SPORT PARTICIPATION RESEARCH PROJECT

SPORT PARTICIPATION SETTINGS: WHERE AND 'HOW' DO VICTORIANS PLAY SPORT?

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INTRODUCTION

Participation in organised sport is popular, especially for children and youth [1, 2]. Participation in sport can occur in a range of settings including sport clubs, gyms and centres, community recreation clubs and public spaces, events as well as at work/education settings [3]. For children and youth, the far majority of participation in organised sport occurs within sport clubs and associations, and adults are much less likely than children to play sport within sport club settings [3].

Over recent years, there has been a shift away from participation in sport through traditional organised and competitive clubs to less structured, non-competitive and individual forms of sport and physical activity [4, 5]. Further, COVID-19 impacted participation in organised competitive club-based sport more than some individual types of activity such as running, walking, yoga and cycling [6].

COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted and individuals are able to return to playing sport. Recent research has demonstrated that participation has not consistently returned to pre-COVID levels and there are many differences in participation trends across sports, age and gender [2]. Some individuals may return to playing sport, but not necessarily within the traditional club-based structure.

The aim of this study was to investigate participation trends in sport pre-post-COVID restrictions across sports, settings, and age.

KEY INSIGHTS

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children's participation

- Participation in organised club/association sport declined.
- Overall participation in sport and physical activity did not significantly decline but rather – participants switched activities and settings.

Post Covid-19 trend in children's participation

- It seems that there is a continuing loss of participation in club/association settings in favour of unorganised settings.

Winners and losers in regard to children's participation post pandemic

- It seems that netball and tennis in particular have fallen from favour, struggling to bring back children.
- Cricket on the other hand has increased its market share.
- Hockey took the biggest hit in participation but has to some extent recovered.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on adult participation

- Participation in organised club/association organised sport declined.
- Overall participation in sport and physical activity increased – participants switched activities and settings.

Post Covid-19 trend in adults' participation

- It seems that there is a continuing loss of participation in organised club/association settings in favour of unorganised settings.

Winners and losers in regard to adult participation post pandemic

- It seems that netball has fallen from favour.
- Bowls proved to be a 'go to' sport during the pandemic but participation dropped again post pandemic restrictions.
- Cricket, swimming, tennis and hockey on the other hand have increased market share in 2021, post pandemic restrictions.

Overall insights

- Participation in club/association organised sport declined during the pandemic and has remained below pre-pandemic levels.
- Adults have become more flexible in regard to the settings in which they participate in sport and physical activity.
- The pandemic has had a positive enduring (for now) effect on adult participation in sport and physical activity in unorganised settings.
- Club/association settings are more important for enduring participation in sport and physical activity for children than for adults.

METHODS

Data collection

The AusPlay survey (AusPlay) is conducted quarterly under the auspices of Sport Australia. A detailed description of the AusPlay methodology can be found elsewhere [7]. Briefly, the target population for AusPlay is all Australian residents. For data collection, a randomly selected sample of Australian residents aged 15 years and over take part in computer-aided telephone interview (CATI). In AusPlay, the term "adult" is applied to this sample. While the application of this term to persons as young as 15 years may be questionable, it provides a simpler alternative to repetitive use of a phrase such as "persons aged 15 years or more", and it distinguishes the main survey sample from the secondary sample of "children" (aged 0-14 years). A more restricted set of data about children (with questions on topics such as motivation and costs of participation being omitted) is collected from adult respondents who are parents or guardians of at least one child in their household, with these respondents providing data about themselves and also one randomly selected child.

The annual target sample size for the AusPlay survey is 20,000 adults (aged 15 years and over) spread equally across the year, with 5,000 adult interviews being conducted each quarter. The AusPlay sample is stratified, with the overall target of 5,000 adult interviews being split into target sample sizes for each of 13 geographic strata based on States and Territories, and in the case of NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and West Australia, with further splits into the Greater Capital City Statistical Areas and the Rest of the State. From the start of AusPlay in Quarter 4, 2015 until Quarter 2, 2019 the AusPlay sample design was a dual frame overlapping design with 50% of the sample being from a landline frame and 50% from a random digit dialling (RDD) mobile phone frame. In Quarter 3, 2019 the sample design changed to a single frame RDD mobile design (100% mobile design).

