

Wednesday, 16 November 2016

## It's official: golf is good for you!

The benefits of sports participation are widely acknowledged to go beyond the physical, with sporty people commonly reporting a below-average rate of anxiety, stress and depression. And according to the latest findings from Roy Morgan Research, Australians who play golf are among the least susceptible to these mental health conditions. In recognition of this week's upcoming Emirates Australian Open Golf championship, we shine a spotlight on golf's striking therapeutic benefits...

Just over 1.7 million Australian adults (or 9.3%) play golf either regularly or occasionally, putting it among our 10 most popular forms of exercise. Compared with the average Aussie aged 18+, or even people taking part in most other sports, these golfers are less likely to experience depression, stress, anxiety or even panic attacks.

Between July 2015 and June 2016, 25.8% of Australian adults reported experiencing stress at some point in the preceding 12 months; 18.3% reported having anxiety; 15.1% had depression; and 5.4% suffered at least one panic attack. Among people who play golf, these figures fell to 22.5% for stress, 11.9% for anxiety, 8.7% for depression and 3.0% for panic attacks.

### The effect of playing golf on anxiety, depression, stress and panic attacks

	TOTAL POPULATION		MEN		WOMEN	
	Average	Golfers	Average	Golfers	Average	Golfers
% who experienced anxiety in last 12 months	18.3%	11.9%	14.0%	9.8%	22.4%	21.4%
% who experienced depression in last 12 months	15.1%	8.7%	13.3%	8.3%	16.9%	10.5%
% who experienced stress in last 12 months	25.8%	22.5%	21.0%	19.0%	30.4%	38.1%
% who experienced panic attack in last 12 months	5.4%	3.0%	3.5%	2.5%	7.3%	5.2%

**Source:** Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), July 2015-June 2016, n=14,300. **Base:** Australians 18+

While golf is very much a male-dominated sport (more than eight in every 10 Aussies who play golf are men), its mental-health benefits can be seen among both men and women who take part.

The most striking difference between men who play golf and the average Australian man is in anxiety (9.8% vs 14.0%) and depression (8.3% vs 13.3%) rates, but prevalence of stress and panic attacks is also lower among male golfers.

Among women, the main disparity is in incidence of depression: while 16.9% of Aussie women aged 18+ experience depression, this falls to 10.5% among those who play golf. Anxiety and panic attacks are also less likely among female golfers (puzzlingly, stress is more common).

Furthermore, Roy Morgan Research data also reveals that even watching golf on TV appears to have a positive effect on the viewer's mental health, with golf viewers reporting below-average incidences of anxiety, depression, panic attacks and stress! Sounds like a good reason to tune in to this week's Australian Open...

**Norman Morris, Industry Communications Director, Roy Morgan Research, says:**

*"It's a wonder doctors and psychologists don't prescribe golf as a treatment for people with depression, anxiety, stress and panic attacks. Not only are participants surrounded by nature as they play (which has been found to relax people and reduce stress/anxiety), but they have social interaction with other players (also known to benefit mental health), and have to engage their concentration skills. In fact, the only sport with participants less susceptible to all four mental-health conditions is sailing.*

*"Roy Morgan data shows that men who play golf are not only 30% less likely to experience anxiety and 38% less likely to suffer depression, but also markedly less susceptible to stress and panic attacks.*

*"Among women, the differences are not quite as pronounced, but are still worthy of mention, particularly when it comes to depression rates. As the table above shows, and as Roy Morgan has reported previously, women are more likely than men to experience these conditions in general, so any reduction is a positive development.*

*"Golf is well known for its popularity among older Australians, and it should be noted that Australians aged over 50 are consistently less likely than younger Aussies to be stressed, depressed or anxious. However, Roy Morgan data shows that golf's mental health benefits apply to participants of all ages. For example, 30.9% of 18-24 year-olds overall report having felt stressed in the last 12 months—compared with only 17.3% of those who play golf.*

*"The reduced prevalence of anxiety, stress, depression and panic attacks among people who watch golf on TV is intriguing: perhaps the game's slow pace and its scenic setting have some kind of relaxing effect?"*

*"Roy Morgan's deep health data is an invaluable resource for sporting and health professionals, providing insights not only into Australians' sports participation and viewing habits, but also enabling investigation into the correlation between different sports and their participants' mental and physical health."*

**For comments or more information about Roy Morgan Research's sporting and health data, please contact:**

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## Related research findings

View our [extensive range of sports participant profiles](#), including our [Golfers profile](#), and our profiles of [people with different mental health conditions](#), including [People with Depression](#).

Compiled with data from Roy Morgan's Single Source survey (the largest of its kind in the world, with 50,000 respondents p.a), these ready-made profiles provide a broad understanding of the target audience, in terms of demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage in Australia.

## About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years' experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

## Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2