

Active Women

Just about everyone agrees that being physically active is a major health benefit for women. Active women are those who take part in at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a day, or 150 minutes over five or more days per week, or 60 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week.¹

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

How active are Western Australian women?²

Just over half of Western Australian women (52 per cent, compared with 57 per cent of men) aged 18 years and over were sufficiently active.

Physical activity levels of Western Australians aged 18 years and over by gender

Level of activity	Females (%)	Males (%)
Sufficiently active	52.2	57.2
Insufficiently active	34.2	29.4
Inactive	13.6	13.4

Participation in sport or physical activity by Western Australian women aged 15 years and over³

Western Australia has one of the highest proportions of women who are active, in comparison to the other states and territories. Between 2001 and 2004, 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. The level of overall and organised participation in sport and physical activity also increased.

Rates of participation in sport or physical activity by women aged 15 years and over between 2001 and 2004⁴

Year	Western Australia (%)	Australia (%)
2001	80.8	75.9
2002	81.6	77.0
2003	86.0	82.4
2004	83.7	82.6

The proportion of Indigenous Australian women (42 per cent) was less than the proportion of Indigenous Australian men (57 per cent) aged 18 years and over who participated in sport or physical recreation activities.⁵

Women's participation in organised sport or physical activity

Western Australia is the only state where the proportion of females (46 per cent) was higher than the proportion of males (40.8 per cent) aged 15 years and over who participated in organised physical activity.⁶



Active Women

Rates of participation in organised sport and physical activity by women aged 15 years and over between 2001 and 2004⁷

Year	Western Australia (%)	Australia (%)
2001	41.5	37.7
2002	41.6	38.4
2003	46	40.8
2004	43	40.8

In 2004, women's participation in organised sport and physical activity decreased with age, with the exception of the age group 55 to 64.⁸

Western Australian women's rates of participation in organised sport and physical activity in 2004 by age group⁹

Age Group	Participation rate (%)
15 to 24	59
25 to 34	50.3
35 to 44	41.7
45 to 54	29.6
55 to 64	37.4
65 and over	36.1
Total	43

Most popular physical activities for active Western Australian women

Most popular physical activities including gardening and household chores¹⁰

Walking for recreation is by far the most popular activity undertaken by Western Australian women and men aged 18 years. However, the proportion of women (69.6 per cent) was significantly greater than the proportion of men (54.9 per cent) who reported walking as an activity. The data was taken from the Western Australian Adult Physical Activity Survey 2002, and includes gardening and household chores.

Most popular physical activities for Western Australian women aged 18 years and over in 2002 including gardening and household chores¹¹

Activity	Participation rate (%)
Walking for recreation	69.6
Gardening	37.4
Walking for transport	28.1
Aerobics	14.4
Swimming/surfing	14.1

The popularity of some of the activities varied between different age groups.¹² For example, gardening was less popular among women in the 18 to 29 years age group (21.4 per cent) than for all women (37.4 per cent). Women in the 18 to 29 years age group were more likely to participate in aerobics (20.2 per cent) than those in other age groups.

Most popular physical activities not related to work or household chores¹³

Walking (excluding bushwalking) was clearly the most common activity not related to work or household chores that was reported by Western Australian women aged 15 years and over. The data is from the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey 2004, which does not collect information on activities related to work or household chores.

Active Women

Most popular physical activities for Western Australian women aged 15 years and over in 2004 not related to work or household chores

Activity	Participation rate (%)
Walking (excluding bushwalking)	52.5
Aerobics/fitness	21.9
Swimming	20.1
Cycling	8.0
Netball	7.9
Yoga	6.6
Tennis	6.1
Running	5.3
Bushwalking	3.6
Dancing	3.5

Club membership in Western Australia¹⁴

Women aged 18 years and over were less likely than men to be members of a health, sport or recreation club. They were less likely to be a member of a sports club or an outdoor recreation club but were more likely than men to be a member of an exercise club.

