Maja Pori,
Boris Sila
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sport

FREQUENCY OF SPORT ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION OF SLOVENES

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1973 the frequency of participation in sport activities of Slovene adults has been followed. That year only 11% of people were regularly active (at least twice a week) and 58% were not active at all (Sila, 2007). Over the decades the number of physically active adult Slovenes is on the rise. There were 59% of people regularly or occasionally active in the year 2006 (Pori, Bednarik and Kolenc, 2008). People are becoming more and more aware of positive impacts of sport activity on gaining and keeping health from youth to seniority. Good health is on the top of the list of most important values of an individual (Sila, 2003). Physical activity can improve the quality of life for adults of all ages and conditions (Seefeldt, Malina and Clark, 2002).

Only adequate and systematic sport activity plays an important part in maintaining good health. Sport activity increases the functional ability of the heart (Berlin and Colditz, 1990, Fras, 2002), have positive impact on decreasing blood pressure (Arnoll and Beaglehole, 1992), it helps with weight control (Kromhout, Bloemberg, Siedell, Nissinen and Menotti, 2001; Mišigoj-Duraković, 2003), it reduces stress (Hassmen, Koivula and Uutela, 2000)…

As regards benefits for health, the most desirable type of sport activity is the regular organised one, which is held at least twice a week with qualified staff (Berčič, 2001). It has been also proved, that four times more active are people who participate in organised types of sport activities compared to non-organised ones (meaning they are practising without professional guidance) (Doupona Topič and Sila, 2007).

Nowadays people should be active to avoid or compensate the negative influence of modern lifestyle. Every day we have been bombed with new technological ‘toys’, which enables us to spend the day more non-active. We are able to shop from home working desk, do all sort of bank procedures from home computer, and get bought things delivered on the front door...On the other side we have also been bombed with all sorts of promotions of physical active lifestyle. There are for example numerous jumbo posters looking at us, inviting to be active, to buy the newest running shoes or to take the active weekend off in a ski resort... Which sport activity should we choose? Which activity should have the most positive impact on our well-being?

The aim of this study was to present the data on sport participation of Slovenes and to compare the latest results with a similar research done in the year 1973. We were also interested in establishing sport activities, which are the most popular among Slovenes.

2. METHODS

2.1. Subject sample

The data was obtained with interviewing adults in Slovenia in the framework of Slovenian Opinion Research conducted by the Research Centre of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana in April 2009. The sample consisted of 1286 persons, aged over 15 years (age 46,6 ± 18,9 years). The structure by gender was 46% to 54% in favour to females.

2.2. Variable sample

To assess the frequency of sport activity a 7 level scale was used (Table 1). To gain the most popular sport activity the list of 52 sport activities was formed (Sila, 2007). In this study we are presenting only the first 15 most popular sport activities among Slovenes (Table 2).

2.3. Data analysis

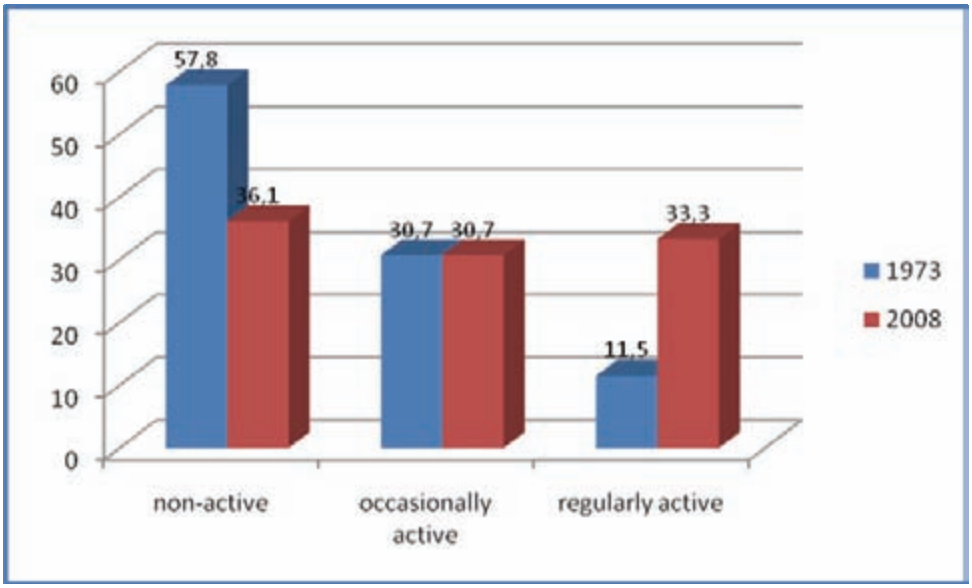
First we computed the frequencies of participation in any sport activity and second in particular (proposed list) sport activity. The results are presented in percentage.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSION

