

Victoria University

Faculty of Arts, Education and Human Development

School of Sport and Exercise Science

Sport and Culture Group



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Welcome

The **Sport and Culture Group** (SCG) is a collaborative group of scholars based in the School of Sport and Exercise Science at Victoria University. The unifying aim of the Group is its desire to advance the critical understanding of sport through individual and collaborative research projects that explore the role of sport in local and global communities. The work of Group members is multi and cross-disciplinary, with the base disciplines being economics, history, philosophy, management and sociology. These disciplines not only drive the operation of many of the School's research projects, but also underpin areas of postgraduate supervision.

SCG hosts international conferences and local seminars, and promotes informed discussion on sport issues and policies. SCG also provides forums for commentary and debate through its ***Bulletin of Sport and Culture*** and its ***SCG Research Digest***.

The SCG Research Digest contains succinct reviews of scholarly journal articles that examine aspects of sport, leisure and recreation. The reviews address research that adds new and valuable knowledge to the field, and covers both theoretical and empirical studies. Special attention is given to: career development in sport and recreation, community sport, participation and social inclusion, football studies, global sport, nation building and the Olympic movement, identity, sexuality, and gender studies in sport and recreation, corporate sport, policy and regulation, sport and consumption, disadvantage and social justice in sport and recreation, and sustainability. Welcome to volume 1: issue 3.

Publication details

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Editor's note

Each issue of the ***SCG Research Digest*** has themed sections that focus on specific aspects of sport, leisure and recreation research. In this issue the leisure preferences of Australian adults are examined. We welcome reader feedback, and will be delighted to receive reviews and commentaries for publication. The next issue of the ***SCG Research Digest*** is scheduled for late June 2010. The editor can be contacted at bob.stewart@vu.edu.au or phone 9919 4350.

Leisure Preferences of Australian adults

Introductory note:

There is now a wealth of information covering the leisure preferences and practices of Australians. Most of the data is collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), but data is also collected by the Australian Sports Commission, which undertakes – in conjunction with State Government Sports Departments- an annual survey, which goes under the title of the *Exercise, Recreation and Sports Survey*, or as it is colloquially known, ERASS. A private sector publication titled *Sweeney Sports Report* (SSR) also looks at the popularity and participation levels of sport, but it does not have the detail or reliability of either the ABS or ERASS publications. It also has a strong commercial orientation, and looks in some detail at the sponsorship arrangements for sport, and the marketability of players and athletes from the major sports.

The document-summaries listed below are confined to ABS data, and in addition to identifying the things people do in their spare time, also distinguishes between those groups and classes of people who do it a lot, and those groups and classes of people who do it rather less. Most of the summaries cover sport and active recreation activities, but a few also look at non-sport activities. It is pretty clear that not only do some groups of people do more leisure than other groups, but that they also do different types of leisure. The data also hints that more people 'do' sport and active recreation than watch others play it at a ground, field, or stadium.

None of the ERASS data is examined here, but it will be included a later edition of the DIGEST.

Review 1:

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) : *Sport Attendance: 2005-2006*. Catalogue 4174.0: Canberra, Australian Government.

In 2007 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) completed a study of sport attendance amongst the Australian population aged 15 years and older. The study used data extracted from a 2005-2006 multi-purpose household survey (MPHS) which covered a nation-wide sample of just over 14,000 households (29). Informants were asked to advise on their patterns of attendance at sporting events over a twelve month period. They were also asked to advise on their age, gender, residential postcode, occupation, and level of formal education.

