

### Article Title

Comparisons of leisure-time physical activity participation by adults with and without a disability: results of an Australian cross-sectional national survey.

### Article Citation

Hassett L, Shields N, Cole J, *et al.* Comparisons of leisure-time physical activity participation by adults with and without a disability: results of an Australian cross-sectional national survey. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine* 2021;7:e000991. doi:10.1136/bmjsem-2020-000991

### Adaptive Sports/Recreation Topic Categories

- Physical Activity
- Participation
- Leisure
- Recreation and sport
- Adults with disability

**Study Type:** Analysis of deidentified data from the *AusPlay* Australian cross-sectional national survey collected between October 2015 and June 2018.

### Summary

Physical activity is a global health problem; yet little is known about participation rates, types of activities, facilitators and barriers to participation at a population level and across the lifespan for adults with disability. With 15% of the population globally identified as having a disability, understanding trends in participation may help identify strategies needed to enhance participation at a personal, organisational, and policy level.

Sport Australia conducts a national survey called AusPlay annually that aims to obtain 20000 computer assisted interviews to understand sport and physical recreation participation at a population-level of people 15 years of age and older living in Australia. The aims of this study included: 1) to describe the amount and type of leisure-time physical activity of Australian adults with and without disability, 2) to compare the two between sexes, and 3) to compare motivations and barriers to leisure-time physical activity participation by the two cohorts. This study included adults (>18 years) sampled between October 2015 and June 2018 who responded to the question regarding whether they have a disability or not (defined as disability or physical condition that restricts their life in some way and has lasted or is likely to last for at least 6 months).

Of the 54 343 adults surveyed, 15% reported a disability (n=10235). Discrepancies between physical activity participation existed across the lifespan for all measures. Key differences were:

- 46% of adults with disability vs 62% of adults without disability meet physical activity guidelines of >150 minutes/week duration for adults. Adults with disability had similar frequency (how often they were active) but reduced diversity and duration of physical activity.
- Adults with a disability had lower participation rates in sport and/or physical recreation activities than adults without a disability across all age brackets except 18–19 years.

- A greater percentage of all women participated in recreation activities while more men without disability participated in sports.
- Adults with disability are more likely to participate in recreation activities only (e.g., walking, dance, gym/fitness activities) (40% vs 31% adults without disability). In contrast, adults without disability were more likely to participate in sport only (20% vs 12% adults with disability).
- 78% adults with disability vs 91% adults without disability had participated in sport or physical recreation at least once in the past 12 months.
- 41% adults with disability vs 58% adults without disability had participated in paid sport or physical recreation at least once in the past 12 months.
- The highest motivators for trying new activities were for physical health or fitness benefits, fun and enjoyment for both groups.
- Barriers to participation for non-participating adults with disability were most often related to poor health or injury (62%), whereas for adults without a disability, a lack of time/too many other commitments were reported (43%).
- Walking and gym/fitness-based activities were the most popular activities for both groups.

This study highlights Australian adults with disability across all ages are less physically active and face greater barriers to being active than adults without disability. Barriers appear to be related to disability rather than age and supports the need for diverse, inclusive and/or disability-specific physical activity opportunities across the lifespan. Differences in physical activity participation profiles between the two groups may need to consider if choices match preferences and if diverse, suitable opportunities exist for adults with disability.

### **Article Strengths**

- Data is from a national survey with a large cohort of adults with disability
- Inclusive of adults across the lifespan
- Inclusive of all disabilities

### **Article Weaknesses**

- Disability types are not collected therefore comparisons for participation rates, patterns, motivator and barriers are not able to be reported
- Exclusion of adults in care institutions and those unable to communicate verbally due to data collection through telephone interviews
- Levels of physical activity were self-reported

### **Take Home Messages**

- Lower rates of physical activity participation in sport and recreation for adults with disability match global findings and therefore requires action at a national and global level
- Reduced participation diversity and duration of physical activities across the lifespan may have consequences on the health and well-being for adults with disabilities
- Less sports participation in adults with disability cannot be assumed to be due to choice, and may reflect opportunities, inclusivity, and availability.
- There is a need for more diversity in activities for adults with disabilities

**Impacts on Clinical Practice**

- Clinician should promote activities that promote physical health and fitness and are fun and enjoyable for adults with disability
- Clinicians have an important role to provide opportunities that help adults with disability increase their physical activity participation and reduce barriers
- Clinicians should help adults with disability match their physical activity participation to their preferences across both sport and recreation