

# Participation in Exercise, Recreation and Sports in Regional SA



Government  
of South Australia  
Office for Recreation  
and Sport

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## Introduction

The Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS) has been undertaken annually across Australia since 2001, providing detailed information on the nature and level of participation in exercise, recreation and sport by persons aged 15 years and over. ERASS is conducted through telephone interviews, with the sample randomly selected from an electronic version of the White Pages telephone directory. The questionnaire is framed around a 12-month reference period. Respondents are defined as 'participants' if they had undertaken one or more activities for the purpose of exercise, recreation or sport during the year prior to the survey.

The standard ERASS sampling frame allows results to be reported for Australia as a whole, as well as providing comparative data by state. In 2003, additional sampling was undertaken in South Australia to allow analysis of participation at regional level, and to provide information to assist with the development of policies and programs across the state.

Results reported in this fact sheet are based on 1,700 interviews conducted in South Australia as part of the standard national ERASS sampling, in addition to 2,690 interviews that comprised the 'boosted' sample, giving a total of sample size of 4,390<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the figures reported here may differ slightly from those shown for South Australia in the national ERASS report for 2003.

## Boundaries used for the regional analysis

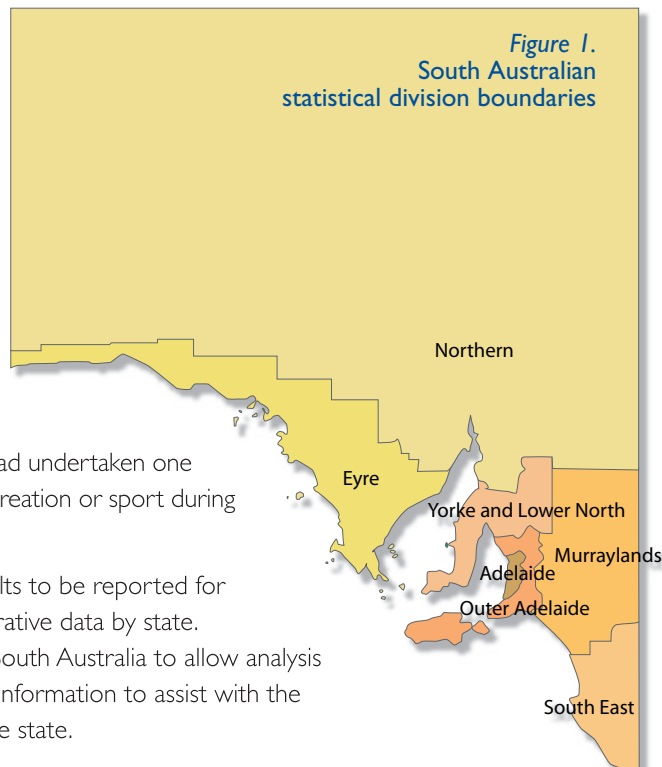
The geographical regions used to analyse data from the boosted sample were defined according to the ABS statistical division boundaries for South Australia (see Figure 1). The Adelaide statistical division, which covers the metropolitan area, was further divided into four regions, based on ABS statistical sub-division boundaries (see Figure 3). A brief description of each statistical division is given below:

**Outer Adelaide** – covers the area surrounding the Adelaide statistical division, extending as far as Mallala to the north, and taking in Barossa Valley and the northern extremes of the Mount Lofty Ranges. It also includes the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.

**Yorke and Lower North** – incorporates the Yorke Peninsula, including a small area north as far as Port Broughton, and extends eastward to encompass the Clare Valley, and the Eudunda Ranges and its associated plains.

**Murraylands** – the Murraylands statistical division centres around the Murray River. It takes in Murray Bridge and the Riverland, and is bounded by The Coorong in the south-west and the Ninety-Mile Desert in the south-east. It extends to the Victorian and New South Wales borders in the east.

<sup>1</sup> Prior to analysis, the sample was weighted to reflect ABS population estimates.



**South East** – covers the south-eastern corner of the state, and is bounded by the Southern Ocean to the west and south and the Victorian border in the east. It extends to the Tatiara district around Keith in the north.

**Eyre** – this region is bounded by Spencer Gulf in the east, and extends westwards beyond Ceduna to the West Australian border. It extends as far as the Gawler Ranges and includes the Nullarbor Plain in the north-west.

**Northern** – the Northern statistical division includes the South Australian Outback, the Flinders Ranges and the upper Spencer Gulf cities of Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie, and surrounding areas. It extends to the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales borders in the north and east.

