



# Australian public libraries and the delivery of a strength program (Geri-Fit) to older adults: A multi-site case study

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# Purpose of the research

Explore: To what extent are Australian public libraries effective settings for engaging older adults in physical activity programs to support healthy ageing?

more specifically....

To develop a physical activity delivery model specific to Australian public libraries and our older adult population, i.e. requirements for delivery, factors that drive engagement etc.

# Participating public libraries summary

14 Library services (16 locations) completed the study

**Table 1**

*Study 2 public library services by state and location type*

	WA	SA	NT	VIC	NSW	ACT	QLD	TAS	Total
Metro	5			1	1	1		1	9
Regional		1		2	1				4
Rural				1					1
Total	5	1		5	2	1		1	14

- Engaged 188 participants, with 88% female and 12% male representation.
- The average age of participants was 72.6 years, ranging from 60 to 88 years old.
- Classes had an average size of 12 participants, with attendance ranging from 5 to 30 individuals, and a remarkable average attendance of 20 out of 24 classes.
- Notably, 86% of participants were existing library members, while 55% had never attended any library programs or events.
- Among the participants, 59% reported having arthritis, 14% had heart disease, and 17% were managing diabetes.

# Older adult participant summary





# Geri-Fit program statistics

**Improved mobility:** 73% of participants reported improved mobility since starting the program.

**Enhanced mood:** 95% found that the program lifted their spirits or put them in a better mood.

**General wellbeing:** 82% reported improved general well-being, including improved energy levels (67%) and reduced daily pain (60%).

**Strength improvement:** 81% of participants reported that their overall strength had gotten better.

**Fear of falling:** 45% reported lessening their fear of falling down since starting the program.

**Program satisfaction:** 94% would continue with the program if offered, with 99% saying they would recommend it to family and friends.

# Common themes from participants



**Overall, the data underscores the importance of tailored exercise programs for older adults that focus on physical health and foster social connections and emotional well-being within a community environment.**

**Library environment:** the positive aspects of the library environment for the program, such as its suitability, welcoming staff, no judgements and convenient facilities, were highlighted by participants.

**Positive social interaction:** Many participants highlight the importance of socialising and forming friendships during the Geri-Fit classes. They appreciate the camaraderie and supportive atmosphere created by their peers and instructors.

**Physical benefits:** Participants report various physical improvements, including increased strength, flexibility, and mobility. Many note improvements in specific areas such as shoulder flexibility, leg strength, and posture.

**Mental wellbeing:** Engaging in regular exercise and social activities positively impacts participants' mental well-being. They report feeling happier, more positive, and more energised as a result of participating in the program.

**Community engagement:** Participants express gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the Geri-Fit program, highlighting the importance of community-based initiatives that promote health and well-being among older adults.

**Challenges and limitations:** Some participants mention challenges such as pre-existing health conditions, injuries, or limitations in maintaining exercise routines outside of the group setting. However, they recognise the value of the program in helping them overcome these challenges and improve their overall quality of life.

# What the participants said:

“I feel so much better both physically and mentally. I enjoyed the small group setting and met some lovely people. “

“I think that the library is the perfect setting for Geri-Fit. The staff are particularly welcoming. The venue has parking on site. Plus I can use the library facilities before or after the program.”

“I feel the organisers were amazing, professional empathetic to the different levels of fitness in our group. Thankyou for organising this course. “

“Non-judgement environment... a fun and positive environment.”

“Geri-Fit has meant we have met and spoken to people who want to prevent the problems that getting older brings to all of us. The last three months has been well worth while and we hope to keep up the Geri-Fit program at home.”

“I thought the separate room at library was a good space. Group exercising is something I enjoyed and looked forward to. I find gyms daunting and I feel out of place at my age and ability.”





# Thank you

Make tomorrow better.

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