

2010 Muslim Women Physical Activity Survey For Halton & Peel



PETER MCCABE/FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Source: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/724677--montreal-designer-creates-sleek-sports-hijab>

This project was made possible through funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

2010 Muslim Women Physical Activity Survey for Halton & Peel

Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre (formerly Oak Park Moms & Tots) started supporting a local Muslim swim group 2 years ago. It was through our new connections to these ladies that we became aware of the limited opportunities for recreation. This survey was made possible through funding from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario through their Spark Community Advocacy Fund. The physical activity survey was set up on Survey Monkey for women to complete on line and the survey was also completed with women at various events in our community. The survey was delivered in hard copy to several agencies and was also sent via email with the link. The following groups were provided with the surveys.

Muslim Association of Canada, Newcomer Information Centre- Oakville, Muslim Girls Youth Group, Muslim Federation of Women, Riyadh Al-Saladin Weekend Heritage School, Al-Huda Weekend Heritage School, Oakville Muslim Swim Group- Oak Park Moms Tots, Muslim Youth Soccer League, Oak Park Neighbour Centre- Muslim Members, Halton Multicultural Council, Diversity Officer- Halton Board of Education, Centre for Skills Exchange and Learning- Oakville, Oakville Public Library- Sue Doherty, Al-Falah School, Al-Falah Masjid, Olive Grove School, ISNA High School, Halton Mosque, White Oaks SS- Muslim Student Association, Oakville Community Foundation- International Festival

260 surveys were completed from the beginning of March to mid June 2010. The link to the survey was sent to Halton Multicultural Council, The Centre for Skills Exchange & Learning, centre for Education and Training Newcomer Info centre, Oakville Public Library, Muslim Oakville Ladies Swim, Muslim women who attend Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre, women from the Muslim Soccer League, Olive Grove School Al Falah School and Muslim groups at the Halton District School board. In addition surveys were completed with women at Muslim school events, and Mosques.

SUMMARY

260 surveys completed (119 from Oakville)

38% of Muslim women do not participate in physical activities

46% are very motivated to increase their level of physical activity

86% of Muslim women say exercise is very or extremely important to them

69% of Muslim women say they are experiencing barriers to participation in activities

72% say there are activities they want to participate in but can't.

96% say they would increase their physical activity if there were women only options

89% chose swimming, 67% chose aerobics, and 49% chose yoga

150 Women were so interested in finding programs that they gave us their contact information to let them know of recreation opportunities.

1. What is your age category?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
under 9 years	2.3%	6
10 to 19 years	16.5%	43
20 to 29 years	24.2%	63
30 to 39 years	33.5%	87
40 to 49 years	20.0%	52
Over 50 years	3.5%	9
<i>answered question</i>		260

2. Where do you presently reside?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Mississauga	45.0%	117
Brampton	1.5%	4
Oakville	45.8%	119
Burlington	4.2%	11
Milton	3.5%	9
Other (please specify)		19
<i>answered question</i>		260

3. How often do you currently participate in physical activities?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not at all.	37.7%	98
Once or twice per week.	37.3%	97
Three or more times per week.	25.0%	65
<i>answered question</i>		260

4. How motivated are you to increase your activity level?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Somewhat motivated	26.9%	70
Very motivated	45.8%	119
Extremely motivated	27.3%	71
Additional comments:		18
<i>answered question</i>		260

5. How important is physical activity to you?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Somewhat important.	14.2%	37
Very important.	54.2%	141
Extremely important.	31.5%	82
<i>answered question</i>		260

6. Are you presently experiencing any barriers with participating in physical activities?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	68.6%	175
No	31.4%	80
Please explain:		147
<i>answered question</i>		255
<i>skipped question</i>		5

Summary of the responses on barriers (Full detailed responses can be found in Appendix A.)

Privacy (ladies only)	98	Financial	28
Childcare	20	Time	19 (longer & more classes, more personal time)
Injury/ Health needs	9	Hijab constraints	8
Transportation	5	Appropriate Music	1

7. Is there any particular program/activity you would like to participate in but feel you can't?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.3%	180
No	27.7%	69
Please Explain:		150
<i>answered question</i>		249
<i>skipped question</i>		11

The majority of responses asked for swimming similar to question 9 below. Some needs not mentioned elsewhere are the need for prenatal, self defence and baby & mum swim classes. Detailed responses can be found in Appendix B.

