



North Carolina Senior Games Evaluation Report

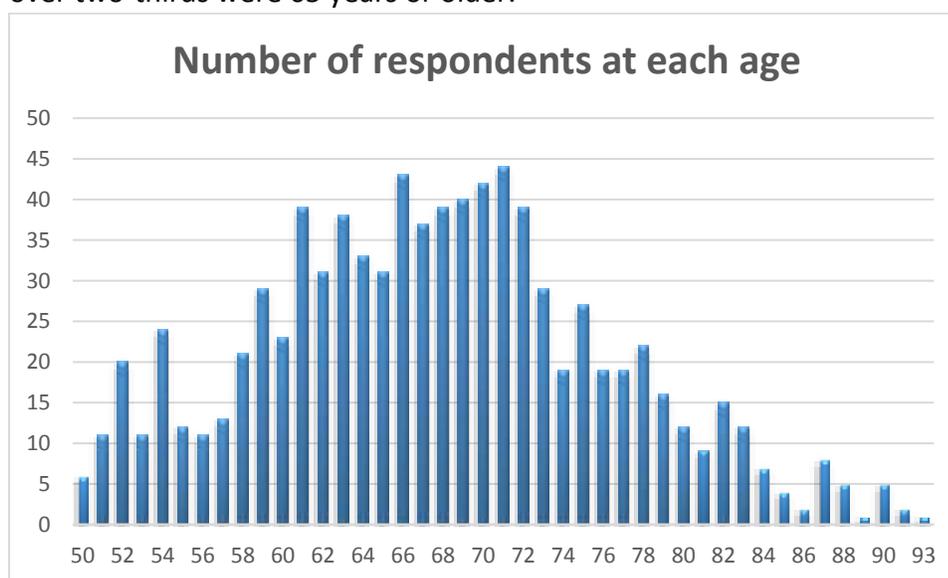
FY 2018-19

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the perceptions of participants and to ascertain the outcomes of participation. A study was conducted during FY 2018-19 with an online survey sent to 2790 participants in the 2018 NCSG State Finals. Responses were received from 932 participants resulting in a response rate of 33%. This is a good response rate for an online survey.

Participant Profile

The profile of participants has not substantially changed, although the Games are now available to younger participants. In most cases, the characteristics of respondents mirror the actual statistics of all participants in State Finals and in Local Games across the state.

- Participants in the survey ranged in age from 50-93 years with an average of 68 years old. Less than one-third of the participants were 64 years or younger, and over two-thirds were 65 years or older.



- The number of female respondents increased by 6% between 2013 and 2018. In 2013, 60% were male and 40% were female. In 2018, the proportion was 54% male and 46% female.
- Sixty-seven percent of the respondents had a college degree with eight percent having a high school diploma or less.
- Seventy-five percent of the respondents lived with a spouse or partner and the remainder lived alone or with relatives/non-relatives. Similarly, the same proportion was married/partnered compared to single/widowed/divorced.

- About 85% identified as White, with 11% identifying as African American and with a few respondents who identified as American Indian, Latino/Latina, or Asian American. This is a change from 2016, which had 87% and 9%, respectively.
- Seventy-seven percent of respondents said their general health was excellent or very good.
- The major NCSG activities of the respondents were: Sports (90%), SilverArts (14%), SilverStriders (1%), SilverLiners (<1%), and Volunteers (4%).

Reasons to Participate

Over the past evaluations of NCSG, similar questions have been asked about the reasons that respondents participate. These responses have been tracked since 2007. Most responses have remained stable. Small fluctuations in the percentages may not be meaningful, but rather due to sampling error. However, the importance of fitness, improving health, and doctors' orders have shown a slight upward trend. Understanding what's important to participants can help with marketing and outreach efforts.



Table 1 Importance of Reasons for Participating from 2007-2018.

Reasons for Participating in NCSG	Very Important and Important Percentages 2007	Very Important and Important Percentages 2010	Very Important and Important Percentages 2013	Very Important and Important Percentages 2016	Very Important and Important Percentages 2018
Fun	95%	98%	97%	98%	99%
Keep Active	91%	97%	96%	97%	97%
Friendship	90%	90%	88%	85%	90%
Fitness	83%	91%	91%	92%	92%
Improving Health	77%	87%	89%	89%	91%
Competition	80%	85%	93%	93%	93%
Feel Younger	75%	87%	85%	86%	87%
Fellowship/Social	77%	86%	81%	77%	83%
Live Longer	69%	85%	81%	81%	85%
Self-Esteem	71%	84%	81%	82%	85%
Creative Expression	49%	64%	54%	47%	53%
Doctor's Orders	27%	40%	43%	36%	42%

The data make it clear that NCSG is playing an important role in the lives of many participants.

About 87% of the respondents said that NCSG was part of their regular weekly activities.