Type of club membership in Western Australia in 1999 by gender

Type of Membership	Females (%)	Males (%)
Sport club	15.8	30.8
Exercise club	12.2	11.1
Outdoor recreation club	10.1	13.3
Total	28.1	42.7

What motivates Western Australian women to be active?¹⁵

The most common reason reported by women aged 18 years and over for undertaking physical activity was to improve fitness (33.2 per cent). This was also the main reason reported by men (34.1 per cent).

Main reasons why Western Australian women participated in physical activity in 2002

Reason	Proportion (%)
To improve fitness	33.2
For enjoyment	17
For weight control	11.2

Research has shown that many women participate in physical activity for enjoyment, fun and social interaction. In contrast, few women participate in physical activity for reasons such as winning a competition or trophies.¹⁶

What are the most common barriers to physical activity?¹⁷

In 2002, lack of time was by far the most common barrier to physical activity reported by Western Australian women aged 18 years and over.

Main barriers to physical activity for Western Australian women in 2002

Reason	Proportion (%)
Lack of time	54.1
No motivation	14.4
Already active enough	11.9
Poor health	10.5
Children to look after	9.5

Active Women

Types of social support used by active women¹⁸

The most common social support for physical activity received by women aged 18 years and over was from a family member (23.5 per cent). Support could be shown in many ways, such as exercising in a group or with a partner.

Social support for physical activity received by Western Australian women in 2002

Support Type	Proportion (%)
Family member	23.5
Friend	20.8
Spouse/Partner	19
Club member	7.2

Strategies used by active women in planning and maintaining an active lifestyle¹⁹

Women aged 18 years and over were more likely than men to set times and goals for physical activity.

Planning and maintaining an active lifestyle

Strategy	Females (%)	Males (%)
Set time to exercise	59.1	53.2
Arranged to meet with support person	51.6	50.6
Set goals	36.4	26

Relationship of watching television and computer use to activity²⁰

There is a clear inverse relationship between the amount of television and computer use outside of work and the level of physical activity. In 1999, active women aged 18 years and over spent less time watching television or using a computer than those who were either inactive or insufficiently active.

Western Australian women's television and computer use by level of activity in 1999

Level of Activity	Television and computer use (average hours per week)
Sufficient physical activity	12.2
Insufficient physical activity	13.6
Inactive	15.7
Total	13.1

Footnotes

- ¹ McCormack, G., Milligan, R., Giles-Corti B. and Clarkson, J.P. (2003). Physical activity levels of Western Australians 2002: results from the adult physical activity survey and pedometer study. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p10.
- ² Ibid. p25.
- ³ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. (2004). Participation in exercise, recreation and sport: annual report 2004. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. p11.
- ⁴ Ibid. p47.
- ⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2002). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social survey. (No. 4714.0). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Author. p27.
- ⁶ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. op. cit. p52.
- ⁷ Ibid. p48.
- ⁸ Ibid. p29.
- ⁹ Ibid. p33.
- ¹⁰ McCormack, G. et al. op.cit. p35.
- ¹¹ McCormack, G. et al. op.cit. p35.
- ¹² Ibid. p34.
- ¹³ Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport. op. cit. p45.
- ¹⁴ Bull, F., Milligan, R., Rosenberg, M., and MacGowan, H. (2000). Physical activity levels of Western Australian Adults 1999. Perth: Western Australia: Western Australian Government. p54.
- ¹⁵ McCormack, G. et al. op.cit. p54.
- ¹⁶ Sport and Recreation Queensland. (16/05/2005: date of retrieval). Women and girls. Brisbane, Queensland: The State of Queensland: http://www.srq.qld.gov.au/industry_information/increasing_participation/women_and_girls.cfm
- ¹⁷ McCormack, G. et al. op.cit. p55.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p58.
- ¹⁹ Bull, F. et al. op.cit. p52.
- ²⁰ Ibid. p37.