

Australia, the sporting nation



Australia is a nation of sports lovers. Four in five (80%) Australians agree that sport is a significant part of Australian culture. We are proud that we punch above our weight on the international stage, be it the Olympics, soccer world cup, the cricket or rugby. The often-used analogy to describe our obsession with sport, is that to Australians, sport is like a religion.

AFL is Australia's most attended sport

The AFL is the most powerful sporting code enjoying the largest support base and an annual attendance rate of 16% of Australians. Almost double its nearest rival, the Rugby League (9%).

Just a third of Aussies (32%) have confidence in the direction our professional sporting codes are headed. More than half of Australians (56%) believe sport and politics should stay

in separate arenas. Twice the amount of those who believe that sport should take a stand on political and social issues (28%).

How much time do Australians spend on sport compared to other activities?

We are more religious about sport than religion itself. Australians spend four times more time watching sport at home per week (2h 22m) than doing religious activities (35m). This is on par with the amount of time spent actually participating in sport and outdoor activity (2h 27m).

Australia is no longer the land of the couch potato! The average Australian spends longer each week participating in sport or physical activities (2 hours, 27 minutes) than watching it on TV (2 hours, 22 minutes). – Mark McCrindle, Social Researcher.

The most popular sport and exercise Australians like to participate in aside from recreational walking is fitness/gym (35%). It is little wonder the fitness industry is now a billion-dollar industry in Australia. Athletics, including running, (15%), swimming (15%) and cycling (12%) round out the top five.

The most popular sports to attend, Australian Football and Rugby League, do not even rank in the top ten for participation. Participation rates for these sports are only 3% and 1% respectively. It comes as no surprise then that more than half of Australians (56%) believe sporting codes should focus more on community participation. When the community spirit is bolstered through sport, not only does the local area benefit but it feeds back into the national sense of identity. Local sporting clubs create a shared sense of belonging and community outside of family and workplaces previously filled by religious and other service organisations.

The ongoing benefits of participating in sport

The number one reason why men and women choose to get stuck into a workout is for physical health or fitness (78%) and secondly for fun or enjoyment (46%). The third and fourth highest reasons, are social (31%) and psychological/mental health (18%) respectively.

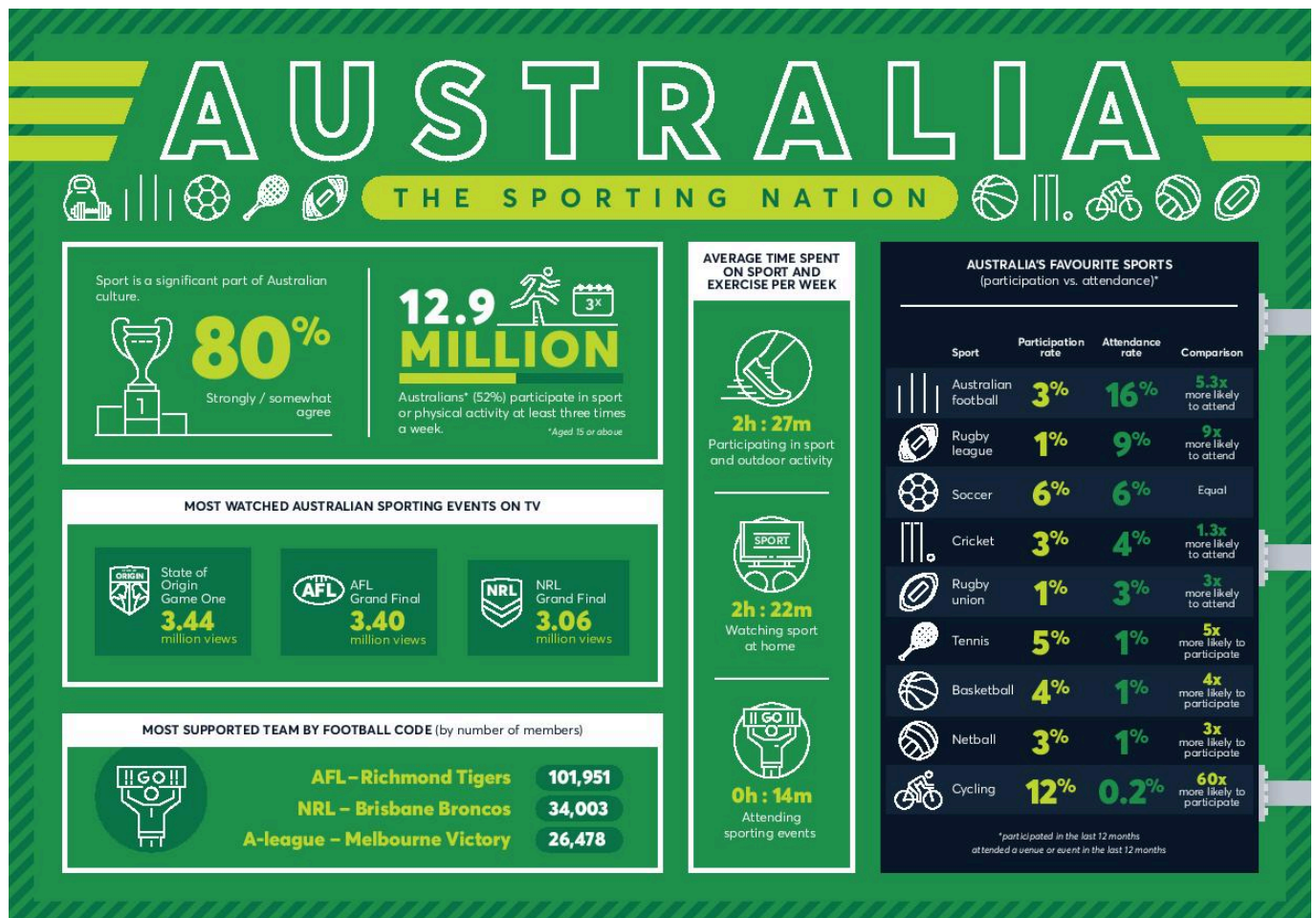
While the key reason Australians participate in sport and activity is physical health and fitness, increasingly the factors of fun, social connections and mental health are motivators. Mental health is much more of a motivator for women (23%) than men (13%). – Mark McCrindle, Social Researcher.

