

Wigfield, Dan

University of Waterloo

Ryan Snelgrove

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Who is Climbing? Understanding Participants Within Climbing Escalade Canada

In order to ensure that effective programs and partnerships continue to be established during the rapid rise in the popularity of climbing, Climbing Escalade Canada (CEC) has sought to develop a better understanding of members within the Canadian Sport Climbing Community. In partnership with researchers at the University of Waterloo, an anonymous online survey was created and launched during the Spring of 2021. The survey captured respondents' motivations for climbing, constraints to their participation, as well as perception of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the climbing community.

A total of 844 survey responses were analyzed. Findings revealed the gender and racial identity of climbers holds significant impact on their motivations to climb as well as any constraints to participation that they may face. For example, women reported being significantly more motivated by the social aspects of climbing compared to other participation groups. When constraints to participation were considered respondents from minority groups were more likely to perceive climbing as a high-cost sport which has limited their participation opportunities.

In addition to the motivations and constraints to participating in climbing, perceptions of EDI within the climbing community were also significantly impacted by gender and racial identity. Specifically, women, gender minorities, and racialized groups all noted climbing experiences being negatively impacted by a fear of discrimination, exclusion, and lower sense of being accepted. It is important to note that many respondents shared positive experiences regarding EDI that are taking place throughout the climbing community; however, most climbers acknowledged that there is room for improvement regarding efforts to make climbing more welcoming to minority groups.

The findings of the survey will be employed by the CEC's Diversity and Inclusion Committee to develop a recommended action plan for the CEC Board of Directors and executive staff in order to address participation the barriers highlighted by respondents.
