

# KinderGym

Gymnastics Australia

Sport Australia Move It AUS Participation Grant Evaluation

Final Report

August 2021



Centre for  
Sport and  
Social Impact



# Contents

<b>Background</b>	
Background	4
KinderGym program	5
Researching and reporting approach	6
Summary for Sport Aus Move It AUS Participation Grant	7
Control and influence on the KinderGym experience	9
The KinderGym conundrums	10
Key recommendations	11
Research methodology	16
Key concepts	17
<b>1. KinderGym engagement</b>	
Who participated	21
How they heard about it	22
Why they participated	23
Retention in gymnastics	24
Net Promoter Score	26
<b>2. The KinderGym experience</b>	
Overall importance and satisfaction	28
The KinderGym experience	30

<b>3. KinderGym outcomes</b>	
Children outcomes overview	46
Physical domain	47
Psychological domain	49
Social domain	51
Cognitive domain	53
<b>4. KinderGym program delivery</b>	
COVID-19	55
Imp[plementation fidelity	57
Non-negotiables	58
Program development	59
<b>5. KinderGym coach support</b>	
Coaches	61
Current support	62
Further support	63
<b>For more information</b>	

# Background

This section provides an overview of the KinderGym program, the approach to the research including a description of the key concepts and key findings.



# Background

## Background

Gymnastics Australia received a Sport Australia Move it AUS Participation Grant to develop and deliver the KinderGym program. The Sport Australia Move it AUS Participation Grant aimed to increase levels of physical activity of inactive Australians. The KinderGym program targeted young children (aged 0 -5 years) to develop their fundamental movement skills and their overall physical literacy with the aim of providing them a strong foundation to live a more active life. KinderGym has been designed for families (children and their parents or carers) to participate together in an enjoyable, educational, and social environment, meaning the reach of the program outcomes could be extended from the KinderGym setting to also supporting more activity at home.

Gymnastics Australia engaged the Centre for Sport and Social Impact (CSSI) from La Trobe University to deliver part of the evaluation for the KinderGym program. The evaluation sought to:

1. Understand if the program had succeeded in increasing the physical activity of inactive Australians
2. Determine the physical literacy benefits of KinderGym
3. Explore the KinderGym experience and program satisfaction
4. Investigate the coach support structures of the program

## Scope

COVID-19 has interrupted the delivery and evaluation of the program (originally funded for the July 2019 – June 2020 period). Australians in some states were restricted from movement during 2020 and were potentially less likely to engage in new activities due to the pandemic and its associated health risks. Gymnastics Australia received an extension to continue delivering the KinderGym program to June 2021, and this Final Report is based on data collected between January 2021 – June 2021.

## Final report

This Final Report is based on KinderGym participant (N=3044) and coach survey feedback (N=67) for programs delivered in 2021. It describes the methodology and background to the evaluation, the KinderGym program, and the results across five themes: participant engagement; experience; outcomes; program delivery; and coach support.

# KinderGym program

## KinderGym program

The KinderGym program is delivered by coaches accredited by Gymnastics Australia in gymnastics clubs and sports centres across Australia. The program provides a safe environment for children to experience a wide-range of movement activities and be encouraged to think, create, construct and solve problems with their own bodies.

Parent/carers are encouraged (and in most sessions required) to participate *with* their children. The aim of this is to create healthy bonds between parent/carers and children based on movement, improve parent/carers knowledge and ability to support their child to be physically active, and to create a socially supportive environment to improve engagement and enjoyment.

## KinderGym website

An online website ([KinderGym website](#)) provides a written and video explanation of the KinderGym program, explains what physical literacy is, why it is important, and how KinderGym can support physical literacy development. The website also features images and a video of a typical KinderGym session.

Parent/carers can find a class on the website and there are links to resources to further explain physical literacy.



# Research and reporting approach

To provide research relevant to the aims of both Sport Australia and Gymnastics Australia, and provide insights into program improvements, CSSI focused on five core themes:

## Theme one: KinderGym engagement

The first theme looks at how participants engaged with KinderGym, who they were, why they participated, and if they would continue to engage with gymnastics.

## Theme two: The KinderGym experience

The second theme explores the KinderGym experience, examining how satisfied participants were and what influenced their experience and satisfaction.

## Theme three: KinderGym outcomes

The third theme considers the KinderGym outcomes through a physical literacy lens (physical, psychological, social, and cognitive outcomes).

## Theme four: KinderGym program delivery

The fourth theme looks at the program delivery of KinderGym, what was delivered and how and why coaches modified the program. It also establishes the KinderGym non-negotiables (those elements most important to program delivery).

## Theme five: KinderGym coach support

The final theme looks at the coaches who responded to the survey and their perception of the support they currently receive to deliver KinderGym, and what further support would be beneficial.



# Summary for Sport Australia Move It AUS Participation Grant

## Top three take-aways

**1** KinderGym provided families with a valuable opportunity and foundation to be active together. Parents and carers rated enjoying being active with my child as their main program outcome and, more importantly, these results were sustainable with most ( 74%) intending to be active with their children at home, continue their child with gymnastics (86%) and start or continue with both organised (75%) and unorganised (80%) sport and physical activity.

**2** Session plans that included free play with structured progressive activities provided a balanced program for child development (i.e. fundamental motor skills and self-directed play). KinderGym has seen positive outcomes across all four domains of physical literacy for children (physical (83% improved), psychological (76% improved), social (65% improved) and cognitive (69% improved)) and positive improvements for parents and carers. Targeting children during their foundation years, KinderGym has provided them the best possible foundation for leading an active lifestyle.

**3** The quality of the experience for participants (children and parent and carers) influenced their engagement and intention to continue with gymnastics. Core to a quality KinderGym experience was the coach, creating a safe and welcoming environment, supporting participants to engage with activities, and an organised session with a range of enjoyable activities that lead to positive outcomes.



# Summary for Sport Australia Move It AUS Participation Grant

## Success stories

- With a Net Promoter Score of 69, KinderGym has established a strong set of advocates who will promote KinderGym to their friends and family. Personal connection and communication was the most common way participants found out about KinderGym, meaning the success and sustainability of the program will most likely rely on a good reputation and peer promotion.
- Through the feedback collected from coaches and participants, Gymnastics Australia has developed a good understanding of what makes a good quality KinderGym experience. This includes identifying the necessary core capabilities of KinderGym coaches (knowledge of child development, able to control a class, confidence, energetic, and supportive), the setting (good music, clean, not crowded) and of the activities to include in a KinderGym program (varied, fun and engaging, and a balance of organised activities that develop fundamental movement skills with free play).
- KinderGym coaches are critical to a quality experience (parents and carers rating it 4.7 out of 5 for importance). Parent and carer feedback indicates that the current coaches understand the KinderGym philosophy and have delivered a quality program overall (with coaches rating a 4.6/5 for satisfaction and the program also a 4.6/5). This result is especially pleasing with most coaches taking ownership of their KinderGym delivery and modifying activities and sessions based on the needs and interests of their participants.

## Challenges and opportunities

- The 0 – 5 age cohort can differ in their abilities and engagement. KinderGym sessions have been developed to cater to this spectrum, however there is a potential that more could be done here to ensure that sessions with a diverse age group engages all participants.
- Gymnastics Australia is at an arms length in terms of KinderGym delivery. This report provides some clear insights and evidence around what makes a positive KinderGym experience, however Gymnastics Australia may have little control over the quality of experience actually delivered. Embedding some quality control measures, or supporting clubs/ facilities to improve the KinderGym experience could improve outcomes.
- COVID-19 has been an obvious challenge, with clubs being restricted by what they can deliver in some parts of Australia for significant periods of the funding. When participants have been able to return, 92% were satisfied with how the new restrictions were managed during their KinderGym sessions, indicating that although participation has been interrupted, as restrictions ease the quality of the experience has not diminished.

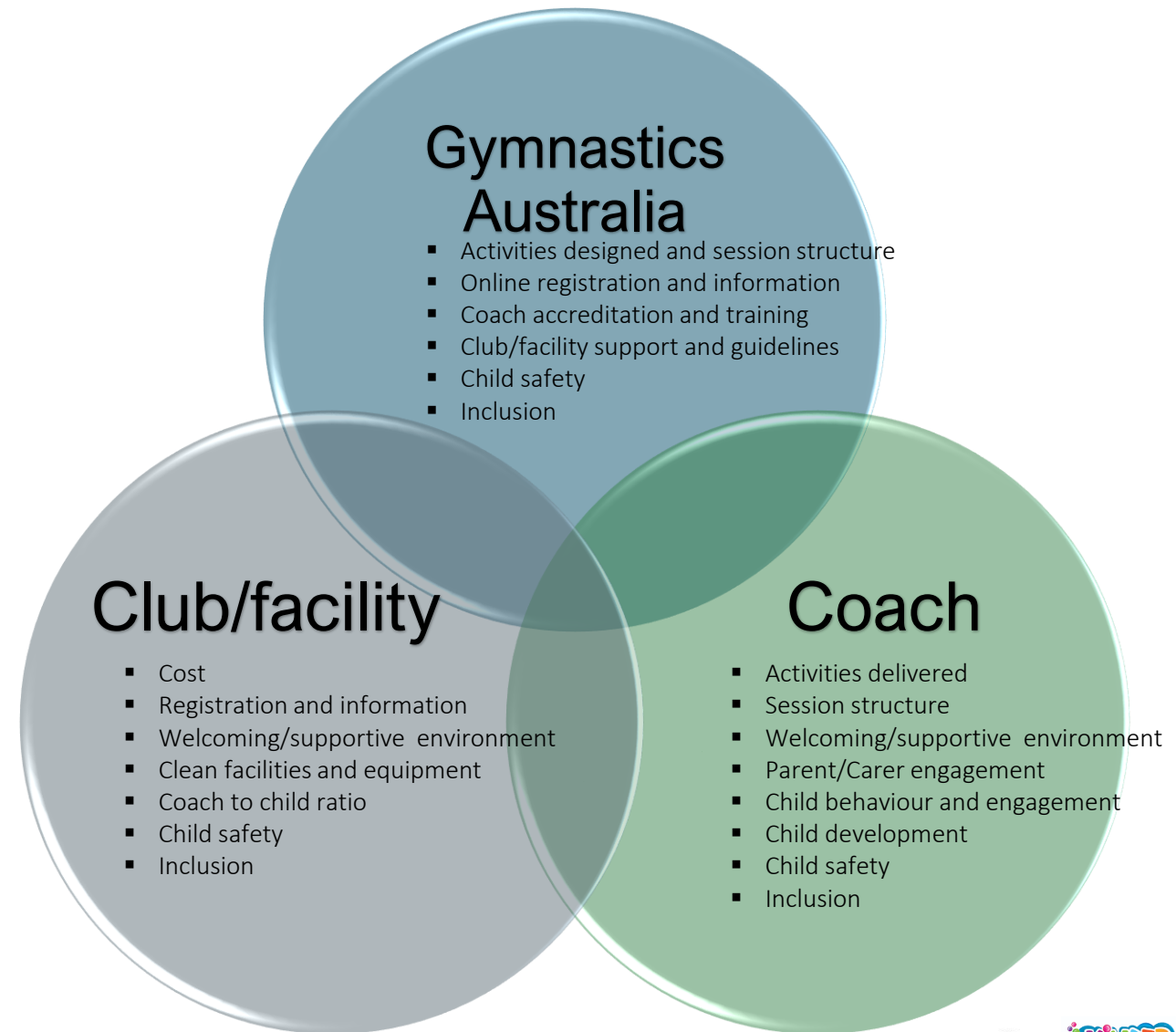
# Control and influence over KinderGym and the KinderGym experience

## Controlling and influencing the experience

*Delivering a quality KinderGym experience will be critical to the ongoing sustainability and success of the program as word-of-mouth, personal recommendations, and some previous connection to KinderGym were the most successful engagement strategies.*

*The research results have provided insights into what could contribute to a quality KinderGym experience. In reality, the greater control for influence over the KinderGym experience would sit with clubs/facilities and coaches. Gymnastics Australia could consider the ways in which they could control this experience directly, and what mechanisms they could implement to influence club/facilities or coaches in order to manage quality from a distance.*

- In general, Gymnastics Australia can *guide* the delivery and design of KinderGym as it manifests in club/facilities on the ground. This could be through providing resources, evidence, activity or session ideas, insights into what matters to parent/carers, and guidelines/regulations on key issues (such as child safety, coach to children ratio, and coach recruitment standards).
- The club/facility has direct control over the KinderGym setting (the built and social environments) and the program framework (timing and cost). The coach controls what is ultimately delivered, and has a direct influence on engagement, enjoyment, and child development outcomes.
- The following recommendations are based on the key findings and in the knowledge that most coaches in this study did desire more support in most areas of the KinderGym experience (how to engage parent/carers and children, and how to develop each domain of physical literacy).