The sample of respondents contacted in this way within each stratum (region) is unlikely

to be representative of the population of the region in important ways, such as age and gender profiles. In order to ensure that the estimated counts and rates for the whole population based on the sample data are representative of the whole population, the data from each AusPlay respondent is assigned a weight. The weights are based on the estimated resident population [8] in each of the 156 "cells" of a 3-factor classification: geographical region (13) × gender (2) × age (6). In principle, responses from respondents in cells which are under-represented in the AusPlay sample (relative to the population) are up-weighted (multiplied by a weight >1) and responses from cells which are over-represented in the AusPlay sample are down-weighted (multiplied by a weight <1). In practice, the weights must also include adjustments for household size and for other complexities relating to the combining of two sampling strategies. Finally, weights are rescaled so that the sum of the weights for each quarterly sample is equal to the population of Australia (aged 15 years and over). The weights also sum to the population counts in each cell of the cross-classification. Consequently, weighted sample estimates of the numbers of persons with a particular characteristic (such as playing a particular sport) are direct estimates for the population or relevant sub-population. To maintain these properties, when data from more than one quarter are aggregated, the weights are divided by the number of quarters. Weights for child data are determined by a similar process, but include further adjustments for the number of children in the household. The weighting methodology is described in more detail in the AusPlay methodology reports [7].

The sampling uncertainty in estimated counts and rates (e.g. the number and percentage of women in Victoria aged 25-44 who play netball in non-club settings) can be expressed in terms of four measures: standard error, relative standard error, margin of error, or relative margin of error. These measures depend on the relevant sample size, and hence on the size of the estimate; the larger the estimated count, the larger the error but the smaller the relative error. These measures are tabulated and explained in detail in the AusPlay methodology reports [7].

The flow of the AusPlay interview and the questions asked are shown in two other AusPlay publications [9, 10]. After initial demographic questions, respondents were asked whether they had participated in any physical activity, for sport, exercise or recreation during the 12 months prior to the interview. Those who had done so were invited to nominate up to 10 types of physical activity (e.g. basketball, tennis, aerobics, walking). The scope included both sports as defined in Australia at the time [11] and other forms of recreational physical activity. For each physical activity type nominated, participants were then asked a number of further questions about the frequency, duration and the settings in which the activity occurred [10]. In accordance with the aims of the present study, our focus is on the settings reported for each of the 12 sports included in the study.

For each type of physical activity, respondents were first asked *"In the last 12 months, did you do any of this through an organisation – like a club or a gym; or at a venue – like a pool or an oval?"* Respondents who answered "Yes – all" or "Yes – some" were asked to indicate what types organisations or venues from a list of 12 types of setting. In the present study, to keep tabulations within manageable proportions, these 12 types were collapsed into five broader settings, as shown in Table 1, together with the sixth setting "Not organised". Physical activity within school hours and informal recreational physical activity not involving an organisation or venue were excluded from the scope of data collection for children aged under 15 years [10]. Consequently, the "Not organised" setting does not apply to children, and the "Work, education" setting for children includes only activities organised by schools but undertaken outside school hours.

Table 1. Setting categories

Collapsed category	Original categories
Sport club or association	• Sport club or association
Gyms, centres etc.	• Gym/Fitness club/sports/leisure centre
	• Private studio (e.g. dance, yoga, pilates, martial arts)
	• Individual personal trainer or coach
Community, rec clubs etc.	• Recreation club or association (e.g. social club, senior citizens' club, abseiling association)
	• Public space (including park, oval, beach)
	• Events (e.g. fun run or Parkrun)
	• Community-run programs
Work, education	• Work
	• Educational institution (e.g. school or university)
Other, don't know	• Other (record answer)
	• Don't know
Not organised	• Not organised

For the present study, AusPlay data for the state of Victoria collected in the four quarters of each of the calendar years 2019, 2020 and 2021 were analysed. Gender and age breakdowns of the three annual samples are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. AusPlay survey 2019–2021: Study sample characteristics for Victoria[1,2]

