

A Look at Leisure

January 1991

No. 29

REGIONAL RECREATION PATTERNS

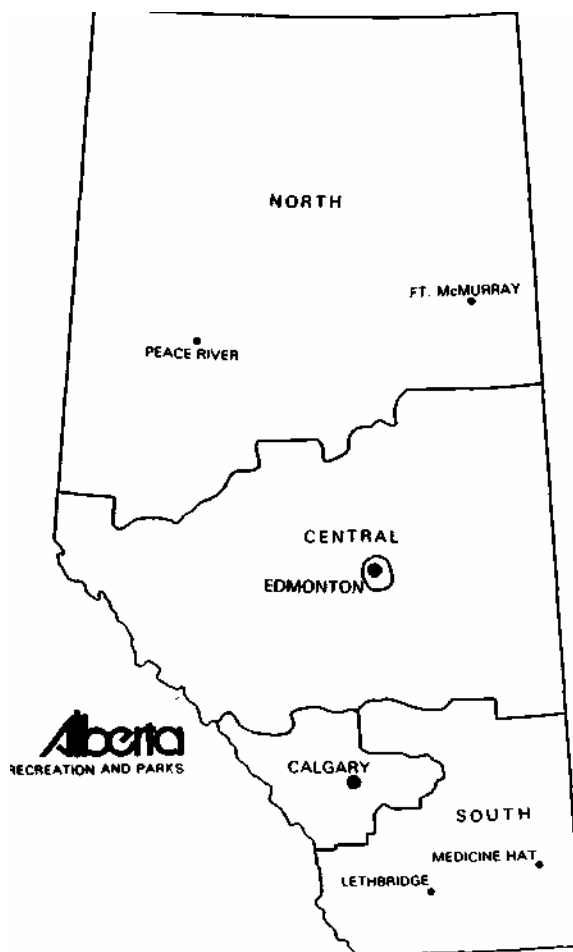
Findings from the 1988 *General Recreation Survey*, conducted by Alberta Recreation and Parks, show that there are variations in recreation patterns across Alberta. This bulletin discusses these patterns and their implications for community recreation services.



INTRODUCTION

The 1988 *General Recreation Survey* obtained information from over 4,000 households, in all areas of Alberta. With this large sample size, it was possible to divide the province into regions, and to look at the recreation behaviours of residents in each region. This analysis provides practitioners with an understanding of the recreation interests of their regional residents, and how these compare to other areas of the province.

Five provincial regions were defined. These were: South, Central, North, Edmonton, and Calgary. The boundaries of each region are shown in the map below.



Appropriate Use of Documents: Documents may be downloaded or printed (single copy only). You are free to edit the documents you download and use them for your own projects, but you should show your appreciation by providing credit to the originator of the document. You must not sell the document or make a profit from reproducing it. You must not copy, extract, summarize or distribute downloaded documents outside of your own organization in a manner which competes with or substitutes for the distribution of the database by the Leisure Information Network (LIN). <http://www.lin.ca>

The results reported in this bulletin are based on the following numbers of survey respondents for each region:

	Number of Respondents	Proportion of Total Sample
South	761	19%
Central	1131	28%
North	334	8%
Calgary	999	25%
Edmonton	786	20%

Some of the highlights from the survey include the following:

- Activities with the highest rates of participation are quite consistent across the province.
- The northern region has relatively high rates of participation in many activities, particularly outdoor pursuits.
- Golf and swimming are two activities which respondents in all areas would like to start.
- The social benefits of recreation participation are particularly important to residents living outside the large urban centres.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES

In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate, from a list of 65 activities, those in which household members had participated during the previous year. Table 1 shows the activities which had the highest rates of participation in each region. Most of the top-ranked activities were quite consistent across the province, although there are some variations in their ranking.

We also compared regional participation rates with overall provincial participation levels, for each activity. For example, 50% of all provincial households reported participation in fishing (see below). Participation in this outdoor pursuit varied from region to region. The highest participation rate was in the northern region (65%), which is well above the provincial level. In contrast, Calgary had the lowest participation (38% of households).



