

INTRODUCTION

In April 2003, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) conducted a national survey to gather information on various culture and leisure activities undertaken by children aged 5 to 14 years.

The survey collected data on children's participation in four selected organised cultural activities (playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing and drama); organised sport; six non-organised leisure activities (TV and video watching, reading for pleasure, playing electronic or computer games, bike riding, art and craft activities and skateboarding or rollerblading); and computer and Internet usage.

CHANGES IN PARTICIPATION SINCE 2000

Whilst the overall picture of children's participation did not change dramatically between 2000 and 2003, there were still some interesting movements in specific activities included in the survey, in particular some marked differences in the participation rates for girls and boys.

CHILDREN INVOLVED IN SELECTED ACTIVITIES, Changes over time—2000 and 2003

	2000.....		2003.....	
	<i>Number</i> '000	<i>Participation rate</i> %	<i>Number</i> '000	<i>Participation rate</i> %
Organised cultural activities				
Playing a musical instrument	473.9	17.9	445.5	16.8
Dancing	274.1	10.4	329.3	12.4
Singing	124.6	4.7	122.5	4.6
Drama	121.8	4.6	112.6	4.3
Organised sports	1 568.2	59.4	1 630.4	61.6
Selected leisure activities				
Watching TV or videos	2 560.3	96.9	2 601.0	98.2
Reading for pleasure	1 981.0	74.8
Playing electronic or computer games	1 818.9	68.9	1 870.5	70.7
Bike riding	1 686.1	63.8	1 644.8	62.1
Art and craft activities	1 170.7	44.3	1 311.2	49.5
Skateboarding or rollerblading	817.4	30.9	604.5	22.8
Computer activities				
Accessing the Internet	1 234.4	46.7	1 693.3	64.0
Using a computer but not the Internet	1 263.9	47.8	824.2	31.1

The largest increase over this period occurred in Internet usage, with the overall proportion of children accessing the Net growing by 17 percentage points (14% for boys and 20% for girls).

The overall participation rate also increased for organised sports, moving from 66% to 69% for boys and from 52% to 54% for girls.

This pattern was mirrored for art and craft activities, where participation rates increased from 34% to 39% for boys and from 55% to 61% for girls.

Participation in organised cultural activities varied markedly between boys and girls, and the difference became even more stark between 2000 and 2003.

While the girls' participation rate increased from 40% to 43% (driven mainly by greater involvement in dancing), the participation rate for boys fell from 20% to 17%, largely as a result of decreases in playing a musical instrument.

Both boys and girls moved away from skateboarding and rollerblading in large numbers, with the overall participation rate falling by 8 percentage points.

ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

A total of 780,400 children (29%) aged 5 to 14 years were involved in at least one of the four nominated cultural activities outside of school hours in the 12 months to April 2003.

Of the four cultural activities, the predominant activity was playing a musical instrument (undertaken by 17% of children). This was followed by dancing (12%), singing (5%) and drama (4%).

Overall, girls were more than twice as likely to have participated in organised cultural activities than boys (43% compared with 17%).

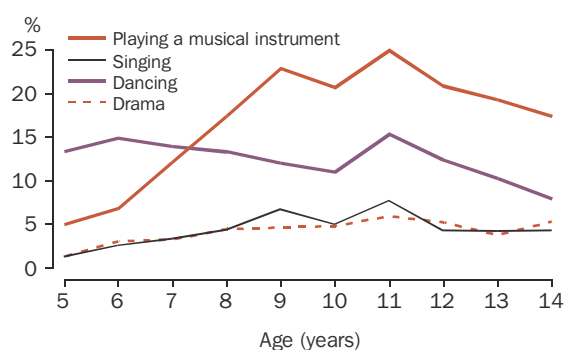
The largest variation between the sexes was evident for dancing in their free time, with fourteen girls participating in this activity to every boy.