# Key findings and recommendations

## Solving the KinderGym conundrums

Setting clear parent/carer expectations could solve many of the KinderGym conundrums.

This could be delivered by Gymnastics Australia through the KinderGym website, by providing clubs/facilities with resources or content to share with parent/carers through their own websites or by email as they register for the program. Content could address the two key issues of free play and parent/carer responsibilities.

1. Finding the *right* balance and variety of activities (structured and free play) that satisfies all parent/carers would most likely be beyond the possibility of KinderGym. This means that it would be critical to communicate with parent/carers *before* they register for the program to set their expectations of what will be delivered, and then *during* sessions to explain the value of each activity. Providing some key *how to* for each activity, or some recommendations on free play could also support them to be more active at home.
2. Setting clearer expectations for parent/carers about what the KinderGym experience looks like in terms of the expected level of involvement from coaches and from parent/carers could best prepare them for what they would be expected to do in a KinderGym class. This should include the fact that they will be encouraged and supported to learn how to guide their children to engage in activity and develop physical literacy.

## Delivering support to coaches and club/facilities

- Gymnastics Australia could deliver relevant coach support around improving the KinderGym experience directly to coaches through written resources, videos or webinars. This would bypass the issue of not having state associations or club/facilities pass on the information.
- A KinderGym coach peer network could support the further sharing of resources, sharing of experiences, and generating ideas. Where these have been developed by state associations and by coaches themselves, they have been highly valued.
- Content for support could be generated based on evidence generated by Gymnastics Australia (such as these research findings) and by experts in childhood development. The following topics identified in this research that could best support clubs/facilities and coaches to deliver a quality KinderGym experience and deliver on outcomes are:
  1. The KinderGym framework
  2. The KinderGym environment
  3. The KinderGym experience
  4. The KinderGym non-negotiables
  5. Supporting parent/carer engagement
  6. Supporting children engagement and enjoyment
  7. Diversity

# Key findings and recommendations

## 1. The KinderGym framework

The KinderGym framework that best supports a quality experience could include:

- Restrictions on the coach to child ratio
- Guidance on dividing sessions by age and/or ability
- Cost structure that included a casual session option, a pay upfront option, and a family discount
- Processes in place to ensure that missed sessions can be made-up
- Guidelines in place not allowing sick children to attend KinderGym
- Website being update regularly with correct information and session times
- Ensure all children receive the KinderGym t-shirt
- Clear expectations of parent/carer roles and responsibilities during a session
- Minimal requirements for coaches around gymnastics knowledge and group management skills and abilities

## 2. The KinderGym environment

The built environment of the club/facility was critical to a quality experience. Specifically:

- Clean environments that have been vacuumed and surfaces wiped
- Equipment maintained and repaired or replaced when necessary
- Gymnastics equipment
- Heating and cooling (keeping the facility at a good temperature)
- Clear parking areas

The social environment of the club/facility was equally critical to a quality experience.

- A friendly greeting on arrival by centre staff (a smile or a hello)
- Modifications made for children with disability or specific needs
- Being understanding and as accommodating as possible when parent/carers missed sessions or had to book in for make up sessions
- Supporting parent/carers and children to interact with others. This could be done by introducing them to each other, providing morning tea areas where they could socialise before or after a session, coaches encouraging interaction during sessions, and potentially social media groups.



# Key findings and recommendations

## 5. Supporting parent/carer engagement

Providing an opportunity for children and parent/carers to participate in a healthy activity together is a valuable attribute of KinderGym. Coach training to ensure that coaches understand that supporting parent/carers to engage is an *active* action rather than a passive one. That means, that coaches simply letting parent/carers take control does not necessarily deliver on outcomes (in some cases it has had the opposite effect and has negatively impacted on the KinderGym experience). Coaches need to actively support parent/carers by showing them how to support their child to engage to develop their confidence and capacity, and further talk to them about the values of the activities they are undertaking to enhance the perceived benefit.

*“We have been attending regularly now for over a year and my daughter loves it. We both look forward to it each week. I get to spend time with her doing something she loves and she gets an outlet to try out all her new development skills and burn energy. I’ve seen her movement development and confidence grow so much.”* KinderGym parent/carer

## 6. Supporting children’s engagement and enjoyment

Children enjoying the program and being motivated to attend were highly influential to overall satisfaction with the KinderGym experience, and parent/carers were most forgiving of other program faults if their child enjoyed the program and *wanted to go*.

Understanding this, having coaches or club/facility staff check-in with families about their experience at key points (such as after their first session and toward the end of the program) to ensure they are enjoying it, could support retention.

Program elements that best supported enjoyment and motivation were the:

- Sense of belonging (coaches knowing children’s name and engaging with them during the session and tangible elements like the KinderGym t-shirt)
- Building of confidence by trying and achieving new activities
- The diversity of activities (gymnastics focus, changing themes, different equipment)

# Key findings and recommendations

## 7. Diversity

Gymnastics has had great success at developing targeted programs for diverse audiences. Some clubs/facilities delivered targeted programs for children with a disability, while others integrated them into KinderGym. There is some indication that some KinderGym programs delivered were not welcoming for children with an intellectual disability (particularly Autism Spectrum Disorder, ASD), however, there were others who had very positive experiences.

Upskilling coaches on how to modify their program to manage a diverse group of participants, or developing specific program activities and structure for children with ASD could improve experiences for all. Educating other parent/carers around ASD could also minimise parent/carers with ASD children feeling *judged* because their child is thought to be *naughty*.

Really pleasingly, KinderGym enjoyment and outcomes were experienced by all genders. Some comments indicated that coaches used language targeting girls (such as *come on girls*) when there were boys present. This would most likely be habit, however prompting coaches to ensure they are inclusive could be beneficial to ensuring that KinderGym continues to provide a quality step in the pathway for children of all genders to enter the sport of gymnastics.



# Key concept one: physical literacy

## Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework

Physical literacy is described by Sport Australia as being:

*“about building the skills, knowledge and behaviours that give us the confidence and motivation to lead active lives.”*

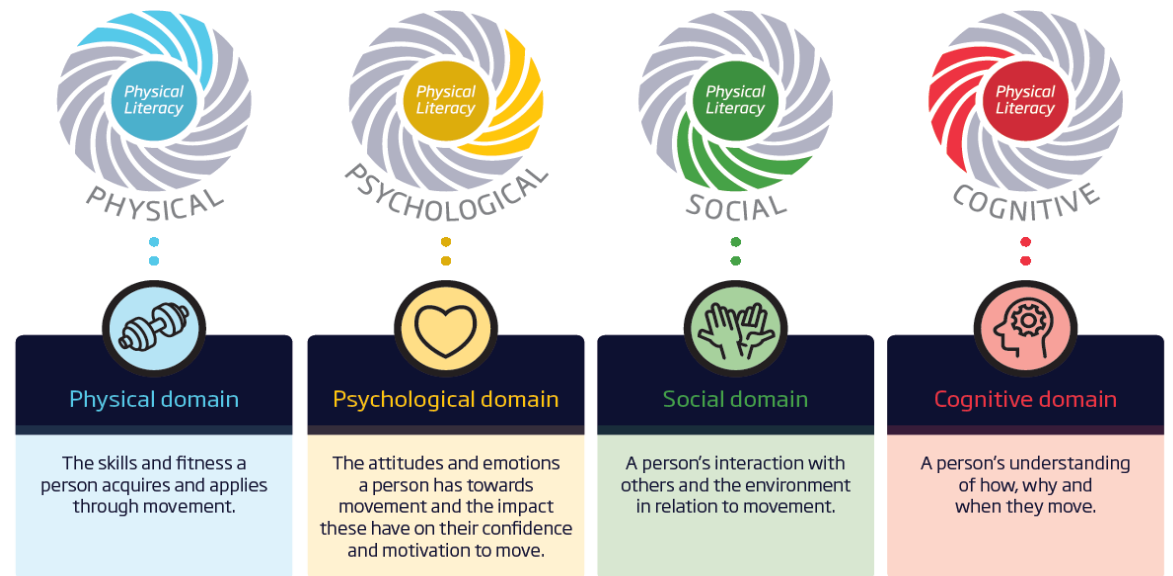
Physical literacy is critical to supporting sustainable physical activity. In 2019, Sport Australia launched the Physical Literacy Framework (the Framework) to guide the sport, health, and education sectors to develop physical literacy among Australians. The Framework incorporates 30 elements across four overarching domains: physical; psychological; social; and cognitive.

### Why we selected the Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework

Gymnastics Australia has taken a holistic approach to the KinderGym program. This has included focusing on the four core physical literacy domains. By framing the research and reporting through a physical literacy lens, the output could best indicate the outcomes of this effort.

### How we used the Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework

The Centre for Sport and Social Impact collaborated with Sport Australia to develop a set of case studies and resources that illustrated and guided users on how the Framework could be used as an evaluation, mapping, and program design and development tool. We have followed those guidelines here by using the four domains as a Framework for designing the data collection tools and on reporting outcomes.



[Download the full Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework here.](#)

# Key concept two: a systems-based approach

## Systems-based approach to physical activity

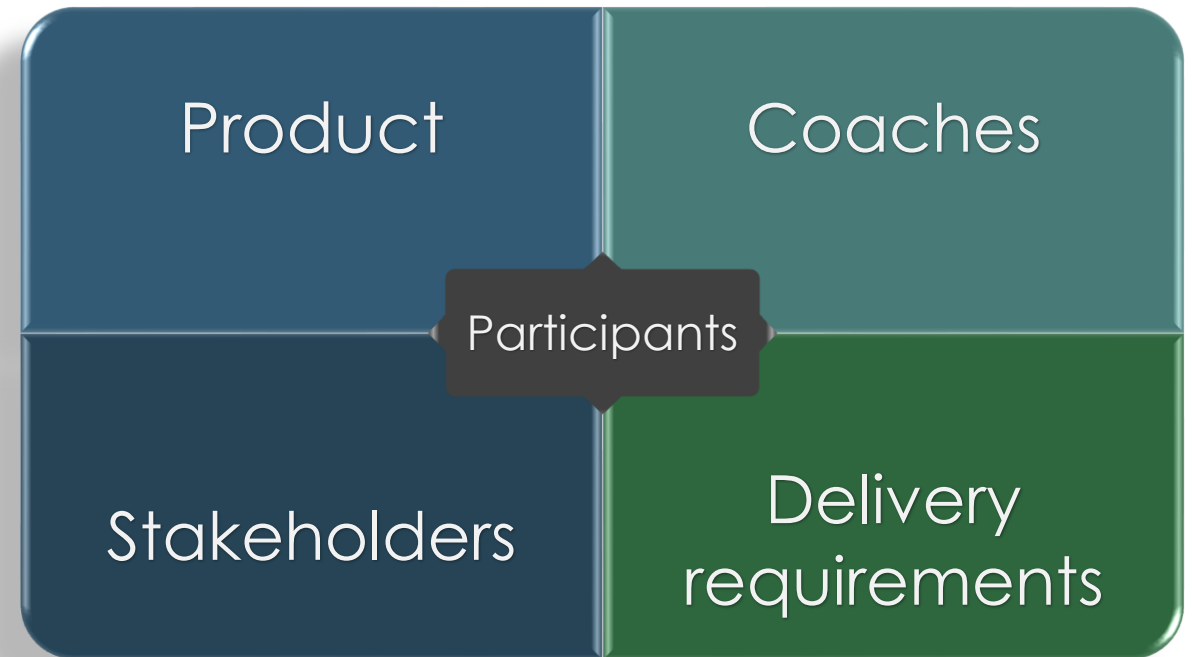
A systems-based approach to physical activity strategies and evaluation has been recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and has been used in their Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018 – 2030.

## Systems-based approach to program evaluation

A systems-based approach to evaluation can guide who data is collected from and the topics to explore and report on; these topics can then determine the questions to include in data collection tools. The approach ensures that the research recognises the whole system that influences the development and delivery of a physical activity intervention, including (as illustrated), the product itself, the resources that support coach delivery, the engagement of other program supporter stakeholders (such as club administrators), and the processes and resources required for delivery. CSSI also advocates for that the participant be placed at the centre of a system, ensuring that all other decisions and considerations are taken with the needs of the participant at its core.

