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# Outdoor Leisure Occupation: The Impact of Women's Fear of Violence on Engagement and Enjoyment

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## Background

- Engaging in a balance of meaningful human occupation is crucial for health (Crepeau, Cohn, & Boyt-Schell, 2003)
- Associations exist between leisure and positive physical and mental health, socialization, and connection to the environment (Caldwell, 2005; Iso Ahola & Mannell, 2004; Korpela et al., 2014; Wensley & Slade, 2012; Winston et al., 2017)
- Leisure occupations may be even more important to women's health than men's (Håkansson & Ahlberg, 2010)
- Occupational justice: "recognizes occupational rights to inclusive participation in everyday occupations for all persons in society, regardless of age, ability, **gender**, social class, or other differences" (Nilsson & Townsend, 2010, p. 58)
- Barriers to participation in leisure include lack of time and resources (Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010 ; Jackson, 2005) and for women some specific barriers exist (Bustam, 2011)
- One barrier may be a fear for safety that shapes women's participation in leisure activities (Coble, Erickson, Selin, 2003; Whyte, & Shaw, 1994)
- Women report high levels of harassment, assault, and other forms of sexual violence (Breiding, 2014) and greater levels of fear for their safety doing certain activities alone (Wesely & Gaarder, 2004)
- Limited research examines the types of outdoor leisure that women like to do and the specific impact of fear for safety on their engagement in and enjoyment of outdoor leisure occupations

*What are the outdoor leisure participation patterns of women and how do barriers, including fear for personal safety, impact engagement and enjoyment?*

## Methods

Sample: Females aged 18-65 who participate in outdoor leisure activities

Recruitment: Digital through email and Facebook, flyers posted in gyms and retail locations that cater to outdoor activities

Data collection: Online 19 question survey with no identifying subject information- IRB exempt

Data analysis: Descriptive statistics and examination of qualitative information

## Results: Demographics

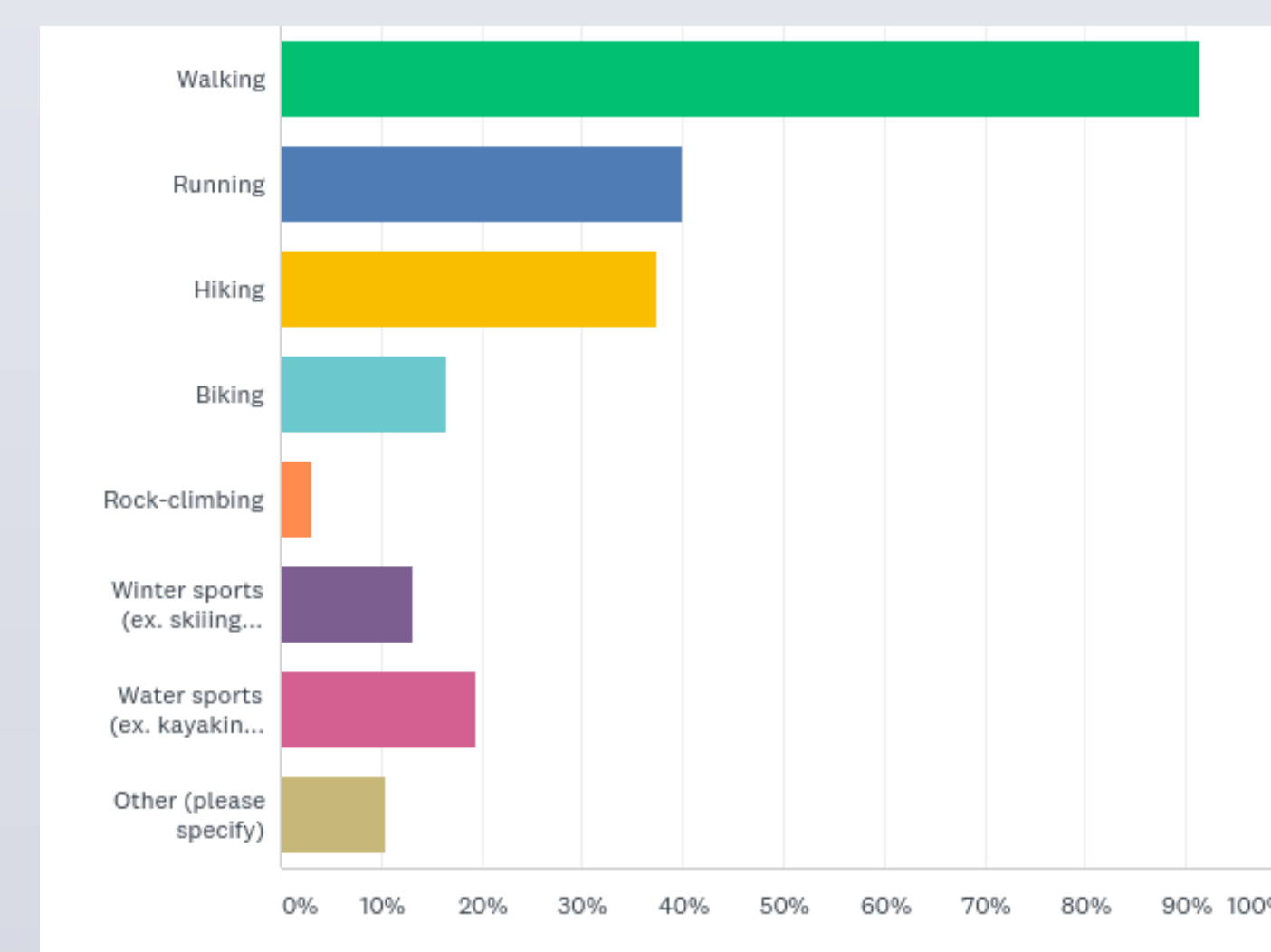
267 completed surveys, age range between 18-65 with 50% of respondents under the age of 30, 65.67% suburban, 22.39% urban, 11.94% rural, 90.98% white