A small percentage (7%) of children were involved in more than one of the four selected organised activities outside of school hours, with girls more likely to do so than boys (12% of girls and 2% of boys).

Age of participants

Children aged 9–11 years had the highest participation rate (36%), followed by children aged 12–14 years (30%) and children aged 5–8 years (24%).

PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, By age



Participation by state or territory

The participation rate of children in the four organised cultural activities ranged from a high of 33% in Western Australia to a low of 25% in the Northern Territory.

PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, By state or territory—Participation rates

	<i>Playing a musical instrument</i> %	<i>Singing</i> %	<i>Dancing</i> %	<i>Drama</i> %
NSW	17.2	4.3	13.9	3.3
Vic.	15.5	3.9	12.0	3.3
Qld	15.7	5.9	11.8	5.7
SA	17.0	4.6	10.4	5.4
WA	20.5	4.8	12.7	6.1
Tas.	18.4	4.4	9.7	6.1
NT	12.0	7.0	11.3	0.3
ACT	19.9	4.5	8.4	3.4
Aust.	16.8	4.6	12.4	4.3

Girls' participation in the four organised cultural activities was more than double that for boys in all states and territories except South Australia. The largest difference occurred in Western Australia where girls were almost three times more likely to participate in organised cultural activities than boys (48% compared with 19%).

PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES,
By state or territory and sex—Participation rates

	Boys %	Girls %	Total %
NSW	16.7	43.7	29.9
Vic.	16.0	41.8	28.5
Qld	15.4	43.2	29.0
SA	20.3	37.3	28.6
WA	19.1	47.5	32.9
Tas.	19.3	39.4	29.1
NT	14.3	37.3	25.3
ACT	17.5	38.0	27.5
Aust.	16.8	42.8	29.5

Participation by part of state

Children living in capital cities had a slightly higher participation rate in organised cultural activities during their free time than those living elsewhere in Australia (31% compared with 28%).

Playing a musical instrument was the only activity in which the location appeared to affect the participation rate by more than a single percentage point—18% of children living in capital cities participated in this activity compared with 15% of children living elsewhere.

PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES,
By part of state—Participation rates

	<i>Playing a musical instrument</i> %	<i>Singing</i> %	<i>Dancing</i> %	<i>Drama</i> %
Capital city	18.2	4.7	12.6	4.5
Other	14.7	4.5	12.1	3.9
Total	16.8	4.6	12.4	4.3

Frequency of participation

Of those children who played a musical instrument in their leisure time, 45% practised, had lessons or performed more than once a week on average during the year.

In comparison, 22% of the dancers, 14% of the singers and 3% of those involved in drama participated in their activity more than once a week on average.

**PARTICIPANTS IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES,
Frequency in past year**

	<i>Playing a musical instrument</i>	<i>Singing</i>	<i>Dancing</i>	<i>Drama</i>
Percentage of participants (%)				
1–13 times	13.5	44.5	24.4	45.9
14–26 times	11.3	10.6	9.5	16.9
27–52 times	30.2	30.8	44.4	34.2
53 or more times	27.7	17.1	27.2	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean times (no.)	106.0	35.8	48.8	23.3

Duration of participation

Those children playing a musical instrument outside of school hours spent an average of 4 hours practising, having lessons and performing during the two school weeks prior to the survey.

The average hours spent undertaking the other activities were 4 hours for dancing and 3 hours for singing and 2 hours for drama during the two-week period.

