



Peterborough Rowing Club

Evaluation of PeterboroughROWS

Final Report on Year 3 Evaluation Findings

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1. Introduction

Overview of PeterboroughROWS

This report documents the third and final year of the results of PeterboroughROWS, a three-year program conducted by the Peterborough Rowing Club (PRC) with financial support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. PeterboroughROWS is designed to benefit residents of the City and County of Peterborough, from 12 years old to 80+ who are new or returning to recreational rowing. Inclusivity is a priority and the program open to everyone.

PeterboroughROWS includes two main components: 1) outreach to new rowers; and, 2) a recreational rowing program for youth and adults in Peterborough that includes both training and on-the-water rowing experience. The program is designed to promote active lifestyles by delivering fun, inclusive and easy-to-access rowing activities.

As a late-entry sport, most people have not had the experience of rowing as a sport or recreational activity. PeterboroughROWS allows people to try rowing and makes rowing accessible to new and less experienced rowers from all different groups. By providing a high-quality experience, the PRC is working to ensure that new rowers will continue with rowing as a healthy and fun outdoor activity. The youth and student outreach component of the program is another initiative by the PRC to promote ongoing engagement in rowing and engage individuals in an activity in which they can participate throughout their life.

Spring and Summer programming for both youth and adults includes three main components:

- Learn to Row (LTR) – Introductory programs
- Return to Row (RTR) – More advanced programs
- Try it Days – single day sessions for groups

In 2023, week-long junior camps were held and the number of Try it Days was reduced.

Adult programming also includes an Adult Rowing League, which is open to anyone who has rowing experience and wants to row for fitness, health and fun.

Outreach activities of PeterboroughROWS targeted intermediate and secondary school students as a priority group. The school component of the program provides high-quality instruction in a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment. The program, which features in-class instruction by qualified coaches using rowing machines, streams rowers into activities that are appropriate to their age and rowing experience.

School programming in Spring and Fall 2023 included a gym rowing program for students in grades 7 and 8 at eight intermediate schools and for older students at one high school. The objective is to introduce new rowers to a fun and challenging physical activity. In-class sessions were held again as planned in Year 3 following the first year (2021-22) during which sessions were conducted with online instruction because of restrictions related to Covid-19.

Objectives of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation of PeterboroughROWS is to provide information about the program that will allow PRC to optimize outreach, coaching, and participant retention to increase the number of people who are participating in youth and adult recreational rowing activities. There also is an expectation that results of the evaluation and the lessons learned can be applied more widely to help increase the number of Ontarians actively involved in rowing.

The evaluation also is designed to assess the extent to which PeterboroughROWS is achieving four main program outcomes:

- Increased youth and adult participation in rowing programs.
- Participants' ongoing engagement in rowing (through exposure to a program with high-quality coaching in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment).
- Increase in participants' overall levels of physical activity.
- Development of positive attitudes about rowing for life-long recreation and sport.

2. Evaluation Methodology

Data collection methodology

The evaluation results are based on six data sources:

Quantitative data (primarily):

1. Administrative data (on program participation and participant characteristics)
2. Program participant survey (post-program online survey)
3. In-school gym rowing session participant survey (a short survey designed as an add-on to the OTF 2-page survey of all student participants in school sessions)

Qualitative data:

4. PRC staff interviews
5. Youth competitive rower focus group discussion

Data collection instruments used to collect Year 3 data, including participant surveys and interview guides, are consistent with the instruments used for Years 1 and 2.

A list of performance measures by data source is presented in Appendix A.

Participant Survey sample characteristics

In 2023, there were a total of 121 registrations for adult and junior recreational rowing programs. This represented a total of 101 unique program registrants, as some individuals registered for more than one program and a few adults registered for more than one junior participant.

The invitation to complete the online survey was sent to these 101 unique program registrants. As the registrants for junior participants typically were parents, these adults were asked to assist with survey completion.

The survey was conducted in October - November following the 2023 rowing season.

A total of 45 program participants completed the survey, for an overall response rate of 45%. The response rate was higher for juniors (48%) than for adults (43%).

Year 3 survey sample characteristics are as follows. The figures represent the numbers in the sample and the percentage for each sub-category (with the total for each characteristic summing to 100%)

Gender:

- Female = 22 (49%)
- Male = 22 (49%)
- Non-binary = 1 (2%)

Adult or Junior:

- Adult = 30 (67%)
- Junior = 15 (33%)

Rowing experience:

- Previous experience rowing on the water = 27 (42%)
- No previous experience = 18 (40%)

Of those with previous rowing experience, 82% had rowed at the PRC before: 52% in 2022 PRC rowing programs and 30% in a previous year.

The Participant Survey, annotated with the overall statistics, is presented in Appendix B of this report.

Staff and volunteer interviews

Five interviews were completed with PRC staff. All interviews were completed by telephone or video link (Zoom).

Junior competitive rower focus group

There were four participants in the junior competitive rower focus group. The discussion lasted for 75 minutes and covered a variety of topics related to PRC rowing programs and their rowing experience.

School survey

The school survey questions were not administered to students in 2023 because sessions were held in middle schools to participants in grades 7 and 8. The PRC survey questions were last administered to 76 students at two high schools in 2022. These results were presented in the Year 2 evaluation report.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1 PeterboroughROWS participant profile

With the exception of Junior Learn to Row and Return to Row programs, which were not held in 2023, participation in recreational rowing programs overall was stable or increased slightly from the previous two years.

Program participation – In 2023, there were 121 registrations in recreational programs including Adult programs and Junior Camps and Rowing League.

- Combined adult program registrations in 2023 increased by 7% compared to 2022 (88 and 82, respectively), and by 66% compared to 2021 (88 and 53, respectively).
- Junior participation overall decreased in 2023, by 39% compared to 2022 (33 and 54, respectively), and by 51% compared to 2021 (33 and 67, respectively). This decrease reflects to change to camps and not having junior LRT and RTR programs in 2023. Junior Rowing League participation decreased in 2023 to 12 participants compared to 19 in 2022 and 18 in 2021.

Recreational program participation: 2021 to 2023

Program Type	Registration Numbers		
	2021	2022	2023
Adult Learn to Row (LTR)	28	45	42
Adult Return to Row (RTR)	10	21	26
Adult Rowing League	15	16	20
Junior Learn to Row	31	20	0
Junior Return to Row	18	15	0
Junior Camp	na	na	21
Junior Rowing League	18	19	12
Sub-total programs¹	120	136	121
Events (e.g., Try it Day)	184	181	192
Total Registrations	304	317	313

1. This represents 84 individuals in 2021, 105 individuals in 2022, and 101 individuals in 2023 after controlling for registration in two or more programs.

Participant characteristics (programs only, excluding camps)

The following figures are based on the 101 individuals participating in 2023 recreational programs (with some participating in more than one program).

Gender – By gender, 57 recreational program participants were female (56%), 41 were male (41%), and three were non-binary (3%). This is similar to the recreational programs in 2021 and 2021 in which 58% of participants were female and 42% were male.

Age group – By age category, 70 were in adult programs (69%) and 31 were in junior programs (31%). These figures include adult and junior participation in leagues. This represents a higher percentage of adult participants compared to previous years when approximately half of participants were both adults and juniors: for 2021 and 2022, respectively, 49% and 57% were adults, and 51% and 43% were juniors. This means that most of the growth in the number of participants in recreational rowing programs continued to be in the adult category in 2023 – although the lack of junior LTR and RTR programs is an important factor to consider:

- Adults – 41 participants in 2021, 60 participants in 2022, and 70 participants in 2023 – an increase of 71% from 2021 to 2023.
- Juniors – 43 participants in 2021, 45 participants in 2022, and 31 participants in 2023 – a decrease of 28% from 2021 to 2023 (mainly from the lack of junior LTR and RTR programs in 2023).

The average age of recreational program participants in 2023 was 34.0. This is almost identical to the figure of 34.3 in 2022 and slightly higher than the average age of 30.1 in 2021, which reflects the higher percentage of adult program participants in 2022 and 2023.

3.2 Participant experiences and opinions about the PeterboroughROWS program

Three years of very positive results overall

The results of the 2023 participant survey are similar to those of the 2021 and 2022 surveys. Participants in 2023 provided very positive feedback about their experience with PeterboroughROWS programs.

Enjoyment of rowing – 82% of participants agreed that participation in the program increased their enjoyment of rowing; 64% strongly agreed (a rating of 5 on the 5-point scale). This is similar to 2021, when 83% of participants indicated an increased enjoyment of rowing, and a slight decrease from 2022 when 92% agreed.

Differences by gender – Differences by gender were small: 95% of females agreed compared to 86% of males. The percentage of females and males who strongly agreed (a rating of 5 on the 5-point scale) are very similar: 62% for females and 64% for males. This is more balanced than the results of the 2021 survey, when males (71%) were more likely than females (50%) to strongly agree that the program increased their enjoyment or rowing.

Differences by age – Juniors (79%) and adults (83%) were equally likely to agree that the program increased their enjoyment or rowing. The percentage of adults who strongly agreed (67%) increased from 2022 (50%).