A systems-based approach recognises the potential complexity in the process of developing and delivering physical activity and sport. It is particularly pertinent in complex and targeted interventions such as those targeting older adults.

Although it was beyond the scope of this evaluation to fully unpack the KinderGym system, CSSI used this approach to consider each element in the process to its fullest extent. This was achieved by planning to collect data from both the process (Gymnastics Australia, coaches and administrators) and outcomes (participants) aspect, and by exploring systematic elements through surveys and conversations.





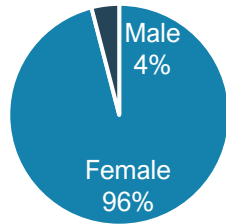
# 1. KinderGym engagement

The section provides an overview of how parent/carers and children engaged with KinderGym, how they heard about the program, would they be likely to continue with gymnastics, and if they would advocate to others about KinderGym.

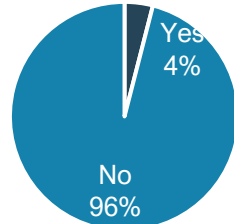


# 1. KinderGym engagement: who participated

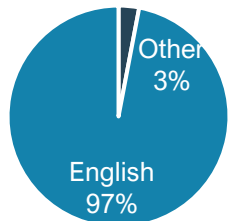
**Gender (N=3042)**



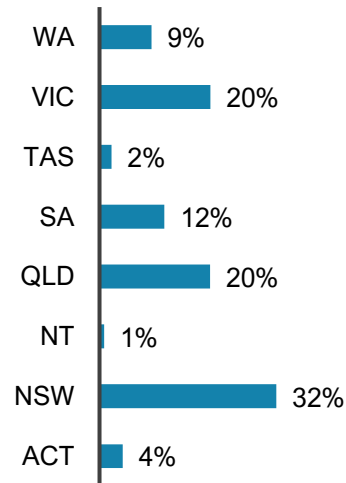
**Disability (n=3014)**



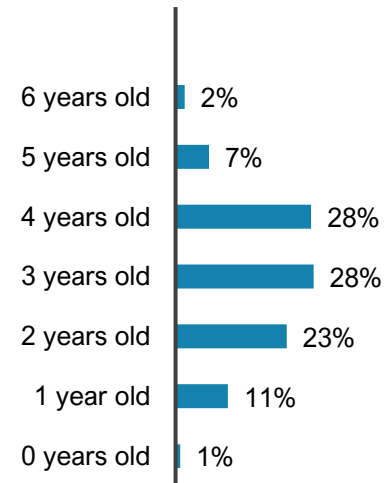
**Language spoken at home (n=3033)**



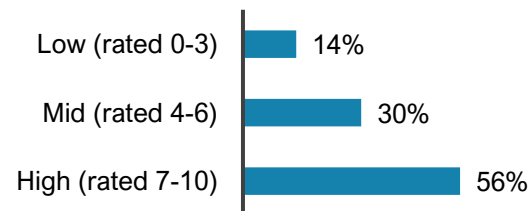
**Location (n=2969)**



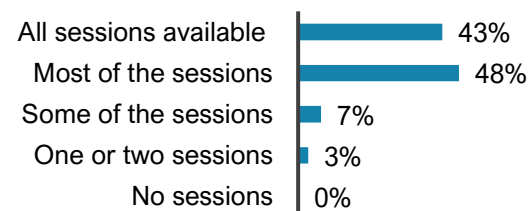
**Children's age (n=2935)**



**SEIFA decile (n=2962)**



**Sessions attended (n=3039)**



## KinderGym participants

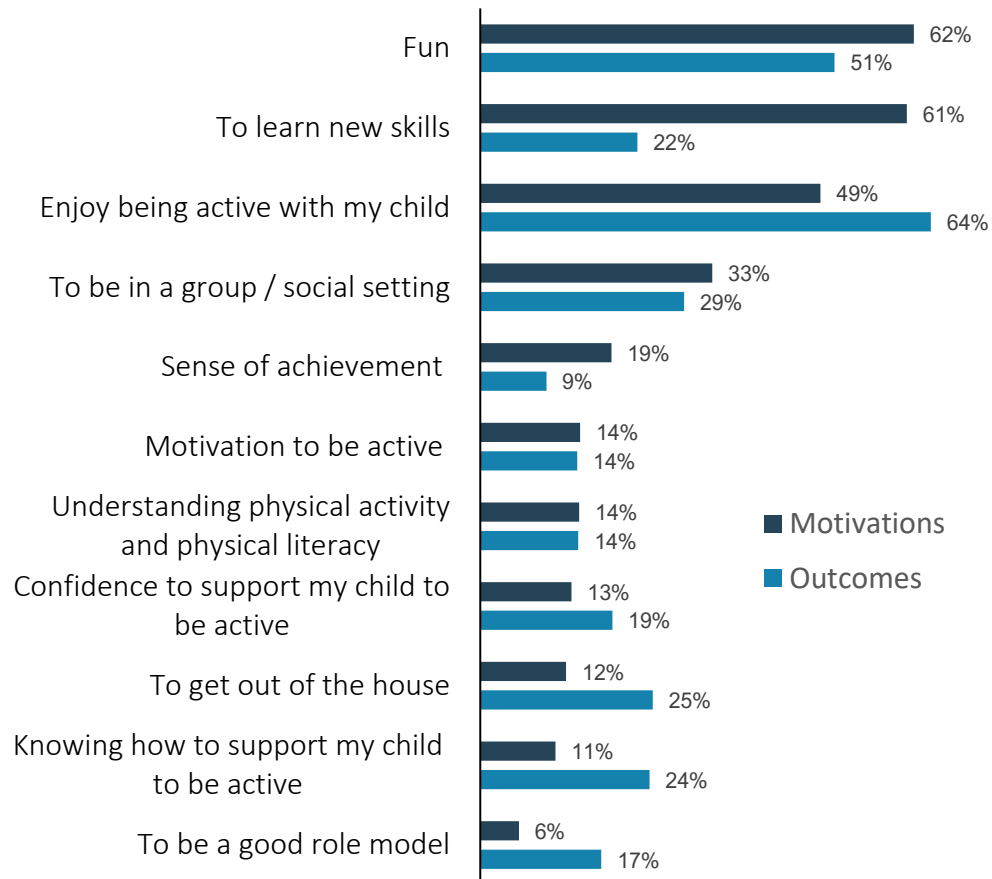
*Understanding who engaged with the KinderGym program can indicate whether or not the program has attracted its intended market and potentially indicate where gaps in participation could require further more targeted approaches.*

- There was limited diversity within the KinderGym participant group that completed the post-program survey. The majority (96%) were women, with no disability (96%) and spoke English at home (97%). Over half (56%) came from a high socio-economic area (i.e. SEIFA rating 7-10).
- Survey responses were received across every state and each child's age group.
- Pleasingly most participants attended all (43%) or most (48%) of the KinderGym sessions available to them indicating a high engagement level with the program.



# 1. KinderGym engagement: why they participated

## Motivations and outcomes for parents/guardians (n=2478)(could select up to three)



## Motivations and outcomes

Parent/carers were asked their top 3 motivations for participating in KinderGym and the top 3 outcomes they got from it.

- Fun (62%) and learning new skills (61%) were the top motivations for parent/carers. This is consistent with previous studies looking at motivations for sport, that although enjoyment/fun is important, so too is learning and having tangible outcomes from participating (similar to having a *sense of achievement* 19%). KinderGym delivered on fun (51% reporting it as a top outcome) and 22% learnt new skill. This result could be considered low, however other outcomes such as *knowing how to support my child to be active* was listed by 24% of participants as a top outcome.
- Parent/carers also wanted to *enjoy being active with their child* (49%). This could be representative of new parents who did not have experience, *knowledge* (11%), or *confidence* (13%) in this area and also those grandparents or aunties/uncles who saw KinderGym as an opportunity to enjoy time with their family members. *Enjoying time being active with my child* was the top outcome (64%) indicating that KinderGym really delivered in this area and provided a welcoming and safe space for adults and children to interact.
- The social aspect was also important. *To be in a social setting* was a high motivator (33%) and KinderGym delivered with 29% of participants rating it as a top outcome, along with *to get out of the house* (12% motivator and 25% outcome), potentially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions of movement.

# 1. KinderGym engagement: retention in gymnastics

## Intentions to continue with gymnastics

*Participants were asked how likely they would be to continue their child with gymnastics as a result of attending KinderGym.*

The majority (64%) were very likely to continue (and a further 21% likely), while only 2% were very unlikely and a further 2% unlikely. There were 10% who were unsure. Understanding why or why not someone would want to continue with gymnastics could provide insights useful to developing stronger pathways for children, and participants who were unsure or unlikely to continue (n=431) were asked why. There were four main themes to this feedback: poor coaching and the coach to participant ratio; structural barriers; activities and interest; and diversity barriers. These are unpacked further in the next page.

KinderGym is a foundational activity that supports children to develop valuable fundamental movement skills and holistically across all four physical literacy domains. Studies have shown that it is important for children to try multiple sports in their developmental years in order to flourish in activity later in life. For that reason, a pathway could be provided for children to continue in gymnastics should they want to, however preparing children through KinderGym to be able to then go and try and succeed in *other sports* should also be perceived as a valuable contribution by Gymnastics Australia. A quality KinderGym experience could:

1. See children return to gymnastics after they have tried other sports (or make gymnastics part of a seasonal rotation of sports on their activity calendar)
2. Motivate parent/carers to bring other children to the program or recommend it to others (important)
3. Long-term, KinderGym children may bring their own children to the program or to the sport creating a next generation of gymnastic participants

### Future intentions with gymnastics (n=3030)



# 1. KinderGym engagement: retention in gymnastics

## Intentions to continue with gymnastics

Parent/carers who were unsure or unlikely to continue their child in gymnastics (n=431) were asked why. There were four main themes to this feedback: poor coaching and the coach to participant ratio; structural barriers; activities and interest; and diversity barriers.

### 1. Poor coaching and the coach to participant ratio

- Did not control the class or show interest or was lacking in confidence
- Not enough coaches (or too many participants) led to some classes being chaotic with children behaving poorly and coaches unable to manage. This impacted on children's ability to hear and understand instruction and led to stressed parent/carers
- Parent/carers with a toddler and new born found it difficult to manage both children.

*"My child didn't like to follow the rules. After dealing with this for 2 terms (the second of which I had a newborn in a carrier during classes) with little support from teaching staff, I cant continue anymore. Either my child, my baby or I will get hurt. We will try again at a later time."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"The long wait times (instructions/waiting in line). It's hard to keep an active toddler still and he ends up being naughty, I end up stressed and then it doesn't feel worth it."* KinderGym parent/carer

### 2. Structural barriers

- Timing (clashed with children's other activities such as Kindergarten or parent/carers commitments such as women returning to work)
- Cost (too costly with other activities, session price had increased, cost structure)
- Location (no classes nearby)
- Information online was not consistent with what was available at the club
- Perception that Kindergarten performed the same role and so no need to continue with KinderGym once children enrolled in Kindergarten
- Some parent/carers did not feel the next step was being made available or was not clear

### 3. Activities and interest

- Not enough structure to the lessons or program
- Child was bored, not interested, or was not engaged
- Too much free play with no perceived value or actual focus on gymnastics
- Wanted their children to do a team or a ball sport, or try out different sports to ensure they get the benefit from multi-sport participation

### 4. Diversity barriers

- The children were too young; some of these parents were going to try when their child was a little older
- range of ages (0-5 years) in each class was too diverse and this impacted on the ability for the coach to control and engage all children
- Being the only boy in the class (particularly when the coach only addressed the class as 'girls')
- Some sessions or programs were not inclusive for children with intellectual disability

*"I just feel the age range was too hard. Having a class where there is children much younger was difficult."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"He isn't stimulated enough unless doing the pre-gym program but that coach isn't patient or understanding of my sons abilities and limitations of his autism. I don't feel he is accepted or welcome by her."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"Don't know where and how to start and what is available to young kids"* KinderGym parent/carer

# 1. KinderGym engagement: net promoter score



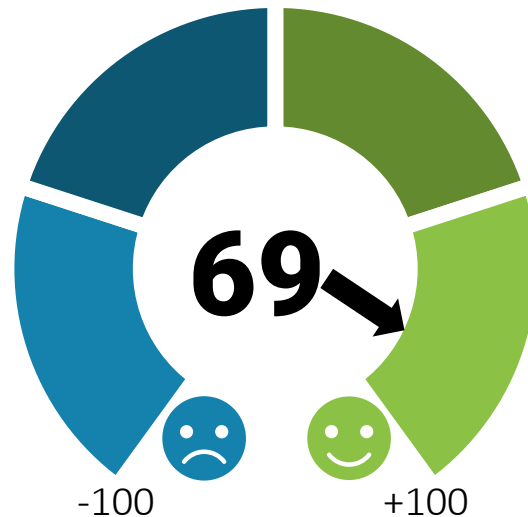
Likely to continue with gymnastics (n=2582)



Not sure (n=307)



Unlikely to continue (n=123)



Overall (N = 3044)

## KinderGym Net Promoter Score

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) calculates the extent to which KinderGym participants will promote the program to their friends and family. Given that word of mouth was the most common source of marketing for the program, advocates will be critical to ongoing success.