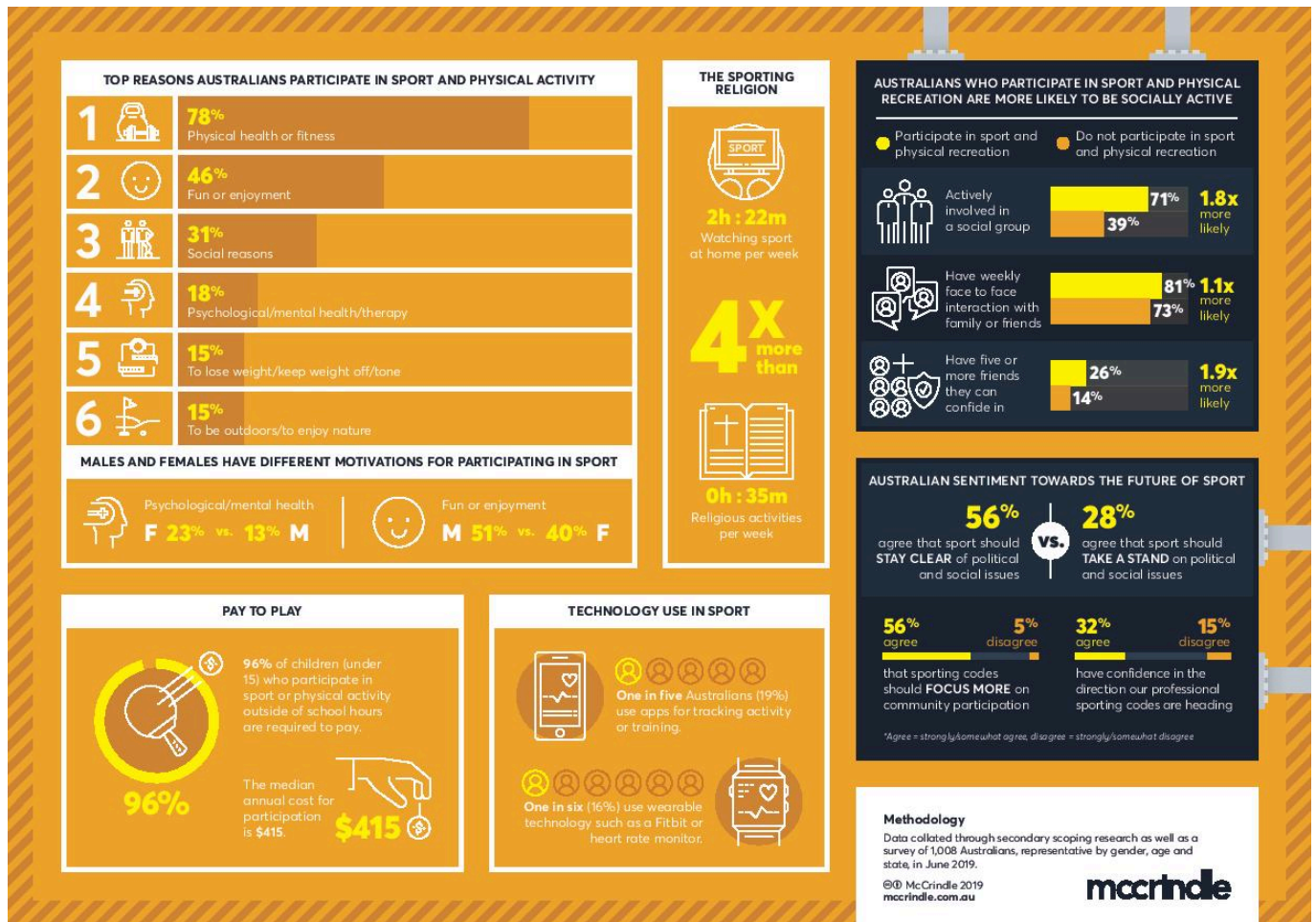
Losing weight is only the fifth most common reason at 15%. This may be because the

current commentary and science around weight loss is focused more on diet than exercise with the billion-dollar health food industry taking a far bigger slice of the proverbial pie. A simple Google or YouTube search ‘how to lose weight’ will confirm this. Common phrases like ‘abs are made in the kitchen’ and ‘you can’t out train a bad diet’ further reinforce this belief.

Those who like to get their sweat on and their heart rate up are also more likely to be sociable than their non-active counterparts. They are almost twice as likely to be actively involved in a social group as well as have five or more friends they can confide in.

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