

A Survey of Participation of Children with Disabilities in Aquatic Programs

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INTRODUCTION

- Children with disabilities (CWD) have lower participation in organized sport programs
- Limited availability of inclusive opportunities is a barrier to CWD participation in physical activity and organized sport programs
- Aquatic programs offer accessible opportunities for physical activity for CWD

To support and improve inclusion, we need to:

1. Assess current participation rates of CWD in aquatic programs; and
2. Explore organizational characteristics and perceptions of aquatics program directors

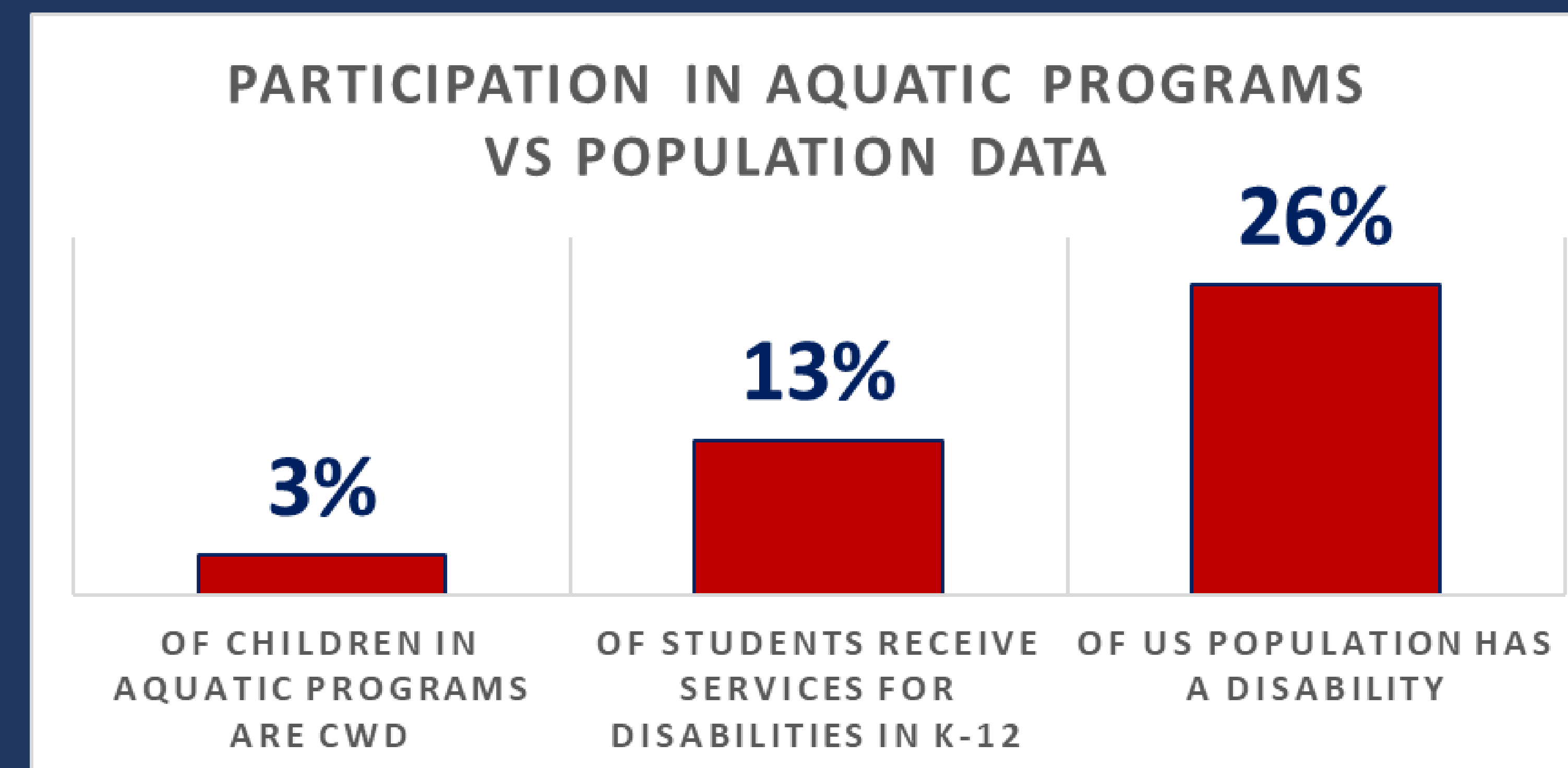
METHOD

- Online survey of 185 program directors of aquatic organizations from 27 states
- Univariate & bivariate descriptive statistics for non-parametric data were used (Spearman Correlation, Kruskal-Wallis, & Mann-Whitney tests)
- **Participation rate** → % of children participating in programs are CWD

Characteristics of Aquatic Directors and Organizations

Aquatic Director	Frequencies
Age; median (IQR)	40 (15)
Years at Organization	162
1-2 years	33 (20.3)
3-5 years	38 (23.5)
6-10 years	42 (25.9)
11 & up	49 (30.2)
Organization	
Years Open; median (IQR)	55 (40.0)
Organization Size; median (IQR)	900 (1200)
Region of country	140
Northeast	37 (26.6)
South	27 (18.9)
Midwest	26 (18.2)
West	51 (36.3)

While almost all aquatic programs claim to offer opportunities for children with disabilities, in reality participation rates are extremely low.