When asked whether they had ever considered stopping their participation in NCSG over 4 out of 5 said they had **never** thought about quitting.

The participants who did say that they had considered stopping their participation were asked why. The reasons that they listed included:

- Injuries/health concerns
- Low participation rates in their activity, locally
- Expense to participate
- Having little time to devote to the Games
- Dissatisfaction with how the state event was organized.
- Too much/too little competitiveness
- Driving distance

Outcomes



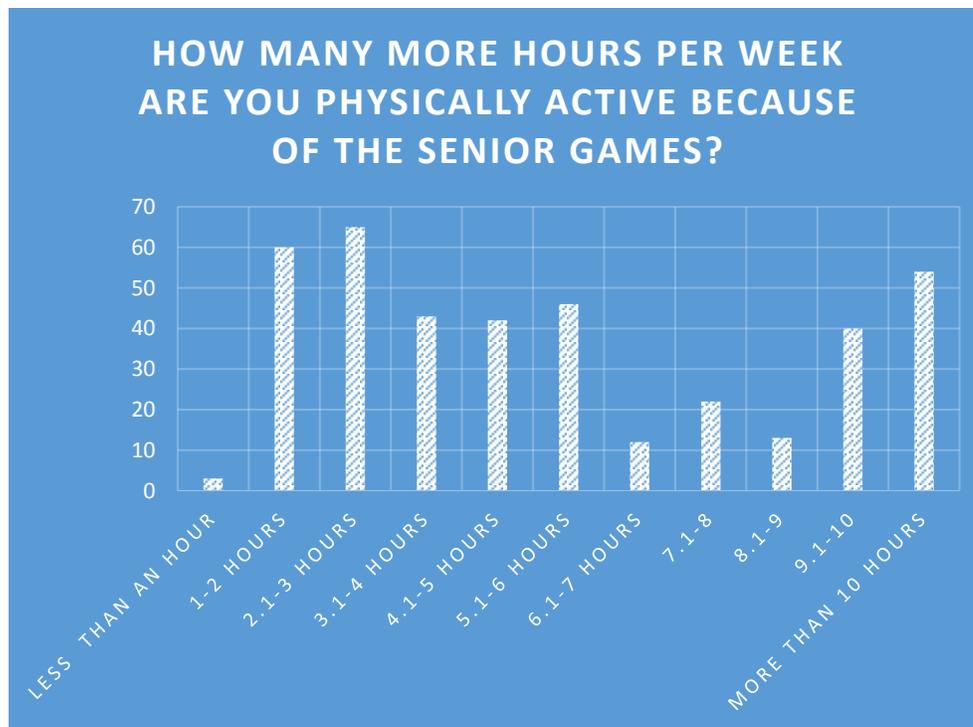
In evaluating any program, the outcomes or the changes in behavior resulting from involvement are key in determining the worth of the program—the effectiveness. In other words, how has an individual's life changed as a result of participation? Knowing the numbers of participants is important, but if involvement makes no difference in their lives then the program is not effective. Because pre and post tests are not feasible for a program like NCSG that has participants who have belonged for decades as well as first timers, a retrospective pre/post analysis was used. These responses were based on participants reflecting on life for themselves before NCSG and life currently.

The retrospective outcomes measures addressed whether participants felt they increased a lot, increased some, neither increased nor decreased, and decreased concerning targeted outcomes. Zero participants reported that any potential outcomes had decreased a lot for them because of NCSG, with the exception of stress, where 3% of participants reported that their stress decreased a lot. The following table shows the percentage of participants who felt they had increased their abilities based on NCSG.

Table 2 Perceived Health Outcomes of Participating in NCSG, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2018

Area of Change	Increased Some or a Lot 2010	Increased Some or a Lot 2013	Increased Some or a Lot 2016	Increased Some or a Lot 2018
Meet more People	86%	87%	84%	88%
Good Feelings about Life	78%	77%	72%	75%
My Health	62%	62%	61%	68%
Self-Esteem	71%	73%	67%	74%
Energy Level	64%	53%	57%	64%
Physical Strength	57%	59%	53%	62%
Heart and Lung Functioning	55%	56%	51%	56%
Shape/Physique	50%	55%	51%	58%

A large majority (72%) of the participants said they were **more physically active** as a result of NCSG. The proportion who said that they were **more socially active** because of NCSG is at 65%, up from previous years. Those respondents who indicated that they were more physically active said on average that they spent **6.5 hours a week** involved in physical activity because of NCSG, again, up from previous years, with a **median of 5 hours per week**.



Differences among Older Adults



The importance of participating and the outcomes achieved were high for most of the participants. Of interest sometimes, however, is also knowing where any differences might lie related to demographic characteristics such as gender, age group, marital status, living arrangements, race/ethnicity, and education. Appropriate statistical procedures were used to determine significant differences, but only the interpretation of those differences are included in this report.