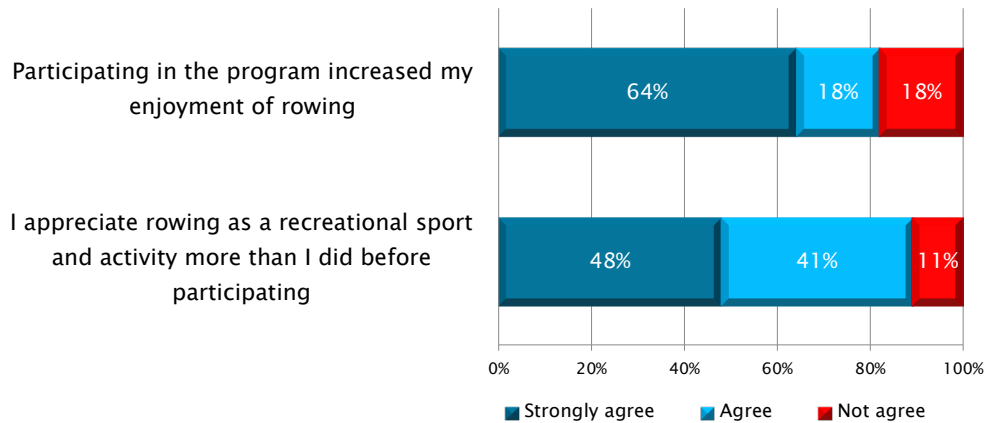
New appreciation for rowing – As in the 2021 and 2022 surveys, 89% of 2023 participants agreed that they appreciate rowing as a recreational sport and activity more than they did before participating; 48% strongly agreed.

Differences by gender – A large majority of both males (91%) and females (86%) agreed that they appreciate rowing more than before participating in the program.

Differences by age – Almost all juniors (93%) and a large majority of adults (87%) agreed that they appreciate rowing more than before participating in the program. As in 2022, juniors (64%) were more likely than adults (40%) to strongly agree.

Overall opinions about the PeterboroughROWS experience

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the program?



Source: 2023 Participant Survey; n=44

On the 5-point scales: Strongly agree=5; Agree=4; Not agree=1-3

Reasons for a positive experience

The reasons given by participants for their enjoyment of Peterborough and their positive experiences generally are similar to the responses to previous participant surveys. The reasons given by participants over the three years of the program are consistent with the design of PeterboroughROWS. A large majority of participants agreed that they were made to feel welcome and that they were provided with a high-quality rowing experience.

Feeling welcome – 86% agreed program leaders and coaches made me feel welcome; 57% strongly agreed.

Differences by gender – As in 2022, males (64%) were more likely than females (52%) to strongly agree that leaders and coaches made them feel welcome – although the difference in ratings is just 12% compared to 33% in 2022 (71% and 38% for males and females, respectively).

Differences by age – Juniors (71%) were more likely than adults (50%) to strongly agree that leaders and coaches made them feel welcome in 2023. The responses of juniors and adults were almost identical in 2022.

Following are some illustrative comments made by participants in the survey about their enjoyment of the 2023 rowing programs. Coaching played a big role in their enjoyment.

- “I had rowed in high school at the PRC (30 years ago!!!) and thought I’d try it again. Loved the Learn to Row session. Coaches were great! (And who knew that rowing is like riding a bike??!! Once you get in the boat, it is surprising how fast you remember!) Thanks for a great week!”
- “We did this activity as a team builder and really had a great time! Leadership team was fantastic and enthusiastic! Thanks Peterborough Rowing Club!!”
- “My son had an amazing camp at Trent Rowing camp.”
- “The program was fantastic, and I really enjoyed the opportunity to try different boats and work with different coaches.”

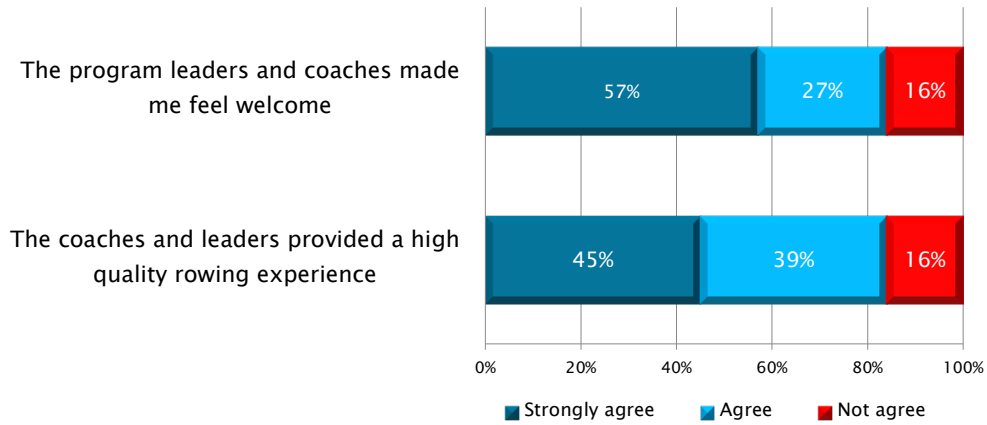
High quality rowing experience – 86% agreed that coaches and leaders provided a high-quality rowing experience; 45% strongly agreed. These figures are similar to the results of the 2021 and 2022 participant surveys.

Differences by gender – The overall percentages of males (82%) and females (86%) who agree that coaches and leaders provided a high-quality rowing learning experience are similar. However, males (64%) were more likely than females (29%) to strongly agree. This difference in strong agreement between males and females is consistent with the results of the 2021 and 2022 participant surveys.

Differences by age – The overall levels of agreement among adults (80%) and juniors (93%) also are fairly similar. However, juniors (71%) were somewhat more likely than adults (50%) to strongly agree.

Reasons for having a positive experience with PeterboroughROWS

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the program?



Source: 2023 Participant Survey; n=44

On the 5-point scales: Strongly agree=5; Agree=4; Not agree=1-3

As was the case in 2021 and 2022, participants emphasized the importance of their coaches and good coaching to their positive rowing experience in 2023. Following are some illustrative comments from the survey:

- “Coaches were warm, welcoming, enthusiastic, and provided very good coaching.”
- “The coaches and leaders are such amazing individuals, and their encouragement and knowledge were extremely helpful.”
- “The coaches and staff were fantastic and made me feel welcome and part of the club. All of the coaches were very patient, took the time to demonstrate techniques and helped everyone improve individually and as a team.”

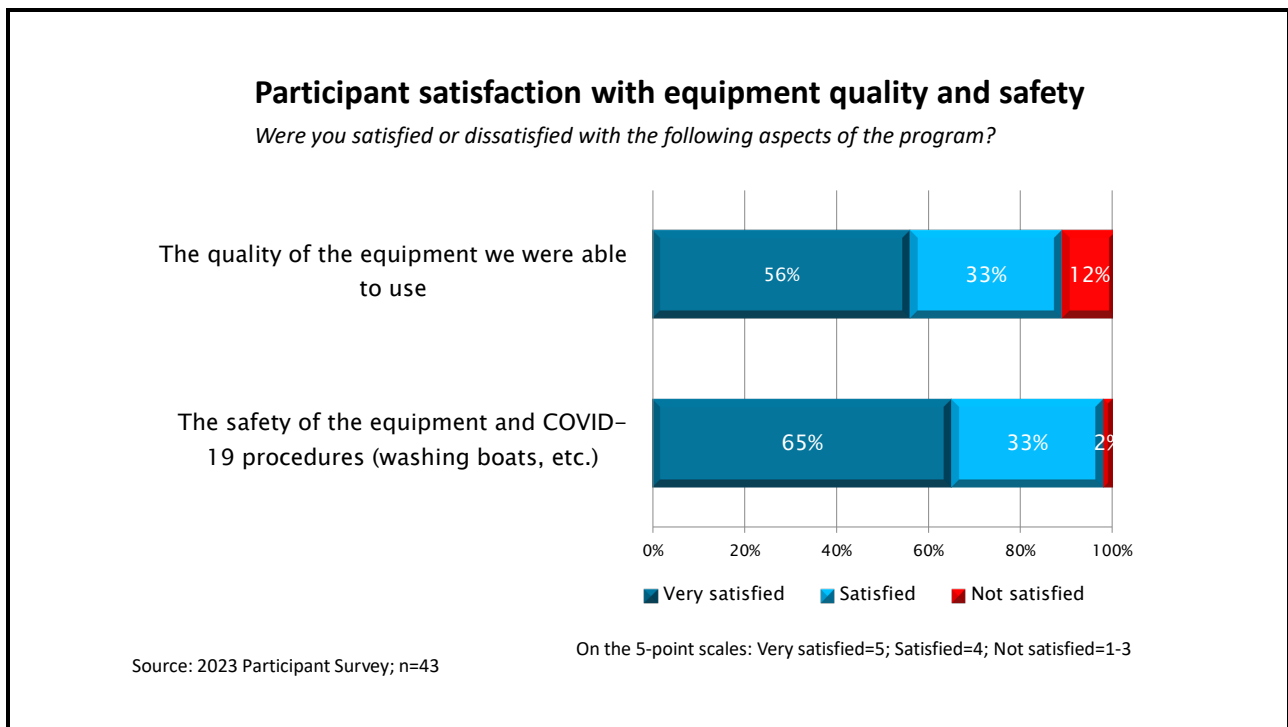
Equipment and safety

Participants were satisfied with the equipment used, including the quality of the equipment and especially with equipment safety and COVID-19 procedures.

