

# Look at Leisure: Regional Recreation Patterns

Findings derived from the Alberta Recreation Surveys over the past 20 years show that there are variations in recreation patterns across Alberta. This bulletin discusses these patterns, how they have varied over the study period, and the implications for community recreation services in Alberta.

## Introduction

The 1981-2000 Alberta Recreation Surveys gathered information from a wide range of Albertans. Such a large sample allows respondents to be divided within the province into regions. This information can then be used to study the recreation behaviours of each region, and provide practitioners with an understanding of the recreation interests in their region, and how these compare to other regions in the province.

In the 2000 study, five regions were defined for Alberta. These are: South, Central, North, Calgary and Edmonton. The results reported in this bulletin are based on the following numbers of surveys returned from respondents in each region.

Survey Year		Region				
		South	Cal.	Central	Edm.	North
1981	N	217	754	156	947	211
	%	9	33	7	41	9
1984	N	504	1232	1002	901	202
	%	13	32	26	23	5
1988	N	523	1217	393	1269	560
	%	13	32	10	32	14
1992	N	509	1994	359	1937	417
	%	10	38	7	37	8
1996	N	343	1656	209	1131	131
	%	10	48	6	33	4
2000	N	325	903	223	1003	164
	%	12	35	9	38	6

## Favourite Activities

Leisure and recreation play an important role in the development and quality of life of Albertans. People participate in these activities to obtain a variety of benefits – economic, physiological, environmental, psychological, and social. Generally, these benefits are obtained through Albertans' favourite activities. The Alberta Recreation Surveys have shown that the most important reasons for participation in leisure and recreation activities are pleasure, physical health/exercise, relaxation, enjoyment of nature and doing something different from work. Understanding this, allows recreation practitioners to design programs to suit Albertans' needs.

Over the past 20 years Albertans' favourite activities have been fairly consistent. In the 2000 survey respondents were asked to name these activities. For analysis, the responses were grouped into ten activity groupings. (See Figures 1-3).

Exercise-oriented activities are the most frequently mentioned and have increased from 1996. Team sports and social-passive activities are next in popularity. However, the team sport grouping has decreased since 1996, and social-passive activities have increased. There is also a decrease in mechanized outdoor and non-mechanized outdoor groupings. Downhill skiing has continued on a steady decline since 1981.

