

#GetLifelongReady

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Review of Literature



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

QORF (the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation) has focused on building the capacity of the outdoor recreation industry to better engage adult participants through its #GetLifelongReady project. This report provides a review of existing literature regarding lifelong participation in sport and recreation to inform the #GetLifelongReady project and guide subsequent phases of the project. The review of literature identified the need to understand adult participation within a broader life course of participation [1].

Consequently, the report encompasses research into older adults' sport and recreation participation, rather than narrowly focusing on the limited literature available for 36-to-60-year-olds¹. The review also sought to inform the capacity building of the sector to engage and positively affect individual participants in increasing their participation; that is, creating a habit of participation in outdoor activities generally, whether for recreation or sport.

During the process of selecting and reviewing articles, it became apparent that much of the literature relevant to lifelong participation focuses on a particular subgroup: Mostly elite Masters sport athletes aged 50 years and over. While the insights to this group are important, and sometimes transferable, this finding during the review process highlights a need for research pertaining to broader stakeholder groups targeted through #GetLifelongReady.

The literature gathered for this review was grouped thematically under two main sections:

1. Ways of thinking about active participation and ageing in sport and recreation – Six main themes were identified through the review, including 1) Disengagement from participation; 2) Benefits of participation; 3) Maintaining participation; 4) Motivations to participate; 5) Unique experiences of participation; and 6) Participation through the life-course.
2. Challenges to lifelong participation, including challenges presented at structural and individual levels. Structural challenges included: 1) Sport as a Youthful Concept; 2) Expectations and Obligations of Society and Significant Others; 3) Mixed Health and Fitness Messages; 4) Ad hoc Provision of Activities and Opportunities. Individual Challenges included: 1) Physical Ability; 2) Heterogeneity of Market; and 3) Entry / Re-entry Needs.

Based on the review of literature, the following recommendations are suggested for policy makers and practitioners in the outdoor recreation sector to inform the engagement of 36—to-60-year-olds in active outdoor recreation:

- Governments, universities and peak bodies are encouraged to fund / carry out research to inform sector approaches for engaging this group and supporting their participation through this phase of their lives;
- Organisations should be open to new ways of thinking about ageing, adults and active recreation. The emergent ways of thinking covered in this review provide justification for the identification of the midlife group as a specific market to target and engage;

¹ Medibank classifies the age group 36-60 years as 'middle-aged'. QORF acknowledges the experience of ageing is unique from one individual to the next, however, it is beyond the scope of #GetLifelongReady to debate age classifications and terminology.

- Organisations should give thought broadly to the inclusivity of their organisations and activities. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the nature of outdoor recreation as it is more broadly defined than 'sport' and due to its nature, has less restrictions imposed. These characteristics make outdoor recreation a space for family leisure and if implemented thoughtfully, can be inclusive of a range of abilities and appeal to a range of markets;
- Organisations should support individuals in their negotiation of societal expectations and obligations through all aspects of designing, scheduling and marketing activities so adults can identify opportunities as being relevant to them and an important part of a well-balanced lifestyle;
- Organisations should be proactive in providing clear, succinct and relevant health messages about different activities available to adults;
- Once an organisation has considered inclusive philosophies and programming, it is important that the marketing (i.e. language and images) accurately reflects these characteristics. Importantly, marketing should profile everyday people doing activities that are accessible and appealing to the market being targeted;
- Programming should be approached on a long-term basis, progressively challenging participants;
- Organisations should consider practical ways of addressing physical abilities, understanding this may include supporting adults to negotiate perceived physical inabilities, and in some instances, it may involve the modification of activities to overcome real physical limitations; and
- Policymakers and organisations need to understand the subtleties across the sub-groups which make up the broader 36-to-60-year-old group. It is important that opportunities be targeted to the sub-groups rather than attempt to be everything to everyone.

Organisations should provide support for adults re-entering activities, or entering for the first time, to ensure a positive and ongoing experience.

INTRODUCTION TO #GETLIFELONGREADY

The rationales for targeting engagement with adults in their 'middle-ages' include:

- The physical activity habits developed during this life stage are an important precursor for continued physical activity into later years [1-4]; and
- The development of resources for adults aged 36-60 is an important building block to encourage impetus by industry to develop resources for later life stages [1, 2].

The initial #GetLifelongReady concept focused on four main areas for development:

1. Encouraging lifelong participation pathways;
2. Enhancing / developing participation opportunities for adults;
3. Upskilling our staff and volunteer workforce to confidently deliver for a group that is in itself heterogeneous by nature; and
4. Designing relevant marketing strategies to engage non-participants.

IDENTIFIED NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released figures in early 2015 highlighting a continued trend of decreasing participation in sport and physical recreation by adults and older Australians [5], illustrated in Figure 1. Alarming, the statistics show that in our state of Queensland, often associated with warm climates and active lifestyles, participation is tracking well below the Australian averages.

Figure 1: Australian and Queensland Participation in Sport and Physical Recreation, 2013-2014



Source: ABS, 2015

The statistics reported by the ABS are based on participation, defined as doing a particular sport and / or physical recreation at least once in the 12 months prior to interview [5]. Consistent with previous research [6], these statistics give us limited certainty whether adults and older Australians participate frequently enough to maintain functional capacities, or derive a health benefit from their participation². These low participation rates are problematic given that physical inactivity, or sedentariness, is considered a leading cause of many preventable and lifestyle diseases in later life [8].

While there are many factors that influence participation, a fundamental but often overlooked factor is the extent to which sport and recreation settings seek to engage and be inclusive of adults and older Australians. Research shows us that negative stereotypes and unsubstantiated fears of the health risks of adults and older people's active participation influence the likelihood of organisations developing and delivering participation opportunities targeting adults and older Australians [9, 10].

² Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend: 18-64 years olds to accumulate 2.5-5 hours of moderate intensity, or 1.25-2.5 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity, or a combination of both, each week, along with muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week; 65 years and over to be physically active for 30 minutes every day, preferably incorporating fitness, strength, balance and flexibility (7. Department of Health, *Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines*. 2014, Australian Government, Canberra, Australia.)

Burns' 1992 investigation into Australian Masters sport³ indicated sport administrators that did not provide active participation opportunities for this group held the following views:

- Adults and older people could participate in sport equally, regardless of their age;
- The physical nature of some activities was not appropriate for adults or older people; and
- Priorities of organisations were in other areas (i.e. youth and elite development) and therefore organisations had limited time or resources to commit to developing and delivering opportunities for adults and older people [9].

At the time, Burns argued these beliefs to be flawed, and since then others have weighed in on these arguments, with key points summarised here:

- **Equal Access to Participation** - Burns highlighted that the perception of equality of access to participation for Masters-age participants was subject to the issue of inequality of opportunity, with this group facing similar constraints and barriers to participation as experienced by women, junior participants and people with disabilities [9]. Since the 1990's, government and sporting bodies have been developing initiatives to encourage women's participation, junior participation, and people with disabilities [11, 12]. A recent example of this is the Queensland Government's strategic initiative - Start Playing, Stay Playing - targeting women and girls' participation in sport.
- **Physical Demands Inappropriate for Adults / Older People** - Burns highlighted most research into participation by Masters-aged participants had found the economic, social and health benefits of older people's participation in sport far outweighed any negative consequences perceived by sport administrators. Since Burns' work was completed, a growing body of literature argues that adults and older people are much more active and prepared for physical exertion compared with previous generations [9, 11]. More recently, literature has also highlighted that stereotypes of ageing are being challenged as adults and older people choose to participate in an increasingly diverse range of leisure activities [6].
- **Other Population Groups are a Higher Priority** - There are both moral and economic reasons for sport and recreation organisations to prioritise adults' and older people's participation. First, access to participate in sport and recreation is a fundamental human right, regardless of a person's age. Accordingly, sport and recreation organisations are morally bound to provide opportunities for all people in the community to participate. Second, there are economic rationales at both macro and micro levels. At a macro level, the potential costs brought about by an ageing population mean there are financial gains to be had through encouraging a more physically active and healthier ageing population. At a micro level, adults and older people constitute a substantive majority of the audience in terms of consumer spending. If the sport and recreation sector better understands and caters for the unique characteristics, needs and expectations of this target market [11, 13-15], there are gains to be had in terms of increased membership and alternative and / or additional revenue streams through diversified activity offerings.

³ Masters sport is a term used to refer to sport participation by people aged approximately 30 years and over, dependent upon the minimum age requirements of a particular sport [13,15]

In 2009, the Crawford Report identified adult and older people's sport and active recreation participation as a key area for development [16]. Four years later, the Australian Sport Commission (ASC) released market segmentation profiles for adult participation, identifying a range of behaviours across existing participants and non-participants in an attempt to provide the sport industry with information on this market [17]. The ASC's market segmentation exercise highlighted the adult market as a distinct audience, which warrants specific strategies for engagement. In many cases, however, the challenge for development in this area requires greater support, in addition to the market research.

The Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) 2013 report on the stereotypes of older Australians found more than a third of Australians aged 55 years and older reported to have experienced aged-related discrimination [18]. The AHRC found age discrimination is occurring across many facets of life, including service provision, product design, in people's familial settings and through the representation of adults and older Australians in pop culture [18]. While the AHRC did not explicitly explore sport and recreation, the report alluded to the frailty associated with ageing and the generalisations made about what the older body is or is not capable of doing, indicating stereotypes and discrimination reported by the AHRC are likely to translate into sport and recreation settings as well. This is consistent with Burns' recommendations for the sport and recreation sector, made over two decades ago. These recommendations remain pertinent, establishing the need for governments and sport organisations at all levels to work to dispel stereotypes of ageing; provide specific opportunities for adults and older people; and encourage older people's active participation [9].

In 2015, gaps remain in our understanding of the practicalities of how to engage adults and older people in active sport and recreation, particularly those described as 'non-participants', including those who have taken a hiatus from activity or others who have simply never participated.

SCOPE FOR #GETLIFELONGREADY

With thanks to the Medibank Community Benefit Fund, QORF will develop and deliver an Online Toolkit - #GetLifelongReady - to provide access to information and case studies, providing our sector with information and confidence to better engage with adults, particularly those aged 36-60 years. QORF will aim to facilitate these outcomes through a systematic and informed process, including the delivery of the following components:

1. Review of relevant literature;
2. Stakeholder consultation workshops;
3. Development, refinement and promotion of an Online Toolkit for industry stakeholders; and
4. Forward planning for ongoing development, maintenance and renewal of the Online Toolkit.

The scope of #GetLifelongReady includes:

- Drawing on existing research and working with industry stakeholders to identify constraints and opportunities;
- Developing industry capacity to engage those in the target age range who are not participating, with a focus on:
 - a) Primary: Adults who have previously participated, but disengaged at some stage. As this group has some experience of the activities, skills and subcultures, we assume the barriers to re-entry are less than those who have never participated in sport and recreation; and
 - b) Secondary: Adults who have not participated, as we understand the higher barriers to entry, and therefore greater resources are required to engage adults who have never participated in sport and recreation. The capacity building engendered by #GetLifelongReady may engage people who have never participated, but this is a secondary focus for the project.

Importantly, #GetLifelongReady is not:

- An extensive review of the benefits of participation. There are many research articles and literature reviews documenting the benefits of participation and demonstrating these benefits far outweighs potential risks of physical activity for older people; nor
- A marketing campaign aimed at the general public to 'get active'.