The Adelaide statistical sub-division boundaries are shown in Figure 3. The Local Government Areas covered by each statistical region are:

**Northern Adelaide** – Gawler, Playford, Salisbury, Tea Tree Gully and the northern part of Port Adelaide Enfield.

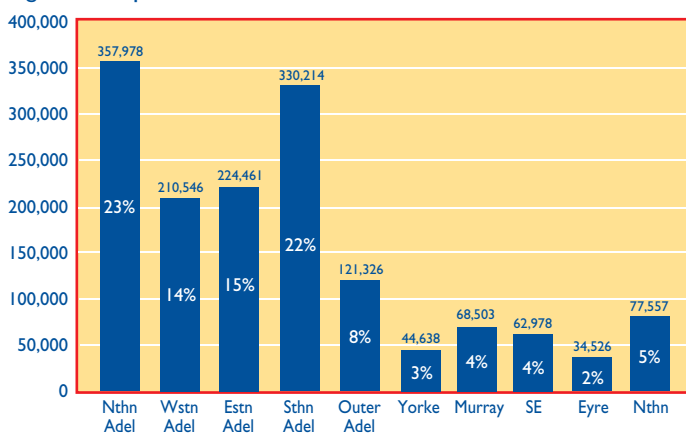
**Western Adelaide** – Charles Sturt, West Torrens and the southern section of Port Adelaide Enfield.

**Eastern Adelaide** – Prospect, Walkerville, Adelaide, Unley, Norwood Payneham and St Peters, Burnside and the western part of Adelaide Hills.

**Southern Adelaide** – Onkaparinga, Marion, Holdfast Bay and Mitcham.

The population distribution across the regions is illustrated in Figure 2. The four metropolitan regions account for 73% of the states total population. Eyre has the smallest population (34,000 residents) accounting for just 2% of the population.

Figure 2. Population distribution of South Australia



Source: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

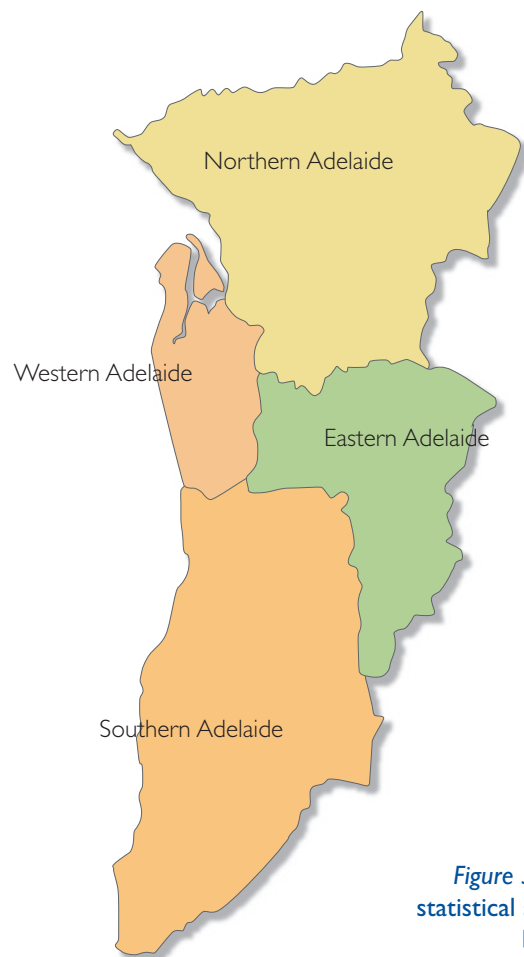


Figure 3. Adelaide statistical subdivision boundaries

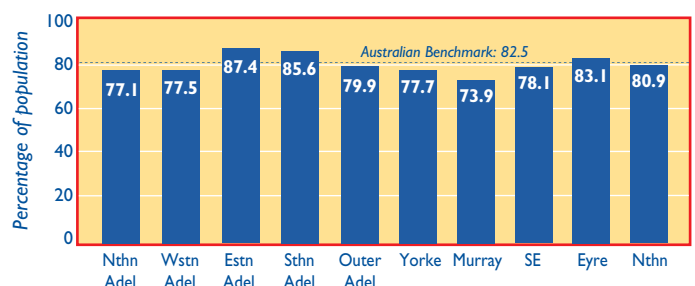
## Participation rates by region

Results from the boosted sample indicated that 81.0% of South Australians participated in exercise, recreation or sport at least once in the 12-months prior to being surveyed. When the data were examined by region however, it was apparent that there were considerable differences in the level of participation according to where people lived.

