

Active Women

Physical activity is important for the health and wellbeing of women. It provides a range of physical health, mental health and social benefits. Conversely, physical inactivity is the leading contributor to disease in women.^{1,2}

It is important to understand women's involvement in physical activity to identify ways to encourage women to become more active.

Note that the data sources in this fact sheet define physical activity participation differently. The Australian Bureau of Statistics and the *Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey* define participants as people aged 15 years and over who participated at least once in the 12 months prior to survey. In comparison, the *Western Australian Adult Physical Activity Survey* of people aged 18 years and over focuses on sufficient levels of physical activity. This is defined as at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days of the week, which is frequently interpreted as 150 minutes of moderate activity over at least five sessions.³

HOW ACTIVE ARE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WOMEN?

Physical activity levels of Western Australian women aged 18 years and over⁴

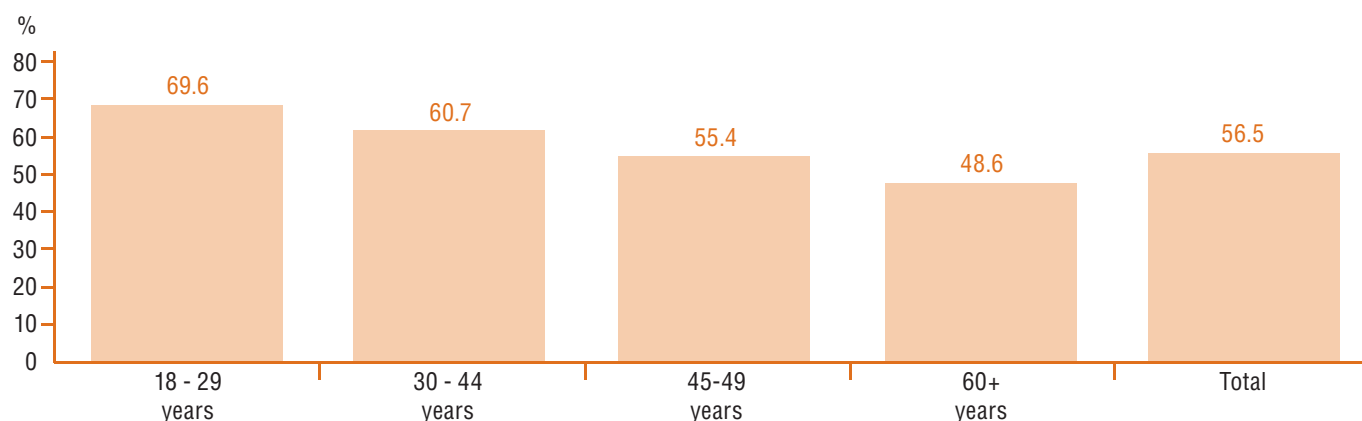
In 2006, just over half (56.5%) of Western Australian women aged 18 years and over were sufficiently active.

Physical activity levels of Western Australians aged 18 years and over by sex – 2006

Level of activity	Females (%)	Males (%)
Sufficiently active	56.5	61.2
Insufficiently active	29.9	28.0
Inactive	13.6	10.8

The proportion of women who were sufficiently active was highest among 18 to 29 year olds and decreased with age.

Proportion of sufficiently active females aged 18 years and over by age – Western Australia, 2006



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Participation in sport or physical activity by women aged 15 years and over ^{5,6,7,8,9,10}

Western Australia has one of the highest proportions of women aged 15 years and over who are active, in comparison to the other states and territories. Between 2001 and 2006, the participation rate of Western Australian women in sport and physical activity exceeded the national rate, as did the proportion of Western Australian women who participated in organised sport and physical activity. Note that participation rates are the proportions of people who participated at least once in the 12 months to survey.

Rates of participation in sport or physical activity: women aged 15 years and over, 2001–2006 ^(a)

Year	Western Australia (%)	Australia (%)
2001	80.8	75.9
2002	81.6	77.0
2003	86.0	82.4
2004	83.7	82.6
2005	83.8	83.1
2006	84.7	80.5

(a) Proportion who participated at least once in the 12 months to survey

Rates of participation in organised sport or physical activity: women aged 15 years and over, 2001–2006 ^{(a) 11,12,13,14,15,16}

Year	Western Australia (%)	Australia (%)
2001	41.5	37.7
2002	41.6	38.4
2003	46.0	40.8
2004	3.0	40.8
2005	44.4	39.4
2006	43.3	37.4

(a) Proportion who participated at least once in the 12 months to survey

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MOST POPULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR ACTIVE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