“I feel that I will be judged by people, who are better than me, or I’ll try and won’t do well and I’ll just embarrass myself.”

“I’d like to participate in swimming activities and to obtain a life guard certificate.”

“Classes all require you to wear lighter t-shirts and shorts, I can’t do this unless the class is segregated and female led. To do these classes with a hijab, full pants and a full sleeved shirt is not easy, trust me, I’ve tried. Over heating is not fun.”

8. Would you increase your physical activity level if more women only, women instructed opportunities were available?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	96.2%	250
No	3.8%	10
<i>answered question</i>		260

9. What activities do/would you like to participate in?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Swimming	88.6%	226
Aerobics	67.1%	171
Pilates	36.5%	93
Yoga	48.6%	124
Gymnastics	35.3%	90
Soccer	34.5%	88
Tennis	40.8%	104
Other (please specify):		53
<i>answered question</i>		255
<i>skipped question</i>		5

The “other” responses were
 Basketball 17 Badminton 8 Volleyball 8 Dance 8 Kickboxing 4
 Martial Arts 4 Table Tennis 3 Boxing 3 Weightlifting 2 Skating 2
 Walking 2 Rock Climbing 2
 Cycling, Belly Dancing, Frisbee, Touch Football, Gym Activities, Aqua Fit, Ice Hockey, Archery, Spinning, Step, Rugby, Squash

If you would like to be contacted about future "Women only, Women Instructed" physical activity opportunities and programs in Halton, please provide us with your name and email address.	
Answer Options	Response Count
	150
<i>answered question</i>	150
<i>skipped question</i>	110

150 women provided us with contact information at the end of the survey to let them know of any recreation opportunities for Muslim women,

Appendix A

(Detailed responses for Question 6, Are you experiencing barriers with participation in physical activities?)

Time Limitations

Type of music used, nothing for ladies only;

Because of religious requirements I can't just go slip on a swim suit whenever I want and swim at the local pool. Child care Needs. I feel uncomfortable working out knowing that the opposite gender may have free access to enter the room I'm in at any point.

Would like more programs that are women only ie: swimming but not at crazy hours, like Sunday's nights...

Have an 8 month old baby

I find it extremely hard to run/exercise wearing full hijab, long dress with full sleeves. The normal clothing is extremely uncomfortable and hot for strenuous activity.

Not enough programming for women only.

Knee problems

Financial barriers. Also, the lack of women only activities (such as hip hop, aerobics, swimming, etc.)

I pay for it, and it has limited time (once a week)

Not all facilities for physical activity are women only.

I like to have separate facility for women where I can easily participate in physical activities

only opportunities are in women-only gyms

not much variety in all women activities

I would like to workout and play soccer without my hijab

Knee injury!

Time, Being a Muslim girl who doesn't have access to a lot of women-only pools and gym.

Sports instruction classes are very expensive

The fact that I have to go to a coed gym stops and discourages me.

Not enough women's only services, Not enough organized groups for (Muslim and non-Muslim) women

Amount of school works tend to get on the way of my engagement in physical activities

Timing and availability of Women only programs.

Not enough facilities for women only activities. too far. Too expensive. Timings limited.

Babysitting

I am looking for an affordable all women fitness class.

Time availability

As Muslim women I don't feel comfortable swimming in front of men or doing physical activity when there are men there .

I love aerobic classes but I can only go if there is no men in the class, otherwise, I have to go back home!

I wrote many suggestions asking for women only class but one year past and no changes.

money - child care

There is no private areas for Muslims in Shower rooms and exercise rooms

We need privacy and places just for women, not mixed with men.

placing kids

don't find any affordable women only program, women instructor

I cannot find any activity for women only.

I would like to participate in women activities due to religious restriction.

I can't have a specific time for practice.

I can't join club with mixed males and females together

also if it is swimming I can't practise swimming because I can't take shower in front of nude women or nude women in front of me.

As Muslim women, we need a privacy to practice any activities. For instant we need special days for only women to be able to use swimming pool or gym. Another barrier is daycare for children as well as reasonable fees for any activities.