Organizations report low interest from families of CWD and factors related to staff capacity as limitations to these low rates. Literature reports that families of CWD are unaware of available inclusive opportunities for their children.



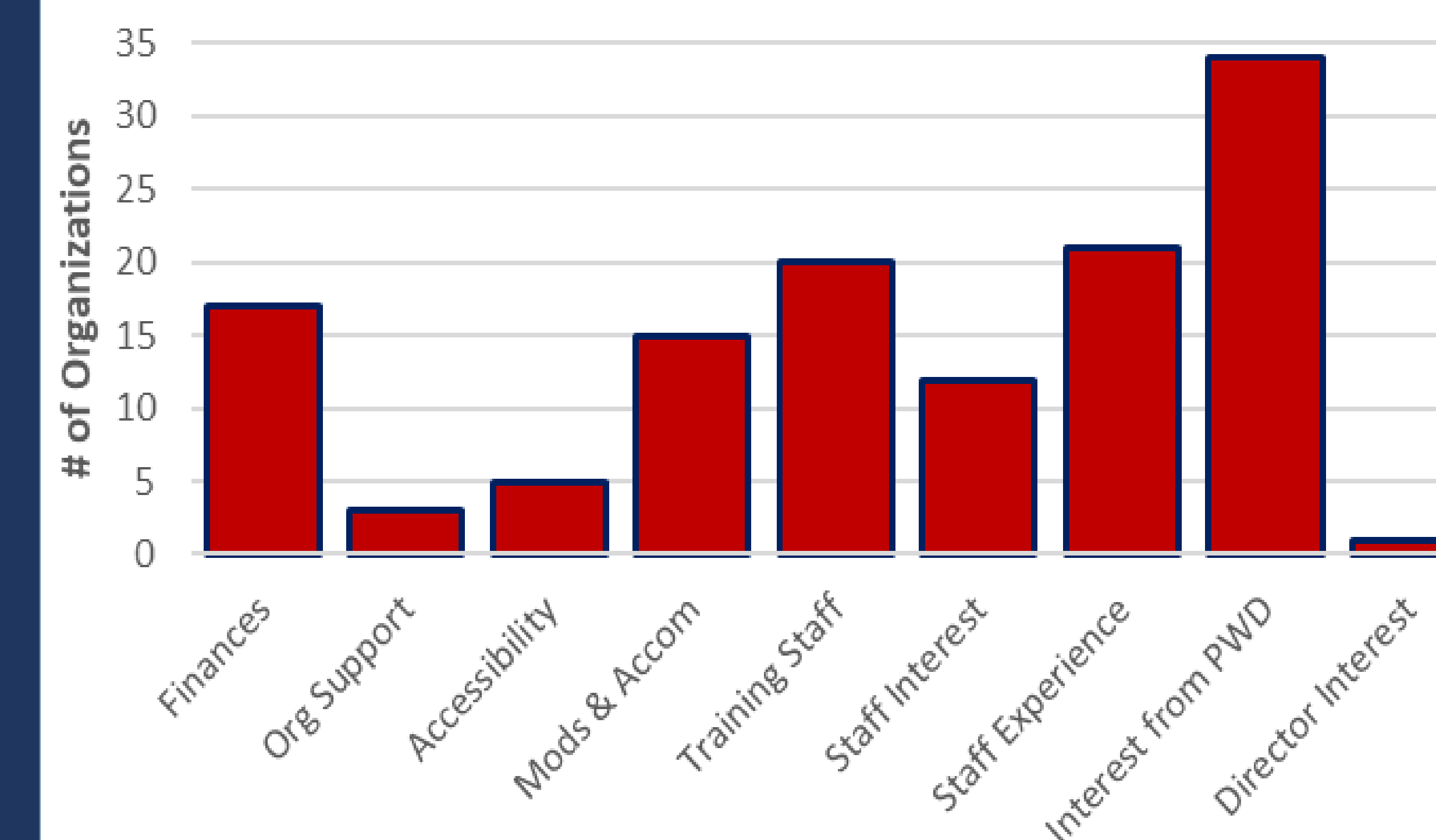
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RESULTS

- 92% of organizations offered programs for CWD
- 3.3% of children participating in Aquatic programs are CWD (median, IQR: 7.6)

- ↑ director age associated w/ ↑ participation
- ↑ organization size associated w/ ↓ participation

Organization's Top Limitation to Participation



DISCUSSION

- Only 3.3% of the kids participating in aquatic programs are CWD. **This is significantly lower than their representation in national data.**
- **Interest in aquatic programs** from CWD is biggest barrier as cited by organization, which conflicts with parent reported barriers.
- **Challenges with staff training and experience** is also a substantial limiting factors
- Study Limitations include recall and selection bias.
- Further studies and interventions should address these contrasting perceptions, incorporating the voices of both organization and families of CWD.

References

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