The NPS is calculated by subtracting the 'detractors' (those who rate their likelihood of recommending KinderGym at a 6/10 or below) from the promoters (those who rate their likelihood of recommending KinderGym at a 9/10 or above).

Scores can range from -100 to +100. Any score above '0' is considered a *good* score as it indicates there are more promoters than detractors.

A general guide to scores is:

0 – 30	Good
31 – 50	Very good
51 – 70	Excellent
71 - 100	Great

Overall, KinderGym received a very positive 69 NPS. This places very near to the top range.

By breaking down results and reading comments by those who were likely to continue with gymnastics (NPS=+78) and those who were not (NPS=-20), it can be seen that there was a large disparity in the experience they had with KinderGym. The large majority of participants received a very high quality experience, however there were instances where over-crowding or a poor deliverer negatively impacted and this contributed to the overall NPS.

## 2. The KinderGym experience

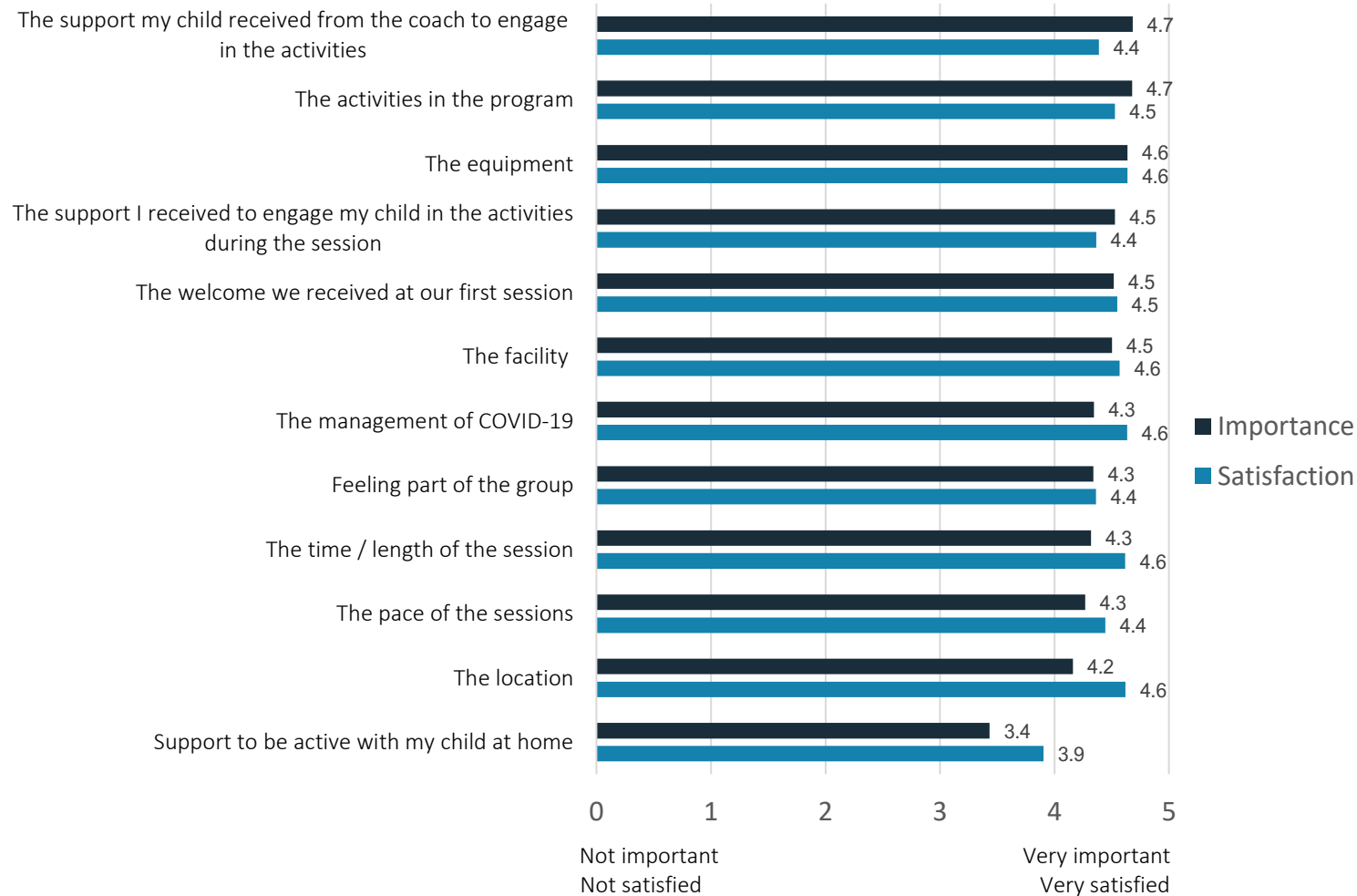
The section provides a more detailed consideration of program delivery elements and how they contributed to the participant experience.





## 2. The KinderGym experience: overall importance and satisfaction

Importance and satisfaction of elements (n=3032)



### Importance and satisfaction of program elements

Parent/carers were asked how important each program element was to their experience and how satisfied they were with each.

- Six elements rated a 4.5 out of 5 or higher for importance. The support children received to engage and the activities in the program were the most important elements (rated 4.7 out of 5), with the equipment, facility, support provided to parent/carers, and the welcome all important.
- On average, parent/carers were very satisfied with all elements of KinderGym. They were most satisfied with the KinderGym setting (location, equipment, facility and the management of COVID-19). They were least satisfied with the support to be active with their children at home, and the support they received to engage themselves and their children in the activities. This result is not surprising. Although most KinderGym experiences have been extremely positive, there have been a small proportion of experiences that have been less quality.

# 2. The KinderGym experience: the KinderGym experience

## The KinderGym experience

*The KinderGym experience was highly influenced by the club/facility where the program was being held, and by the coach delivering the program. There was evidence within the survey results that indicated some club/facilities delivered a higher quality KinderGym experience than others. Understanding what is important to parent/carers who attend KinderGym could provide insights useful for clubs/facilities and their coaches to manage and improve their KinderGym experience delivery, improving retention and the likelihood of parent/carers recommending KinderGym at that location. From parent/carer comments (n=2780) seven core themes around the KinderGym experience were identified, each with sub-themes as listed.*

- 1. The KinderGym framework**
  - Cost and perceived value
  - Information / registration / structure
- 2. The KinderGym setting**
  - Equipment and facility (built setting)
  - Welcoming and supportive environment (social setting)
  - Safety
- 3. KinderGym activities**
  - Gymnastics focus
  - Age appropriate
  - Variety of activities (structured and free-play)
- 4. KinderGym coaches**
  - Control and child to coach ratio
  - Qualities and behaviours
- 5. KinderGym developing children**
  - Physical, social, psychological, cognitive, and behaviour
- 6. KinderGym parent/carers**
  - Engagement with their child
  - Engagement with other parent/carers
- 7. KinderGym inclusion**
  - People with a disability

# 2. The KinderGym experience: framework

## Theme 1: KinderGym framework Cost and perceived value

*Across the country, the price structure for KinderGym varied and so too did the KinderGym experience. This meant there were those who believed that the costs were prohibitive, that KinderGym was not good value, and others who thought KinderGym was great value. The key influences around perceived value were:*

- The structure of the session, the level of organisation, and the attention and knowledge of the coach influenced perceived value. If the coach was seen to be *unorganised*, not engaged, or the sessions appeared to be chaotic with no plan then the perceived value was low. This was not to say that free play was always undervalued, it was more about if coaches did not provide a structure of learning and development within the program around the free play, the parent/carers could not see its value. As several parent/carers noted, it would be cheaper to play at home, go to the park or at play facility that cost less.
- How many children were in the class, and the mix of ages of the children influenced the perceived attention paid by the coach and this directly impacted on perceived value. Crowded classes, or classes where coaches paid more attention to the older children (leaving younger children with no attention) were perceived as low value.
- Children *loving it* or *wanting to attend* KinderGym could overcome cost barriers. Some parent/carers noted that they felt the cost was *pricey* but because their child *loved it* they continued to attend.
- A parent/carer perceived greater value if they saw their child developing (physically, mentally and socially) as a result of KinderGym, and this was often also linked with a greater variety of activities (activities that changed within the session and changing week to week) because it signalled that coaches took time and cared about program delivery.
- If parent/carers had more than one child, then the costs increased to a point where the cost could become too prohibitive. A cost structure that provided discounts for families could overcome this.
- The ease of paying and payment structure was mentioned by several parent/carers including wanting to be able to: pay upfront; pay by EFTPOS; and pay on a casual basis rather than signing up for a year.
- Receiving the KinderGym t-shirts was important – it was a symbol of the club/facilities organisation and of them delivering on what they had promised. Several children had not received their t-shirt yet and this contributed to a poor experience.

### Parent/carer feedback on cost and perceived value

*“Coach is lovely!!! Equipment rotation and weekly theme keep it engaging. Price is super affordable. Time of the Saturday morning session is great for still being able to do other things throughout the day without restriction. Just 10/10 all round.”*

*“Fun and interactive; Gross motor skill building activity to do with your child weekly; Good value for money; Instructors care for the kids and put effort in.”*

*“Great value for money, increased my child’s physical abilities, great social interaction for child and myself.”*

*“Well organised, friendly various activities, levels to challenge, not too expensive.”*

*“The cost is prohibitive especially when there is basically no engagement from the instructors. You do wonder what your paying for. It is very expensive for the kids to jump on a trampoline and climb over a few mats for an hour. I could do that in my own house for free.”*

*“Transitioning from Free Play into a structure session was quite hard. I would like the session to be a little bit longer as well. The having half free play and half structure is great, however for the price I would like to see a little more time as there are so many kids in a session. But otherwise we absolutely love it.”*

*“Feel like I paid to teach my own child. Received no instruction or help with technique/constructive criticism from instructors.”*

*“I don't find the communication particularly friendly, and not much information is given, however my kid loves it, so we are happy. The cost is quite a bit too, and I don't quite understand why I have to pay for the insurance, shouldn't this be the company's responsibility?”*

# 2. The KinderGym experience: framework

## Theme 1: KinderGym framework Information / registration / structure

*A well organised and supported program was positively perceived by parent/carers.*

- Providing an easy registration and booking system that provided reliable information on the times and costs of classes improved satisfaction. Information on additional charges or changes to charges in a timely manner influenced satisfaction. The pre-program *information step* was also important in setting up expectations about the program (such as the level of parent/carer involvement).
- There were several parent/carers who had been to different KinderGym programs (at different clubs/facilities) and they were more likely to stay at the location that was perceived to be *well run* or *well organised*. A well run program was one that had helpful club/facility staff, availability of classes, developed their child and engaged them in enjoyable activities, and had good quality coach delivery.
- Making sure that sessions were delivered on time and for the allocated duration (i.e. not starting late or finishing early) and the length of the session impacted on satisfaction. The length needed to be long enough to enjoy the activities without being *rushed*, and short enough that they fit within people's lifestyle.
- Classes could be cancelled for several reasons. For example, during COVID-19 some clubs and facilities had to close, and in general parent/carers may not be able to make all sessions due to being unwell or other engagements. The support and opportunity parent/carers received to *make-up classes* was important and satisfaction could decrease where parent/carers thought they had missed out on sessions they had paid for.
- As children increased their activities as they aged (such as starting playgroup or Kindergarten) then parent/carers required more flexibility and availability in KinderGym timetabling. Clubs/facilities that could provide more sessions at various times across the week were better able to provide for families as they got busier. Providing various session times so that both parents (or other family members) could attend was also appreciated (such as Saturday morning).
- Some parent/carers noted that the coaches were *rushed* or overloaded with having to quickly clean, set-up and then pack-up equipment. This gave some parent/carers the perception that the coaches did not have enough support from the club/facility to run the sessions.

