

A Look at Leisure #45: Facility-Based Pursuits

This bulletin examines the facility-based activities people enjoy, the reasons they participate and the barriers that limit their participation. This bulletin was developed in collaboration with the City of Edmonton. The primary data source for this report is the Alberta Recreation Survey conducted in 2000 by Alberta Community Development, in cooperation with the Alberta Centre for Active Living, Alberta Environment, and the Cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Red Deer. Facility-based pursuits generally take place indoors or may take place outdoors but require payment of fees or controlled access (i.e., golf, skiing). Some facility-based pursuits may overlap with outdoor pursuits (i.e., running/jogging, soccer).

Introduction

The 2000 Alberta Recreation Survey looks at respondents' participation from three different perspectives. The first one investigates household and respondent participation in 68 social, creative, cultural, outdoor and sports activities. For the purpose of this bulletin, thirty-five of the 68 activities are considered facility-based pursuits. The second perspective inquires about the respondents' three favourite activities and reasons for their participation. The third perspective asks respondents about an activity they would like to start and the barriers that keep them from not starting this activity. It is important to look at facility-based pursuits separately as the reasons for growth and decline may differ from non-facility-based activities. Many people participate in facility-based pursuits, but the level of participation is subject to money, time constraints, and convenience. This bulletin provides information that may assist recreation practitioners when planning activities for their facilities.

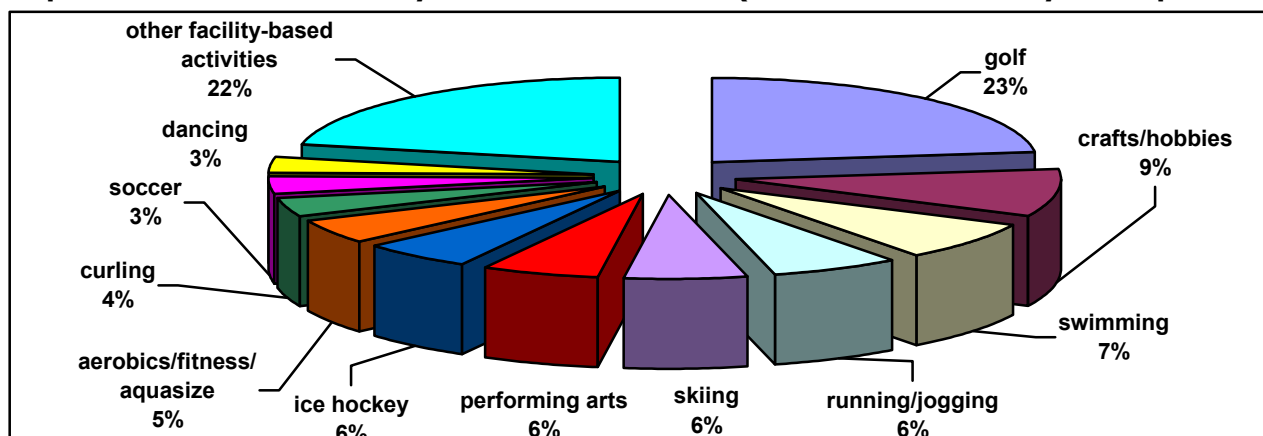
Participation in Facility-Based Activities

The top ten facility-based activities household members and respondents participated in are:

- Visiting a museum, theatre, etc.
- Doing crafts/hobbies
- Attending sports events as a spectator
- Attending a fair or festival
- Swimming in pools
- Attending educational courses
- Golfing
- Aerobics/fitness/aquasize
- Taking part in drama, music, etc.
- Weight training

Since 1981, in terms of participation, doing crafts, swimming and attending sports events as a spectator have decreased 10-15%. Golf has experienced an increase since 1981. Visiting a museum, theatre, etc. and taking part in a drama have remained consistent since 1981.

Graph 1: First Favourite Facility-Based Activities 2000 (% are based on facility-based pursuits only)



*other 'facility-based' activities include weight training, hunting/shooting, bowling, basketball, racquetball/squash, snowboarding, spectating, and horseback riding.

Favourite Facility-Based Activities

Respondents were asked to list their three favourite recreation activities. In total, 30 different facility-based pursuits were mentioned. Graph 1 shows the first favourite facility-based activities.

