

# A Look at Leisure

## Facilities-Based Participation

### Introduction

The *A Look at Leisure* series has presented summaries of the results produced from the *Alberta Recreation Survey* since 1981. The *Alberta Recreation Survey* is conducted every four years using a mail survey to a representative sample of Alberta households. The most recent survey was conducted in 2004.

The Bulletins have covered a variety of topics including participation by Albertans in recreational activities, reasons for taking part, constraints, favourite activities, and trends in preferences. This is Bulletin No. 53 and presents results for Albertans' participation in facility-based activities, a full list of which is included as an appendix to this bulletin.

### Overview of Facility-Based Participation

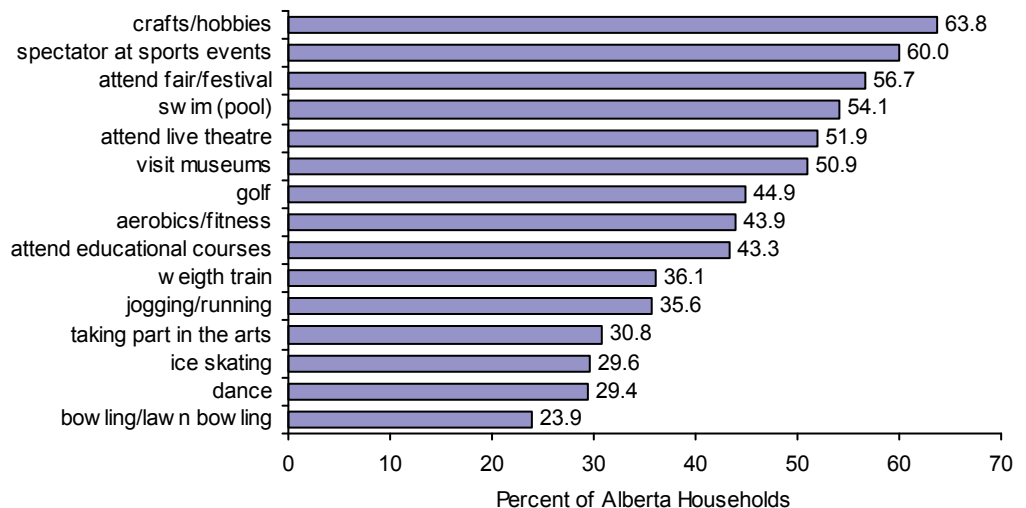
The 2004 *Alberta Recreation Survey* asked respondents about their participation in 37 activities that are classed as facility-based pursuits. The activities that attracted the highest rates of household participation are summarized by Chart 1.

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Chart 1

Participation in the 15 Leading Facility-Based Activities



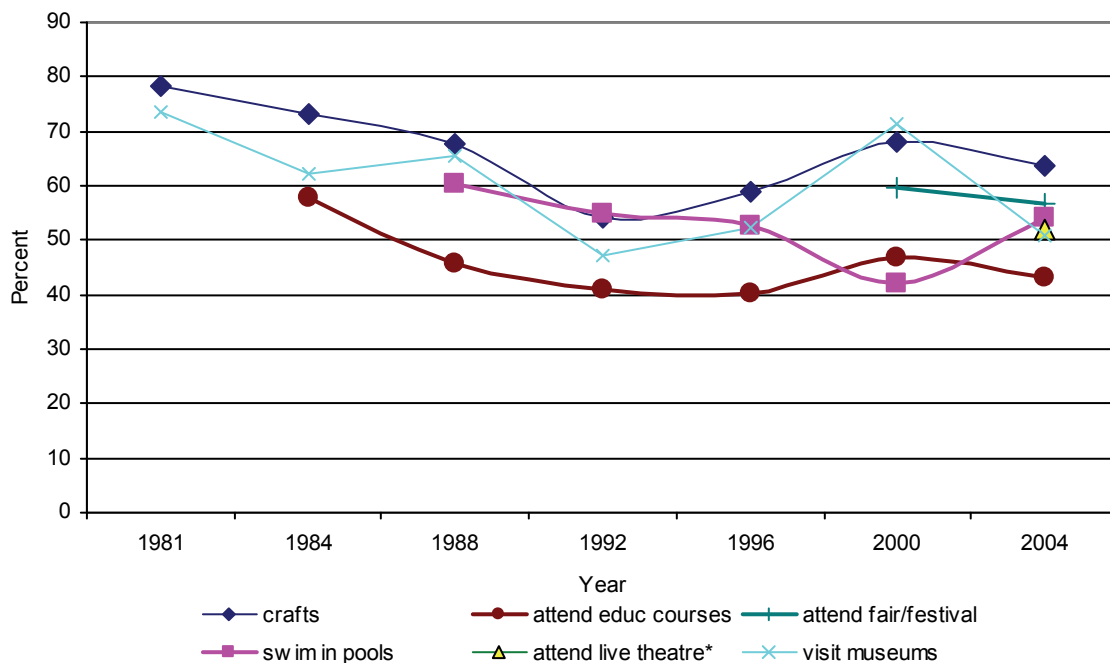
The leading facility-based activities reflect Albertans' interest in keeping the mind active as well as the body. Crafts and hobbies ranks first at 63.8%, followed by being a spectator at a sports event (60.0%). Ranked third is attending a fair or festival (56.7%) followed by swimming in pools (54.1%), attending live theatre (51.9%) and visiting a museum/art gallery (50.9%)<sup>1</sup>.