Safety of the equipment – Almost all participants (98%) were satisfied with the safety of the equipment; 64% were very satisfied. These figures are slightly higher than the results from the 2022 participant survey (88% and 59%, respectively) and similar to the results from 2021.

Quality of the equipment – 86% were satisfied with the quality of the equipment used; 56% were very satisfied. The 56% who were very satisfied in 2023 is higher than the corresponding figures of 49% in 2022 and 32% in 2021.

Differences by gender – A very large majority of both males and females were satisfied overall with equipment quality. However, females (65%) were more likely than males (50%). This is the reverse of the results for satisfaction with equipment quality in 2022, when males (69%) were more like than females (38%) to be very satisfied.



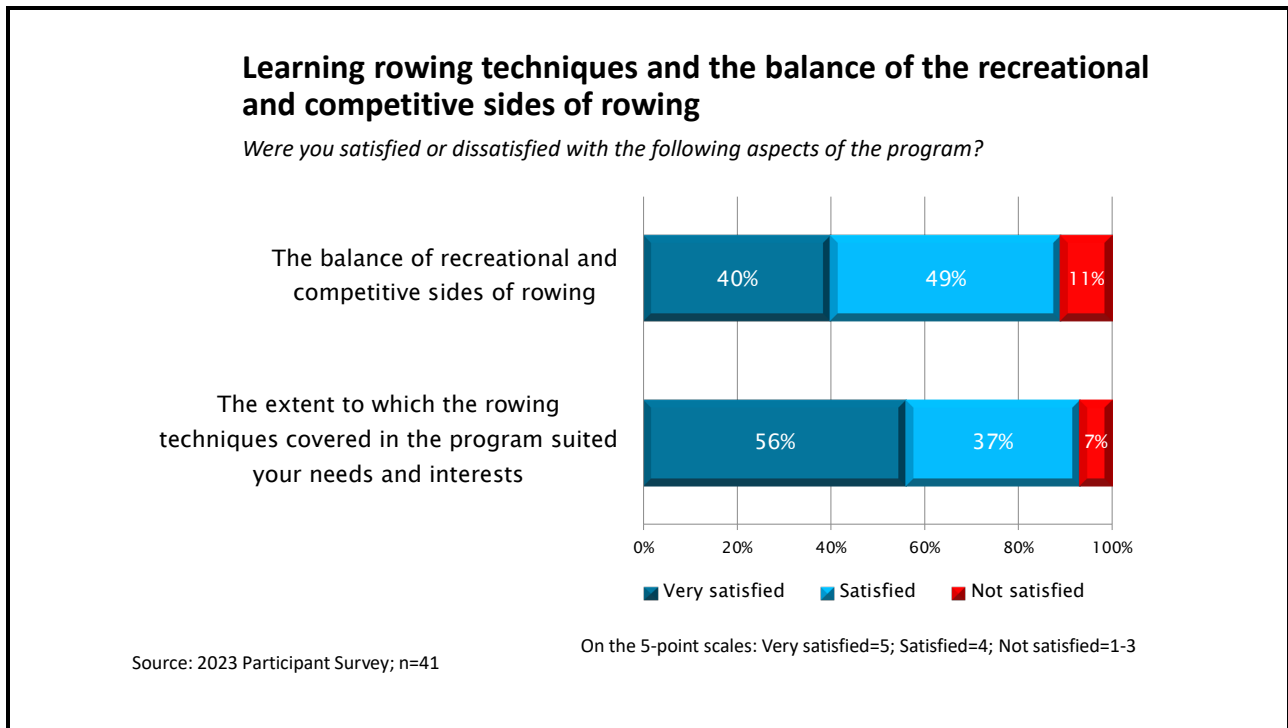
Program structure and delivery

Rowing techniques learned suited their needs and interests – Almost all participants (93%) were satisfied with the extent to which the rowing techniques covered in the program suited their needs and interests; 56% were very satisfied. These results are very similar to the results from the 2021 and 2022 surveys.

The balance of the recreational and competitive sides of rowing – 89% of participants were satisfied with the balance of the recreational and competitive sides of rowing in their program

sessions: 44% were very satisfied. This result also is very similar to the results from the 2021 and 2022 surveys.

As in the 2021 and 2022 surveys, the participant responses about rowing techniques and the balance of activities were similar for males and females and for adults and juniors.



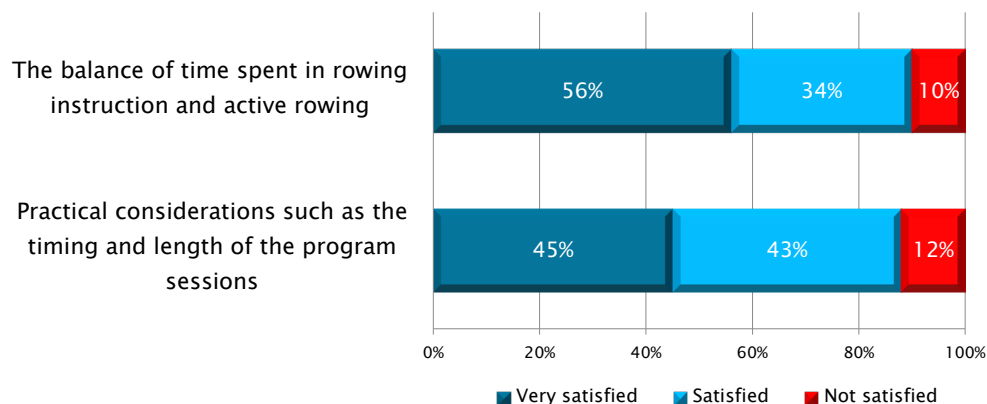
Balance of time spent in rowing instruction and active rowing – A large majority of participants (89%) also were satisfied with the balance of time spent in rowing instruction and in active rowing: 40% were very satisfied and another 49% were satisfied. This overall result is similar percentage satisfied in the 2021 and 2022 surveys, although more participants were very satisfied in previous surveys (65% in 2022 and 53% in 2021).

Practical considerations such as the timing and length of program sessions – A large majority of participants (88%) also were satisfied with practical considerations for participation such as the timing and length of program sessions; 45% were very satisfied. Again, these results are similar to the results from the 2021 and 2022 surveys.

Responses to questions about rowing instruction and practical considerations were similar for males and females and for adults and juniors.

The timing and organization of rowing sessions

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following aspects of the program?



Source: 2023 Participant Survey; n=43

On the 5-point scales: Very satisfied=5; Satisfied=4; Not satisfied=1-3

Overall satisfaction

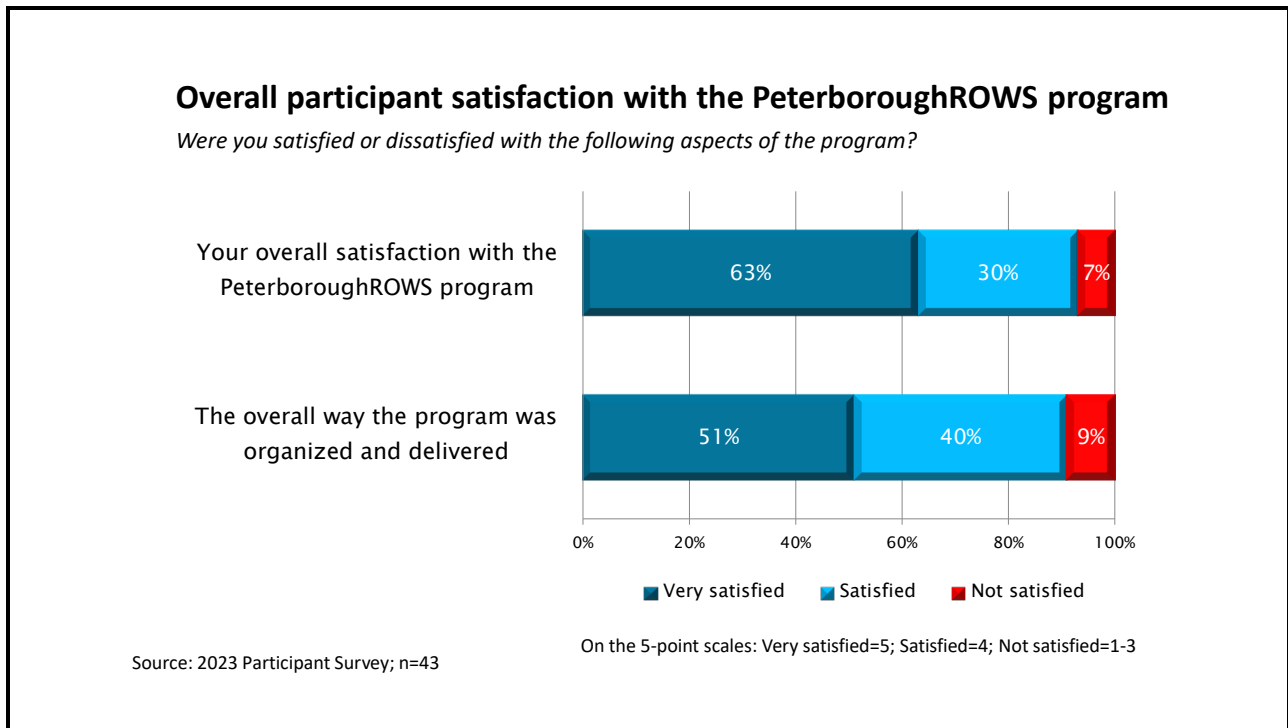
The overall way the program was organized and delivered – A very large majority of participants (91%) were satisfied with the way that the program was organized and delivered overall; 51% were very satisfied and 40% were satisfied.

