Participation in swimming by Australians 15 and over fell by nearly 30% between 2005/06 and 2013/14

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ (ABS) Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation survey, the percentage of Australians over the age of 15 who engaged in swimming or diving at least once in the last year dropped from 9% in 2005/06, to 7.4% in 2009/10 and to 6.4% in 2013/14, the latest year for which statistics are available.

Swimming remains Australians’ third favourite form of physical activity

Findings from the Australian Sports Commission’s 2016 AusPlay report show that swimming is the most popular organised after-school activity for children, and the third most popular form of exercise for adults of both sexes, behind walking and fitness/gym.

Australians’ interest in swimming might be bouncing back, but it’s too soon to tell

There is some evidence that Australians are back to swimming in larger numbers, and that the 2013/14 ABS data represents a low point in Australia’s swimming participation. AusPlay’s 2016 data shows significantly higher involvement in swimming than the ABS survey, as does December 2017 Roy Morgan data on participation on Commonwealth Games sports. But these surveys ask slightly different questions to different groups of people, so it’s difficult to compare them to the ABS data, which used consistent survey methods and shows a clear declining trend.

Up to 40% of children can’t swim 50 meters by the time they finish primary school

Research conducted by Royal Life Saving shows significant gaps in the achievement of benchmarks for water safety among primary school aged children. In addition to the estimated 40% of children who can’t swim 50 meters by the end of primary school, the research found higher failure rates among children from indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds.

As many as 5% of adult Australians are unable to swim

A survey conducted by Royal Life Saving found that 3.3% of adults reported being unable to swim. With the growing diversity of Australia’s population, and with many migrants arriving too late to take advantage of government-sponsored learn-to-swim programs, and potential under-reporting due to embarrassment on the part of non-swimmers, we estimate that the true figure could be closer to 5% of the population.

The 1,077 public swimming pools across Australia receive more than 100 million individual visits each year

Royal Life Saving estimates the number of public aquatic facilities in Australia at approximately 1,077. The 2015/16 Western Australian Aquatics Industry report estimates that Australians visit a public pool on average 4.4 times a year, which equates to 106 million total visits each year.

ROYAL LIFE SAVING HAS DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF FACT SHEETS ON WATER SAFETY ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA.

Contact Royal Life Saving on: 1300 737 763 or download them from: www.royallifesaving.com.au