

factsandstats

Motivators and Barriers in Physical Activity

We all agree that physical activity is important for our health and that a lack of physical activity can lead to a range of health issues such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

Aside from the personal effects of inactivity, the community pays for it through increased health costs.

It is important to understand why some people choose to be physically active and why others do not, so that those individuals and groups who are working to get more people active may better target physical activity programs.

1. Motivators

Main reasons for being physically active for Western Australians in 2002¹

Main reason	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
To improve fitness	34.1	33.2	33.7
For enjoyment	22.3	17.0	19.6
For weight control	7.1	11.2	9.3
Feel better about self	2.2	4.2	3.2
For reduction in risk of disease	1.3	1.6	1.4
To improve appearance	0.1	0.7	0.4

These reasons were independent of gender, age and location.

The two most common reasons for being physically active given by men and women were to improve fitness and for enjoyment, followed by weight control (more common for women than men). Weight control was also more important to those aged between 30 and 59 years and was less relevant to those aged 60 years and over and under 30 years.²

Youth

Top five reasons why adolescents decide to play community sport:³

1. They like the sport;
2. It keeps them fit and healthy;
3. They are good at it;
4. They started the sport at school and like it; and
5. Friends who are in clubs encourage them.

Seniors

Western Australians aged 60 years and over were more likely than other age groups to state that their main reason for being active was to reduce the risk of disease.

What motivates seniors to exercise?⁴

- Having fun and companionship
- Having enhanced control over one's life;



Department of Sport and Recreation
Government of Western Australia

Motivators and Barriers in Physical Activity

- Achieving lifelong activity levels;
- Improving health and well-being;
- Increasing self-esteem; and
- Having access to tailored programs.

2. Barriers

Barriers to participation in physical activity vary with age, gender, employment, health and location.⁵

- Lack of time was the most frequently reported barrier to participation for all adults aged under 60 years;
- Poor health was the most frequently reported reason for not being more active for seniors (60 years and over); and
- Childcare was a more significant barrier for adults aged 30 to 44 years (14%) compared to all other age categories.

Gender

Most common reasons for not being more active in 2002, by gender

Barrier	Males (%)	Females (%)	Total (%)
Lack of Time	48.8	54.1	48.6
Already Active Enough	18.6	11.9	15.2
No Motivation	11.8	14.4	10.9
Childcare	3.3	9.5	6.5

Just over 10 per cent (10.1 per cent) of the combined total of males and females surveyed reported poor health and 3.4 per cent reported being too old as a reason for inactivity.

Seniors

Some of the barriers to physical activity among seniors are:⁶

- Limited or inappropriate sporting opportunities including instructors capable of identifying the physiological needs of seniors;
- Stereotypical images of ageing;
- Poor health;
- Lack of confidence;
- Lack of time;
- Instructor training – needs to identify physiological needs of seniors;
- Transport and access to programs; and
- Cost.

Motivators and Barriers in Physical Activity

Youth

Some of the reasons why youth do not play sport:⁸

- They feel uncomfortable – poor body image;
- Parents do not approve;
- Too much work – can't be bothered;
- Other family, work and study commitments; and
- Influence of peers.

Most common reasons why youth discontinued playing a sport⁸

Reason	Rate (%)
Time clashed with other activities	68
Sport became boring	64
Other activities more fun	51
Sport conflicted with study (particularly schools)	48
Changed to another sport	38

Characteristics of non-participants⁹

People who are non-participants in physical activity are those who undertook no walking, moderate intensity or vigorous intensity physical activity in the previous week. The proportion of people who were inactive varied significantly across a range of demographic characteristics.

Gender

In 2002, there was no significant difference in the proportion of inactive females (13.6 per cent) compared to inactive males (13.4 per cent).

Age

The proportion of people who were inactive increased as people became older.

Age	Proportion inactive (%)
18 to 29 years	7.8
30 to 44 years	13.8
45 to 49 years	14.9
60 years or more	17.3

Marital Status

There were significant differences in inactivity based on marital status. Single people (10.1 per cent) were the least likely to be inactive while the widowed (19.8 per cent) were the most likely to be inactive.

Marital Status	Proportion inactive (%)
Married/de facto	14.1
Single	10.1
Separated/divorced	14.2
Widowed	19.8

Motivators and Barriers in Physical Activity

Education

The proportion of people who were inactive decreased as the level of education increased.

Education	Proportion inactive (%)
Less than TEE	18.7
TEE/Diploma	11.5
University	9.3

Employment

There was large variation in inactivity based on employment categories. The unemployed (19.8 per cent) were the most likely to be inactive whereas students were least likely to be inactive (6.9 per cent).

Employment	Proportion inactive (%)
Unemployed	19.8
Blue collar	18.0
Home duty	17.9
Retired	15.1
White collar trade	10.3
Manager/professional	9.9
Student	6.9

Weight

Those that were in the acceptable weight range based on their Body Mass Index (BMI) were the least likely to be inactive.

Body Mass Index	Proportion inactive (%)
Underweight	26.6
Acceptable	10.0
Overweight	13.7
Obese	22.9

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, p54.
- 2 McCormack, G. et al op.cit. p53.
- 3 Taggart, A. and Sharp, S. (1997) Adolescents & sport: Determinants of current and future participation. Perth, Western Australia: Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre, Edith Cowan University. p23.
- 4 McCormack, G. et al op.cit. p54.
- 5 Australian Sports Commission and Department of Veterans' Affairs. (2001). Older, smarter, fitter: a guide for providers of sport and physical activity programs for older Australians. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Australian Sports Commission and Department of Veterans' Affairs. p12.
- 6 McCormack, G. et al. op. cit. p55.
- 7 Australian Sports Commission and Department of Veterans' Affairs. op. cit. p12-14.
- 8 Taggart & Sharp op. cit. p35.
- 9 Ibid. p27-8.
- 10 McCormack, G. et al op.cit. p25.
- 11 McCormack, G. et al op.cit. p17.