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Student Research Report

An Assessment of UBC Women's Only Fitness Hours Group 11 Project F

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UBC SUSTAINABILITY

An Assessment of UBC Women's Only Fitness Hours

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Executive Summary

The University of British Columbia (UBC) Recreation aims to provide equity for students who self-identify as a woman by providing Women's Only Fitness Hours (WOFH). These predetermined hours each week allow self-identifying women to enjoy private exercising times in the ARC Lower-Level Studio. In collaboration with campus partners such as UBC Rec and UBC's Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS), the study aimed to analyze UBC's WOFH. After conducting an in-depth literature review on barriers to women in co-ed gyms and past SEEDS research on WOFH, it was clear barriers such as confidence, gender coding, and education were apparent. As well, there was an overall lack of awareness of UBC's WOFH. For this reason, the purpose of this study was to 1) assess student awareness of UBC's WOFH and how this can be improved, and 2) propose strategies to educate program participants about common gym FAQs and specific equipment use. The study used an online Qualtrics survey and a mixed-methods approach, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from a total of 81 participants. After data collection concluded, the authors used thematic analysis and measures of central tendency to interpret the results. The quantitative data was summarized using bar graphs, while the qualitative data was summarized through tables. Out of the 81 survey responders, 77 met the survey criteria based on the exclusion criteria which was limited to those who self-identified as women, were current UBC students, and were not varsity athletes. While the survey was open to students of all education levels at UBC, an overwhelming majority of survey responses came from undergraduate students (95%). Regarding the awareness of WOFH, the results indicated that 64% of participants were unaware of WOFH and that 36% were aware of WOFH but did not attend. 41% of participants said they were not confident using gym equipment and 67% agreed that more knowledge about the gym and its equipment would increase their likelihood of participation. Based on the findings regarding the experience of the 9% of survey participants who had attended WOFH, many were comfortable with the space provided, however, others mentioned the need for a larger space with more equipment options. The attendees had valuable insight towards recommendations which included low-cost personal training options, increasing the number of hours WOFH provides, and including group-based fitness class options. Based on these findings, four recommendations were created to improve WOFH. First, increasing posts on UBC Rec's social media platforms and more posters throughout campus were recommended to increase student awareness. Second, to improve knowledge of equipment, instructional videos through QR machines and basic workout videos and posters on the UBC Rec website were proposed. Next, to combat the concern of finances, the program can provide affordable memberships for those who strictly use WOFH. Finally, UBC's WOFH can increase their hours by providing more available days and hours to increase attendance.

Introduction

More than 50% of university students in Canada are not meeting the recommended physical activity guidelines proposed by the American College of Sports Medicine (Irwin, 2004). Specifically, women in university are one of the least active groups and do not attain the health benefits associated with exercise (Irwin, 2004). To combat this disparity, there has been an increase in women-only gym facilities (Abel et al., 2013). The University of British Columbia (UBC) has implemented Women's Only Fitness Hours to access studio spaces and equipment in an all-women environment, including women-only staff (UBC Recreation, n.d.). The program's purpose is to empower self-identifying women to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines (UBC Recreation, n.d.). Self-identifying women encompasses all people who sincerely self-identify as a woman, meaning all people who live as a woman, which includes cis-gendered women and trans-gendered women (Barnes, 2020). It is essential to review past literature regarding barriers that self-identifying women face in mixed-gender gyms, improvements in women's fitness experience, and any gaps within the literature that can be addressed for future research.

Barriers and Gender Coding in the Gym

Coen et al. (2018) conducted a study on the gendering of physical activity and observed the hyper-masculinization of mixed-gender gym settings, such that gyms are illustrated as unappealing and inaccessible. Women felt that men took up more space while exercising and created louder sounds by dropping weights while weightlifting (Coen et al., 2018). Women also found men tended to hog the equipment, and this caused them to create strategies to take up less space and time in the gym (Coen et al., 2018). Equally important, several micro-aggressions such as men crowding around women, refusing to share equipment or space, and rushing women are significant barriers that women face in mixed-gender gyms (Coen et al., 2018). Furthermore, the sexualized gazes and interactions with men impede the workouts of women and force them to relocate within the space (Coen et al., 2018). Similarly, a study that examined barriers to women's weightlifting found that 44% felt that they were watched, scrutinized, or judged (Salvatore & Marecek, 2010). As well, men tended to act macho in front of mirrors, thus contributing to the hyper-masculinity of mixed-gender gyms (Salvatore & Marecek, 2010).

Gym facilities are marketed as being a welcoming space for everyone to partake in activities that will increase their overall health, however, gyms and fitness facilities are not always supportive spaces for women (Fisher et al., 2017). Gender-coding is defined as assigning particular traits or behaviors exclusively or predominantly to men or women, while gendertyping is defined as expectations about people's behaviour that are based on their biological sex (Salvatore and Marecek, 2010). They reported that participants saw bench press as a "man's exercise" and cardio machines as a "woman's exercise" (Salvatore and Marecek, 2010). The gender-coding of equipment and gender-typing of exercises within the gym environment led to a continual cycle of evaluation concerns and equipment avoidance from women (Salvatore and Marecek, 2010). For example, gender-typing of the bench press as being "male equipment" led to evaluation concerns among women who used that equipment, which led to infrequent use of the bench press, creating low proficiency and gendered knowledge gaps (Salvatore and Marecek, 2010). The lack of proficiency produced additional evaluation concerns, and thus continued the cycle of disuse (Salvatore and Marecek, 2010). While women-only fitness hours attempt to alleviate the fear of evaluation from men, there is still a lack of equipment knowledge and proficiency due to the previous gender-typing of gym equipment (Salvatore and Marecek, 2010). One woman even described being "afraid [that she] looked inexperienced" as its own barrier to gym participation (Salvatore & Marecek, 2010). If gyms spent more time trying to create a safe and educational environment for beginners, women may be better equipped to use all areas of the gym which would help strengthen their confidence levels and abilities (Fisher et al., 2017).

Benefits of Women-Only Fitness Hours

Furthermore, Willinger et al. (2020) conducted a study investigating the gym attendance of women in women-only versus mixed-gender gyms. This study highlighted higher attendance frequency in the initial 12 months for women-only gyms and a longer membership length than mixed-gender gyms (Willinger et al., 2020). With the use of women-only spaces, participants described this new environment as less intimidating and free from judgment (Fisher et al., 2017). By choosing to be in an all-women section, it provided a sense of camaraderie and confidence as everyone was there to become healthier without the potential micro-aggressions of males (Fisher et al., 2017). Through the utilization of women-only gyms, this is a strategic tool in dismantling various barriers that women face in exercising at mixed-gender gyms. Based on these studies, women-only gyms appear to be an effective tool in dismantling barriers that women face in mixed-gender gyms.

