

Senior Games—Better than EVER!

2011

N O R T H C A R O L I N A Senior Games



North Carolina Senior Games is the oldest, largest, and arguably best health promotion organization for adults 55 years of age and better in the country. In the fall of 2010, a random sample was conducted by mailing and emailing 1,127 surveys to Local Senior Games participants in North Carolina, which resulted in a 36% response rate with 408 usable surveys. This report describes who the respondents were, why they participated, and what they believed the outcomes of their involvement were. The purpose of the evaluative research, conducted in partnership with the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at North Carolina State University, was to assist Local Games and the statewide Senior Games program with information to enhance program development and marketing.

Outcomes

Ways that people identified changing as a result of participation in North were considered **outcomes**.

- ◆ Almost **79%** indicated that training and preparation for participation in Senior Games is part of their **regular weekly activity**.
- ◆ **67%** indicated that their participation in Senior Games has motivated them to be more **physically active** and **66%** more **socially active**.

Respondents indicated the extent to which their experience with Senior Games changed them in the following ways (% indicates *Increased Some or Increased A Lot*)

Meet More People	86%
Good Feelings About Life	78%
Self-Esteem	71%
Energy Level	64%
Physical Strength	57%
Heart and Lung Functioning	55%
Shape/Physique	50%

In Comparison to Previous Years:

Similar studies were conducted in 2003 and in 2007. Results indicated that the demographic profile of respondents has remained similar throughout the years.

- ◆ Since 2003, even fewer respondents have ever thought about stopping their participation in Senior Games (16% in 2003 and only 12% 2011).
- ◆ In 2011 more respondents (79%) indicated training and preparation for Senior Games is part of their weekly activity than in 2007 (73%).
- ◆ Finally, Senior Games is motivating respondents to be more physically active (67% said so in 2011 and 61% in 2007)!

66% of NCSG respondents said that in general their health is Excellent or Very Good.

The health of NCSG respondents was much better than the state average! This question was compared to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System—BRFSS) data. These data reported 2009 health status for all adults including a 55-64 age group and a 65+ age group. The question was, "Would you say that in general your health is..."

Age	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Senior Games: 55-94	20.6%	45.7%	29.2%	4.2%	0.3%
BRFSS: 55-64 years	17.1%	33.1%	30%	13.4%	5.3%
BRFSS: 65+ years	11.6%	27.9%	34.7%	17.7%	7%

88% have never thought about stopping their participation in Senior Games!

Reasons for thinking about stopping participation mostly related to health reasons such as memory loss, arthritis, emphysema, loss of energy, injuries, and other medical conditions.

98% would recommend participating in Senior Games to friends and family!



Demographics of Respondents

- ◆ Age of respondents ranged from 55 year to 94 years, with an average of **71.6** years.
- ◆ 51% were female and 49% were male.
- ◆ A majority of respondents were retired (79%) with 12% full-time employed, and 9% part-time employed.
- ◆ 46% were college graduates and 30% completed some college including community college, Jr. college, or technical school, 20% were high school graduates, 4% completed less than high school.
- ◆ 81% identified themselves as White, 12% and as Black or African American, 3% as American Indian or Alaska Native and less than 1% as Asian American. Less than 1% were of Hispanic or Latino origin.
- ◆ 74% were married/partnered, 14% were widowed, 7% were single, and 5% were divorced.

Participation Information

Respondents got information about Senior Games from:

Senior Center	61%
Recreation Dept.	39%
E-mail from Senior Games	38%
Friend/Family member	36%
Senior Games Web-site	27%
Newspaper	17%
Senior Games Ambassador	17%
Council on Aging	8%
Senior Club	8%
Facebook	1%
Other responses included: YMCA, assisted living activities' center director, word of mouth, coach/teacher, senior living magazines	

Percentage indicating IMPORTANT Reasons for Participating in Senior Games

Fun	98%
Keep Active	97%
Fitness	91%
Friendships	90%
Improving Health	87%
Feel Younger	87%
Fellowship/Social Opportunities	86%
Live Longer	85%
Competition	85%
Self-Esteem	84%
Creative Expression	64%
Doctor's Recommendation	40%