	2019			2020			2021		
Age (years)	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
4	18	5	23	13	9	22	10	6	16
5-9	81	65	146	85	79	164	84	78	162
10-14	106	67	173	136	110	246	132	104	236
Children (4-14)	205	137	342	234	198	432	226	188	414
15-19	56	22	78	79	40	119	62	33	95
20-24	55	15	70	66	34	100	68	17	85
25-29	47	22	69	59	24	83	62	27	89
30-34	42	17	59	36	22	58	36	32	68
35-39	38	20	58	45	24	69	43	22	65
40-44	27	25	52	32	29	61	41	19	60
45-49	21	22	43	36	25	61	41	20	61
50-54	24	21	45	27	14	41	25	18	43
55-59	24	15	39	23	17	40	29	15	44
60-64	30	19	49	15	14	29	29	13	42
65-69	19	15	34	23	12	35	17	13	30
70-74	19	16	35	15	12	27	13	5	18
75-79	12	11	23	9	11	20	7	4	11
80+	9	11	20	4	4	8	9	7	16
Adult (15+)	423	251	674	469	282	751	482	245	727

[1] Unweighted frequencies
[2] AusPlay survey respondents who reported playing any of the 11 sports included in the study in the 12 months prior to the survey interview

Statistical Analysis

For each of the 11[1] included sports, we summed the weighted survey responses pertaining to each of the five (children) or six (adults) broad settings listed in Table 1. Because the weights are designed to scale estimates up to population level, the

[1] Data for all 11 sports were included in the aggregate calculations. However, because the numbers of participants in sailing and bowls aged less than 15 years in the survey sample were too small to provide a basis for reliable population estimates, no estimates for these sports specifically were included for this age cohort.

estimated counts tabulated below and the percentages and prevalence based on them are estimates for the Victorian population in the two age cohorts.

Counting the extent of participation in each setting for each sport is complicated by the fact some respondents participated in a particular sport in more than one setting. In this study, we have used the term "an instance of participation" to refer to a person playing a particular sport in a particular setting. An "instance" is not an episode/occasion/session/match; frequency of participation is not the focus of this study. Nor does an instance necessarily represent participation at a single location. For example, a respondent aged 17 who played basketball during the previous 12 months in two settings, such as a community club team and at school, contributes two instances of basketball participation, one for each setting, regardless of the number of occasions or locations involved in each setting.

RESULTS

1. Structure of Tables 3 and 4

All participation numbers in this report are population estimates for Victoria derived from the survey results and refer to numbers of instances of participation as explained above under Methods. Table 3 and 4 each show, for the two age cohorts respectively, data for the three years 2019, 2020 and 2021. Each row of these tables includes, for a particular sport (and for all sports aggregated) and a particular year, two sets of figures.

First, the estimated number of instances of participation in each setting are shown. The total number of instances of participation in each sport (the row aggregates in Tables 3 and 4) is greater than the number of participants in the sport, although the excess is small because the great majority of respondents participated in a particular sport in only one setting. When the data for the sports are aggregated (the bottom row of each

table) the multiple counting effect is greater because many respondents participated in more than one sport.

Second, the count for each setting is expressed as a percentage of the row aggregate across all settings. For the older age cohort (Table 4), two such percentages were calculated – with the "Not organised" category included and excluded. The exclusion was to enable comparison between the settings profiles for the two age cohorts; for the younger cohort, no data about informal settings was collected in the AusPlay survey.

Additionally, Tables 3 and 4 include columns showing measures of change in participation over time for each sport and for the aggregate across sports. This analysis was limited to the aggregate across all settings and one particular type of setting – club and association; specifically, for the years 2020 and 2021:

1. changes in participation numbers aggregated across all settings, expressed as percentages of the 2019 figure (green text).
2. changes in participation numbers in club and association settings, expressed as percentages of the 2019 figure (blue text).
3. changes in the percentage of all participation which occurred in club and association settings, expressed as percentage points (pp) of difference from the 2019 percentage (red text).

For the older cohort (Table 4) there are two versions of the type 3 changes – with (red text) and without (brown text) the inclusion of the "Not organised" category (as explained in the description of percentages above). The comments below regarding changes are mostly based on the first of these.