Figure 1

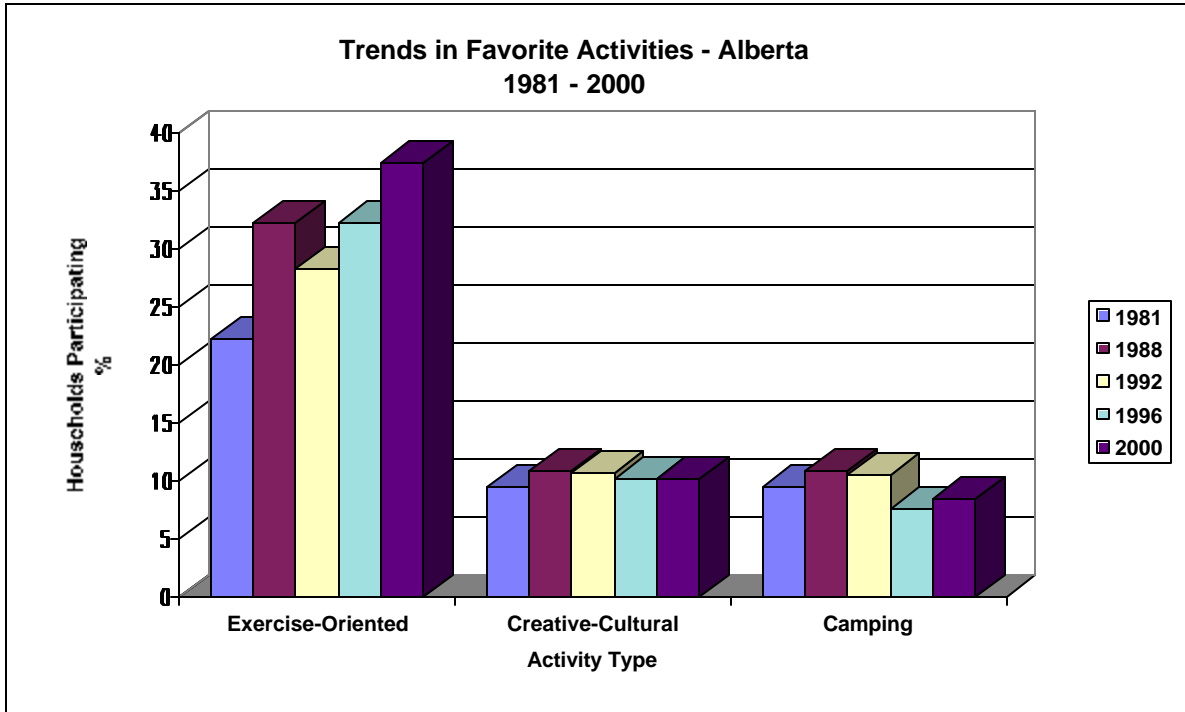


Figure 2

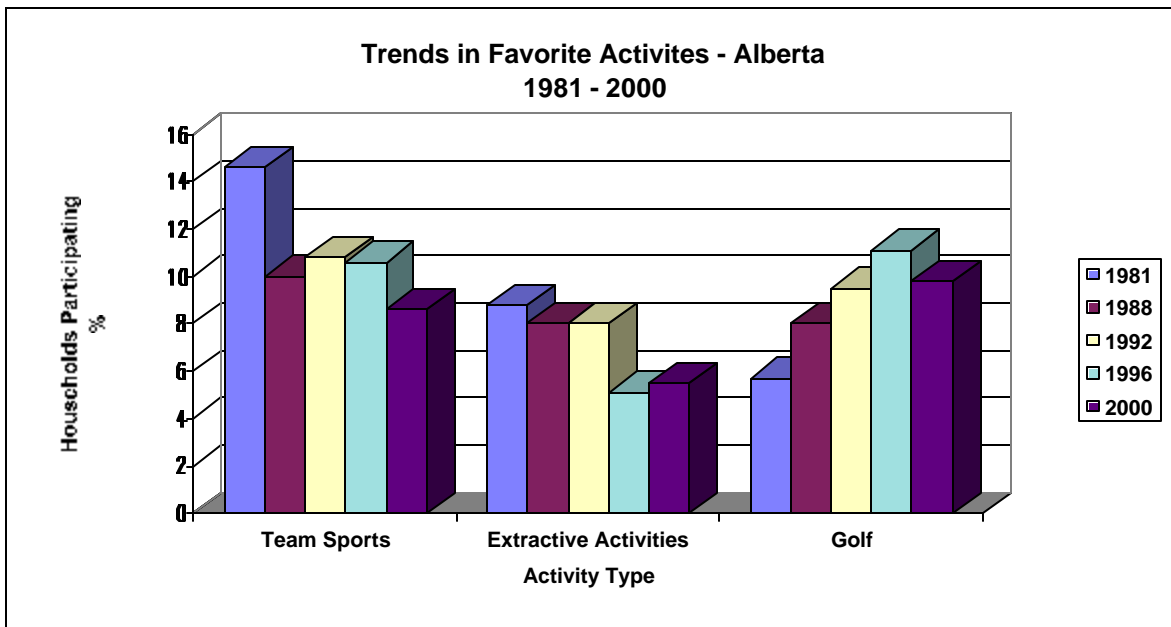
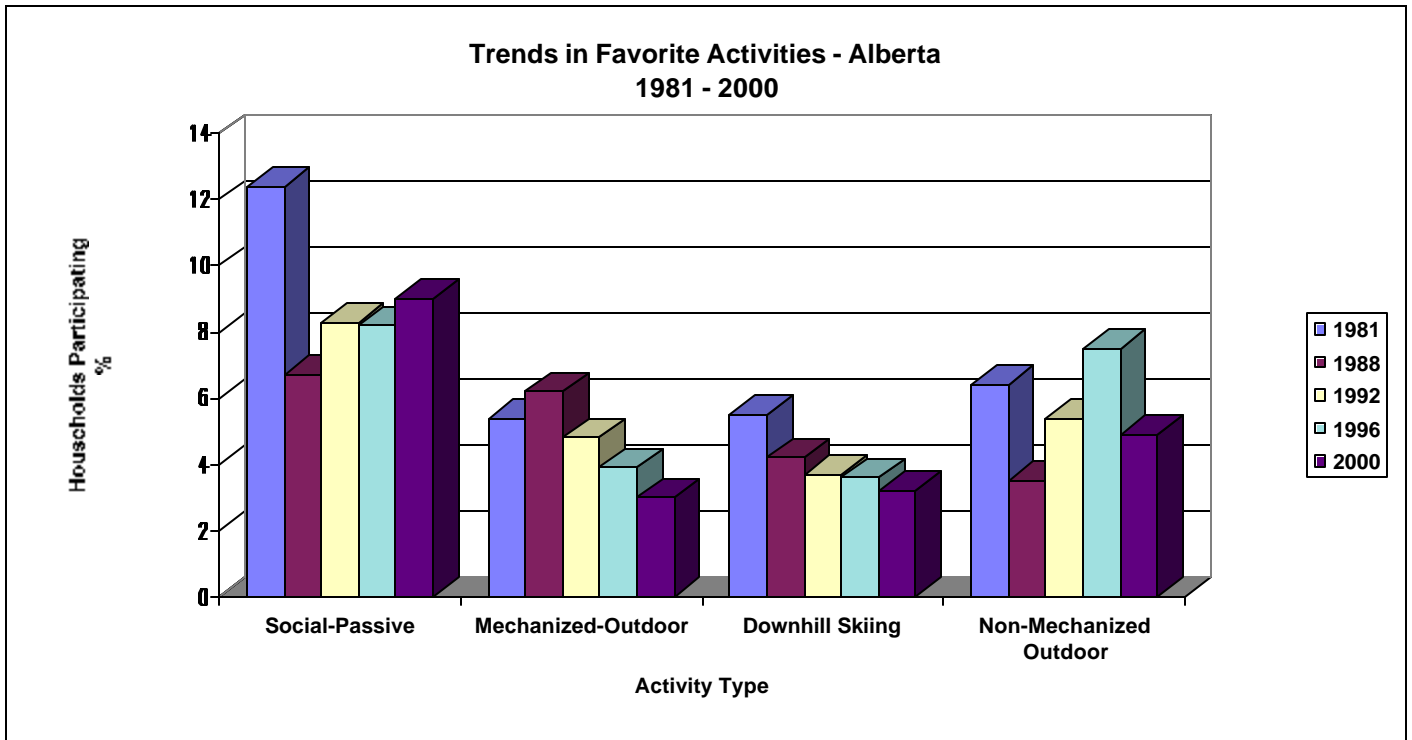