Facility-based activities which were ranked most highly as favourite activities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Favourite Facility-Based Activities 2000

Favourite Facility-Based Activities	Overall Percentage of Respondents*	Rank
1st Favourite		
Golf	8.6%	1
Crafts/hobbies	3.5%	2
Swimming	2.8%	3
Running/jogging	2.4%	4
Skiing/downhill skiing	2.3%	5
2nd Favourite		
Golf	5.6%	1
Crafts/hobbies	3.3%	2
Swimming	3.3%	2
Skiing/downhill skiing	2.6%	3
Performing arts	2.4%	4
3rd Favourite		
Golf	3.4%	1
Swimming	3.2%	2
Crafts/hobbies	2.8%	3
Performing arts	2.4%	4
Aerobics/fitness/aqua-size	1.9%	5

* Overall responses include non-facility based pursuits that represent 50.5% of respondents' first favourite activity, 50.2% of the second and 46.3% of the third.

The information below shows how the favourite activities are linked to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Participation

- Respondents who chose skiing/downhill skiing, and golfing as their favourite activity participated an average of 11-30 times in the past year.
- Respondents who chose swimming, running/jogging, crafts/hobbies, performing arts, and aerobics/fitness/aquasize participated an average of 51 or more times in the past year.

Gender

- Males were most likely to choose golfing and skiing/downhill skiing.
- Females were more likely to select performing arts, aerobics/fitness/aquasize, crafts/hobbies, and swimming.
- Soccer, running/jogging, skating, and being a spectator were favoured equally by males and females.
- Other facility-based activities favoured by males include hockey, racquetball/squash, and basketball.
- Other facility-based activities favoured by females include dancing and volleyball.

Age

- Respondents aged 18-25 selected basketball, ice hockey, and snowboarding as their top three favourite activities.
- Golf, running/jogging and soccer were favoured by those between 26 and 34 years.
- Respondents aged 35-44 chose golf, ice hockey, and swimming.
- Those aged 45-64 preferred golf, crafts/hobbies, and running/jogging.
- Respondents aged 65 and over selected golf, crafts/hobbies, and performing arts.

Income

- Respondents whose household income was less than \$10,001 favoured crafts/hobbies, basketball, performing arts, and dancing.
- Favourite activities for respondents in households with an income between \$10,001-\$30,000 were swimming, golf, and crafts/hobbies.
- Respondents with a household income of \$30,001-\$50,000 identified the widest variety of facility-based activities.
- Respondents in a household with an income level between \$30,001-\$50,000 identified golf, crafts/hobbies, and swimming as favourite activities.
- Favourite activities for those with a household income level between \$50,001-\$70,000 were golf, ice hockey, and crafts/hobbies.
- Favourite activities chosen by the \$70,001-\$90,000 household income level were golf, running/jogging, and ice hockey.

- Favourite facility-based activities for respondents with a household income of \$90,001 or more were golf, skiing/downhill skiing, and running/jogging.

Household Type

- Couples with no children selected golf, crafts/hobbies, and performing arts as their top favourite activities.
- Couples with children selected golf, crafts/hobbies and swimming.
- Single persons chose golf, crafts/hobbies, and performing arts.
- Single parents chose skiing/downhill skiing, running/jogging, and crafts/hobbies.
- Households consisting of two or more unrelated adults selected team sports including basketball and soccer.
- Households of two or more related adults selected swimming, golfing, and crafts/hobbies.

Regional Variations

Respondents from Calgary chose skiing/downhill skiing and ice hockey as favourite facility-based activities. Their favourite activities were ones that crossed into outdoor pursuits, such as skiing/downhill skiing, snowboarding, archery, soccer, and ice hockey. In addition, Calgarians were more likely to participate in team sports.

Respondents living in Edmonton were also more likely to participate in facility-based activities

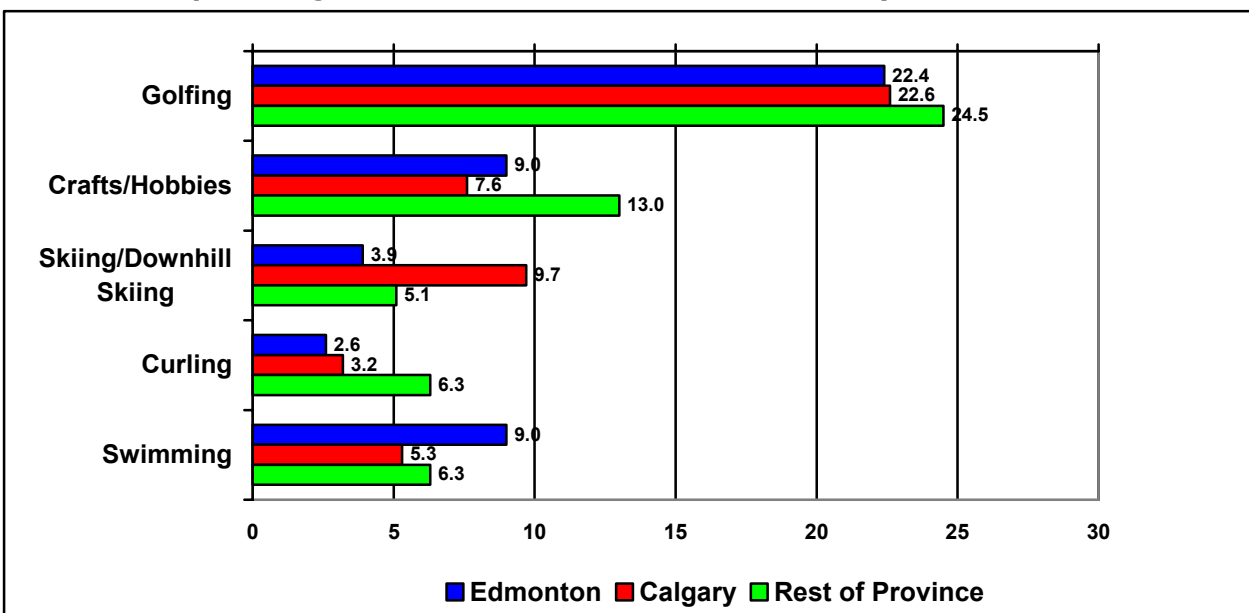
such as dancing, running/jogging, swimming, aerobics/fitness/aquasize, racquetball, and bowling.