**PARTICIPANTS IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES,
Duration in past two school weeks**

	<i>Playing a musical instrument</i>	<i>Singing</i>	<i>Dancing</i>	<i>Drama</i>
Percentage of participants (%)				
2 hours or less	44.8	73.1	61.1	77.7
3–4 hours	22.8	12.4	20.6	11.4
5–9 hours	20.6	7.0	9.7	6.8
10 or more hours	11.9	7.5	8.6	4.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean hours (no.)	4.5	2.9	3.6	2.1

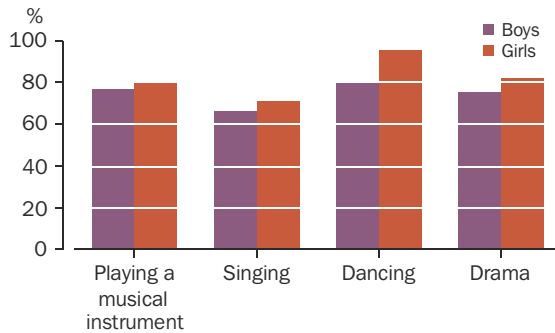
Lessons outside of school hours

About 349,300 children received lessons outside of school hours, on how to play a musical instrument in the 12 months to April 2003. This represents 78% of children who played a musical instrument.

In comparison, 311,000 children (94% of dancers) received dancing lessons, 90,200 children (80% of those involved in drama) had drama lessons and 85,600 children (70% of singers) had singing lessons.

Girls who were involved in dance were more likely than boys to have had dancing lessons (96% of girls and 79% of boys).

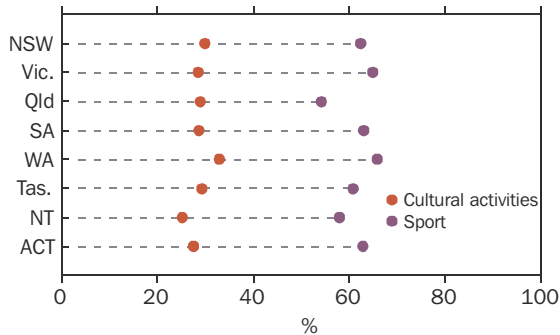
PARTICIPANTS IN ORGANISED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES WHO HAD LESSONS



COMPARISON WITH ORGANISED SPORT

In the 12 months to April 2003, children aged 5 to 14 years were twice as likely to have participated in organised sport outside of school hours, than in the four organised cultural activities covered in the survey—62% (1,630,400) compared with 29% (780,400).

PARTICIPATION IN ORGANISED ACTIVITIES, By state or territory



While girls were more likely to have been involved in organised cultural activities, boys were more likely to have participated in organised sport in their free time during the 12-month period—69% of boys played organised sport compared with 54% of girls.

Participation in organised sport ranged from a low of 44% for 5 year olds to a peak of 69% for 10 year olds. All of the organised cultural activities showed a similar trend with participation lowest amongst 5 year olds (18%) and highest for 11 year olds (39%).

Children in Western Australia had the highest participation rate in both organised sport in their free time (66%) and in at least one of the four organised cultural activities (33%). In contrast, children in Queensland had the lowest rate of participation in organised sport in their free time (54%), whilst children in the Northern Territory had the lowest rate of participation in at least one of the four organised cultural activities (25%).

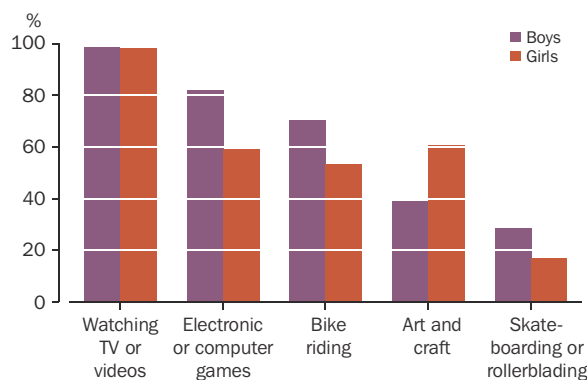
In the 12-month period, 29% of girls (376,200) and 28% of boys (379,200) did not take part in any of the selected organised cultural activities or in organised sport outside of school hours.