As shown in Figure 4, the two regions with the highest overall participation levels were both located in the metropolitan area. Eastern Adelaide had the highest participation rate of 87.4%, with Southern Adelaide the next highest at 85.6%. However, participation in the Northern Adelaide (77.1%) and Western Adelaide (77.5%) regions was below the national average.

Among the non-metropolitan regions, the highest participation rate was in the Eyre region (83.1%). Murraylands recorded the lowest participation of any region in the state (73.9%), while Yorke and Lower North and the South East were also well below the national average.

Figure 4. Participation rates by region



## Participation by gender and region

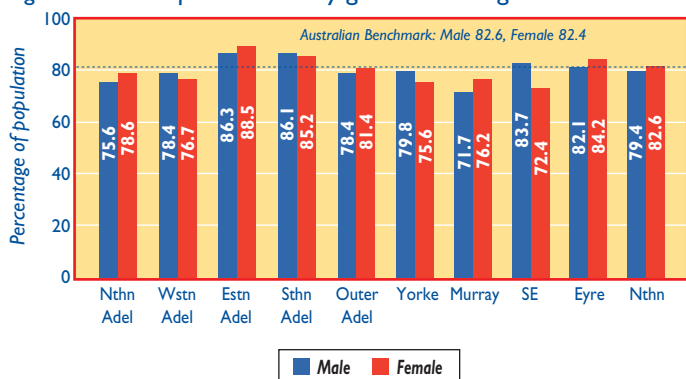
Data for the whole of South Australia indicated that there was little difference in the level of participation on the basis of gender, although rates were marginally higher for females (81.4%) than for males (80.7%). The regional analysis showed that in some parts of the state, there was considerable variation in participation rates between men and women (see Figure 5).

Interestingly, as with the national ERASS data, there appears to be no uniform skew towards either males or females having higher participation rates. (Females show higher participation rates in Qld, SA and TAS, whereas as males have higher participation rates in ACT, NSW, NT, VIC and WA.)

For males, the lowest rate of participation was recorded in the Murraylands (71.7%), followed by Northern Adelaide region (75.6%). The South East had the lowest rate of participation by females of any region (72.4%), despite a relatively high level by males (83.7%).

The biggest discrepancies in participation rates between males and females occurred in the South East, Murraylands, and Yorke and Lower North.

Figure 5. Participation rates by gender and region



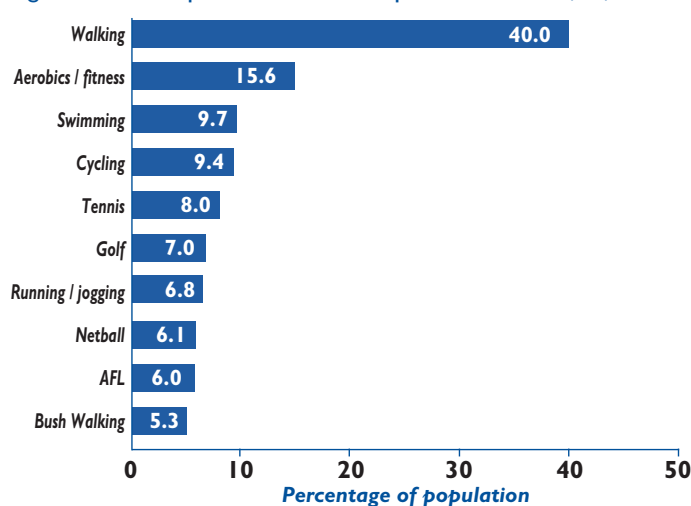
## Type of activities undertaken

The next section looks at the main activities undertaken by South Australians aged 15 years and over, based on participation rates calculated from the boosted 2003 ERASS sample.

### Top ten activities for South Australia

Figure 6 shows that walking (excluding bushwalking) was the activity with the highest rate of participation overall, with 40.0% of South Australians walking for exercise, recreation or sport in the 12 months prior to the survey. The second most popular type of activity was aerobics/fitness (15.6%), followed by swimming (9.7%), cycling (9.4%) and tennis (8.0%). Of the more traditional team sports, only netball (6.1%) and Australian Rules Football (6.0%), which were ranked eighth and ninth respectively, figured among the ten most popular sporting and recreational pursuits by South Australians.