I would like to swim but there aren't many venues that have women only hours.

I don't know of any free activities for Muslim women. I wouldn't feel comfortable taking my hijab off in front of non-Muslim women and I don't want to overheat.

Muslim activity programs needed

The number one barrier is MONEY.

health issues

financial barriers and lack of suitable places for Muslim women

Not many areas solely for 'women'. even if it is for women you still have men walking in and out of your classes or they're able to watch while you exercise. I think more privacy is needed.

Transportation & Children

I have a knee problem

Not having a place that respect privacy 100%

Very few places dedicated for women only with no men access. Due to religious obligations I can't participate in Athletic activities and wearing light exercise wear in a place where men also do.

There are very very little women only activities

I prefer outdoors, so in winter with long hours work hardly can find time, even in summer because I study and some times I work till 7 :00pm

I would like to see female only activities and at a reasonable time and location.

As woman I do not feel comfortable to exercise in front men. I love swimming but never got the opportunity as I will be able

To swim only in free places that has no men. Being with men is restricting my ability to access the physical activities

I have 2 kids a 5 years old boy and another 2 years old and so far I think raising them is a very important physical activity

Nothing specially only for women

Our cultural as Muslims prevents us from gender mixing in the activities especially when it comes to remove our Hijab, or dress special costumes like swim costume, so it is difficult to find a place were we feel free to practice activities without break our religion rules.

Not able to find a suitable place for a Muslim woman with 3 girls.

we need to be provided with premises for physical activities that typically suite a Muslim women's' norm, e.g. segregated from men

kids and pregnancy and feeling very comfortable

Sometimes dance classes aren't gender exclusive...which is a disincentive to participate at all.

Children, difficulty to find suitable places, money

no class for women only, no swimming pool also

We need female only swimming and fitness program.

Some one to take care of my kids

care giver for my child if I am gone, financial barriers

Less opportunities for girls sports. Girls swimming, I mean women's only swimming, women basket ball, etc.

no privacy for only female area in rec facilities

Swimming...cannot swim regularly due to clothing restrictions. The community center fitness club in my area always has men in it...

not enough, flexible, women only services

Swimming for girls only with a female life guard is hard to get because you need a certain number of females to participate.

I'm a kinesiology student and I find it extremely important to be physically active however it is very difficult to find fitness facilities that are accessible in terms of privacy. In addition, as a student it is difficult for me to afford paying hundreds of dollars on women's only fitness clubs and that also limits my ability to be more active than I am. So I either end up working out at home or picking a time when the weather is nice to go for an outdoor jog or even pick a time when the gym is usually empty. I think more chances will make it easier for me and many other women to stay motivated and committed to staying healthy.

There are no swimming pools for ladies near my area. I would also appreciate gym classes for Muslim woman near my area.

I have a child so it would be great to include physical programs while including children such as a child care.

I can't find a swimming pool for women only at a cheap cost.

Work and school takes my time

time. availability near my house, women only facilities are very rare

Some parents do not allow girls to work out or try out for teams, because guys are participating and/ or watching.

Time

University and stress. It is hard to find time, but I try to

No privacy for me as a Muslim woman and I can't afford the high expenses of a fitness club.

All women facilities for physical activity are not enough.

I find that exercising in groups is helpful to remain committed but again it is difficult to find to a group of women who do such a thing.

I like to do physical activities because we need it is good for our body and is good for our mood.

limited facilities that are ALL WOMEN

Limited access to swimming, v few women-only sessions but there are some, for which I am grateful.

I joined a women-only gym and now they are bringing in male trainers!! I want a female-only environment for working out, Due to religious reasons and personal preference. The club I go to is in Mississauga, I heard on the grapevine it is happening in all the clubs owned by this company. Only other barriers are being v overweight and limited ability due to health reasons, arthritis etc. Have to do low-impact *only* and avoid some moves for fear of injury...

Lack of appropriate women only programs

Have knee and left leg problems so cannot participate in the women only gym classes that I used to because they are too stressful on the joints. Yoga would be a good alternative for stretching and a slower pace, but not worth a membership for. I am finding it really expensive and cannot afford to participate.

No women's-only programs where I would feel most comfortable.