Overall satisfaction with the PeterboroughROWS program – Similarly, almost all participants (93%) were satisfied overall with PeterboroughROWS; 63% were very satisfied and 30% were satisfied.

Differences by age – Overall satisfaction with the PeterboroughROWS program was very similar for adult and junior participants. However, juniors (79%) were more likely than adults (55%) to be very satisfied.

Differences by gender – Female participants (100%) were somewhat more likely than males (82%) to be satisfied with the overall way the program was organized and delivered. Similarly, females (100%) were somewhat more likely than males (86%) to be very satisfied overall with the program. This is the reverse of the results of the 2022 survey, in which males

(86%) were much more likely than females (46%) to be very satisfied overall with the program.



Following are some illustrative comments made by participants in the survey about their overall satisfaction with the 2023 rowing programs:

- “Great time and spirit at the Peterborough rowing club this year.”
- “I had an excellent experience. Thank you.”
- “I enjoyed both rowing sessions I participated in and also enjoyed meeting the coaches, leaders and other participants! I am planning on returning in 2024. Thank you very much to all involved.”
- “Great fun.”

Comparative levels of satisfaction with program features – The following table ranks the eight different program features presented in this section by the percentage of participants who were “very satisfied” (i.e., a rating of 5 on the 5-point scales).

By this ranking method, the safety of the equipment and COVID-19 procedures is the most highly rated feature (65% very satisfied). Three program features are the next most highly rated, with 56% being very satisfied: the balance of time spent in rowing instruction and active rowing, rowing techniques covered in the program, and quality of the equipment used.

Participant satisfaction with PeterboroughROWS 2023 program features

Program features	Level of satisfaction*		
	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Overall
Safety of the equipment and COVID-19 procedures	33%	65%	98%
Rowing techniques covered in the program suited my needs and interests	37%	56%	93%
Balance of time spent in rowing instruction and active rowing	34%	56%	90%
Quality of the equipment we were able to use	33%	56%	88%
Practical considerations such as the time and length of program sessions	43%	45%	88%
Balance of recreational and competitive sides of rowing	49%	40%	89%
The overall way the program was organized and delivered	40%	51%	91%
Overall satisfaction with PeterboroughROWS	30%	63%	93%

*Satisfied = 4 and Very satisfied = 5 on the 5-point scales. Overall combines these two ratings.

Comparative levels of participant satisfaction from 2021 to 2023

As with the results of the 2021 and 2022 participant surveys, it is important to restate that large majorities of participants in 2023 were satisfied with each of the different features of the program, with 93% satisfied overall.

Comparisons of the overall levels of satisfaction with program features from 2021 to 2023 surveys are presented in the following table. It is easy to see that all of the ratings are very high over the three years of the program. When combining the eight program features, including the overall ratings, the average percentage of participants who are satisfied is 95.5% for 2021, 89.1% for 2022 and 91.3% for 2023.

Participant satisfaction with PeterboroughROWS program features: 2021 to 2023

Program feature	Level of satisfaction overall*		
	2021	2022	2023
Safety of the equipment and COVID-19 procedures	100%	88%	98%
Rowing techniques covered in the program suited my needs and interests	97%	97%	93%
Balance of time spent in rowing instruction and active rowing	89%	89%	90%
Quality of the equipment we were able to use	97%	87%	88%
Practical considerations such as the time and length of program sessions	92%	84%	88%
Balance of recreational and competitive sides of rowing	92%	89%	89%
The overall way the program was organized and delivered	100%	89%	91%
Overall satisfaction with PeterboroughROWS	97%	90%	93%

* Satisfaction overall combines the ratings of Satisfied (4) and Very satisfied (5) on the 5-point scales.

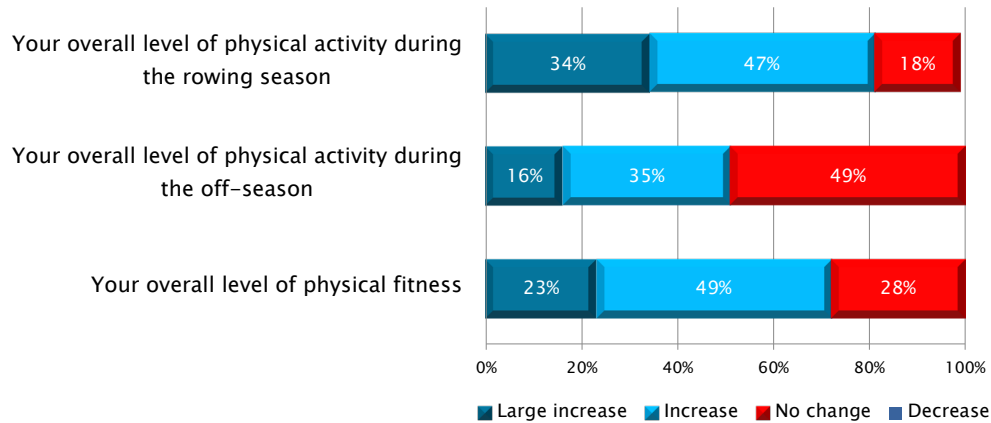
Impacts of participation in rowing on levels of physical activity

A majority of participants reported that their participation in rowing led to an increase in their overall level of physical activity both during the rowing season and in the off-season. They also reported an increase in their and overall level of physical fitness.

- *Overall level of PA during the rowing season* – 82% reported that it increased; 34% reported a large increase.
- *Overall level of PA during the off-season* – 51% reported that it increased; 16% reported a large increase; the rest reported no change (49%).
- *Overall level of physical fitness* – 72% reported an increase; 23% reported a large increase.

Influence of participating in PeterboroughROWS on physical activity

Would you say that your participation in rowing led to an increase or decrease in each of the following?



Source: 2023 Participant Survey; n=39

On the 5-point scales: Large increase=5; Increase=4; No change=3; Decrease=1-2

Differences by gender – As in 2021, males were more likely than females to report an increase in levels of physical activity and overall physical fitness.

- During the rowing season: 92% of males and 71% of females reported an increase in their level of physical activity during the rowing season. Half of the males (50%) reported a large increase compared to 19% of females.
- During the off-season: 73% of males reported an increase in off-season activity compared to 24% of females.
- Overall level of physical fitness: 76% of males reported an increase compared to 59% of females; 24% of males reported a large increase in overall physical fitness compared to 12% of females.

Differences by age – Juniors were more likely to report an increase in their level of physical activity:

- During the rowing season: 83% of juniors reported an increase compared to 54% of adults.
- During the off-season: physical activity levels for juniors and adults were similar.
- Overall level of physical fitness: 76% of juniors reported an increase in physical activity compared to 54% of adults.

Comparison of changes in levels of physical activity and physical fitness from 2021 to 2023

The reported levels of increase in physical activity as a result of participating in PeterboroughROWS were high in all three years, particularly for physical activity during the rowing season.

The reported increases in levels of physical activity among program participants in 2023 were higher than what they reported in the 2021 and 2022 surveys.

The percentage of program participant who reported an increase in their overall level of physical fitness was consistently high in all three years.

Participant reports on changes in overall levels of physical activity and physical fitness	Participants reporting an increase*		
	2021	2022	2023
Increase in PA during the rowing season	66%	79%	88%
Increase in PA during the off-season	39%	41%	51%
Increase in overall level of physical fitness	68%	75%	72%

*Percentages combine ratings of Increase (4) and Large Increase (5) on the 5-point scales.

- *Overall level of PA during the rowing season* – The percentage of program participants who reported an increase in physical activity during the rowing season increased from 66% in 2021 to 88% in 2023.
- *Overall level of PA during the off-season* – The percentage of program participants who reported an increase in physical activity during the off-season increased from 39% in 2021 to 51% in 2023.
- *Overall level of physical fitness* – Between two-thirds and three-quarters of program participants reported an increase in their overall level of physical fitness over the duration of the program: 68% in 2021, 75% in 2022, and 72% in 2023.

Hours per week of physical activity during the rowing season

Rowing and rowing-related activities – Participants spent an average of 4.2 hours per week on rowing and rowing-related activities (erging, weight training, etc.). The amounts ranged from 1 hour to 20 hours per week. This average number of hours is lower than the figure of 5.6 hours reported by participants in both 2021 and 2023.

- Males in 2023 reported spending an average of 4.4 hours per week on rowing and rowing-related activities. The figure for females is somewhat lower at 3.9 hours. The comparable figures for 2022 were higher for both males (6.7 hours) and females (4.8 hours).

- Juniors (4.9 hours) reported spending somewhat more time per week on rowing and rowing-related activities than adults (4.0 hours).

Other sports and physical activities – Participants reported spending an average of 5.7 hours per week in 2023 on other sports and physical activities. The amounts ranged from 2.0 hours to 20 hours per week. This average number of hours per week is slightly lower than what was reported in 2022 (6.0 hours) as well as in 2021 (8.6 hours, which is partly a result of one outlier who spent 40 hours per week on other activities).

- The number of hours spent per week on other sports and physical activities in 2023 is higher for males (6.5 hours) than females (4.0).
- The number of hours per week spent on other sports and physical activities is similar for adults (5.8 hours) and juniors (5.6 hours).