CONTEXT OF REPORT

The various phases of this project are identified in Table 1. This report delivers on the first project phase, the review of literature regarding adult participation

Table 1: Project Phases for #GetLifelongReady

Project Phase	Purpose
Phase 1: Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gather existing information on lifelong participation to inform subsequent phases of the project.
Phase 2: Stakeholder Consultation Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hear from the sector, including QORF members and sector stakeholders, about constraints and enablers of delivering outdoor recreation opportunities for adults and older people. ▪ Identify promising practice case studies.
Phase 3: Development of Online Toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop an Online Toolkit to address industry capacity needs identified in Phase 1 and Phase 2. ▪ Pilot and refine the Online Toolkit.
Phase 4: Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote the Online Toolkit to QORF members and a broader audience of outdoor recreation stakeholders in Queensland. ▪ Raise awareness of the project by the broader community.
Phase 5: Lessons Learned and Future Proofing Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compile lessons learned throughout the project and plans for future development of #GetLifelongReady

REPORT STRUCTURE

This report incorporates the following sections:

- Section 3.0: Literature Review Process;
- Section 4.0: Literature Review; and
- Section 5.0: Final Remarks.

CONSULTANT

Alana Thomson, PhD., Thomson Management Group, is an experienced coordinator and manager of research and strategy development projects. Alana's areas of expertise include sport and recreation development, inter-organisational relationships and sport event legacies. Alana has presented conference papers and published articles in peer-reviewed journals in areas of inclusive sport (including Masters sport) and sport event impacts and legacies. Alana has worked on various leisure-based consultancy projects over the last 10 years for a number of organisations, including: Gold Coast City Council; Queensland Government; City of Sydney; Griffith University; La Trobe University; University of Technology, Sydney; Cricket Australia; the Australian Sport Commission and the AIS; the AFL; the NRL; and Netball Australia. Alana has also worked as a project coordinator with QORF for several years, gaining valuable insights into the unique nature and needs of the outdoor recreation sector in Queensland. Alana is an active participant in sport and recreation, knows first-hand the health and social benefits of participation and is a keen advocate for finding ways to encourage more people to be more active, more often.

LITERATURE REVIEW PROCESS

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of existing literature in the areas of lifelong participation in sport and recreation to inform the #GetLifelongReady project and guide subsequent phases of the project. To achieve this, a series of Google Scholar searches were carried out to bring together a sample of articles relevant to lifelong participation in sport and recreation. Search terms included "active ageing" or "adults / masters / older people / seniors" and "sport / recreation / physical activity". Articles were selected based on managerial and sociological perspectives, rather than from a medical or health benefits perspective. From the initial base of articles, some citation trails were followed to locate other relevant papers. While a significant proportion of the literature included peer-reviewed articles, several further policy documents and research papers deemed relevant and significant were also included.

Importantly, this review of literature identified the need to understand adult participation within a broader life course of participation [1]. For instance, experiences we have as children influence our perception of opportunities as adults, and the habits we develop as adults influence our sense of self-efficacy and active participation as we age [1]. As articulated by the World Health Organisation (WHO):

Yesterday's child is today's adult and tomorrow's grandmother and grandfather. The quality of life they will enjoy as grandparents depends on the risks and opportunities they experienced throughout the life course [4]

For this reason, the report encompasses research into older adults' sport and recreation participation, to help situate the importance of focusing on the engagement of 36-to-60-year-olds.

KEY CHALLENGES

WHAT TYPE OF PARTICIPATION?

This project is concerned with participation in outdoor recreation activities, defined by QORF as those activities which:

- Are undertaken outside the confines of buildings (i.e. in the outdoors);
- Can be undertaken without the existence of any built facility or infrastructure;
- May require large areas of land, water and / or air; and
- May require outdoor areas of predominantly unmodified natural landscape.

Outdoor recreation activities include (but are not limited to) non-competitive:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Ballooning | ▪ Geocaching | ▪ Rock climbing |
| ▪ Boating / sailing | ▪ Hang-gliding / paragliding | ▪ Rogaining |
| ▪ Bungy jumping | ▪ Horse riding | ▪ Ropes courses |
| ▪ Bushwalking | ▪ Hunting | ▪ Sailboarding |
| ▪ Camping | ▪ Jet skiing | ▪ Scuba diving |
| ▪ Canoeing | ▪ Kayaking (river and sea) | ▪ Shooting |
| ▪ Canyoning | ▪ Kite flying | ▪ Skateboarding / rollerblading |
| ▪ Caving | ▪ Motor / trail bike riding | ▪ Skiing (snow): Cross country / Nordic |
| ▪ Climbing | ▪ Mountain bike riding | ▪ Skiing (snow): Downhill |
| ▪ Conservation activities | ▪ Nature studies | ▪ Snorkelling |
| ▪ Cycling | ▪ Orienteering | ▪ Surfing |
| ▪ Fishing | ▪ Parachuting | ▪ Trail Running |
| ▪ Fossicking / collecting | ▪ Picnicking | ▪ Touring |
| ▪ Four-wheel-driving | ▪ Rafting | ▪ Waterskiing |

QORF's definition distinguishes participation in these activities based on recreational or sporting pursuits, with the key characteristics of sport being organised competition formats based on rules. This project is less interested in the differentiation between the recreational or sporting participation, but more interested in the capacity building of the sector to engage and positively affect individual participants to increase their participation; that is, creating a habit of participation in outdoor activities generally, whether for recreation or sport or a combination of both.

TERMINOLOGY

Research and discussion about the participation of adults and older people in sport and physical recreation uses various terms, including: 'successful ageing', 'ageing well', 'positive ageing', 'healthy ageing', 'productive ageing' and other similar terms [2, 19, 20]. The challenge presented by this terminology is that it can have a disempowering effect if we do not acknowledge that 'successful ageing' means different things to different people, and there is no definitive way to achieve this state of being [19, 20].

