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Physical Activity in the Rural Southwest

Self-Identified Barriers and Facilitators to Walking

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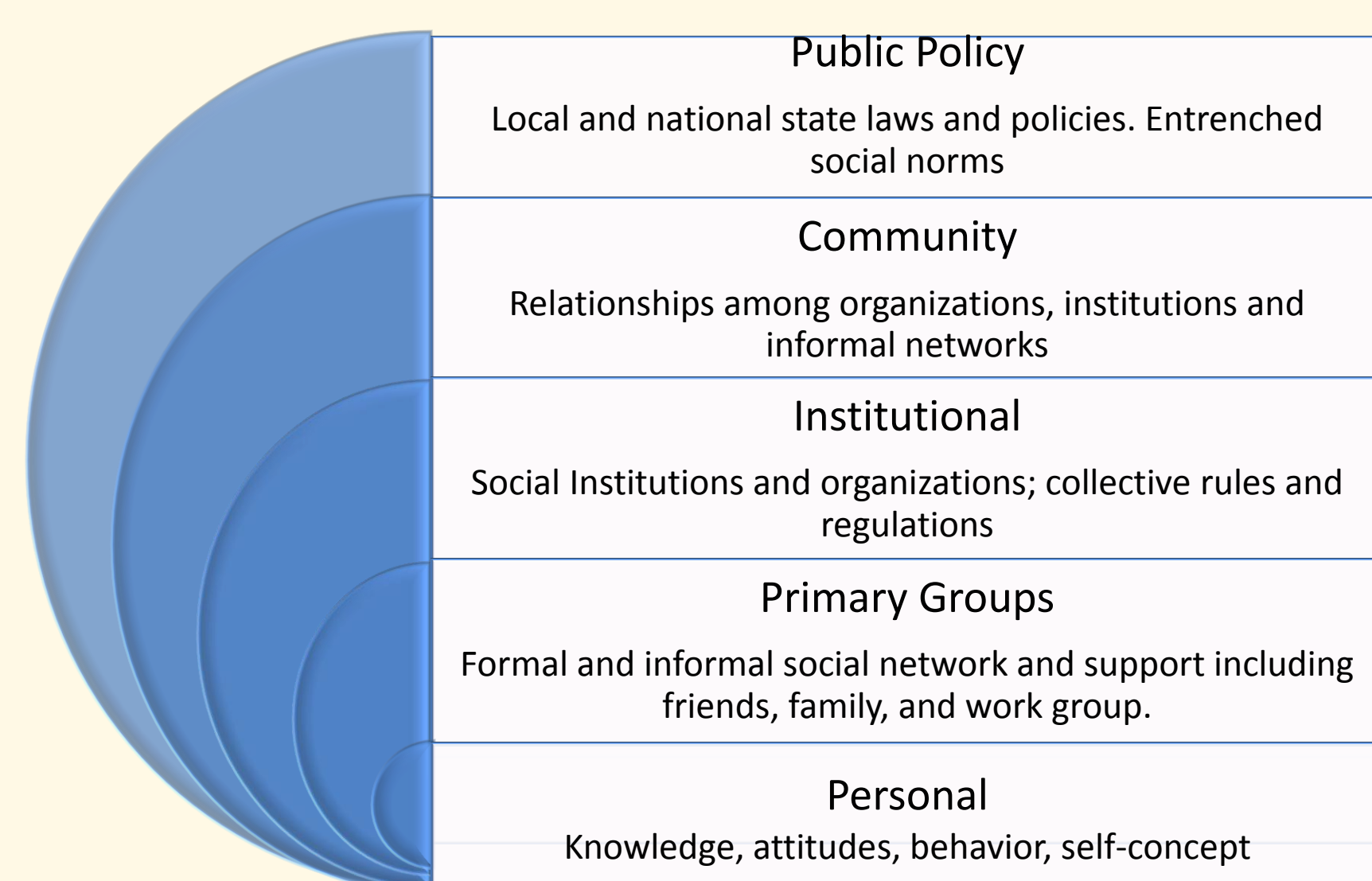
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Abstract

