

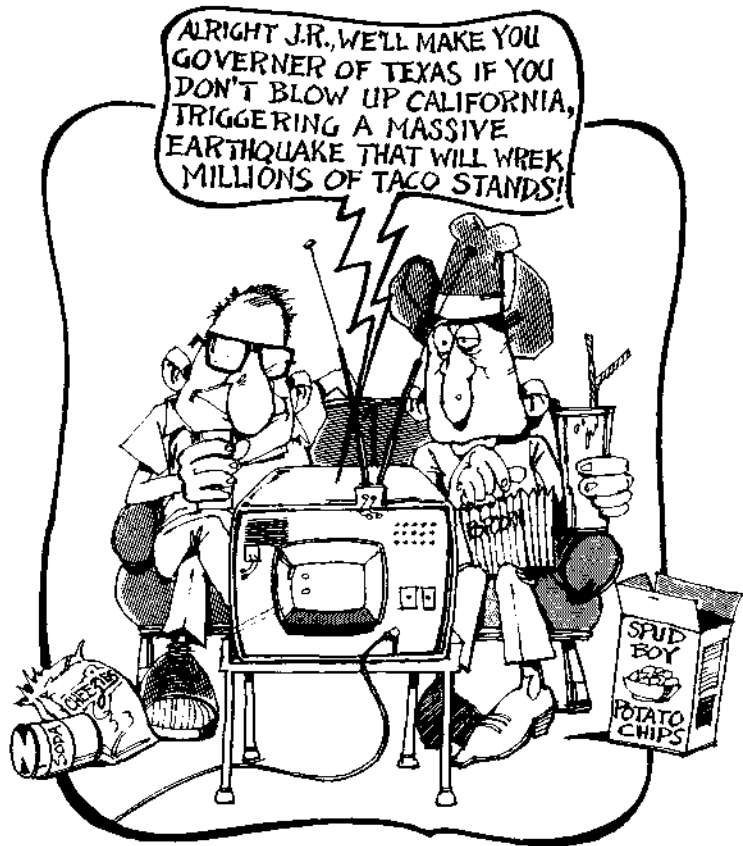
A Look at Leisure

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

No. 2

A LOOK AT PARTICIPATION

This is the second bulletin in a series published by Alberta Recreation and Parks that looks at the leisure of Albertans. The series is designed to describe the responses from the 1981 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation. The information presented will be of use to practitioners involved in the delivery of recreation services to Albertans.



The most popular activities in Alberta -
visiting friends and watching T.V.

Alberta

RECREATION AND PARKS
Recreation Development Division



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**SECTION 1
ABOUT YOUR HOUSEHOLD**

Please answer the following questions about the recreational activities of all the members of your household. Members of the household include all of those people who normally live in the apartment, house or other dwelling in which you live.

For each of the following activities, please indicate the number of people from your household who participated in each of the following activities in the past twelve months.

FOR EXAMPLE, a household with 5 members might answer this way for tennis:

2 members each played tennis more than 51 times
1 member played tennis 14 times
2 members did not play tennis at all

	Not at all	1 to 10 times	11 to 20 times	21 to 50 times	51 or more times
Tennis		2	1		2

NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM YOUR HOUSEHOLD WHO PARTICIPATED

Creative Or Cultural Activities:	Not at all	1 to 10 times	11 to 20 times	21 to 50 times	51 or more times
Visiting a museum, library, live theatre, art gallery, etc. (not movies)					
Engaging in a craft or hobby (photography, woodwork, sewing, etc.)					
Engaging in drama, music, drawing, writing, etc.					
Physical Activities:					
Swimming					
Golf (other than at a driving range or miniature golf course)					
Curling					
Bowling					
Racquetball					
Tennis					
Soccer					
Football					
Ice Hockey					
Ice Skating					
Softball/Baseball					

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0 2

0 3

NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM YOUR HOUSEHOLD WHO PARTICIPATED (continued)