The balance of the top 10 ranked facility-based activities is made of pursuits that provide participants specifically with physical benefits. Golf (44.9%) and aerobics/fitness/aquasize/yoga (43.9%) are the most popular with weight training (36.1%), and jogging/running (35.6%) all involving about one-third of Alberta households.

## Trends in Participation

Of the leading facility-based activities in the 2004 *Alberta Recreation Survey*, all experienced a decline in participation through the 1980's before stabilizing in the 1990's. Visiting a museum/art gallery reached a peak in 2000 but dropped back in 2004<sup>2</sup>. By contrast, swimming reached a low point of below 50% in 2000 before increasing above 50% in 2004. By 2004, none of the leading activities have experienced participation rates above the reported between 1981 and 1988.

**Chart 2**  
Participation in the Highest Rated Facility-Based Activities,  
1981-2004



<sup>1</sup>Attending live theatre and visiting a museum/art gallery were identified as separate activities for the 2004 *Alberta Recreation Survey* but had previously been treated as a combined activity.

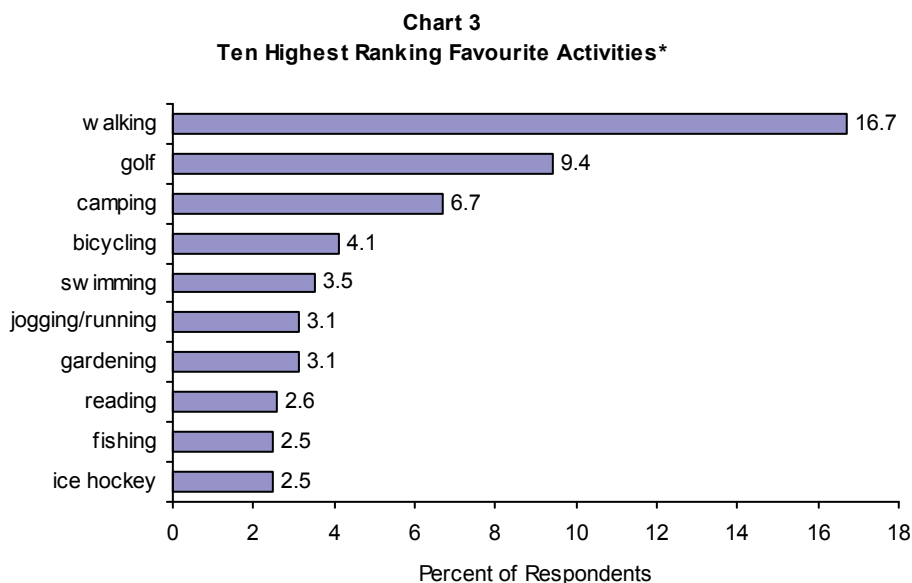
<sup>2</sup>A possible reflection of the separation of attending live theatre from visiting a museum/art gallery.

Some other trends of note for activities outside of the top five include:

- Aerobics/fitness had a participation rate of 44% in 1984 but this dropped to less than 40% during the 1990s although it has recovered to 43.9% in the 2004 survey.
- Jogging/running had a participation rate of 53.6% in 1981 but this dropped to 27.6% in 1992 and has since recovered to 35.6% in 2004.
- Skateboarding has grown from 7.5% in 1996 to 10.4% in 2004.
- Soccer reached a peak in 2000 with a participation rate of 23% but this dropped back to 19.3% in the 2004 survey.
- Attending education courses dropped from 57.9% in 1984 to 40.4% in 1996 and has since increased to 46.8% in 2000 and is at 43.3% in the 2004 survey.