Intentions to continue with rowing

A very large majority of participants (88%) indicated they are likely to continue with rowing next year, either with the PRC or somewhere else: 24% indicated “likely” and 64% indicated “very likely”. This is higher than the 68% of participants in 2021 and 78% in 2022 who indicated they intended to continue with rowing.

Differences by gender – Males (90%) are only slightly more likely than females (85%) to indicate they are likely to continue with rowing.

Differences by age – Adults (89%) also are only slightly more likely than juniors (85%) to indicate they are likely to continue with rowing.

Reasons for not continuing with rowing – The reasons given by 2023 participants who indicated they are not likely to continue with rowing (n=7) are as follows:

- It is too far to travel (3)
- They could fit it into their schedule (2)
- They don’t like it enough to continue (1)
- They wanted to know what rowing is like and now they know (1)

3.3 Views of PRC coaches about 2023 recreational programs features

Features of club and programs that appeal to new rowers

Coaches identified several features of the 2023 PeterboroughROWS program that appealed to new rowers. As in the first two years of the program, there is a high level of correspondence between the features identified by coaches and program participants.

Good coaching – High quality coaching may be the most important component of a successful recreational rowing program. Participants appreciate coaches who are enthusiastic and attentive. Participant ratings of coaches have been high since the start of the program in 2021. Participants from previous years reported that coaching was even better in 2023, saying that coaches this year help them to learn more and improve their rowing skills. One coach said that this was particularly the case for some high school students who are interested in using the leagues as a stepping stone to more advanced rowing.

A welcoming environment – Participant survey results in 2023 continue to show that almost all participants agreed they were made to feel welcome by the club. Similarly, coaches in 2023 agreed that creating a welcoming atmosphere is essential for participant satisfaction and program success. All coaches agreed that the welcoming environment created by staff and members is important to attracting and keeping new rowers. As one said: “This is a huge part of the club”. Another agreed, saying “it’s what makes the community so appealing”. Another coach with experience at a different club said that the PRC provides a more welcoming experience: “Coaches approach the programs in a more positive manner... they made sure to greet athletes and engage in conversation”.

Social activities contribute to a sense of community and belonging to a club – Coaches all said that the PRC runs good social activities and events. They reported that participation in the social activities was growing again after being slow to come back from Covid-19, and that there was a notable improvement in 2023 as the club returned to more regular activities. Coaches reported that club social activities and events “draw people in” and make the club “another home”. They also reported that it is appealing to participants to see other people at club events and activities.

Program features contributing to success

Program structure – The recreational program structure, with the sequence of Learn to Row, Return to Row and Leagues, is both liked by participants and credited by coaches with contributing to the enjoyment of participants and increasing the likelihood that they will

continue with rowing. The programs provide participants with a pathway for development, one that allows them to gain skills training and hands-on experience in a well-defined format. Both participants and coaches agree that the programs are well run. Coaches reported that people new to rowing in the LTR program are surprised about how accessible rowing is to people with different abilities. Participants agreed that the balance of the amounts of time spent on instruction and active rowing in the three program streams is appropriate.

Coaches also identified Try it Days as being a very good way for people to test their interest in rowing. Try it Days in 2023 were described as “very successful”. Coaches reported the Try It Days open to the public and held mostly on weekends this year gained much more interest and “way more participation” than the sessions held with particular organizations. A few coaches also reported that many participants in the public Try it Days later joined up for other recreational programs: “We saw familiar faces later in Return to Row”.

The number of coaches and allocation of coaching time – All of the coaches thought that the additional coaches hired in 2023 paid off in the quality of the programming provided to participants. Having both more full-time and part-time staff helped coaches to spend their time on the water more efficiently, giving participants more attention and providing more one-on-one instruction: “More staff made it easier to cater to people’s preferences.” The number and balance of full-time and part-time coaches reduced coaches’ down-time. In previous years, with mostly full-time coaches, the ratio of their down-time to coaching time was higher. All of the coaches felt that reducing the number of coaches would be a loss for programs.

Coaches felt that the larger coaching staff this year also allowed for more consistency in coaching specific programs and led to more consistent outcomes across programs. As one said: “When I got a new RTR group, I knew what to expect from what they learned in LTR”. More staff allowed for better scheduling, with more set schedules. This allowed more coaches to coach consistently with the same program, which participants like more than frequent coach changing. Part-time coaches appreciated being assigned to the same program on a consistent basis. Coaches said that completing the coaching schedule in May was very helpful for planning and ensuring consistency of coaches.

Equipment and safety – Coaches, like participants, continued to rate the quality of equipment and safety procedures in 2023 as very good. All 2023 coaches think that the investments made in more equipment this year were worthwhile. As one said: “We have a lot of good recreational equipment now”. Comments made by coaches about the advantages and benefits of having more boats in 2023 include the following:

- “More equipment this year made it a lot easier to balance boats between programs.”

- “Having more boats of different types available meant that coaches were able to help participants to build their skills.”
- “More shells were available for recreational programs in 2023, which allowed more people to try out singles.”

3.4 Student Outreach Program Participation

2023 session participation totals

In-class rowing sessions were held at 13 intermediate schools between January and May 2023. A total of 32 week-long sessions were conducted at these schools. The total number of students participating was 607 – an average 47 students per school and 19 per session.

Surveys were not conducted with students in this age group.

Additional in-class rowing sessions were held at two high schools later in 2023. Another session is scheduled for late February 2024. Participation numbers from these schools are not included in the above totals.

Three-year participation totals

In 2021 and 2022, a total of 1,333 students participated in 53 in-class rowing sessions held at 14 different schools, including middle schools and high schools.

For the three years from 2021 to 2023, a total of 1,940 students participated in 85 week-long in-class rowing sessions.

3.5 Participant and staff concerns and suggestions for program improvements

Program participants, coaches and competitive junior rowers identified some challenges and shortcomings in the 2023 programs and had some ideas about improvements that could be made. Their ideas and suggestions for improvements are organized under the following headings: communications, programming, coaches and coaching, equipment and facilities, and program promotion.

Communications

Communications about continuing activities with the club – Some recreational program participants would like to have better information about ways in which they could continue rowing with the PRC. Some feel they are not given a “clear path” about how to become involved after their program. One participant said: “I attempted to follow-up about participation with the club following the programs, and I have still not heard anything.” Another participant recommended “better structure in how you can move through the programs and the support you'll get”. Another asked: “what are next steps to become involved? Seemed like the organization staff does not want people to join”.

Notification about program changes and session cancellations – Late notification about program changes were an issue for a few participants. One participant wrote: “There were many weeks when Saturday sessions were cancelled, often with notification at last minute. This significantly decreased the financial value of the season”. Although coaches agreed that the general emails “worked for most people”, they also agreed that it is difficult for some people to get last-minute email notifications. Not everyone checks their emails regularly and messages sometimes come when people are travelling to the club.

Some coaches and participants thought that more use could be made of channels such as Slack and MS Teams groups to make it easier for LTR and RTR participants to be updated on developments. Some coaches noted that not everyone is familiar with using these channels but thought that most participants would be comfortable with other methods besides email. One coach said that a Slack channel is less useful for a short program, but it works well for longer programs. One participant suggested having a communications channel where people can ask questions and let their coach know they won't be at a session. Another recommended earlier notification about summer program schedules, writing that “knowing in advance would be better for planning summer weekends”.

PRC website information and notices – A couple of participants thought the club's website and communication could be clearer. As one junior wrote: “Once you know how the club works,

then it's obvious, but for new people who don't understand, there aren't many ways to figure out what's going on”.

More communications about club social activities and greater involvement of recreational rowers – Coaches reported that club social activities and events are more highly attended by competitive rowers. In 2023, events such as the Henley garden party and mini regatta were attended mostly by competitive athletes and some league rowers, with few LTR and RTR rowers.

Although there has been some increase in participation at club social events by people in recreational programs, most are not aware of these events. As one said, people in recreational programs “typically wouldn’t know about them”. Coaches would like to see recreational rowers become more integrated into all club activities, with the club “continuing to work on involving recreational program participants”. The welcoming environment at the PRC created by staff and members is important to attracting and keeping new rowers – “it’s what makes the community so appealing” – and both program participants and coaches want the club to maintain a positive and welcoming environment. Continuing to make people feel welcome at events, especially recreation program participants, contributes to this.

One coach said that the summer newsletter at the beginning of LTR and RTR programs would be a good vehicle for the club to provide information to recreational rowers about the club’s social events. A participant recommended earlier notification about summer program schedules, writing that “knowing in advance would be better for planning summer weekends” and could increase participation in club activities.

Information about of-site and off-season training opportunities – A few participants would like more information about off-site and off-season training opportunities, such as club-affiliated gym programs and the indoor water rowing system at Trent University.

Programming

Keep the introductory rowing programs – Coaches think it is important to keep the Learn to Row program and Try it Days. As one said: “These are the foundation of how we bring people into the sport”. Another said: “Keep Learn to Row, it is essential to programming.” Coaches think that people have to learn the basics to enjoy rowing, and since most people do not understand the mechanics of rowing, these introductory programs are needed. Recreational program participants like seeing progress and, with some skills training, people who started off as looking for something new become people who really enjoy the sport of rowing.