The survey found that 7 million people, or 44% the adult population attended a sport event at least once over the previous twelve months. , The sport with higher rate of attendance was Australian Rules Football or AFL as it is sometimes called, with 16% of all informants indicating they had attended a game in the previous twelve months. Horse racing had the next highest attendance rate, at 14%, with motor sports and rugby league at 9%, cricket at 5%, rugby union and soccer at 4%, and harness racing, dog racing, basketball, netball and tennis all somewhere between 1% and 3% (17). There were some interesting gender differences with rugby league showing a strong bloke-support-base, with the rates being 12% for males and 7% for females. The gender divide was less marked for AFL, but was still significant, with 19% for males and 13% for females. Motor sports, which is often seen as stereotypically male, was indeed just that. Whereas 13% of all males had attended a motor

sport event over the last twelve months, it dropped to 6% for females. A surprising gender-related result was linked to netball. While 13% of females had attended at least one AFL game over the previous twelve months, just under 2% had attended a netball game, which was only marginally higher than the female attendance level for dog racing (17).

There were also many interesting differences between attendance rates and occupational status. The AFL clearly attracted far more middle and upper-middle class supporters to games than any other sport. Whereas 27% of all managers who were surveyed had attended an AFL game, only 4% had attended a harness-racing event. After AFL, the next most popular sports amongst the management class was horse racing with 24%, rugby league with 11% and cricket with 10% (18). At the other end of the occupational spectrum, motor racing and rugby league had strong support. Whereas only 7% of the professional class attended motor sport events, the figure was 24% for trades-people, and 15% for production and transport workers. Trades-people were also strong supporters of rugby league with 15% attending games. The attendance rate for clerical workers was also high at just over 13%. Rugby league could only muster 10% of the professional class, which was well below the AFL attendance rate of 22% (18). Interestingly, the labouring class, at 15% had in fact most frequently attended the AFL, which appears to be an aberration given the AFL's attraction to middle classes, and the mythical assumption that rugby is the sport of the working class. However the ambiguity dissolves when the figures also show that the AFL is favourite game for all occupational classes (19).

The relationship between education and attendance is not so clear. One of the higher attendance rates – 23% in fact for AFL - is amongst people who did not get beyond year 11 at school. This is higher than the attendance rate for people with a bachelor's degree, which is 21%. But, having said that, people with a post-graduate award also favoured the AFL over every other sport that was listed. Whereas 21% of post graduates had attended a game of AFL over the previous twelve months, only 9% went to a cricket game, 8% went to rugby union, and 3% to the soccer. For some unexplainable reason a TAFE certificate provided a gold pass to rugby league. Just over 12% of certificate holders attended rugby league games, which compares more than favourably to the 9% rate for degree holders (20).

Overall these figures suggest that there is some association between class and sports watching, where sports like rugby league, motor racing and dog racing have strong support amongst the so-called working classes, while AFL has very strong support amongst the middle classes. But they also show that no sport is dominated by one class or the other. At the same time, they also confirm the results of other studies which indicate that people from the upper classes attend more games more often than people with lower class connections.

Prepared by Bob Stewart

Review 2

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) *Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation: 2005-2006*. Catalogue 4174.0: Canberra, Australian Government.

In 2006 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) completed a study of sports and physical recreation participation amongst the Australian population aged 15 years and older. The study used data extracted from a 2005-2006 multi-purpose household survey (MPHS) which covered a nation-wide sample of just over 14,000 households (29). Informants were asked to advise on their patterns of participation in both (1) organised sports and (2) less competitive and unorganised physical activity programs, over a twelve month period. They were also asked to advise on their age, gender, residential postcode, occupation, and level of formal education.

When asked to advise on whether not they had engaged in some form of sports or physical recreation over the previous twelve months, 66% of all informants – which constituted just over 10.5 million people, said they had. Interestingly there was no difference between males and females on this score. Participation fell off with age, however, with the 15-35 year old age group participation rate hovering between a healthy 72% and 75%, and the over 65's getting to a solid but very much lower 49% (15).

The most popular activity was walking for exercise, with 25% saying they had done it at least once over the previous twelve months. There was a marked gender divide, however, with 33% of females doing it, but only 17% of males. The second most popular activity was aerobics and fitness –which included circuit training and fitness programs - with 16% of females doing it, and 9% of males doing it. Swimming was also relatively popular at 9%, with the participation rate for females being 10% and the male rate being 8%. The only other activity to score above 3% overall was running, at 4%. The rate for males was 5%, while for females it a slightly lower 4% (17) Amongst the high participation activities the greatest gender differences occurred in walking and aerobics. The gender divide was also quite wide in golf where the female rate was 2% but the male rate was 9%. Cricket was also dominated by blokes where the rate was 4% in contrast to 0.3% for females. Tennis had no gender divide, where the participation rate was 4% in each instance (17).