Swimming need women only

It is difficult to find women's only fitness programs and centres

young children and pregnancy

My work schedule, Finding all women's gyms, Finding swimming pools with women-only scheduled swimming, Finding women only sports teams, Finding fitness classes taught by women

Financially

Not a lot of female only private activities available for free or for little charge

Financial

I would like to have exclusively women activity centers, I join friends in one of the expensive women Gyms, and it is above my budget to go more frequent.

I have an autistic child so I work around his needs and those of my two other children.

It is difficult to find women-only facilities.

I prefer all female environments.

Not enough privacy in public areas to comfortably run around and actually have a hard workout session. Also lack of activities available for ladies with my preferences who want to stay fit.

Rec centre and YMCA classes look interesting but they are exposed to the public. I would not do aerobics, Pilates or yoga classes for example in front of men or in public where men can see me. I would want to be dressed without my hijab and I only do that in front of women.

Access to programs for women, at. Reasonable price and flexible schedule.

Distance, not having gyms or areas where its just women

not everywhere there is only woman

I can go to only women's gym because I wear the head scarf. My daughters and I only go to pools for women because we don't uncover our bodies.

Parents too busy.

I'm a Muslim female who wear a hijab and find that I'm restricted to participate in various activities. For example, I'm not able to use public swimming pool due to my own personal clothing choices

religious clothing required

Knee injury!

I find it hard to get up and start my work out, however I find it easy to continue it once I get started. A class would be nice because at this moment there is a serious lack in female led segregated classes, a spinning class or a boxing class would be a lot of fun.

Lack of place where I would feel comfortable, availability of childcare, and closer to home for a reasonable price.

no class or I get to hot since it's always something to do out in the sun

uniform/attire to participate in certain activities

I am looking for more all girl activities.

Price and availability. also, some activities seem to be too short, like an hour of swimming is not enough for a hassle like changing in and out of our clothes.

I wear hijab which requires me to be covered in front of men and this makes it difficult to take part in physical activities.

Location of women only facilities

Rates and prices for women only activities.

Time, location and financial

Can only visit the gym/pool at certain hours because they are mix on regular hours.

Money

places where no men are allowed and I can afford.

female only facilities

Hard to find activities for women only.

Cost

Time

no co-ed facilities

Childcare and women only facilities

Childcare

Childcare

Convenient women only facilities
Women only facilities
Childcare
prefer all women classes and activities
Childcare
Financial
Location of a women only facility
Time
Lack of women only gyms
girls only swimming, girls only basketball, girls only gymnastics, yoga
limited women's only programs
lack of access
we don't have activities with only women
lack of facilities geared to strictly women
Degenerative disc disorder, ruptured disc L5-S1
following Islamic dress code
Swimming in all female environment
Affordable, female only, female instructed programs

Question 7 detailed Responses Appendix B

"Swimming" listed 48 times just on it's own as a comment- have deleted them all and amalgamated here to save space

Swimming available at various hours at various locations
would like to do some of the rec programs but because of hijab concerns not comfortable doing so ie: windows not covered properly, not sure if the instructors are female, I prefer not to wear my hijab when working out.
i would like to be more active and go to the gym but costs, not knowing how to use the machines, who would take care of my baby, finding the time, and finding a place with females only due to the Muslim dress code, make it more difficult
Running, playing badminton and tennis, and doing aerobics with an instructor.
parks and recreation are all co-ed.

Swimming: almost all pools are public and the ones that are women only are
it is not for ladies only

More women's only swimming and gym use.

swimming, women's recreational sports

Swimming! I'm a hijabi and would like to swim more, but there aren't many women's only places, and the ones that do have women's hours have them for 1 or 2 hours maximum.

kickboxing gym

Working out, soccer, swimming,
because there is no area for women only.

Aerobics and swimming for Muslim women in Oakville.

Swimming, there is not a lot of female-only swimming time in Waterloo.

-Gym

-pool

team sports, swimming, karate/martial arts

Swimming, skipping, soccer

Yoga classes. Racquet sports (tennis/ badminton). Basketball. Volleyball. Soccer.

I feel uncomfortable if there are men in the class. Sometimes it's too hot to dress in long sleeves and pants. Tight clothes are not appropriate.

there is no facility for only women

Women fitness

I feel that I will be judged by people who are better than me at that thing, or ill try and wont do well and I'll just embarrass myself.