Other terms used in the sport and recreation management context to refer to this group include 'masters athletes', 'veteran athletes', 'golden oldies', etc. We need to be cautious with these terms, as they are often used in other contexts and may be interpreted differently, therefore acting as a barrier to entry for adults and older people who are not already part of these groups. For instance:

- **Masters Sport:** In the sports of tennis and golf, the word 'masters' refers to competition between the world's *best* athletes. This contrasts with the notion of Masters sport associated with the Masters Movement, which refers to sport opportunities with minimum age requirements starting at 25, 30 or 35 depending on the sport [21]. This inconsistent use of terminology may be misleading for those not already participating in Masters sport, as there may be the perception that Masters sport is for older elite athletes, which acts as a barrier to participation for people taking up something for the first time, or returning from a hiatus.
- **Veterans Sport:** The word veteran is predominantly used in military and armed forces contexts, referring to war veterans, and as such, terms such as 'veteran athletes' or 'veterans games' have the potential to mean something other than the provision of sport and recreation opportunities for adults and older people.

REPRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCES PORTRAYED IN THE LITERATURE

The literature gathered for this review disproportionately focused on elite sport experiences of older athletes (approximately 40 per cent of the articles gathered for this review). Elite sport literature was distinguished by investigations into training and performance characteristics and participating in Masters-type events. While we have seen growth in participation of Masters sport and Masters Games since the 1980's [9, 11], current participation statistics (refer Figure 1) indicate that the elite and Masters Games experiences are not the typical experience of adults and older Australians [5]. As such, the knowledge drawn from these articles has been tempered in the context of the #GetLifelongReady project. Insights from these articles are included where relevant, however, we have tried to focus as much as possible on literature relevant to encouraging regular and ongoing participation by those who have had a hiatus from active sport or recreation participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature gathered for this review was grouped thematically, including:

1. Ways of thinking about active participation and ageing in sport and recreation, such as historical trends and emerging bodies of thought; and
2. Challenges to lifelong participation, presented at structural and individual levels.

WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND AGEING IN SPORT AND RECREATION

During the literature review, six themes were identified regarding trends in thinking about active participation and ageing in sport and recreation:

1. Disengagement from participation;
2. Benefits of participation;
3. Maintaining participation;
4. Motivations to participate;
5. Unique experiences of participation; and
6. Participation through the life-course.

An overview of the main points for each of these themes is presented in Table 2.

These themes represent ways of thinking that have emerged at various points since the mid-20th century, and highlight significant shifts in thought and practice relating to adults' and older people's participation in sport and recreation. The nature of this group's participation in sport and recreation has evolved since the 1960's, sometimes consistent with the ways society considers and values ageing, and sometimes in contrast, with sport providing a sphere for stereotypes of ageing to be challenged. While each of the themes is distinct from one another, they cannot be considered sequential stages in the development of mainstream thinking, as there continues to be examples of the different ways of thinking in contemporary society. For instance, aspects of disengagement and negative stereotypes of ageing continue to be prevalent, as evidenced through the AHRC's research [18]. The overview provided in Table 2 provides insight into what has influenced the approaches of organisations and institutions, as well as what has influenced the approaches of individuals with regard to the types of activities they seek and the extent of their participation.

Table 2: Summary of Perspectives on Active Participation and Ageing

Perspectives	Key Points
<p>Disengagement from participation</p> <p><i>Dominant view pre-1960's</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Competitive sports are for youth, vigorous activity was to be avoided in old age as it would speed up the ageing process [22, 23]. ▪ Withdrawal from mid-life roles and activities – voluntary (self) and mandatory or culturally (e.g. policy, stereotypes) [13]. ▪ Adults or older people participating in sport and recreation not the norm [13].
<p>Benefits of participation</p> <p><i>Emerged during 1960's</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benefits of maintaining physically active lifestyles at all ages recognised. ▪ Adults' and older people's participation increased and types of activities diversified beyond those associated with old age [11]. ▪ Physical declines more likely due to disuse, rather than the act of ageing [24]. ▪ Most research focuses on physical benefits [6, 25]. ▪ More recently, research identifies opportunities for positive psychological benefits: feelings of happiness [26]; maintenance and self-expression of active, athletic and independent identities [25, 27-32]; social interaction, social connectedness and sense of community [33, 34] and to escape feelings of loneliness [19].
<p>Maintaining participation</p> <p><i>Gained momentum during the 1990's</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adults and older people should be able to continue activities, or take up new activities, through their mid-life and into later years [13]. ▪ Continuation of mid-life roles brings benefits to individuals and society [13]. ▪ Adults and older people should be able to make decisions for themselves and opportunities should not be limited [13]. ▪ Society (i.e. community organisations, institutions, etc.) should assist in the continuation process through inclusion of adults and older people [13]. ▪ Policy and practice should recognise adults and older people as distinct groups with different needs and wants [13]. ▪ Adults and older people more likely to participate during the 1990's; participation in Masters sport events grew rapidly [21-23]. ▪ Types of activities more diverse and physically demanding [29].

<p>Motivations to participate</p> <p><i>Increased research during the 1990's</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus of motivation on older athletes participating in elite levels of competition. ▪ Motivations of Masters athletes (aged 40-50) consistently include: fitness, enjoyment, friendship, social interaction, self-expression and challenge [29]. ▪ Motivation research predominantly used predefined surveys and questionnaires leading researchers to question whether the findings truly reflect adults' and older people's motivations [29]. ▪ Qualitative research has revealed competition and / or the need to feel a sense of success are also important motivators [6, 8, 14, 32, 35-37]. ▪ Categorising athletes as motivated by social or competitive reasons is simplistic, as athletes can be motivated by a mixture of both [35]. ▪ Motivations change through the lifespan [3, 29] and gender plays an important influence on motivation and behaviour [8].
<p>Unique experiences of participation</p> <p><i>Gained momentum early / mid 2000's</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adults' and older people's experience of sport and recreation is unique from other groups and the meaning of participation can be complex [6, 26]. ▪ Ageing is not only a biological process, but a lived and individual experience [6, 22, 26, 29]. ▪ In a sample of 56-to-90-year-old World Masters Games competitors, researchers identified four distinct themes in relation to ways adults and older athletes negotiated the ageing process through their sport participation [22], including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoiding old age - Intention to participate until no longer able, believed they could avoid, or at least postpone, the ageing process through continued participation; 2. Fighting the ageing process - Maintained self-control through sport participation, but also feared losing control and becoming the stereotypical version of 'old' if they did not participate. 3. Redefining self and old-age - Participation in sport contributes to a well-balanced lifestyle, which is underpinned by an acceptance of the ageing process. 4. Adapting and accepting - Valued participation overall and the ideas of making the most of everyday, accepting the ageing process and adapting where necessary to enable participation.