The above figures appear to paint a rosy picture of Australian's levels of physical activity, but they need to be tempered by the much lower figures for regular sport involvement and physical activity. When asked to advise on the frequency of their participation, only 4.7 million, or 29% of the population said they engaged in sport or physical activities at least two or more times a week (5). At the same time it was interesting to note that whereas 27% of males regularly participated, the figure for females was a significantly higher 32%. This figure challenges the argument that not only are women less active than men, but that they are also disadvantaged because of the sizeable economic, social and cultural barriers they face in securing equal time and space for meeting the bodily side of the personal development.

The other interesting result emerging from these figures was the proportion of the population who engaged in organised activities compared to those who engaged in more non-structured activities. There was a strong preference for unstructured and un-organised activities, with 54% of informants saying they did their sport and physical activity in this form at one time or another. On the other hand, only 28% said they had engaged in organised sport and active recreation at least once over the previous twelve months. Females were only marginally more likely to do their activity in a non-organised way than men.

Review 3

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) *Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation: 2005-2006*. Catalogue 4174.0: Canberra, Australian Government.

In 2006 the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) completed a study of sports and physical recreation participation amongst the Australian population aged 15 years and older. The study used data extracted from a 2005-2006 multi-purpose household survey (MPHS) which covered a nation-wide sample of just over 14,000 households (29). Informants were asked to advise on not only their patterns of participation in sport and active recreation programs, over a twelve month period, but also what it was that either constrained them from being more physically active, or alternatively motivated them to be active.

Informants were divided into two groups. Group1 - which was designated as the constrained cohort -consisted of non-participants and those who had engaged in sport and active recreation activities no more than twelve times in the previous twelve months. Group 2 which was designated as the motivated cohort –consisted of participants who had engaged in sport and active recreation activities more than twelve time over the previous twelve months.

Group 1 was then asked to advise on what prevented them from spending more time doing sport and active recreation. Five main reasons were given for their low levels of lack of involvement. The dominant reason given was insufficient-time, which was cited in 35% of all cases. The next most cited reason was just-not-interested at 19%, followed by too-old at 17% and chronic-illness-or-injury at 13% (32). There was in interesting gender difference in and around the insufficient time factor. Whereas 28% of males advised that the time problem was all about work and study, only 19% of females cited it as a problem. On the other hand, while 15% of females advised that family-responsibilities was the main time problem, it was only cited by 8% of the male informants (32). This response confirmed the often cited comments that women increasingly resent their partners often obsessive commitment to the workplace. Interestingly, both males and female had the same response rate for the not-interested reason.

When it came to the factors that motivated participants to regularly engage in sport and active recreation, six points dominated the responses. First and foremost, and not surprisingly, the desire to be healthy and fit was noted by 82% of all informants. Enjoyment was the next most frequently cited response, with 54% giving it a motivator. The idea that participation would improve well-being came in third at 41%, followed by its use to bind families and socialise with other people at 34%. Finally, 17% did it to lose weight, while 12% of informants did it for the challenge and the competition it provided (34). Not unexpectedly there were a couple of significant gender differences. Whereas 86% of females did it to become healthier and fitter, only 78% of males cited this as a reason. Men, on the other hand, were far more interested in the challenge and the competition with a response rate of 16%, in contrast to females, whose response rate on this factor was only 8%. Women, though, were far more interested in using sport and active recreation as a way of losing weight. They cited this as a factor in 22% of all cases, but it was only mentioned by 12% of

the men. Doing sport and active recreation for the enjoyment it produced was cited by 59% of all male informants, while a slightly lower, but solid proportion of females cited it in 50% of all cases (34).