Salvatore and Marecek (2010) identified that weightlifting is beneficial to the physical and mental health of both men and women and that there are also considerable psychological benefits of weightlifting for women. However, Bopp et al. (2004) found that women were not knowledgeable about lifting weights, while Guess (2012) additionally found women often forgot how to use the equipment. These findings suggest that there is a lack of education that prevents women from using all spaces of the gym. Guess (2012) also observed women resorting to aerobic exercises because it was viewed as easier. For example, women reported that the StairMaster[™] would be more useful than weightlifting (Salvatore & Marecek, 2010). This shows that there may be a gendered knowledge gap around weightlifting and gym subculture. However, increasing knowledge of strength training, its benefits, and the correct techniques encourages some women to begin strength training (Vasudevan and Ford, 2021). Women who had knowledge of the physical and mental health benefits of strength training indicated this was a motivating factor for engaging in physical activity (Vasudevan & Ford, 2021). This suggests that if there was a greater focus on educating women about the gym and promoting its health benefits, then there could be more women who take part in it as their form of daily physical activity.

Past SEEDS Findings

The UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) is a program that allows students to share their studies and findings with the UBC community (UBC Sustainability, n.d.). Previous literature from the SEEDS program identifies a few barriers to physical activity for women. Numerous studies mentioned that the number one barrier to participation was the lack of awareness and knowledge of UBC Women's only programs. Chan et al. (2021) found that half of their participants did not even know that women only programs existed at UBC. 76% of participants reported that they do not participate in women only programs because they are unaware that it exists (Chan et al., 2021). Abella et al. (2019) also reported that 82% had never attended a women's only program due to unawareness. Past SEEDS findings concerning UBC'S Women's only programs have not identified feasible and realistic educational strategies that can be implemented into the Women-only fitness hours program.

A gap we found in the literature included how future studies should determine how women's only fitness centers can incorporate education into their programs to increase participation rates. Our research question asks: Would providing instruction regarding gym etiquette and proper equipment use affect student participation and overall experience in UBC's women-only fitness hours? The targeted students will encompass all UBC undergraduate and graduate students. The purpose of this study is to 1) assess student awareness of UBC's Women Only Fitness Hours and how this can be improved, and 2) propose strategies to educate program participants about common gym FAQs and specific equipment use.

Methods

Research Design and Plan

This study assessed the awareness of UBC's Women's Only Fitness Hours (WOFH), looked for any improvements, and proposed educational strategies that utilized a mixed-methods approach. A mixed-methods design that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2004). This approach allowed for a more complete analysis because neither method alone was able to grasp the trends of a situation (Creswell, 2004). To execute this survey design and collect data, a survey (Appendix A) was used. Surveys are extremely useful for non-experimental designs seeking to describe reality and allow to collect data on attitudes and behaviours (Mathers et al., 2007). An online Qualtrics survey was used for convenience. Online surveys are inexpensive, fast, and can cover a wide range of geographical areas (Denscombe, 2006). A meta-analysis conducted by Asire (2017), found that there was an increase in web-based survey participation when using incentives. Therefore, to increase participation, participants who completed the survey were entered into a prize draw to win a 1year HOPR membership or a FitBit (Appendix A, Figure 10). The survey was designed to be taken in less than 5 minutes, as it was reported that shorter surveys significantly increase response rates (Sahlqvist, 2011).

Participants

The UBC's WOFH was open to all UBC students that self-identify as a woman (UBC Recreation, n.d.). As this study addressed the awareness of UBC students of WOFH, it was important to analyze the attitudes and beliefs of those whom the program is intended for. Therefore, the inclusion criteria for the survey were all UBC students who identify as a woman, including non-binary individuals. This included undergraduate, master's, Ph.D., and postdoctoral fellow students, as well as medical and law students. The targeted student population encompassed all undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students. It was important to note that participants who have and have not attended WOFH were eligible for the study. The exclusion criteria involved all UBC varsity athletes as they had access to The Smith and Laycoe Varsity Training Center (UBC Give, n.d.). This center is frequently visited by varsity athletes and was developed specifically for student athletes (UBC Give, n.d.). Due to the high involvement with gym fitness and utilization of a specific gym outside of WOFH, student athletes from the UBC Thunderbird Sports Club were excluded to avoid any bias in the findings.

Data Collection

To minimize contact due to COVID-19, a mixed-methods survey was the method of choice used for data collection. At the beginning of the survey, participants read the displayed consent form, and those who agreed to participate pressed 'next' to begin the survey. The 2 main purposes of this survey were to 1) assess awareness of UBC WOFH and how this may be improved and 2) assess the participant experiences of those who have used WOFH and how this may be improved. For these reasons, the survey was tailored to each group based on their answer to the 'yes' or 'no' question of "Have you ever attended UBC Recreations Women's Only Fitness Hours?" (Appendix A, Figure 2). This allowed the survey to redirect responders to more questions that pertained to them and divide survey participants into those who have attended WOFH and those who have not. The survey also aimed to address how education may improve participation rates for WOFH among those who have previously attended, as well as those who may be interested in getting started. This was addressed through questions such as "I would feel more comfortable in the gym if there was..." (Appendix A, Figure 7). This survey used closedended questions, such as 'yes' or 'no' questions, as well as open-ended questions that allowed for more freedom of expression and detailed responses from the participants, for example, "What do you think would improve awareness of UBC women's only fitness hours?" (Appendix A, Figure 8). Likert-scale style questions were also used. For example, participants were asked to select how much they agreed with statements that pertained to why participants may not have engaged in WOFH. The scales ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Based on our previously mentioned exclusion criteria, responses from men and varsity athletes were discarded.

The survey was distributed and promoted entirely online due to circumstances regarding COVID-19. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were also used to promote the survey. The survey link was shared on posters that were posted in UBC student group chats, class Facebook pages, and on group member's stories (Appendix C, Figure 1-3). The posters included a brief overview of the research purpose, the survey link, and advertised incentives by mentioning the prize draw of a Fitbit or a 1-year HOPR membership (Appendix C, Figure 1). Facebook and Instagram stories were posted 2 times during the duration of the survey. In addition, emails were also sent to UBC Professors of a variety of departments asking them to

share the poster and survey link with their students (Appendix C, Figure 4). The survey was available from March 13, 2022 until March 21, 2022 for a total of 9 days.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey aimed to make recommendations for and improve the attendance of WOFH. This study used a mixed-methods design, using closed- and open-ended questions to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data regarding participants' experiences and awareness of WOFH. The quantitative data was summarized with the use of bar graphs and the qualitative data was summarized using tables. Descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency were used to analyze Likert-scale questions. Open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying common themes within the participant's answers. The themes mentioned in the literature review were applied to our thematic analysis of the survey participant's answers as they contained common concerns and recommendations. The data from the responders were used to provide recommendations on how UBC WOFH can increase awareness of their program as well as improve participant experience.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Of the 81 participants who were surveyed, 80 identified as a woman and 1 individual identified as other, specifically two-spirited (Appendix D, Figure 1). Looking at participant level of education, 77 were undergraduate students, thus accounting for 95.06% of those surveyed. There was 1 Masters student, 2 postgraduate students, and 1 Ph.D. student (Appendix D, Figure 2). In order to filter out varsity athletes, 4 participants stated that they were varsity athletes, thus they did not continue with the survey (Appendix D, Figure 3). Since 4 varsity athletes were excluded from the rest of the survey, the questions following had responses from 77 participants.