Figure 6. Participation rates for top ten activities (SA)



### Participation rates for the top ten activities, by gender

As shown in figure 7, there were marked differences in the pattern of participation in the top 10 activities on the basis of gender:

#### Females

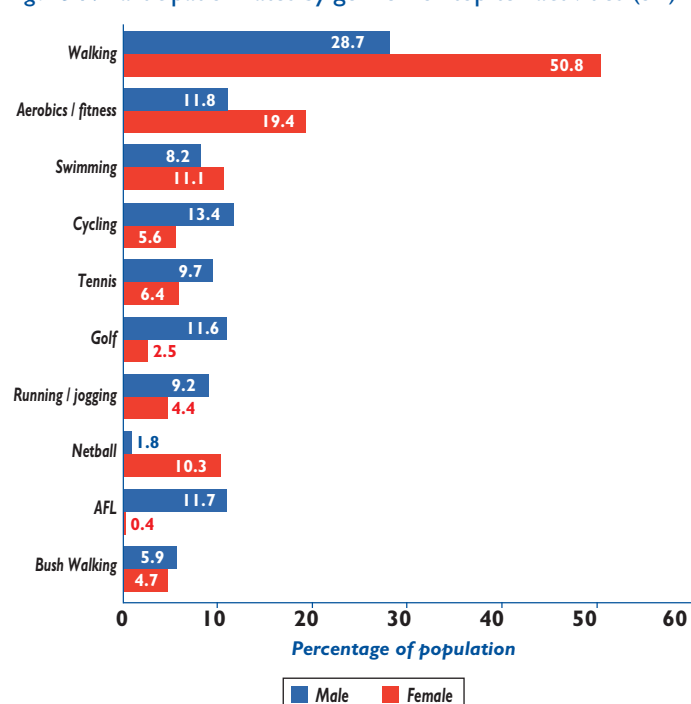
Walking (50.8%) was by far the most popular activity for females, followed by Aerobics/fitness (19.4%), Swimming (11.1%) and netball (10.3%). Female participation in the remaining top 10 activities drops off significantly.

#### Males

Walking (28.7%) was still the most popular activity for males, but this was well below the female participation rate in this activity. Several of the other top 10 activities rated well for participation by males including cycling (13.4%), aerobics/fitness (11.8%), AFL (11.7%) and golf (11.6%). Tennis, running/jogging and swimming were also approaching the 10% participation rate for males.

Among the 10 most popular activities, bush walking had the most even distribution of participation on the basis of gender (5.9% by males and 4.7% by females)

Figure 7. Participation rates by gender for top ten activities (SA)



## Rates of participation in the top five activities, by region

Participation rates by region for the five most popular activities undertaken by South Australians aged 15 years and over are shown in Figures 8-12. Note that, due to relatively low regional estimates of the number of participants in certain activities, some of the results may be subject to sampling error (as indicated on the graph).

### Walking

Although there were some variations, participation rates for walking were reasonably consistent throughout South Australia, with no region more than four percentage points below the state average. The Southern Adelaide region had the highest participation rate, followed by Eastern Adelaide and Eyre (see Figure 8). The lowest rates were recorded in Northern Adelaide, the South East, Yorke and Lower North and the Northern region of the state.

### Aerobics/fitness

As shown in Figure 9, there were clear differences in participation in aerobics/fitness activities between metropolitan Adelaide and the country areas of South Australia. Participation rates in the metropolitan regions were all above the national average of 16.0%, while participation in the country areas was significantly less. The results suggest that facilities and/or programs for these activities may be less readily available in the more remote regions of South Australia.

### Swimming

Compared to the Australia benchmark, South Australians have a very low participation rate for swimming. The highest participation rates were in the Eastern and Southern metropolitan districts, and the Outer Adelaide region (see Figure 10). Northern Adelaide recorded a rate considerably below the other metropolitan regions, while the Eyre and Murraylands were lowest overall.

### Cycling

Participation in cycling was generally higher in the metropolitan and Outer Adelaide regions than in the more remote areas of South Australia (see Figure 11). The exception was the Northern region, which had a participation rate similar to that for the metropolitan areas.

### Tennis

Residents of Eastern Adelaide and the South East were most likely to participate in tennis. The lowest rates of participation were in Northern Adelaide and the Eyre region (see Figure 12).



Figure 8. Participation rates by region - Walking (other than bush walking)