The results of frequency of sport activity in general are shown in Table 1. From the 7-category scale we computed 3 categories of participation: non-active (the sum of 1. and 2. category), occasionally active (the sum of 3. and 4 category) and active (the sum of 5., 6. and 7. category) and compared it to the results in 1973 (Graph 1).

Table 1: *Frequency of sport activity on the 7-category scale*

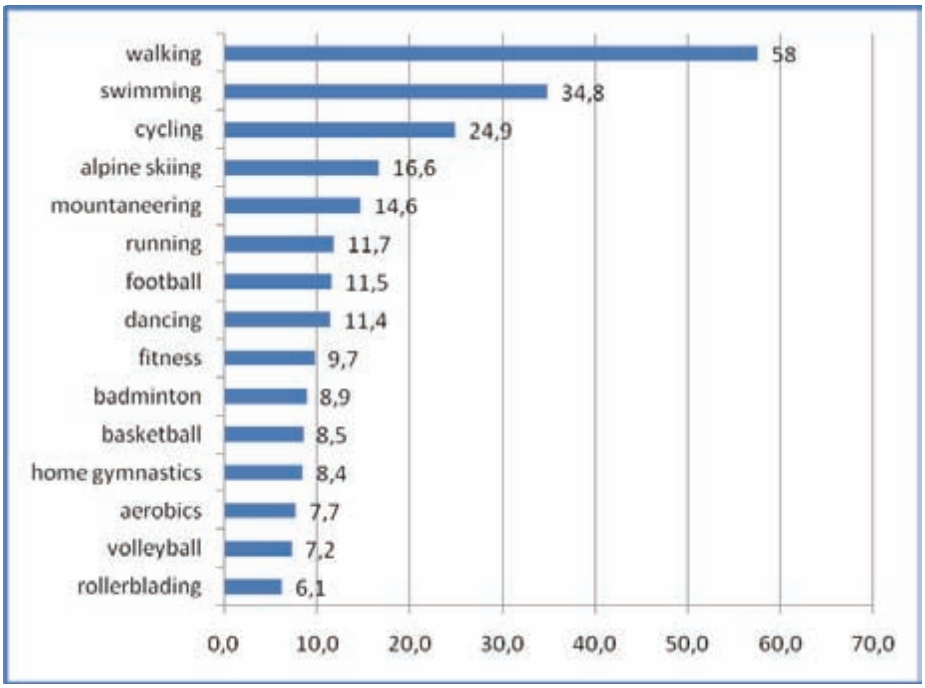
frequency	f	%
1 - non-active	367	28.9
2 - once to a couple times a year	92	7.2
3 - 1 to 3 times a month	175	13.8
4 - once a week	215	16.9
5 - 2 to 3 times a week	215	16.9
6 - 4 to 6 times a week	67	5.3
7 - every day	141	11.1



Graph 1: *Frequency of sport activity on the 3-category scale*

The results show that our sample broke down to 3 more or less equal groups: a little more than a third are regularly active (33%), a third are occasionally active (31%) and 36% are non-active. More than 3 decades ago (1973) proportion was very different (Graph 1). The number of occasionally active people stayed the same, while the number of regularly active increased. The growth of 22% of regularly active people shows that Slovenes are aware of positive impacts of sport activity on their well-being. Individuals who exercise regularly enjoy better health than those who are sedentary (Wagner, LaCroix and Buchner, 1992). It is obvious, that promotion of active lifestyle through past 37 years has achieved some results. The number of non-active is the lowest in this study (36%) ever.