Obesity is a serious health issue and is a primary risk factor for a myriad of chronic diseases. Obesity is rooted in socio-cultural, economic, and political factors, and thus disparities exist in the obesity disease burden. In the United States, poorer and rural populations, as well as Hispanic and American Indian populations, suffer elevated obesity rates. Physical activity is a key obesity and chronic disease prevention and treatment mechanism, and research shows that broad-based, multi-component, community-wide initiatives are effective in increasing physical activity within communities.¹ However, most prevention efforts have been designed for urban, non-Hispanic and non-Native populations. More research is needed in order to create successful prevention programs for rural and diverse communities. This study focuses on Cuba, New Mexico - a rural, under-resourced, and majority Hispanic and American Indian community that suffers a disproportionate chronic disease burden. This study is a component of the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center's evaluation of the VIVA-*Step Into Cuba* initiative, a physical activity-focused prevention program. Data were analyzed from three consecutive years of an annual VIVA-*Step Into Cuba* cross-sectional survey. Nine walking related and demographic variables were analyzed in order to describe differences in barriers and facilitators to physical activity within the Cuba population. Differences in facilitators and barriers by gender and age were identified. The findings of this study provide insight not only in terms of improving the *Step Into Cuba* program, but also in terms of designing more effective rural and minority physical activity interventions.

Context

The Social Context of Disease Prevention Behavior: The Socio Ecological model⁵



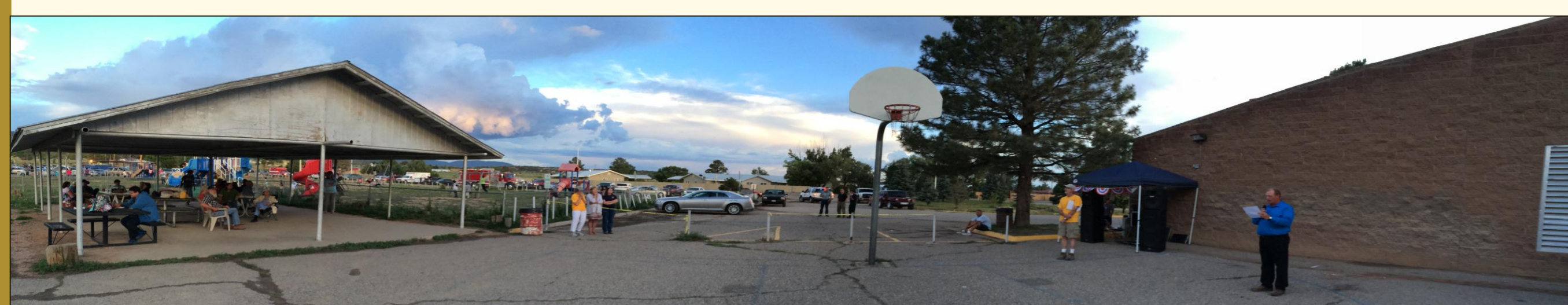
Chronic Disease in Cuba, NM

Health Disparities Indicators ^{1,2}	Cuba, NM	New Mexico	Nationally
Diabetes Death Rate	29.2	27.8	21.5
Heart Disease Prevalence	211.6	203.8	190.9
Stroke Prevalence	45.5	38.2	42.2

*per 100,000 population

Poverty Level in Cuba, NM

Economic Indicators	Cuba, NM	New Mexico	Nationally
Live below poverty line	41% - 85% ³	19% ⁴	14.9% ⁴



Methods

Step Into Cuba General Survey

- An anonymous annual convenience sample.
- Measures individual walking behavior, walking support from family and friends, and opinions on the importance of walking.

