

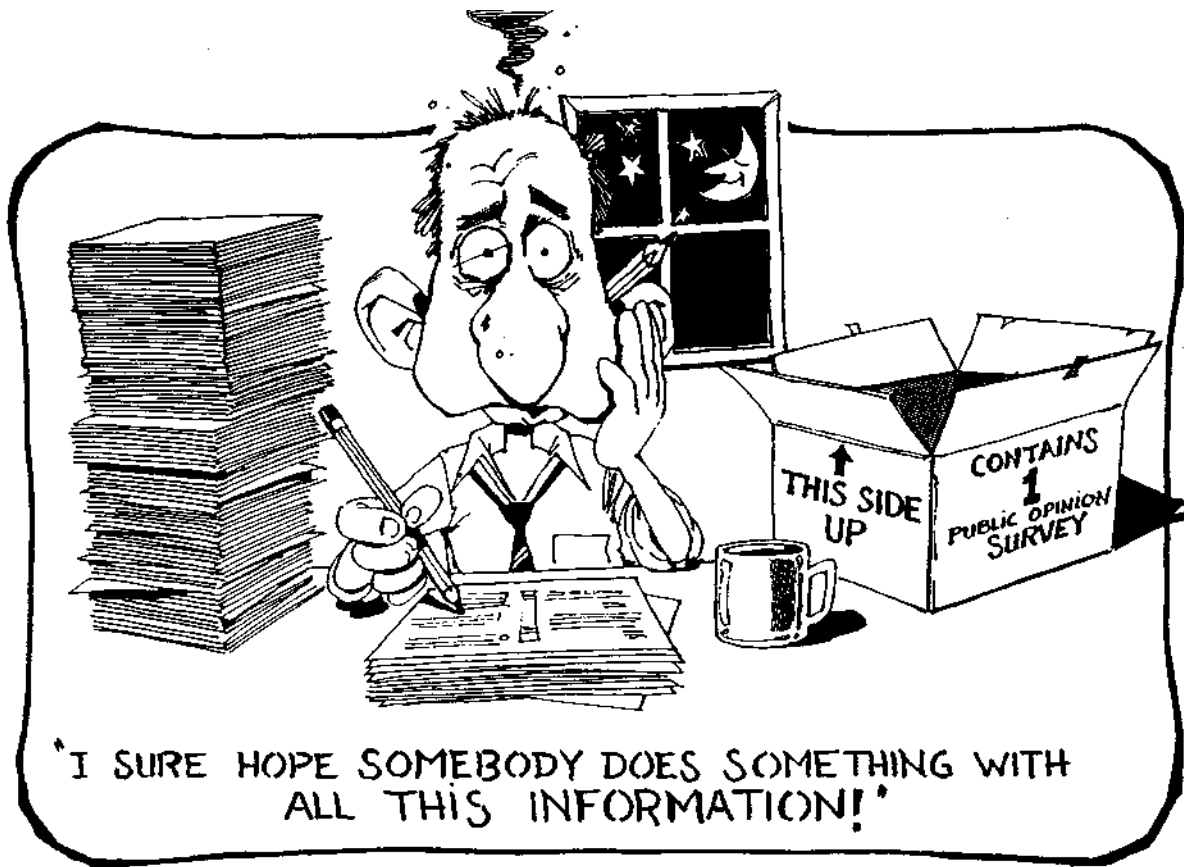
# A Look at Leisure

May, 1993

No. 32

## ANOTHER CHAPTER

Alberta Community Development (formerly Alberta Recreation and Parks) with the help of the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, and of R. Conrad & Associates, has recently completed another province-wide survey - the 1992 Alberta Recreation Survey. Future issues of A Look at Leisure will present the main findings from this survey. They will provide recreation practitioners with up-to-date information on the recreation behaviours and opinions of Albertans. Since this survey is the fourth in a series, we will also be able to provide some insights into recreation trends in the province.