Table 3. Estimated instances of participation1 in 9 sports in 2019–2021 by Victorians aged less than 15 years: by sport and setting

		Setting												Aggregate (5 settings)[2]		
		Sport clubs & associations				Gyms, centres etc.		Community, rec clubs etc.		Work, education[2]		Other, don't know				
Sport	Year	Count	Change %[3]	%	Change pp[4]	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	Change %[3]	Rank
Aus Football[5]	2021	147,839	79.8	84.7	-5.4	0	0.0	20,869	12.0	5,849	3.4	0	0.0	174,557	84.9	2
	2020	123,464	66.7	80.2	-9.9	0	0.0	20,245	13.2	4,032	2.6	6,146	4.0	153,887	74.9	3
	2019	185,176		90.1		0	0.0	13,415	6.5	4,033	2.0	2,873	1.4	205,498		2
Basketball	2021	121,250	94.1	75.9	-0.5	3,167	2.0	20,563	12.9	7,413	4.6	7,359	4.6	159,752	94.8	3
	2020	130,240	101.1	81.4	5.0	6,845	4.3	10,622	6.6	5,527	3.5	6,710	4.2	159,943	94.9	2
	2019	128,787		76.4		8,560	5.1	11,112	6.6	19,546	11.6	551	0.3	168,556		3
Cricket	2021	74,261	110.7	87.8	-8.0	1,332	1.6	5,046	6.0	1,154	1.4	2,793	3.3	84,586	120.8	6
	2020	57,653	85.9	85.6	-10.2	0	0.0	4,086	6.1	0	0.0	5,602	8.3	67,341	96.2	8
	2019	67,090		95.8		0	0.0	2,923	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	70,013		7
Gymnastics	2021	54,093	82.0	52.0	-0.2	33,883	32.6	10,910	10.5	1,385	1.3	3,816	3.7	104,085	82.4	5
	2020	37,460	56.8	33.9	-18.3	46,778	42.3	8,628	7.8	6,033	5.5	11,734	10.6	110,634	87.6	4
	2019	65,936		52.2		44,875	35.5	13,634	10.8	1,918	1.5	0	0.0	126,362		5
Hockey	2021	11,439	58.3	83.1	-7.3	0	0.0	919	6.7	1,402	10.2	0	0.0	13,760	63.4	9
	2020	7,219	36.8	48.7	-41.7	0	0.0	4,445	30.0	1,385	9.3	1,782	12.0	14,830	68.3	9
	2019	19,629		90.4		2,075	9.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	21,704		9
Netball	2021	61,540	93.1	81.0	-14.4	366	0.5	5,598	7.4	4,108	5.4	4,320	5.7	75,932	109.6	8
	2020	71,126	107.6	77.1	-18.3	3,448	3.7	9,965	10.8	6,071	6.6	1,636	1.8	92,246	133.1	7
	2019	66,088		95.4		0	0.0	650	0.9	2,542	3.7	0	0.0	69,281		8
Soccer	2021	85,816	85.6	76.3	1.9	5,118	4.5	13,505	12.0	6,528	5.8	1,524	1.4	112,491	83.5	4
	2020	79,688	79.5	72.2	-2.2	6,295	5.7	17,697	16.0	3,797	3.4	2,835	2.6	110,312	81.9	5
	2019	100,245		74.4		3,900	2.9	15,502	11.5	13,609	10.1	1,516	1.1	134,771		4
Swimming	2021	41,412	64.8	11.6	-6.6	208,253	58.2	38,456	10.7	19,392	5.4	50,246	14.0	357,760	101.8	1
	2020	42,072	65.8	13.1	-5.1	184,222	57.5	31,653	9.9	18,542	5.8	43,838	13.7	320,327	91.2	1
	2019	63,894		18.2		220,577	62.8	27,454	7.8	16,305	4.6	23,040	6.6	351,269		1
Tennis	2021	52,225	78.1	67.1	-17.0	8,343	10.7	12,353	15.9	399	0.5	4,510	5.8	77,831	97.9	7
	2020	82,033	122.6	78.7	-5.4	7,529	7.2	1,949	1.9	5,853	5.6	6,836	6.6	104,200	131.0	6
	2019	66,891		84.1		804	1.0	6,089	7.7	4,472	5.6	1,285	1.6	79,541		6
Aggregate (11 sports)[6,7]	2021	655,454	85.8	56.2	-6.0	260,461	22.3	128,220	11.0	48,103	4.1	74,567	6.4	1,166,804	94.9	
	2020	632,517	82.8	55.7	-6.5	255,117	22.5	109,289	9.6	51,240	4.5	87,119	7.7	1,135,282	92.3	
	2019	764,183		62.2		280,791	22.8	90,779	7.4	64,368	5.2	29,266	2.4	1,229,386		