### Parent/carer feedback on information provided and registration

*"Appears to be well organised and was a simple and easy registration process (first timer). They were very accommodating finding a makeup lesson time when needed."*

*"Both instructors are warm, friendly & knowledgeable & engage the children skilfully. Administration staff are helpful & friendly & go the extra mile at all times. Booking into classes was easy."*

*"Easy booking, staff are friendly, my daughter enjoys it."*

*"Well organised, different theme/activities each week and our child likes it. Also having classes on Saturday is great for both parents."*

*"Well organized, good variety of equipment, enthusiastic and friendly instructor, lots of session times to choose from."*

*"Love it! The kids love it, the trainers are excellent. Management is excellent. Always easy to deal with."*

*"Very well run and organised. We love it."*

*"Enjoyed the lessons when they were on, but unfortunately several were cancelled this term."*

*"The inability to reschedule classes when sick (I can understand however that this is the best way to operate) as there is only a makeup allowed every 30 days. I feel this encourages people to come to class when sick/contagious with a bug."*

*"Although the kids find it enjoyable, it is not well organised and often I am there helping set up and pack up and time is wasted during this."*





## 2. The KinderGym experience: setting

### Theme 2: KinderGym setting Safety

*Having a safe environment for children to participate was important to parent/carers. Safety was perceived on various levels including equipment, coach instruction, cleanliness of the environment, and managing of sick (or potentially sick) participants.*

- Equipment that was well padded or suitable for each age group increased the perception of safety. This was important for parent/carers as they were able to feel more confident in allowing their child to engage in more risky behaviour with minimal supervision (especially in sessions with a low child to coach ratio). Children in a safe environment could explore more freely without parent/carer concern, improving the experience for both participants. This was perceived by some parent/carers as an advantage over other play environments.
- The instruction that coaches gave in teaching children how to *move safely* was valued highly by parent/carers. They saw this as valuable development for their children, setting them up with core skills to manage and control their body safely during movement for their life to come. In this way, the perception of safety was closely linked to the coaches perceived knowledge and experience. More knowledgeable and experienced coaches were able to provide more support and education around safety – the *how and why* of certain movement and how to avoid injury.
- Mentioned by several parent/carers was the management of ill-health. This was linked to the cleanliness of the facility and equipment (e.g. if children became sick after attending it was attributed to the dirtiness of the facility) and the management of session attendance, making sure that children did not attend if they were sick. This could be managed in several ways. Firstly, making sure that missed sessions due to illness did not mean a financial loss to parent/carers – that they were able to make-up the sessions at another time. Secondly, it was about controlling the message that the facility would not let sick children attend. This should be clearly explained at the start of each term, and enforced by sending sick children home.

#### Parent/carer feedback on safety

*"KinderGym is a great opportunity for toddlers to explore movement and be free to have fun and take risks in a safe, guided way."*

*"My child is a physical kid and has really thrived being able to challenge himself in a safe environment."*

*"Its fun, supportive and well organised. They don't baby the kids, they teach them to do fun safe activities and learn new skills."*

*"Great place for toddlers to practice their motor skills with minimal risk of injury due to soft flooring unlike playgrounds."*

*"I found the whole team fabulous, very kind and caring, the kids all seem to feel comfortable around them. The set up and activities are always very engaging and are slightly different each week to keep kids motivated. The gross motor skills and safety skills taught are invaluable."*

*"I love that the instructor sets up organised things for the kids to do but then is more than ok if they choose to do something different at the time. The equipment is well maintained and safe for my child to play on without constant hovering due to everything being padded."*

*"The cleanliness of the facility- my child regularly gets sick after attending. Needs professional cleaning."*

*"Love the class and the teacher, the only downfall for me is the lack of policy when it comes to sick children attending. There have been several occasions where children have turned up visibly unwell which I believe have led to my child becoming unwell. Green snot was left on equipment by this sick child. It was difficult to avoid."*













## 2. The KinderGym experience: parent/carers

### Theme 6: KinderGym parent/carers Engagement with children

*KinderGym is a somewhat special program in that it provides an opportunity for parent/carers to participate with their children. This facilitated an opportunity to create stronger bonds between families and to deliver outcomes for parent/carers.*

- Parent/carers took joy out of watching their children develop. Seeing their children try new things, grow in confidence, and achieve all contributed to a positive experience. Having activities that could demonstrate improvement supported parent/carers to clearly recognise development.
- Participating in a healthy activity together, supported by coach expertise and knowledge, provided the foundation for creating bonds between children and parent/carers that were not developed in other settings. Some parent/carers reported that they had fun and enjoyed KinderGym, and teaching children and parent/carers together in an engaging and enjoyable way promoted the potential for them to practice together at home.
- Parent/carers commented that their own experience was influenced by how well the coach managed and engaged the entire cohort of participants (children and parent/carers). Leaving parent/carers to effectively *teach* their own children impacted negatively on some people's experience, whereas sessions where coaches supported parent/carers engagement with their child and taught them about the why and how of movement and gymnastics, improved satisfaction.
- Some parent/carers strongly believed that KinderGym was a place to focus on your child. These parent/carer's experience could be negatively impacted if they thought other parent/carers behaviour was focused too much on socialising or on their phones (resulting in those children effectively being unsupervised and potentially being out of control). This impacted on the experience if poorly behaved children interrupted the coach trying to provide instruction or interrupted their child engaging in activities.

#### Parent/carer feedback on their engagement with their children

*"Wonderful staff and such a supportive environment to nurture the energy of little ones. They learn so much at the same time they are having fun and that is really wonderful to watch as a parent."*

*"We have really enjoyed our first term! We will definitely be back next term. My daughter loves it, she has a great time, I love that I get to be there as well and its great to have this learning/play time together outside of the home."*

*"We have been attending regularly now for over a year and my daughter loves it. We both look forward to it each week. I get to spend time with her doing something she loves and she gets an outlet to try out all her new development skills and burn energy. I've seen her movement development and confidence grow so much."*

*"We had a lot of fun, it was a great bonding experience for this age and she is learning great skills like balance, listening, following instructions in a fun environment."*

*"I would love to see more parent-child activities. I think it's the one thing that's missing from the program. Many of the parents assist classes are literally just that: parents assist. While I think there's a missed opportunity to get the parent moving with the kids more."*

*"I do enjoy the class but sometimes the activities are a bit random. it would be good to know what your kid should be doing more."*

*"Whilst the activities and stations are great, parents let their children run around making noise whilst the teachers are trying to explain something, allow their children to push in setting a bad example for others, and just seem to view it as a public playground rather than a space where important skills are developed."*

*"Whilst my child has fun playing on the equipment, the lack of actual teaching from the teacher is frustrating. I am left to teach my child everything from the gymnastic skills to listening and taking turns because the teacher of our group is incompetent."*



## 2. The KinderGym experience: inclusion

### Theme 7: Inclusion

#### Children with a with a disability

*Providing an inclusive environment was important for people with a disability, especially for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder who could become overwhelmed in a sensory heavy environment and children with physical disabilities that required modification.*

- There were around 130 KinderGym participants who identified as having a disability and who completed the post-program survey. What improved their experience was having an engaging coach who listened and catered to children's individual needs, and having activities that facilitated development (particularly for children with physical disabilities).
- Having *fill-in* coaches could impact on the experience because they did not have the opportunity to fully understand children's needs.
- Some club/facilities delivered specialised programs for children with a disability, while others included them in regular classes. When included together, then educating parent/carers about different disabilities and how they manifest in a KinderGym setting could improve overall support and engagement. As one parent/carers explained, their child could be perceived as *naughty* by other parent/carers. Parent/carers comments in the survey do indicate that there was some judgement on other children's behaviour and how it was managed by both coaches and parent/carers. Growing awareness around disabilities (such as Autism Spectrum Disorder) could improve understanding and the experience for all involved.

*"Not enough communication with parents. I was unsure of the format of the class and found it difficult to prepare and guide my child. Also, I wasn't aware that there was a program available for children with disabilities until I specifically asked after not succeeding in the classes. However, the staff are kind and really put effort into the weekly themes, activities were engaging to the other children, equipment is good quality and safe. I think most children would enjoy these classes. We had difficulties due to our disabilities."*

#### Parent/carers feedback on children with a disability

*"Developmentally appropriate, well structured and inclusive."*

*"Great staff. Friendly small club. And great activities for the kids. Our son is autistic and the trainers are great at keeping him focused, along with being particularly kind and patient."*

*"Its great value for money. Everyone is friendly and accommodating. The circuit changes every week which keeps the kids so entertained. It is the only sport my daughter loves to come back to. It is fantastic gross motor skills, exactly like a physiotherapist does."*

*"It is well organised and planned and our current instructor really makes an effort to include our child with a disability."*

*"My child has nerve damage in his legs and his gymnastic lessons have dramatically improved his movement, strength and confidence."*

*"It's a very friendly and accommodating gym. My child has a tracheostomy and requires extra attention from myself or accompanying nurse and it doesn't affect the class at all."*

*"Could have been more accommodating of my child's needs."*

*"Kids loved it but I felt judged by other parents."*

*"It's great for really young children but not as stimulating for those approaching kindy age. I also feel very judged at times for my child being on the Autism spectrum if he is a bit rowdy instead of accepted and supported. It would be great if the staff could receive some basic training to develop understanding on common disabilities such as Autism so our kids with special needs are more accepted instead of ostracised for behaving a bit different to other children. My child often gets viewed as naughty rather than understanding he is having challenges processing and following multiple instructions for example."*

### 3. KinderGym outcomes

This section describes the participant outcomes through the lens of the four physical literacy domains (physical, psychological, social, and cognitive).



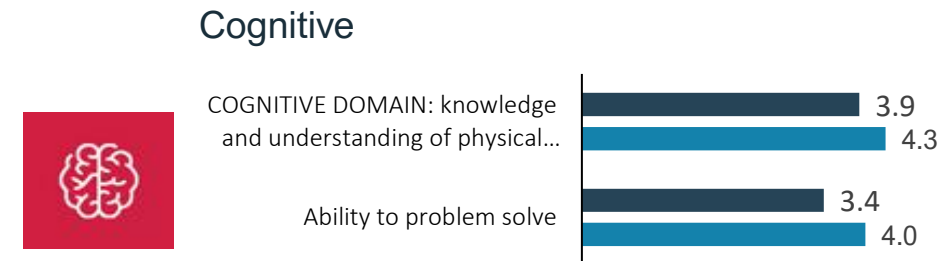
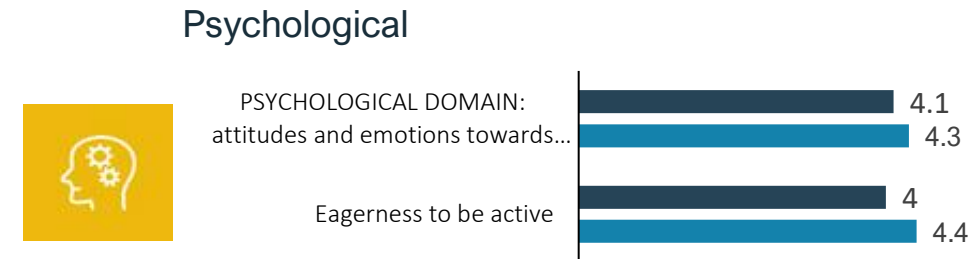
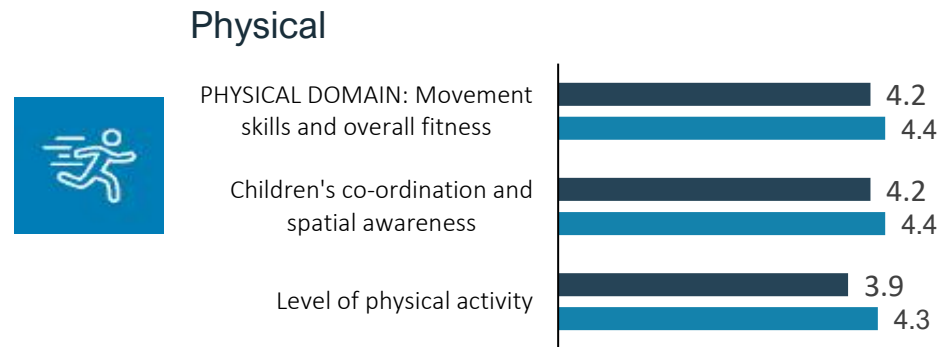
# 3. KinderGym outcomes: overview for children

## Children's improvement in physical literacy

The four domains of physical literacy provide a useful framework for analysing the outcomes of KinderGym for children. The following charts provide the coach (N=67) and parent/carer (n=3033) perception of children's outcomes on a scale from 0=not all improved to 5=improved a lot).