## THE SERIES

The A Look at Leisure bulletins provide a general description of research findings from the series of general recreation surveys. Those surveys conducted to date are:

The 1981 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation

The 1984 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation

The 1988 General Recreation Survey The 1992

Alberta Recreation Survey

In addition to Bulletin No. 32, which introduces the 1992 series, further A Look at Leisure issues are planned for 1993-95. Each will describe the findings from one aspect of the survey. Wherever possible, comparisons will be made with results of the 1981, 1984 and 1988 surveys. Information from other current sources is also provided in the bulletins.

Each bulletin also outlines the implications of the survey findings for recreation programming and planning in Alberta. Recreation practitioners are faced with meeting changing consumer preferences in a world of evolving technologies and social concerns. These research findings can provide practitioners with a clearer understanding of the current preferences and behaviours of their clientele. They can also assist agencies to evaluate their programs to see if they meet consumer needs, and to prepare for future changes.

## THE 1992 SURVEY

The 1992 Alberta Recreation Survey gathered current information on the recreation behaviours and views of Albertans. Topics covered in the 1992 survey were:

Participation in 65 leisure activities;

Favorite leisure or recreational activities;

Reasons for participating;

Desired activities;

Reasons for not taking part in activities;

Volunteer involvement;

Opinions about the provision of services and activities in provincial parks and recreation areas;

Demographic characteristics of households and respondents.



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The information obtained in this survey will help to answer questions such as:

What activities will be in demand for the future?

What activities seem to be losing participants?

What effect will the aging population profile have on recreation participation?

Are there any barriers to participation that can be reduced by effective programming or improved leisure education?

Why do people take part in leisure activities? What needs are being met by participation in specific leisure activities?

What does the public feel about various services and activities in provincial parks?

Can the Alberta public be divided into key target groups for marketing and promoting recreation activities?

## LOOKING AT TRENDS

Many of the topics included in the 1992 Alberta Recreation Survey were also covered in the 1981, 1984 and 1988 Public Opinion Surveys on Recreation.

While direct comparisons are impossible to make on all topics, we can make some indirect comparisons across this eleven year period. We can identify what recreation behaviours are stable and where changes are occurring. The Alberta general recreation survey series appears to be the only one in Canada to provide this long-term perspective.

## HOW IT WAS DONE

The survey was designed and administered by staff of the department. It was conducted between March and July, 1992. Questionnaires were mailed to 10,299 randomly selected Alberta households. Wrong addresses and other non-contacts reduced this to an effective sample size of 10,064 households. Questionnaires were returned by 5,598 households, resulting in a response rate of 56%.

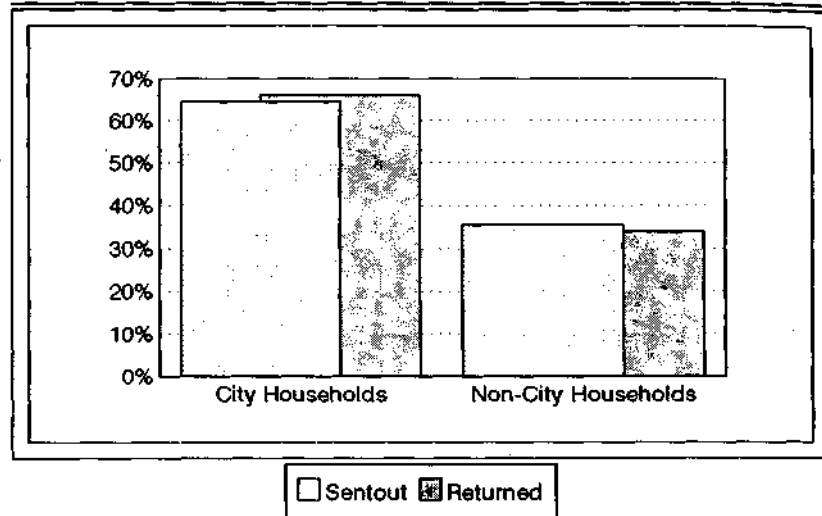
To date, a descriptive summary of the study findings (including basic frequencies and percentages) has been produced. With more detailed analysis, it will also be possible to look at relationships among the variables. For example, it will be possible to see how participation patterns or opinions vary for different types of respondents.



