

1 Introduction

The Active Australia Survey is designed to measure participation in leisure-time physical activity and to assess knowledge of current public health messages about the health benefits of physical activity. It offers a short and reliable set of questions that can be easily implemented via computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) techniques or in face-to-face interviews.

The Active Australia Survey was first developed and nationally implemented in 1997 to assess the effectiveness of the *Active Australia* campaign which was being run in New South Wales at the time in order to promote physical activity. Since then, the survey has been implemented nationally through the National Physical Activity Surveys in 1999 and 2000 and the Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study in 1999–00. It has also been used in several state-based surveys, such as in Queensland, South Australia, and New South Wales. For more information on surveys of physical activity, see <<http://www.aihw.gov.au>>.

This manual is designed to provide an overview of the survey. It includes a copy of the survey, an implementation guide with instructions for interviewers, a guide to the measures that can be derived from the survey data, information on how these measures are calculated and examples of how they are usually reported. It also provides background information on the development of the survey and an example of CATI coding (Appendix 1).

While this manual specifically focuses on the Active Australia Survey, it is worth noting that other surveys such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Health Surveys also collect and present data on participation in physical activity. However the ABS results are not directly comparable with those of the Active Australia Survey. The key differences between the two surveys are (AIHW forthcoming):

- The Active Australia questions apply to only one week preceding interview, whereas the National Health Survey questions apply to the two weeks preceding interview.
- The Active Australia Survey includes walking for transport, whereas the National Health Surveys do not.
- The Active Australia Survey and the National Health Surveys report levels of participation using different measures.

For more information on the ABS National Health Surveys see <<http://www.abs.gov.au>>.