Some coaches recommended restoring the junior LTR and RTR programs, which they view as more fundamental and important programming than the camps.

Some reconfigurations of the Return to Row and League programs – Some coaches advised a modest reconfiguration of these programs, with a shorter Return to Row program and a more formal introduction to leagues. They advised RTR programs of two weeks duration. As one said: “Return to Row is awesome, but it is too long for the transition to league”. With a shorter RTR program, coaches recommended having an introduction to league sessions, with more coaches. The introduction to leagues could be like an orientation day. Participants could, for example, attend a league practice (without having to pay), learn the basics of how it works, and talk to other rowers. This could also be an introduction to the more social aspects of the club. Some coaches commented that recreation program participants like league rowing the most. It is the most enjoyable program because people are more confident in their skills, and they are able to do more and go farther. Such an introduction could reduce the number of people who coaches advise to retake the RTR program before joining the league.

Continue and enhance the open, public Try it Days – There was a strong consensus among coaches that the Try it Days open to the general public were very successful in 2023 – very well attended, well run, and “so much fun” for participants. Coaches reported that many participants later signed up for LTR sessions. They advised increasing the number of events by lengthening the season: adding some in the Spring for university students and in August for people unable to attend an event held earlier in the summer. One coach said that the sessions being free was important, especially for students.

Restoring the junior LTR and RTR programs – Coaches recommended restoring these programs. As one said: “learning the basics of rowing is essential and LTR and RTR are great programs”. Another coach commented that the junior and adult LTR and RTR programs can be run at the same time, and they do not require a lot of extra staffing.

Rethink the junior summer camps – The junior summer camps were enjoyed by participants who “had a really good time”. However, the number of participants was too low for it to be a sustainable program without changes. Coaches think that the camps were targeted at too old an age group, as those age 14 to 18 have other commitments and interests that make it difficult for them to commit to a week-long camp. Coaches generally think that 12 to 15 is a more appropriate age group for the camps (plus or minus a year or so at each end).

One of the coaches observed that the day-long camp sessions were too much for some participants. Coaches tried to get participants on the water twice a day, but some did not want to go back on the water a second time. Most of the other non-rowing activities were described

as typical camp activities (e.g., crafts). They advised that half-day camps would be better, with one session daily on the water, and erg sessions or similar activities during the rest of the time instead of more ordinary summer day camp activities.

Options for less structured recreational rowing – Several adult participants indicated that they would like more opportunities for recreational rowing outside of the structure of programs and at flexible times. Following are some of the views on this subject expressed in the participant survey.

- “The option to be a rec rower with no programming or coaching would be great.”
- “It would be nice to have an option for recreational rowers to register as athletes that do not want coaching or to participate in the league sessions. I believe this would help in managing expectations for both the athletes and the coaching staff. It appeared that this summer there was a number of rec athletes who did not want coaching or to participate in the league sessions but that because the only option was to register as a league athlete the league coaches felt compelled to 'manage' the rec athletes time even though it was clear that the athletes did not want to participate, they just wanted to go out for the occasional leisurely row.”
- “I wish there were more flexible timing for members who have rowed recreationally for some time, who have passed a flip test in the active year and have demonstrated their knowledge of the river and the rules of the water to get out and row when it suits their schedule, not getting in the way of the competitive rowers.”
- “More flexibility in time that recreational rowers can be on the water, within certain constraints like having demonstrated basic skills and knowledge, passed a flip test, not getting in the way of competitive athletes.”
- “I’d like to have consistent times throughout the week when coaches are present to ensure safe use/treatment of equipment and the boathouse, but not necessarily active coaching.”

Program organization and management – A few participants had some specific suggestions about programs changes they would like to see.

- Introduction to rowing through LTR – “I felt that the Learn to Row program could have been better managed. More time in a larger boat where less can go wrong, practicing the movement... RTR was much better organized but again, I think maybe some more time on ergs getting movement and key positioning would have been helpful.”
- Types of boats – “Too much focus on team rowing and not always enough singles available.”

- Grouping new rowers – “Consider options to group new rowers with similar abilities and mind-sets by using various boats including twos, fours and eights.”

Program scheduling and timing – A few participants would like to see changes in the timing of program sessions.

- A participant who expects to return in 2024 would like RTR program sessions to be held three times a week for 3 weeks, with league sessions remaining at twice a week.
- Another would like to see “better scheduling with no cancellations if there is a regatta”.
- Two participants recommended reviewing the scheduling of recreational and competitive programs. One wrote: “sometimes it was crowded with overlap of different programs”. Another advised against holding sessions with recreational and competitive rowers at the same time.
- A junior participant noted that “recreational rowing is for enjoyment so have coaches who are not competing”.

Other specific programming suggestions – Participants made a number of specific suggestions about what they would like to see in the programs:

- PRC has little after the summer sessions are over. PRC could do these types of activities. Maybe once a week at the club.
- The Barrie club does erg programs for adults in the winter, with social events like “wing nights” after. PRC could do this.
- One participant asked if the club is considering an option for dragon boating in the future: “While I enjoyed the rowing lessons, I did not feel the sport was for me. I have dragon-boated in the past and find this a better fit for me, but there is limited opportunity for this in Peterborough”.

Coaches and coaching: Program participant opinions

Good coaches and coaching may be the biggest contributor to participants’ enjoyment and satisfaction with recreational programs. Participant survey results, both for 2023 and for the previous two years, show a high level of satisfaction with coaches and the coaching provided through the PeterboroughROWS programs.

Along with good instruction in rowing techniques for beginners and novices, coaches were praised for their ability to assess participants’ abilities and interests and put people in boats and in situations where they felt both comfortable and challenged.

While their reviews of coaches and coaching in 2023 generally were very positive, some participants had some criticisms and/or suggestions for changes to improve the experiences of recreational programs.

Club focus on competitive rowers – One participant thought that the primary focus of coaches and the club “is clearly on competitive rowers and rowing”. They felt that this “made it difficult to find a lot of time to get on the water for those more interested in building skills and getting exercise than in competition”.

More skills training for beginners – One participant did not think it was a good idea to put novice adult participants in a boat with experienced rowers. In their view, “time should have been taken to methodically break down each element of the stroke. Practice each one until some proficiency was established and then move on to the next, rather than demonstrating all elements at once and hoping the participant can understand and execute all together within first 10 minutes of the first lesson”. This was their experience on the first day. On the second day, “we got out in the water but had to be towed back in because of driving wind and rain. Unbelievable that the coaches somehow thought conditions were ok for a new crew to go out”. This participant did not return for the third day.

Attention from coaches – A few participants felt that the coaches “sometimes gave conflicting instructions”, were “distracted” by other things, or were arguing among themselves. One participant reported the following experience that left them disappointed: “While I’ve had a good experience so far, my last session left me feeling a bit disheartened. I encountered some confusion during the session, and rather than guiding me through it, the coach chose to end the session. I believe that in such situations, clearer guidance and support would be more beneficial to the overall learning experience”.

Coach training – One participant, who was familiar with NCCP coach training in another sport, did not think that the recreational program coaches had received the appropriate training. They did not think that the coaches understood coaching principles for beginners to ensure that participants enjoy the sport and come back to learn more.

Coaches and coaching: Coach opinions

A larger coaching staff improved 2023 programs – All of the coaches thought that the additional coaches hired in 2023 paid off in the quality of the programming provided to recreational participants. More full-time and part-time coaching staff helped with program delivery by allowing coaches to give participants more attention and to provide more consistent instruction. The additional coaches on the water helped to maintain a good coach-rower ratio

and allowed for more one-on-one instruction. As one said: “More staff made it easier to cater to people’s preferences.”

Coaches also thought that a larger staff allowed them to spend their time more efficiently. The number and balance of full-time and part-time coaches reduced down time compared to previous years when, with mostly full-time coaches, the ratio of their down-time to coaching time was higher. In the words of one coach: “we were very efficient and made sure that people spent the maximum amount of time on the water.”

Attitudes and demeanor of coaches – Coaches are very important for instilling a love of rowing in people new to rowing. Both coaches and participants agreed that it is very important for coaches to have a positive attitude. One coach reported that “the biggest feedback” they received was that coaches sometimes “seemed not interested in being there”. This is consistent with reports from participants that sometimes coaches were distracted. Coaches have to be fully engaged to teach something new every session and challenge people to improve their skills.

Coach assignments and scheduling – Coaches in 2023 liked that they were able to have reliable and consistent expectations about what they would be coaching on any given day. More coaching staff allowed for better scheduling, with more set schedules. This allowed more coaches to coach consistently with the same program, which participants like more than frequent coach changing. Part-time coaches appreciated being assigned to the same program on a consistent basis. Completing the coaching schedule in May was very helpful for planning and consistency of coaches.

Coach training – One of the coaches recommended holding a training session for coaches at the beginning of the season: “Start off the year with the basics for coaches: how to fix boats, what is the proper rigging for boats. Boats often need fixing during the year. There is no time during the year to learn how to deal with repairs. In May when we have time for a couple of weeks, set aside a bit of time to learn different things, such as how to drive a coach boat, how to wax a boat, how to do different minor repairs, how to start a motor, how to take apart an erg.”

Equipment and facilities

Boat maintenance – Most of the coaches identified boat maintenance and repair as an issue. Boat maintenance can be a challenge with more program participants and higher demand. One of the coaches did a lot of boat maintenance, which was very helpful, but “sometimes boats were not in the best shape and maintenance got pushed down”. One coach recommended hiring someone to maintain the equipment, although they recognized that this may be difficult.