## WHO ANSWERED?

Responses were received from all areas of the province. Figure 1 shows the response rates according to whether the household was located in one of the cities or not. As can be seen, the rates are about the same for both. This shows that the response is generally representative of the population distribution in Alberta.

### Figure 1: Respondent Distribution



ARS '92

Information was obtained about respondent and household characteristics. These socio-demographic variables are a useful way of describing sub-groups in the survey sample. We can then look at similarities and differences in recreation behaviours across various market groups. Many of the respondent profiles also provide a good reflection of socio-demographic patterns and trends in society.

## GENDER

This year, the proportion of male (49.6%) and female (50.4%) respondents was almost equal. This is close to the Alberta population profile of 49.9% females and 50.1% males. In the surveys conducted before 1988, over 60% of the respondents were male. In order to reduce this male bias we changed the sampling procedure slightly in 1988 by asking that the questionnaire be completed by the next adult who will have a birthday. The new method seems to yield better results.

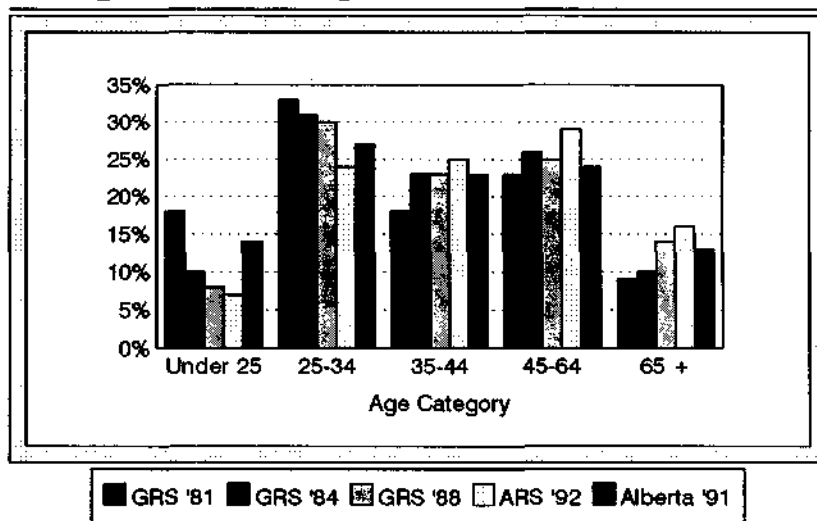


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## AGE

Age is an important factor in recreation participation. The percentages of respondents in various age categories are shown in Figure 2. For comparison, age profiles are provided for the four survey samples and the 1991 Alberta population. Generally, the percentage of younger adult respondents has declined over the survey period, while that of older adults has risen. The gradual change in the age structure of the survey respondents is consistent with the overall provincial trend toward an aging population.

### Figure 2: Age of Respondent



1992 Alberta Recreation Survey

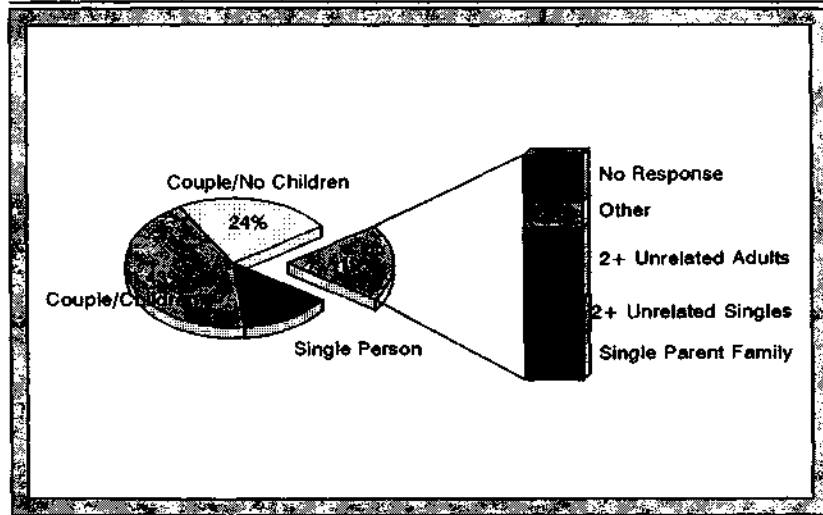
## HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

Details of respondents' household structure are summarized in Figure 3. More than one-half of the households consisted of couples with children or single parent families. Just under one-quarter consisted of couples with no children. The proportion of respondent households consisting of couples with children has been gradually declining since 1981.



