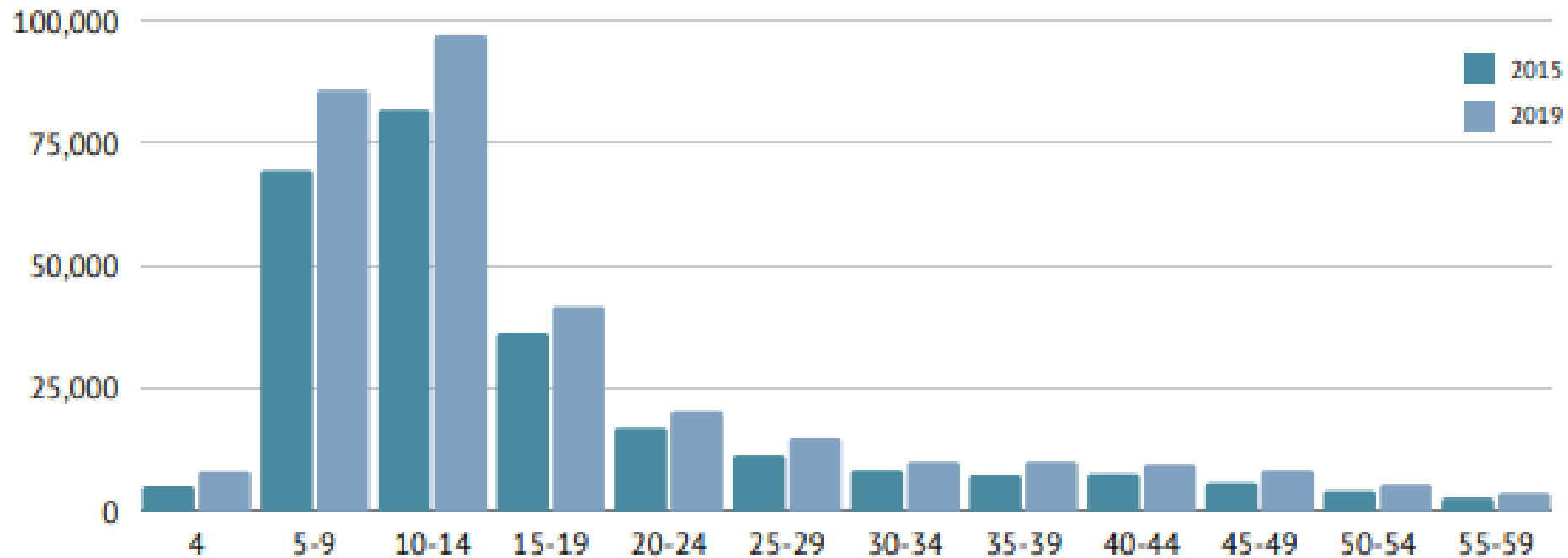
Participation 2015 & 2019



Increase in female participation

FEMALE PARTICIPATION 2015, 2019

(players per age group)



Highest rates of participation

Over half of all sport participants are aged between 4–14 years. Sport participation is highest among children and adolescents aged 10–14 years and drops significantly during late adolescence.



Sport participation is higher for males than females.

17%
Male



10%
Female



Sport for regional and rural communities

- Majority of children play organised sport in regional Vic
 - Regional Growth 10-14 years: male 85%, female 61%
 - Regional Other 10-14 years: male 93%, female 73%

Sport participation rates are higher in regional Victoria compared to metropolitan Melbourne. Metropolitan-growth areas have considerably lower sport participation compared to all other regions.

