

# Continuers, Re-kindlers, and Late Starters: A Profile of Masters Athletes and their Experiences in Sport

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## Background & Purpose

- Masters athletes train and compete in sport for older adults (Reaburn & Dascombe, 2008), and are exemplars of successful ageing.
- Participation in competitive sport *may* provide benefits such as meeting new friends and giving meaning to life (Dionigi et al., 2011; Ogles & Masters, 2000; Smith & Storandt, 1997).
- However, existing research on the profile and experiences of Masters athletes is largely limited to the physical domain.



- The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived physical, social, psychological, and cognitive benefits of competitive sport for adults aged 50+.
- Research questions:
  1. What is the profile of Masters athletes?
  2. What are the perceived benefits associated with training for, and competing in, Masters sport?

## Methodology

- In-person, semi-structured interviews with Masters athletes ( $n = 19$  women, 21 men).
- Participants ranged in age from 50 to 85 years.
- Open and emergent coding was undertaken independently and then collaboratively.

## Profile of Masters Athletes

- Train and compete in individual and team sports (e.g., swimming, pickleball, basketball, athletics, dragon boating, slo-pitch, race-walking.)
- Compete at the local, provincial, national, and international events.
- Train/practice 3 to 5 times a week, for 45 minutes to 2 hours.
- Masters athletes are continuers in sport, re-kindlers after an absence, or late starters participating in sport for the first time.

## Key Benefits



### SOCIAL

- Family, friends
- e.g., stronger relationships, larger group of friends, closer with children



### PHYSICAL

- Overall health, strength, energy
- e.g., improved strength, more energy for day-to-day activities



### COGNITIVE

- Improved mindfulness
- e.g., feeling of being more awake, having a clearer mind, improved problem solving



### PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Improved sense of well-being, increased self-confidence, having a purpose in life
- e.g., feeling happier and enjoying life more, a better sense of self



## Implications

- This study contributes to the development of an interdisciplinary framework of enablers, constraints, and benefits of Masters sport participation.
- The perceived benefits illustrate that Masters sport may be promoted as a positive outlet for successful ageing, regardless of one's previous or recent experience in sport.

## Sport and Social Impact Research Group (SSIRG)