Allocation of boats to programs – A few coaches said there needs to be some discussion about the appropriate equipment for different programs. With overlapping program schedules, and with more people wanting time in smaller boats, there were boat shortages at times. People often want to go out in smaller boats. There are enough smaller boats, but RTR and League programs overlapped so RTR rowers didn't always have smaller boats available. The use of different types of boats needs more direction and coordination.

Club and program fees

Most 2023 recreational program participants think that club and program fees are reasonable and good value for money. Some illustrative comments include:

- “Honestly, the costs seemed reasonable, so I don't have much additional feedback.”
- “The price for lessons was very fair and an excellent experience.”

Along with agreeing that current fees are reasonable, a majority of participants also do not want to see fee increases, as shown by the following comments.

- “I feel that the fees are on par for the programs offered and what we as participants gain from the experience.”
- “Cost is considerable. Memberships are promoted as 12 months but offer few opportunities in the ‘off-the-water’ period, which is quite long.”
- “I hope the financial cost can be maintained at current levels. There were often far more coaches on the water than seemed necessary.”
- “Make entry level rowing for adults affordable and comparable to golf, tennis, baseball etc.”
- “Continuing the adult programs would be great. The 2023 fees were affordable so keeping them similar is important.”
- “I think it's important to try to keep competitive costs down as to not price out TURC members during the summer.”

While some participants understand the cost pressures on the PRC, the least frequent comment in the survey was for the club to increase fees for 2024. Following is one comment advising a fee increase:

- “Charge additional fees. Considering the cost of the boats and boat house, rowers are paying less than competitive skiers. Skiers pay more for a much shorter season, plus they have to purchase a membership to the ski hill as well as pay for their racing fees. Find additional fundraisers in addition to Bingo.”

Program promotion

Increasing use of social media – Coaches reported that the club was more successful in 2023 with social media marketing and promotions through, for example, Instagram and Facebook ads. They also reported that recreational program participants were happy to see these ads. Instagram posting of events also were useful to people. A couple of coaches linked the higher recreational program participation in 2023 to social media promotions: “Every year the word gets our more.”

Making and promoting videos of club programs, activities and events – Coaches like the idea of having more videos of club activities that can be shared on social media. One of the coaches made videos highlighting the competitive team. They said it also would be helpful to have fun videos of recreational programs to help promote the club, for example with links through Facebook and Instagram. Coaches suggested different approaches for making such videos: club members could volunteer to take photos and make videos, making videos and posters could be a small part of coaches’ job description, or the club could hire a professional photographer to do some videos and photos, for example, on days when we have a “suit” practice, or for races.

Increasing awareness of PRC programs in high schools – Coaches reported that the high school program started to show its impacts on recreational program participation in 2023, with more participation from students who had been in the in-class sessions. Even with this impact, coaches think that the club “should be pulling in high school age kids”. They recognize that it is difficult to promote club programs in schools, as handouts are not allowed, but think that “We have to talk about it more in the schools”. Coaches and junior competitive rowers had many comments and several suggestions related to increasing awareness among local high school students and promotional initiatives in the schools.

- “There is lots of potential in Peterborough high schools, but most people don’t know about the club and rowing opportunities.”
- “High school students would be interested in rowing at the club if they knew about it and if there are opportunities.”
- “Having more activities in school, like the gym class sessions.”
- “Rowing and club activities are not talked about enough in schools.”
- “For high school rowers, it would be appealing to competitive rowers at the club if they could compete in high school competitions.”
- “Start marketing earlier, in the winter, in the schools.”
- “Camps should be promoted in schools during the winter.”
- “Let more kids know about it. There were only three kids in my session.”

4.0 Lessons Learned and Reflections on PeterboroughROWS

Annual evaluations have been conducted following each of the three years of the suite of recreational rowing programs called PeterboroughROWS. This final section of the report reviews some of the lessons learned from the third and final year of PeterboroughROWS and some of the most important evaluation findings that have been consistent over its duration.

4.1 Some lessons learned in 2023

This section reviews some of the lessons learned in 2023. Although some of the themes have been discussed in the two previous evaluation reports, the intention is to provide new information from the 2023 rowing season that builds on the previous reports and helps the PRC with planning for 2024 and beyond.

The importance and value of Introductory rowing programs – The introductory recreational rowing programs, Learn to Row and Return to Row, create the foundation for a lifetime of enjoyment with rowing. The programs are essential for both adults and juniors to learn the basic skills and start on a development path that will keep them active in rowing. This is not a new insight, or a lesson learned only in 2023, but the absence of the junior LTR and RTR programs this year helped to bring the value of these programs into focus.

Participants and coaches benefited from a larger staff in 2023 – A larger complement of full-time and part-time coaches contributed to the successes of the 2023 season. Coaches credit the better coach to rower ratios in 2023 with improvements in the quality of content and delivery of recreational programs, including more directed and consistent instruction. Full-time coaches reported that the availability of part-time coaches allowed them to spend their time more efficiently.

Engaging recreational rowers in the club's social activities and events – The 2023 season saw a return to a more regular schedule of social activities and events. The majority of participants at these events are competitive rowers and long-time members. New recreational program participants do not participate in the club's activities and events to the same degree as competitive rowers. The duration of recreational rowers' attachment to the club over the course of a season typically is shorter and their interactions with club members are fewer. Increasing the involvement of recreational rowers in social activities and events will require enhancing efforts to make them aware of these activities and to let them know they are invited and welcome.

Try it Days open to the public were the most successful – Try it Day events continued to be successful in 2023. The events open to the general public had much higher participation than the ones run for specific groups. Both recreational program participants and coaches recommended increasing the number of open Try it Days, for example, by adding some earlier in the season at times suitable for younger people (e.g., university students after the winter semester is over and before summer activities and jobs begin) and later in the season for interested people who could not attend an earlier event.

Changes to the junior summer camps – The summer junior camps run in 2023 were well-received by participants and coaches, but the number of participants was low. Coaches think that the target age group for the summer camps tried in 2023 was too old, as youth 16 and over have many other interests and commitments including summer jobs. Coaches advised two significant changes if the summer camps are held again: a lower age group (e.g., 12 to 15) and half-day instead of all-day sessions.

Many adult recreational rowers would like more opportunities for rowing outside of the structure of the regular programs – More adult program participants in 2023 expressed an interest in unstructured rowing at flexible times than in the two previous years. This may reflect the maturing in rowing of people who were introduced to rowing through PeterboroughROWS programs in 2021 and 2022 and who have developed the skills and confidence to row recreationally without ongoing formal instruction. Recreational rowers making this request recognized the need to demonstrate competency. They also recognize that there would be practical limits on the opportunities provided for this type of recreational rowing.

Increasing promotions of PRC rowing programs in schools to school-aged youth – Both recreational and competitive junior rowers advised the club to do more program promotion to youth, for example by having more interactions with local high schools and increasing promotional initiatives in the schools. While coaches in the gym class sessions recognize the restrictions on in-school promotions, they would like to have more opportunities to talk with students about rowing at the PRC.

4.2 Reflections on three years of PeterboroughROWS

PeterboroughROWS has been successful at attracting new people to rowing – The PRC and these programs attracted many people new to rowing. At the beginning of each of the three years of the program, a majority of new participants had never rowed on the water before. At the end of each year, a majority of these new participants indicated that they intended to row again the following year.

Participant satisfaction consistently has been very high – For all three years of PeterboroughROWS, almost all participants enjoyed the programs and were satisfied with the program content and delivery, time spent on the water, coaching and instruction, equipment, safety and other features of the programs.

This evaluation report, along with the reports for Years 1 and 2, discusses some challenges and shortcomings identified by participants and staff as well as their ideas and recommendations for improvements. The need for some changes and improvements does not diminish the value of the program and its enjoyment by participants and should not be viewed as detracting from the tremendous successes of PeterboroughROWS.

The welcoming environment offered by the PRC has contributed to the success of PeterboroughROWS – Three years of participant survey results have show that almost all participants agreed they were made to feel welcome by the club. Participants and coaches alike agreed that creating a welcoming atmosphere is essential for participant satisfaction and program success. They emphasized the importance of making new rowers feel welcome from the first contacts with the club. Coaches reported that they made this a priority, including for junior-age participants about whom they said some could be shy compared to adults.

Validation of the program design for attracting people new to rowing and retaining their interest – The development pathway offered by the suite of recreational programs offered through PeterboroughROWS has been successful at attracting new recreational rowers and, as important, providing them with a quality experience that makes them want to continue rowing. The progression of Learn to Row, Return to Row and League rowing allowed participants to learn and put into practice the skills that enabled them to feel a sense of accomplishment and enjoy the sport as they moved through the developmental stages.

Learning the fundamentals of rowing – Teaching basic rowing skills to beginners is very important. Coaches believe that learning the fundamentals of rowing, with the proper techniques, is essential for participants to enjoy their rowing experience. A sound instructional program and close attention from coaches are required for beginners to overcome any anxiety they may have about being in a boat and to get comfortable on the water. All participants in the introductory Learn to Row program received both, and almost all learned quickly how to be comfortable in a boat.