## Albertans' Favourite Activities

The *Alberta Recreation Survey* gives respondents the opportunity to report their favourite activities among all the activities in which they take part. Chart 3 shows that of all favourite activities reported, facility-based activities represent four of the top 10, with golf (second, at 9.4%) being the highest ranked following by swimming (fifth, 3.5%). Jogging/running is ranked sixth (3.1%) and ice hockey is tenth (2.5%).

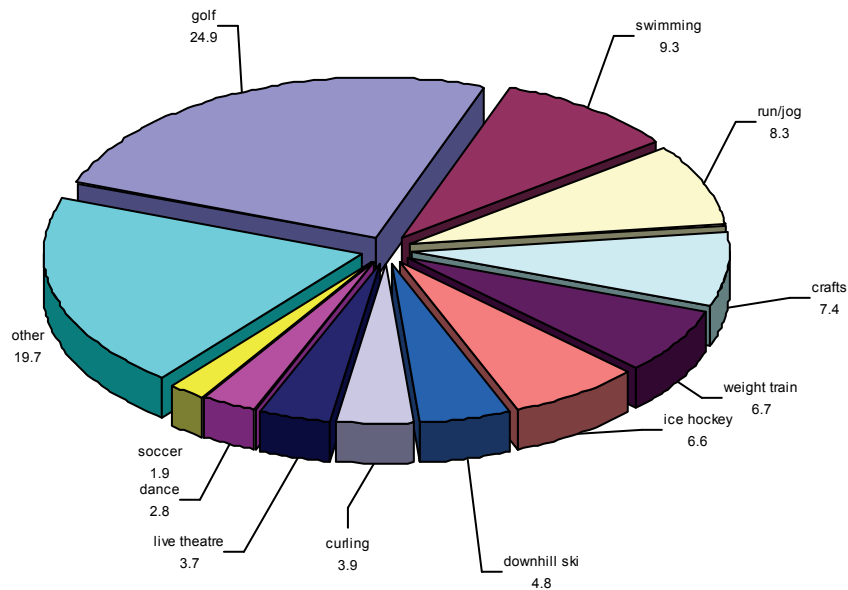


\* based on activities reported as 'first favourite'

## Favourite Facility-Based Pursuits

Facility-based activities represent 42.1% of all activities reported as favourites. Approximately one-quarter of respondents identified golf (24.9%) as their favourite facility-based activity followed by swimming (9.3%) and jogging/running at 8.3% (Chart 4).

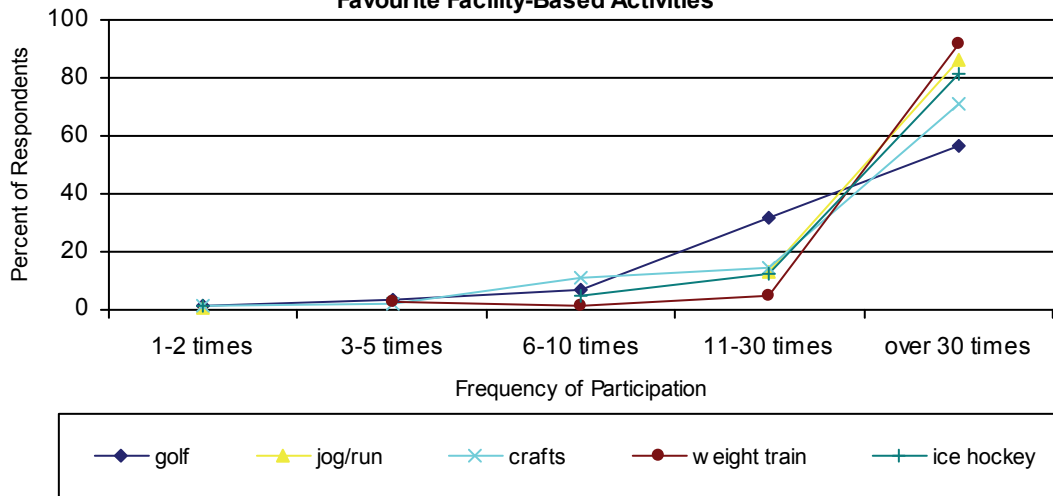
Chart 4  
Favourite Facility-Based Activities, 2004