SELECTED LEISURE ACTIVITIES

This survey also collected information on children's participation in a number of non-organised activities during the most recent two school weeks prior to interview in April 2003. Almost all children (99.8%) were involved in at least one of the six selected leisure activities outside of school:

- 98% watched TV or videos
- 75% spent time reading for pleasure
- 71% played electronic or computer games
- 62% rode their bikes;
- 50% participated in art and craft activities
- 23% skateboarded or rollerbladed.

PARTICIPATION IN NON-ORGANISED LEISURE ACTIVITIES, By sex



Whilst TV or video watching attracted almost equal percentages of boys (99%) and girls (98%), a much greater percentage of boys played electronic or computer games (82% versus 59%), rode bikes (70% versus 53%) or went skateboarding or rollerblading (28% versus 17%).

Children spent more time watching television or videos than they did on any of the other selected activities, with an average of 22 hours over a school fortnight. By contrast, the average time spent on each of the two next-most popular activities (reading for pleasure and electronic/computer games) was eight hours over a school fortnight.

The times children spent participating in the remaining selected activities were very similar, with both bike riding and art/craft activity averaging six hours, and skateboarding/rollerblading averaging five hours over a school fortnight.

PARTICIPATION IN NON-ORGANISED LEISURE ACTIVITIES, By sex

	<i>Skate-boarding or rollerblading</i>	<i>Bike riding</i>	<i>Watching TV or videos</i>	<i>Playing electronic or computer games</i>	<i>Art and craft</i>
Participation rate (%)					
Boys	28.5	70.5	98.6	81.8	39.0
Girls	16.9	53.3	97.9	58.9	60.6
Total	22.8	62.1	98.2	70.7	49.5
Mean hours—participants only (no.)					
Boys	5.7	6.3	22.3	9.0	5.2
Girls	4.1	4.6	21.4	5.3	6.5
Total	5.2	5.6	21.9	7.5	6.0

READING FOR PLEASURE

Children's reading habits were included in the survey for the first time. Whilst television and videos remain unchallenged as their most popular leisure time activity, more children chose to read books than participate in any of the other selected leisure activities.

PARTICIPATION IN READING FOR PLEASURE, By state or territory—Participation rates

	<i>Boys</i> %	<i>Girls</i> %	<i>Total</i> %
NSW	68.3	83.0	75.4
Vic.	67.3	82.1	74.5
Qld	65.4	81.4	73.2
SA	71.0	83.5	77.1
WA	67.0	81.6	74.1
Tas.	70.5	85.9	78.2
NT	73.9	78.2	76.0
ACT	72.8	80.3	76.3
Aust.	67.7	82.3	74.8

There was little variation between the states, with children in Tasmania (78%) reporting the highest levels of reading for pleasure and Queensland (73%) the lowest.

There was even less variation between children living in capital cities (76%) and those living in the rest of Australia (73%).

**PARTICIPATION IN READING FOR PLEASURE,
Duration in past two school weeks**

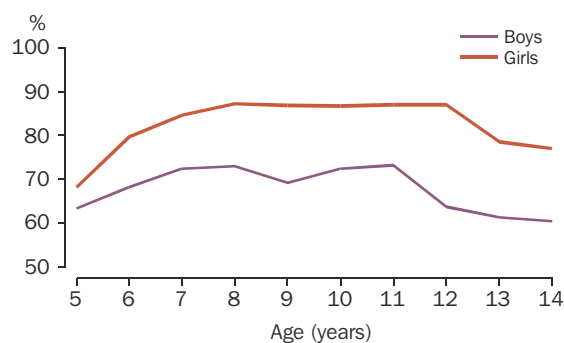
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
Percentage of participants (%)			
2 hours or less	23.2	17.1	19.9
3–4 hours	16.9	14.3	15.5
5–9 hours	34.9	34.8	34.9
10–19 hours	20.4	25.4	23.1
20 hours or more	4.5	8.4	6.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean hours (no.)	7.1	8.6	7.9

It was only when gender entered the picture that any substantial variations appeared in the numbers.