Most popular physical activities for women aged 18 years and over¹⁷

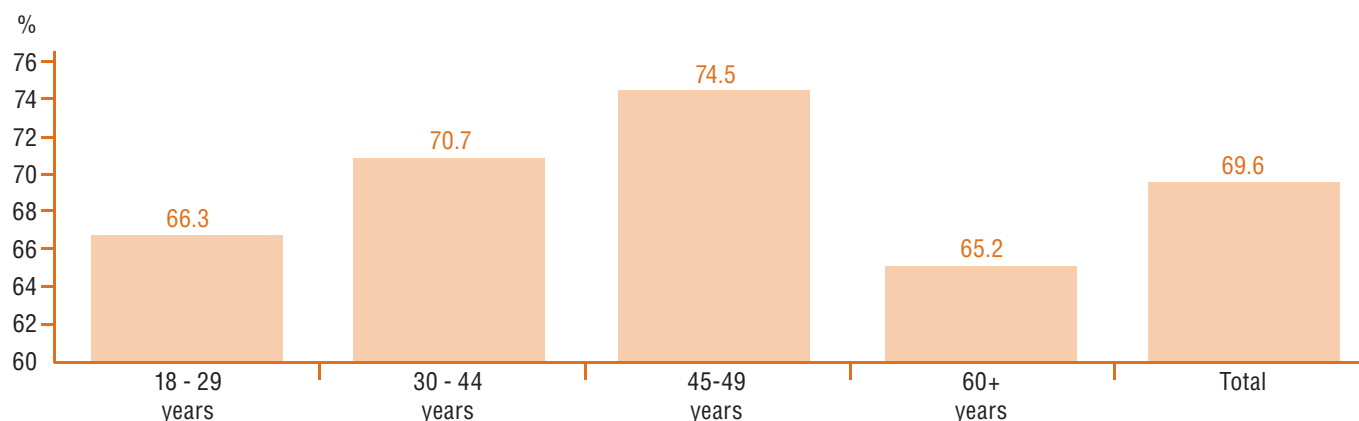
By far the most popular activity undertaken by Western Australian women and men aged 18 years and over in 2006 was walking for recreation. The proportion of women (69.6%) was greater than the proportion of men (55.9%) who reported walking for recreation as an activity in the previous week.

Most popular physical activities undertaken in the previous week: women aged 18 years and over, Western Australia – 2006

Activity	Participation rate (%)
Walking for recreation	69.6
Walking for transport	32.4
Aerobics	17.6
Swimming/surfing	14.9
Jogging/running	9.5
Cycling for recreation	7.5

The proportion of women who walked for recreation increased with age with the exception of women aged 60 years and over who had the lowest participation rate overall.

Participation in walking for recreation in the previous week by age: women aged 18 years and over, Western Australia – 2006



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Most popular physical activities for women aged 15 years and over¹⁸

The *Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey* collects data on participation in physical activity for exercise, recreation and sport. It does not include activities related to work, transport or household chores. In 2006 walking (excluding bushwalking) was clearly the most common activity reported by women aged 15 years and over. Note that the participation rates are the proportions of people who participated at least once in the 12 months to survey.

Top ten physical activities for Western Australian women aged 15 years and over – 2006 ^(a)

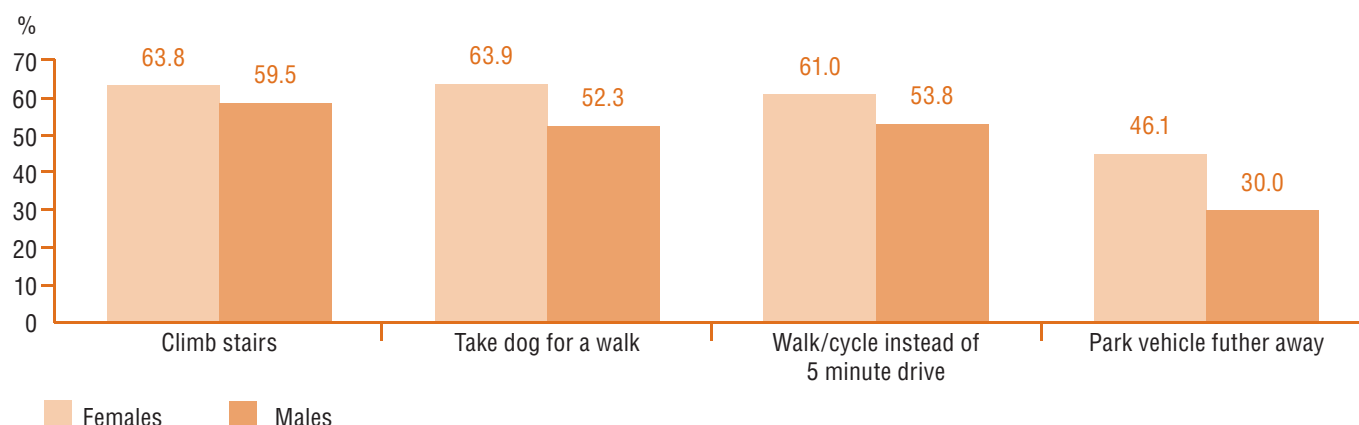
Activity	Participation rate (%)
Walking (excluding bushwalking)	49.6
Aerobics/fitness	27.8
Swimming	17.2
Netball	9.7
Cycling	8.9
Running	7.6
Tennis	5.7
Yoga	5.2
Dancing	4.3
Bushwalking	4.0

