

Changes in social and physical activity participation in older adults prior to and after the onset of COVID-19

Objective

To examine older adults' social and physical activity participation before and since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and their perceptions of precautionary measures and alternative physical activity program delivery options.

Methods



155 patrons of City of Calgary Recreation aged 65+ were surveyed online between August and September of 2020.

76.4 % Female, 23.6% Male.
Ages ranged from 65 - 86.

Perceptions of Precautionary Measures

Most participants agreed with all precautionary measures for in-person programming with the exceptions: **wearing a mask during strenuous physical activity**, and **outdoor classes**.

Examples of precautionary measures:



Disinfect facility and equipment frequently throughout the day.



Wear face masks in public areas.
This applies to staff and patrons

Online Group Exercise Participation

33.6% had attended an online exercise class.

Participants were most drawn to programs or instructors they had experience with when considering online classes.

Barriers to Online Classes:

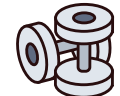
- Technological concerns
- Lack of space
- Lack of interest in the available programming

Changes in Physical & Social Activity Participation

Overall, physical activity levels did not change significantly from pre-pandemic levels. However, the proportion of each type of physical activity did change:



Moderate-to-vigorous physical activity did not significantly change from pre-pandemic levels.



Resistance physical activity **decreased** from pre-pandemic levels.



Flexibility physical activity all **decreased** from pre-pandemic levels.



Mild physical activities **increased** from pre-pandemic levels.

Social activities **decreased** from pre-pandemic levels.



Activities done alone **increased**.

Activities done with friends or with others from the activity **decreased**

Satisfaction with overall activities also **decreased**

The lack of structured programs available may have led to a rise in self-directed mild physical activities such as walking.

Main Takeaways

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on older adults' physical and social participation, **many older adults were interested in finding ways to stay safe while remaining active.**

Future research should address **how to support older adults' physical and social participation** and the **challenges that recreation providers face for providing programming for older adults** in the wake of COVID-19.

Article Reference:

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