

KEY STATS

A profile of bowls

People participate in bowls for several reasons:

Seeking to play a competitive sport.

The sense of camaraderie and sense of belonging from being part of a team sport.

A particular interest in the skill-based nature of bowls.

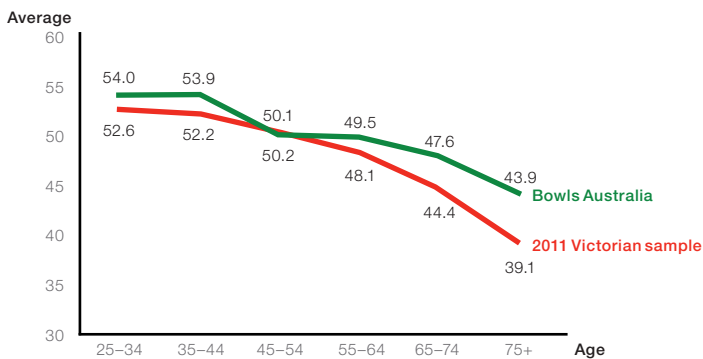
The social connections that participation in bowls provides.

The capacity to engage in social drinking within a club environment.

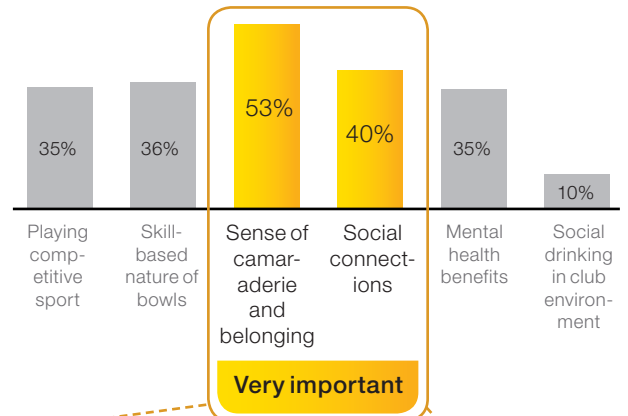
The perceptions that the specific activity of playing bowls offers mental health benefits.

Perceived physical health advantages of bowls

PCS by age and population norm



Motives for participation in bowls



The most important motives for participation in bowls are:

- the sense of camaraderie and belonging from being part of a team sport, and
- the social connections that participation in bowls provides.

Both of which are higher for women than men

The areas where clubs can improve their recruitment and retention of members are:

Fostering an inclusive club culture.

Educating members in how to welcome and integrate new members.



Improving their governance and management practices.

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Why do people play bowls?

- Most bowlers have previously played another sport and see bowls as an opportunity to continue to enjoy the competitive and team aspects of sport.
- Bowls is a sport that has some unique attributes; specifically being able to offer people of all ages and abilities a chance to play.
- The most important motives for participation in bowls are the sense of camaraderie and belonging from being part of a team sport and the social connections that participation in bowls provides, both of which are higher for women than men.

Why do people cease playing bowls?

- The main reasons respondents believe people cease bowling are selection processes in clubs, the treatment of people by other club members and the quality of club administration.
- The areas where clubs can improve their retention of members is in fostering an inclusive club culture, educating members in how to welcome and integrate new members and in improving their governance and management practices.

What are the physical and mental health benefits of playing bowls?

- Bowls facilitates long lasting friendships that are often a central feature of the social support network for older people who may have lost their partner.
- Bowls can offer a family friendly environment and offers players of varying physical ability the chance to compete with each other in an integrated sport participation opportunity.
- Participation in bowls assists in sustaining both physical and mental health.
- Bowls clubs are safe social spaces for women.
- Bowls participants can be grouped into 5 broad categories (consumers, bowlers, socialisers, clubbers and identifiers) each seeking something different from their bowls experience.

How are changes in demographics of communities affecting bowls clubs?

- Membership decline is a pervasive problem throughout bowls.
- Clubs appear ill-equipped to deal with diverse population groups and need assistance in how to communicate with and market themselves to local communities.
- Clubs are facing a number of key challenges, specifically in relation to the way in which they manage their business, the increasing financial pressures to run a club and their future leadership capacity.
- Most club members have been involved with their club for more than 6 years, visit the club more than 10 times per month, and spend at least 10 hours per week at their club.

What format for participation/competition bowls is preferred for different age groups?

- The majority of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the length of the season for and scheduling of competitions
- The provision of adequate levels of quality coaching and perhaps the timing of its provision seems to be an important driver of satisfaction among bowls participants.

What are the characteristics of the 'bowls experience' that will attract new participants?

- More flexible scheduling of competitions should be investigated as a way of maximising participation.
- Selection processes are important drivers of club member satisfaction.
- Clubs should consider how they can be more accommodating of a diverse set of potential users of their facilities and services.
- Mixed competition structures should be encouraged.
- Shortened game times seem to have been well accepted by the bowls community.
- A key challenge for bowls is to offer a desirable bowls format that fits between casual bowling and Pennant competition that will attract a market that clearly does not want to play Pennant in its current form.

Benefits of bowls

Bowls facilitates long lasting friendships that are often a central feature of the social support network for older people who may have lost their partner.

Bowls offers players of varying physical ability the chance to compete with each other in an integrated sport participation opportunity.

Bowls clubs are safe social spaces for women.

Participation in bowls – even at a very moderate level – assists in sustaining both physical and mental health. Respondents in this study reported higher physical and mental health status compared to the general population.