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# Sport Participation Patterns

## Research Report

### July 2014

## Participation patterns

Participation in sport is popular, especially amongst children and adolescents. It is consistently reported that as age increases, participation in sport decreases. This report provides a breakdown of participation patterns, including drop-out, in X across the lifespan, with a particular focus on those aged 4-14 years, for whom the rate of participation is highest.

A participant is defined as a registered member of a club affiliated with X Victoria. Because we have membership data from 2010-2013, we were able to identify “new” members (or “commencers”) in 2011, defined as any member in 2011 who was not a member in 2010. Of course, in all but the youngest age groups, a “commencer” may have been a member previously, at any time prior to 2010.

We tracked these 2011 commencers through the 3-year period 2011-2013. The age profiles presented are based on the age of each member in 2011, i.e. age at commencement of membership. For each member who commenced in 2011, participation was classified as one of:

- Single year – membership in 2011 only.
- Discontinuous – membership in 2011 and either 2012 or 2013, but not both.
- Continuous – continuous membership for the 3-year period 2011-13.

Each of figures 1-6 shows the percentage of each age category who were classified as single year, discontinuous and continuous participants, together with a table showing numbers of commencers in each age category.

Figures 1-3 cover the whole life cycle for all commencers, male commencers and female commencers respectively, in standard (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 5-year and 10-year cohorts, with 4-year-old commencers forming a separate cohort. Figures 4-6 cover the ages from 4 to 14 in single years of age.

### Key Points

#### Figure 1

- Across most age groups 20-30% of members who commenced in 2011 played continuously for three years.
- The age groups with most commencers (5-9 and 10-14) had a higher proportion of continuous members (above 40%).
- The peak age range for commencement was 5-9. Beyond the age of 9, the number of commencers in each broad age group diminished with increasing age.

#### Figure 2

- Because the number of female members greatly exceeds the number of male members, not surprisingly the patterns of female recruitment and retention seen in Figure 2 closely parallel those in Figure 1.

#### Figure 3

- The patterns of male recruitment and retention seen in Figure 3 are different to those in Figure 1.
- Retention rates among males were much lower than for females in all age groups up to the age of 34.

#### Figure 4

- Looking more closely at the 4-14 age range, the number of commencers was highest at age 8 and 9, with over 2000 commencers for each year of age from 7 to 11.
- The proportion of commencers who participated for more than one year was also highest for ages 8 and 9. This may be linked to physiological developments whereby those commencing at ages 8-9 are more likely to have adequate levels of development to have confidence to continue to participate. Those starting younger may not be sufficiently developed enough to feel confident

continuing, especially if in classes with older participants. Those starting later, at age 10+ may be more likely to feel that they do not have the necessary skills to participate comfortably with those who started participating in the 8-9 year age range.

### Figure 5

- Because the number of female members greatly exceeds the number of male members, not surprisingly the patterns of female recruitment and retention seen in Figure 5 closely parallel those in Figure 4.

### Figure 6

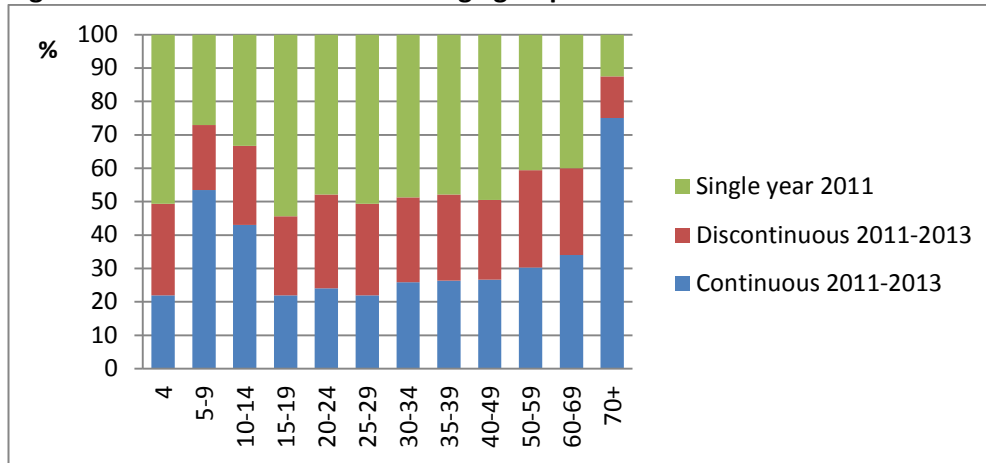
- While the number of male players is small, the shape of the age profiles of commencement and of retention are broadly similar for boys as for girls, though the boys' profiles are less smooth because of the small numbers. Furthermore, the retention rates are lower for boys than for girls at all ages from 4 to 14.

