

YOGA PARTICIPANTS

WHO ARE THEY IN AUSTRALIA

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Yoga Australia is often asked for details about who participates in yoga. How many yoga students are there across Australia?

Are my classes unusual? Is there such a thing as a typical yoga student?

Are there groups of people we are not reaching?

With the enormous expansion of yoga, in numbers and diversity, over the last few decades, there is no simple way to keep track of these sorts of statistics. Our annual member surveys (you will have received one in Yoga Australia mail outs in the last couple of months) give us information from a sample of our members but we need to turn to broader research for more representative answers. The Yoga in Australia study (2006) gave us some extensive data, but how much of this is still current? Yoga Australia recently purchased a Roy Morgan Research Report, The Yoga Participants Profile 2015 -2016. This article is the beginning of a summary of this snapshot profile.

The Yoga Participants Profile, produced by Roy Morgan Research, is drawn from a large survey of a purposefully representative sample of 20,000 people (14 yrs+) around Australia during July 2015 – June 2016. A range of information about personal characteristics, interests, activities and habits was collected from this sample, which came from all states, socio-economic groups, ages, household types and incomes. Of interest to us are the 1,240 people who ticked yoga as one of the sport/recreation activities in which they participated, regularly or occasionally. Information about these people was combined with ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) data to give a projected profile of yoga participants in Australia, estimated to number just over 2 million.

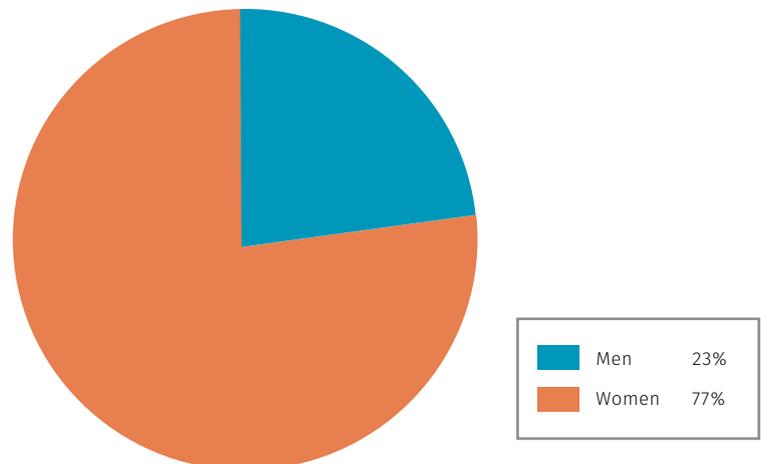
As with all research and statistics, it's important to remember that a number of factors may skew the information in this report and we need to be careful about drawing definitive conclusions and relationships, even though the report gives us some potentially useful insights and affirmations. For example the report indicates that yoga participants are 127% more likely than the average Australian to buy women's fashion magazines. This is likely to reflect the relative high numbers of young women doing yoga rather than (or as well as?) saying anything about a direct relationship between buying fashion magazines and doing yoga. On the other hand, we might not be surprised to find that in this profile, people who do yoga are 113% more likely to eat mostly, or all, vegetarian food. We might also question the extent to which this survey captured the true nature of the yoga participant population in Australia, because we don't exactly know what was in people's minds when they ticked the 'yoga' box. Three factors need to be borne in mind here:

- Yoga was not defined or explained (people chose it in a long list of sports and activities that included pilates, martial arts and gym/weight-training but did not include meditation, relaxation or other Eastern influenced/new age activities).
- People could have been referring to their own practice rather than participating in classes.
- Regular and occasional were not defined

... so this profile includes an unknown percentage of people who may only do yoga very occasionally, who may have ticked the box because it was the closest to their gym stretch class or their tai chi class, etc.

It is interesting, however, to consider the general characteristics of this profile and compare them with what we experience in our part of the Australian yoga community:

It is no surprise to find that more women than men do yoga - this Roy Morgan profile suggests that 77% of yoga participants are women and 23% men. Interestingly, the Yoga in Australia survey found, in 2006, that 85.5% of participants were women. Perhaps we have seen an increase in the number of men doing yoga in the last decade. [Penman 2008:224]