Regarding **gender**, where there was a significant difference, women placed greater importance on most of the reasons for participating except for competition, which men regarded more highly. This may be related to the makeup of the two groups. Ninety-five percent of men participated in sports, versus eighty-four percent of women. Conversely, twenty-three percent of women participated in SilverArts, compared to only six percent of men.

Race and ethnicity were not easy to compare because so few respondents were of any one race other than White. When comparing two groups, minority (People of color) and majority (White), minority groups (i.e., African American, Asian American, American Indian, and Latino/Latina) showed greater importance associated with friendships, fitness, improving health, doctor's recommendation/orders, fellowship, fun, self-esteem, and creative expression. There was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of competition, living longer, feeling younger, and keeping active.

Respondents with less **education** compared to college graduates placed higher importance as their reason for participating on friendships, fitness, doctor's recommendations, fun, competition, fellowship, self-esteem, creative expression, living longer, and feeling younger.

Younger participants (those younger than 65) were more likely to consider fitness and competition to be important or very important to their participation than those who were 65 and older.



The Influence of NCSG

One open-ended question enabled respondents to elaborate on “What influence has Senior Games” had on your life. Several examples of quotations were illustrative of the tone of the responses:



- I look forward to seeing all these women and catching up on family happenings, births, weddings, graduations each year. It's kind of like a family reunion except we are not kinfolks.
- Senior Games has had a profound impact on my life for the past 29 years! The joy of learning and participating in sports, meeting new friends, and discovering new avenues for self-expression. I am very appreciative of the mentors that have helped me through the years.
- For the first time in my life, I feel like an athlete. I am proud of myself and I daily work on balance and strength as I prepare for and practice throwing. Maybe the greatest influence has been in meeting older women who are doing this as well--including 85 and 95 year olds.
- I've felt a sense of accomplishment that I haven't felt in a VERY long time
- Good fun and healthy competition
- I feel I have found the best kept secret in North Carolina.
- It gave me my first opportunity to compete in an athletic venue. And I medaled!
- After I retired, I began swimming again after over 40 years of non swimming. I was looking some motivation to get back in shape and learned about the Mid Carolina Senior Games. I was more motivated to practice after learning I could compete locally. I had qualified for my first Nationals in Birmingham but had to withdraw due to my cancer diagnosis one month prior to the Games. The Senior Games have motivated me to get back in the pool and the gym since I completed my Chemo. I have worked hard to rebuild my strength and endurance in the last year. I have qualified for the National Games in Albuquerque this June. I still have a way to go but I am working hard to be in the best shape possible. My Oncologist is thrilled at my progress. I would not be where I am today without the NCSG.
- It's inspired me to keep up my exercise to sustain and improve my health by training and competing, its encouraged me to keep up with my artwork and writing skills, and offered me the joy of making so many new and longtime friends at the same time
- It has brought competitiveness back to my life

Summary

Based on these data, several conclusions and recommendations can be drawn:

- NCSG remains a strong program that is changing the lives of participants. Respondents said that they spent an average of 6.5 hours (390 minutes) each week of additional physical activity that was directly due to their participation in NCSG. This finding is important because 6 hours of exercise is more than twice the minimum amount recommended by the CDC for adult health (i.e., the recommendation is 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week). Research has shown that many people over-estimate the amount of activity that they do when self-reporting. Although every measure that uses self-report is inherently flawed, it may be worth it to find a valid, reliable measurement of physical activity that is appropriate to the NCSG demographics.
- Even in the absence of a better measurement, the numbers clearly show that NCSG provides an incentive for meeting the weekly recommendations, if not exceeding them. In a study of people over the age of 50, 30% of those living in the south reported that they were physically inactive (Watson KB, Carlson SA, Gunn JP, et al., 2016). Statistics like this highlights the value and importance of NCSG's efforts.
- The data that are particularly supportive of the value of NCSG relate to the percentage of respondents who say they are active physically and socially on a weekly basis. The year around nature of the program is what makes NCSG powerful. The emphasis on this year around weekly participation, rather than on just a once a year State Finals, can be the emphasis of local promotion.
- Well over half of the participants (see Table 2) perceived that because of NCSG they had met more people, had better feelings about life, greater self-esteem, more energy, and better physical strength, heart/lung functioning, and better physique. However, our data indicated that these types of outcomes were even higher for women and minority participants.
- Respondent's written comments indicated that the North Carolina Senior Games is making a real difference in their lives. Some respondents related stories indicating that the Games had made a profound difference. Some respondents stated that participation in the NCSG helped motivate them to recover from cancer or a stroke. They related how inspiring it was to see others being physically active well into their eighties, and they talked about deep friendships that had arisen because of their participation.

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