<p>Participation through the life-course</p> <p><i>Gained momentum mid 2000s</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Participation behaviour is a product of the influences and experiences accumulated throughout our lives [1, 38].▪ Long-term development is a trajectory, influenced over time by a number of dimensions, including physical, psychological, or social development, and the interactions with our social environments (i.e. family, education, work) [38].▪ The life-trajectory is a career, charting a person’s pattern of physical activity over time, where prior physical activity behaviours are considered to have a direct predictive effect on future participation (i.e. both active or inactive behaviour) [1, 38].▪ Notion of life course, or trajectory, helps to understand the complexity of achieving active participation habits.▪ Trajectories can change, but this often take time.▪ Research supports interventions for all stages of life, designed to be sensitive to the unique circumstance of each stage [1, 38]. For instance, interventions for early life stages should focus on establishing a foundation for a positive and healthy future, and for later life stages, interventions may aim at reversing well-established at-risk behaviours.
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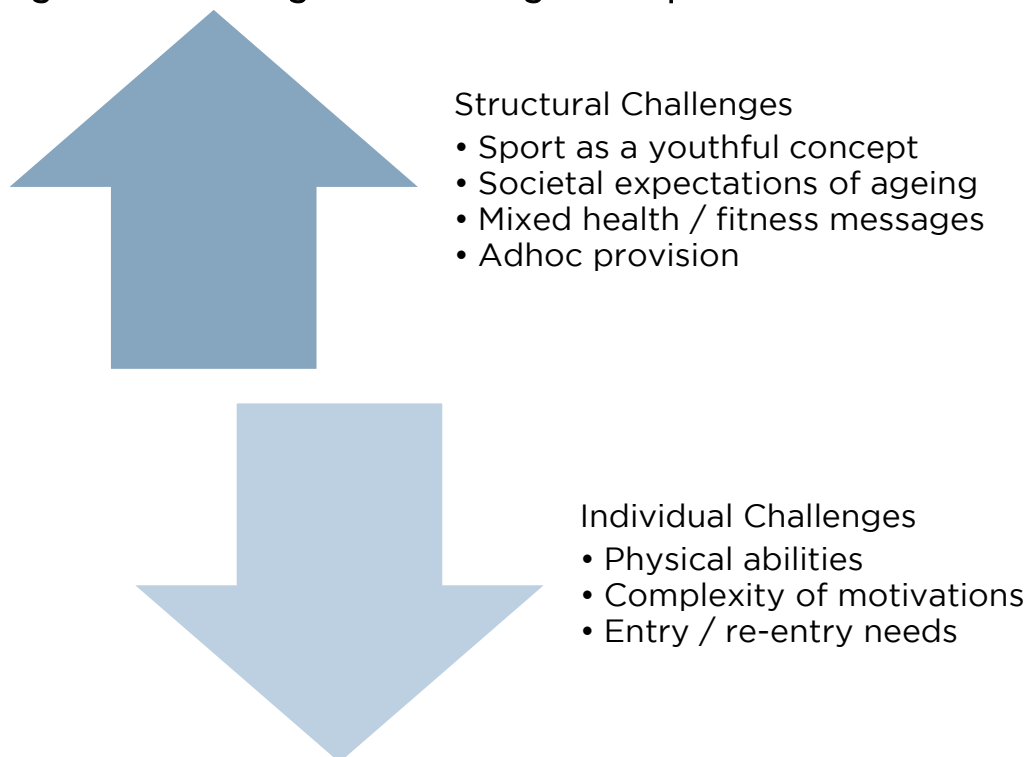
Moving forward, the latter two themes (i.e. unique experiences of ageing and participation through the life course) have the most to offer the #GetLifelongReady project, in terms of highlighting:

- The complexities of engaging the midlife market (i.e. needs, wants, motivations, individual experiences and meanings); and
- The importance of targeting specific groups (including midlife) throughout the lifespan to maximise the likelihood that people remain active participants, or alternatively, have the skills, confidence and opportunities to re-engage after hiatus.

CHALLENGES TO LIFELONG PARTICIPATION

The literature review highlighted several challenges to lifelong participation. These challenges are indicated in Figure 2, and have been categorised as structural challenges or individual challenges, to indicate the role that both the sector and the individual have in terms of enabling or increasing active participation. Each of the challenges is elaborated below.

Figure 2: Challenges to Lifelong Participation at Structural and Individual Levels



STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

SPORT AS A YOUTHFUL CONCEPT

“Sport... celebrates and values physical and mental strength, endurance, performance enhancements and competition.” [22]

The notion of sport is commonly associated with strength, agility, endurance, performance and competition. These attributes are typically reserved for youth [22, 29] and are in stark contrast with what society typically associates with ageing; for instance, physical decline, loss and something to be feared [22, 39]. As such, the notion of sport in

later life presents a contradiction [22, 29], and therefore brings a number of complexities influencing both sector provision and individual uptake of opportunities.

The literature suggests the way society typically deals with this complexity and ageing and sport is to construct active, youthful notions of ageing [22]. The problem with constructing ageing this way is that stereotypes of ageing are not challenged [20, 30, 40-42]. Instead, active adults and older people are distanced from inactive adults and older people, and the stereotypes of the ageing process associated with loss, decline and dependency are further entrenched, which has negative effects for those who are not part of the active ageing group [22].