When asked if they ever attended WOFH, 7 participants had attended and 70 had not (Appendix D, Figure 4). From the 7 participants who had attended, they were then asked on average, per month, how often they had attended WOFH in the last year. 2 stated 4-5 times per month, 1 said 2-3 times per month, 2 stated once per month and 2 said less than one time per month (Appendix D, Figure 5). When surveying the 70 who had not attended WOFH, 25 said they were aware that UBC has WOFH and 45 said they were unaware (Appendix D, Figure 6). These participants were then further asked why they did not attend WOFH and were given Likert-scale questions with reasons for not attending (Appendix D, Figure 8). The Likert-scale asked participants to select "strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree" to a series of statements. When given the statement "because it did not interest me", 11 strongly disagreed, 23 disagreed, 18 neither agreed nor disagreed, 8 agreed and 3 strongly agreed. When given the statement "because I have my own routine", 3 strongly disagreed, 16 disagreed, 16 neither agreed nor disagreed, 19 agreed and 9 strongly agreed. For the statement "the times don't work for me", 3 strongly disagreed, 12 disagreed, 36 neither agreed nor disagreed and 12 agreed. For the statement "[I'm] not confident in using gym equipment", 13 strongly disagreed, 14 disagreed, 10 neither agreed nor disagreed, 17 agreed and 9 strongly agreed. Finally, when given the statement "I'm not aware of UBC WOFH", 16 strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 3 neither agreed nor disagreed, 9 agreed and 28 strongly agreed.

Looking at the 7 participants who had attended UBC's WOFH, they were given Likertscale questions in relation to their experience at WOFH (Appendix D, Figure 10). To the statement "I felt comfortable in the facility", 1 somewhat disagreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed, 4 somewhat agreed and 1 strongly agreed. When given "I was satisfied with the equipment available", 1 somewhat disagreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed, 4 somewhat agreed and 1 strongly agreed. To the statement "I was satisfied with the space provided", 1 somewhat disagreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed, 2 somewhat agreed and 3 strongly agreed. When given "It was a friendly and safe environment", 1 somewhat disagreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed and 5 strongly agreed. When provided "I felt comfortable asking for help from staff", 2 somewhat disagreed, 2 neither agreed nor disagreed, 1 somewhat agreed and 2 strongly agreed. When given the statement "I prefer it over co-ed gyms", 3 somewhat disagreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked if having more knowledge about the equipment and the gym would make them more likely to attend UBC'S WOFH, 47 participants said "yes", which is 67.14% of the participants (Appendix D, Figure 12). 23 participants said "no", which is 32.86% of the sample.

Participants were then given Likert-scale questions to understand what strategies can make them feel more comfortable in the gym (Appendix D, Figure 13). When suggested if "educational posters" would increase comfort, 1 strongly disagreed, 6 disagreed, 17 neither agreed nor disagreed, 32 agreed and 11 strongly agreed. For the suggestion of "a gym orientation" to increase comfort, 2 strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 17 neither agreed nor disagreed, 24 agreed and 17 strongly agreed. When given the strategy of "online tips and instructional videos" to increase comfort, 1 strongly disagreed, 4 disagreed, 9 neither agreed nor disagreed, 37 agreed and 16 strongly agreed. When suggested "an instructional attendant on-site (self-identifying woman)" to make participants feel more comfortable, 3 strongly disagreed, 6 disagreed, 12 neither agreed nor disagreed, 28 agreed and 18 strongly agreed. Finally, when given the statement "I feel comfortable as it is", 3 strongly disagreed, 7 disagreed, 26 neither agreed nor disagreed, 20 agreed and 11 strongly agreed.

Descriptive Qualitative Analysis

Aside from the quantitative survey questions, participants were also given qualitative questions throughout the survey. For those who were aware of UBC's WOFH or had attended WOFH, they were asked where they had heard about it (Appendix D, Figure 7). Most responses indicated that they had heard about WOFH from UBC Rec's website, followed by posters at UBC's gym and from their peers. Other responses that weren't as popular include Instagram, Facebook, and other UBC Kinesiology classes.

Participants who had never attended WOFH were asked for other reasons why they did not participate aside from the statements given in the Likert-style questions (Appendix D, Figure 9). The majority of responses indicated that they "did not know it was a thing" or "had no idea women-only hours existed till now". Another common answer was regarding finances, such that they "don't want to pay for it". As well, many responses indicated something concerning "nerves and self-esteem", "anxiety and nerves", "not confident in self-image, fear of judgment" or "motivation/intimidat[ion]". Other participants indicated that they commute to school and that "it is uncomfortable to keep carrying school material and also gym". As well, some stated that they "[d]on't live on campus so it takes more effort to attend". Some participants stated that they were "unaware of the times, they usually conflict w[ith] class" or what deterred them from going is that "you have to register". To add, some said that they are just "busy with school", WOFH has "not enough machines, mostly free weight" or they just "never gave it a thought."

When surveying those who had attended WOFH, an open-ended question was given to them regarding anything else they would like to say about using WOFH (Appendix D, Figure 11). One participant stated that they really enjoyed going to WOFH as "there were never many people there and the equipment was adequate for [their] workouts" and that it "made [them] more comfortable moving into a co-ed gym setting". However, one participant said that "[a] lot of times it was not set up on the time" and that it "felt a bit intimidating and a bit judgemental for newer exercisers". One response said that it was a good initiative but "all women wante[d] to use the same machines, so it gets a little hard to use the machine you'd like". Finally, another surveyed student said that WOFH "make[s] it feels uncomfortable by obviously separating you in a worse room".

Participants were then asked an open-ended question on what could make them more comfortable at WOFH (Appendix D, Figure 14). Multiple responses indicated "having a friend to go with" and "more hours". Others indicated a "larger space", "more equipment" and just "more info about hours and availabilit[y]". Aside from these, many participants spoke to "education and training", such as the suggestion of "group fitness classes", "work out ideas to follow", "affordable personal training" and "group-based programs".

When asking participants who had attended WOFH any suggestions to improve WOFH, 2 out of the 4 who answered this question suggested "more times/days" and one stated that "sometimes it wouldn't be open on time", thus "having to cut [their] workouts short" (Appendix D, Figure 15). One participant addressed education, such that "knowing how to locate and use equipment is a big factor influencing participation". As well, another person addressed the need for more advertisement.

All participants were asked, "what would influence you or make you more interested to attend WOFH?" (Appendix D, Figure 16). Having a gym buddy, lowering rates, more time slots, more times, and more awareness were all reiterated in this open-ended question. Additional comments include "non-judgemental staff", the use of "instructional videos" and "if there's someone present to help beginners get started". One interesting comment suggested "lessons on how to perform strength training and weight-lifting" and providing "a guideline to different training you can do at the gym to help women start and learn how to properly plan a gym session of their own".

Participants were then asked, "what do you think would improve the awareness of WOFH?" (Appendix D, Figure 17). Most respondents indicated greater social media posts, posters, and even booths on campus. One even suggested having a specific Instagram page for WOFH and possibly starting a gym buddy program. More postings on the UBC Rec website were mentioned multiple times and emailing information was recommended. Some indicated more posters in the AMS Nest and "more promotion from AMS". One suggestion described "a free first trial so people who are unsure would be more motivated to give it a try".