Children improved across all four domains of physical literacy, providing them important development opportunities and providing them a strong foundation for future sport participation and the leading of a physically active life.

Overall coaches perceived a greater improvement in children's development than parent/carers. This could be because parent/carers were not fully aware of some of the benefits of KinderGym activities (such as free-play) or may have had higher expectations for their child. Parent/carers did still perceive that their children improved over all areas. The greatest perceived outcomes for parent/carers were around the physical domain (possibly because this is where the improvement could have been more tangible). Coaches saw improvements across all domains equally (4.3-4.4 out of 5), with the lowest rated outcome being the *ability to problem solve* rated 4.0 out of 5.



Parent/carer response (n=3033)
  Coach response (N=67)

# 3. KinderGym outcomes: physical



## Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework (physical domain)

The physical domain refers to the skills and fitness a person acquires and applies through movement.

- Results indicated that the KinderGym program could support young children to develop and improve in the physical domain elements of:

Movement skills	Stability/balance
Coordination	Strength
Agility	Object manipulation

- Parent/carers were also able to show some improvement in their own physical ability in some sessions where coaches encouraged their active involvement.
- Free-play was valued by coaches as being important for movement outcomes. Some parent/carers placed less value on free-play, and there could be an opportunity to better educate parent/carers about the importance it has in developing children.
- Structured activities that allowed children to progress and develop fine and gross motor skills supported physical outcomes. This included activities with equipment, climbing, and movement following instruction.
- Parent/carers valued the activity as somewhere their children could *burn up energy* and for its development of foundational skills. This balance of *fun* with purpose and learning was important, therefore KinderGym sessions should continue to be an *active* program where children can explore and develop.

### Parent/carers and coach feedback on physical outcomes

*"I think its really a important part of learning, to move, fall, climb & get general awareness of body movement & function."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"Its a high energy class, no sitting around and my child has already developed new skills."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"My boy loved to use his body with equipment safely with teachers instruction."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"My child has nerve damage in his legs and his gymnastic lessons have dramatically improved his movement, strength and confidence."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"Our Granddaughter has always enjoyed participating in the activities provided and her balance and strength continues to improve from week to week. She is confident to try different and harder activities now. We have just started to bring our 1 year old grandson along who is also enjoying the experience."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"The benefits of kindy gym on toddlers motor skills and balance are invaluable."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"Very well run, the coach (Rose) is fantastic with the children, and they are learning good foundational skills while having lots of fun."* KinderGym parent/carers

*"KinderGym is so wonderful for children to explore their coordination, flexibility and motor skills, I have noticed a huge difference in my toddlers since starting KinderGym and the upper strength that they have built and not to mention how much fun they have! My kids and I just love it!"* KinderGym parent/carers

*"Children were given the time, space and opportunity to engage with activities to improve their own particular movement outcome, not necessarily their parent/guardians outcome."* KinderGym coach

# 3. KinderGym outcomes: physical

## Meeting physical activity guidelines

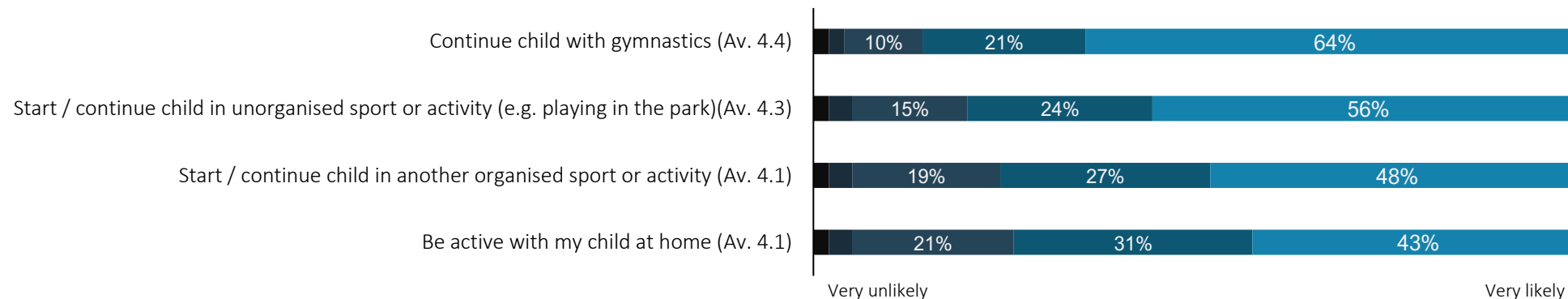
*It's recommended that children engage in active play and activity as its important to their development. Australian Government Department of Health [guidelines recommend](#):*

- Infants (birth–12 months) several active times a day including reaching for objects, tummy time, and when mobile crawling and pulling themselves up.
- Toddlers (1-2 years) At least 3 hours of activity per day (across several sessions, not all at once) including energetic play that includes running, twirling, jumping, obstacle course, dancing, skipping. Should include exploration and discovery.
- Pre-schoolers (3-5 years) At least 3 hours of activity per day (across several sessions, not all at once) including at least 1 hour of energetic play like running, ball games, kicking, throwing, jumping, obstacle course, dancing, skipping. Should include exploration and discovery.

- KinderGym provided a regular weekly physical activity opportunity for children that included developmental activities such as obstacle courses, dancing, jumping, object manipulation, running, and energetic play meaning they had access to those activities listed as important in the guidelines.
- KinderGym developed capacity and interest in parent/carers to continue these activities at home improving the livelihood of children reaching the activity guidelines in terms of time and variety of activity. Further to that, as a result of attending KinderGym, 64% parent/carers were very likely to continue their children in gymnastics, 56% very likely to keep playing or participate in unorganised activity, and 48% were very likely to start or continue in another organised sport or activity.

*“My son loves it and learns so many new skills. It also teaches me how to help him play and do physical activities safely.”* KinderGym parent/carer

Future intentions as a result of attending KinderGym (n=3030)



# 3. KinderGym outcomes: psychological



## Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework (psychological domain)

The psychological domain refers to the attitudes and emotions a person has towards movement and the impact they have on their confidence and motivation to move.

- KinderGym program could support children and their parent/carers to develop and improve in the psychological elements of:
  - Engagement and enjoyment
  - Motivation
  - Confidence

### Parent/carer and coach feedback on engagement and enjoyment

*“Excellent program, equipment and teachers. My daughter looked forward to every lesson.”* KinderGym parent/carer

*“My daughter’s confidence in herself and in her climbing increased. She became more aware of her body and her strength. But most of all she enjoyed every minute of it. She was excited to attend even after a long day at preschool.”* KinderGym parent/carer

*“She absolutely loves KinderGym. We had taken her elsewhere and the classes were not as structured. She goes which her father and eagerly comes home trying to show me the new skills she has learned at gym. She also wants to go every week, it’s her favourite day of the week.”* KinderGym parent/carer

## Motivation / engagement and enjoyment

Motivation provides an insight into human behaviour such as: the reasons why people engaged with the program; the type of goals they may have set for themselves and their children; and the type of outcomes that may be more valuable than others.

- Parent/carers were motivated to provide their children with the opportunity to develop physically, socially, and mentally. Comments suggest that, for the most part, the program has delivered on these.
- Engagement and enjoyment of the program was important for parent/carers and their children. Having fun was the top motivator for 62% parent/carers, and enjoying being active with my child was a top outcome for 64% of parent/carers
- Parent/carers considered how much a child *looked forward to* KinderGym as a good indicator of how much they enjoyed the program, and this factored into retention and satisfaction. That is, parent/carers were more likely to keep attending KinderGym if their child/ren looked forward to the program each week. If children stopped looking forward to it, then they were less satisfied and less likely to come back.
- Parent/carers placed their perception of outcomes on how well the coach was able to engage their child. Coaches were critical to delivering outcomes through engaging children that may have been shy or lacking in confidence.

*“I love the fact they are so welcoming and inclusive and encourage all the children. It’s really helped improve my sons confidence. And besides anything else it’s so much fun!”* KinderGym parent/carer

*“They have been fabulous in coaxing my son to participate. He loves it now.”* KinderGym parent/carer

# 3. KinderGym outcomes: psychological

## Confidence

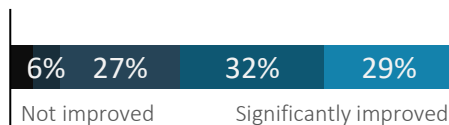
*Confidence drives behaviour.*

*It impacts on the ability for people to try new things, and their motivation for continuing on certain activities and behaviours. If someone is more confident, they are more likely to engage in that behaviour or activity. The reverse is also true, people are less likely to engage in behaviour or activities that they are less confident about.*

- Improving children’s confidence was called out by parent/carers and coaches alike as being one of the more important KinderGym outcomes. This was both their confidence to be active and try new things, and also their confidence in being in a social setting.
- Parent/carers improved their own confidence to support their children to be active, with 29% of parent/carers significantly improved and 32% improved.

### Parent/carers confidence n=(3041)

Confidence to support my child to be active (Av. 3.8/5)



### Parent/carers and coach feedback around confidence

*“Improved Social skills and children becoming more independent and social with other peers. Self confidence and self belief improves per visit.”* KinderGym coach

*“It is always great to see the confidence of the child grow each week and the parent gets to see their child be more confident too.”* KinderGym coach

*“Kinder gym has helped my daughter to become more adventurous, more confident in her self and her abilities. I always thought I would enrol my daughter into dancing but she just loved to jump and balance and KinderGym has helped her develop more of these skills and feel confident in front of the other children and teachers.”* KinderGym parent/carers

*“My son loves it and learns so many new skills. It also teaches me how to help him play and do physical activities safely.”* KinderGym parent/carers

*“We have loved bringing her to KinderGym. She has gained lots of confidence and is excited each week to go to gym!”* KinderGym parent/carers

*“The program has been very beneficial to my child. The physical activity is great; his confidence is growing; he enjoys it and looks forward to it each week; the program varies from week to week and the coaches are excellent.”* KinderGym parent/carers

# 3. KinderGym outcomes: social



## Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework (social domain)

*The social domain refers to a person's interaction with others in relation to movement.*

- Results indicated that the KinderGym program could support children and parent/carers to develop and improve in the social domain element of:
  - Relationships
  - Collaboration
  - Ethics

### Relationships, collaboration and ethics

*Relationships: Building and maintaining respectful relationships that enable a person to interact effectively with others.*

*Collaboration: Social skills for successful interaction with others, including: communication, cooperation, leadership and conflict resolution.*

*Ethics: Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour relating to fairness and justice, inclusion, equity, integrity and respect.*

- KinderGym is one of the first opportunities for children to be involved in a structured physical activity program with other children of a similar age. This provides them the opportunity to develop relationship and collaboration skills and the importance of ethics. KinderGym does this by having children learn to listen to instruction, stand in lines and take turns, and sharing toys and equipment. It could also refer to providing an inclusive environment where children of all abilities can participate, opening children up to interacting with children with disabilities.

### Parent/carers and coach feedback on social outcomes

*"We love KinderGym for the physical and social skills it gives our child. Not just how to move her body, but also how to wait turns, follow instructions, assess risk etc."*  
KinderGym parent/carer

*"My two kids love it. It is great exercise and teaches them how to listen, share and enjoy new experiences."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"I believe the children learn a lot of gross motor skills. The program is fun and engaging, it also provides independence while the parents are able to watch. My daughter always enjoys it. The children learn to share and have patience while waiting for other classmates to finish."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"Not being allowed to take photos can be frustrating BUT it also means that I stay 100% focused on my son for the time we are at KinderGym. -no phone notifications to distract me and I LOVE that too!"* KinderGym parent/carer

*"Its very beneficial to a child's physical development, but also their social and emotional development as well. IT gives parent and child/ren a chance to engage together in a positive and interactive way. It gives children (and adults) a chance to interact with others beyond their usual social circles."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"My daughter gets lots out of the experience. She loves interacting with others and learning what her body can do."* KinderGym parent/carer

# 3. KinderGym outcomes: social

## Social connection for parent/carers at KinderGym

*Social isolation and loneliness are considered significant health issues in Australia due to the impact they can have on mental and physical health, and overall wellbeing.*

*Interventions that can connect individuals to a supportive group are therefore valuable, particularly if they can show longer-term bonds being created that could address the health risks associated with social isolation or support the prevention of loneliness.*

- KinderGym provided parent/carers to develop relationships with their children. Being a physical activity based on fun and developing the children added a sense of purpose and enjoyment which led parent/carers to see KinderGym as a health setting/program to facilitate a healthy parent/carer and child relationship.
- New parents could be considered an at-risk group of isolation. KinderGym proved to be a setting whereby new parents could connect to other parent/carers and develop a support network. These connections facilitated social and physical activity outside of the KinderGym program, with parent/carers able to set up *play dates*.
- Another key target group were the extended family of children (grandparents, aunts and uncles). Through KinderGym they were able to develop important bonds with their family and have social interactions with other parent/carers.

