

What are differences between users and non-users of recreational sports facilities?

Pilot study results of a recreational sports
facility survey

Student Life Research & Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

The pilot "Recreational Sports Facility User and Non-User Survey" was given to undergraduate students to see if there were differences on a quantitative measure between those who used recreational sports facilities and those who did not. To make this survey more relevant to both users and non-users, focus groups were conducted prior to the construction of the survey. Furthermore, this survey was submitted to the advisory board of the National Research Institute for College Recreational Sports and Wellness in September 2010 for feedback and content validity from national experts on the topics of survey methods, recreational sports issues, and wellness issues. Some survey items were constructed from extant literature in recreational sports and college student wellness literature.

METHODOLOGY

In February 2011 (winter quarter), a stratified random sampling technique was used to invite 3,000 undergraduate students to take the survey at The Ohio State University, with 1,500 being those who had used a recreational sports facility in last six months (according to the Recreational Sports card swipe system). The remaining 1,500 were pulled from the Student Information System database and compared against the card-swipe system to identify non-users. In both cases, the only students pulled were those who were charged the recreational sports fee (students taking 4 or more credit hours).

RESPONSE RATES AND CAVEATS

Of the 3,000 who were invited, 696 responded, for an overall response rate of 23.2%. The population of facility users had 376 respondents (response rate of 25.0%), while the non-user population had 320 respondents (response rates of 21.3%.) These response rates were significantly different, with an over-representation of user respondents, so caution should be used when making inferences from the non-user data. Of all students who responded, 95.0% indicated that they were full-time students.

A low number of first-year students and a very high number of fourth-year students responded to the survey. When compared to the Ohio State 15th day report from winter quarter 2011, there was a significant difference between the proportions of rank 1 and rank 4 students as well as the proportions of males and females. Thus, the samples are not representative of the population at Ohio State in terms of gender and class rank, so caution should be used in any inferences relative to class rank and gender.

DEMOGRAPHICS (OVERALL)

Around 6.9% of the respondents indicated that they were international students; 8.6% of the respondents indicated that English was not their native language. Regarding housing, 32.8% stated they lived on campus while 66.5% stated that they lived off campus.

Gender	%
Male	41.5%
Female	58.5%

Class Rank	%
1	13.2%
2	21.1%
3	22.7%
4	43.0%

Race/Ethnicity	%
African American/Black	5.5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8.9%
Hispanic/Latino/a	3.5%
White/Caucasian	77.3%
Other	4.7%

HIGHLIGHTS

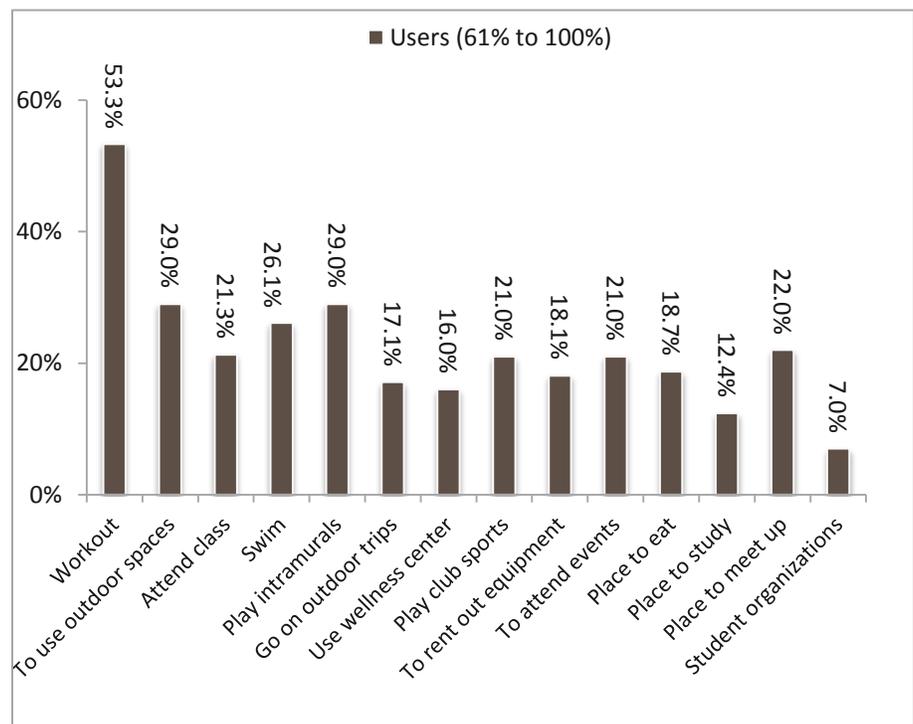
- **59.0%** of non-user respondents were female, compared to **41.0%** of male non-user respondents.
- Respondents who had used the recreational sports facilities identified the following as the top motivators for use: *to work out, to use outdoor spaces, to play intramurals, to swim, as a place to meet up, and to attend class.*
- Respondents lived on campus used the facilities more than those who lived off campus (**69.7%** as compared to **46.4%**).
- Non-users perceived potential benefits of using the facilities as an *opportunity to meet new people from all over campus* and a place for *interaction with faculty and staff outside the classroom* at higher rates than did users.
- Of those students who worked in a campus recreational facility, **82.0%** saw a benefit of the recreational sports facility as being a place for *opportunity for future or current employment*, and **82.0%** believed that *leadership opportunities* exist as a benefit of the recreational sports facility.
- The top 6 reasons non-users identified for not using the recreational sports facilities were: *I do not have time, I do not know everything the recreational sports facility has to offer, the facility is too far to walk from where I live, I do not have people to work out with, I have alternate workout activities (i.e. cycling outside, running outside, etc.), and I have no motivation to use the recreational sports facility.*