Finally, participants were then asked for any additional comments they may have (Appendix D, Figure 18). Numerous participants indicated that WOFH is a great idea and one indicated that they did not know it was a thing but are hoping to go soon. A couple of individuals reiterated the need for more time slots. One notable comment raised the issue of "non-identifying individuals or those that may not feel comfortable with the general public but don't identify as a woman" and their lack of accessibility to the gym.

Discussion

The study contains findings that are relevant to what was asked of the researchers by the campus partners. An overwhelming majority (91%) of the survey participants had not taken part in WOFH, with 64% of these participants being unaware UBC WOFH existed, suggesting the

need for increased awareness of WOFH within the UBC community to maximize the amount of engagement and participation with this program. The findings suggest increased awareness among participants similar to Chan et al. (2021), who found that 76% of respondents were unaware of UBC WOFH. The other 36% of participants were aware of WOFH but have not participated. However, based on the responses to the survey, it is evident that while adherence to the program is relatively low amongst people who have heard of WOFH, there's value within the program itself as many participants indicated it was a "great idea" and disagreed with the statement "it did not interest me" when asked why they did not attend WOFH, suggesting a lack of interest from students is not one of the barriers from participating.

Based on previous literature from past SEEDS projects and peer-reviewed articles, Women's only fitness centers can be a benefit to women by increasing their confidence, perceived self-efficacy, and sense of camaraderie within the gym (Fisher et al., 2017). It can also remove barriers that may be present among co-ed gyms, such as men taking up too much space within the gym or hogging the equipment (Coen et al., 2018). However, based on our findings there are other barriers that exist within WOFH itself. While lack of awareness is a key barrier to the low participation rate of UBC WOFH, another important finding regarding barriers was that 41% of participants said they did not participate in the program because they were not confident in using the equipment. Additionally, 67% of participants said that having more knowledge about the gym and its equipment would increase their participation in WOFH. This suggests that a lack of knowledge about gym equipment acts as a significant perceived barrier to accessing and participating in WOFH. Some of the suggestions received from participants were to increase education around equipment use and the gym by having someone present in the gym to help with machine use for beginners or using instructional videos for people to follow. Another suggestion was the program could provide workout ideas for beginners to follow. Providing these educational tools to beginners may help bring more newcomers into WOFH. Aside from lack of knowledge, other barriers included financial and lack of accountability (i.e., wanting to go with a friend or rely on a buddy system). These findings make sense because students are usually not of high socioeconomic status and may find the price to be a barrier to accessing these hours. It's also important to note that a reason why many participants may not have attended WOFH is not necessarily because of flaws within the program, but due to COVID-19 and the gym shut-downs over the last year. COVID-19 presented a barrier for people to access all gyms, and thus the use of WOFH may have been increased if not for such circumstances.

The satisfaction of the 7 women who did attend WOFH varied depending on the context. Many participants agreed in saying that they were satisfied with the space provided on the Likert-scale questions, however, there were statements in the open-ended questions which mentioned the environment felt intimidating for newcomers, or that many women wanted to use the same machines, making it difficult to workout at the pace they wanted. Others mentioned the need for a bigger space and more machines, and one person mentioned how the space may be perceived as uncomfortable as women get "separated into a worse room." All of these aspects affected how satisfied users were with their experience. While the number of participants in WOFH was small, they gave valuable insight as to what changes could be made to the program for it to flourish and increase satisfaction. Some of these improvements included expanding the space provided, having more equipment available, having low-cost personal training options, and introducing group-based classes or group fitness workouts. These findings suggest that creating a sense of community might be key to the improvement of this program, along with expanding the space and equipment to avoid women from feeling like they're isolated in a smaller space. Whether or not the women who participated in WOFH appreciated it over co-ed gyms is inconclusive, however out of the 7 who attended WOFH, 3 agreed they prefer WOFH to co-ed gyms, 3 disagreed and 1 neither agreed nor disagreed, therefore making it difficult to assume whether or this space was better for women.

Limitations

One limitation of the study was the limited time the survey was open due to time constraints. The survey was only open for 9 days which limited the number of respondents. Had the survey been open for longer, there would have been more of an outreach to the UBC community which would have impacted the data. Therefore, one cannot assume that the data from this study is an actual representation of women's perceptions of WOFH. Additionally, most of the survey participants were undergraduate students (95%) therefore the feedback received from the respondents was representative mainly of undergraduate students, with little feedback from post-graduate students, masters' students, and Ph.D. students. This may have been due to the researchers being undergraduate students themselves, and therefore advertising it to those within their social circles, as well as reaching out to previous professors to ask them to share with their classes. Whether or not the majority of the sample reflects students also in their upperlevel years of undergraduate studies is unknown, however, the demographic represents real and potential bias among the findings. Users should proceed with caution when extrapolating these results to all women at UBC.

Another limitation of this study was that it was conducted directly after the gyms had reopened due to COVID-19, making it difficult to determine whether survey participants who hadn't used this service in the past might have participated if the gyms had been open consecutively. The year prior, courses were delivered primarily through an online format, meaning there were fewer commuters and people on campus to participate in WOFH. Therefore, this program and its delivery has been subjected to many obstacles regarding participant adherence over the last 12 months, making it difficult to determine whether the pandemic may have affected our results.

The final limitation of the study is that we could not infer what ethnic groups were answering the survey questions and were potentially over/underrepresented within the sample. Similarly, while most of the students who responded to the survey were identified as undergraduate students, it was unclear what year level they were in. Future research may want to explore further how year level might affect awareness and participation in WOFT.

Recommendations

After conducting a survey to determine the effectiveness of UBC's WOFH's it is evident that some changes must be made to improve the program.

The survey revealed that 64% of participants were unaware of the UBC WOFH, therefore the first recommendation is to increase awareness of the program. An immediate way to employ this recommendation is by making frequent posts on the social media platforms of UBC Rec and the official UBC platforms. Putting posters up in a more variety of buildings instead of just the Nest or the student union building could also help reach a greater population. Additionally, members of UBC Rec could visit lecture halls during the first week of the fall term to spread awareness of WOFH.

The second recommendation is to create knowledge resources on how to use different equipment in the gym, as well as basic workout guides. Lack of confidence about gym equipment was a barrier for 41% of participants and 67% of participants said that more

knowledge about the gym and its equipment would increase their participation. An immediate plan of action could be having a women-identifying attendant(s) that can answer any questions about the equipment or exercises that a participant may have. A long-term solution is to provide instructional videos on how to use the equipment by scanning a QR code located on the machine and showing how to do free weight exercises. Additionally, creating basic workout guides that list movements that can be done with, or without machines can help increase knowledge. These workout guides can be accessed online or in a physical form such as posters or handouts. By having these resources easily accessible to members confidence will increase, as well as participation in WOFH.

Another barrier for students is finances. Participants in the survey mentioned that finances and the quality of the space were reasons they did not attend WOFH. A third recommendation is for UBC Rec to provide more affordable memberships that reflect the quality of the service and space that participants are receiving. Since WOFH is only offered 3 days a week for 3 hours a time slot, there can be a membership option that is only for WOFH and is cheaper than the standard membership. Having a more affordable membership plan for women will get rid of these barriers and increase participation for WOFH.