## Results: Participation Patterns/Barriers

In an average one week time period, with appropriate weather, how often do you engage in outdoor leisure activities (ex. Running, walking, biking, hiking, roller-blading, kayaking etc)?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At least once a day	12.96%	42
2-3 times per week	46.30%	150
4-5 times per week	23.46%	76
Less than once a week	17.28%	56
TOTAL		324

Which of the following outdoor activities do you engage in regularly?



Have you ever experienced an event or occurrence during your outdoor leisure that specifically scared you? No: 66%

## Results: Outcomes

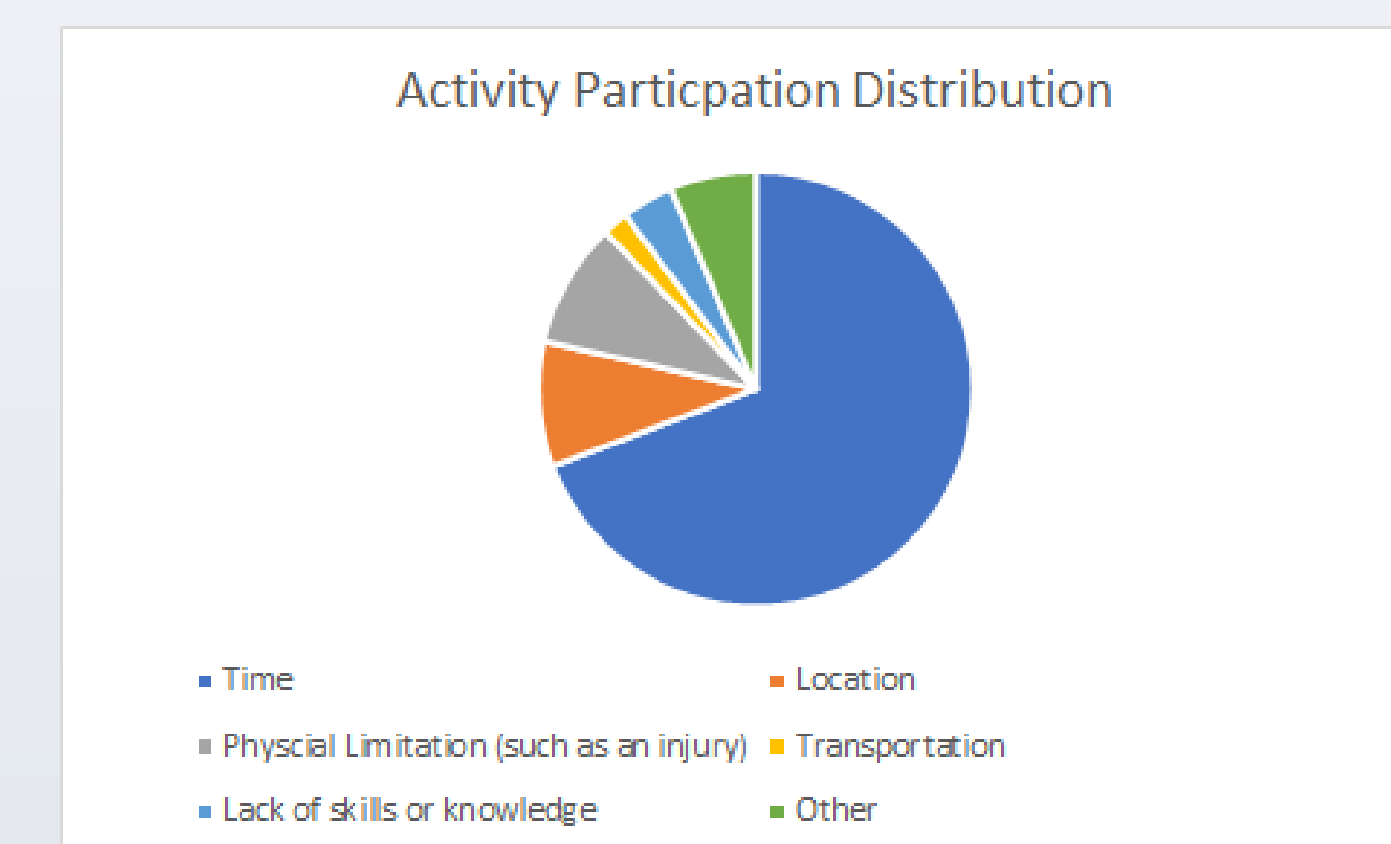
*"I don't run alone anymore. If I'm out walking I call my mother and talk. I don't go to isolate parks trails, or too early or late. If I can't run with my buddy outdoors, I might not run at all depending on the week"-Anonymous*