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This report was prepared by Rochelle Eime, Jack Harvey and Melanie Charity.

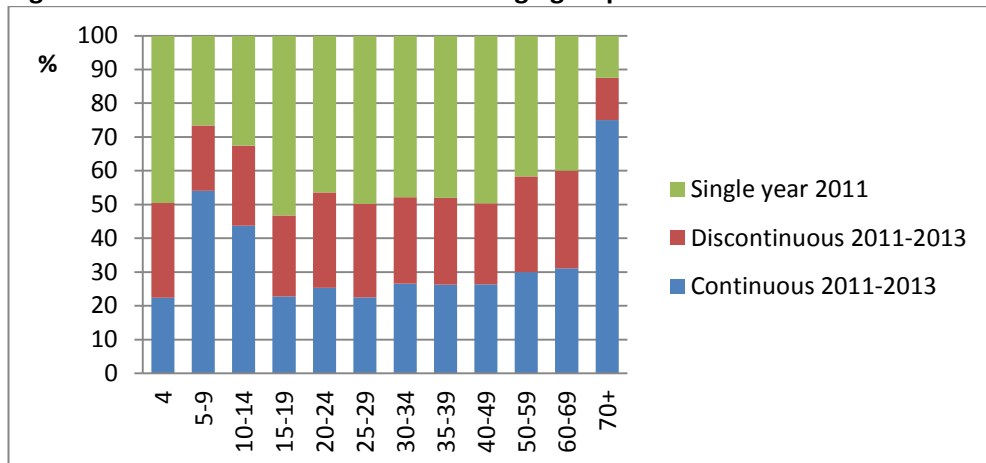
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**Figure 1. All 2011 commencers – all age groups**



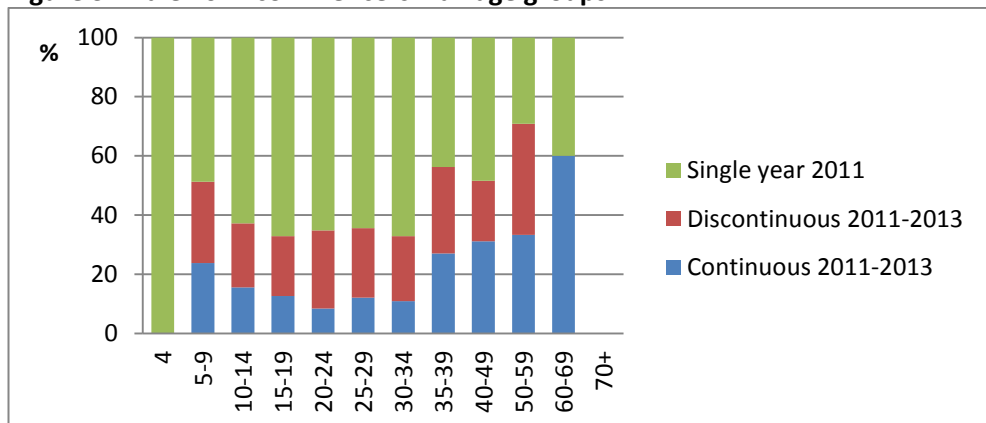
Age	4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
N	237	10,372	8,151	3,520	3,251	2,551	1,607	1,288	1,619	271	50	8

**Figure 2. Female 2011 commencers – all age groups**



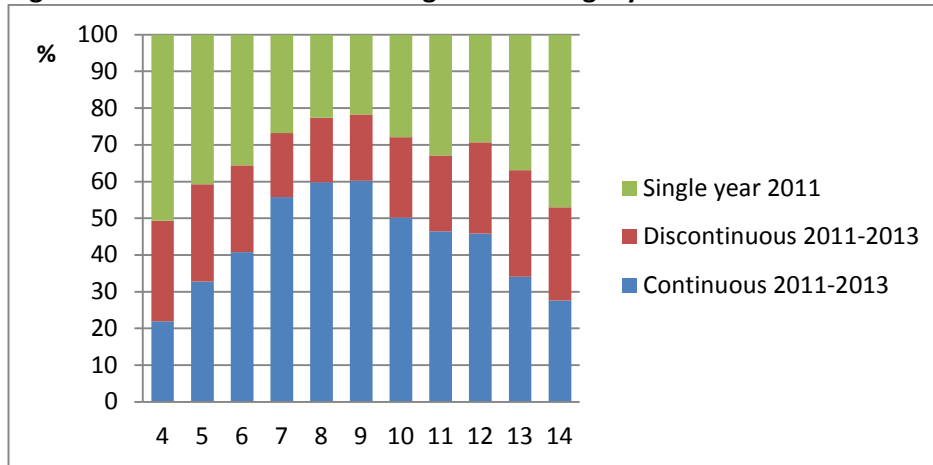
Age	4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
N	232	10,175	7,952	3,213	3,004	2,402	1,534	1,240	1,526	247	45	8