17%
Regional
Victoria

16%
Regional
-growth

18%
Regional
-other

12%
Metropolitan
Melbourne

10%
Metropolitan
-growth

13%
Metropolitan
-other



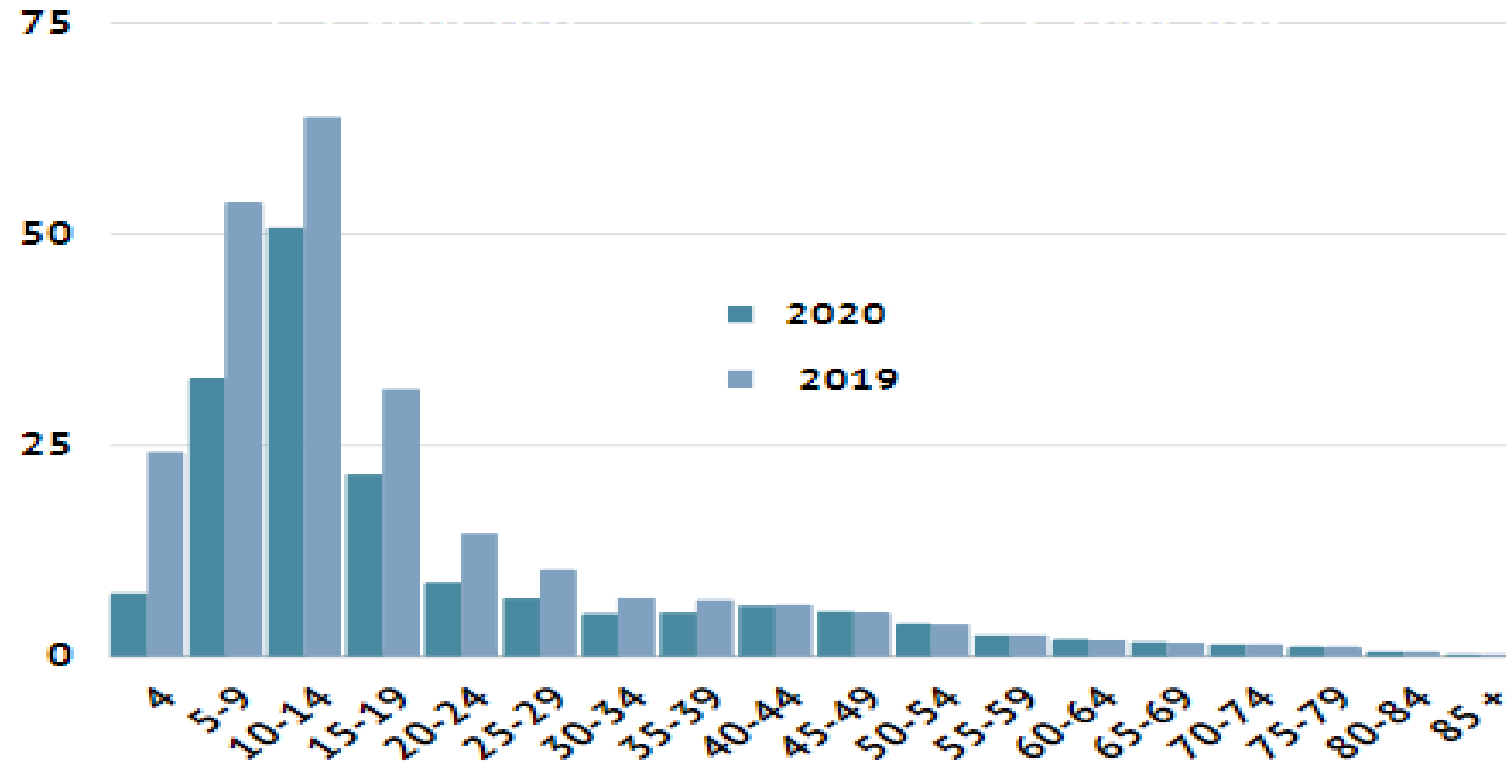
Impact of COVID-19 on participation

2019: 868,266 players

2020: 637,263 players

↓ over 230,000 players

↓ of 27% of players



Largest Decreases in Participation

- **Early sport adopters (4-9 years)**
 - 4yr olds decreased by 69%
 - 5-9yr olds decreased by 38%
 - 10-14yr olds decreased by 18%
- **Adolescent drop-out**
 - Decrease of 58% from 10-14 to 15-19 years



Larger decline for females than males

- Female participation declined 29%
- Male participation declined 25%
- Impact of trends in female participation from 2015 to now



Sport participation in Victoria 2015–2020 and the impact of COVID-19 on participation Research Summary

This summary outlines key findings and insights from the 6th year of the VicHealth and Sport and Recreation Victoria's joint research project into organised community sport participation in Victoria. The project is conducted across 10 popular sports and compares participation rates across age, sex and region between 2015–2020.



This report has a particular focus on the impact of COVID-19 on sport participation in Victoria, comparing 2020 with 2019 and then previous years.

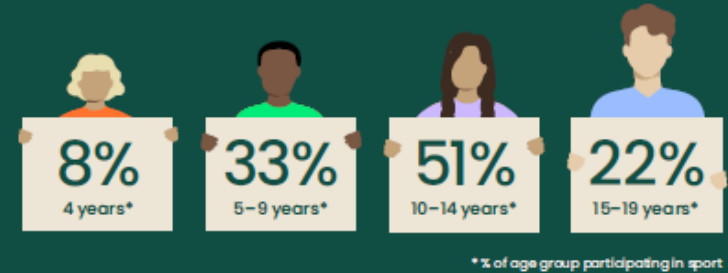
Figure 1: Sports included in the VicHealth and Sport and Recreation Victoria research



Please note: golf and bowls did not provide data for 2019 and are not included

Key findings at a glance: organised sport participation in Victoria, 2020

Over half of all sport participants (53%) are aged between 4–14 years. Sport participation is highest among children and adolescents aged 10–14 years and drops significantly during late adolescence.



Sport participation rate is higher for males than females.

13% Male



7% Female



Sport participation rates are higher in regional Victoria compared to metropolitan Melbourne.

Metropolitan-growth areas have considerably lower sport participation rates compared to all other regions.