Example: Fishing

Overall provincial rate 50% of households

Regions:

South	55%
Central	56%
North	65%
Calgary	38%
Edmonton	43%

There were several activities which had consistent participation levels in all areas of the province. Among these were: walking for pleasure; swimming (in pools); jogging; ice skating; bicy-

Table 1: Top Activities in Each Region *

South	Central	North	Calgary	Edmonton
Walking	Walking	Walking	Walking	Walking
Driving	Driving	Driving	Driving	Driving
Gardening	Gardening	Gardening	Visiting museums, live theatre	Visiting museums, live theatre
Crafts, hobbies	Crafts, hobbies	Spectator at sports events	Spectator at sports events	Crafts, hobbies
Bicycling	Bicycling	Bicycling	Crafts,hobbies	Gardening
Visiting museums, live theatre	Visiting museums, live theatre	Picnicking in country	Gardening	Bicycling
Spectator at sports events	Spectator at sports events	Crafts, hobbies	Bicycling	Swimming
Swimming	Swimming	Fishing	Swimming	Spectator at sports events
Fishing	Fishing	Camping	Picnicking in country	Educational courses
Picnicking in country	Picnicking in country	Visiting museum, live theatre	Camping	Ice skating
Camping		Swimming	Educational courses	

*Based on proportions of households participating. Ranked in descending order based on participation rates.



Appropriate Use of Documents: Documents may be downloaded or printed (single copy only). You are free to edit the documents you download and use them for your own projects, but you should show your appreciation by providing credit to the originator of the document. You must not sell the document or make a profit from reproducing it. You must not copy, extract, summarize or distribute downloaded documents outside of your own organization in a manner which competes with or substitutes for the distribution of the database by the Leisure Information Network (LIN). <http://www.lin.ca>

cling; bowling; participation in crafts/hobbies; and attending educational courses.

Activities with participation levels above the overall provincial rate are listed for each region in Table 2. The northern region had many activities with relatively high rates of participation. Most of these were outdoor recreation pursuits. Certain team sports were also popular.

The central area of the province also had above-average participation in outdoor pursuits, particularly some water-based activities.

Have there been any changes in regional participation patterns during the 1980s? In order to assess trends, we compared the proportions of participating households in 1981 and 1988. Table 3 shows activities in which increases or decreases in participation were observed. Activities which showed decreases in participation are divided into two groups - moderate and marked declines.

Table 2: Regional Participation Above Provincial Average

South	Central	North	Calgary	Edmonton
Fishing Mountain climbing	Gardening Fishing Swimming in lakes Motorboating Snowmobiling AW, trail biking	Picnicking in country Camping Fishing Hunting Motorboating ATV, trail biking Snowmobiling Cross-country skiing Tobogganing Swimming in lakes Curling Volleyball Softball, baseball Track and field Ice hockey	Picnicking in city Downhill skiing Hiking, backpacking Mountain climbing Spectator at sports events Visiting museums, live theatre Aerobics Squash, racquetball Roller skating Sailing	Picnicking in city Sailing



Increased participation in golf was seen in all regions, except for Calgary. This increase was especially evident in northern Alberta.

There were several activities which showed decreased participation in all regions of the province. The extent of the decreases did vary from region to region, however. For example, jogging showed a moderate decline in Edmonton and Calgary, but a more marked decline in the remaining regions. Football experienced a marked decline in participation in all regions, except for the north, where the decline was more moderate.

Table 3: Changes in Participation in the 1980s

South	Central	North	Calgary	Edmonton
Increase				
Golf	Golf	Golf		Golf
Bicycling		Bicycling		
Walking		Downhill skiing		
Downhill skiing		Video games		
Moderate Decline				
Racquetball	Tennis	Football	Jogging	Jogging
Tennis	Cross-country	Bowling	Racquetball	Badminton
skiing * Backpacking	Drama, arts	Dancing	Tennis	Skateboarding
Dancing			Baseball/softball	Bowling Cross-country skiing *
			Drama, arts	Camping
				Hunting
Marked Decline				
Jogging	Jogging	Jogging	Badminton	Racquetball
Rollerskating	Rollerskating	Rollerskating	Rollerskating	Rollerskating
Rollerskating	Racquetball	Bowling	Bowling	Football
Football	Bowling	Backpacking	Football	Backpacking
	Football Backpacking		Backpacking	Dancing
			Hunting	Curling
			Dancing	

Note: This may be related to annual snow conditions, rather than any long-term trends.