Respondents living in Edmonton and the rest of the province were more likely to choose crafts/hobbies and swimming. For Alberta respondents’ outside Edmonton and Calgary favourite facility-based activities reflect their outdoor pursuits such as horseback riding.

Graph 2 shows how five current facility-based activities vary on a regional basis:

- Golfing tends to be equally favoured regardless of the region.
- Calgarians (9.7%) tend to favour skiing/downhill skiing more than Edmontonians (3.9%) and the rest of the province (5.1%).
- Crafts and hobbies tend to be mentioned most often (13.0%) by those outside Edmonton and Calgary with 7.6% of Calgarians and 9.0% of Edmontonians mentioning crafts and hobbies as their favourite activity.
- Curling is twice as popular in the rest of the province (6.3%) than in Edmonton (2.6%) and Calgary (3.2%).
- Swimming is the most popular among residents of Edmonton with 9.0% mentioning it as their favourite activity compared to 5.3% in Calgary, and 6.3% in the rest of the province.

Graph 2: Regional Differences 2000 – Favourite Facility-Based Activities



Variations Over the Survey Years

Soccer, crafts/hobbies, running/jogging, skiing/downhill skiing, and performing arts became more important as favourite activities from 1981-2000, while ice hockey, aerobics/fitness/aquasize, and dancing experienced decreases.

Profiles for Favourite Facility-Based Activities

Profiles of top ranked facility-based activities and the main reasons respondents participate in these activities are provided below. These profiles reflect the unique factors associated with each facility-based activity.

1. Golfing

Profile: Favoured by males and couples with or without children; participation increases with income and age up to age 64.

Main Reasons: To improve my skills, to do things with friends, to learn new skills, for a challenge, and for pleasure.

2. Crafts/Hobbies

Profile: Most likely to be favoured by females; popularity increases with age in particular among those 65 and older; household incomes of less than \$10,001-\$50,000; most popular among couples with children and single parents.

Main Reasons: To be creative, because I'm good at it, to show others I can do it, to improve my skills, to learn new skills, to keep busy, and to be away from family.

According to a 2001 study, "*there has been a significant increase in the number of people starting creative activities and hobbies over their lifespan, including activities outside of the home, such as attending courses, volunteering for an organization, or home-based activities such as crafts, gardening, creative activities, musical instruments.*" (Oh, p. 30)

3. Swimming

Profile: Favoured by females; highest among respondents aged 18-25 then decreases; households with an income level of \$10,001-\$30,000 and steadily decreasing as income rises; most frequent among couples with children.

Main Reasons: Because I'm good at it, to keep busy, to be with family, and for physical health/exercise.

4. Running/Jogging

Profile: Favoured by both males and females; highest among ages 26-34 and 45-64; participation increases as household income increases.

Main Reasons: To compete with others, for excitement, for the challenge, to be alone, and to be away from family.

5. Skiing/Downhill Skiing

Profile: Favoured by males; highest among the 35-64 age group; participation increases as income increases; favoured by couples with children and by respondents residing in Calgary.

Main Reasons: Because I'm good at it, for a challenge, for excitement, to be with family, for pleasure, and to enjoy nature.

6. Soccer

Profile: Favoured by both males and females; participation is highest among those between 18-34 years then decreases; couples with children and households with two or more unrelated single adults.