(a) Proportion who participated in the activity at least once in the 12 months to survey

Incidental physical activity¹⁹

Western Australians are encouraged to incorporate physical activity into their daily activities or chores as all activity is beneficial to health. In 2006 participation in all four incidental physical activity behaviours surveyed was higher among women than men.

Prevalence of Incidental Physical Activity: Western Australians aged 18 years and over – 2006



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Facilities used for physical activity²⁰

In 2006, the most popular places for physical activity for women aged 18 years and over were streets/ footpaths (49.1%) and the home (50.2%). Women were more likely than men to use cycle/ walk paths (26.6% compared to 22.7%) and gyms (24.8% compared to 19.1%). Note that the rates relate to physical activity undertaken in the previous week.

Facilities used for physical activity in the previous week: Western Australians aged 18 years and over – 2006

Facility	Females (%)	Males (%)
Street/footpath	49.1	48.1
Home	50.2	45.1
Cycle/walk path	26.6	22.7
Gym	24.8	19.1
Public park	17.5	18.6
Beach	9.6	13.3
Workplace	2.2	6.8

Motivators to physical activity for women aged 15 years and over²¹

In 2006, the most common main reason reported by women aged 15 years and over for undertaking physical activity was for health/ fitness (54.6%). This was also the most common main reason reported by men (47.4%).

Main reasons why Western Australian women aged 15 years and over participated in physical activity – 2006

Main reason	Proportion (%)
Health/fitness	54.6
Enjoyment	14.2
Well-being	10.4
Weight loss	7.0
Social/family	6.5
Walk the dog	4.0

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Barriers to physical activity for women aged 15 years and over²²

In 2006, the most common main constraint on participation in physical activity for women aged 15 years and over was insufficient time due to work/ study commitments.

Main barriers to physical activity for Western Australian women aged 15 years and over: 2006

Main reason	Proportion (%)
Insufficient time due to work/ study	21.2
Age/ too old	16.9
Ongoing injury/ illness	16.5
Not interested	15.9
Insufficient time due to family	12.6
Already active	6.5

Endnotes

- ¹ Begg S, Vos T, Barker B, Stevenson C, Stanley L, Lopez AD, 2007. The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003. PHE 82. Canberra: AIHW. p5.
- ² Milligan, R., McCormack, G. R., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical activity levels of Western Australian adults 2006. Results from the Adult Physical Activity Survey. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p7.
- ³ Ibid. p17.
- ⁴ Ibid. p22.
- ⁵ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2007). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2006. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p35.
- ⁶ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2006). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2005. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p19.
- ⁷ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2005). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2004. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p11.
- ⁸ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2004). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport: annual report 2003. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p13.
- ⁹ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2003). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport: annual report 2002. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p8.
- ¹⁰ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2002). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport: annual report 2001. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p6.
- ¹¹ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2007). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2006. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p62.
- ¹² Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2006). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2005. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p41.
- ¹³ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2005). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2004. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p33.
- ¹⁴ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2004). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2003. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p40.
- ¹⁵ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2003). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2002. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p18.
- ¹⁶ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2002). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2001. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p14.
- ¹⁷ Milligan, R., McCormack, G. R., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2006. Results from the Adult Physical Activity Survey. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p33.
- ¹⁸ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2007). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport survey: annual report 2006. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p86.
- ¹⁹ Milligan, R., McCormack, G. R., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2006. Results from the Adult Physical Activity Survey. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p41.
- ²⁰ Ibid. p34.
- ²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation. (Cat. no. 4177.0). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, state table 3: motivators to participation – by states and territories, data cube: Excel spreadsheet. Viewed 07/03/2008. [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5C26D83E8A0C9A11CA257281001ACD49/\\$File/41770_state_table3.xls](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5C26D83E8A0C9A11CA257281001ACD49/$File/41770_state_table3.xls)
- ²² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007). Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation. (Cat. no. 4177.0). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, state table 2: constraints to participation – by states and territories, data cube: Excel spreadsheet. Viewed 07/03/2008. [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/4D0A875DA0F9DDAACA257281001ACBCC/\\$File/41770_state_table2.xls](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/4D0A875DA0F9DDAACA257281001ACBCC/$File/41770_state_table2.xls)