Appropriate Use of Documents: Documents may be downloaded or printed (single copy only). You are free to edit the documents you download and use them for your own projects, but you should show your appreciation by providing credit to the originator of the document. You must not sell the document or make a profit from reproducing it. You must not copy, extract, summarize or distribute downloaded documents outside of your own organization in a manner which competes with or substitutes for the distribution of the database by the Leisure Information Network (LIN). <http://www.lin.ca>

Some changes in participation were more localized. For example/ declining participation in drama and the arts was most evident in Calgary and the central region.

INTEREST IN FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Respondents were asked about activities which they were interested in starting in the future. About one-half of respondents in each region indicated they were interested in a new activity.

The desired activities mentioned most frequently in each region are shown in Table 4. Interest in starting swimming and golf was reported in all regions. Physical fitness/aerobics was desired in all regions, except for the south. Tennis was mentioned as a desired activity more frequently in Edmonton than in other areas of the province.

Table 4: Activities Respondents Would Like to Start

South	Central	North	Calgary	Edmonton
Golf	Golf	Golf	Swimming	Swimming
Swimming	Swimming	Swimming	Golf	Tennis
	Physical fitness/aerobics	Physical fitness/aerobics	Physical fitness/aerobics	Golf
	Downhill skiing	Downhill skiing	Boating	Physical fitness/aerobics
		Cross-country skiing	Cross-country skiing	

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

For the most part, barriers to participation in desired recreation activities were similar across the five regions. The most frequently reported barriers are summarized in Table 5.

The cost of equipment and supplies ranks as the main barrier in all regions of the province. The perception that facilities and recreation areas are overcrowded is a general problem, but appears to be of most concern in Calgary.

Regional residents living away from the large urban centres are most like to encounter a lack of opportunity near home. Lack of partners with whom to participate is a greater problem in Edmonton than elsewhere.



1 Table 5: Main Barriers to Participation in Each Region (in order of importance) I

South	Cost of equipment/supplies; Too busy with work, family; No opportunity near home; Admission fees.
Central	Cost of equipment/ supplies; Too busy with work, family; Recreation facilities overcrowded; No opportunity near home.
North	Cost of equipment/supplies; Too busy with work, family; No opportunity near home; Recreation facilities overcrowded.
Calgary	Cost of equipment/supplies; Recreation facilities overcrowded; Too busy with work, family; Admission fees.
Edmonton	Cost of equipment/supplies; Too busy with work; Recreation facilities overcrowded; Admission fees; No others with whom to participate.

WHY DO PEOPLE PARTICIPATE

Most reasons for participating in recreation activities are quite consistent across Alberta. Among the most important are pleasure, relaxation, physical health, and a change from work.

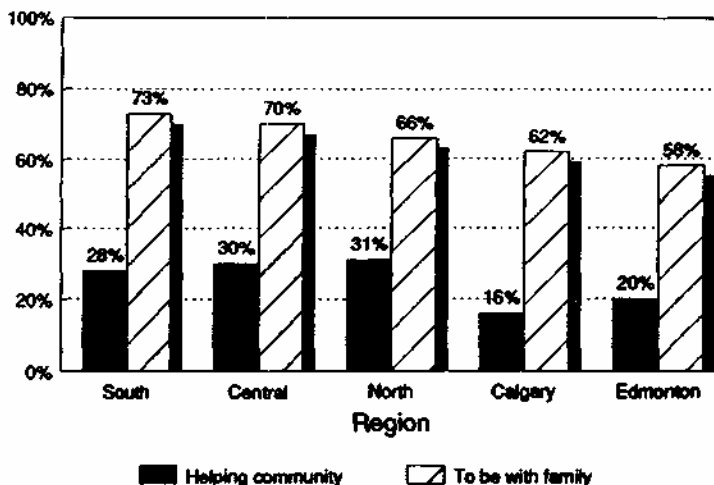
It is mainly social reasons which vary in importance across the province. In general, people living in smaller communities (i.e., outside of Edmonton and Calgary) place greater importance than urban residents on the following:

- helping their community;
- being with their family;
- doing things with friends; and,
- meeting new people.