Finally, we recommend adding a wider variety of sessions to increase the attendance for WOFH. The survey revealed that many individuals did not attend WOFH because it did not fit into their schedule and would appreciate more time slots. Also, survey participants share their previous experience that the space would not be open on time which consequently impacted their workout. It is important that WOFH operate on the hours that they advertise to ensure equal access and opportunity to the facility. By creating more time slots and increasing the days of the week the program is provided, the program can be more inclusive and will allow others to easily incorporate WOFH into their daily schedules.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Qualtrics Survey

What gender do you self-identify as
O Woman
O Man
O Non-binary
O Other
What is your current level of education at UBC?
O Undergraduate student
O Masters student
O PhD student
O Post graduate student (postdoctoral fellows, medical students, law students, etc.)
Are you currently a varsity athlete at UBC?
O Yes
O No

Figure 1. Inclusion criteria verification and distinction between UBC WOFH users and non-users.

Have you ever attended UBC Women's Only Fitness hours? O Yes O No

Figure 2. Participant attendance

On average, per month, how often have you attended Women's Only Fitness Hours in the last year? O less than one time per month O once per month O 2-3 times per month O 4-5 times per month O 6+ times per month

Figure 3. Attendance ('yes' path)

Where have you heard about the UBC Women's Only Fitness hours?

Figure 4. Where did you hear about WOFH? ('yes' path)

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I felt comfortable in the facility	0	0	0	0	0
I was satisfied with the equipment availble	0	0	0	0	0
l was satisfied with the space provided	0	0	0	0	0
it was a friendly and safe environment	0	0	0	0	0
I felt comfortable asking for help from staff	0	0	0	0	0
l prefer it over co-ed gyms	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 5. User satisfaction ('yes' path)

Having more knowledge about the equipment and the gym would make me more likely to attend UBC's
Women's Only Hours

O Yes O No

Figure 6. Education and adherence ('yes' path)

I would feel more comfortable in the gym if there was						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
educational posters	0	0	0	0	0	
a gym orientation	0	0	0	0	0	
online tips and instructional videos	0	0	0	0	0	
an instructional attendant on-site (self- identifying woman)	0	0	0	0	0	
I feel comfortable as it is	0	0	0	0	0	
What else would make you more comfortable at UBC's Womens Only Fitness hours?						

Figure 7. Strategies to increase comfort ('yes' path)

What do you think would improve awareness of UBC Women's Only Fitness hours?

Figure 8. Future recommendations ('yes' path)

Any additional comments regarding UBC Women's Only Fitness Hours:

Figure 9. Comments ('yes' path)

Thank you for participating in our survey!

If you would like to enter to win a 1-year HOPR membership or a FitBit, please continue on to this separate survey

https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b8TXhsrFsUCsCr4

To enter the draw, please indicate that you completed the survey for Group #11 and provide your email address. Thank you.

Figure 10. Prize draw ('yes' path)

Are you aware that UBC has Women's Only Fitness hours?

O Yes

O No

Figure 11. Awareness of WOFH ('no' path)

Where have you heard about the UBC Women's Only Fitness hours?

Figure 12. Where did you hear about WOFH? ('no' path)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
pecause it did not nterest me	0	0	0	0	0	
pecause I have my own routine	0	0	0	0	0	
he times don't work for ne	0	0	0	0	0	
not confident in using gym equipment	0	0	0	0	0	
'm not aware of ubc Nomen's Only Fitness Hours	0	0	0	0	0	
Are there any other reasons why you don't participate in UBC Women's Only Fitness hours? (finances, nerves, other barriers, etc)						

Figure 13. Barriers to participation ('no' path)

Having more knowledge about the equipment and the gym would make me more likely to attend UBC's Women's Only Hours

O Yes O No

Figure 14. Education and adherence ('no' path)

I would feel more comfortable in the gym if there was						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
educational posters	0	0	0	0	0	
a gym orientation	0	0	0	0	0	
online tips and instructional videos	0	0	0	0	0	
an instructional attendant on-site (self- identifying woman)	0	0	0	0	0	
I feel comfortable as it is	0	0	0	0	0	
What else would make you more comfortable at UBC's Womens Only Fitness hours?						

Figure 15. User satisfaction ('no' path)

What would influence you or make you more interested to attend UBC Women's Only Fitness hours?

Figure 16. Increasing program interest ('no' path)

What do you think would improve awareness of UBC Women's Only Fitness hours?

Figure 17. Future recommendations ('no' path)

Any additional comments regarding UBC Women's Only Fitness Hours:

Figure 18. Comments ('no' path)

Thank you for participating in our survey!

If you would like to enter to win a 1-year HOPR membership or a FitBit, please continue on to this separate survey

https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b8TXhsrFsUCsCr4

To enter the draw, please indicate that you completed the survey for Group #11 and provide your email address. Thank you.

Figure 19. Prize draw ('no' path)

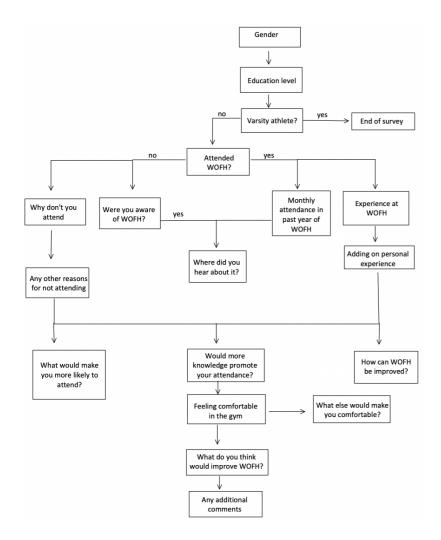


Figure 20. Concept map of Qualtrics survey

Appendix B: Consent Form

CLASS PROJECT: Health Promotion and Physical Activity (KIN 464)

Participant Consent Form

Project F: An Assessment of UBC's Recreation Women's Only Fitness Hours Program

Group 11

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Andrea Bundon (Assistant Professor, School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Education)

Sessional Instructor:

Dr. Negin Riazi (School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Education)

The purpose of the class project:

To gather feedback from UBC students regarding their awareness of UBC's Women's Only Fitness Hours and how this can be improved, as well as to propose strategies to help educate and inform program participants about common gym FAQ's and specific equipment use.

Study Procedures:

With your permission, we are asking you to participate in a survey. You may only complete the survey once. With the information gathered, students will critically examine how different individuals understand or engage in health promoting activities or health promotion initiatives.

Project outcomes:

The information gathered will be part of a written report for the class project. The written report will be shared with campus partners involved with the project. Summaries of findings will also

be posted on the following websites. *No personal information/information that could identify participants will be included in these reports or shared with campus partners.*

UBC SEEDS Program Library:

https://sustain.ubc.ca/courses-degrees/alternative-credit-options/seeds-sustainabilityprogram/seeds-sustainability-library

Potential benefits of class project:

There are no explicit benefits to you by taking part in this class project. However, the survey will provide you with the opportunity to voice your opinion on your experiences with health promoting activities or initiatives in a broad sense and will provide the students with an opportunity to learn from your experiences.