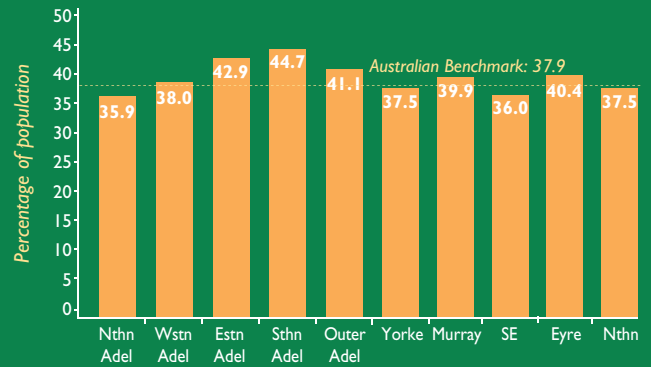
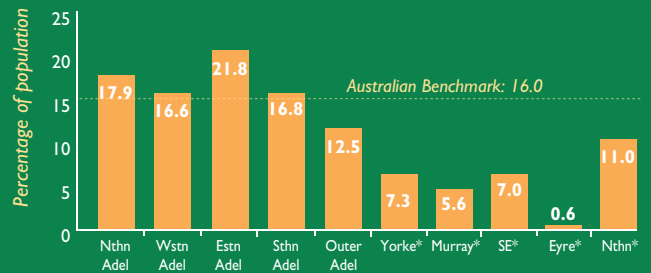
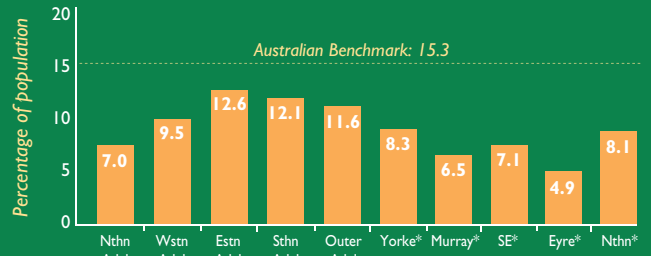


Figure 9. Participation rates by region - Aerobics / fitness



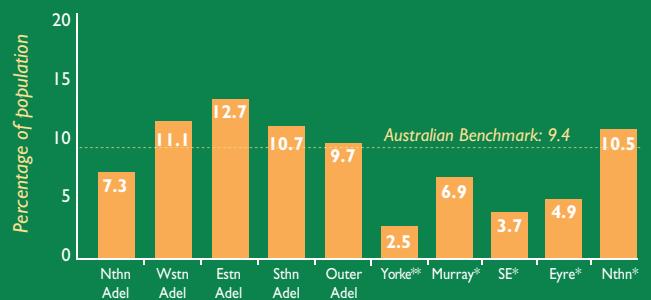
\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 10. Participation rates by region - Swimming



\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution.

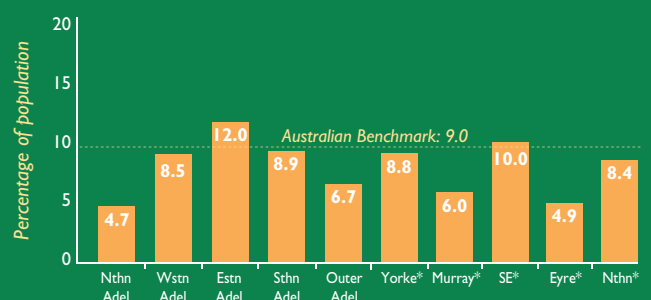
Figure 11. Participation rates by region - Cycling



\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution.

\*\* Estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

Figure 12. Participation rates by region - Tennis



\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution.

## Organised and non-organised participation

As shown in the previous section, walking was the most popular form of activity undertaken by South Australians for exercise, recreation or sport. Information sources such as the national ERASS research conducted since 2001 have shown an increasing trend towards participation in unstructured or non-organised activities like walking, which is also the most popular activity nationally. The data also suggest that the overall level of participation in organised activities, such as those undertaken through sporting clubs, or commercial fitness and leisure centres, has not shown the same growth.

This trend is a key issue for the provision of appropriate sport and recreation programs and services, but until the additional sampling for South Australia within ERASS in 2003, there was no information available below state level. The next section shows the findings from the boosted sample, which has allowed analysis of participation patterns in respect to organised and non-organised activities by region.

### Organised and non-organised participation by region

Across South Australia, an estimated 41% of the population partook in some form of organised activity, while around 66% participated in non-organised or unstructured forms of exercise, recreation or sport (Figure 13). This includes 26% who participate in both organised and non-organised activities.

### Organised participation

When broken down by region, the proportion of the population who participated in organised activities was generally higher in the non-metro regions than in the Adelaide district. The Eyre region had over half (53.5%) of the population participating in organised activities.

The Northern (46.7%), South East (44.0%) and Yorke (43.0%) region also recorded higher participation rates in organised activities than the national average. Eastern Adelaide (44.7%) was the only metro region to better the national benchmark. Northern Adelaide (37.5%) and Western Adelaide (38.2%) regions had the lowest participation rate in organised activities.

