

Measuring the injury risks of football, cycling and other sports

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Sporting injuries make a mark every year, with almost one-third of the 60,000 Australians admitted to hospital connected to one of the football codes.

A new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found 32% of all hospitalized sports injuries reported in Australia in 2016–17 were sustained while playing Aussie Rules, rugby, soccer or other code of [football](#). Cycling injuries accounted for around 11% of those admitted to hospital.

"Many Australians participate regularly in sport and physical recreation activities, and it's clear that we are a nation of sport-lovers," says AIHW spokesperson Flinders University Professor James Harrison, who led on the report.

"Participation in sport contributes positively to a range of physical, mental and social health outcomes. Just [30 minutes of physical activity](#) a day can lead to a happier and healthier lifestyle.

"However playing sport does not come without risk."

Professor Harrison is director of the Research Centre for Injury Studies at Flinders and of the AIHW National Injury Surveillance Unit.

Football injuries, including Australian Rules football, the two combined rugby codes, and soccer, each accounted for around 8% of injuries, plus almost 2% for touch football. Most football injuries were to the hips and legs (30%), followed by the head and neck (25%).

Just over a quarter (28%) of all hospitalizations for sports injuries were for women or girls. Among females, equestrian activities accounted for 11% of hospitalized injuries, followed by netball (10%), and cycling (7%).

For all sports combined, most injuries were to the hips and legs (28%), followed by the shoulders and arms (24%).

"One in 10 sports injuries were life-threatening, with swimming and diving injuries making up 27% of life-threatening cases, followed by cycling (24%), and equestrian (24%)," Professor Harrison says.

An additional 7% of injuries (3800) resulted in an intracranial [injury](#). This includes cases of concussion and other traumatic brain injuries.

Factoring in the number of participants, the sport with the highest rate of participation-based hospitalization was wheeled motor sports, such as motorcycling and go-carting, with 1280 hospitalizations per 100,000 participants. This was followed by rugby, and roller sports (such as roller skating and skateboarding), with a rate of 1180 and 1175 per 100,000 participants, respectively.

Fitness and gym activities and walking had much lower rates at 10 and 12 hospitalizations per 100,000 participants, respectively.

The report does not cover emergency department presentations where a patient was treated without admission to hospital.

Provided by Flinders University

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