Main Reasons: To compete with others, because I'm good at it, to improve my skills, to learn new skills, for a challenge, for excitement, for physical health/exercise, to do things with friends, to do something different from work, and to be away from family.

7. Performing Arts

Profile: Favoured more by females than males; popular among those aged 18-25 years and 65 years and over; highest among respondents with household incomes of less than \$10,001; favoured by couples with or without children.

Main Reasons: For excitement, to keep busy, to help the community, because I'm good at it, and to be creative.

8. Aerobics/Fitness/Aquasize

Profile: Favoured by females; highest among respondents with household incomes of \$70,001-\$90,000; twice as popular at age 26-34 than any other age; equal across all household types.

Main Reasons: To show others I can do it, to learn new skills, for a challenge, and for physical health/exercise.

Desired Facility-Based Activities

Respondents were asked to name an activity they wished to start. Of the top ten desired activities named, five are facility-based activities. These include:

1. Aerobics/fitness/aquasize
2. Golfing
3. Swimming
4. Skiing/downhill skiing
5. Running/jogging

Barriers to Facility-Based Pursuit Participation

Respondents identified barriers which prevented them from participating in their desired activity. Barriers to participation for the five activities listed above include:

1. Aerobics/Fitness/Aquasize

Main Barriers: Admission fees/charges, no opportunity near home, too busy with family, too busy with work, and lack of physical abilities.

2. Golfing

Main Barriers: Admission fees/charges, cost of equipment/supplies, and facilities overcrowded.

These findings are consistent with a 2001 study of golfers' motivations and constraints, which found green fee costs, tee-time availability, and lack of time, to be the greatest factors inhibiting participation in golf (Petrick, p. 66).

3. Swimming

Main Barriers: Admission fees/charges, cost of equipment/supplies, facilities poorly kept/maintained, and lack of transportation.

4. Skiing/Downhill skiing

Main Barriers: Admission fee/charges, cost of equipment/supplies, and facility not physically convenient to use.

5. Running/Jogging

Main Barriers: Too busy with work/family, lack of physical ability, don't know where to go.

Albertans perceive high fees for admission and equipment, lack of time and inconvenience to be the greatest barriers affecting facility-based activities. However, barriers are also greatly influenced by age and gender. A 2001 study found young girls were more likely to "*dislike team sports (too aggressive), swimming (messed up hair and make-up) and gymnastics (could not do well)*" (Kovar, p. 118). Another study found married women, in their late twenties or early thirties with young children, were likely to drop out of facility-based programs due to "*time constraints and lack of support from family and friends*" (Erickson, p. 4). Studies of non-participation in recreation help agencies to understand the factors that may limit participation in their programs and services. With this information, agencies may be able to modify their programs and information distribution to reduce the effects of barriers.

Volunteering in Facility Based Activities

Volunteering is another means for people to become involved in facility-based pursuits. Among these are local sports teams, community associations, special sports/recreation events and cultural groups. The age group most active in volunteering is between 45-64 years. As the baby boom generation ages, the percentage of the population open to volunteering should increase. "*Because of population aging, volunteering, like classical music, is a pastime that will grow in the years to come*" (Foot, p. 173).

Implications

Facility-based activities account for just under half of Albertans' favourite leisure activities. Respondents indicated time, money and convenience as important factors affecting participation. Constraints identified by respondents should not restrict their activity, but rather allow the recreation practitioner to "*negotiate through constraints to initiate or continue participation*" (Petrick, p. 58). This can be achieved several ways. Promoting the benefits of recreation allows the recreation practitioner to educate individuals on the importance of finding time within their lifestyle for recreation and is one way of overcoming constraints. It could be argued, "*that perceived lack of time actually energizes people to do a better job of planning and organizing their time so that they are freer to participate in desired activities*" (Oh, p. 36).

Another area to consider when looking at ways of improving facility-based participation levels is hours of operation i.e., are the hours flexible?

Socio-demographic factors such as age and gender influence a person's level of participation and their activity preferences as well. This type of information is useful to recreation practitioners when considering ways of improving participation levels in their facilities. A study on physical education choices among students, found that allowing some degree of choice in activities was appealing to students and prompted motivation and effort (Kovar, 2001). Allowing students to make choices will help in understanding the reasons students participate in leisure activities.

An important factor for the recreation practitioner to recognize is the change in the demographics within their community and how these changes will affect their recreation facilities. Because a large proportion of the population is getting older, there will be an increase in participation in some activities and a decrease in others. This shift in leisure interests will greatly affect leisure facilities. How can recreation practitioners prepare for this shift? How will this shift affect existing recreation facilities? How will future facilities be developed? How will new activities or modifications to traditional activities (i.e., sports that have traditionally been played outdoors being played indoors as well) affect existing or future facilities?

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