

A Look at Leisure

Results of the 1981 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation conducted by Alberta Recreation and Parks

No. 5

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

This is the fifth bulletin in a series published by Alberta Recreation and Parks that examines the recreation behaviour of Albertans. The focus of this bulletin is a look at barriers to recreation participation. An analysis of the survey results may provide some direction to recreation practitioners' for future program planning and service delivery.



Alberta

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Four topics are discussed in this issue:

- (i) recreation activities in which Albertans desire to participate but currently do not;
- (ii) differences between Albertans who desire to engage in new activities and those who don't;
- (iii) some barriers or obstacles to participation; and
- (iv) factors which influence the desire for activities and the perception of barriers.

Analysis is based upon the following question.

2. (a) Is there any recreational activity that you don't take part in now, but you would like to start regularly?

Yes No Go to question 3

If yes, please specify which recreational activity you would most like to start.

Name one activity only _____

(b) Why don't you participate in this activity? Please indicate how each reason affects your ability to participate (Check one box for each reason).

Never a Sometimes a Often a
problem problem problem

Family commitments _____

Work commitments _____

Not having the physical abilities .

The present price of gasoline

Not having artistic or creative abilities

Admission fees and charges to use recreational facilities _____

I don't know where I can participate in this activity

It is difficult to find others to participate with..... _____

The price of recreational equipment..... _____

I don't know where I can learn the activity..... _____

The recreational facilities or areas are overcrowded

I am shy about participating in public..... _____

There is no opportunity to participate near my home

I am physically unable to participate..... _____

Lack of transportation. Other

(please specify) .

Some of the major findings are:

- the four most desired activity groups were exercise-oriented activities, racquetball/handball, non-mechanized outdoor recreation and team sports. These represent the activity groups chosen by sixty percent of the respondents who desired to participate in new activities but did not because of one or more barriers.



- desire for a new activity varied in relation to age, education, income and length of residence in Alberta.
- there were substantial differences in the types of activities desired on the basis of sex and age.
- the barriers most often stated as "sometimes" or "often a problem" were work commitments, overcrowding of facilities or areas, lack of partners, lack of close opportunity and family commitments.
- age, education, income, length of residence in Alberta, and the type of household were significant factors found to affect the perception of barriers.

The third Look at Leisure bulletin examined participation in favorite activities during the last twelve months of the Survey. In this issue, we are looking at recreation activities that Albertans would like to start regularly but don't take part in now because of the effects of one or more barriers. Desired activities were grouped into a nine-category classification (Table I) to allow for more specific analysis.

**TABLE I THE DESIRED ACTIVITIES CLASSIFICATION
(RANK-ORDER)**

ACTIVITY CLASS	RANK
Exercise-oriented (eg. archery, badminton, bicycling, calisthenics, body-building)	1
Racquetball/Handball	2
Non-mechanized Outdoor Recreation (eg. backpacking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, sailing)	3
Team Sports (eg. baseball, basketball, football, soccer)	4
Resource-based and/or Mechanized Outdoor Recreation (eg. boating, fishing, hunting, water-skiing)	5
Tennis	6
Downhill Skiing	7
Creative-Cultural, Social and Passive (eg. attending classes, dancing, reading, gardening, cards)	8
Golf	9

DESIRED ACTIVITIES

The four most desired activity groups were exercise-oriented activities, racquetball/handball, non-mechanized outdoor recreation and team sports. This may suggest that Albertans have concern for personal health and fitness.



DIFFERENCES

How do Albertans who desire a new or additional recreation activity differ from those who don't? In general, the level of interest in a new recreation activity varied most in relation to age, education, income and length of residence in Alberta. Desire for a new activity tended to grow with increasing levels of education and income, and to decline with advancing age and length of residence in Alberta

For example, greatest interest in a new activity was expressed by Albertans who were under 34, relative newcomers to the Province, university educated, and had higher family incomes. On the other hand, lowest levels of desire for a new activity were expressed by Albertans aged 45 and over who had not completed high school, had lower family incomes and had resided in Alberta for 10 years or more.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The rank-order of barriers to participation in desired activities (Table II) is based upon the proportion of Albertans evaluating them as "often" or "sometimes" a problem.