[1] An instance of participation is participation by a person in a particular sport in a particular setting.
[2] The row aggregates are calculated for each sport by summing the counts for the six settings. Because a small proportion of respondents reported playing a particular sport in more than one setting, the aggregate figures are slightly (<1%) higher than the total number of participants for each sport.
[3] Expressed as percentages of the 2019 figure
[4] Changes from the 2019 percentage, expressed as percentage points (pp)
[5] Australian rules football
6 Data for sailing and bowls are included in the aggregate calculations. However, because the numbers of participants in these sports aged less than 15 years in the survey sample were too small to provide a basis for reliable population estimates, no estimates for these sports are included in the table.
7 The aggregates for each setting are calculated by summing the counts for the 11 sports. Because some respondents reported playing more than one sport in a particular setting, the aggregate figures are higher than the total number of participants for each setting and for all settings combined.

Table 4. Estimated instances of participation1 in 11 sports during 2019-2021 by Victorians aged 15 years or more: by sport and setting

Sport	Year	Setting: Sport clubs & associations						Gyms, centres etc.			Community, rec clubs etc.			Work, education			Other, don't know			Not organised[2]		Aggregate (6 settings)[3]		
		Count	Change %[4]	%	Change pp[5]	%[2]	Change pp[5]	Count	%	%[2]	Count	%	%[2]	Count	%	%[2]	Count	%	%[2]	Count	%	Count	Change %[4]	Rank
Aus Football[6]	2021	146,891	96.0	52.5	-12.7	68.8	-10.6	0	0.0	0.0	45,654	16.3	21.4	13,721	4.9	6.4	7,265	2.6	3.4	66,420	23.7	279,951	119.3	4
	2020	129,556	84.7	52.9	-12.3	71.8	-7.6	0	0.0	0.0	39,752	16.2	22.0	10,572	4.3	5.9	579	0.2	0.3	64,344	26.3	244,803	104.4	5
	2019	153,007		65.2		79.4		1,260	0.5	0.7	23,413	10.0	12.1	13,171	5.6	6.8	1,854	0.8	1.0	41,888	17.9	234,593		5
Basketball	2021	103,832	68.4	30.2	-18.8	53.1	-12.9	24,356	7.1	12.4	44,834	13.0	22.9	20,359	5.9	10.4	2,264	0.7	1.2	148,602	43.2	344,247	111.0	3
	2020	111,997	73.8	32.9	-16.1	54.9	-11.1	19,798	5.8	9.7	49,598	14.6	24.3	12,117	3.6	5.9	10,657	3.1	5.2	136,056	40.0	340,223	109.7	2
	2019	151,857		49.0		66.0		21,640	7.0	9.4	29,910	9.6	13.0	21,290	6.9	9.2	5,517	1.8	2.4	79,981	25.8	310,195		2
Bowls	2021	51,911	93.3	65.3	-5.4	67.7	-8.5	0	0.0	0.0	18,515	23.3	24.1	633	0.8	0.8	5,655	7.1	7.4	2,738	3.4	79,451	100.9	8
	2020	71,215	128.0	79.0	8.3	83.4	7.2	0	0.0	0.0	10,771	11.9	12.6	0	0.0	0.0	3,453	3.8	4.0	4,754	5.3	90,194	114.6	8
	2019	55,628		70.7		76.2		0	0.0	0.0	15,172	19.3	20.8	1,385	1.8	1.9	863	1.1	1.2	5,688	7.2	78,735		8
Cricket	2021	119,409	125.6	57.4	-0.7	73.9	-3.2	0	0.0	0.0	32,148	15.4	19.9	6,685	3.2	4.1	3,348	1.6	2.1	46,513	22.4	208,102	127.1	6
	2020	91,658	96.4	58.2	0.1	76.0	-1.1	0	0.0	0.0	23,601	15.0	19.6	4,759	3.0	3.9	569	0.4	0.5	36,949	23.5	157,535	96.3	7
	2019	95,090		58.1		77.1		1,853	1.1	1.5	20,205	12.3	16.4	3,433	2.1	2.8	2,713	1.7	2.2	40,374	24.7	163,668		7
