

Survey May 2022: Strength and balance awareness – Key findings

This report summarises key findings from a Hampshire County Council survey on awareness and perceived importance of strength and balance exercises as means of living healthier lives for longer.

The research was conducted via Hampshire Perspectives: The County Council's online residents' forum – a group of people who share their views to help the County Council to shape services and make decisions. Typically, forum members are older (55+) and more engaged with Council affairs.

The Survey was completed late April 2022 by 393 respondents online.

Key findings were as follows:

- 1. Low engagement with the topic despite it was introduced as “Leading healthy and independent lives for longer”.** It didn't engage as many Hampshire Perspectives respondents as usual. Even for those who completed the survey, strength and balance exercises were not generally regarded as important, and only around half the respondents surveyed claim to carry them out on a weekly basis. There is mixed belief of when to take up strength and balance exercises
- 2. The lack of awareness and misconception were seen in some respondents.** The concept and terminology 'Strength and Balance' are not familiar to all, and 'strength', can be taken to imply more difficult exercises (e.g. weightlifting), making activity feel less desirable. 64% of respondents thought walking counts as a strength and balance activity.
- 3. Majority of people had false belief that other activity is enough and generally seen it as more important.** Most people considered activities such as walking, swimming, and cycling as strength and balance, many also include daily activities such as housework, gardening, etc. Therefore, they feel that they are undertaking sufficient exercise if doing these. Similarly, 'Doing other things instead' was a key reason for many not undertaking the target strength and balance activities monthly basis.
- 4. Leisure centres are a clear port of call for those seeking information,** but for a few there are barriers around perceived cost and the suitability of person.

The overall findings are being used to establish ideas/content to raise more awareness about 'Strength and Balance' concept and exercise among older adults as part of Live longer better project.