

# Trends in Physical Activity

Summary Report No 1 2005

- **The trend since 1998 is stable, showing that only half of the South Australian adult population is undertaking sufficient physical activity to benefit their health.**
- **The proportion of people undertaking vigorous physical activity has increased from 32.1% in 1998 to 36.9% in 2004.**
- **There appears to have been a slight shift from walking and other moderate activities toward vigorous activity, with the overall amount of activity not changing.**

## Introduction

Physical activity is an important factor in a healthy lifestyle and helps to maintain a healthy weight.

The 2004 South Australian Physical Activity survey asked a sample of 2999 adults about the amount of physical activity they had undertaken in the past week. The types of physical activity considered were: walking, vigorous physical activity which made people breathe harder or puff and pant (for example jogging, cycling and organised sports) and more moderate activities such as golf, gentle swimming or lawn bowls. The results provide a picture of leisure time activities people undertook in a week and can be compared to similar surveys done in South Australia in 1998 and 2001.

## Sufficient physical activity

The amount of time people undertake walking, moderate or vigorous activity can be summed to determine whether a level of physical activity sufficient to provide a health benefit has been achieved.

There are two definitions, the first definition involves achieving a minimum level of 150 minutes of walking or moderate or vigorous activity in the past week (with time spent doing vigorous activity multiplied by two to account for its greater intensity).

According to this definition, in 2004 53.9% of South Australian adults achieved a level of physical activity sufficient to confer a health benefit. In 2001 the figure was 52.5% and in 1998 52.7%. Thus there has been no detectable change over the six years (Figure 1).

The second definition uses the 150 minutes of activity as described above, however also states that the activity must be undertaken over at least five sessions in the week. In 2004 the prevalence of sufficient physical activity by this definition was 42.9%. In 2001 the figure was 40.3% and in 1998 40.9%. The level of sufficient activity according to Definition 2 has therefore not significantly changed between 1998 and 2004 (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Trends in level of sufficient physical activity over six years (Definition 1)

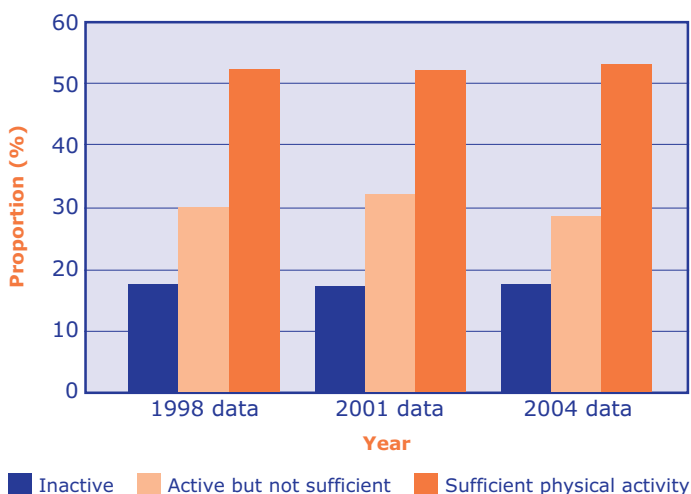
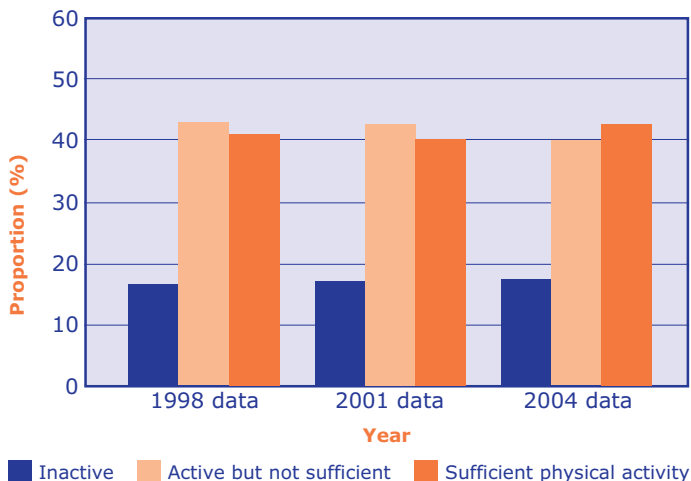
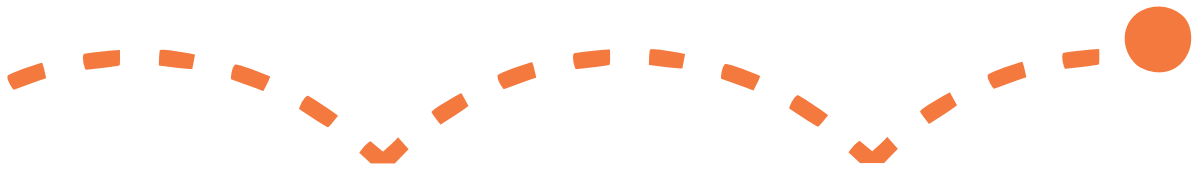