Key messages to new rowers – People new to rowing usually are anxious and unsure about how they will do in a boat, about whether they will tip over or fall in the water. It is the same for people who may be considering trying out rowing or signing up for a beginner program at the

PRC. Messaging that allays these anxieties are helpful for encouraging people to try rowing. Appropriate messages for potential new rowers are that anyone can row, that rowing is for everyone, and that the PRC programs are an easy way to try rowing.

Most of the rowers who have participated and succeeded in the introductory programs want more information from the club about future rowing opportunities and options. They enjoyed their introduction to rowing, and they want to know more about what comes next and how they can continue to row.

The PRC provided high quality coaching – Over the three years, both adult and junior participants reported that the PRC provided high quality coaching, and that the coaching contributed to a positive experience overall. Coaches agreed that the coaching team was well qualified with the technical knowledge, rowing experience, and teaching ability to provide a good rowing experience for new and less experienced rowers.

The recreational program coaches achieved a good balance between providing participants with a fun and enjoyable experience and with challenging them so there is a sense of accomplishment when they succeed. Beginner rowers get a great deal of satisfaction from learning how to row. First, they get comfortable being on the water, then they learn techniques and master skills and then they “begin to really enjoy themselves”.

Social activities contribute to a sense of community and belonging to a club – Both recreational program participants and coaches think that the PRC holds good social activities and events. In 2023, the club’s social activities and events returned to a more regular schedule following the irregular years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Coaches view social activities as an excellent way to get people involved in the club and make them feel at home. Program participants view social activities and events as contributing to the welcoming environment and sense of community that are important reasons for their affiliation with the PRC.

Participation in PeterboroughROWS has had a positive impact on physical activity and physical fitness – In each of the three years of the program, recreational rowers reported that their participation in rowing led to increases in their physical activity and improvements in their overall physical fitness. The following figures are averaged over the three years.

- *Physical activity* – More than three-quarters of participants (76%) reported an increase in their physical activity during the rowing season. Almost half (43%) reported more physical activity during the off-season.
- *Physical fitness* – Almost three-quarters of participants (72%) reported that their participation in rowing led to an increase in their overall level of physical fitness.

The Peterborough Rowing Club compares very favourably with other rowing clubs at introducing people to rowing – Coaches with experience of other rowing clubs reported that the Peterborough Rowing Club has a better overall coaching staff and introductory rowing programs for beginners than other clubs. In their experience, the PRC has a better balance of recreational and competitive rowing programs, as other clubs tend to focus more on competitive rowing programs and rowers. The PRC's Learn to Row program in particular provides an excellent entry point to rowing and helps people with no experience to get into the sport.

Appendix A: Performance indicators and other measures (by data source)

The following tables present the types of data and performance measures that will be used in the evaluation of PeterboroughROWS.

From administrative data

Performance indicator	Breakdowns and details
Number of participants – by year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult recreational: Learn to Row, League • Adult competitive • Youth recreational: Learn to Row, League • Youth competitive • Try it Day • Other: corporate, custom programs, special events • Breakdowns by gender and age
Repeat registrations / Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number and percent of returning participants: adult and youth; by type of program
School outreach – by year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events, by type • Number of participants

From participants:

Performance indicator	Breakdowns and details
Attitudes and opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of awareness (how participants heard about the program) • Increased awareness and appreciation of rowing as a recreational activity and sport • Increased enjoyment of rowing • Satisfaction with the program – overall and by program features • Likelihood of continuing with rowing after the program • Reasons for continuing /not continuing with rowing • Perceptions of improved level of fitness
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratings of what was learned (e.g., how much, how useful) • Ratings of the coaches' knowledge and ability to communicate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of what was learned about rowing (from the program; from coaches) on the likelihood of continuing with rowing after the program
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience with rowing: overall; with PRC • Time spent rowing (e.g., hours per week) and in related physical activities during the rowing season. • Changes in overall level of physical activity: during the rowing season; during the off-season • Impact of program on changes in overall level and types of physical activity
Areas where the program could be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content • Delivery • Practical considerations: e.g., timing, length • Quality / availability of equipment • Other

From PRC staff and volunteers:

Performance indicator	Breakdowns and details
Strengths and weaknesses of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works well; why? • What is not working well; why?
Achievement of objectives and reasons; why or why not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach, promotion and recruitment • Programming • Program delivery • Participant feedback
Areas where the program could be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content • Teaching/coaching and learning • Recruitment and training of coaches/instructors in subsequent years • Practical considerations (e.g., timing, length) • Equipment availability and quality • Outreach activities/marketing and promotion • Allocation of resources • Other

Appendix B: Participant Survey – annotated with overall statistics



PeterboroughROWS Participant Survey 2023

Introduction

We want to hear your opinions and comments about our programs for recreational and junior rowers and how the programs could be improved. This survey includes mostly two types of questions: rating scales asking for your opinions about the program and open- ended questions that allow you make any comments you want about your experiences with the program. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. You can pause mid-survey and return at another time if you want.

To begin, we would like to know a little about your previous rowing experience.

1. Have you ever rowed on the water before participating in your 2023 PeterboroughROWS sessions(s)?

Yes	60.0%	
No	40.0%	n = 45

Previous experience at the Peterborough Rowing Club

2. Have you ever rowed at the Peterborough Rowing Club before?

Yes, in last year's program	51.9%	
Yes, I didn't row last year but I have rowed at PRC before	29.6%	
No	18.5%	n = 27

Opinions about your experiences with PeterboroughROWS

3. How did you hear about the PeterboroughROWS program offered in 2023? (Check all that apply.)

Club member	46.9%
Friend	18.8%
Family	31.2%
Social media.....	18.8%
At another sport club or activity.....	12.5%
At a community group meeting or activity	0.0%
Local announcement (e.g., a flyer).....	3.1%
Other (please specify)	26.7%

n = 45

4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the program?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	n
a. Participating in the program increased my enjoyment of rowing	6.8%	2.3%	9.1%	18.2%	63.6%	44
b. The program leaders and coaches made me feel welcome	9.1%	0.0%	6.8%	27.3%	56.8%	44
c. I appreciate rowing as a recreational sport and activity more than I did before participating	2.3%	2.3%	6.8%	40.9%	47.7%	44
d. The coaches and leaders provided a high-quality rowing experience	9.1%	4.5%	2.3%	38.6%	45.5%	44

5. Do you have any comments for the Peterborough Rowing Club about running this type of program?

Program content and delivery

Next, we have a few questions about more specific aspects of the program.

6. Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the following aspects of the program?

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	n
a. The extent to which the rowing techniques covered in the program suited your needs and interests	4.9%	2.4%	0.0%	36.6%	56.1%	41
b. The balance of the recreational and competitive sides of rowing	2.9%	2.9%	5.7%	48.6%	40.0%	41
c. The balance of the time spent in rowing instruction and active rowing	2.4%	0.0%	7.3%	34.1%	56.1%	41
d. The overall way the program was organized and delivered	4.7%	2.3%	2.3%	39.5%	51.2%	43
e. The quality of the equipment we were able to use	0.0%	4.7%	7.0%	32.6%	55.8%	43
f. The safety of the equipment and COVID-19 procedures (washing boats, etc.)	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	33.3%	64.3%	42
g. Practical considerations such as the timing and length of the program sessions	0.0%	4.8%	7.1%	42.9%	45.2%	42
h. Your overall satisfaction with the PeterboroughROWS program	2.3%	4.7%	0.0%	30.2%	62.8%	43

7. Please add any comments here.

Improvements to the PeterboroughROWS program

8. Let us know about any ways in which you think the program could be improved. Please consider the elements covered in the previous questions as well as anything else you think could be improved.

9. Every year the PRC selects rowers for club awards. Among recreational programs, they are looking for rowers who demonstrate the love of rowing for rowing’s sake, enthusiasm, coachability and a willingness to try new things.

For your program, who do you think should get the club award, and why?

Rowing and other sports and physical activities

10. During the 2023 rowing season, approximately how many hours per week did you spend on average in...

Rowing and rowing-related training (erging, weight training, etc.)

Min 1.0 Max 20.0 Avg = 6.0 n = 24

Other sports and physical activities

Min 2.0 Max 10.0 Avg = 6.0 n = 24

11. Would you say that your participation in rowing led to an increase or decrease in each of the following?

	Large Decrease	Decrease	No Change	Increase	Large Increase	n
a. Your overall level of physical activity during the rowing season	0.0%	0.0%	18.4%	47.4%	34.2%	38
b. Your overall level of physical activity during the off-season	0.0%	0.0%	48.6%	35.1%	16.2%	37
c. Your overall level of physical fitness	0.0%	0.0%	28.2%	48.7%	23.1%	39

12. Please add any comments here.

13. Considering your experience and what you learned about rowing, how likely is it that you will continue with rowing in 2024, either with the PRC or somewhere else?

Not at all likely	Not likely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely	n
4.9%	4.9%	2.4%	24.4%	63.4%	41

14. If you are not likely to continue with rowing, please indicate why. (Check all that apply.)

No time, could not fit it into my schedule.....	29%	
Too far to travel	43%	
Too expensive.....	0%	
I don't like it enough to continue	14%	
I wanted to know what rowing is like and now I know	14%	
Other (please specify).....	14%	n = 7

Conclusion

15. To conclude, do you have any other comments about the PeterboroughROWS program or advice for the Peterborough Rowing Club about running this type of program?