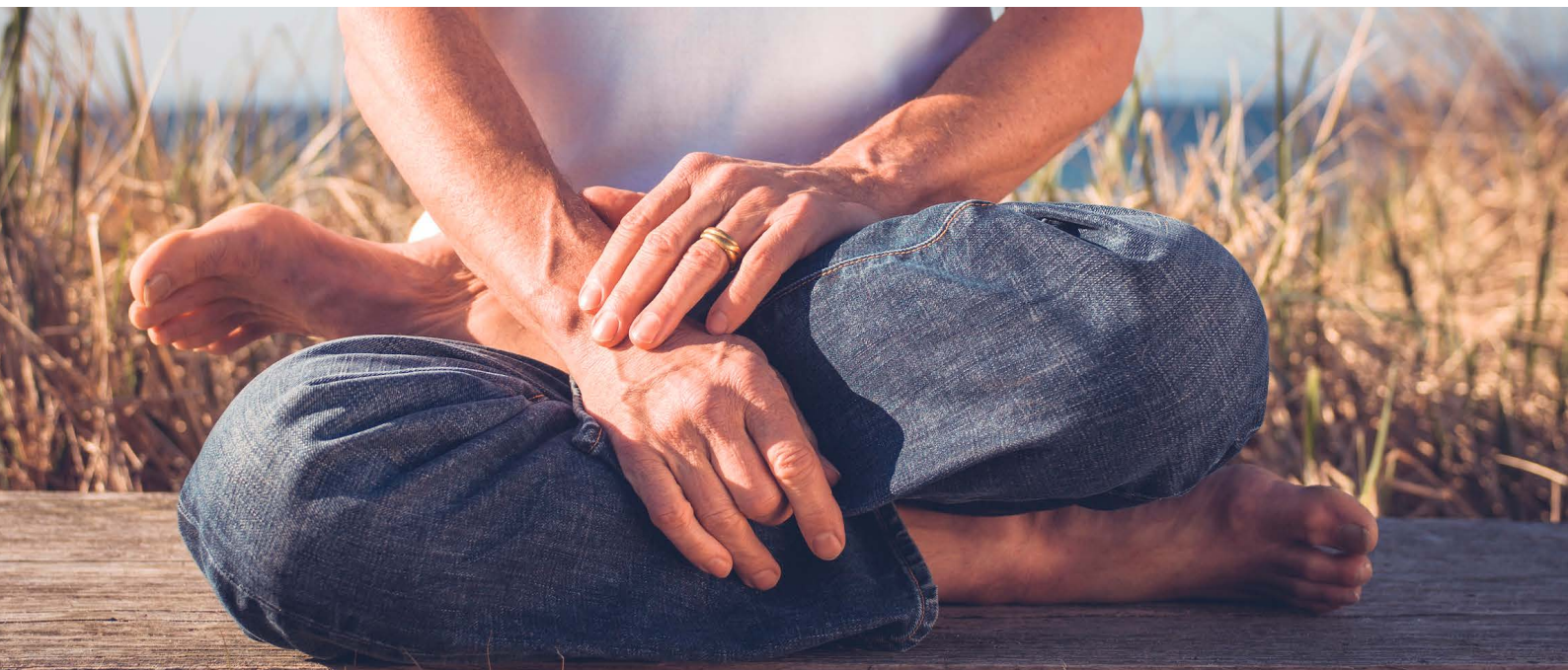


INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE & BUSINESS OF YOGA: DISCUSSION POINT - TOWARDS MORE DIVERSE PARTICIPATION IN YOGA

ARE WE TEACHING PEOPLE WHO ARE THE SAME AS US?



BACKGROUND

In early 2017 Yoga Australia purchased the 'Yoga Participants Profile' report from Roy Morgan Research. This report is based on data extracted from a wider survey of 20,000 Australians (via face-to face interviews and self-completion questionnaires) over the period July 2015 to June 2016. It gives us information about the characteristics of the 1,240 participants who listed yoga as one of their sport/recreation activities and compares them to the general Australian population.

Yoga Australia's response to this report, via the Industry Intelligence and now also the Business of Yoga Working Groups has been in 3 parts. Part 1 - 'Yoga Participants: Who Are They In Australia?' focused on the demographic data and appeared in Yoga Today, Autumn 2017 and part 2, 'When The Teacher Is Ready

The Students Will Be There' was in the Winter edition of Yoga Today and grappled with issues around marketing, profiles and knowing our purpose as teachers.

As a third part of our response, this paper highlights the populations that seem to be under-represented in yoga participation and raises questions about what this might mean and what we are doing to reach out.

POPULATIONS LESS LIKELY TO DO YOGA

The Morgan Yoga Participants Profile shows us certain age ranges, geographic areas, personal characteristics, social/economic/educational groups that are over-represented in the 1,240 yoga participants surveyed and some that are significantly under-represented.