Physical Activities (continued)	Not at all	1 to 10 times	11 to 20 times	21 to 50 times	51 or more times
Roller skating					
Badminton					
Calisthenics					
Outdoor Activities					
Walking for pleasure					
Driving for pleasure or sightseeing					
Picnicking					
Backpacking (overnight)					
Gardening					
Frisbee throwing					
Skateboarding					
Jogging/Running					
Boating					
Downhill skiing					
Cross-country skiing					
Bicycling					
Hunting					
Fishing					
Camping					
Social Activities					
Dancing					
Dining out					
Visiting with friends or relatives					
Participating in church group, service group or community organization activities					
Other Activities					
Reading for pleasure					
Playing table and board games (chess, cards, monopoly, etc.)					
Playing video and electronic games					
Attending a movie					
Watching T.V.					
Listening to radio, records, tapes					
Attending a sports event as a spectator					
Other (please specify)					
Other (please specify)					

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2

This bulletin deals exclusively with the involvement of Alberta households in 43 recreation activities, grouped into five categories relating to the type of recreation pursuit: cultural/creative, physical, outdoor, social and other (the latter will be referred to as passive throughout the text). Some of the findings were:

- Visiting friends, watching television, and listening to the radio are the three activities in which participation was highest.
- Most activities listed in the Top 20 did not require the assistance of an organized recreation service.
- Skating ranked twentieth in participation.

What do these results tell you, the recreation practitioner? Should television watching be a program provided by recreation departments? Does this mean organized recreation services are no longer needed? Is skating less popular than watching television?

When interpreting these results there are four things to consider. First, recreation participation is affected by the availability of opportunities (time, program or facilities). Second, the results show that the activities with the highest participation rates are not necessarily what people would prefer to do given a choice. Skating, for example, while twentieth overall, is not necessarily less popular than the top three activities. The availability of skating is seasonal while television is available year round in almost all households.

Third, other factors that affect participation rates include the physical and specialized skills required by the participant, the degree of social interaction in a particular activity, personal desires for entertainment or personal development, and disposable income. Lastly, while the results indicated that the activities with the most participants do not require the assistance from an organized recreation service, there is no need for recreation departments to start offering programs to encourage television watching! Among the goals of many organized recreation services is the desire to facilitate those recreation pursuits which are difficult for individuals to provide for themselves.

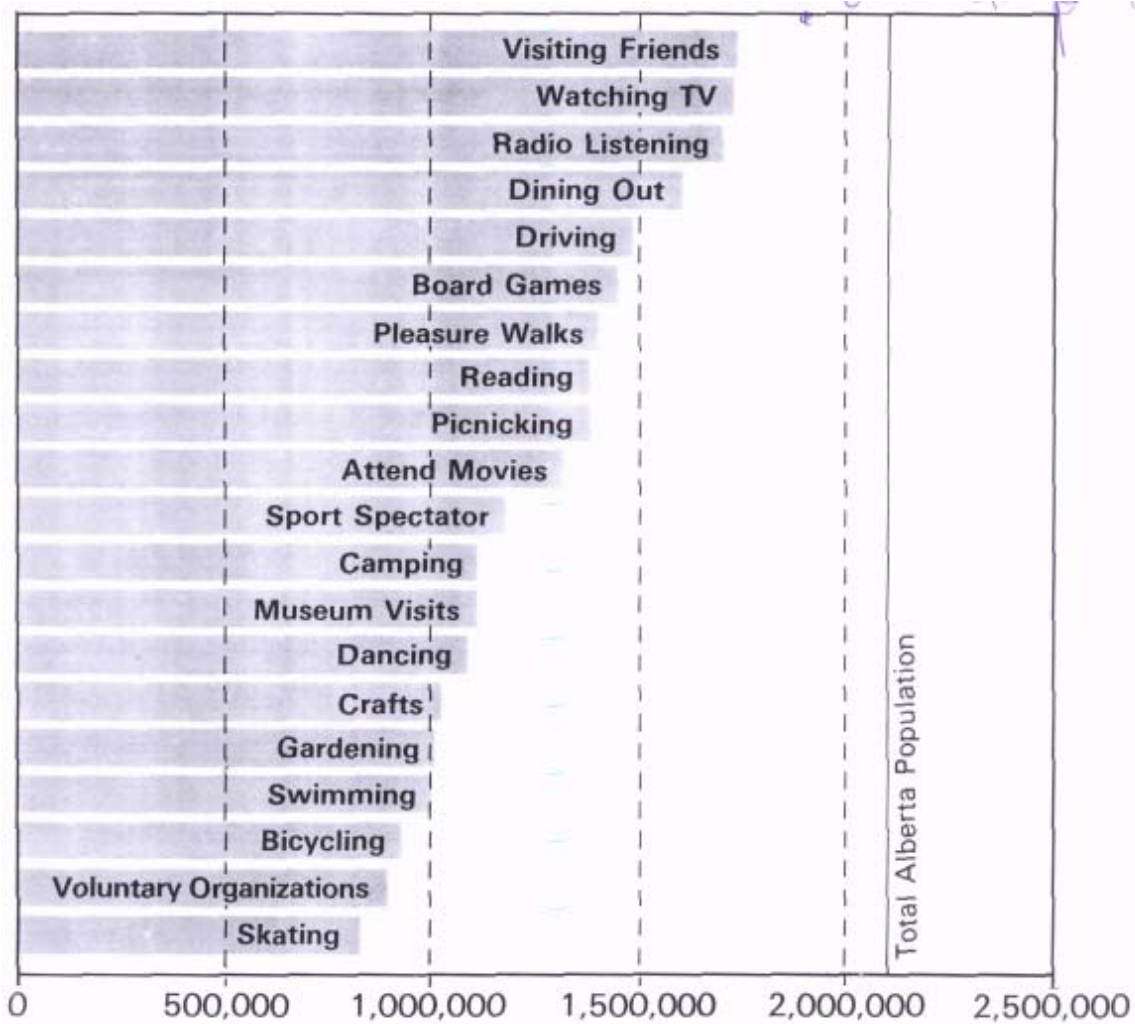
Considering these factors, the results from the survey would be most useful to recreation practitioners in identifying potential areas of involvement for recreation departments.