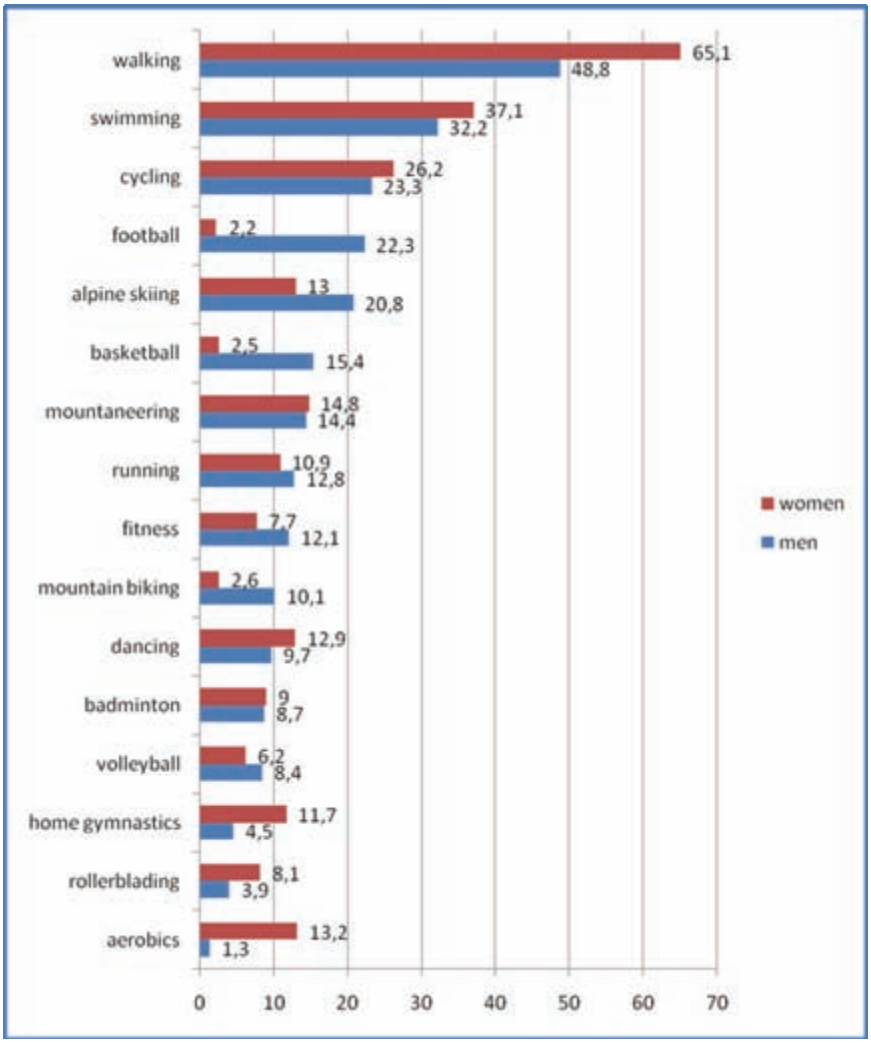
Today a wide variety of sport participation possibilities exist. The results as shown in the Graph 2 indicate that most of the Slovenes prefer their recreation in the open air. The majority of people mostly appreciate a direct contact with nature, where they can enjoy its beauty and accumulate energy for work. Most people prefer to walk (58%), swim (35%) or cycle (25%). Since walking is one of basic motor movements the results are not surprising. Walking is the activity, which does not require any technical knowledge; it is cheap and could be performed through lifespan. Walking is humankind's oldest and most basic form of physical activity and its value to health has long been recognised (Zhu, 2008). The proposed list of sport activities did not contain nordic walking, which will be corrected in the next surveying. It is so called walking with sticks, which is gaining on its importance in the last years.