Figure 3



### Participation in Activities

Respondents were asked to indicate those activities in which household members had participated during the previous year.

Figures 4-9 show the regional variations in household participation rates of the ten top activities during the five survey periods. Though the rates for most activities were close across the province, there was variation over the 20-year study period.

Variations were found to be related to the size of the respondent's community. Rural residents were more likely to participate in gardening, fishing and hunting, camping and mechanical assisted outdoor activities. Urban residents, on the other hand, had higher participation rates in exercise-oriented activities, team sports, and social-passive activities. Urban activities include visiting a museum and swimming in pools.

An analysis, based on community size compares the 2000 Alberta Recreation Survey with those of previous years. Table 1 (see page 8) shows the data for ten activities broken into 3 community groups. The data analysis reveals that bicycling, camping, doing crafts, being a spectator, and swimming in pools have declined since 1981. Walking for pleasure, golf, and playing video games have increased since 1981.

Urban centres of

500,000 or more report an increase in playing video games, and a decline in camping. Visiting a museum and gardening have also declined over the 20-year study period for all communities of 6,000-500,000 or more. However, both activities, in these groups, gained considerable popularity since the 1996 study. Those respondents living in communities of 6,000 to 65,000 reflect the greatest increase in walking for pleasure, along with a significant increase in golf, while participation declined for swimming in pools and being a spectator over the 20-year study period. Respondents living in communities smaller than 6,000 show an increase in gardening, and a decrease in walking for pleasure. In addition, this was the only community category with a drop in participation in golf since the 1996 study.