FINDINGS

The following results cover detailed findings related to both users and non-users of the recreational sports facilities.

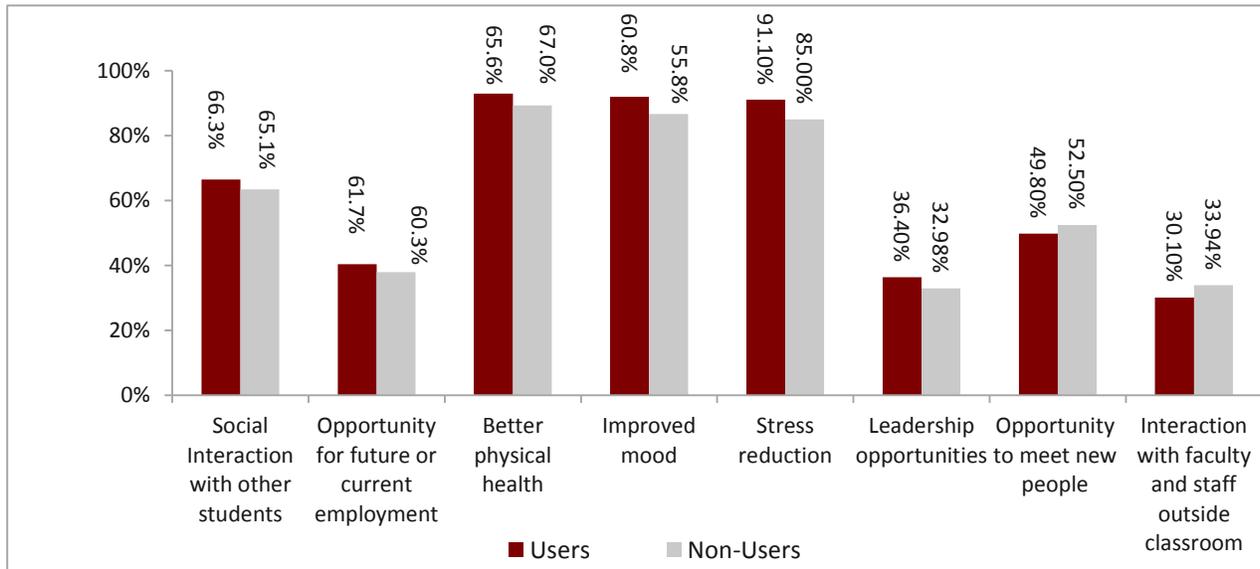
TOP MOTIVATORS FOR USE

This chart highlights the 14 motivators for those respondents who were users of the recreational sports facilities. Participants were allowed to select multiple motivators. Respondents could choose from 0% to 100% to indicate their level of motivation on a specific variable. The chart displays the percentage of total users who said that a specific variable was 61% or above for motivating them to use the facility.



PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE RECREATIONAL SPORTS FACILITIES

This chart shows the differences in perceived benefits of the recreational sports facilities between users and non-users. The bars represent the combined percentages of people who answered that they *somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed* that the variable in question was a benefit of having a recreational sports facility on campus. Non-users perceived two benefits higher than users: *the opportunity to meet new people from across campus* and *interaction with faculty and staff outside the classroom*.