11% Regional Victoria

12% Regional - growth

10% Regional - other

9% Metropolitan Melbourne

7% Metropolitan - growth

10% Metropolitan - other



Participation across LGAs 2019-2020

- Largest participation decreases see in regional Victoria
- Participation decreases by region
 - Metropolitan- Growth 26%
 - Metropolitan- Other 21%
 - Regional - Growth 27%
 - Regional- Other 44%
- Greater decreases in winter and team-based sports



Participation across LGAs 2019-2020

- Large differences in participation rates by LGA even within

Highest Participation			Lowest Participation		
	2019	2020		2019	2020
Metro-Growth	Cardinia 14%, Mitchell 13%	Cardinia 10%	Metro-Growth	Melton 8%	Melton 6%, Hume 6%
Metro-Other	Nillumbik 23%, Bayside 22%	Bayside 19%	Metro-Other	Melbourne 6%, Greater Dandenong 6%	Greater Dandenong 4%, Brimbank & Melb 5%
Regional- Growth	Surf Coast 24%	Surf Coast 18%	Regional- Growth	Ballarat 15%	Ballarat 10%
Regional- Other	Buloke 31%	Queenscliffe 21%	Regional- Other	Hepburn 12%	West Wimmera 6%



Reasons for LGA differences

- Demographic differences
 - Age, socio-economic status, newly-arrived
- Role of sport for rural and regional communities
 - Social clue
 - Availability of leisure activities
- Density of housing
 - Melbourne CBD
 - Other leisure-time activities
- Growth areas
 - Generally lower participation
 - Distance from work
 - Open space availability
 - Cost of infrastructure



Largest Decreases in Participation

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Children and Youth: Re-engagement and Retention

- Impact of absence on sport
 - Social, physical and mental health
 - Value of sport
- Changing priorities
 - COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related
 - Individual physical activities
 - No/low cost
 - No structure/flexible
 - No/little equipment
 - No skill
 - Cycling, skate parks
 - Sedentary
 - Social activities
 - Work
- Cost of playing
 - Playing fewer sports



Children and Youth: Re-engagement and Retention

- Impacted with no educational PE/Sport
 - Impacting entry-age children for sport
 - Development of physical literacy?
 - Bigger skill divide
- Adolescents missed play
 - Entering open-age competitions
 - Larger retention issues
 - Changing priorities
 - Impact on health
 - Injury
- Focus on re-engage and retention
 - Players and volunteers
 - Impact on play with COVID infected players and volunteers



COVID survey



- Pre-COVID, COVID (first lockdown) and Return to Play
- Distributed through NSOs and SSAs
- Focus on sports participants
- Demographics
- Sport and physical activity profiles
- Health and wellbeing outcomes
- 6,140 survey respondents

COVID- Adult 18-59 years results

- 83% sports participants
- During lockdown men significantly more likely than women to report worse:
 - General health
 - Physical health
 - Mental health
 - Life satisfaction
- Inactive adults significantly more likely to report poorer general health and physical health
- Absence of playing sport with friends, teams and clubs severely impacted males and younger adults in particular
- Importance of sport for social connectedness and health



COVID- Youth 13-17 years results

- 94% sport participants
- During lockdown males significantly more likely than females to report good/excellent:
 - General health
 - Physical health
 - Mental health
 - Resilience
 - Life satisfaction
- Higher involvement in sport protects males wellbeing?
- Impact of loss of social networks for females?



COVID- Frequency and duration of participation

- Greatest decline was in team sports
- Increase in individual activities
 - Adults: running, walking, yoga and cycling
 - Adolescents: cycling, basketball, dancing and golf
- Decline greater for men than women
 - Women more likely to do other activities like yoga, Pilates and walking
 - Importance of social nature of sport
- How will sport respond to getting the men back in the game, and women back from home-based yoga?
- Is COVID the 'perfect storm' for sports to reassess and provide a wider range of programs to suit a changing and diverse consumer demand?



Strategies for participation and retention

- **Fun**
 - Participant enjoyment
 - Remember why people play sport
 - Its not all about winning
 - Voice of youth
 - Be inclusive
- **Individual**
 - Skill and competency
 - Physical literacy
 - Preference for other activities
 - Enjoyment = continued participation
- **Social**
 - Involvement of friends and family



Strategies for participation and retention continued.

- **Competition structure/programs**
 - Length of game and seasons
 - Commitment to training and competition
 - Competition V social/recreational play
 - Online registration systems
- **Club-environment**
 - Welcome and inclusive
 - Female friendly facilities
 - Diversity in governance and decision making
 - Online marketing and communication
 - Social media
 - Governance and culture



Take home message

- **Evidence-based decision making**
 - Programs/competitions
 - Infrastructure
- **COVID impacting sports differently**
 - Season
 - Age players
 - Indoor/outdoor
 - Contact
- **Strategies for retention**
 - Players
 - Volunteers
- **Value of sport**
 - Individual and community health

Questions?

PASglobal.com



Prof. Rochelle Eime

r.eime@federation.edu.au

0418 800 521