TABLE I
BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION
(RANK-ORDER)

<u>BARRIER</u>	<u>RANK</u>
Work Commitments	1
Overcrowding of Facilities or Areas	2
Lack of Partners	3
Lack of a Close Opportunity	4
Family Commitments	5
Price of Recreational Equipment	6
Admission Fees and User Charges	7
Unawareness of Where to Participate in Activity	8
*Shyness Price of Gasoline	9
Not Having Physical Abilities	10
Lack of Transportation	11
Not Having Artistic or Creative Abilities	12
* Being Physically Unable to Participate	13
	14
* Personal Barriers	
The remaining are non-personal barriers	

Of the top five barriers, three were personal as they related to the individual.



Notably, work commitments were ranked as the number one barrier. This finding is supported by the Canada Fitness survey results (1) which indicated that lack of time due to work was still the main reason people cited for not increasing their activity levels. Lack of partners ranked third, with family commitments ranking fifth.

Of the non-personal barriers, overcrowding of facilities/areas ranked second and lack of a close opportunity ranked fourth. The economic barriers - price of recreational equipment, admission fees/user charges and the price of gasoline - ranked sixth, seventh and tenth respectively.

The findings suggest the need for the practitioner to examine barriers to participation, and to develop a better understanding of the individual's lifestyle and desires in relation to the delivery of recreation services.

Further analysis of the data showed that the importance of barriers to participation depended in part upon the nature of the activity desired. For example, those who wanted to participate in downhill skiing tended to face economic obstacles while would-be racquetball and handball players were more severely affected by overcrowding of facilities and lack of partners with whom to participate. It appears that combinations of barriers, rather than individual barriers alone, serve to restrict participation in any given type of activity or among any relatively similar group of people.

The literature relevant to barriers can be divided into two categories. First, there is a large body of research examining recreation preferences and participation in which incidental reference is made to barriers or obstacles to participation. Second, there is a small body of research specifically dealing with barriers to recreation participation (eg. Harvey (2), Goodale & Witt (3), and Miller (4)). The results of our 1981 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation confirm the presence in Alberta of many of the barriers examined in the studies. However, other potential barriers not considered, such as safety, prejudice, and social groups were identified in the literature. Although there was no consistency overall in the barriers stated, or in the relative importance attributed to various barriers, the studies reviewed did show that:



- (i) there were many different ways that each barrier could be viewed;
- (ii) there was overlap and interdependence of one barrier with another; and
- (iii) socio-economic/demographic variables were important to understanding barriers to participation.

FACTORS AFFECTING
DESIRED ACTIVITIES
AND
BARRIERS TO
PARTICIPATION

Two general areas were examined as possible influences on both desired activities and the perception of barriers: economic (eg. household income) and social (eg. age, sex, education, marital status, etc.).

The results showed significant differences in desired activities on the basis of age and sex as illustrated in Table III.

TABLE I DIFFERENCES IN DESIRED ACTIVITIES BY AGE AND SEX

1. DESIRED ACTIVITIES BY AGE:

24 or less	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 64	65 and over
exercise-oriented	exercise-oriented	exercise-oriented	exercise-oriented	exercise-oriented
racquetball/handball	racquetball/handball	self-propelled	golf	golf
team sports	self-propelled	resource-based	self-propelled	creative, social, passive
self-propelled	team sports	racquetball/handball	creative, social, passive	resource-based

2. DESIRED ACTIVITIES BY SEX:

DESIRED ACTIVITY	MALES (RANK)	FEMALES (RANK)
Creative, social, passive	9	5
Racquetball/handball	2	3
Tennis	8	3
Exercise-oriented	1	1
Team sports	5	6
Self propelled	4	2
Golf	6	9
Downhill Skiing	7	7
Resource-based	3	8

The most striking result was that exercise-oriented activities ranked first among all age groups. Beyond this finding it can be seen that choice of desired activity varied with advancing age. These findings



support the literature. For example, Kelly (5), in a study of outdoor recreation, found that age was inversely related to activities requiring physical strength.