*"For a while I did not go outside and stopped all outside activities for about a year. I am generally much more reticent to go jogging because I almost always get catcalled. This ruins the fun of it for me and usually makes me upset for the rest of the day"-Anonymous*

How often does each of the following occur in relation to your fear of violence from strangers DURING your outdoor leisure?

	NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY	ALWAYS	TOTAL
You are cautious or alert	6.21% 18	31.03% 90	31.72% 92	31.03% 90	290
You are concerned for your safety	17.59% 51	64.83% 188	8.97% 26	8.62% 25	290
You are afraid for your safety	38.06% 110	54.67% 158	4.50% 13	2.77% 8	289
You think about your safety	4.14% 12	41.35% 120	33.45% 97	21.03% 61	290
You consider your safety in your planning or preparation	10.34% 30	36.21% 105	30.34% 88	23.10% 67	290
You change your leisure habits	33.79% 98	53.79% 156	10.34% 30	2.07% 6	290
Your concern/fear affects your enjoyment of the activity	45.52% 132	46.55% 135	5.86% 17	2.07% 6	290
Your concern/fear affects your mental well-being	54.14% 157	36.90% 107	7.59% 22	1.38% 4	290

What do you feel hinders regular participation in these leisure activities?



Have you ever experienced any of the following in your life?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Being followed by a stranger	61.54%	120
Receiving unwanted and sexually explicit phone calls	22.05%	43
Being observed unknowingly/ unwillingly in dressing/undressing/bathing	7.69%	15
Being stared at by a stranger in a threatening or sexually provocative way	57.44%	112
Being physically assaulted by a stranger	9.23%	18
Being verbally harassed by a stranger	53.33%	104
Being forcibly held down by a stranger	5.13%	10
Being pushed or shoved by a stranger	9.74%	19
Being hit by a stranger	3.59%	7
Being sexually assaulted by a stranger without rape	9.74%	19
Being raped	9.23%	18
Other (please specify)	7.18%	14
Total Respondents:		195

## Discussion/Limitations

- Preferred activities were varied and similar to those found in other studies (Outdoor Foundation, 2017)
- Barriers to participating in outdoor leisure (Bustam, 2011) such as lack of time were reported; however, participants engaged in outdoor leisure regularly (Kilgour & Parker, 2013)
- Although 66% of respondents indicated they had never experienced a violent event during outdoor leisure participation, 62% felt anxious for their safety
- Anxiety and worry may occur in response to media exposure and changes in perceived risk and risk sensitivity (Custers & Van den Bulck, 2012; Jackson, 2011)
- Majority of respondents reported altering their participation patterns and engagement at least occasionally due to fears for safety (Kilgour & Parker, 2013; Wesely & Gaarder, 2004)
- Both of these points suggest a potential impact on emotional well being of at least some women and also suggest the need for OT advocacy for occupational justice
- Limitations
  - Participants were allowed to skip questions
  - Convenience sampling affected diversity
  - Respondents were very engaged in outdoor leisure

## Conclusions/Recommendations

- Important area for further rigorous investigation
- Generate awareness of this as a potential problem and advocate for change
- Advocate for occupational justice
- Provide community programming
- Create/Promote approach

## References

Please see handout

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