Figure 1 provides two examples to show how the importance of social reasons for participating in recreation activities varies across provincial regions.



Figure 1 Regional Differences in Reasons for Participating



REASONS FOR REGIONAL VARIATION

One influence on recreation participation is the supply of recreation opportunities. The northern region provides a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities. This is reflected in above-average participation rates in these pursuits. Downhill skiing, hiking, backpacking, and mountain climbing have above-average participation in Calgary, reflecting opportunities in the nearby mountains.

Participation patterns also reflect regional socio-demographic profiles. We found that the age profiles of respondents varied from region to region, as did their household characteristics. The following patterns were evident:

- South: Highest proportion of adults in the 65 years and over age category; about one-half of households consisted of a couple with children.
- Central: About one-half of households consisted of a couple with children.
- North: Highest proportion of adults between 25 and 49 years of age; highest proportion of couples with children (57%).
- Calgary: High proportion of single persons.
- Edmonton: Highest proportion of young adults under 25 years of age and single persons.



There were no differences in the proportions of males and females in each of the various regions.

Because recreation patterns are linked to age and lifecycle characteristics, these profiles assist in understanding regional differences. For example, outdoor and team sport activity preferences in the northern region are consistent with the interests of young to mid-age adults. To be with the family is an important reason for recreation participation in southern Alberta, and this reason is most often expressed by older adults.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings from the 1988 *General Recreation Survey* show similarities in recreation patterns across Alberta but also point out some regional differences. These patterns reflect both the supply of recreation opportunities and regional socio-demographic profiles.

The northern region stands out in terms of outdoor recreation participation. For the practitioner, this suggests that skill development in a variety of outdoor activities would be an attractive programming feature in this area.

The survey found that barriers to participation vary somewhat from region to region. Agencies in Calgary may need to pay particular attention to facility crowding. In Edmonton, efforts to assist participants to find other participants or playing partners would address a frequently mentioned barrier in this community.

Social reasons for participating are particularly important in smaller communities. Programs which emphasize social benefits would be attractive to these residents; this feature should also be highlighted in program advertising and marketing.

The survey findings suggest that families with children are a particularly important recreation market segment in northern Alberta. In southern Alberta, the seniors market is especially important.

The *General Recreation Survey* findings highlight the need for local market information. Although province-wide patterns and trends provide a general background, planning requires a good understanding of local community needs and characteristics.



Local and regional studies, and sharing information on issues and trends with other communities in the region, will help agencies to plan for the unique characteristics of their local and regional markets.

REFERENCES

Balmer, Ken. 1986. "One City Looks at Trends: The Future of Park/Recreation Services in the City of Calgary⁷". *Recreation Canada*. February, pp. 19-24.

THE NEXT ISSUE

The next bulletin in the *Look at Leisure* series will examine variations in recreation participation patterns across the life span.

FURTHER INFORMATION

From time to time, special analyses of the General Recreation Survey data are carried out. If you have any analysis requests, please let us know. We may be able to help. We can also provide copies of the questionnaire used in the survey.

For further information, or to have your mailing address changed, please contact:

J.H. (Chip) Ross
Recreation Development Division
Alberta Recreation and Parks
10405 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3N4



Appropriate Use of Documents: Documents may be downloaded or printed (single copy only). You are free to edit the documents you download and use them for your own projects, but you should show your appreciation by providing credit to the originator of the document. You must not sell the document or make a profit from reproducing it. You must not copy, extract, summarize or distribute downloaded documents outside of your own organization in a manner which competes with or substitutes for the distribution of the database by the Leisure Information Network (LIN). <http://www.lin.ca>