THE TOP 10 ON THE CHART

Those activities with the most participants tended to have several things in common. They had a high entertainment level, an element of social interaction, and required little or no support from a public recreation service. The Top 10 activities could be done on the spur of the moment or in one block of time and did not require the scheduling of a particular facility. These activities did not generally require specialized skills and required lower levels of physical exertion than activities found lower on the list. The availability of these activities was also generally unaffected by seasonal changes.



TOP 20 RECREATION ACTIVITIES OF ALBERTANS, 1980



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS



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Since socialization was a common element among the Top 10 activities, it would seem logical to emphasize social interaction in programs. Popular programs may be those that encourage 'people meeting people with a common interest or activity.

Emphasis on activities that do not require regular time commitments made in advance could indicate that the public might respond positively to a relaxation of formal program structures. Recreation departments could consider altering their style to provide a more flexible approach to participation.

Alternative programming possibilities could be drop-in style programs, or workshops offered on a one-time basis. Workshops or drop-in teaching spaces could allow people to learn at their own pace and then continue participating at their own convenience. Pottery or craft classes are a good example. Lessons and workshops would introduce people of similar interests or degrees of skill. From there, the development of clubs could occur. The recreation practitioner could encourage these clubs where appropriate and provide some organizational assistance. These clubs could encourage members to keep up their participation and would provide a social network for individuals interested in the same activity.

THE BOTTOM 20 ACTIVITIES

Those activities in which fewer people participated are generally ones requiring special skills, equipment, facilities and large amounts of scheduled time. They frequently involve organized teams or groups as opposed to activities oriented towards individual participation. Many of these activities also tend to be seasonal in nature. The need to acquire skills or equipment plus accommodate the time demands of an organized activity all serve to limit participation and account for the lower ratings of these activities.

Table 1 - Results of
Question
One

Recreation Activities in order of Participation

11.	Visiting Friends	Gardening	Swimming	Downhill Ski
	TV	31. Bicycling		Rollerskating
	Radio	Organizations	Skating	Tennis
	Dining Out	21. Frisbeeing	Boating	X-country ski
	Driving	Fishing	Jogging	Video
	Board Games	Games	Drama	Golf
	Walking	Bowling	41.	Racquetball
	Reading	Calisthenics	Baseball	Hockey
	Picnicking			Curling
	Movies			Badminton
	Being a Spectator			Hunting
	Camping			Football
	Museum			Backpacking
	Dancing			Soccer
	Crafts			Skateboarding



To increase participation in physical sports, recreation departments could encourage amateur 'fun-league sports and help develop ways around the financial burden for equipment that the 'occasional sports or outdoors person may feel. One alternative could be a return to sports in which equipment is not mandatory - offering a shinny hockey league, touch football or basketball nights. An equipment rental service could assist in many outdoor pursuits where equipment is mandatory but used only occasionally. A seasonal 'equipment swap' could allow participants to buy and sell equipment for a better return on their investment.