Gymnastics	2021	8,276	77.6	28.9	-11.6	41.0	-4.6	9,156	32.0	45.3	1,276	4.5	6.3	1,491	5.2	7.4	0	0.0	0.0	8,391	29.3	28,591	108.5	11
	2020	8,371	78.5	27.7	-12.8	37.5	-8.1	10,151	33.6	45.5	1,577	5.2	7.1	0	0.0	0.0	2,223	7.4	10.0	7,878	26.1	30,200	114.7	11
	2019	10,665		40.5		45.6		8,334	31.6	35.7	0	0.0	0.0	3,135	11.9	13.4	1,241	4.7	5.3	2,966	11.3	26,340		11
Hockey	2021	27,553	166.2	81.5	24.2	83.0	22.8	975	2.9	2.9	926	2.7	2.8	2,433	7.2	7.3	1,316	3.9	4.0	594	1.8	33,795	116.8	9
	2020	29,842	180.0	82.2	24.9	91.3	31.1	0	0.0	0.0	1,284	3.5	3.9	0	0.0	0.0	1,565	4.3	4.8	3,594	9.9	36,286	125.4	10
	2019	16,579		57.3		60.2		0	0.0	0.0	1,486	5.1	5.4	9,457	32.7	34.4	0	0.0	0.0	1,423	4.9	28,944		10
Netball	2021	97,429	78.0	51.2	-15.0	57.5	-13.2	16,201	8.5	9.6	34,939	18.4	20.6	13,908	7.3	8.2	6,845	3.6	4.0	20,787	10.9	190,109	100.7	7
	2020	102,984	82.4	59.9	-6.3	64.4	-6.3	10,361	6.0	6.5	23,278	13.5	14.6	16,779	9.8	10.5	6,401	3.7	4.0	12,251	7.1	172,054	91.2	6
	2019	124,942		66.2		70.7		16,416	8.7	9.3	18,556	9.8	10.5	16,911	9.0	9.6	0	0.0	0.0	11,931	6.3	188,756		6
Sailing	2021	16,279	88.7	56.5	8.7	76.0	2.3	0	0.0	0.0	5,144	17.9	24.0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0	7,390	25.6	28,813	74.9	10
	2020	20,766	113.1	49.0	1.2	74.5	0.8	0	0.0	0.0	5,060	11.9	18.2	0	0.0	0.0	2,049	4.8	7.4	14,511	34.2	42,386	110.2	9
	2019	18,361		47.8		73.7		0	0.0	0.0	5,711	14.9	22.9	0	0.0	0.0	856	2.2	3.4	13,519	35.2	38,446		9
Soccer	2021	77,786	64.4	31.1	-19.1	48.8	-15.3	12,415	5.0	7.8	42,760	17.1	26.8	16,337	6.5	10.2	10,222	4.1	6.4	90,648	36.2	250,169	104.0	5
	2020	92,265	76.3	33.0	-17.2	47.2	-16.9	19,536	7.0	10.0	44,806	16.0	22.9	29,905	10.7	15.3	8,968	3.2	4.6	84,389	30.2	279,869	116.3	4
	2019	120,867		50.2		64.1		14,359	6.0	7.6	31,929	13.3	16.9	19,289	8.0	10.2	2,001	0.8	1.1	52,157	21.7	240,602		4
Swimming	2021	26,461	122.9	3.0	0.2	4.6	0.6	354,307	40.8	61.5	144,900	16.7	25.1	17,492	2.0	3.0	33,154	3.8	5.8	291,396	33.6	867,710	111.6	1
	2020	18,493	85.9	2.2	-0.6	3.2	-0.8	375,261	43.8	64.6	119,894	14.0	20.6	21,517	2.5	3.7	45,521	5.3	7.8	275,734	32.2	856,419	110.1	1
	2019	21,531		2.8		4.0		380,960	49.0	70.2	101,626	13.1	18.7	12,379	1.6	2.3	26,190	3.4	4.8	234,837	30.2	777,523		1
Tennis	2021	165,995	121.4	47.2	-7.1	63.8	-17.8	10,410	3.0	4.0	56,495	16.1	21.7	10,126	2.9	3.9	17,145	4.9	6.6	91,623	26.0	351,794	139.7	2
	2020	162,887	119.2	51.8	-2.5	73.8	-7.8	6,653	2.1	3.0	37,825	12.0	17.1	5,258	1.7	2.4	8,119	2.6	3.7	93,457	29.7	314,198	124.7	3
	2019	136,683		54.3		81.6		3,630	1.4	2.2	12,912	5.1	7.7	10,070	4.0	6.0	4,235	1.7	2.5	84,365	33.5	251,894		3
Aggregate[7] (11 sports)	2021	841,821	93.0	31.6	-7.1	44.6	-6.5	427,820	16.1	22.7	427,591	16.1	22.7	103,184	3.9	5.5	87,213	3.3	4.6	775,102	29.1	2,662,731	113.8	
	2020	840,033	92.8	32.8	-5.9	45.9	-5.2	441,759	17.2	24.1	357,445	13.9	19.5	100,907	3.9	5.5	90,105	3.5	4.9	733,917	28.6	2,564,165	109.6	
	2019	905,210		38.7		51.1		448,451	19.2	25.3	260,920	11.2	14.7	110,519	4.7	6.2	45,469	1.9	2.6	569,127	24.3	2,339,696		