Graph 2: *Frequency of participation in different sport activities*

Swimming belongs to sport activities, which are already traditionally recommended for maintaining and improving one's health. Most people swim on vacations, mostly during summertime (when it is also no need to pay for the activity). It is a problem to get swimming available to more people during all the year, because of quite expensive tickets for swimming pools. Cycling is on third place of popularity and could have double effects – being a sport activity or a type of transport. Top three activities are relatively available, cheap (except for swimming ticket) and could well be performed non-organised (one doesn't need professional guidance).

Men and women choose above-mentioned top 3 sport activities equally (Graph 3). Other sports were ranked differently by gender. Men prefer sport games such as football and basketball, when movements are performed with high speed and intensity. Most popular sports for men require more energy and physical contacts with opponents. Women prefer sport activities of aerobic type with lower technical demands. They like to practise aerobics or do gymnastics at home. Their favourite sports beside top 5 ones are performed in rhythm while listening to the music. The aesthetic component of movement plays greater role than scoring points.



Graph 3: *Frequency of participation in different sport activities according to gender*

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that citizens of Slovenia are reasonably sport active, despite 36% of people don't practice sport even a couple times a year. Most people prefer sports activities outdoor. Comparing to the results of first research in 1973, now Slovenes are being more regularly active and less non-active. We are completely aware that all people won't be sport active, but even just everyday' rambling on the fresh air could have positive impacts on people's health. This, to be honest, is not really a strong marketing strategy nowadays.

6. LITERATURE

1. Arnoll, B. & Beaglehole, R. (1992). Does physical activity lower blood preasure: a critical review of the clinical trials? *Journal of Clinical Epidemiol, 45* (5), 439-447.
2. Berčič, H. (2001). Načini in oblike športnorekreativnega udejstvovanja. *Šport, 49* (3), 24-26.
3. Berlin, JA & Colditz, GA (1990). A meta-analysis of physical activity in the prevention of coronary heart disease. *Am J Epidemiol, 132,* 612-628
4. Doupona Topič, m. & Sila, B. (2007). Types and models of sport activities in relation to social stratification. *Šport, 55, suppl*., 12-16.
5. Fras, Z. (2002). Predpisovanje telesne aktivnosti za preprečevanje bolezni srca in ožilja. *Zdravstveno varstvo, 41*, 27-34.
6. Hassmen, P., Koivula, N. & Uutela, A. (2000). Physical exercise and psychological well-being: a population study in Finland. *Prev Med, 30*, 17-25.
7. Kromhout, bloemberg, Siedell, Nissinen and Menotti, 2001
8. Mišigoj-Duraković, M. et. al (2003). *Physical activity and health*. Ljubljana: ZDŠD, FŠ, KIF, ZŠ.
9. Seefeldt, V., Malina, RM & Clark, MA (2002). Factors affecting levels of physical activity in adults. *Sports Med, 32* (3), 143-168.
10. Pori, M., Bednarik, J. & Kolenc, M. (2008). Sport recreation from the point of view of financial resources used since 1999. *Šport, 56, suppl*., 27-32.
11. Sila, B. (2003). People's estimation of their state of health in relation to frequency of their sports activity. *Acta universitatis carolinae kinanthropologica, 39* (1), 99-108.
12. Sila, B. (2007). Frequency of engaging in sport activities. *Šport, 55, suppl*., 37-42.
13. Zhu, W. (2008). Let's keep walking. Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 40 (suppl), 509-511.
14. Wagner, EH, LaCroix, AZ & Buchner, DM et. al (1992). Effects of physical activity on health in older adults. *Annu Rev Public Health, 13,* 451-468.

SUMMARY

The objective of the study was to investigate the frequency of participation in sport activity of Slovenes. The sample consisted of 1286 persons, 54% were women and 46% were men. To obtain the necessary data a questionnaire method was used. We focused on two groups of questions. The first group reffered to participation in sport activity in general (frequency of any sport activity) and the second group reffered to participation in a particular sport. The results show that 33% of Slovenes were regularly active, 31% occasionally active and 36% non-active. They were the most active in the following sport activities: walking, swimming, cycling, alpine skiing and mountaineering.

Keywords: *Sport activity, popular sports, Slovenes*