

League of Women Voters – Survey Report

Ames, Iowa

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The following report is a summary of the results obtained from surveys distributed to senior individuals and current facilities located in Ames, IA. Due to the open ended format of the surveys, there was substantial variability in the information collected and therefore, the prevalence of reported events had to be equal or greater to 10% to be considered relevant to the proceeding discussion of the results.

The report is organized in two sections: a) Participant Survey and b) Facility Survey. The main questions of interest were identified from each of the surveys, and respective answer frequencies were calculated.

Participant Survey

This survey was distributed to different participants in Story County, IA. The data presented below illustrates descriptive information from 3 main questions asked, in addition to demographic information.

Overall, there were a total of 180 individual participants that completed and returned the survey. The majority of participants was from Ames (38.9%) and was equally represented through two age groups: 43.2% with 60-70y and 56.9% with 71-80y. Due to confounding effects of participants older than 80 years old, it was decided to remove this age stratum from proceeding results. There were 3 main questions that were asked to participants in Story County, in addition to demographic information.

1- List any physical/recreational programs in which you participate or would participate if they were available.

Participants identified Aquatic Pool (22.8%), Bowling (25.0%), and Yoga/Tai Chi (16.7%) as their current physical activities. When asked about what programs they would like to enroll if available, Aquatic Pool-related programs were the most mentioned (20%), however, 65% of the respondents did not show interest.

Table 1. Programs in which seniors participate.

	Count	%
Aquatic Pool	41	22.8
Yoga/Tai Chi	30	16.7
Bowling	45	25.0
Other	64	35.6
Total	180	100.0

2- Identify 1, 2 or 3 physical activities that you would like to engage in, however there are some obstacles that do not allow doing so: availability, affordability, difficult to get access to, health limitations that do not allow you to participate, not enough information on related-programs, time constraints or no interest on those.

Ballroom dancing was identified as the activity more often under such obstacles (41.1%) and Therapeutic warm water was identified by 11.1% of the respondents. When asked about a second activity under such obstacles, Basketball was identified by 26.7% of the participants. There was not a consistent third activity identified by the participants.

Table 2. First activity under obstacles (such as affordability).

	Count	%
None	36	20.0
Ballroom dancing	74	41.1
Therapeutic warm water	20	11.1
Other	50	27.8
Total	180	100.0

3- Identify three of the obstacles: availability, affordability, difficult to get access to, health limitations that do not allow you to participate, not enough information on related-programs, time constraints or no interest on those; that do not allow to participate in the activities identified in question 2.

Participants identified Availability (33.9%) as being the main obstacle for participation in previous activities (question 2). Health limitations (12.2%) and affordability (10.0%) were also mentioned as the respondents' first choice as an obstacle for activity participation. Interestingly, Affordability was also mentioned as second main obstacle for some of the respondents (11.1%). There was not a consistent third obstacle identified by the respondents.

Table 3. Main obstacle for participation in physical activities.

	Count	%
None	41	22.8
Availability	61	33.9
Affordability	18	10.0
Health limitations	22	12.2
Other	38	21.1
Total	180	100.0

Facility Survey

This survey was distributed to different recreation facilities in Story County, IA. The data presented below illustrates descriptive information from 30 facilities that returned the survey. There were 3 main questions that were asked to current facilities in Story County, in addition to demographic information.

Most of facilities are located in Ames (33.0%), while 13.3% of all facilities that returned the survey are located in Nevada. The remaining facilities were from various locations within Story County. Sixteen percent of the facilities in Story County report that they serve annually 100 seniors while 10.0% serve 500 seniors in the community. There was also great variability regarding this question and therefore the remaining answers are not reported.

1- Which Recreation and Exercise Facilities you presently have for seniors?

When questioned about what facilities they currently have for seniors, 23.3% reported having gymnasiums, 20.0% having walking trails, and 13.3% having a lap pool available. Thirteen percent of the facilities reported not having any facility for this population (see table 1). When asked about more alternatives available for seniors, 13.3% of the facilities indicated they also have tennis courts available. Bicycling ergometers (10.0%) and fitness rooms (10.0%) are also available.

Table 1. Facilities available for senior population.

	Count	%
Gymnasium	7.0	23.3
Walking Trails	6.0	20.0
Lap Pool	4.0	13.3
Other	9.0	30.0
None	4.0	13.3
Total	30.0	100.0

2- What Programs you presently have for seniors?

When questioned about current programs that are offered, approximately 1 out of every 4 facilities (23.3%) reported they have water aerobics programs available to the senior population. Personal trainer services are also offered by 10.0% of the facilities. Eleven percent of the facilities reported not having programs available for seniors (see table 2).

Table 2. Programs available for senior population.

	Count	%
Water Aerobics	7.0	23.3
Personal Trainer	3.0	10.0
Other	9.0	30.0
None	11.0	36.7
Total	30.0	100.0

3- Does your facility/community have future plans to provide recreation/exercise facilities or programs for seniors?

The vast majority of facilities (93.3%) indicated that they have no plans in their agenda to address the needs of senior population.

Table 3. Does your facility have future plans for seniors?

	Count	%
Yes	2.0	6.7
No	28.0	93.3
Total	30.0	100.0

Conclusions

Despite the fact that it's not possible to link information from different questions and surveys, the results obtained from these surveys seem to provide important information on how to improve senior quality of life in Story County.

The information collected from the participant survey indicated that Aquatic pool-related activities were identified by the seniors in Ames as being their preferred activity, however therapeutic warm water activities are still lacking on the senior community. This might indicate that despite the availability of aquatic pool related activities, therapeutic warm water activities do not seem to be readily available. Nevertheless, ballroom dancing was identified as the activity under greater barriers. Those barriers are either related with availability or/and affordability of those activities.

Further, gymnasiums, walking trails and lap pools were the most common facilities that seem to be available for seniors in Story County. This might justify the higher percentage of seniors currently enrolled in water-related activities. This idea is also supported by the high prevalence of water aerobics programs offered in the community.

Nevertheless, according to these surveys, the senior population from Story County is currently engaged in water-related activities, however, warm water pools seem to be lacking. In addition, ballroom dancing is also lacking and the reason that seniors see these has inaccessible might be related with availability and affordability of these programs. According to these surveys, there are no current plans to provide the senior community with additional programs or facilities.

Overall, there is a need for further clarification on currently available weight-bearing activities that are readily available and are affordable to the senior population. The creation of structured activity programs for seniors could possibly overcome some of the concerns of the senior population in Story County.