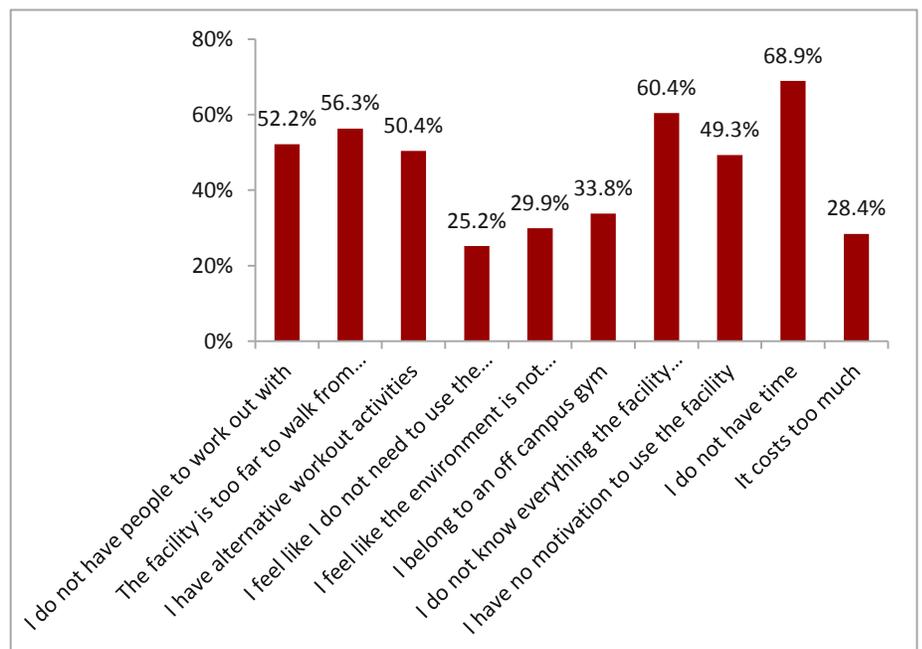


Scale: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (six point scale); percentages reflect sum of upper half of the scale (4-6)

REASONS FOR NON-USE

Non-users were asked to choose among a list of reasons why they did not use the facilities. These reasons were formulated using the focus group data from the initial studies.

The results shown on the chart combine the percentages of people who answered that they *somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed* that the variable in question was a reason for not using the facility. Participants could select multiple reasons in their response to this question.



LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This was a pilot study. Further validation and reliability tests should be run with additional samples in order to draw more solid conclusions. The data identifying users and non-users were based on the revised recreational sports reporting system, which has limitations; the main limitation of this, and other card swipe based systems, is that the system cannot track users who might only use the outdoor facilities. People who use the facilities only for meeting space or for eating might not be included in the analysis.

The survey designers assumed that the definition of the term, *user*, was someone who swiped into a recreational sports facility in the six months prior to the survey administration. However, there was confusion among the participants; some users (identified using the data of the card swipe records) said they had not used the facility in the past six months. As with all self-report surveys that require students to recall information from the past, students' memories might be a factor in their self-report.

Alternatively, it might be that the respondent did not consider themselves to be a user of the facility. Perhaps they only came for class, a student organization meeting, or used the wellness center; because they did not work out, they did not consider themselves as using the facility. Further research should be done on how survey takers think of the word *user*, so it can be more clearly defined in future surveys.

In the same way, the definition of *non-user* should be more clearly defined. A *non-user* could be anyone who did not swipe in to the facilities, but some of the participants who were identified as non-users listed themselves as using the facility in the past six months. It could be that they considered use of the facility as eating, studying, or other similar activities.

The data suggest that, for non-users, marketing may be an important consideration; those who did not use the facilities may not have known what is offered. When students were asked if they remembered if their resident advisor had discussed all that the recreational sports facilities had to offer, 35.5% percent said *yes*, 34.2% said they *could not recall*, and 30.4% said *no*. This is a possible intervention point, as most people are told about the facilities during their campus tour or orientation. Perhaps revisiting this message in the residence halls would be useful.

In regards to health, both groups perceived benefits of the facilities in terms of *better physical health*, *improved mood*, and *stress reduction*. These perceived benefits may not be contingent upon facility use. In addition, it should not be assumed that non-users are unhealthy as 50% stated that they had alternative workout activities.

All students were asked how much of a contribution their experiences, or the presence of, recreational sports facilities had on their college experience. On a six point scale, with 1 being *no impact* to 6 being *a lot of impact*, 85.9% said there was *some impact* (they answered anywhere from 2 to 6 on the scale). However, when answering this question, only 3.8% of users said there was *no impact*, as compared to 26.6% of non-users. This result is an interesting parallel to the results about perceived benefits. It seems that, while most students perceive some benefit in the recreational sports facilities, a small number might not consider the benefits to affect their college experience. Further research on this phenomenon is suggested.