“Older people who do not or cannot live out the individualized rules of participating in regular physical activity and remaining active are positioned as deviant and as causing the social and economic problems associated with ageing.” [31].

EXPECTATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS

A common challenge for adults and older people is the need to negotiate societal expectations of what is suitable for adults and older people. There are often societal expectations that adults’ and older people’s activity should be within a realm of appropriate activity for adults and older people (e.g. non-vigorous, non-competitive, socially-oriented) [13, 27, 43]. While there is an increasing amount of literature highlighting that adults and older people live longer, are more physically capable and expect more in their leisure time [29]; expectations regarding appropriate activity mean many participants experience tension with their athletic identities. For instance, research has highlighted many adults and older people involved with Masters sport maintain a spirit of competitiveness, but are not always comfortable in articulating this as they recognise it is not age-appropriate and may attract unwanted attention [31, 35, 44, 45]. This means many participants will often downplay their involvement, their commitment and their performance.

Others may be more comfortable revealing their competitive identities and engaging in practices to reinforce their identity, such as buying merchandise [30]. From this perspective, sport becomes a way for adults and older people to negotiate societal expectations, resist stereotypes of ageing and recreate and express their identities [29, 42]. This is particularly so for female participants, as participation can enable the resistance of stereotypes, opportunities for empowerment, a sense of identity and a sense of community [46].

In terms of social and familial obligations, there are often expectations by significant others to fulfil household duties and commitments – both male and female roles [6] – which can impact on active participation. For those in families with young children, there is often caution around sacrificing time with children and spouses to be involved in an activity [47]. For adults with teenage or university-aged children, familial roles can be both positive and negative. For instance, spouses and / or children may support and therefore enable participation. However, factors such as scheduling conflicts between parents and children may be negative, with children’s commitments often taking priority over parents’ active participation [48]. Older adults often have childcare duties bestowed upon them [6].

MIXED HEALTH AND FITNESS MESSAGES

Our society has placed a substantial emphasis on the individual taking responsibility for their fitness, health and independence [6]. While developments in technology and marketing have given us an increased awareness of choices, opportunities and limitations [26], many adults and older people are confused about what one should or should not do in order to maintain health [6]. On one hand, advice is prescriptive and implies homogeneity across the group [6]. On the other hand, the increased amount of information has created a crowded market place where people have difficulty in discerning what advice they should or should not follow [6].

Consistent with the discussion under the previous themes, much health promotion has emphasised anti-ageing messages and promoted ‘use it or lose it’, rather than valuing different ways of ageing [19, 35, 42, 43, 49]. Through this lens, sport and physical recreation has become positioned as an obligation, a prescription against ageing, rather than something engaged in out of free choice and intrinsic motivations [35, 43]. Framing participation in exercise, physical activity or sport and recreation as an obligation is problematic because at some stage in later life, participation may no longer be possible [20, 25].

The language and imagery we use in the marketing of sport and recreation opportunities and face-to-face interactions with adults and older people also contributes to mixed health and fitness messages. Comments such as “playing sport at your age” can be discouraging during the take-up of an activity as adults and older people are often already self-conscious of their ageing selves without more attention being drawn to it [6]. For some, labels commonly used to describe adults or older people are not relevant or acceptable to people in these categories, as their self-perceptions are very much aligned with a younger identity [14]. Some messages are seen to focus too much on the commercial aspect of exercise, with exercise to be purchased as a means to an end [6]. Some messages ignore notions of play and spontaneity, which is a fundamental aspect of meaningful leisure activities [6]. Images depicting skinny young bodies are likely to keep older people away [6], while images of much older people are unlikely to connect with people in their midlife [25]. Research indicates marketing should avoid labels, and focus on terms and imagery that are positively associated with those in the targeted life-stage, and not focused on the extremities of age or activity [14, 25].

AD HOC PROVISION

There is no point motivating older people to become more active if no opportunities, in the shape of services, facilities or classes, exist to back this up [14].

Regular participation and competition opportunities are likely to increase motivation to maintain involvement [35]. However, one-off events, such as Masters sport events or short-term programs that are not supported by ongoing programs, have the potential to stimulate interest, but do not enable adults or older people to establish routines, develop friendships and / or maintain activity [14]. Ongoing programs, structured similarly to mainstream programming, provide benefits to participants above and beyond participation in physical activity [35], such as regular social interaction. A key difference to mainstream programming is that some adults and older people do not want to stop at

certain times of the year, such as for school holidays, and would rather their programs continue regularly and without interruption [14].

INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGES

While there is much to be gained by regularly participating in sport and recreation throughout life, it is not always as easy as it might seem [6, 41].

PHYSICAL ABILITY

Active participation requires individuals to deal with the physicality of ageing and negotiate the physical realities of ageing [13, 29, 43]. This is a complex process and incorporates the extent to which physical abilities are real or perceived. The process of ageing often brings declines in physical competence and function, and this may prevent participation in activities [6, 14], or it requires individuals to adapt and modify their skills to continue to participate [42]. This physical reality of ageing is also accompanied by perceptions of ability and people's beliefs about what their bodies can or cannot handle [6, 14]. Adults and older people are susceptible to messaging about physical activity from both their families and broader marketing campaigns [6]. Given the various mixed messages discussed under other themes in this section, individuals often need to be reassured that age alone should not be used as an excuse for not participating [6, 14].

HETEROGENEITY OF MARKET

The individual experiences, interests, needs, wants and motivations across the midlife market and associated subgroups, present the sport and recreation sector with a complex task in encouraging engagement. For some participants, individual activities are often preferred over team activities [6], for reasons including:

- The need to have control over personal time;
- The desire to have control over the level of competitiveness;
- Freedom to practice and play as much or as little as possible; and / or
- No need to rely on others for training or playing a game.

A study of Masters swimming (subjects ages ranging from 21-57 years), however, found the structure (e.g. access to coaching and new training techniques) and the social opportunities afforded through group activity is what had attracted newcomers to the club [47].