## Parent/carer and coach feedback around social connection

*"When we joined KinderGym it was a great opportunity for my children to finally interact with some other kids. During COVID we were extremely isolated and locked in our house for months without seeing friends, family or have anyone to speak to. My son was born during the lockdown and both kids struggled and lacked skills and confidence. Since our enrolment both children have grown in spirit, have the confidence to play with other kids, I have been able to open up and be more confident as a mother. KinderGym has been supporting, approachable and feels like family. The team make me and my children happy and I am so grateful for them"* KinderGym parent/carer

*"It is great fun, helps with social skills, great for parents to get to know other parents and our instructors are absolutely amazing. Plus the physical skills and confidence it builds in the kids."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"As a mum I also find it social as I meet other parents."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"KinderGym builds community and friendships."* KinderGym coach

*"KinderGym classes are a great place for parents & guardians to meet and socialise with others within the community."* KinderGym coach

*"Making new friends and furthering relationships outside the gym with play dates and meeting up at playgrounds."* KinderGym coach

*"Parent interaction with their child and the other children/parents in the program. Able to converse easily Term 2 as they are getting to know the children/parents - social networking very important. Child interaction with each other and doing activities together rather than relying totally on parent."* KinderGym coach

# 3. KinderGym outcomes: cognitive



## Sport Australia Physical Literacy Framework (cognitive domain)

The cognitive domain refers to a person's understanding of how, why and when they move.

- Results indicated that the KinderGym program could support children to develop and improve in the cognitive elements of:
  - Content knowledge
  - Perceptual awareness
  - Safety and risk
  - Rules

### Content knowledge

- Providing a greater focus on the *why* and *how* of activities could improve cognitive outcomes for parent/carers. When they understood the reasoning behind activity selection and how it supported their children's development, they could be more supportive of the program overall, and provide opportunities for their children at home to participate in activities that support development. For example, those parent/carers that understood the value of free play were more likely to support it.
- Children were also able to learn about specific physical activities, why they were important, and how each supported their development.

### Rules, safety and risk, perceptual awareness

- KinderGym provided children the opportunity to learn how to follow instructions given by the coach and how organised physical activity sessions run.
- During KinderGym sessions, children were able to explore movement during free play and other structured activities. Through these experiences, observations, and their own emotions (such as fear and courage) they were able to develop their understanding of safety, risk, and perceptual awareness.

## Parent/carer and coach feedback around cognitive development

*"Great for the kids to be learning both physically and mentally."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"Friendly, patient teachers. Throughout the term my child's confidence has grown as well as his ability to follow instructions."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"I ABSOLUTELY LOVE KinderGym. Incidental learning, routine following, instruction following are all things that happen ON TOP of the incredible physical benefits."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"He's now 21 maths old and can follow all instructions. He is a very active boy and KinderGym has definitely helped improve his strength and coordination."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"We love KinderGym for the physical and social skills it gives our child. Not just how to move her body, but also how to wait turns, follow instructions, assess risk etc"* KinderGym parent/carer

*"The coaches were fantastic and really good at gaining the children's confidence and supporting them to feel safe while doing certain manoeuvres which were out of their comfort zone. The program is excellent for physical exercise, development of co-ordination skills, and learning to listen to and obey teachers."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"My daughters love KinderGym and look forward to attending. Sharon always includes information as to why certain activities are important, e.g. crossing the midline of the body for development."* KinderGym parent/carer

*"I notice that parents feel empowered if the coach shares some info about why things are included, or done in a certain way. Some will then replicate it at home, once they understand."* KinderGym coach

*"Co-ordination and spatial awareness and improved fine and gross motor skills."* KinderGym coach

*"Many children learned how to walk and climb in our program. They also learned fun facts."* KinderGym coach

## 4. KinderGym program delivery

This section provides an overview of coach feedback on how they implemented the program, the non-negotiables and the importance of each program elements. It also addresses how coaches returned to the program during COVID-19.



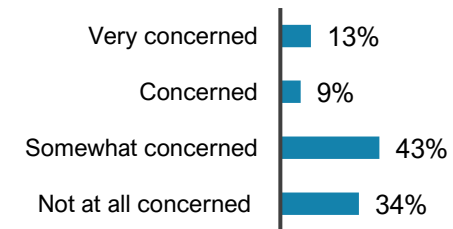
# 4. KinderGym program delivery: COVID-19

## Support to return to KinderGym delivery during COVID-19

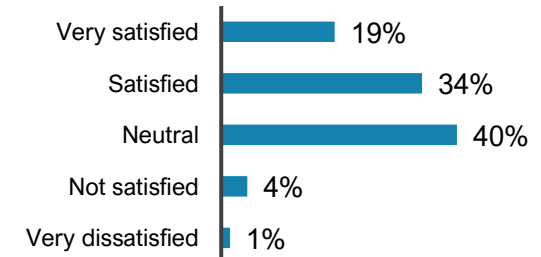
*KinderGym coaches were asked about how concerned they were about returning to delivery during COVID-19, and their satisfaction with the support provided overall for that return.*

- Just over half of coaches were satisfied with the support they received to return to sport during COVID-19 (34% satisfied and 19% very satisfied). These coaches appreciated the zoom classes that were held, the information available online, and developed COVID plans and implemented them.
- The neutral group did not perceive any support, or that it was delivered by their club only. This could be a symptom of the communication structure set up within gymnastics, that more formal guidance was delivered by Gymnastics Australia, state associations, and government departments to clubs and then clubs passed on to coaches. Some coaches reported that clubs were timely and thorough with communication, while other clubs were less forthcoming and this was stressful for coaches who reported feeling less supported.
- There was some perception that KinderGym was *an afterthought* and that information and support provided did not adequately apply to KinderGym or participants of that age group. One coach explained “*we were given general guidelines to follow, but were not too sure how to implement them*” while another thought it was challenging waiting for Gymnastics Australia to provide operational advice (particularly where regional areas returned to sport before metropolitan areas).

Concern to return to delivery  
(N=67)



Support to return to delivery  
(N=67)



# 4. KinderGym program delivery: COVID-19

## Returning to KinderGym delivery during COVID-19

*KinderGym coaches provided the ways in which they modified or changed behaviours and the strategies they needed to implement during the return to delivery during COVID-19.*

- Returning to KinderGym during the pandemic required some logistical and communication modifications such as: cleaning equipment and setting; restructuring timetables for cleaning between sessions and ensure participant groups did not cross over; limits on participants to allow physical distancing; QR code check-ins and keeping attendance records; online bookings; moving from casual bookings to term bookings to manage attendance and numbers; keeping children and parent/carers home if unwell; limiting toys to share and the removal of the toddler playpens and foam pits; hand sanitisation; signage to guide behaviour on new regulations; use of visual cues to guide children instead of touching; mask wearing; entry and exit practices through the club; and online classes.
- There were the economic impacts of COVID-19 that had to be managed. Some clubs reported losing coaches during the pandemic, and others had to pay additional costs for coach and staff time to clean before and after sessions (while some coaches reported having to do this for free).
- Physical distancing restrictions were challenging with small children, as one coach explained children still wanted to run up and hug them at the end of sessions and others commented on the stress of trying to keep children distanced safely. Further to this, coaches noticed parent/carers were uncomfortable in the first few sessions returning being around people that they did not know.
- Two coaches commented on missing sessions during COVID-19 that led to children missing out on critical progressive activities and caused a potential set-back in their development.

*“Working by myself is challenging, to set up, pack up, modify programs to meet COVID requirements, run the classes and COVID clean toys and gym in limited hours makes the job too difficult.”* KinderGym coach

*“We had to restructure our whole time table to allow extra time for cleaning. We have had to implement extra training for coaches to ensure they are being COVID safe. Most of our staff missed out on JobKeeper so we lost a lot of coaches. This last lock down was the hardest as there was no JobKeeper at all to pay Staff.”* KinderGym coach

*“We found lockdowns have regressed the abilities of some KinderGymers and has had an adverse affect on emotional and social confidence.”* KinderGym coach

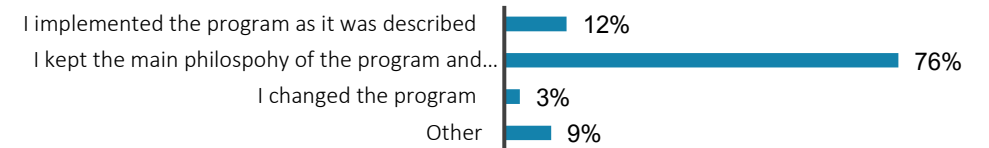
# 4. KinderGym program delivery: implementation fidelity

## KinderGym implementation

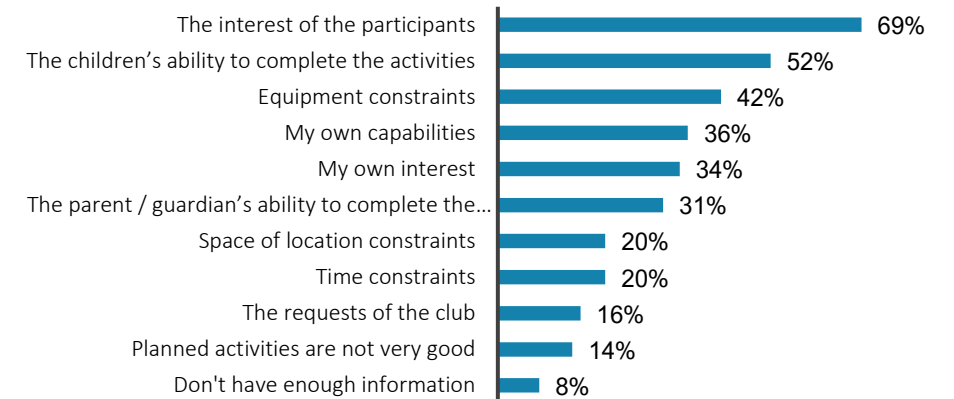
- Coaches were asked to what extent they delivered the program as it was prescribed. The majority (76%) kept the main philosophy of the program and used their own activities. This underpins the importance of ensuring that coaches do understand the philosophy of KinderGym, and the potential usefulness of developing a set of KinderGym non-negotiables (those KinderGym components considered essential to realising positive participant outcomes).
- The main reasons for modifying the program were to meet the participant’s interest (69%), the children’s ability (52%). This is an encouraging result indicating that coaches take a participant-centred approach to delivery, however it does illustrate the importance of coaches being able to assess children’s ability and modify activities to ensure that they continue to develop through KinderGym, a key desirable outcome for parent/carers. Allowing children to *free play* because of a *perceived* lack of ability could impact on this outcome.
- Around one-third (36%) of coaches modified the program based on their own strengths and experience and one-third (34%) because of their own interests. Setting constraints were also influential with coaches modifying the program because of equipment (42%), space (20%), and time (20%).
- The majority (63%) of coaches preferred the current program approach of being given a general framework with some ideas for activities, however 18% preferred to be given a more prescriptive plan, and 12% were more comfortable with a general philosophy. In general, coaches appreciated more support and activity ideas.

