Retention in community sport: Why retention is important post COVID-19

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Sport and Recreation Spatial

- Four key areas for community sport
  - Participation levels and trends
  - Influences on participation
  - Value of sport: the health benefits of participation
  - Places to play: the nexus between facilities and participation

- www.sportandrecreationspatial.com.au
Sport Participation Research Project

• Reliable measure of sport participation in Victoria
  – Trends over time
  – Informing decision making and investments
  – Participation and facilities

• 12 state sporting associations (2011-2021)
  – Australian Football, Basketball, Cricket, Bowls, Tennis, Hockey, Gymnastics, Golf, Sailing, Netball, Swimming and Soccer

• 1 million sport participation records integrated annually

• Largest repository of sport participation data in Australia
Sport policy impacting participation

• It’s about increasing numbers - **MORE**
• Retention *not* a priority of sport policy and strategy
• Sport 2030

• NSO’s and SSA’s strategic priorities
  – *More active players*
  – *Grow junior participation*
  – *Introduce, recruit, transition and retain participants*
  – *More people playing more often*
Why retention?

- Why focus on MORE?
- Why not prioritise RETAINING players?
- Who actually strategically focuses on retention?
- Touching ‘your’ ball doesn’t mean they are in for life
- How do people during adolescence or adulthood enter sport?
  - Important to retain children and adolescents
  - Return to sport as adults
Retention of participants

• 9 sports analysed over four years 2015-2018
• Complete data 2015 n=751,012  2018 n=846,595
• Tracked individual player sport ID
  – Continuous: all four years
  – Departure and no return
  – Intermittent: departure and return
What is the percentage of people still playing the same sport after four years?
Participants playing same sport for 4 years

Female: 31%
Male: 36%
Total: 34%

- Continuous: all 4 years
- Intermittent: departure & return
- Departure & no return
Number of years playing by age

- Includes only those playing in 2015
4 year continuous participation

% of 2015 players retained in 2018

Age range

Female
Male

%
4 year retention by age and region

Highest: Gunnawarra Shire
Lowest: City of Melbourne
4 year pattern of participation by age

% of age cohort

Age range

- Departure & no return
- Intermittent: departure & return
- Continuous: all 4 years
Reasons why people drop out out

• It isn’t fun anymore
  – It has to be fun and enjoyable
  – Modified sport – club competition

• Individual
  – Skill and competency
  – Physical literacy
  – Fun and enjoyment
  – Preference for other non-structured activities

• Social
  – Peer and family support

• Competition structure/programs
  – Length of game and season
  – Commitment to training and competition
  – Competition versus social/recreational programs

• Club environment
  – Welcoming and inclusive
Adults motivations to play sport

n=3,854

% of total motivations

- Fun/enjoyment
- Social reasons
- Physical health/fitness
- Performance/competition
- Play with friends
- Sense of achievement
- Psychological/mental health
- Lose weight

Male | Female
---|---

Male | Female
Adolescents motivations to play sport

n = 534

Fun/enjoyment
Physical health/fitness
Performance/competition
Play with friends
Sense of achievement
Learn new skill
Social reasons

% of total motivations

Male
Female

Legend:
What makes playing sport fun for adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialising</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being challenged to improve</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with friends</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping fit</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly coach</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What makes playing sport fun for adolescents

- Being challenged to improve
- Play with friends
- Trying your best
- Playing together well as a team
- Friendly coach
- Winning
- Getting playing time
- Well-organised practices
- Earning medals or trophies
- Parents show good sportsmanship

% of total responses
Impact of sport on health

• Survey of sport participants, and non-sport before and during COVID-19, post-COVID (to come)
• Over 6,100 survey participants
• Importance of sport for health post-COVID

- WORSE GENERAL HEALTH 25%
- WORSE PHYSICAL HEALTH 29%
- WORSE MENTAL HEALTH 31%
Will they return to play?

- Survey of intentions to return to playing basketball
  - Dr Meghan Casey FedUni
  - Ballarat Basketball Association
  - Players, coaches and officials (n=354 so far)

- 78% of players plan to return
- 79% of coaches and officials plan to return
  - Potential bias

- Main concerns:
  - Others not isolating if feeling unwell or COVID-19 positive
  - Second wave may shut down sport again — and did occur
- Majority are confident sports organisations can comply with government COVID guidelines
Some barriers to players returning

• **People transitioning into other forms of physical activity**
  – Riding, walking, running
  – Especially during adolescence when main drop-off in sport occurs
  – Cheaper options
  – Less commitment, less structure

• **Concerns about health**
  – Contact sports versus those where physical distancing is easier
  – Health professionals
  – Older adults or those with health conditions

• **Cost**
  – Australian Sports Foundation COVID-19 survey report
  – People prioritising their children, especially mothers
  – Children playing one sport instead of multiple
  – How minimise cost burden
Post-COVID-19

• **Retention now important more than ever**
  – Easier to retain, rather than get new members/clients
  – For volunteers and participants
  – Ability to field teams and keep clubs viable
    • Some clubs will close
    • Female competitions and new programs
  – Sector level approaches- media campaigns, advocacy etc
    • Work collectively as a sector
    • Plenty of people don’t play sport, so the pool of potential is very large
    • Many people transition across sports

• **Measure retention**
  – Simple measure of sport or clubs ‘success’ – not total numbers, nor premierships
  – Good governance, club environment, coaching etc.
  – Our research team measuring who comes back, who doesn’t, and why
Stay connected and make it fun

• People can’t play sport during COVID-19, so need to reengage them

• Social media
• Posts and online meetings
• Updating members of what is happening
• Flexible membership options
• Connecting people/players/friends and making it fun
  • Join a club because you know someone
• Asking people what they would like
  • Challenges
  • Team zoom chats
• Rokewood-Corindhaps football training video
  • Intended for small group of footballers and netballers
  • Farm fit versus gym fit
Value proposition

• During COVID-19, exercise one of only four reasons to leave home
  – Government recognising importance of physical activity as public health priority
  – Sport in good position to claim fundamental place in society

• Remember why people play
• What are your sports/clubs values?

• Community sport
  – It's not about winning, medals or trophies
  – Fun, socialising and playing with friends
  – Organised but not competitive focus for everyone
  – Connecting individuals and communities
    • For active, connected and healthier individuals, families and communities
The ‘new’ importance of community sport

• Fun

• Social connectedness
  – “I’m here if you need”
  – “Its my men’s shed, we get together as mates and talk”
  – “I miss my friends”
  • No school, no work, no sport
  • Children and adolescents enjoyed returning to school

• Health: social, mental and physical

• Important for individuals, families, volunteers and community
  – What you do really matters
Further Information

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Panel Questions and Q&A

- Lisa Hasker - CEO, Vicsport (MC)
- Professor Rochelle Eime - Victoria University & Federation University
- Professor Hans Westerbeek - Victoria University
- Emma Staples - Head of Participation, Community Development and Diversity, Cricket Victoria
- Angela Banbury - General Manager Netball Development, Netball Victoria
Thank You