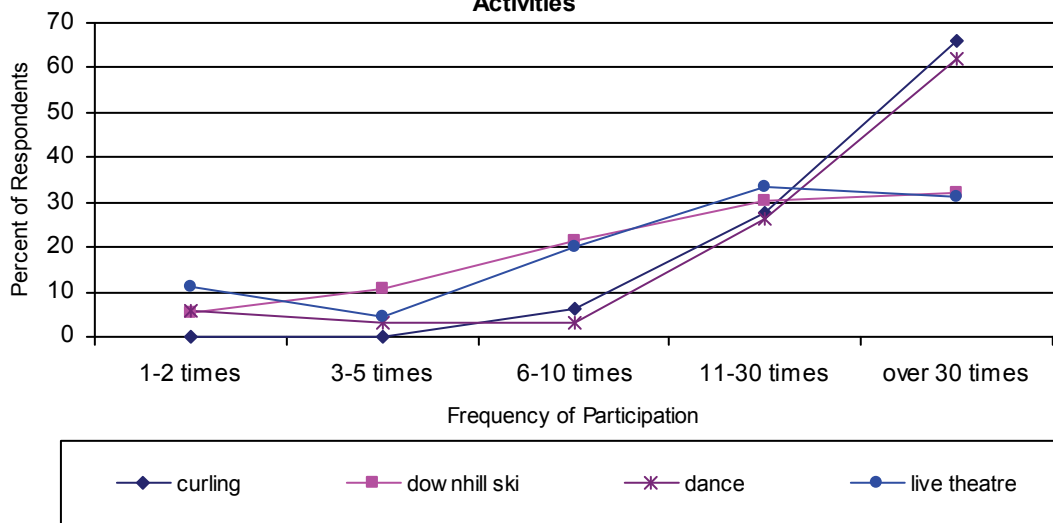
Among the five highest ranked favourite facility-based activities, over 50% of participants took part more than 30 times in the preceding 12 months (Chart 5). This is particularly true for those who weight train as 91.4% of this group participated more than 30 times. The group that jogs/runs is a close second with 86% having taken part at least 30 times and 81.3% of those who identify hockey as their favourite facility-based activity, have taken part on a similarly regular basis.

Among the other most popular favourite facility-based activities, curling and dancing are taken part in at least 30 times by 64% and 61.1%, respectively (Chart 6). Approximately one-third of those who identify attending live theatre (31%) as a favourite took part at least 30 times in the 12 months prior to the survey, as do 32% of those who select downhill skiing as favourite.

**Chart 5**  
**Frequency of Participation in Preceding Twelve Months for Highest Ranking Favourite Facility-Based Activities**



**Chart 6**  
**Frequency of Participation for Other High Ranking Favourite Facility-Based Activities**



## Profile of Favourite Facility-Based Activities

A closer look at the make up of respondents who reported their first favourite facility-based activities is summarized in Table 1. There are some specific demographic characteristics that distinguish some activities from others. The profiles associated with gender, age, household composition and location are presented below.

### Gender

The largest proportion of respondents to identify ice hockey (86%), golf (74%) and weight training (70%) were males. Males were also the most likely to identify downhill skiing and curling as their favourite facility-based activities although they represented just over half of all participants.

Females are the most dominant gender to identify favourites as dancing (82%), attending live theatre (74%), swimming (69%) and crafts (63%).

### Age

Favourite facility-based activities appear to reflect the age of respondents. Ice hockey is popular with those under the age of 45 while golf is preferred by those over 45. The over 55 age group is the most likely to prefer curling, attending live theatre, crafts and dancing. Two activities, downhill skiing and dancing appear to have appeal to younger adults (under 35) as well as older adults (46 to 55 for skiing and over 56 for dancing).

### Household Composition

Stage in the life cycle also appears to relate to activity preferences. Couples with no children prefer golf, while single adults are most likely to enjoy weight training and attending live theatre. Single adults enjoy dance, which is also favourite among households with only adults who also included downhill skiing, crafts and curling as favourites. Ice hockey is a favourite for households with children, probably reflecting a child's participation as well as that of parents.

### Location

There appears to be a regional variation in favourite facility-based activity preferences. Edmonton residents are the most likely to prefer weight training and attending live theatre. Calgarians have a preference for downhill skiing and crafts while residents in other parts of Alberta prefer ice hockey, golf, curling and dancing.

Table 1  
Demographic Profile of Leading Favourite Facility-Based Activities

Favourite Facility-Based Activities									
	Golf	Jogging/ Male/Female	Crafts/Hobbies	Weight	Ice Hockey	Downhill Ski	Curling	Attend Live	Dancing
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Male/Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
<b>Age Group</b>	Over 45	26 to 35 46 to 55	56 to 65	26 to 55	45 and under	26 to 35 46 to 55	Over 55	Over 55	35 and under over 55
<b>Household</b>	Couple, no	Couple with	Adults only	Single Adult	Couple with	Adults only	Adults only	Single Adult	Single adult
<b>Location</b>	Other Alberta	Edmonton	Calgary	Edmonton	Other Alberta	Calgary	Other Alberta	Edmonton	Other Alberta

## Implications for Practitioners

When we look at the leading facility-based favourite activities we find a mix of pursuits that are oriented to the outdoors, the arts, and those that rely more on community complexes. The diversity in the range of interests means that an equally diverse range of facilities is required.