*“Both! Having a program is great, but the flexibility to change and adjust as needed is also necessary.”* KinderGym coach

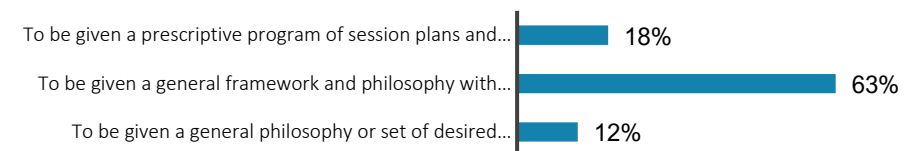
Implementation fidelity of KinderGym (N=67)



Why modifications were made (coaches could select multiple) (n=64)



Preferred program approach (N=67)





# 4. KinderGym program delivery: program development

## Program development

*KinderGym coaches were asked for any additional comments. There were comments in reference to the development of the program and the need to further advocate for the value of KinderGym for children's development.*

### Opportunities for further development support:

- Requiring coaches to have First Aid and CPR
- More KinderGym events in regional areas
- More direct support for coaches (rather than going through state associations and clubs)
- More rounded resources for all age groups (rather than focus on 3 – 5 year olds)

### Communicating the value of KinderGym

- Coaches believed in the value of KinderGym for children's development, however they believed that more could be done to better advocate for the program. A stronger set of evidence-based resources and advocacy on how important early childhood development is and the value of the KinderGym product and program could serve several purposes:
  - Support and provide coach development
  - Provide a foundation for more targeted marketing value-based messaging to parents
  - Provide a foundation to advocate to government for support and funding
  - Encourage clubs to support the program as an important step in the pathway for children
  - Collaborate with physiotherapists who could advocate for, or use, the KinderGym

*"I feel that the association could put forward a report to Service NSW on how important early intervention is for children of under 5s (KinderGym at this age is as important as swimming) and especially children with special needs and how the active and creative kids vouchers would benefit the families of the under 5s."*  
KinderGym coach

*"Love it - its now particularly exciting when you see children you have coached in KinderGym as teenagers who are still enjoying participating in gymnastics activities. When coaching the GymFun classes, it is so rewarding to see the difference between those participants who have done KinderGym, vs this who have not. I feel that this is the greatest estimate to the value of the program."*  
KinderGym coach

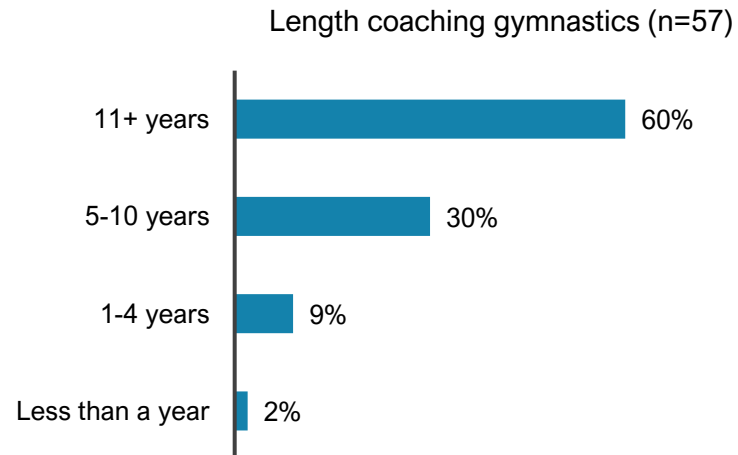
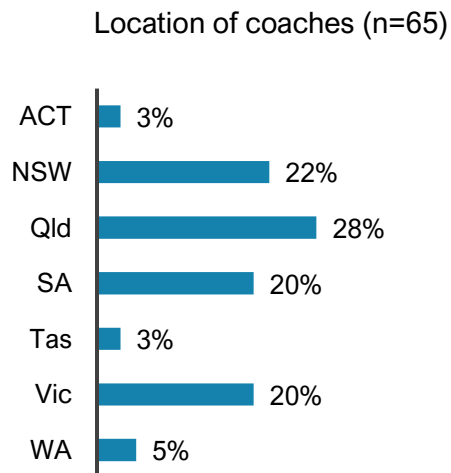
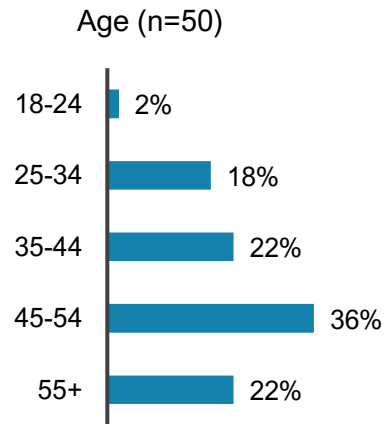
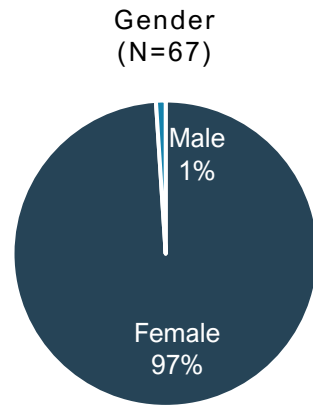
*"Any training I have attended is centred on 3-5 year olds. Any instructors or participants are only working in that age group and have not had any knowledge of modifying for the much younger children."* KinderGym coach

## 5. KinderGym coach support

This final section describes the coaches who responded to the survey, their perception of the support they receive to deliver KinderGym, and further support that could be provided.



# 5. KinderGym coach support



## KinderGym coach survey respondents

Sixty-seven (67) KinderGym coaches responded to the survey.

- Most were women (97%) and there were representatives from around the country (ACT 3%, New South Wales 22%, Queensland 28%, South Australia 20%, Victoria 20%, and Western Australia, 5%).
- Coaches were aged across the lifespan from 18 years of age to over 55 years of age.
- Most (60%) had been coaching gymnastics for over 11 years, with some (30%) delivering between 5 – 10 years, 9% between 1-4 years and 2% less than a year.
- Additional comments indicated the pride and enjoyment that KinderGym coaches felt about the program:

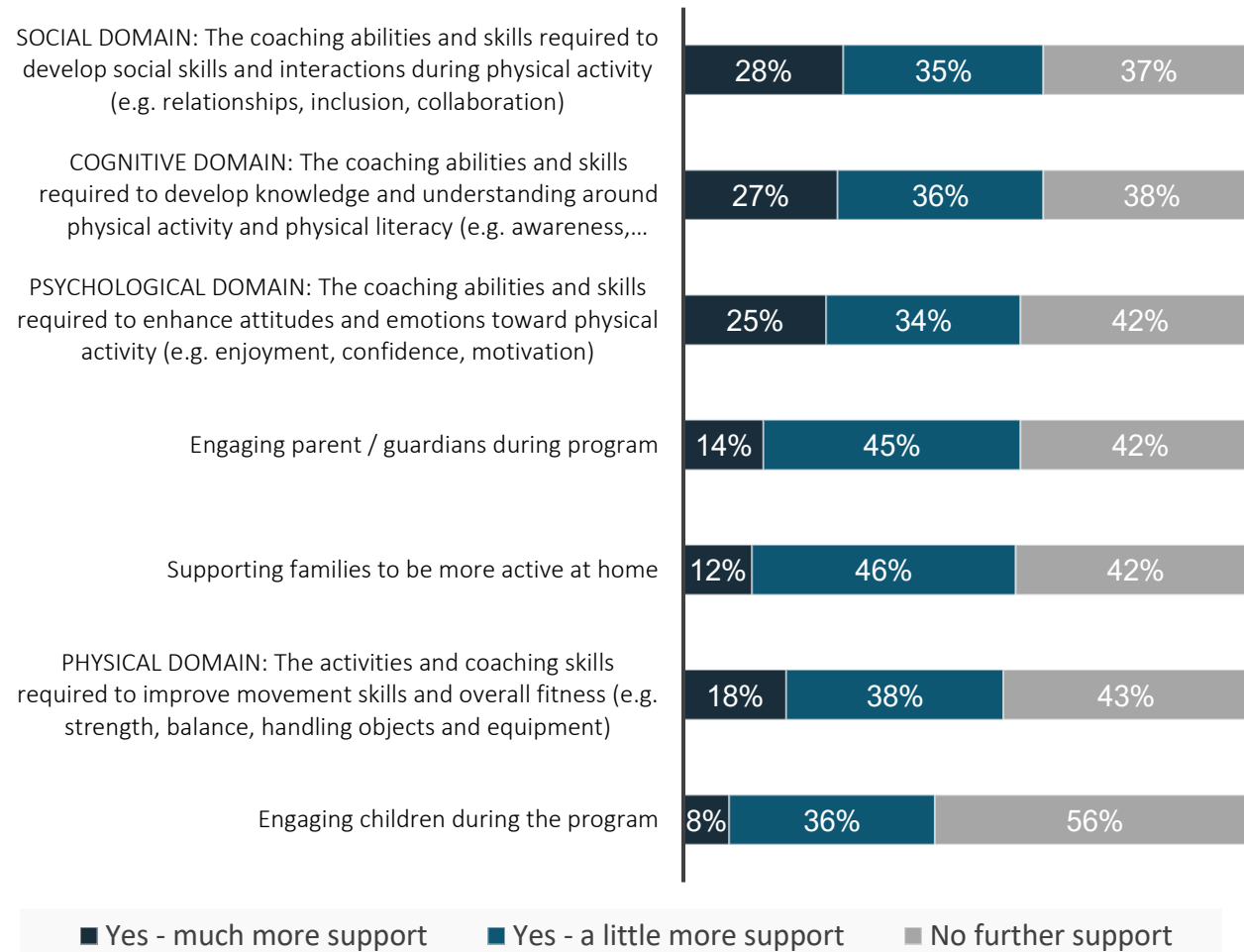
*"Its a wonderful concept and I'm very proud of the programme we deliver - and the quality of the programme we deliver."* KinderGym coach

*"I love KinderGym, it is amazing to watch young children grow in so many ways and even within just a few weeks from starting. It truly is the fundamental for all children no matter what sport they go on to do in their lives."* KinderGym coach



# 5. KinderGym coach support: what further support is needed

## Further support to deliver KinderGym (n=66)



## Further coach support to deliver KinderGym

Coaches were asked about what further support they would like to deliver KinderGym. This information could inform future support or resources developed for the program.

- KinderGym coaches were most confident at engaging children with 56% of coaches not wanting any further support, however there were still 36% who would like a little more support and 8% much more in this area. Engaging parent/carers however was an area that 14% would like much more support and 45% would like a little more support. One coach explained that activities were predominantly designed for children with parent/carers assisting rather than genuine engagement together.
- Most KinderGym coaches would like further support across all physical literacy domains. The social, cognitive, and psychological domains were the areas most coaches wanted further support in (34% -36% wanted a little more support, and 25%-28% wanted much more).

# 5. KinderGym coach support: where should further support come from

## Gymnastics Australia and state associations

- Coaches were asked about where they would like further support to come from. Around one-third of coaches thought that as Gymnastics Australia was responsible for quality assurance, the KinderGym brand, and took affiliate fees, support should be provided from them.
- Support could be in the form of online workshops, courses, a national KinderGym network, online resources for additional activity content and ideas on how to modify and implement.
- At least one coach identified that there was a potential issue with the current communication support structure within KinderGym where Gymnastics Australia or the state association sent resources to clubs and then relied on clubs to deliver to coaches. A more direct channel to coaches could minimise the any perceived lack of support, and potentially improve the coaching quality and experience.
- Some coaches perceived that KinderGym was not necessarily given as much attention as it could have, or that the 3-5 year old age group was given more attention/supporting resources than the younger age group. More resources for the younger age group would be appreciated, and having a dedicated *KinderGym* contact within the national or state body could serve to provide clearer access to information and answering questions in a timely manner.

## Peer support and expert advice

- Peer support was very helpful. In Victoria they have established a KinderGym coach Facebook Group to share ideas, and this, along with small group brainstorming sessions held with other club and coaches, were valuable in sharing activity ideas and could be expanded (or a national network created). One coach suggested a national KinderGym collaborative club buddy or mentor system.
- Additional expertise from childhood development experts would also be welcome (e.g. occupational therapists or specialists) and support to deliver a more inclusive and evidence-based program. The benefits of this could be two-fold, it could improve the confidence and knowledge of coaches, but also provide them the tools and information to better explain to parent/carers about why they *do what they do*. This could support the *free-play conundrum* identified in this study.

*“While I am competent in these areas, I believe we need to be given much more support & practical resources for coaches and clubs to promote/support why we do what we do. Back up the reasons to attend KinderGym.”* KinderGym coach

*“I think there is always room to learn and collaborations and groups discussion tend to produce the best results in my experience. Knowing that we are a part of a group of people who are professional and willing to share would be a rewarding experience. Perhaps Gymnastics Australia can facilitate such a group to connect to, draw support from and contribute to.”* KinderGym coach

# Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Gymnastics Australia for the opportunity to collaborate on the KinderGym Project. In particular we would like to acknowledge Chris Schleusener and Bradley Low for their guidance and leadership.

Our thanks to the KinderGym coaches, administrators, and participants who supported and provided feedback. Their generosity of time and sharing of their experience has greatly enhanced the quality of this research.

## For more information please contact:

Dr Erica Randle  
Centre for Sport and Social Impact  
La Trobe University  
Australia

T: +613 9789 5478  
E: [e.randle@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:e.randle@latrobe.edu.au)  
W: [www.latrobe.edu.au/cssi](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cssi)



**LA TROBE**  
UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR  
SPORT AND  
SOCIAL IMPACT