### Non-organised participation

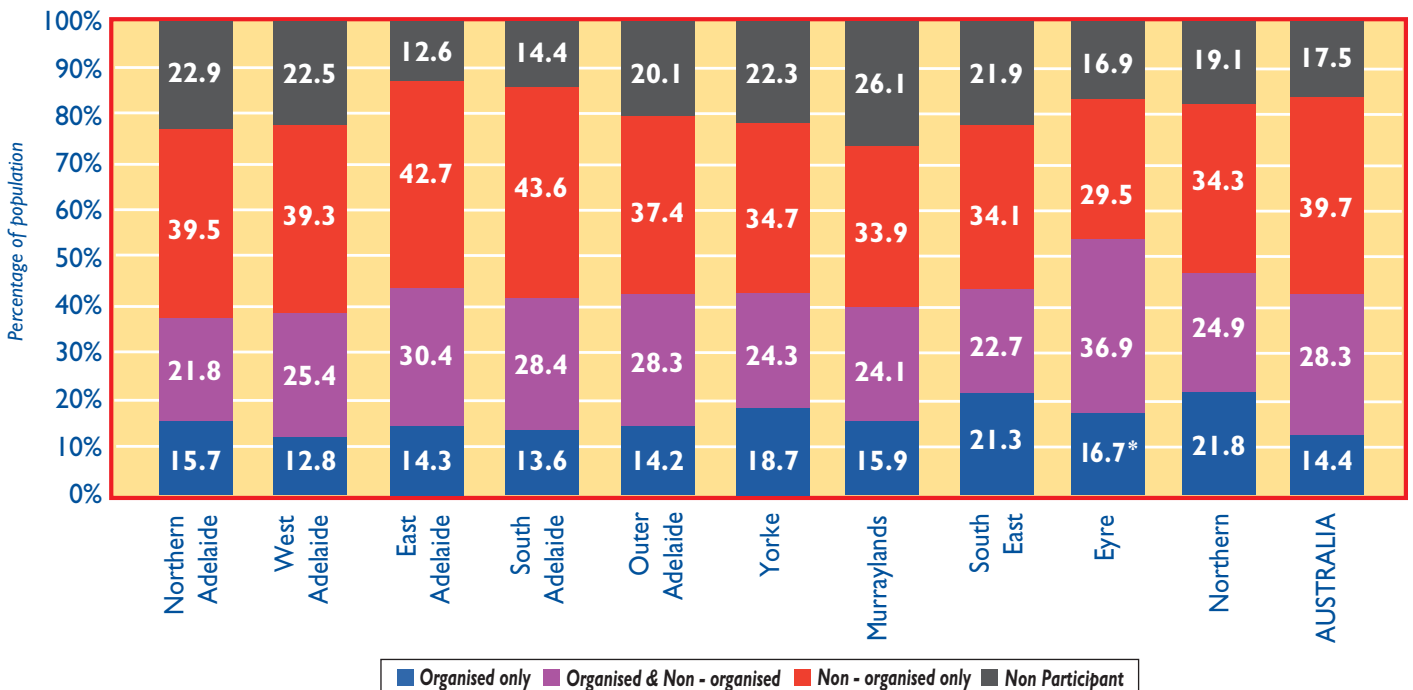
Conversely, participation rates in non-organised activities tended to be higher in the metro regions, whilst overall South Australia falls short of the national average (66.0% vs 68.0%) for non-organised participation.

Eastern Adelaide (73.1%) and Southern Adelaide (72.0%) were the only 2 regions to exceed the national participation rate for non-organised activities.

The regions having the lowest participation rates in non-organised activities were the South East (56.8%), Yorke (59.0%) and Northern (59.2%) regions.



Figure 13. Type of Participation by Region

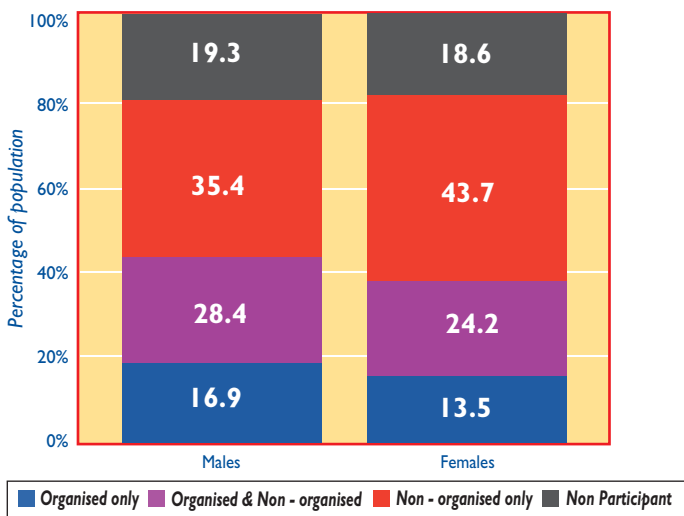


\* Estimate has a relative standard error of between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution.