REFERENCES

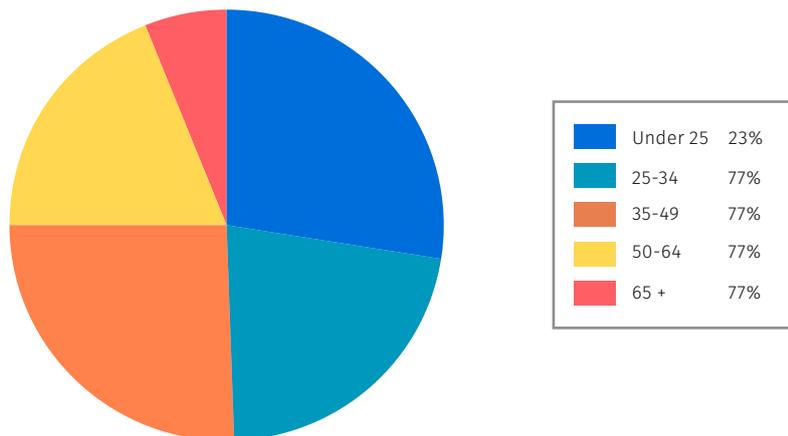
Yoga Participants Profile, July 2015 –June 2016, Roy Morgan Research

Yoga in Australia: Results of A National Survey, 2008 Stephen Penman (<https://researchbank.rmit.edu.au/eserv/rmit:6110/Penman.pdf>)

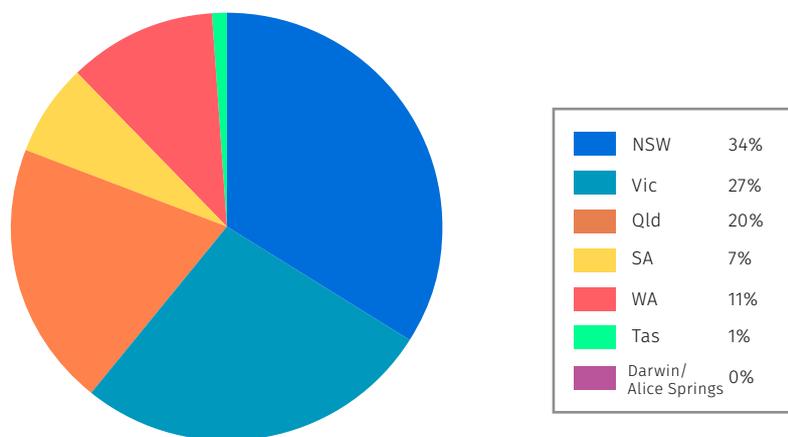
How old are we? Would you have expected that the age breakdown in this 2015-2016 profile is:

14-25yo	22%
25-34yo	28%
35-49yo	26%
50-64yo	19%
over 65	6%

In 2006 the mean age of a yoga student was 41.4 years, '... with the largest proportion of students in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups' [Penman 2008:223].



State by State, yoga participation looks like this:



According to this 2015-2016 profile, nearly 60% of yoga participants have a diploma or degree. 41% work full time, 30% work part-time and 30% are not employed (looking for work, students, home duties, retired, don't work). The average individual income in this profile is \$47,000 and average household income is \$116,900 and in terms of discretionary expenditure this profile is deemed to be a lot more likely (by 34%) to be 'big spenders' than the average Australian.

Education	%
Some Secondary / Tech	7%
Inter. / Form 4 / Year 10	5%
5th Form / Leaving / Year 11	2%
Finished Tech / HSC / Year 12	13%
Some / Now at University	13%
Have Diploma or Degree	59%

Ave. Respondent Income	Ave. Household Income
\$47,620	\$116,900

In this study, 64% of yoga participants have no children. Of all yoga participants, 15% are young singles, 14% young couples, 20% young parents (all under 45), 16% are mid-life families (parents 45-64yo with children under 16 present), 27% mid-life households (45-64yo, no children under 16), 8% are deemed older households (65+ or retired).

So we could say that the 'typical' yoga participant, according to this 2015-2016 profile, is a young working woman (under 34), with a tertiary qualification, living in a household with no children and an income of a bit over one hundred thousand dollars. In the 2006 Yoga in Australia survey, the typical yoga participant '... was found to be a 41-year old, tertiary educated, employed, health-conscious woman' [Penman 2008:236]. Perhaps not much has changed since 2006 except that the average age of yoga students has decreased somewhat and there may have been a slight increase in the proportion of men doing yoga.

The Roy Morgan report also gives us information about yoga participants' attitudes, activities and media usage compared to the average Australian.

In the meantime, let's ponder on the possibility that there are 2 million of us around Australia bringing ourselves into yoga/union regularly or occasionally. What potential there is in our community! ॐ