Although both males and females ranked exercise-oriented activities as the most desired, there was little consistency in their activity desires. For example, men preferred resource-based activities more often than women did, whereas women preferred tennis, creative, social, passive and self-propelled activities more than did men.

The importance of barriers was shown to depend upon (i) the type of activity desired (see the 'Barriers' section), and (ii) the personal circumstances of the individual. There were significant differences in the perception of barriers on the basis of age, (Table IV), education, income, length of residence in Alberta and type of household. In general, the more disadvantaged segments of the population (ie. those that were older, had lower annual family incomes, were less well-educated or were single parent families) generally tended to evaluate the barriers as "sometimes" or "often a problem" to participation in their desired activity. It was also these groups, with the exception of single parent families, who least frequently expressed desire for a new activity. These findings confirm the Canada Fitness Survey results (1) which indicated wide scope for increased activity by groups with poor health, the older population, the economically disadvantaged and the less educated.

TABLE IV _____ DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION OF BARRIERS BY AGE: _____

AGE	MORE INHIBITED THAN OTHER GROUPS BY:
24 or less	lack of opportunity, partners, transportation, and unawareness of where to learn the activity.
25 to 34	family commitments and lack of partners.
35 to 44	family and work commitments.
45 to 64	physical and artistic ability.
65 and over	large number of barriers, including physical and artistic ability, being physically unable, lack of partners, transportation, price of gasoline, and unawareness of where to participate.

In Table II, the rank-order of barriers to participation in desired activities across all age-groups was presented. Further analysis of the data showed that the relative importance of barriers remained roughly the same across all age-groups although there were differences in the perception of barriers by age (Table IV) based



upon the proportion of Albertans in each age group evaluating them more frequently as being obstacles to participation. For example, the importance of family and work commitments as obstacles to participation tended to increase from the youngest to the middle-aged groups, but declined thereafter. On the other hand, lack of an appropriate site, of others with whom to participate, of transport, and of an opportunity to learn the desired activity were effective obstacles for both the youngest and oldest age groups, but were less important for the middle aged. Physical and artistic ability, and physical inability to participate all increased in their effects as obstacles with advancing age. These findings support the literature.

The results also support the literature with regard to the socioeconomic factors of education, income and the significance of the family life cycle. The effects of barriers declined as educational levels increased, with the least-educated group indicating that they felt most barriers more severely than the rest.

The results were similar with regard to income. Those in the lowest family income group felt the effects of barriers more than the rest, and there were also declines in the effect of barriers as income levels increased. Morris (6) alludes to the finding that higher income groups are affected by fewer barriers and notes that present recreation services are engaged in by those most able to finance their own recreation. Levy (7) further suggests that the service provider should become aware of the recreation needs of the lower income person in relation to barriers identified as inhibiting his/her participation (eg. cost, skill).

The perception of barriers also varied with the type of household. Single-parent families tended to be affected by barriers more than other groups. On the other hand, couples without children were less affected by barriers than other groups. The only barrier felt more by couples with children than others was family commitments.

The only meaningful difference in perceived barriers by length of residence was the lack of awareness of where to participate in desired activities among relative newcomers to the province.

The survey results did not show any important regional differences either in desired activities or in the perception of barriers. However, the literature indicates that regional differences could have some bearing when considering the supply of recreation opportunities.



Although no consensus was reached in the literature as to the relative importance of socio-economic factors as barriers to participation, there was emphasis on the importance and need to fully understand all aspects of each barrier in relation to the individual.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of the findings for the practitioner are many. The results showed that Albertans desired exercise-oriented activities, racquetball/handball, non-mechanized outdoor recreation and team sports. Do these desires hold true for your community? A needs survey may be one way to determine local needs and identify obsolete programs in your area.