Figure 2: Trends in level of sufficient physical activity over six years (Definition 2)

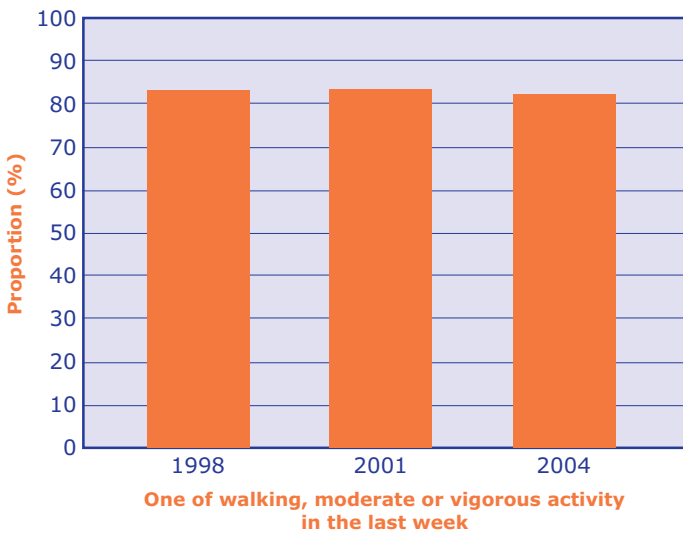




### Individual activities

The survey demonstrated that 82.8% of people participated in at least one of: walking, moderate or vigorous activity in the past week. This compares with 83.5% in 2001 and 83.2% in 1998 and indicates that there has been no detectable change in the level of these activities when combined. Figure 3 demonstrates the trend in undertaking these activities between 1998 and 2004.

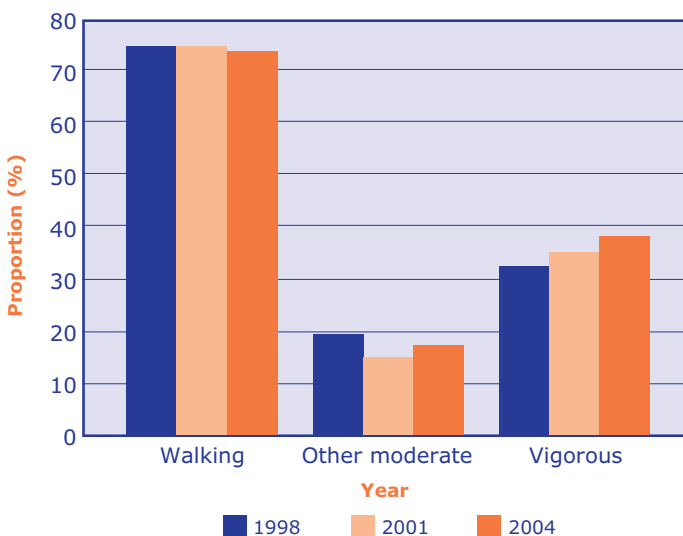
**Figure 3: Participation in at least one of either walking, moderate or vigorous activities in the last week**



### Trends in activity type

Although the sum of activities shows no change in six years from 1998 to 2004, there have been changes in the patterns of individual activities. Figure 4 shows these graphically, and the individual trends are described in the following text.

**Figure 4: Trends in individual activities**



### Walking

- The proportion of survey respondents who reported that they had walked in the last week has not significantly changed between 1998 and 2004.
- In 2004 74.2% walked in the last week compared to 75.1% in 2001 and 75.2% in 1998.

### Moderate activity

- The proportion of people who stated that they had performed a moderate level of physical activity fell significantly between 1998 and 2001 but that difference had been erased by 2004.
- In 2004 it was 17.5%, in 2001 it was 14.8% and in 1998 it was 19.1%.

### Vigorous activity

- The proportion of respondents undertaking vigorous physical activity has increased significantly between 1998 and 2004.
- The proportion in 2004 was 36.9%, in 2001 it was 34.6% and in 1998 it was 32.1%.

### Using trends to inform the physical activity strategy

There has been no detectable change in the overall level of sufficient physical activity between 1998 and 2004, however the combination of activities used to calculate this measure appears to have changed slightly. Vigorous activity is more prevalent and this appears to have emerged from less moderate activity and possibly also less walking. These trends will continue to be monitored.

Since monitoring commenced in 1998 there has been only half of the South Australian population achieving a sufficient level of physical activity. Regular physical activity is an important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and reducing the risks of obesity and serious illnesses.

These results are being used to inform South Australian policy directions related to physical activity. A list of Physical Activity Council and Research Panel members, the full and short reports, and the questionnaire are available at [www.beactive.com.au](http://www.beactive.com.au)



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