

# Fee-waived virtual 5K races allow increased participation compared to in-person races during COVID-19

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## BACKGROUND

Children’s participation in physical exercise has numerous benefits and is well-studied. While there are many significant barriers to participation in exercise in young people, one that has arisen lately is the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cherokee Nation developed the “WINGS” program “to promote and give awareness to regular physical activity, health education, and nutrition for a healthier lifestyle.” One of the benefits of this program is fee waivers for participation in selected 5K races, which were transitioned to virtual races during the pandemic.

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether race participation differed in children (17 years and under) who were given fee-waivers to virtual races compared to those who signed up for normal in-person races.



## DATA ACQUISITION

Data from selected races was retrieved from public databases containing specific event information

- oksportsandfitness.com
- tatur.org
- <http://www.onlineraceresults.com>



## METHODS

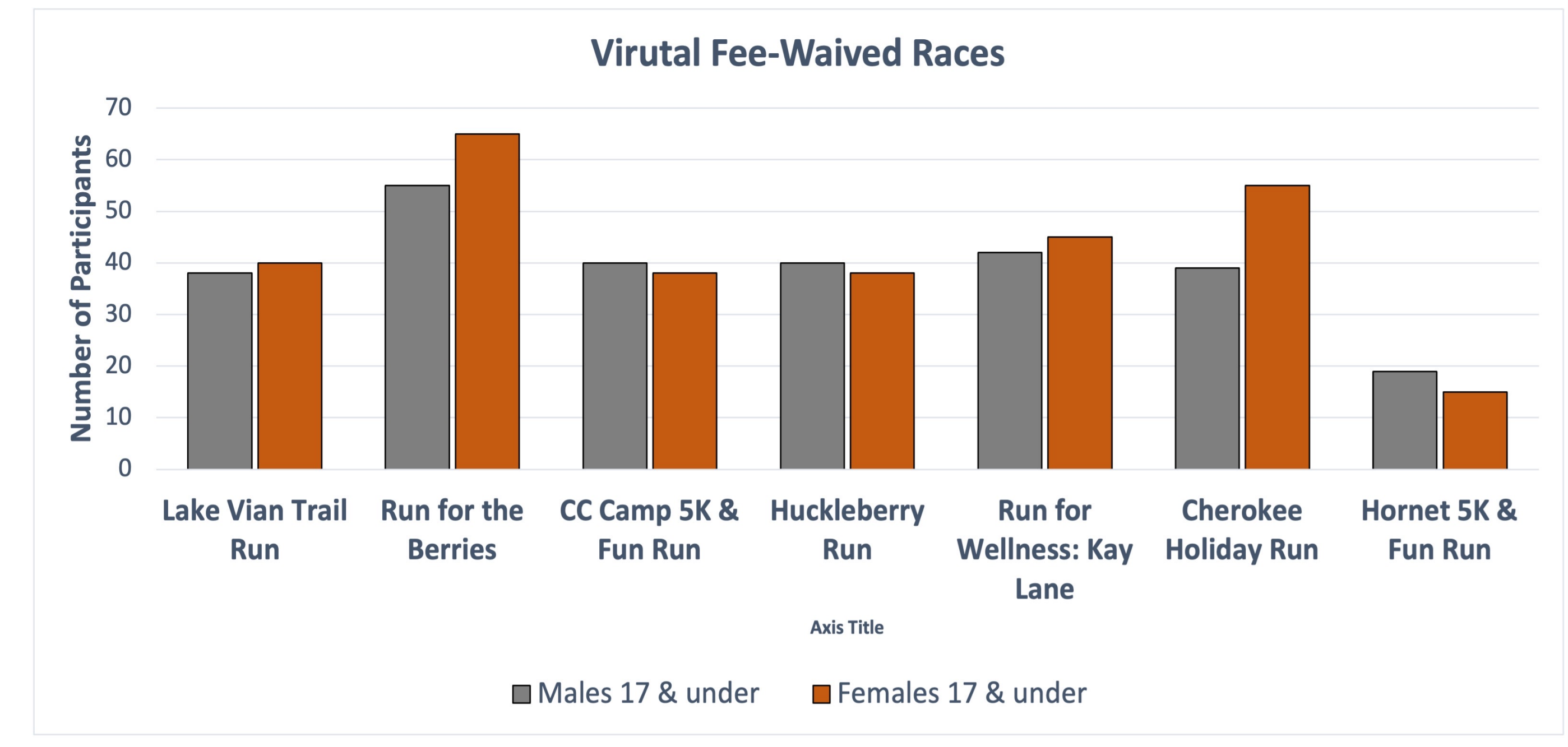
5k participation data was collected for seven virtual fee-waived races and seven in-person non-fee-waived races using public databases for the following groups:

1. Males age 8-17 (fee-waived)
2. Females age 8-17 (fee-waived)
3. Males age 8-17 (non-fee-waived)
4. Females age 8-17 (non-fee-waived)