One of the influencing features on the demand for recreational pursuits is not so much the magnitude of demand as the choice of where participants take part. Kyle, Bricker, Graefe and Wickham (2004) recognize that setting or environment plays an important role in choice. Participants like to find a venue that is comfortable for them, and offers an environment where they can relax and fully enjoy their participation. This emotional link can be strengthened when participants take part with other family members or with friends (Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham, 2004, p. 136). Recreation facilities, then, can provide more than just venues for single activities.

A key challenge in Alberta is the aging recreational infrastructure and the need for updating community facilities. A recent review of the condition of facilities across the province concluded that over \$327 million would be required to bring facilities up to standard, or \$2.8 billion for complete replacement (ARPA, 2006, p. 9). This need is identified despite the support of past and current government programs such as Community Facility Enhancement Program, the Urban Parks Program and the Municipal Recreation/Tourism Areas Program. (ARPA, 2006 p. 1).

Meeting future infrastructure needs means having facilities that include flexibility in how they can be used in order that development and operating costs can be optimized (Webster, 2003, p. 33). Large scale multiplexes have been in vogue since the mid-1990's and accommodate a range of active and passive recreational opportunities. One benefit they offer is the ability to change from one use (e.g., indoor soccer fields) into alternative uses (e.g., tennis courts or exhibition space) using a fieldhouse concept (City of Edmonton, 2004).

The need for flexible space further reflects the changing demographic profile of the population. The popularity of weight training among older adults noted in the 2004 *Alberta Recreation Survey* results, demonstrates an interest among baby-boomers in staying fit and healthy. Likewise, the interest in relatively passive social activities such as crafts and hobbies means that space that can accommodate such activities will be beneficial.

Recreation facilities, therefore, are becoming more complex in the range of amenities and services they offer. Facilities will not only accommodate traditionally active pursuits like hockey but will offer social space and even space for community services such as health centres, libraries, or educational services (Webster, 2003, p. 33). Such diversity will require partnerships between stakeholders and associated joint planning strategies (Hildebaugh, 2003, p. 13). Beyond planning operational partnerships will be needed to ensure community needs are met.

Partnerships will be needed and will include, for example, recreation service providers from government and the private sector, school boards, social and community agencies, and contracted operators of food and janitorial services. Above all, a key partner will always be the users or taxpayers who today are actively engaged in the planning, design and operational phases (Webster, 2003, p. 36).



## Conclusions

Facility-based activities continue to be popular among Albertans. Traditional activities such as ice hockey and downhill skiing are among the favourite activities but also popular are activities such as weight training and crafts and hobbies. This diversity of interest and the implications associated with the changing demographic profile of the population, means that facilities will have to be flexible in order to accommodate the variety of interest. How such needs will be met, either through commitments to retrofitting or building new facilities will continue to be a key challenge for recreation practitioners.

## References

- Alberta Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA). (2006). *Investing in healthy people and communities through community recreation and parks infrastructure*. [http://www.arpaonline.ca/ad/ad\\_inf.html](http://www.arpaonline.ca/ad/ad_inf.html)
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- Kyle, Gerard, Bricker, Kelly, Graefe, Alan, & Wickham, Thomas. (2004). An examination of recreationists relationships with activities and settings. *Leisure Sciences*, 26 (2), 123-142.
- Webster, Bill. (2003, Winter). A look at tomorrow's recreation facilities. *Lifestyle Information Network*. <http://www.lin.ca/resource/html/cpra/lc58.pdf>

### Further Information:

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## **Appendix**

### LIST OF FACILITY-BASED ACTIVITIES

Aerobics/fitness/aquasize/yoga	Downhill skiing	Snowboarding
Archery	Golf	Soccer
Attending educational courses	Gymnastics	Squash
Attending a fair or festival	Horseback riding/trail riding	Swimming (in lakes, rivers, ponds, etc.)
Attending live theatre	Ice hockey	Swimming (in pools)
Attending a sports event as a spectator	Ice skating	Table tennis
Badminton	Jogging/running	Taking part in the arts (e.g., drama, music, drawing, writing)
Basketball	Martial arts	Tennis
Bowling/lawn bowling	Racquetball	Visiting a museum, art gallery
Curling	Ringette	Volleyball
Dancing	Shooting (trap/skeet/target)	Wall climbing
Doing a craft or hobby	Skateboarding	Weight training