Confidentiality:

Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants involved in the research is paramount, and no names of participants will be collected.

At the completion of the course, all data (i.e. notes) and signed consent forms will be stored on a secure electronic drive by Drs. Riazi and Bundon. All data and consent forms will be destroyed 1 year after completion of the course.

Risks:

The risks associated with participating in this research are minimal. There are no known physical, economic, or social risks associated with participation in this study. You should know

that your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study and there will not be negative impacts related to your withdrawal. If you **withdraw from the study**, all of the information you have shared up until that point will be destroyed.

Contact for information about the study:

If you have any questions about this class project, you can contact Negin Riazi by email at negin.riazi@ubc.ca.

Research ethics complaints:

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

By clicking 'Next', you are consenting to participate in the study.

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

KIN 464: Health Promotion and Physical Activity Class-based Project

*** Individuals who meet the inclusion criteria and complete the survey will be eligible to enter a draw to win a prize (1-year HOPR Membership, or a Fitbit) ***

If you self-identify as a Woman who is currently a student at UBC we would love to hear from you!

As part of a course-based research project (KIN 464), we are conducting a study on assessing the awareness of UBC's Women's Only Fitness Hours Program organized by UBC Recreation. If you self-identify as a woman and are currently a student at UBC we would love to hear from you by completing a survey by clicking the link below. For more information, please email <u>skeshava@ubc.student.ca</u>

https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_djxybRWi1lp7MTs

Please note that this post is public and anyone who likes, comments or shares the link will be associated with this study. The Principal Investigator on this project is Dr. Negin Riazi (<u>negin.riazi@ubc.ca</u>).



Figure 1. Recruitment Poster

Click here: https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_djxybRWi11p7MTs



Jacqueline Tyrer

Hey everyone! I am doing a research project for my KIN 464 course, and I was hoping that those who meet the criteria in the poster below could help me by filling out our survey! Thank you in advance for helping us out, we appreciate your feedback!

KIN 464: Health Promotion and Physical Activity Class-based Project

*** Individuals who meet the inclusion criteria and complete the survey will be eligible to enter a draw to win a prize (1-year HOPR Membership, or a Fitbit) ***

If you self-identify as a Woman who is currently a student at UBC we would love to hear from you!

As part of a course-based research project (KIN 464), we are conducting a study on assessing the awareness of UBC's Women's Only Fitness Hours Program organized by UBC Recreation. If you self-identify as a woman and are currently a student at UBC we would love to hear from you by completing a survey by clicking the link below. For more information, please email skeshava@ubc.student.ca

https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_djxybRWi1lp7MTs



Figure 2. Facebook Recruitment Post

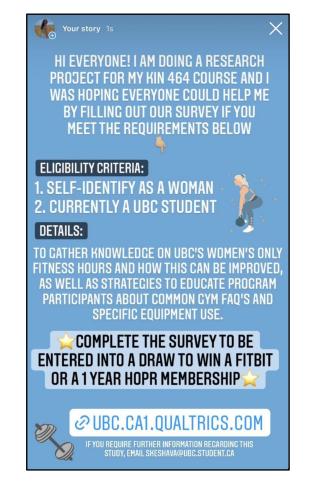


Figure 3. Instagram Recruitment Post

Dear (insert Professors Name):

I am currently a student in Dr. Negin Riazi's KIN 464: Health Promotion and Physical Activity course. My group and I are currently conducting research to gather feedback from UBC students on the awareness of UBC's Women's Only Fitness Hours and how this can be improved, as well as to propose strategies to educate program participants about common gym FAQ's and specific equipment use. We are hoping to get as much feedback from current UBC students as we can, and we are hoping you would be able to help us share information about our study with your classes. We are currently looking for any current UBC students and who self-identify as a woman. I have attached our advertisement poster below and any further questions can be emailed to myself or the email on the poster.

Thank you very much for your time,

Figure 4. Email Recruitment Letter



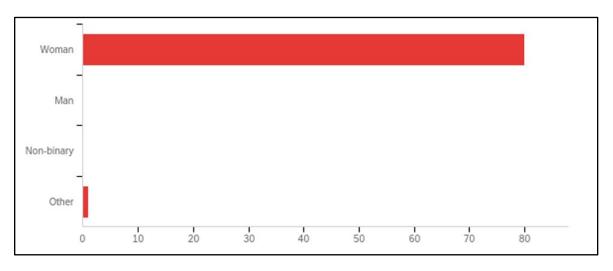


Figure 1. What gender do you self-identify as?

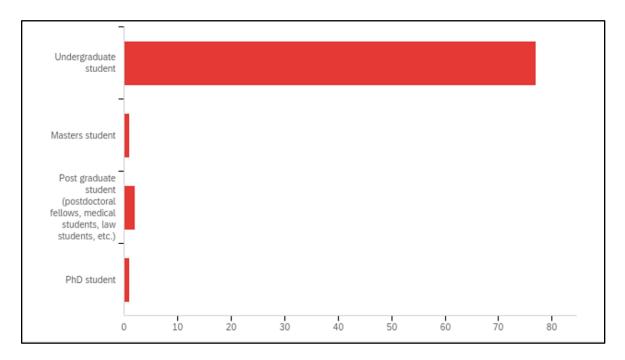


Figure 2. What is your current level of education at UBC?

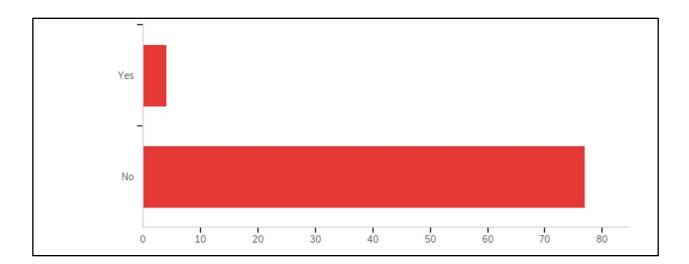


Figure 3. Are you currently a varsity athlete at UBC?

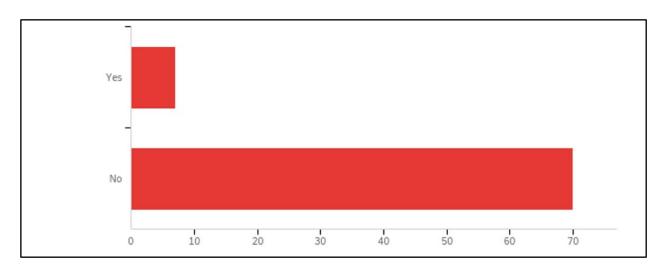


Figure 4. Have you ever attended WOFH?

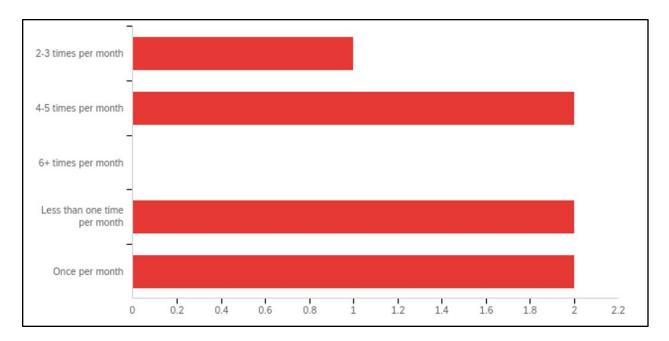


Figure 5. On average, per month, how often have you attended WOFH in the last year?