Remembering that this

research cannot tell us specific relationships or causes, and that there are limitations in the study (for example, 'yoga' was not defined), here is a list of populations that were deemed significantly less likely to be participating in yoga than the general Australian population (this list includes only those identified as at least 15% less likely).

- Men (53% less likely)
- 50-64 years old (16% less likely)
- 65 & over (68% less likely)
- Tasmanian (49% less likely to do yoga than the average Australian)¹
- Northern Territory (results too low to be reliable ... but 56% less likely)¹
- People with a secondary education of year 11 or below (45% less likely)
- People with no secondary education (91% less likely). (2)

- People who are retired or not employed (52-62% less likely)
- People who are NOT professionals, managers, white collar workers (ie skilled/part skilled/unskilled workers) are up to 48% less likely. (People who are professionals/managers are 33% more likely to do yoga, white collar workers 49% more likely).
- Income/socio-economic status - not surprisingly, people with less discretionary expenditure were less likely to do yoga (37%) and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were 50% less likely to do yoga

1 Possibly reflects rural/low density population?

2 Possibly reflects age/disability?

3. Note: there is no data on race/ cultural background in this profile report

ARE WE TEACHING PEOPLE WHO ARE THE SAME AS US?

It is interesting to consider whether this list of characteristics is the opposite of the key characteristics of yoga teachers.

We might not have current hard data but there is significant evidence to suggest that yoga teachers are predominantly women. The 'Yoga in Australia Study', for instance, found that 82.6% of teachers were female [Penman 2006:119]. It would be interesting to find out the age statistics for yoga teachers. Are there significantly more teachers who are under 50? Our 2017 member survey might indicate not – 60% of respondents to this year's survey were between 45 and 64 and only 6.25 % were below 34. (This might reflect a different propensity to fill in surveys or it might reflect the age range of teachers rather than an accurate representation of the age of yoga teachers). On the other hand, the 2006 yoga study found that 82% of teachers were 25-54 yo and generally speaking students and teachers were spread similarly across age groups. [Penman – P112]. Are yoga teachers more likely to have higher secondary and tertiary education and are they more likely to live in cities/ more densely populated areas?

In the 2006 study, level of education was similar between teachers and students (p136), as was marital status (p128). The same study looked at 'rurality' [p 116] and found that teachers were slightly less likely to live in capital cities and slightly more likely to live in remote areas or rural centres than students, otherwise a similar percentage of students and teachers live in metro and large rural centres [p 137]. As far as employment status was concerned in 2006, teachers were significantly more likely to be self-employed than their students and less likely to be employed full-time – otherwise similar. [p139] "Teachers were more likely to have a lower household income, and twice as likely as their students to have a household income of \$30,000 or less".

It seems the evidence suggests that, except in a few areas, yoga students and teachers are likely to mirror each other's characteristics. Thus it is no surprise that male, older, less educated, blue collar and geographically isolated populations aren't finding their way to yoga classes.

Many of us teach the people who are attracted to us. Perhaps this means we mostly teach people who move in similar circles to us. If we teach from the 'livingness of our being' then as a matter of course this may be so.

ARE WE ACTIVELY REACHING OUT?

If we are to make yoga more accessible to the populations who are currently missing out we need to consciously reach beyond our familiar zones – something that is intrinsic to the nature of yoga, one would think. This is what teachers are doing when they offer time or classes for free or at reduced cost in what can be variously termed as 'karma yoga', 'philanthropic outreach', or 'pro bono' classes.

This year's YA members survey showed us that 50% of the 208 teachers who responded offered some form of free yoga and 17% said they would like to. And a quick scan of the Yoga Australia website, reveals articles and blogs with encouraging titles such as:

- 'There Will Be Diversity And The Revolution Will Not Be Televised'

- 'Yoga For People Experiencing Disadvantage'
- 'Indigenous Storytelling In Yoga'
- 'Why Boys Need Yoga'
- 'Why Don't More Men Practice Yoga?'

In addition there are articles and blogs looking at the value and feasibility of yoga in PTSD, surviving stroke, diabetes, anxiety and depression, chronic pain, people who are deaf, war veterans, to name just a few.

CAN WE CHALLENGE THESE STATISTICS?

We know that statistics often don't give us a true picture of the world we live and breathe in. Perhaps you have stories of yoga in your area that is accessible to diverse populations? At the very least, Yoga Australia can be a forum for yoga teachers and students to share wisdom, experiences and strategies as we take the wellbeing and personal expansion that yoga can bring to more corners of the world.

REFERENCES

YOGA PARTICIPANTS PROFILE, July 2015 – June 2106, Roy Morgan Research

YOGA IN AUSTRALIA: Results of A National Survey, 2008 Stephen Penman, <https://researchbank.rmit.edu.au/eserv/rmit:6110/Penman.pdf>