

Active Living Research

Using Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity
and Create Active Communities

ARTICLE SUMMARY

February 2013

Physical Activity Related to Parks and Recreational Programs among Latinos

Introduction

Latinos are at greater risk for obesity than other racial and ethnic groups, and Latina women in particular have a 30 percent higher chance of being overweight than non-Latina women. In a Latino population, we measured men's and women's physical activity at work, home and use of parks and recreational facilities. We also examined whether men and women had different perceptions, behaviors, and preferences related to physical activity and parks and recreation services.

Key Findings

We found that 63 percent of the men in our sample engaged in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity at work or at home, while only 22 percent of women did the same. During each visit to a park, men stayed an average of 21 minutes longer than women: a difference of nearly 30 percent. In parks, women were more likely to walk, jog, and take children to the playground, while men were more likely to play sports. Both men and women had similar levels of participation in sports programs, but in our sample, only women participated in dance programs. Women were more likely to prefer aerobics, dance, aquatics, and walking programs, while men tended to prefer soccer.

Methods

We surveyed 457 Latino adults in Wake County, North Carolina. The average age was 35 years and the majority were female, married, had at least a high school education, and were first-generation immigrants. We asked participants about the frequency, intensity, duration, and types of physical activity performed at home and work; perceived benefits of physical activity and perceived importance of parks and recreation resources; and behaviors, activities, and preferences related to parks and recreation resources.

Implications

This study underscores the importance of identifying and providing the types of park and recreational services and programs that Latinos prefer. Specifically, parks and recreation departments can target Latinos with gender-specific and culturally relevant activities, services, and other resources. This includes partnering with English as a Second Language, offering free or low-cost programs that include child care services, and providing bilingual instructors and transportation to help increase program accessibility.

SOURCE

Casper, J.M., et al. (2013). Gender Differences in Self-Report Physical Activity and Park and Recreation Facility Use among Latinos in Wake County, North Carolina. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 45(1Suppl): S49-S54.

Open access to the full text article is available at:

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12160-012-9435-9>

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