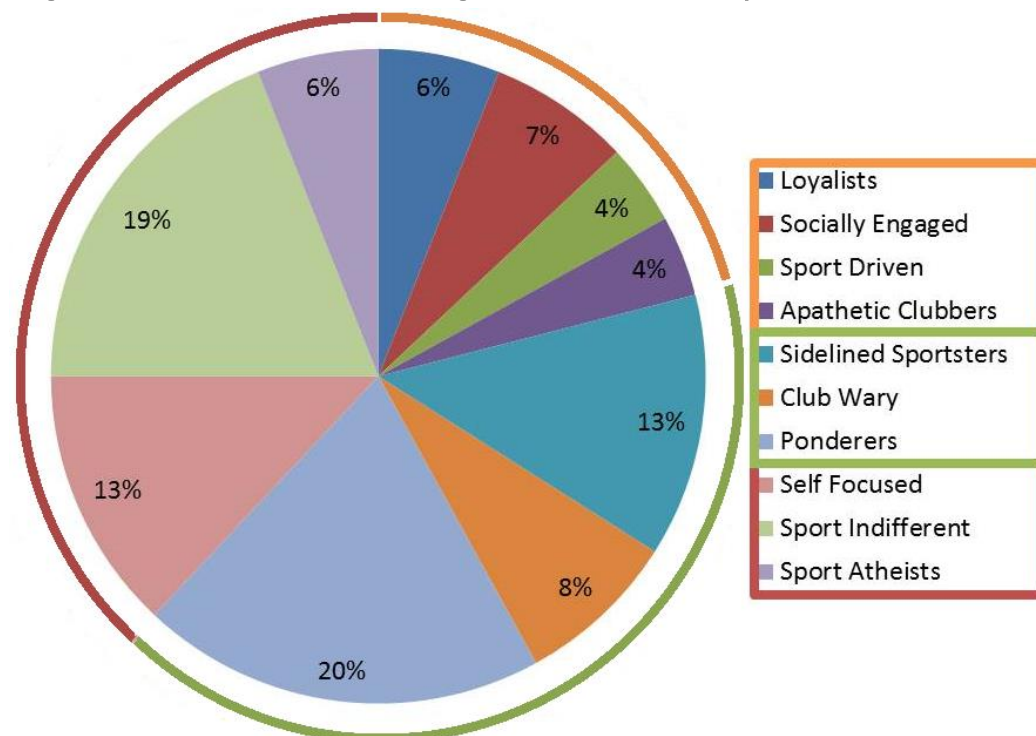
A study of Australians aged 55-93 years [8] found:

- Women are more likely to rate medical, social and involvement reasons higher than men;
- Those aged 75 and over rated medical reasons more highly than younger participants;
- Participants who described themselves as ‘homemakers’ rated involvement motivations higher than those who described themselves as professionals; and
- Active participants were more highly educated than population averages.

More recently, the Australian Sport Commission (ASC) sought to uncover and articulate the motivations, attitudes, needs and barriers influencing the Australian adult population (aged 14-65 years) in the club-based sport setting [17]. Figure 3 presents the market segments identified through the market research. For the purpose of this review, we focus on the three broader categories:

1. Already participating (Orange) - Low potential for growth (Loyalists, Socially Engaged, Sport Driven and Apathetic Clubbers);
2. Not participating (Green) - Potential for growth (Sidelined Sportsters, Club Wary, Ponderers); and
3. Not participating (Red) - Low potential for growth (Self Focused, Sport Indifferent, Sport Atheists).

Figure 3: ASC’s Market Segmentation for Sport⁴



The focus of the ASC’s market segmentation was for the potential for growth in the club-based organised sport setting; this shows the segments not currently participating

⁴ Percentages reported refer to Australian adults aged 14-65 years.

(highlighted in Green). However, an outdoor recreation perspective reveals broader potentialities for growth, as the segments grouped as not participating and low potential for growth (in the sport setting) may better align with the characteristics of unstructured outdoor recreation activities.

ENTRY / RE-ENTRY NEEDS

Many adults understand the importance of being physically active as they get older, however, they do not consciously plan their uptake of physical activity in preparation for their participation later in life [2]. This means when they come to re-join or take up a new activity, they may need to be supported to ensure a positive and ongoing experience.

Many people in this category are reliant on their social networks in terms of finding out about opportunities, or being asked to join in by someone who already participates [6, 14, 47]. The presence of social bonds also influence the likelihood that adults and older people will continue regular and ongoing involvement in an activity [50].

Once connected with an activity, adults and older people may lack the technical knowledge needed to participate fully, and this often causes uncertainty and anxiety [41]. There is often embarrassment associated with getting back into activities, fear of being the odd one out in terms of age, having to re-learn skills and feeling self-conscious if others are watching [6].

“I was encouraged by others to just have a go, but was very aware that I was on show and at first it is very difficult to feel comfortable. It had been a few years, quite a few, since I had been very active and there were concerns about my ability to ‘keep up’ and look reasonable. I think this is probably more difficult to cope with when you’re older. I was lucky that my friends were very supportive and few others were around.” Edith, age 71 [6]

Other barriers to entry which may be less obvious are the cultural aspects in terms of fitting into the culture of an activity and / or group [47]. A study of acculturation for newcomers to a Masters swimming club found four key aspects impacting on connection with the club [47]:

1. Terminology and Jargon - The extent to which newcomers can decipher communications between coach and swimmer, and swimmer and swimmer;
2. Cultural Practices - Learning the etiquette of group swimming, swimming in a circle, leaving space between swimmers and learning drills;
3. Status Position - Understanding where a swimmer is situated by skill and finding similarly skilled athletes to group with; and
4. Effort - Learning how hard to push oneself to be able to complete training sessions effectively.

The psychological investment for individuals entering or re-entering an activity is high. Participants must make important lifestyle adjustments to commit to regular activity, and they undergo a series of cost-benefit thoughts during this process [47]. The initial experiences of beginners, or those re-entering activities, will be an important determinant on whether or not they continue to participate [6].

