



## Changing National Health Values of Russians: Perception of Physical Culture and Sports



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### Keywords

*health opportunities;  
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### Abstract

The publication is aimed at studying the attitude of middle-aged and older Russians to physical culture and sports. The scope of the results embraces studying the dynamics of perception of physical culture and sports in the minds of middle-aged and older Russians. The research subject is studying the dynamic changes in the system of value consciousness of Russians. The method of obtaining empirical data includes focused online interviews, traditional analysis of documents, including legislative acts of the Russian Federation. Conducting focused online interviews with respondents from Nizhny Novgorod and Volgograd is due to the conditions of self-isolation of Russians during the study period. The result of the study is presented as a description of the specifics of the perception of physical culture and sports by middle-aged and older Russians. The scientific novelty of the publication lies in the author's understanding of the influence of self-isolation on changes in the values of Russians in the perception of physical culture and sports worthiness by middle-aged and older people in Russian regions. During the interviewing online focus groups, respondents' suggestions on how to encourage middle-aged and older Russians to engage in physical culture and sports were revealed.

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## 1 Introduction

In many ways, in Russia, the problems of perception and active participation in physical culture and sports are considered the prerogative of people of younger generations. For the most part, this is due to health opportunities, the availability of free time, and the absence of multi-level responsibilities in the family (Khetagurova et al., 2018; Kryukova & Khetagurova, 2020; Kryukova et al., 2021; Mosalev et al., 2018). The Decree of the President of Russia "On the National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2030", dated July 21, 2020 (President of the Russian Federation, 2020), includes the list of main goals, namely, "Increasing the proportion of citizens, systematically engaged in physical culture and sports to 70%", "Preservation of the population, health, and well-being of people", and providing "Opportunities for self-actualization and talent development". That is, the role of physical culture and sports in the life of Russians is given importance at the highest level, which is indicated in documents and materials of various levels (President of the Russian Federation, 2002, 2009, 2012, 2018, 2020; VTsiOM, 2019).

## 2 Research Methodology

When working on the manuscript, the materials of three focused online interviews, conducted in July 2020 were used, namely, one online focus interview, conducted with respondents from Volgograd aged 38 to 54 years (a total of nine respondents were interviewed, including six women and three men); two focus online interviews were conducted with respondents from Nizhny Novgorod (a total of fourteen respondents aged 61 to 73 years, including eleven women and three men). Using the focused online interview method (classically focused interview techniques) is conditioned by the self-isolation of Russians during the study period. Using a qualitative method of sociological research (online-focused interview) allowed achieving the maximum depth of the problem perception.

Besides, methods of secondary analysis of documents were used based on a comprehensive analysis of diverse documentary sources. To analyze the problem at the initial stage, the traditional method of document analysis was used (analysis of legislative acts, publications, dissertations, scientific reports, and other information sources on the research topic). The purpose of the study was to identify the attitude to physical culture and sports of middle-aged and older people in the regions of the Russian Federation (Tesser, 1978; Saqlain et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2020).

## 3 Results and Discussions

### 3.1 Results

*Results on the perception of physical culture and sports by respondents from Volgograd aged from 38 to 54*

It should be noted that from the very beginning the respondents demonstrate a difference in the perception of the concepts of "physical culture and sports". "Physical culture is associated with the tone of the body, daily

activities, while sports are unreasonable loads causing harm". That is, they emphasize the therapeutic, beneficial nature of physical culture and the risks associated with sports, including professional ones. People emphasize reasonableness (moderation) in physical activities mainly to maintain health and vitality (Deev et al., 1998; Gugushvili et al., 2018).

While talking about the functions of sports in the lives of middle-aged people, respondents meaningfully called the disciplinary effect, the relaxation effect, and the supporting function ("*sport disciplines you*", "*keeps fit*", and "*allows resting*"). It is also noted that it is more difficult to play sports in middle and old age than in youth. In the associative series of ideas about sports, rather, as physical culture (at the level of everyday perception), the most often associations noted by respondents were "*self-overcoming*", "*health benefits*", "*keeping the body in shape*", etc.

Respondents noted the reasons why they and people, in general, did not engage in physical culture and sports, in particular in Volgograd, in the city of their residence: "*There are no mass playgrounds in Volgograd, within walking distance from places of residence (no horizontal bars, exercise machines are available). The territory next to our house was fenced, there are no simulators like in Moscow, no one takes care about sports sites for people in Volgograd, and thus people don't do sports*". That is, one of the reasons is the objective lack of conditions for doing sports. Besides, respondents named "*laziness*" as the most common reason for lack of physical culture, as well as "*lack of opportunities to do physical culture and sports for free*". "*Previously, there were free near-home sports sites. They are not available today*".

Interests in the field of physical culture and sports of this age group are quite diverse: from figure skating and skiing to yoga, swimming, and game sports (Sayfullaevich, 2021; Kusumajaya, 2021). Many respondents are often "passive consumers of sports", as they mostly watch television broadcasts of competitions without doing sports or physical culture on their own. Chess and Nordic walking were called possible real options for doing physical culture. The majority of respondents note physical activities in the country, the so-called "*dacha sport*", that is, physical loads, associated with planting plants in the country and growing crops (Spence & Lee, 2003; Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005).

Respondents note that at an age closer to the elderly, it is already more difficult to exercise independently, as certain health problems arise, such as "vascular problems", etc. Some of the respondents do morning exercises. Besides, the injuries were noted among the possible disadvantages of doing sports, in particular, football, boxing, weightlifting, volleyball, and hockey. Injury risk is noted as the main drawback of sports (Carchi et al., 2021). Recalling their sports activities, respondents noted such emotions as "*stress*", and "*fear of injury*". In contrast to the shortcomings, it was noted that sport educates, develops endurance, leadership qualities, responsibility, purposefulness, as well as teamwork in people (Finch, 2006; Pearson et al., 2006).