Similarly, sports schedules should not overlap. Shorter, more clear cut schedules involving fewer games would allow individuals to play more than one or two sports a year.

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

1. Age

Previous research has indicated that participation in physical activities declines with age. (2,3) Results from the 1981 Public Opinion Survey on Recreation indicate that Albertans are no exception. Participation begins to decline beginning at 18-24 years and continues to drop through age 65 and over. Contributing factors to this decline among adults include loss of interest, lack of facilities, and lack of fitness. (3), The lack of time is also a factor for many people. This trend is also evident in the four other activity categories, although the decline is not as sharp and other factors may contribute to this decline.

2. Children

Participation in households where there are children under six years of age is lower than in households where children are over six. Households with younger children probably spend more time in life-maintenance activities - feeding, clothing and caring for family members. Because there is a greater emphasis on spending recreation time as a family unit, personal leisure time may be reduced so the family may spend more time together.

3. Education and Income

Results from this survey indicate that education and income were, for the most part, not influential in determining participation. However, two exceptions should be noted. In households where the annual income was below \$10,000 there was a drop in participation in both sport and cultural activities compared to households earning more than \$10,000. (1) Where heads of households have less than a high school education, there is a similar reduction in sport and cultural activities compared with those with a high school diploma or more.



There is evidence, however, to suggest that the parents' lower levels of formal education do not decrease their children's participation in recreation activities. This is probably a result of the programs offered by schools in these subject areas.

School age children tend to be the most physically active age group. Schools play an important role in exposing children to a variety of physical, cultural and outdoor activities and are a primary provider of services for this age group. As well, many recreation agencies and allied organizations (YMCA, Girl Guides) program for these age groups. The municipal organization might, perhaps, begin to act as a co-ordinator and a liaison for services associated with this age group. Duplication should be avoided wherever possible especially in light of the fiscal restrictions facing municipalities.

In light of these facts, recreation departments need to examine the clients they are serving and see if they are concentrating on only certain segments of the population. Public services sometimes concentrate on one class to the exclusion of others. Changing demographics indicate increasing numbers of single adults, single parents, working women and senior citizens. An evaluation of whom programs are directed towards and how they are delivered should be an ongoing part of recreation program planning. In general, recreation services may need to determine more effective ways to reach a wider range of the community. (4)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

- 1) Walter A Zelman "The Sports People Play" Parks and Recreation, November, 1976.
- 2) John Boothby, Malcolm F. Tungatt, and Alan R. Townsend: "Ceasing Participation in Sports Activity: Reported Reasons and Their Implications" Journal of Leisure Research Volume 13, Number 1, 1981
- 3) Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Physical Activity Patterns in Ontario, 1981.
- 4) J. R. Kelly "Leisure & Family Change: 1960-1990", article, Journal of Physical Education Recreation and Dance, October, 1981.



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To SUM IT Up

Albertans are involved in many leisure pursuits. The ones in which the most individuals participated are those which provide a high entertainment level, have an element of social interaction and place low demands on physical and economic factors. Those that place high demands on physical energy, or a high commitment of money or time are more restricted in terms of participation rates.

Activities that are social and non-competitive are participated in by more people.

Participation rates can be expected to be influenced by availability of local facilities and programs. Other important factors are physical demands, degree of social interaction, desire for entertainment or personal development, disposable income, and time availability. As such, participation rates are an indication of the use of existing opportunities.

The provision of recreation programs must be a careful consideration of both the use of existing opportunities and the need to provide new opportunities. The question of preferred recreational activities will be the subject of bulletin number three.

FUTURE ISSUES

- FAVORITE ACTIVITIES of respondents and reasons for participation. As well, a look at satisfaction of needs through participation.
- EXPENDITURE PATTERNS - How much do people spend on recreation? What factors influence this?
- BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION - Why don't people take part?

OOPS!

There was a numerical error in bulletin #1. 1,807 surveys were returned, not 1,087.

INFORMATION

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

Recreation Planner Planning
Support Branch Recreation
Development Division Alberta
Recreation and Parks 8th Floor,
Standard Life Centre 10405 -
Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3N4

Telephone: 427-4685