Due to busy demands of work/family

yoga

aerobic classes(step classes), low impact, high low impact

Aerobics , gym , ping-pong , prenatal activities classes

swimming and Aerobics

Dancing, Aerobics & Tennis

I would like to join the gym but can't afford it

Gyms and swimming pools that are not for women only.

swimming, body fitness, yoga

playing basket ball and volleyball

I would like to do some practicing on treadmill if it's available.

Swimming, Gym, aerobics, yoga

Swimming Gym actv

organized team sports

swimming, no women only pools available

swimming,yoga,gym

gym and swimming

family only gym

basketball, swimming

I can not practice swimming because I wear hijab

Currently not participating because I don't have childcare on weekends and I work full time.

Swimming, absolutely love it but have not been able to participate for years because swimming pools aren't private enough,

Even when they state it is Women Only Swim. The area isn't closed.

Gym, Swimming,

I have not find one that is for woman only

Aerobics and Recreation in general

Activities ONLY for women; like women only swimming for example

because have kids always with me

gum

Dance

I can help from home

Besides swimming, I would like some core, legs sessions like the one offered at the city, and some weight lifting.

swimming, Aerobics and Pilates

Swimming, aerobics, and all indoor activities.

Swimming in the evenings during the week, not weekend.

Just going to a gender specific gym would be nice!

Yoga

I would like to go out and do some activities (e.g. fitness)

Swimming, Basketball, Volleyball.

swimming and gem

I'd like to participate in swimming activities and to obtain a life guard certificate.

Women's only dance classes, boxing classes, swimming is a major one, self defence classes

Swimming, running in a women area only and playing soccer or basketball.

aerobic, swimming, yoga

Swimming because there are not that many places with only girls

I would like to take swimming lessons. But there are male life guards, and male supervisors and coaches.

I want to play basketball, but I can't because I cant find a place to play in.

a women fitness club

swimming and aerobics

Running, kick boxing and Pilates.

I would like to self-defence classes but so far have not been able to find classes that are only held for women.

I like to swim but I can't because of my religion.

Fitness gyms, although they say they are for women, by women, have men trainers...

EXTREMELY limited swimming facilities that are woman only.

Yes and no :-) A lot of classes are co-ed, and/or not properly screened off, I won't go to any venue where passers-by could look in the windows. Again, this is due to religious reasons and personal preference. I am a Muslim woman who wears hijab and am also v overweight, all reasons why I don't want any spectators!

also evenings are a problem for me b/c I have poor night vision for driving. I would prefer lunchtime classes but there is very little available at that time at present

Basketball, soccer, volleyball, ice hockey for older girls (equipment/shorts)

swimming ,,,, I cant wear swim suit

Cannot take part in parks and recs. programs because mixed gender classes, male instructors, open spaces used with no curtains and now unfortunately the community centres that offer women only swimming have mixed gender change rooms?

Aerobics, swimming

More swimming - other than Sunday for an hour swimming that is it.

Exercise classes offered by the Town of Oakville and swimming

Pilates and Yoga

Basketball - Hockey - Football - just not enough consistency in the turnout for these types of sports unfortunately.

yoga, Pilates aerobics

Sports (teams - vball, bball)

-not women only

swimming, indoor badminton, female exercise classes offered through community centre

Yoga & Aerobics

Boxing class, spinning class, hot yoga class. I wear a hijab, and I find it so hard to do any of these classes because they all require you to wear lighter t-shirts and shorts, I can't do this unless the class is segregated and female led. To do any of these classes with a hijab, full pants and a full sleeved shirt is not easy, trust me, I've tried. Over heating is not fun

swimming and kick-boxing

Swimming and exercising.

Swimming, aerobics, volleyball, tennis or badminton, yoga, DANCE!!

I'd like to learn to swim but I've had difficulty finding women only classes. I'd also like to play soccer and the same obstacle exists there.

swimming and fitness

exercising and gymnastics

badminton and ping pong

Weight training

I would like to join a yoga class for just girls.

swimming, exercise classes

all type of sports

women only swimming where no men can see inside

yoga, dance, aqua fit

dance

availability

swimming, gymnastics

boxing