

Relationship Between Community Mobility & Community Participation Among Young Adults With Autism

Elizabeth Pfeiffer, PhD, OTR/L, BCP¹, Eugene Bruisilovskiy², Mark Salzer, PhD², Amber Davidson Pomponio²

¹Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, USA; ²Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2024.78S2-RP7](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2024.78S2-RP7)

Date presented: March 23, 24

Primary Author and Speaker: Elizabeth Pfeiffer, bpfeiffe@temple.edu

PURPOSE: Greater levels of community mobility are associated with participation in important activities such as employment and social engagement¹. Autistic adults are less likely to engage in their communities than their peers², although there is limited empirical research examining the relationship between participation and community mobility. This study used Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology to track various dimensions of community mobility and community participation in a sample of autistic individuals.

DESIGN: A correlational study was completed with a sample of 63 autistic adults recruited through organizations that provide transitional services.

METHOD: Consented participants were provided with a GPS-enabled cell phone that tracked their mobility over a two-week period. Data was collected using spatiotemporal data algorithms on the total number of destinations and the median activity space area. Community participation was evaluated using the Temple University Community Participation measure, which assesses amount, importance and sufficiency of participation in 26 areas. Pearson correlations were used to examine the associations between community mobility and community participation variables.

RESULTS: Moderate and statistically significant associations were found between the community mobility and community participation variables. Amount of participation had a correlation of $r=0.48$ ($p<.001$) with the total number of destinations, and a correlation of $r=0.32$ ($p<.001$) with total distance traveled. There were also significant relationships between destinations traveled and the breadth ($r=.56$, $p<.001$) and sufficiency ($r=.44$, $p<.01$) of participation.

CONCLUSION: Results identified a significant relationship between community mobility and participation. OT interventions are needed to support community mobility when providing services for autistic adults, due to the potential impact on participation in key health and transition outcomes.

References

- Song, W., Shea, L., Nonnemacher, S.L., Bruisilovskiy, E., Townly, G., & Salzer, M. (2022). Community Participation Comparison Between Adults on the Autism Spectrum and Adults in the General Population. *J Autism Dev Disord* 52, 1610–1621. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05059-9>
- Song, W., Shea, L., Nonnemacher, S. L., Brusilovskiy, E., Townley, G., & Salzer, M. S. (2021). Community participation comparison between adults on the autism spectrum and adults in the general population. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05059-9>