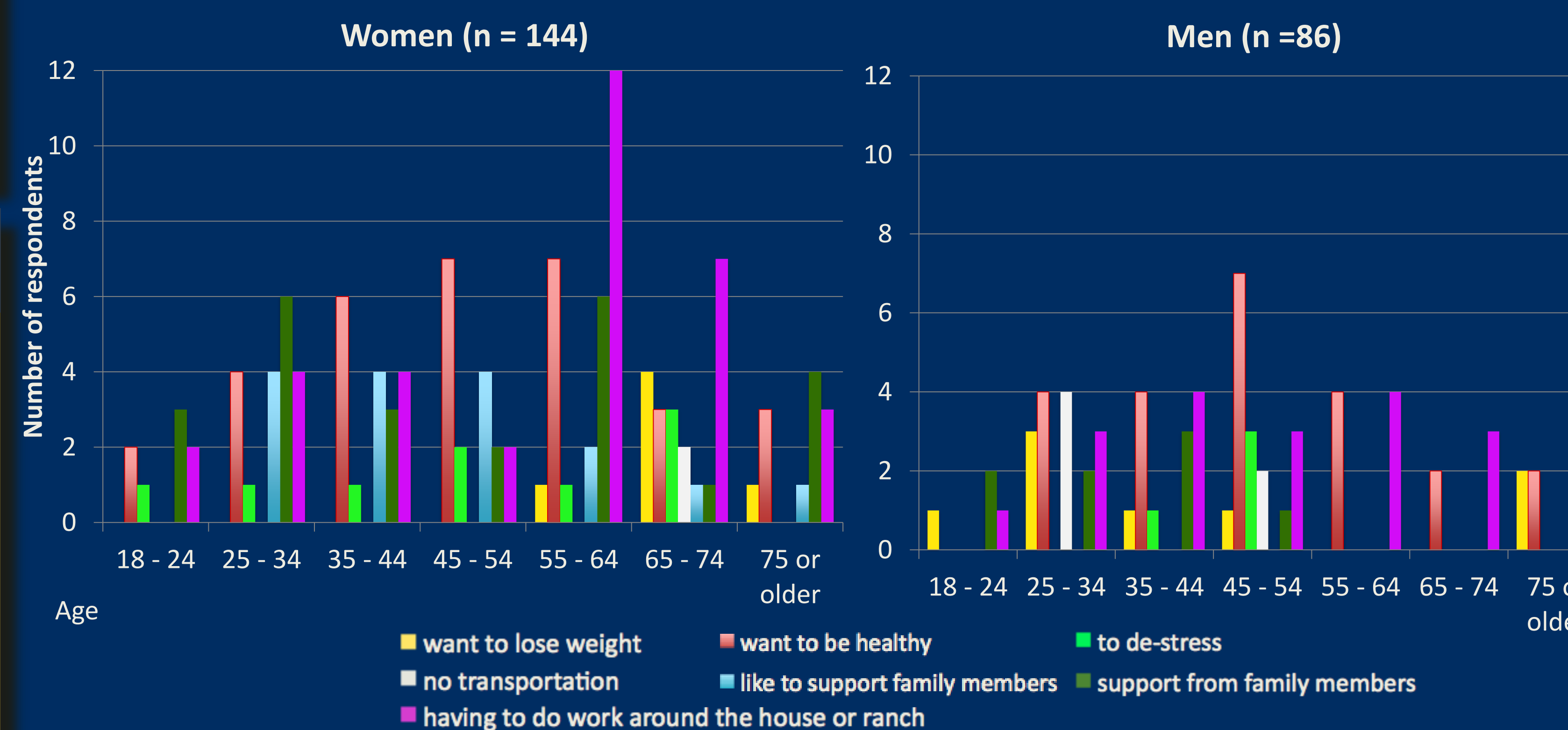
Data Analysis

- 9 demographic and walking attitude variables were cross-analyzed in R and Excel data analysis programs in order to identify and compare self-described walking facilitators and barriers among various demographic groups.
- Three years of survey data were analyzed; sample size n=230.