**Figure 3. Male 2011 commencers – all age groups**



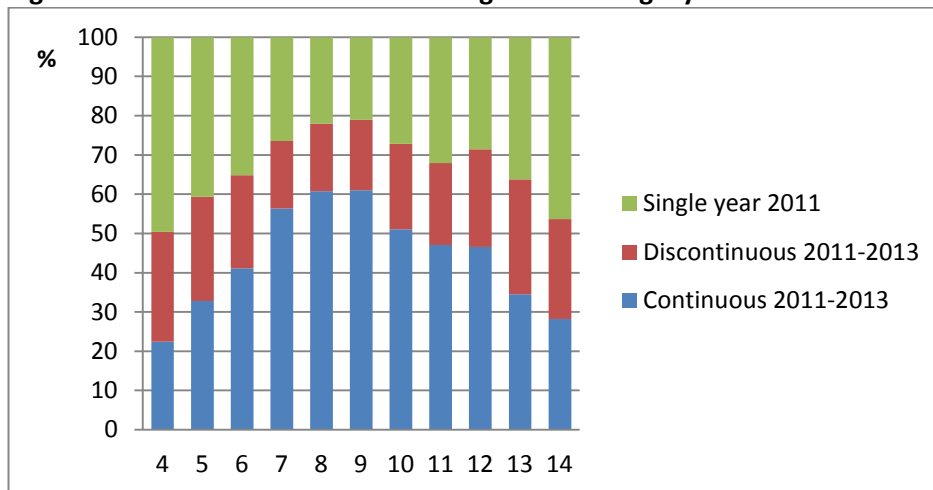
Age	4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
N	5	197	199	307	247	149	73	48	93	24	5	0

**Figure 4. All 2011 commencers – age 4-14 in single years**



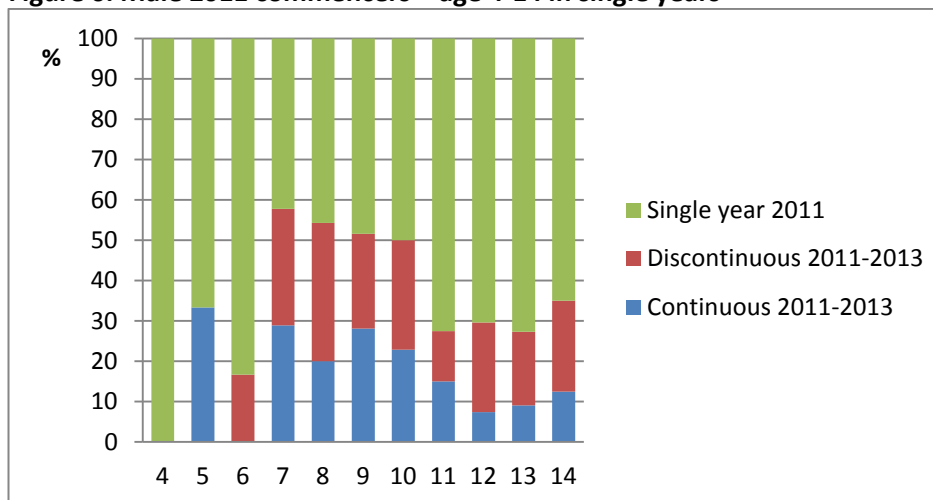
Age	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
N	237	1,025	1,541	2,310	2,922	2,574	2,313	2,053	1,453	1,256	1,076

**Figure 5. Female 2011 commencers – age 4-14 in single years**



Age	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
N	232	1,019	1,529	2,265	2,852	2,510	2,243	2,013	1,426	1,234	1,036

**Figure 6. Male 2011 commencers – age 4-14 in single years**



Age	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
N	5	6	12	45	70	64	70	40	27	22	40