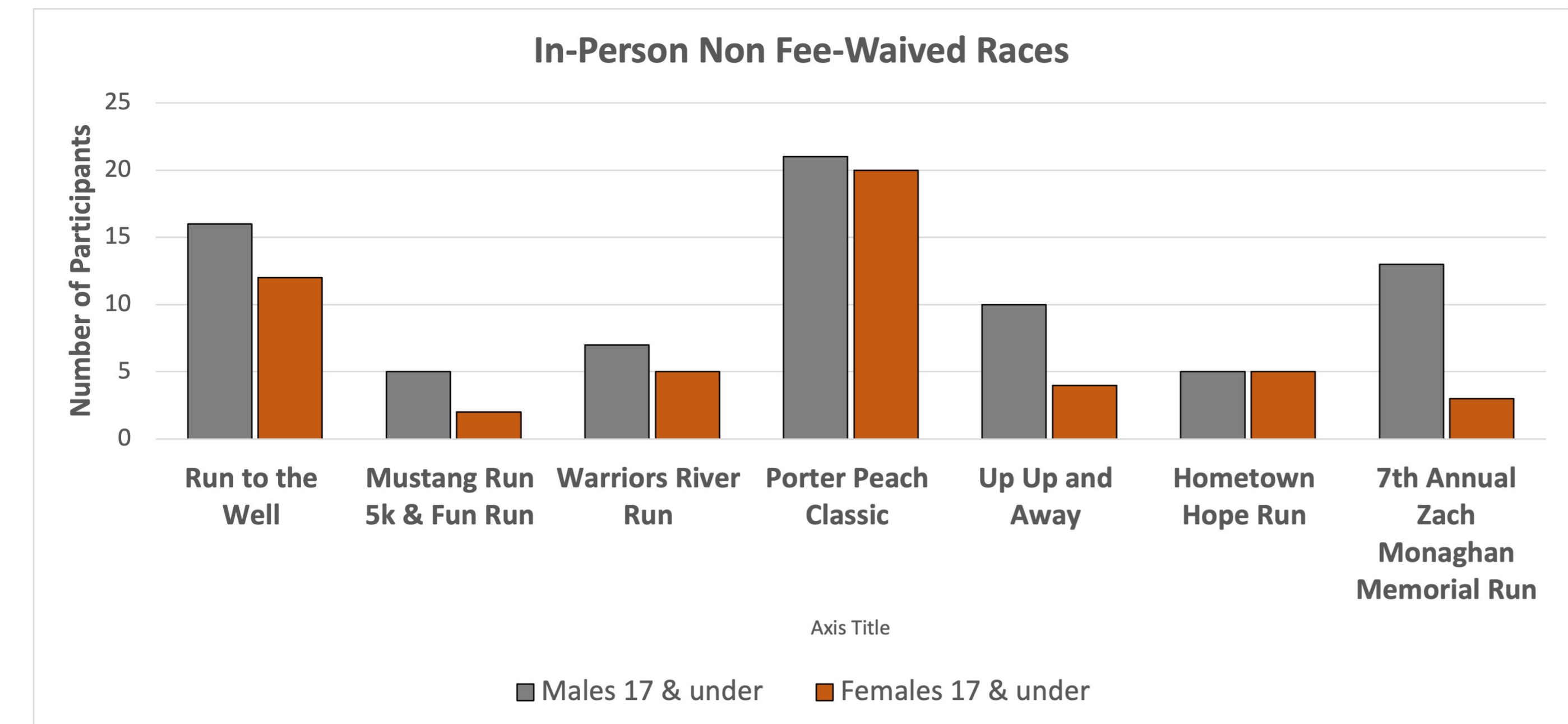
The selected races occurred during the same month and took place during 2021 in different areas of Oklahoma.

Male and female participation in the age group of 17 years and under was analyzed.

## RESULTS



In the seven WINGS 5k virtual fee-waived races, it was found that 273 males and 296 females (17 and under) participated in the 5k races.



In the seven in-person 5k non-fee waived races, it was found that 77 males and 51 females (17 and under) participated in the 5k races.

Of the seven WINGS 5k virtual fee-waived races there was a total of 569 males and females (17 and under). Whereas in the seven in-person 5k non-fee waived races there was a total of 128 males and females (17 and under). Participation rates of the 5k virtual fee-waived races were greater than the participation rates of the in-person non-fee waived races.

## CONCLUSION

The WINGS program, even when offering its races in a virtual format, is able to increase participation in 5K events for children 17 years and under compared to in-person 5K races held in the same month in a similar location where the fee is not waived. This program allows children to continue exercising during the pandemic and reduce the barrier to exercise caused by COVID-19.

Race directors and policy makers should take into consideration that not only the pandemic, but registration fees is a major barrier to participating in 5k’s for youths 17 and under on a national level.

Future investigations will be focused towards investigating whether race participation differs on a national average in fee-waived and non-fee-waived races.