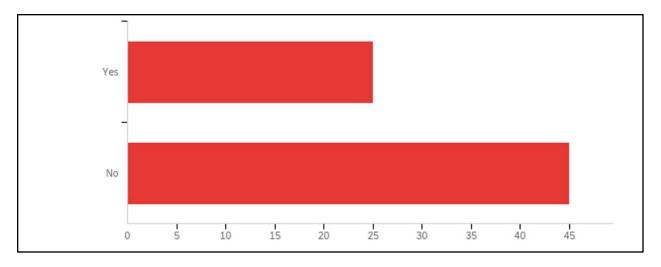


Figure 6. Are you aware that UBC has WOFH?

From a friend	
Ubc rec website or flyer in birdcoop	
through scrolling on the ubc website	
facebook	
Ig	
posters	
At UBC's Gym, the Arc!	
Ubc recreation website	
signage	
On the UBC recreation website and from my friends.	
Saw posters/signs while going to the gym	
I saw it on the website	
a friend - theres definitely not enough advertisement about it	
Online searches/Instagram	
I saw it on the website	

work at the gym	, before that	I did not know
-----------------	---------------	----------------

From peers on campus

Twice a week, specific hours, in the lower level studio at the arc, need to sign up

Online, word of mouth, posters

ubc website

Friends

I searched it up myself recently

Friends

From a friend who has gone.

ubc rec website and instagram

Online

From ubc Rec

Other KIN classes

UBC Website

Figure 7. Where have you heard about WOFH?

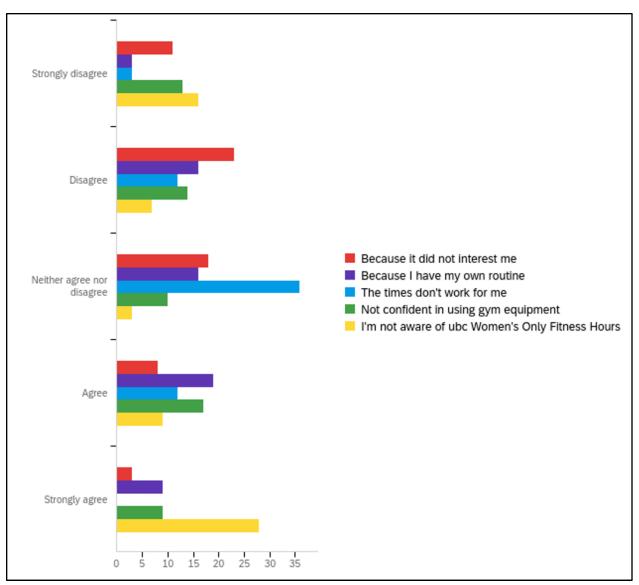


Figure 8. Why don't you attend WOFH?

Busy with school
no routine to follow
nerves
Motivation/intimidated
I don't mind being around males
I have a co-ed gym group!
None, had no idea women only hours existed till now
Not known
no idea this existed or what this is
Go to a different gym
transit/commute, far from home even so that is on campus it is uncomfortable to keep carrying school material and also gym
finances, not confident in self-image, fear of jugement
didn't know
never gave it a thought
I am comfortable in the gym

I have never been to that gym before

Not enough machines, mostly free weight

Commute to school

You have to register

I didn't know that these existed so honestly the first 4 questions on this page didn't really make sense for me to answer

Finances.

Anxiety and nerves

I don't go to the gym

I thought it was only in studios and want to use the main gyms

I would like to but I would like to know all the information about it first

No time

I don't want to pay for it since I don't prefer going to gyms in the first place.

I don't live on campus (and didn't know about it)

While i have a gym and group fitness membership, i mainly utilize the group fitness services and complete my resistance training in my home gym

Little nervous

nope - just wasn't aware

Did not know it was a thing

Don't live on campus so it takes more effort to attend

Wasn't aware it was a thing!

Finances

Nerves and self esteem

Unaware of the times, they usually conflict w class

Doesn't often fit with my routine and sometimes like working out with male friends

Figure 9. Other reasons why you don't participate in WOFH?

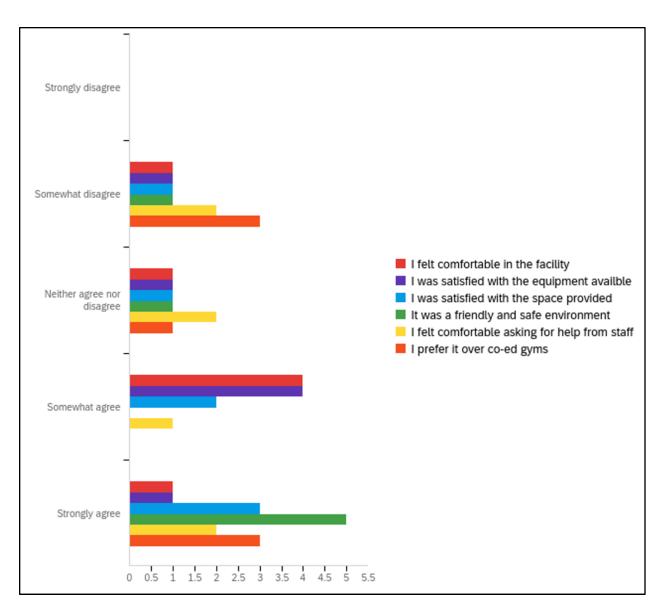


Figure 10. Based on my experience at WOFH...

I used to go to women's only at my home gym and I really enjoyed going to women's only hours at ubc. There were never many people there and the equipment was adequate for my workouts. It definitely made me more comfortable moving into a co-ed gym setting

A lot of times it was not set up on the time (for the first session). At times the space felt a bit intimidating and a bit judgemental for newer exercisers.

It is a really good initiative; however, Sometimes all women want to use the same machines, so it gets a little hard to use the machine you'd like.

Sometimes they make it feel uncomfortable by obviously separating you in a worse room. I now attend a womens only gym and I love it.