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### Figure 3: Household Structure



ARS '92

Twenty percent of the households had children under 6 years of age; 30% had children between 6 and 17 years of age. This is a slight drop from 1981 and 1984.

#### EDUCATION

More than half of the survey respondents had some post-secondary education at a technical school, college, or university. This is similar to the profile seen in the previous surveys and parallels the education profile for the Alberta population.

#### INCOME

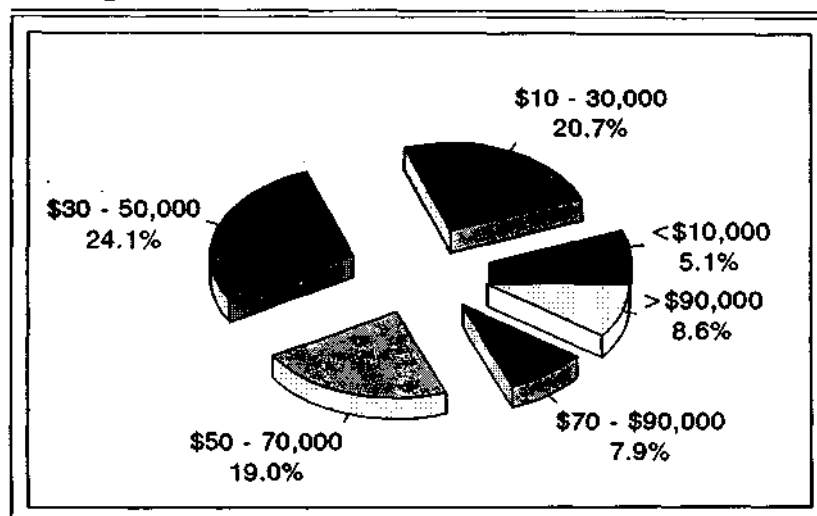
The household income distribution of the sample is shown in Figure 4. Middle and upper income groups were slightly over-represented in the survey compared to the Alberta population.

More than two-thirds of the responding households reported more than one wage-earner. This picture is consistent from 1981 to 1992.



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## Figure 4: Household Income



ARS '92

### LIMITATIONS

As with all surveys, results should be interpreted with caution, since there are many factors which cannot be controlled in research of this nature. For example, changing economic and social trends may affect survey responses. Limitations which apply to specific data will be discussed in appropriate bulletins.

The survey looks at general recreation issues on a broad provincial and regional level. It is not able to provide specific information on localized topics of interest. Recreation practitioners should always assess the degree to which the findings apply to their specific agency or community, and try to supplement the findings with their own local research and observations.

### FUTURE ISSUES

Future topics to look for in the A Look at Leisure series include:

- Participation In Recreation Activities.

What activities have the highest household participation rates in 1992? How do the participation rates compare with those of 1981 and 1984? Can recreation consumer markets be identified?

- Favorite Activities.

Camping, walking for pleasure, and golf rate highly as favorite activities. Various needs are being met by participation in activities. How important are reasons such as physical health or exercise, socializing, and competition?



- Barriers To Participation.

About one-half of the respondents wanted to start a new recreation activity. What are the desired activities? What are the obstacles standing in the way of participation?

- Volunteerism.

Just over one-third of respondents were volunteers. Has participation decreased since 1984? With what kind of groups do the volunteers work? What proportion of volunteers receive training?

MORE INFORMATION

Would you like more information about the A Look at Leisure publication or the background research reports? Do you have any requests for future A Look at Leisure topics? For further information about the survey, or to have your mailing address changed, please contact:

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ISSN 0715-2361



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