

UNIVERSAL CHANGE ROOM INCLUSIVITY AND USE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AQUATIC CENTRE

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The purpose of this study is to conduct semi-structured qualitative surveys at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Aquatic centre in order to gain insight how UBC and the aquatic centre can improve knowledge behind the intention of inclusive changing space and ways to increase the use (Thomas, 2015).

This research project was completed in partnership with the University of British Columbia's Social Ecological Economical Developmental Studies (SEEDS) program whom create partnerships on campus with students, staff and community partners to further impact change on campus through policy change (SEEDS, 2018). In respect to this project, we partnered with UBCs recreation department to analyse the impact of the universal change room initiative in the aquatic center 2 years post opening.

METHODS:

The purpose of this study is to determine how patrons, specifically older populations aged 40+, of the University of British Columbia (UBC) aquatic center perceive the Universal change rooms with regards to accessibility, intended purpose, comfort and user experiences of the space. We gathered qualitative information, through written surveys (Thomas, 2015).

All participants were asked the same broad questions about their knowledge of the universal change rooms space. Only participants who are aware that the change rooms are universally accessible to all groups. The surveys prompted for participant identification and written consent to start the survey (CITE).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS CHALLENGES

Amount of Participants: Not all pool users wanted to take part in our study, they wanted to use the facility as they intended. We had limited time to collect our study, adding more days to collect data would inevitably add to our sample size.

Disinterest in study: Some swim patrons were unwilling willing to spend the time to fill out the surveys, sign the consent form or didn't have an opinion on the Universal change rooms.

Diversity: None of the participants identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2+) (ok2bme,2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

We surveyed a total of 11 patrons though random sampling at the UBC Aquatic Centre on Tuesday March 12th, between 9am and 10.30am during the senior fit time slot. Data collected from the 11 participants were collected though paper based surveys and transcribed onto a word document. We hypothesized that the older demographic would be slightly more unaware of the purpose and overall idea of the universal change rooms than the younger populations on the University campus.

Our respondents provided us with 2 varieties of identification; male and female. Out of the 11 surveyed, 3 were female identifying and 8 identified as male. While the mean age of the males was 44.28 and the mean age of the females was 48 years of age.

Our first question of the survey asked the participants preferred gender. The idea behind making the participants identify their orientation was to be aware who exactly in the population we were surveying and how their gender might affect their views on the Universal change room.

MAJOR THEMES IN THE STUDY

(1) Majority of the population is aware about change rooms; (2) Older population prefer gender specific change rooms; (3) The majority of people do not feel well informed about the universal change rooms and their purpose; (4) The signage needs to be more clear and concise.

Research shows that some students have to travel far out of their way just to use a bathroom they feel comfortable using. Campuses are starting to make changes, making single gender washrooms into single stall, lockable washrooms for any gender (Kozub, 2018). Campus locker rooms have also been a large issue for transgender students as most spaces do not offer much privacy. Facilities that don't offer much privacy create unsafe and awkward situations as it may out transgender students. "This results in the majority of transgender students not partaking in physical activity" (Beemyn, 2005) we can effectively educate and promote the use of the universal change rooms that are in place at the UBC Aquatic Center.

While the findings of our study are limited, due to the size of our participant sample, we believe that replicating the study on a larger scale would provide relevant insights for making the UBC aquatic centre more inclusive and understood.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1 INCLUSIVE SIGNAGE

The first recommendation is to have more clear and concise signage. Though our research we found that aquatic centre patrons preferred signage that clearly stated though writing or photos who is welcome into the space.

The term Universal change room may not be universally known. Terms like "Gender Neutral" and "All Gender" were preferred by the participants in our study.



2 EMPLOYEE EDUCATION

All staff working at the Aquatic Center are knowledgeable in the practices of diversity and inclusion, specifically surrounding the LGBTQ2+ community. By ensuring that the staff are educated enough of the subject matter is key in terms of language used and inclusive behaviours and a general presence that exudes inclusivity. To ensure that all staff are up to standards with those qualities we suggest that the management staff offer a mandatory inclusivity workshop put on by Qmunity called Queer Competency Training. The Queer Competency Trainings are experimental workshops to help one understand diversity and make your workplace or organization more inclusive for queer, trans, and Two-Spirit clients and staff

3 ACCESSABLE INFORMATION

Aquatic Center should look into would be having educational facts that are bulleted at the entrance of the Aquatic Center to inform the public on the stigmas and issues that are faced by the LGBTQ2+ community in regards to physical activity and inclusivity. This would create a central place where patrons would have full access to information about the intentions behind the changerooms and how it can be effectively used by all groups and people.

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Top Photo: <https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/mj-ma-ubc-aquatic-centre-universal-change-room/>

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