Socio-economic/demographic information was shown to be very important in understanding the needs and desires of individuals as well as the barriers affecting them. For example, desire for a new or additional activity was shown to decline with advancing age and residence in Alberta, and with lower levels of education and income. Does this imply that the recreation services cater to the young and the middle or upper middle class? The results suggest the need to find better ways of involving the aging population, and those with lower levels of education and income, since these groups were affected by barriers more than the rest.

Take a look at the program offerings in your community. Are there appropriate and adequate services or opportunities available for different age groups, sexes, education and income groups, sizes and types of households in your area? A regular examination of your services may help to determine who participates and will enable the development of socio-economic/demographic profiles of the client groups you serve. With this information you can determine where discrepancies in opportunity exist, and start to deal with the specific needs of these groups. You may also want to consider current socio-economic/demographic trends and their impact on your planning and service delivery.

The barriers most often evaluated as "sometimes" or "often a problem" by Albertans were work commitments, overcrowding of facilities or areas, lack of partners, lack of a close opportunity and family commitments. Do these barriers hold true for your area? What other barriers prevail? Who do they affect? The results suggest that practitioners try to fully understand all facets of each barrier and then develop services that attempt as comprehensively as possible to eliminate common barriers that restrict participation. For example, the work commitments barrier indicates the need



to consider options such as more flexible hours of work and facility operation, and the provision of on-the-job or industrial recreation opportunities. The overcrowding barriers on the other hand may indicate lack of provision of an adequate number of opportunities or facility scheduling problems. The lack of partners barriers may indicate lack of consideration of the individual by the service provider, whereas the lack of opportunity barrier may indicate inappropriate advertising or promotion techniques. These are just a few indications of the implications of barriers for the service provider.

Are you willing to examine and possibly change approaches to service provision that are traditional or stereotyped in order to overcome barriers? The results suggest consideration of a shift from the "mass medicine" approach to service delivery, to one that is more personal and responsive to the needs of the individual.

When thinking about ways to overcome barriers, you might consider whether or not there is a role for leisure education in reducing or eliminating barriers to recreation participation. Leisure education encompasses the concept of education of the individual so that he/she is able to understand and find the place of recreation within his/her lifestyle at the various stages of his/her life. In addition, an attempt is made to ensure that the individual has the skills to take advantage of the services available to him/her. Could a leisure education program be undertaken, for example, in conjunction with other service providers who work with older adults? what other groups in your community could be helped and reached through leisure education programs?

The results also indicate the need for the practitioner to "market" the recreation service more readily and efficiently. How familiar are you or your staff with marketing concepts? would you consider target marketing (ie. allocating resources to meet the particular needs of specified client groups) in dealing with the barriers associated with newcomers to the province and low income groups? How will the issue of equity (ie. fairness of the distribution of services) be dealt with? How will you deal with these matters?

The study and understanding of barriers to recreation participation may provide you with a new tool for assessing and improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of recreation service delivery in your community.



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FUTURE ISSUES

OPINIONS - How do Albertans feel about competition in children's sports or the provision of recreation opportunities for employees by employers?

VOLUNTEERISM - What are the attitudes of Albertans towards volunteers and volunteerism?

SOCIAL SETTING - Who do people participate with and how important is the social setting in recreation ?

LIFESTYLES - Lifestyle factors and attitudes towards recreation. Are people being educated for leisure?



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INFORMATION

If you require further information or would like to change your mailing address please contact:

G. Burn Evans Research
Coordinator Planning Support
Branch Recreation Development
Division Alberta Recreation and
Parks Standard Life Centre 10405
Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3N4

In the near future we will be publishing the following reports:

- (i) Recreational Activity Preferences, Reasons for Participating, and the Satisfaction of Needs; and
- (ii) Barriers to Recreation Participation.

These reports will be provided to major libraries and universities in Alberta. We will also be publishing the Executive Summaries of the reports, which will be available upon request to those who wish to obtain more detailed information than was provided in the third and fifth A Look at Leisure bulletins. Those who desire further depth are advised to refer to the full report.

G.B.E.



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