As with the organised cultural activities included in the survey, more girls than boys chose to read in their leisure time—82% of girls compared with 68% of boys.

And once they started reading, girls also spent more time between the pages, averaging 9 hours reading in the two school weeks prior to interview (versus 7 hours for boys).

PARTICIPATION IN READING FOR PLEASURE, By age and sex

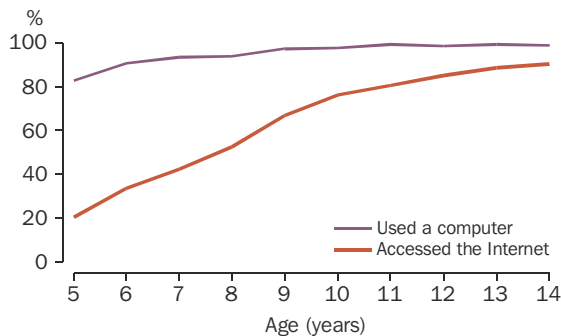


COMPUTER AND INTERNET ACTIVITIES

Children's computer usage and Internet access both during and outside of school hours were also surveyed. More than 2.5 million (95%) children used a computer and almost 1.7 million (64%) children accessed the Internet in the 12 months to April 2003.

No significant difference in usage was evident between boys and girls. However usage, particularly of the Internet, appeared to increase with age.

USAGE OF COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET, By age



Children were most likely to use a computer either at school (94%) or in their own home (86%). However this order was reversed for Internet usage, with most children accessing it in the home (79%) and slightly fewer accessing it at school (70%). Of those using a computer at home, most used it to play games or for school or educational activities (84% for each). The Internet was most likely to be accessed at home for school or educational purposes (86% of home Internet users).

COMPUTER AND INTERNET USERS, Location of usage

	Computer.....		Internet.....	
	'000	%	'000	%
Home	2 165.3	86.0	1 341.6	79.2
Someone else's home	1 050.8	41.7	412.4	24.4
School	2 369.2	94.1	1 181.9	69.8
Public library	303.3	12.0	117.0	6.9
Other places	111.1	4.4	57.2	3.4
Total	2 517.5	100.0	1 693.3	100.0

CULTURAL MINISTERS COUNCIL

The Cultural Ministers Council was established in 1984 to provide a forum for the exchange of views on issues affecting cultural activities in Australia. It comprises Australian, state and territory, and New Zealand government Ministers responsible for arts and cultural heritage. Further information about the Council can be accessed on the web site: <www.dcita.gov.au/cmc>.

STATISTICS WORKING GROUP

The Cultural Ministers Council established a statistics advisory body, now known as the Statistics Working Group, in November 1985. The group liaises with the ABS on cultural statistics, monitors the need for the development, collection and dissemination of culture and leisure statistics, commissions studies, and provides advice to the Cultural Ministers Council on statistical matters.

Information regarding the Statistics Working Group or its activities can be obtained by contacting The Secretariat, Cultural Ministers Council Statistics Working Group, c/o The Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, GPO Box 2154, Canberra ACT 2601 (telephone 02 6271 1051, fax 02 6271 1697) or on the web site: <www.dcita.gov.au/swg>.

ABOUT THE DATA

This brochure contains data from a survey of Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities conducted by the ABS covering the 12 months ending April 2003. The sample survey was conducted in dwellings in urban and rural areas of all states and territories of Australia. Information was collected about the cultural and leisure activities of 8,900 children aged 5 to 14 years.

Further information on the concepts and methods used in the survey, the definitions, the interpretation and reliability of the results, as well as more comprehensive data provided by the survey are included in the publication *Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, April 2003* (cat. no. 4901.0). This publication is available from all bookshops of the ABS. Additional information on a range of culture and leisure statistics can be obtained from the ABS National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, GPO Box 2272, Adelaide SA 5001 (telephone 08 8237 7449) or on the ABS web site <www.abs.gov.au>.