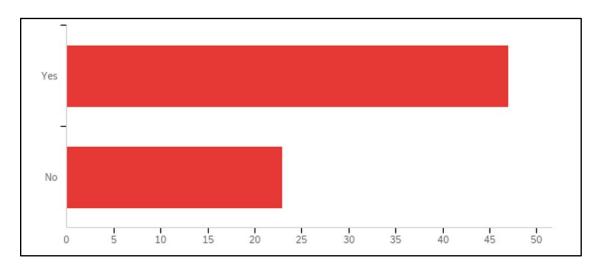


Figure 11. Anything else to add about using WOFH

Figure 12. Having more knowledge about the equipment and the gym would make me more likely to attend WOFH

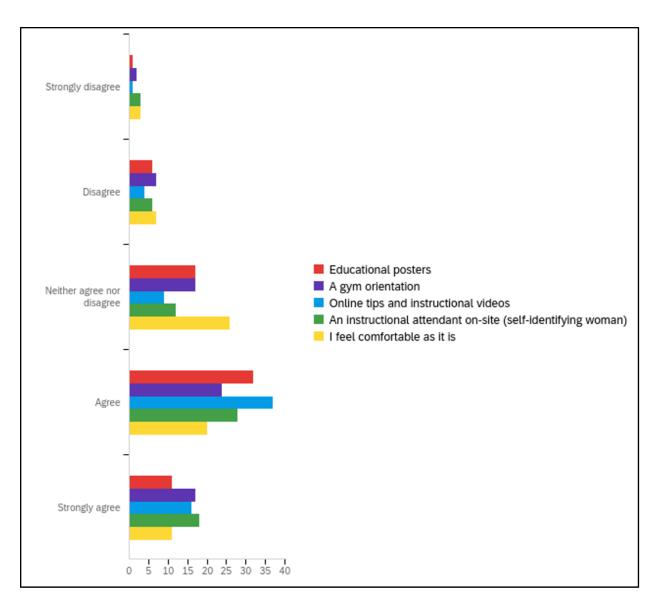


Figure 13. I would feel more comfortable in the gym if there was...

bring a friend to keep accountable and make experience more enjoyable

maybe detailed videos would be most helpful for me

not as scheduled times

Nothing comes to mind

Having a friend to go with

information about it, regular gym etiquette

I don't have anything to add, I felt comfortable being there.

more info about hours and availabilities

more awareness on this topic

Having a routine

going with a friend

An orientation with all the equipment at the start of the session (or maybe bookable in groups or something) would make a big difference. Different workout plans available (online or maybe paper copies) or initiatives like workout of the day pr something on site would make it more fun and open I think.

More info about location

More equipment

I think all of these would add to my existing comfort level

Larger space

education and training

Group fitness classes

More privacy

Knowing about them

Work out ideas to follow

increased hours so less people

personally, I'm okay with going to the gym anytime. However I have heard other women that it would make them feel more comfortable if there were more female staff to help.

More hours

Having every equipment available and not in a secluded room with some equipment

Learn how to use equipment and what workouts to do

Maybe going with a friend or being with people who know their way around a gym.

affordable personal training

Going with others that I know

Going with other people who are also new to the gym

low price

I am comfortable I just go to open fitness hours instead

Nothing I'm glad I know this is a thing now and I will attend :)

Group based programs (eg., UBC womens fitness challenge)

Ability to just do my own thing

Figure 14. What else would make you more comfortable at WOFH?

just knowing how to locate and use equipment is a big factor influencing participation

sometimes it wouldn't be open on time and when the time was limited I would find myself having to cut my workouts short

More times/days

Perhaps advertise them more. Because I have only heard about them once or twice in the span of almost one year.

Figure 15. From your experience, are there any other suggestions to improve WOFH?

Having a gym buddy

If my friends went and if it was when I am free

more times and instruction

Group circuits or something

going with a friend

Having friends go as well

More poster reminding me they exist

More promotion and Flexible times (however I haven't checked the times)

if my friends went

I would attend if I went to UBC gym

if there were lessons on how to perform strength training and weight lifting, maybe provide a guideline to different training you can do a th gym to help women start and learn how to properly plan a gym session of their own

Attending with a friend

Knowing how to attend, where to sign up, how much it costs

if I knew when it was and that I could feel less judged than if I was going during normal hours

susbsidies?

Knowing when they are

if there was a class

I wasn't aware it was a thing. Leading in from this I have no idea what the times etc

I dont have an interest in going, I am perfectly comfortable going during normal hours.

If I had someone to go with

If the main gym was too busy

If they were in the morning

More time slots

having someone to help me through it

More knowledge that it exists

Lower fees.

Knowledge of their existence

Having friends going at the same time

Nothing I don't plan on using it

More information about it more knowledge of/increased hours If I knew more about it more accessible times If we could use the main gym space If there were more hours More information about it! I'd love to go Nothing, happy already if there's someone present to help beginners get started If a friend was going or if the hours were longer. knowing it exists! Finding other individuals that don't have much gym experience to go with to learn together More information about it if I were living on campus

cheap, instructional videos

Seeing more promotions/ads on it & if I lived closer to campus

Price reduction

Discounted rates!

More awareness about it (I didn't know it existed)

More hours and non judgmental staff

More accessible hours

More information on schedule or reminders that it exists since I forget

Figure 16. What would influence you or make you more interested to attend WOFH?

Maybe starting a gym buddy program and having a social media account

social media and posters around campus

just more advertisement

More posts/advertising

more broadcasted on the recreation website

More representatives explaining the program

Email

Poster, more news about them

Instagram promotion on main pages and it's own account page

dedicated Instagram page for schedules/announcements, posters up everywhere on campus, and maybe even a club

more postings of the times

social media, posters, booth on campus

Advertising more on the UBC rec page, in the nest, sending emails about it

Sending out emails, including it in the facilities offered, word of mouth, announcements

Maybe more social media posts would improve awareness. I usually get my information about what is going on at UBC from social media/friends who heard about things from social media.

online media

social media/instagram posts?

Posting online, including them on the website

explaining it's more strength based equipment

instagram advertisements, posters (if there arent already any)

Continue to post on social media, emails, etc.

Advertising on social media etc

Statements in newsletters, clarity on times

Post about it more on UBC rec

More signs around the gyms, posts on social media

Free fitness classes, or trial week for students to test out womens hours

Info about it at the gym not just online

emails posters

Asking undergraduate societies to promote it, more posters on campus, mass email

More promotion from AMS

Social media

Word of mouth, website, posters, social media

Using social media to promote it and have it posted to a large account like AMS

Social media posts on ubc accounts

Social media, posters

more promotion

Social media promotion, flyers

More advertisement once again

posters

More promotion on ubc rec

promoting it on social media

Advertisement: posters, social media, etc

Promoting it online or offering a boot camp that is only womens as well

Posting on Instagram

Post on social media

More advertisements about it in places around campus.

social media, campus wide email,

More social media presence

Social media campaign, posters in the fitness centres, emails

Social media, Posters around campus

emails from ubc about it

More advertising

Maybe posts on the Ubc gym website be it arc or bird coop and maybe somewhere on social media? Or posters in the nest

Posters around campus or social media ads. Maybe a free first trial so people who are unsure would be more motivated to give it a try.

Social media

Advertising

Posters, Instagram posts, announcements via email

Email to all students and posters

More social media posting

Social media posts

Figure 17. What do you think would improve the awareness of WOFH?

It is great having women's only fitness hours!

i dont know the times that are already available but if there isnt already a morning time and an afternoon/evening time i think that would be helpful!

If feasible, it would be nice if there were time slots for every day.

what about non-identifying individuals or those that may not feel comfortable with the general public but dont identify as a women?

I've worked the shift many times and it works for a lot of people. I feel comfortable working out in the main gym so there is no need for me to attend the women's only fitness hours

Not totally visible where it takes place

I didn't know this was a thing but hope to go to one soon!

No, thank you for this survey! I'm glad I was able to help.

Such a great idea!!!

It's a cool idea.

Would love to go!

Figure 18. Additional comments