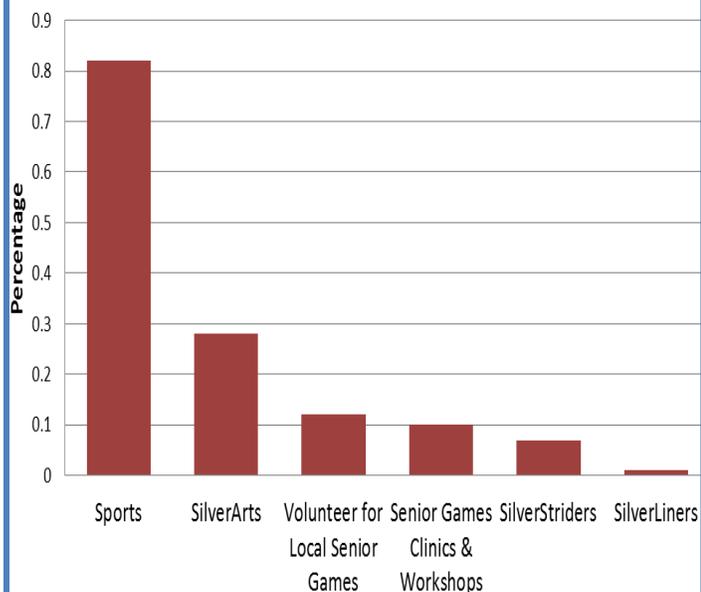
"Senior Games has kept me involved in sports which I have enjoyed all my life. The games have also afforded me the opportunity to meet people from all over the state. To meet as well as watch the participants is most heart warming, enjoyable, and inspiring."

~Anonymous

"It's an exciting opportunity for an amateur watercolorist to be able to compete with others who have my same interests. It also has encouraged me to participate in other aspects of the Senior Games. It revived my enthusiasm for my painting."

~Anonymous

Participation Profile



Conclusions

- ◆ The majority of NCSG respondents were in **good to excellent health**. Although the cause and effect between participation and health cannot be made, all research would suggest that the more physically and socially active individuals are, the more successful the aging process. **The NCSG respondents reported their health status was better than that of the general NC population of older adults.** Respondents attributed about 5 hours each week to physical activity associated with training for NCSG. This amount of activity is **DOUBLE** the recommendations given by the Centers for Disease Control for optimal health.
- ◆ Respondents who said that training and preparation for Senior Games is a **regular weekly activity** and those who said that NCSG helped them be both socially and physically active saw greater benefits and outcomes. These findings emphasize the value of the **year round community-based** nature of NCSG.
- ◆ About 3 out of 4 (75%) respondents said that meeting more people, feeling good about life, and self-esteem were increased because of involvement in Senior Games. Three out of 4 respondents also said that training and preparing for Senior Games is a **regular weekly activity**.
- ◆ The number one reason why respondents participated in NCSG is for **FUN!** Ninety-eight out of 100 respondents agreed. This reason was followed closely by keeping active and fit and for social friendships. These reasons have been consistently expressed in previous studies.
- ◆ North Carolina Senior Games is “better than ever” regarding the important reasons and outcomes that older adults attributed to their involvement in sports, physical activity, and cultural arts. Data collected in 2010 were similar to the high satisfaction found in the previous surveys. Further, almost all respondents would **recommend** NCSG to others.
- ◆ About half the respondents were **women**. Many women of Senior Games age did not have opportunities for sport participation in their younger years. Therefore, NCSG provides a special, healthy opportunity for women’s physical involvement. Women indicated that social, health, doctor’s recommendation, and creative expression were more important to them than men indicated. Competition was much more important as a reason for participation for men than women.
- ◆ Respondents with a **high school education or less** said that the reasons were more important and outcomes were greater than for any other respondents with some college or a college degree. NCSG is an important opportunity for people who may not have had the opportunities to develop leisure skills that higher education often brings.
- ◆ Four out of 5 (80%) respondents in NCSG were involved with sports. Over a quarter were involved in SilverArts. A number of respondents did sports as well as other activities such as SilverArts, SilverStriders, Silverliners, volunteering for Senior Games, and attending NCSG sponsored clinics and workshops. Individuals who did sports PLUS another activity had higher scores on reasons for participating as well as outcomes than did individuals who did sports only. NCSG appears to meet many interests and needs of older adults.

