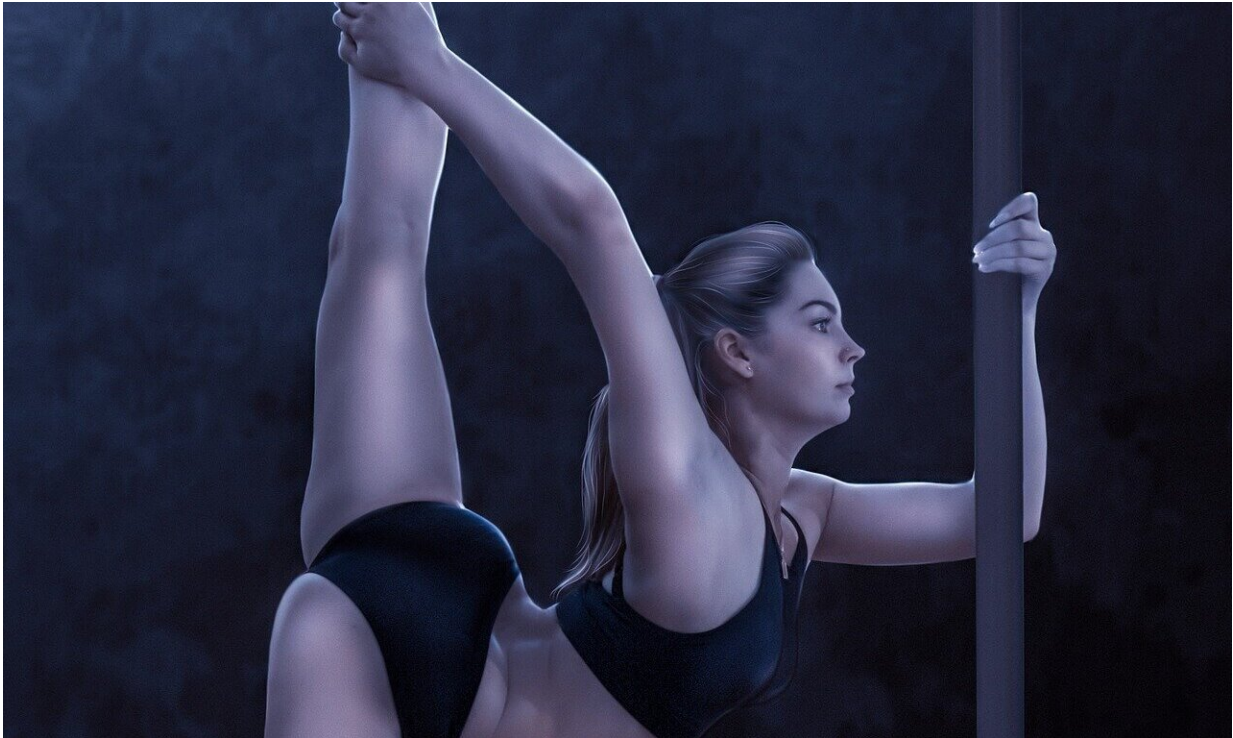


# Pole dancing popularity on the rise

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Research from The University of Western Australia has found that although there is still a stigma associated with pole dancing, the activity is quickly growing in popularity in Australia with many women finding great benefits for their mental and physical health.

Joanna Nicholas, from the UWA School of Human Sciences—Exercise

and Sport Science has been researching the perceptions and popularity of [pole dancing](#) as a form of exercise.

Dr. Nicholas said she was drawn to studying pole dancing because it combined fitness and dance, but still had mixed perceptions.

"Pole dancing has evolved from both Eastern and Western influences. Eastern influences include Chinese and Indian pole which date back centuries, and more recently in Western culture within striptease and exotic dancing which is what many people associate it with, and which initially limited its uptake as a legitimate form of exercise," Dr. Nicholas said.

"However in the past decade we've seen an increase in its popularity, with four studios in 2004 in Australia growing to at least 118 in 2018."

"This large growth rate indicates it is now more commonly being used as a form of exercise however there is still a stigma attached to it with embarrassment and hesitation from some to consider it as a form of exercise."

Dr. Nicholas said it was interesting to see that for those who did choose it as a form of exercise there was a long term loyalty to the activity.

"The negative judgment from outsiders seems to strengthen the bond of those within the pole dancing community and when people do start classes they form strong bonds with fellow participants that helps them continue their pole dancing journey," she said.

"Classes facilitate an environment in which there is a strong sense of inclusion and acceptance, including body appreciation. One huge benefit for women that we can see from our research is that it is great for increasing women's esteem, confidence and a healthy body image."

Dr. Nicholas said the activity also had physical benefits that many other forms of exercise did not.

"Pole dancing is unique as it combines three forms of exercise—cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and flexibility—so it's a good choice for achieving different types of [exercise](#) in one work out."

**More information:** Joanna C. Nicholas et al. "It's our little secret ... an in-group, where everyone's in": Females' motives for participation in a stigmatized form of physical activity, *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.02.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.02.003)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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