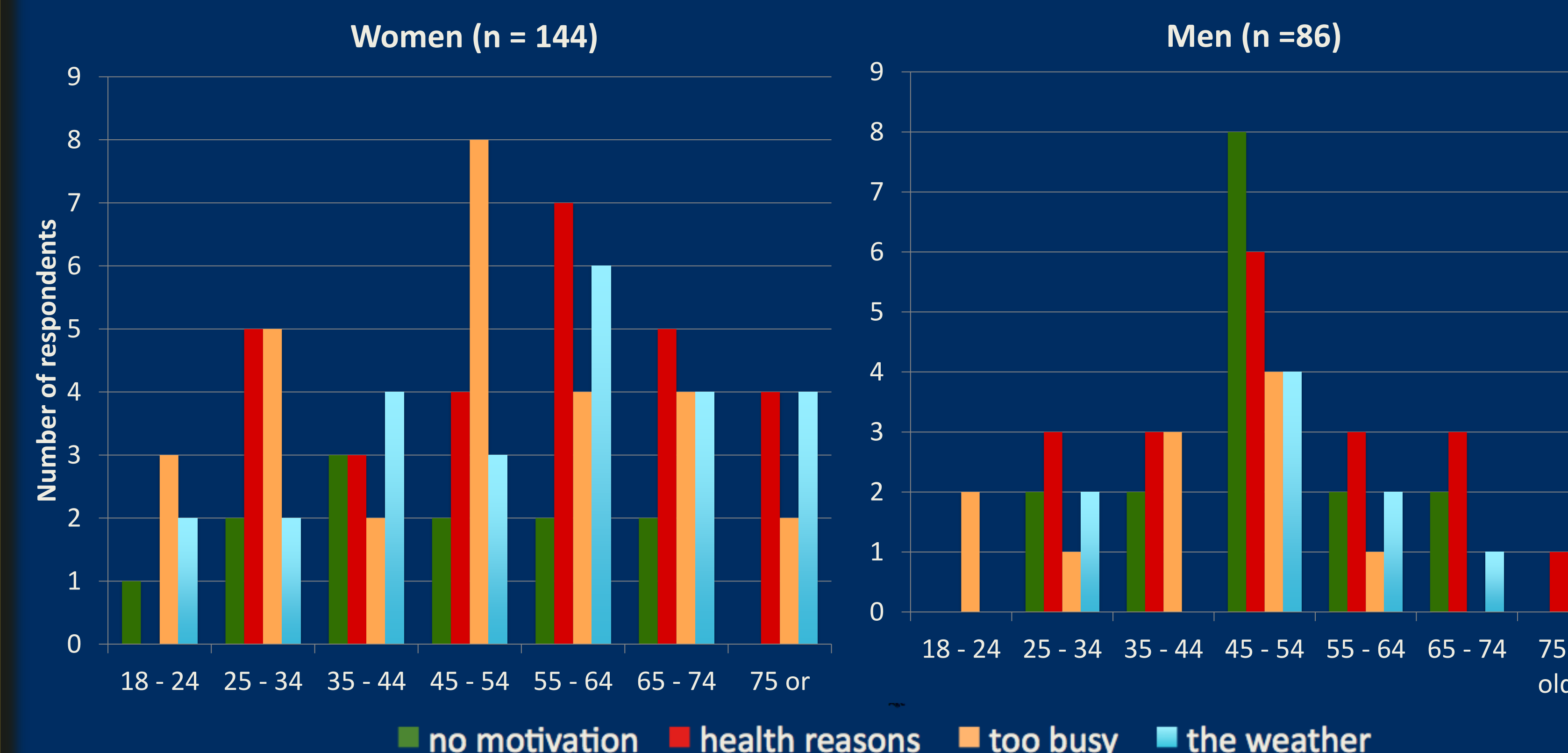


Results

What are some things in your life that help you to be physically active?



What are some things in your life that make it hard to be physically active?



Summary

Self-identified barriers and facilitators to physical activity (namely walking) exhibit variation with respect to individual age and gender.

Women were more inclined to cite family-support related and environmental factors as important barriers and facilitators to physical activity, whereas men were more prone to identify personal factors as key barriers and facilitators. This general theme is supported by the following findings:

- Women of almost all ages cited 'like to support family members' as a facilitator, however, no men cited this.
- Women of all age groups cite 'support from family members' as an important facilitator, whereas only limited numbers of younger men identified this as an important factor.
- Women continually cite all factors throughout all age groups, whereas men (most notably older men) primarily cite only yard and ranch work, a desire to lose weight, and wanting to be healthy as key facilitators.
- Middle-aged men more often cite 'no motivation' as a key barrier.

Other notable findings:

- Young men are uniquely likely to cite a lack of transportation as a physical activity promoter.
- 'The weather' was a consistently cited barrier for both genders and across all age groups, but most notably in older ages.

Future Directions



The results of this study will inform future focus group and interview design, as well as guide future targeted research. This research can help focus the development of targeted outreach to improve the *Step Into Cuba* program.

Recommendations:

- Market physical activity as a family-engaging activity for women
- Market physical activity (walking) as a personal health promotion tool for men.
- Identify ways to elevate the physical activity motivation of middle-aged men
- Improve road and sidewalk access and indoor physical activity venues to reduce weather barriers

References and Acknowledgements

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