[1] An instance of participation is participation by a person in a particular sport in a particular setting.
[2] The “Not organised” category applies only to adults (15+ yrs). For comparison with Table 3, the second column of percentages for each organised setting is calculated with reference to the total count for the five organised settings, with the “Not organised” setting excluded.
[3] The row aggregates are calculated for each sport by summing the counts for the six settings. Because a small proportion of respondents reported playing a particular sport in more than one setting, the aggregate figures are slightly (<1%) higher than the total number of participants for each sport.
[4] Expressed as percentages of the 2019 figure
[5] Changes from the 2019 percentage, expressed as percentage points (pp)
[6] Australian rules football
[7] The aggregates for each setting are calculated by summing the counts for the 11 sports. Because some respondents reported playing more than one sport in a particular setting, the aggregate figures are higher than the total number of participants for each setting and for all settings combined.

2 Victorians aged less than 15 years

Table 3 shows that for this age cohort, there were an estimated 1,166,804 instances of participation in Victoria across the 11[2] sports in 2021 compared to 1,229,386 instances in 2019 and 1,135,282 in 2020.

Relative participation levels for different sports were consistent across the three years, reflected in similar rankings (for all settings aggregated) in all three years. Club/association settings predominated in all years for all sports except for swimming. Gyms and centres were the most predominant setting for swimming and were also important for gymnastics.

Regarding changes over the three years, the aggregate rows of Table 3 (green) show that estimated participation across all 11 sports and across all settings (excluding informal settings) declined from 2019 to 2020 (with 2020 participation numbers being 92.3% of the 2019 figure), then recovered part of that decline in 2021 (to 94.9% of the 2019 figure). The decline in sport club/association settings (blue) in 2020 was more than twice as large (with 2020 numbers being 82.8% of the 2019 figure), and the partial recovery in 2021 (to 82.8% of the 2019 figure) was smaller in relative terms. The percentage of all participation in club/association settings (red) declined from the 2019 value of 62.2% to 55.7% in 2020, and then stayed around that lower level in 2021 (56.2%). However, the pattern of change varied across the nine individually tabulated sports.

Participation aggregated across all settings (green) declined from 2019 (pre-COVID-19) to 2020 (COVID-19) for seven sports (Australian football, basketball, cricket, gymnastics, hockey, soccer, and swimming) and increased for two sports (netball and tennis). Compared to 2019, participation levels in 2020 ranged from 68.3% (hockey) to 131.0% (tennis) of the 2019 figures.

[2] Data for all 11 sports were included in the aggregate calculations. However, because the numbers of participants in sailing and bowls aged less than 15 years in the survey sample were too small to provide a basis for reliable population estimates, no estimates for these sports specifically were included in Table 3.

The number of participation instances that took place in sport clubs and associations (blue) was lower in 2020 than 2019 for six sports (Australian football, cricket, hockey, soccer, and swimming) and higher for three sports (basketball, netball and tennis). In 2020, the greatest decrease in participation numbers was for hockey (with 2020 participation numbers being 36.8% of the 2019 figure), and the highest increase was for tennis (with 2020 participation numbers being 122.6% of the 2019 figure).

The proportion of participation in sport clubs/associations (red) was lower in 2020 than 2019 for all sports except basketball; the changes ranged from -41.7pp (hockey) to +5.0pp (basketball).

The rebound from COVID-19 in 2021 resulted in increases in overall participation (green) (92.3% of the 2019 figure in 2021 and 94.9% in 2022). Compared to 2020, increases occurred in four sports (Australian football, cricket, soccer, and swimming). However, decreases occurred from 2020 to 2021 in five sports (basketball, gymnastics, hockey, netball and tennis).