These results confirm that one of the main reasons people engage in sport and active recreation is the pleasure it brings, and that this strong internal driver should be kept in mind by leisure planners when designing physical activity facilities and programs. The instrumental benefits, however, should not be forgotten either, since sport and active recreation are powerful tools for producing both positive social outcomes and individual transformations.

Prepared by Bob Stewart

Review 4

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events: 2005-2006*. Catalogue 4114.0: Canberra, Australian Government.

The study used data from the 2005-2006 multi-purpose household survey (MPHS) which covered a nation-wide sample of just over 14,000 households. Informants were asked to advise on their attendance at selected cultural venues and events over the previous twelve month period.

The survey found that 85% of Australia's population aged 15 years and over – which amounted to just under 14 million people – had attended at least one cultural venue or event during the previous 12 months. Age played a significant role in influencing attendance. Whereas the attendance rate was more than 90% for people between the ages of 15 and 34, it fell to 75% for people aged 65-74, and 59% for the 75 years and over age group (3). The most popular venue was cinemas which attracted 65% of all informants. The other main cultural venues were zoos and aquariums at 36%, botanic gardens at 34%, and the same 34% attendance rate for libraries. Popular music concerts secure a attendance rate of 25%, while museums caught a slightly lower 24%. The high status end of the cultural venue and events market, were unable to achieve the above rates of penetration. The middle-brow musicals and high-brow opera together got a combined attendance rate of 16%, while classical music concerts scrambled together a 9% attendance rate (22).

The gender differences were also illuminating, mainly because female attendance rates were higher than the male rates for all venue and event categories. Just over 65% of males went to the cinema, but the attendance rate for females was 68%. A similar scenario existed for art galleries, where the attendance rates were 20% and 25% respectively. The largest gender divide occurred with libraries attendance, where the rates were 27% for males and 41% for females. Theatre performance were also more attractive to females, with a 21% rating for females and a 13% rating for male (22). Overall, 8.1 million females had attended a cultural event or venue during the previous twelve months, but only 7.9 million males had done the same (21)

Income levels and the level of educational attainment also had a strong impact on attendance levels at cultural venues and events. For example people in the lowest two household income quintiles - representing 40% of all informants – had significantly lower attendance rates than people in the top two quintiles – again representing 40% of informants – for every category of attendance. The art

gallery attendance for the bottom 40% of household incomes was just over 16%, but for the top 40% of household incomes it was nearly 30%. Interestingly the dance performance numbers were not excessively divisive at 8% and 12% respectively, but the divide re-emerged with musicals and opera with a 10% and 22% contrasting attendance rate (34).

The relationship between educational attainment and cultural event and event attendance was not as starkly positive – that is, as direct – as it was between household income and attendance. Indeed, in the case of dance performance, the attendance rate of just over 11% for people with a year 11 education was greater than the just under 11% rate for people with a post graduate degree. People who had gained a TAFE certificate had the lowest dance performance attendance at just under 8%. This scrambled set of results for dance seemed to be an interesting aberration, though, since art galleries, zoos, aquariums, libraries and the botanic gardens were clearly the special province of the so-called educated classes. Nearly 63% of people with a post graduate degree from a university visited a botanical garden, but only 28 % of year 11 secondary school graduates had made the trip at least once during the previous twelve months. The higher educated cohort took up most of the classical music concert space, with around 24% of all university degree holders attending. In contrast those with a TAFE certificate had a 7% attendance rate, which was lower in fact than the year 11 rate of 8% (33).

These results show that there are significant class and gender divides when it comes to attending cultural venues and events in Australia. On one hand the likelihood of attending a highbrow concert of music or opera, or making out at an art gallery is quite low for a male who has only completed year 11 at secondary school, or secured a TAFE certificate. On the other hand, the probability of a female with a university degree attending a highbrow music concert, or checking out the latest international exhibition at a big-city art gallery is considerably higher. The gender and status divides in the arts-world are alive and well.

Prepared by Bob Stewart