Respondents note that among their acquaintances and friends, only some at this age people have retained athletic activities and play sports regularly (football, table tennis). They noted that "the older a person is, the less important sport is for him." "*If a person of 45-50 years is not accustomed to sports, is not involved in sports, he will not engage in his old age. If he is accustomed to sports, then he will continue doing physical activities. However, most people don't do sports*".

When assessing how the attitude to sports has changed in Russia compared to the time frame 10-15 years ago, respondents noted that both young people and older age groups have generally become more involved in sports (Coutts & Duffield, 2010; Widana et al., 2021). Almost unanimously, respondents noted that sport is fashionable now: "*Sport is fashionable now*", "*The president is sporty and the country is sporty*". The respondents note international trends in the actualization of fashion for sports. Respondents noted the emergence of new sports that have replaced outdated ones: "*Sports games, such as gorodki and lapta have become obsolete, replaced by fashionable yoga and Pilates*"; "*New winter sports have appeared, such as bobsleigh and luge sport*". In general, respondents characterize themselves as people interested in sports, they watch TV sports programs, competitions, and try to lead a healthy lifestyle, believe that ideally "*sports should be accessible to everyone*".

*Results on the perception of physical culture and sports by respondents from Nizhny Novgorod aged from 61 to 73.*

The perception of physical culture and sports by respondents of the older age group is largely related to memories, as well as mainly with associations "*Sport is life*"; "*Movement is life*". The perception of sports is largely associated with the lives of children and grandchildren: "*I remember the Soviet Union when we could*

*send our child to any circle. And this was both sports, and physical culture, and everything. Now it's just a profanation".*

The difference between the concepts of "sport" and "physical culture" for older Russians is largely differentiated. The perception of sports is hampered by external factors: *"For people of my circle, physical culture is not always available. It is hard to get out, start, go to a fitness club"... "Sometimes the reason is banal – there is no suitable sports uniform, sports shoes; the contact with the coach is not always established; sometimes elderly people are just shy of their physical condition associated with excess weight ..., sometimes they are not motivated enough".* External reasons often come to the fore, because of which an individual deprives himself of the opportunity to play sports. It is also noted that many sections that are currently functioning are not adapted to the needs of older people. To play sports, many older people need a partner, a person who would additionally motivate and stimulate them to practice sports. The same concerns "the need for an experienced coach who would help to start a sports life".

Many of the interviewed older people go to the pool, do yoga or Nordic walking, or do gymnastics at home.

Older respondents expressed quite interesting opinions regarding the motivation for sports: *"Sport prevents joint disease"; "The main thing is not to overdo it".* Some respondents also expressed certain wishes, associated with sports: "I would like it to be like in Moscow. There is an Active Longevity program in Moscow, where they are engaged with pensioners, allocate special halls". Some of the respondents noted a desire to master the game of chess in the future.

Similarly, as the representatives of middle age, the elderly respondents note the popularization of physical culture and sports in contemporary Russia, the activation of the sports movement, the increased need for sports activities primarily among young Russians. Respondents living in Nizhny Novgorod noted that their city is sporty: *"Certainly, it is sporty; a lot has changed for the better in recent years. People began to pay attention to sports".*

Regarding the comparison between Russia and the world community, respondents noted that there is still something to strive for to be called Russia a sports country. Many of the interviewed older people associated themselves with sports fans (VTsIOM, 2019). To develop physical culture and sports, some respondents suggested popularizing sports on TV; introducing GTO standards into school curricula (as it was before), and many other innovations.

### 3.2 Discussion

The perception of physical culture and sports traditionally depends on many factors, such as belonging to a certain social stratum, age, attitudes to lifestyle, the standard of living, and level of vital activity (Drobyshev et al., 2017; Drobyshev et al., 2017; Fomicheva, 2021; Kryukova et al., 2017; Kryukova et al., 2018; Tanatova et al., 2020). There are also set of factors, namely, social, demographic, physical, cultural, spiritual, economic, etc. that traditionally influence the perception of physical culture and sports by a particular person (Dusenko et al., 2016; Ilina et al., 2016; Kryukova et al., 2021; Rabilero et al., 2020).

According to VTsIOM (2019), the proportion of older Russians (over 60 years old), self-organizing physical culture or sports, is relatively high (36%). For comparison, the situation in Russia in 2002 is described in detail in some documents, particularly in "On increasing the role of physical culture and sports in the formation of a healthy lifestyle of Russians". Changes in the perception of physical culture and sports in the value consciousness of Russians need dynamic study of this issue due to their mobility in the public consciousness and the importance of the studied issues in general. The significance of this problem is realized and postulated at the state level.

## 4 Conclusion

According to the results of the study, it can be noted that the perception of physical culture and sports by older age groups is mainly limited to the minimum procedures necessary to maintain health, especially in the regions of Russia. This is largely due to the lack of the opportunity to engage in physical culture and sports for free in courtyards, stadiums, and swimming pools (Kryukova et al., 2019; Ushakov et al., 2020). The conducted survey revealed a need to implement free state programs (similar to the Moscow program "Longevity") in the

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regions of Russia. In many ways, the popularization of physical culture and sports in the older age groups of Russians proceeds due to television viewing of sports events held in Russian cities.

Respondents generally note that much more needs to be done so that Russia could be called a sports country. According to the majority of respondents, it is possible and desirable to revive long-lost traditions and practices, such as GTO standards, as well as to introduce a mandatory minimum of physical activity for schoolchildren and students. Many respondents in the older age groups noted the need for external motivation to start sports activity. This circumstance should be taken into account when organizing sports events for these age categories.

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