The number of participation instances that took place in sport clubs and associations (blue) was higher in 2021 than 2020 for five sports (Australian football, cricket, gymnastics, hockey and soccer) and lower for four sports (basketball, netball, swimming and tennis); the changes ranged from tennis (down from 122.6% of the 2019 figure in 2020 to 78.1% of the 2019 figure in 2021) to gymnastics (up from 56.8% of the 2019 figure in 2020 to 82.0 of the 2019 figure in 2021).

However, the proportion of participation that took place in sport clubs and associations (red) continued to decline in 2021 (down overall from 2020 for all sports except soccer; the changes ranged from -17.0pp (tennis) to +1.9pp (soccer).

Overall, participation in 2021 (green) remained below pre-COVID levels (94.9% of 2019 numbers), and the proportion of participation that took place in sport club-based settings (red) was also lower (-6.0pp) while participation rose in other community recreational club settings.

3 Victorians aged 15 years or more

Table 4 shows that for Victorians aged 15 years or more, there were an estimated 2,662,731 instances of participation in Victoria across the 11 sports in 2021 compared to 2,339,696 instances in 2019 and 2,564,165 in 2020.

Relative participation levels for different sports were consistent across the three years, reflected in similar rankings (for all settings aggregated) in all three years.

Club/association settings predominated in all years for all sports except for swimming. Gyms & centres were the most predominant setting for swimming and were also equally important as club/association settings for gymnastics.

Regarding changes over the three years, the aggregate rows of Table 4 (green) show that estimated participation across all 11 sports and across all settings increased considerably (to 109.6% of the 2019 figure) in 2020 and increased further (to 113.8% of the 2019 figure) in 2021. However, participation in club/association settings (blue) declined (to 92.8% of the 2019 figure) in 2020 and stayed at that lower level (93.0%) in 2021. The percentage of all participation that occurred in club/association settings (red) declined from 38.7% in 2019 to 32.8% in 2020 and stayed around that level (31.6%) in 2021. With informal settings excluded for comparison with the younger cohort, the percentage of all other participation that occurred in club/association settings declined from 51.1% in 2019 to 45.9% in 2020 and stayed around that level (44.6%) in 2021.

However, the pattern of change varied across the 11 sports.

Participation aggregated across all settings (green) increased from 2019 (pre-COVID-19) to 2020 (COVID-19) for nine sports and increased for two sports (cricket and netball). Participation numbers for 2020 ranged from 96.3% (cricket) to 125.4% (hockey) of 2019 numbers.

The number of participation instances that took place in sport clubs and associations (blue) was lower in 2020 than 2019 for seven sports (Australian football, basketball,

cricket, gymnastics, netball, soccer and swimming) and higher for four sports (bowls, hockey, sailing and tennis), In 2020, the greatest decrease in participation numbers was for basketball (with 2020 participation numbers being 73.8% of the 2019 figure), and the highest increase was for hockey (with 2020 participation numbers being 180.0% of the 2019 figure).

The proportion of participation that took place in sport clubs and associations (red) was lower in 2020 than 2019 for seven sports and higher for four sports (bowls, cricket, hockey and sailing). The changes ranged from -17.2pp (soccer) to +24.9pp (hockey).

The rebound from COVID-19 in 2021 resulted in increases in overall participation (green) compared to 2020 in six sports (Australian football, basketball, cricket, netball, swimming and tennis), while further decreases occurred from 2020 to 2021 in five sports (bowls, gymnastics, hockey, sailing, and soccer).

Participation instances that took place in sport clubs and associations (blue) also increased in 2021 for four sports (Australian football, cricket, tennis, swimming), but decreased for seven sports (basketball, bowls, gymnastics, hockey, netball, sailing and soccer). The changes ranged from bowls (down from 128.0% of the 2019 figure in 2020 to 93.3% of the 2019 figure in 2021) to swimming (up from 85.9% of the 2019 figure in 2020 to 122.9% of the 2019 figure in 2021).

The proportion of participation that took place in a club-based setting (red) remained lower in 2021 compared to 2019 (pre-COVID-19) for all sports except for hockey, sailing and swimming; the percentage change in participation in club-based settings in 2021 compared to 2019 ranged from -19.1pp (soccer) to +24.2pp (hockey).

Overall, participation in 2021 (green) was above pre-COVID levels (113.8%), but the proportion of participation that occurred in sport club-based settings (red) was lower (-7.1pp) while participation rose in other community recreational club and informal settings.

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