### Organised and non-organised participation by gender

As shown in Figure 14, there was some gender variation in the distribution of organised and non-organised participation, with females (43.7%) more likely to participate only in unstructured activities than males (35.4%). In total, only 37.7% of females participated in some organised activity for exercise, recreation or sport, compared to 45.3% of males.

Figure 14. Organised and non-organised participation by gender

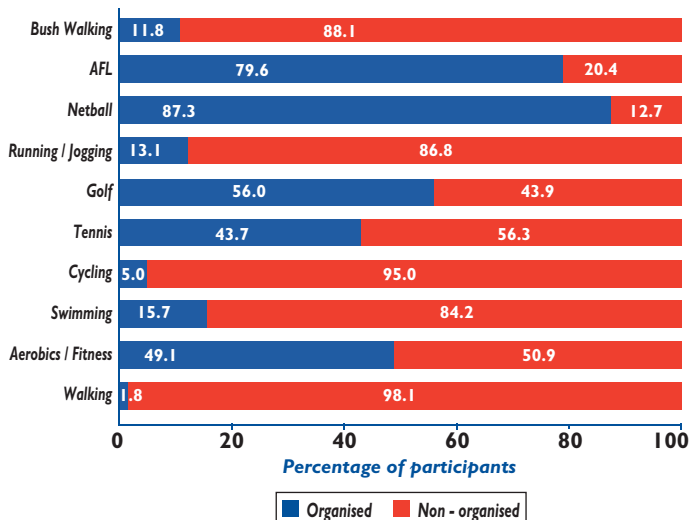


### Rates of organised and non-organised participation in the top ten activities

Figure 15 shows the rates of organised and non-organised, or unstructured, participation for each of the top ten activities for South Australia. The figure shown for 'organised' includes those who participated only on an organised basis, in addition to those who participated in both organised and non-organised forms of the activity.

The graph shows that walking and cycling were almost exclusively undertaken as unstructured activities, with very low rates of organised participation. Running/jogging, bushwalking and swimming were also primarily undertaken on a non-organised basis, although all had an organised component. In contrast, participation in netball, AFL and golf was predominately organised. Participation in aerobics/fitness and tennis was fairly equally divided between organised and unstructured activities.

Figure 15. Top ten activities for SA - organised and non-organised participation



### Frequency of participation

In addition to the type of activities undertaken and the nature of their involvement, respondents were asked to provide details on how often they participated in exercise, recreation and sport over the 12-month reference period.

This information enabled the calculation of the average annual frequency of participation according to geographical region.

### Average (mean) frequency of participation by region

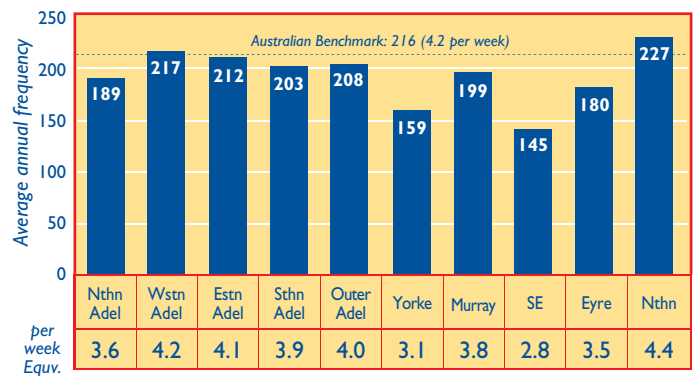
Across South Australia, the average (mean) annual frequency of participation for respondents who had undertaken at least one activity for exercise, recreation and sport was 201 times per year (equivalent to 3.9 times per week). Figure 16 calculations include participation in all activities for each respondent and plots these frequencies by region.

A "per week" equivalent has also been included in figure 16. This calculation ignores seasonal variation in participation frequency (summer/winter) and thus should be interpreted as a guide only.

Across the regions average frequency of participation varied from 145 pa (2.8 /wk) in the South East region to 227 pa (4.4/wk) in the Northern region. Most of the participants in the metropolitan regions had an average frequency of around 200 times a year or more (3.8/wk).

The outer regional areas had a lower average frequency of participation than the metropolitan regions, with the exception of the Northern region. In particular the South East (145 pa/2.8wk) and York and the Lower North (159pa/3.1pw) had the lowest average frequency of participation in South Australia.

