



Staying Active, Staying Strong!

A census of exercise programs for Older Adults in Northern Sydney

Summary

The availability of affordable face to face exercise groups for adults aged 60+ has reduced since COVID. There are notable variations across the region.

Only 25% of local programs were listed on the NSW Active and Healthy Website.

Recommendations:

Organisations and fitness program providers from across Northern Sydney need to work collaboratively with their communities to understand the local needs to ensure equitable access of affordable exercise programs which are easy to find and make use of the Active and Healthy Website.

NSW Policy Alignment

Ageing Well in NSW:
Seniors Strategy 2021–31⁵

Focus Area 3. Staying
safe, active and healthy

For more information about the
Healthy Ageing Program:
nshealthpromotion.com.au

Nslhd-healthpromotion@health.nsw.gov.au



Why it matters?

Regular exercise for older adults promote improved physical and mental well-being, enhancing mobility, balance and overall quality of life.

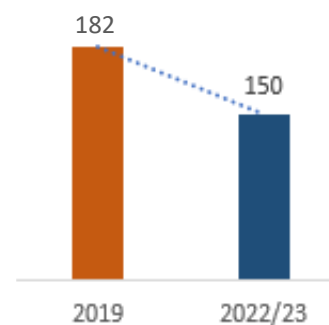
What did we do?

In November 2022, we counted and mapped group exercise programs targeting older adults aged 60+ which were delivered in Northern Sydney. We compared findings from a similar mapping completed in 2019 to identify service gaps, geographical areas and populations of need.

We included face to face group exercise programs provided by the private sector, through local councils or other community organisations. We included programs costing less than \$20 per casual class and those with an up-front payment of less than \$50.

Findings for the Northern Sydney Region

- Available exercise programs for older adults have reduced from 182 programs (pre COVID, 2019) to 150 programs across the region. A 17.6% reduction. Program listings can be viewed on an online [map](#).
- Of these programs, only 25% were found on the NSW Active and Healthy website – ‘Find an Exercise Class’ [directory](#).
- Only 38% of the included programs met the NSW Health criteria¹ for falls prevention program.
- Most programs in the region were strength and balance, gentle exercise, dance and aqua. In addition to the 150 face to face exercise programs, sixteen online/virtual exercise programs were identified.
- A 2022 needs assessment² conducted by the Northern Sydney Population Health Promotion team found that program offerings were impacted by a shortage of certified exercise and fitness leaders locally and barriers in accessing affordable venues suitable for older adults.



A census of exercise programs for older adults in Northern Sydney

Recommendations

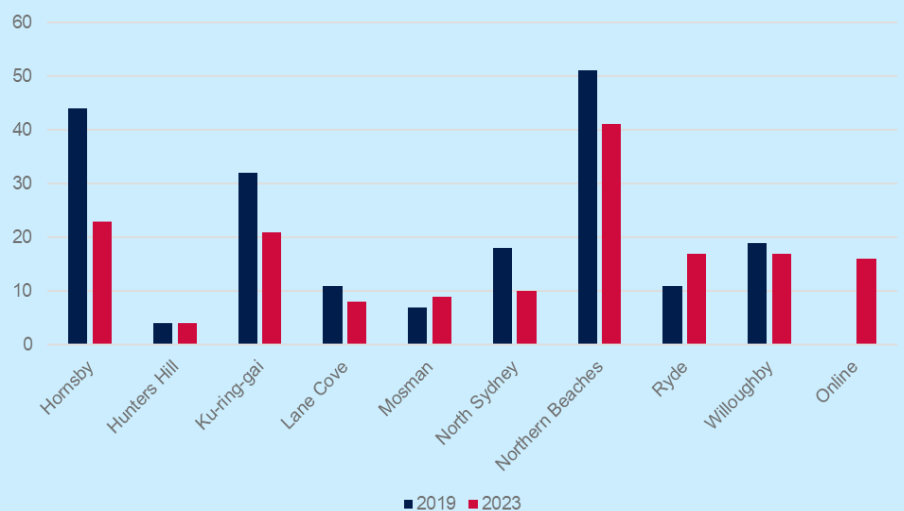
These findings highlight a need for government organisations and the industry to work together to:

- Further understand geographical areas which have lost exercise programs over COVID and how local needs can be met.
- Increase the number of exercise listings on the 'NSW Active and Healthy' Directory to help older adults access up to date information on exercise programs in Northern Sydney .
- Advocate and support exercise providers to offer evidence based Strength & Balance, functional exercises which can reduce the risk of falls and maintain physical function.

Supporting Information

Exercise Programs Listings 2023 vs 2019 by Local Government Area (LGA)

The graph (right) summarises the overall change in the number of exercise program offerings between 2019 and 2022/23 in each Local Government Areas (LGA).



Distribution of all Exercise Classes per 1,000 Person 65+ by Local Government Area (LGA)

To further understand where the current distribution of exercise programs and geographical gaps in the Northern Sydney Region, the listings were overlaid with the exercise groups delivered by the Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Healthy Lifestyle³ programs.

The table, right, is an analysis of exercise programs offered against the number of adults aged of 65+ by Local Government Area (LGA).

LGA	#Persons ⁴ 65+	Healthy Lifestyle ³ Classes	Other Classes	Total Classes	Classes per 1.000 persons 65+ years
Lane Cove	5,666	9	8	17	3.0
Hunter's Hill	3,234	4	4	8	2.5
Mosman	6,199	2	9	11	1.8
Northern Beaches	47,951	30	41	71	1.5
Hornsby	27,458	16	23	39	1.4
Willoughby	12,085	0	17	17	1.4
Ryde	19,445	9	17	26	1.3
Ku-ring-gai	23,997	11	21	32	1.3
North Sydney	11,493	0	10	10	0.9
Total	157,528	81	150*	231	1.4

1. NSW Active and Healthy [Inclusion criteria](#) for falls prevention exercise programs. (Accessed Nov 2022)
2. NSLHD Population Health Promotion (2022) Healthy Lifestyle Needs Assessment June 2022. Internal Report
3. [Healthy Lifestyle - Healthy Lifestyle - Northern Sydney Local Health District \(nsw.gov.au\)](#) Term 1 2023.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census data
5. [NSW Government \(2021\) Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-31](#)

Suggested citation:

NSLHD Population Health Promotion (2023) A census of exercise programs for older adults in Northern Sydney. available: nshealthpromotion.com.au

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