“Older people are encouraged to come along and have a go, but it’s difficult to really enjoy it unless you stick to it for a while. It can also be frustrating, particularly when you haven’t played for a number of years. Your mind can remember what it used to be like but you just can’t perform like you used to. It’s not surprising that most people don’t have much success at first. I can remember this well. It would have been very easy just to give up.” Mary, age 74 [6]

FINAL REMARKS

KEY POINTS

The purpose of this report was to gather existing information on lifelong participation in sport and recreation to inform the #GetLifelongReady project and guide subsequent phases of the project. During the process of selecting and reviewing articles, it became apparent much of the literature relevant to lifelong participation focuses on a particular subgroup, mostly elite Masters sport athletes aged 50 years and over. While the insights to this group are important, and sometimes transferable to a broader demographic, this finding during the review process highlighted a need for research pertaining to broader stakeholder groups. For instance, there is a greater need for insights into the primary target for #GetLifelongReady, being those between the ages of 36-60 returning to activity from a hiatus, and the various subgroups this entails. Information is needed to better understand ways the sector can effectively develop inclusive activities for this group, engage them and support their participation through this phase of their lives, and encourage participation well after the 60-year age mark.

With these limitations noted, the review did gather information to help understand:

1. Ways of thinking about active participation and ageing in sport and recreation, including historical trends and emerging bodies of thought; and
2. Challenges to lifelong participation, including challenges presented at structural and individual levels.

Key Points: Ways of thinking about active participation and ageing in sport and recreation

- The idea of active participation for adults and older people is relatively a new one. For instance, today’s 80-year-old participants grew up in an era when active adults were not the norm and dominant thinking was that physical activity should be avoided in old age.
- We have come a long way in the last 50 years, however, we do need to acknowledge that stereotypes of ageing continue to exist in our society, and these stereotypes shape the offering of active opportunities for adults and older people, and influence the likelihood of engagement at the individual level.
- In addition, while there are adults participating in organised events and activities, even at an elite level, we must acknowledge this participation is still not the norm. This is highlighted by the participation statistics in Figure 1, whereby approximately only half of our Queensland population aged 35-64 years reported participating in a sport and / or recreation activity at least once in the previous 12 months. This means

approximately half of this group did not participate in one of these activities at all in a 12-month period.

- The emerging ways of thinking about participation – acknowledgement of the unique experiences of sport and participation accumulated through the life course – will have much to offer the sector as we seek to improve our understanding of people who do not currently participate, and identify levers to engage this section of the population over the longer term.

Key Points: Challenges to Lifelong Participation

- **Concept of Sport** – Youthful connotations attached to sport can be limiting and exclusionary, and reinforce, rather than challenge, stereotypes of ageing.
- **Expectations and Obligations** – The perspectives of ageing held by society, and significant others, along with expectations of social roles, have an effect on individuals' active participation behavior.
- **Mixed Messages** – Society has placed responsibility on individuals to maintain their fitness, health and independence, positioning activity as an obligation. There is limited accessible information to support the everyday person achieving these outcomes. The marketing of activities is a complex process of ensuring the language and imagery connects with and enables the target market.
- **Ad Hoc Provision** – Short-term, one-off events and programs are not conducive to adults and older people establishing routines, developing friendship and / or maintaining their participation in an activity.
- **Physical Ability** – Adults and older people experience a complex negotiation of their real and perceived physical in/abilities. This is influenced by the messages they receive from their social and media environments.
- **Heterogeneity of Market** – The broad phrase 'adults and older people' used throughout this review of literature refers to an enormity of subgroups, with different lived experiences, interests, needs and wants concerning sport and recreation participation.
- **Entry / Re-Entry Needs** – The experience of adults and older people during their re/entry is critical to their ongoing participation. Social networks, technical skills and acculturation are key areas influencing commitment to participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the review of literature, the following recommendations are suggested for policy makers and practitioners in the outdoor recreation sector to inform the engagement of 36-to-60-year-olds in active outdoor recreation:

- **Research** – A greater breadth and depth of research is required to understand ways the sector can develop inclusive activities for this group, engage them and support their participation through this phase of their lives. Governments, universities and peak bodies are encouraged to fund / carry out research in this area.
- **Ways of Thinking** – Organisations should be open to new ways of thinking and acknowledge 'unique experiences' and 'physical activity through the life course'. These emergent ways of thinking justify the identification of the midlife group (i.e. 36-60) as a specific market to target and engage.

- **Concept of Sport and Activity** – Organisations should give thought broadly to the inclusivity of their organisations and activities. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the nature of outdoor recreation as it is more broadly defined than ‘sport’ and due to its nature has less restrictions imposed on activities. These characteristics make outdoor recreation a space for family leisure and if implemented thoughtfully, can be inclusive of a range of abilities.
- **Expectations and Obligations** – Organisations should support individuals in their negotiation of expectations and obligations through all aspects of designing, scheduling and marketing activities.
- **Mixed Messages** – Organisations should be proactive in providing clear, succinct and relevant health messages about activities.
- **Marketing** – Once an organisation has considered inclusive philosophies and programming, it is important the marketing accurately reflects these characteristics.
- **Ad Hoc Provision** – Programming should be approached on a long-term basis, designed to progressively challenge participants.
- **Physical Ability** – Organisations should consider practical ways of addressing physical abilities, understand this may include supporting adults to negotiate perceived physical in/abilities, and in some instances, it may involve the modification of activities to overcome real physical limitations.
- **Heterogeneity of Market** – Policymakers and practitioners need to understand the subtleties across the sub-groups discussed throughout this review. It is important to be targeted rather than attempt to be everything to everyone.
- **Entry / Re-Entry Needs** – Organisations should provide support for adults re-entering, or entering for the first time, to ensure a positive experience and ongoing participation.

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