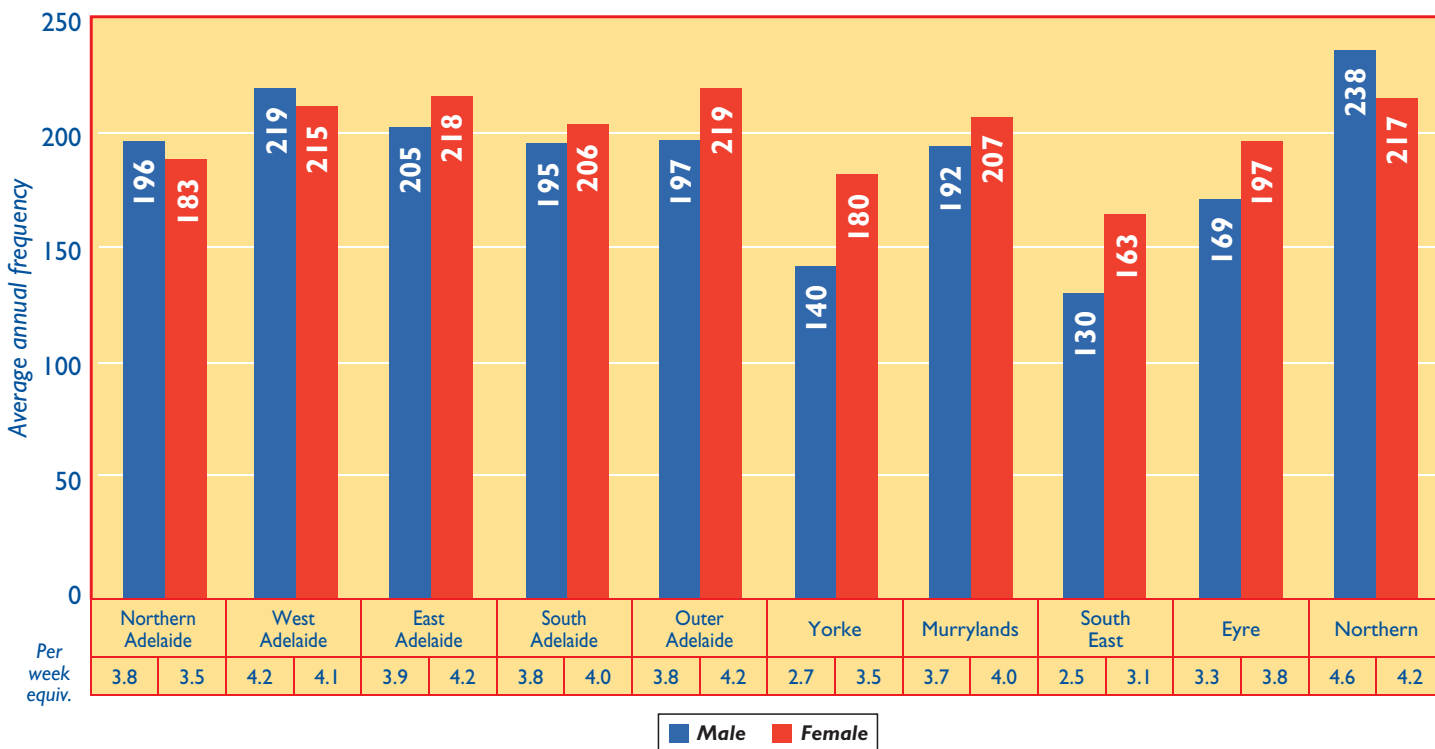
Figure 16. Average annual frequency of participation in exercise, recreation and sport, by region



### Average (mean) frequency of participation by gender

Figure 17 shows that, for most regions, there was very little difference in the average annual frequency of participation in exercise, recreation and sport on the basis of gender. While the biggest variations were in the Yorke and Lower North and South East regions, the calculated differences between male and female average frequencies (40 and 33 respectively) equate to less than one session per week.

Figure 17. Average annual frequency of participation in exercise, recreation and sport, by gender and region



### Conclusion

The standard annual ERASS provides comparisons of participation in exercise, recreation and sport on the basis of whether survey respondents reside within or outside capital city areas. The additional sampling across South Australia in the 2003 survey has for the first time enabled a detailed examination at the regional level.

The results of this analysis have highlighted the difference between the South Australian regions. Participation rates, the type of activity undertaken, the patterns of organised and non-organised activity and the average frequency of participation in exercise, recreation and sport have all been examined by region.

This information can assist the regions to understand the current structure of their sporting landscape. In addition, state and regional service providers can use this information to plan programs and services to enhance exercise, recreation and sporting opportunities for the population into the future.

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