## Trends

The 2000 Alberta Recreation Survey was compared with those conducted in the 80s and 90s. Highlights from this comparison include the following:

- The number of respondents indicating a desire to start a new activity has declined since 1981, but remained consistent since 1996. (51.1% in 1981, 40.6% in 1996, and 40% in 2000)
- Over the last 20 years the favourite activities of Albertans have remained relatively consistent.
- This study period shows that exercise-oriented activities have continued to increase in popularity. Team sports have declined in popularity as have mechanized outdoor activities, non-mechanized outdoor activities, and downhill skiing. Social-

passive activities have dropped since 1981, but have increased after 1996.

There is little difference in regional household participation rates of the top ten activities for the six survey periods. The most significant difference was found in camping and visiting a museum. However, variations did occur over time.

When the same ten activities were studied on the basis of community size, it was noted that being a spectator and doing crafts have declined in participation overall, while walking for pleasure, golfing, swimming in pools, and playing video games have increased overall.

Figure 4

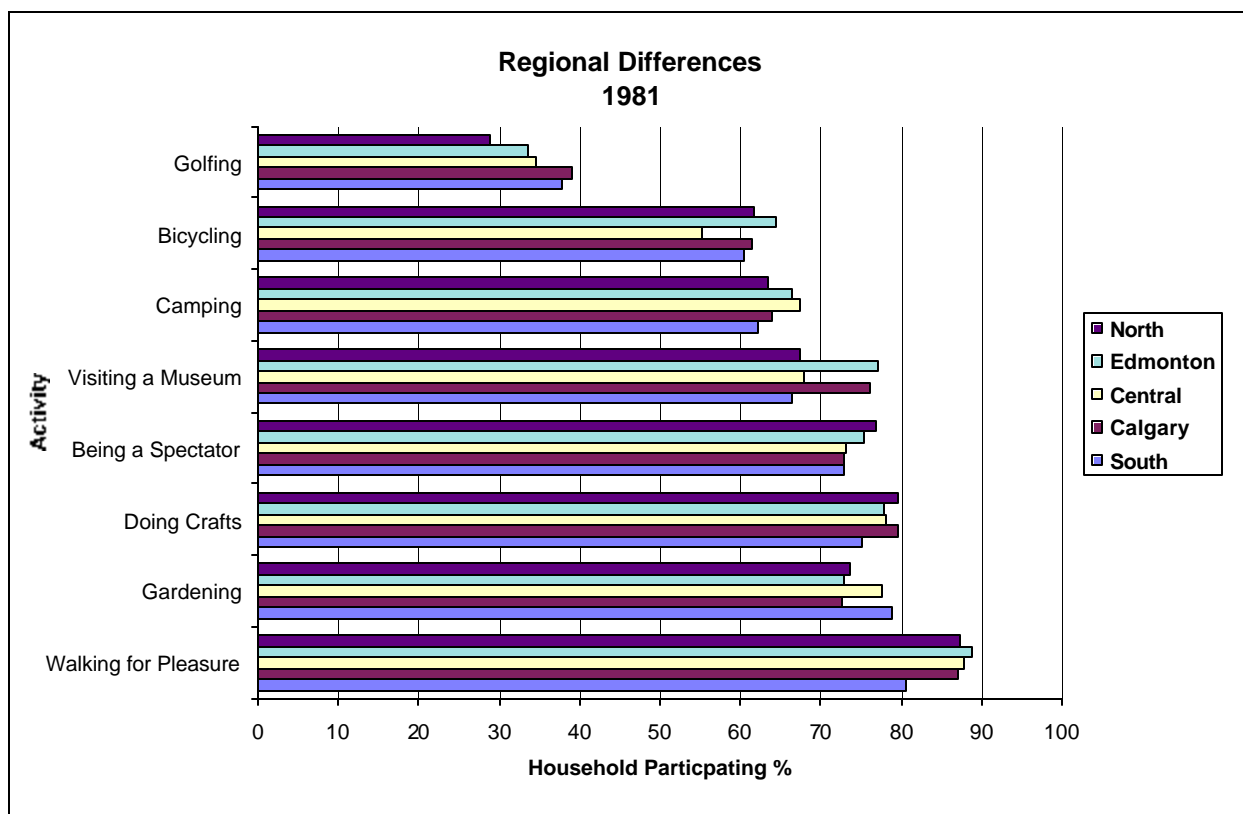


Figure 5

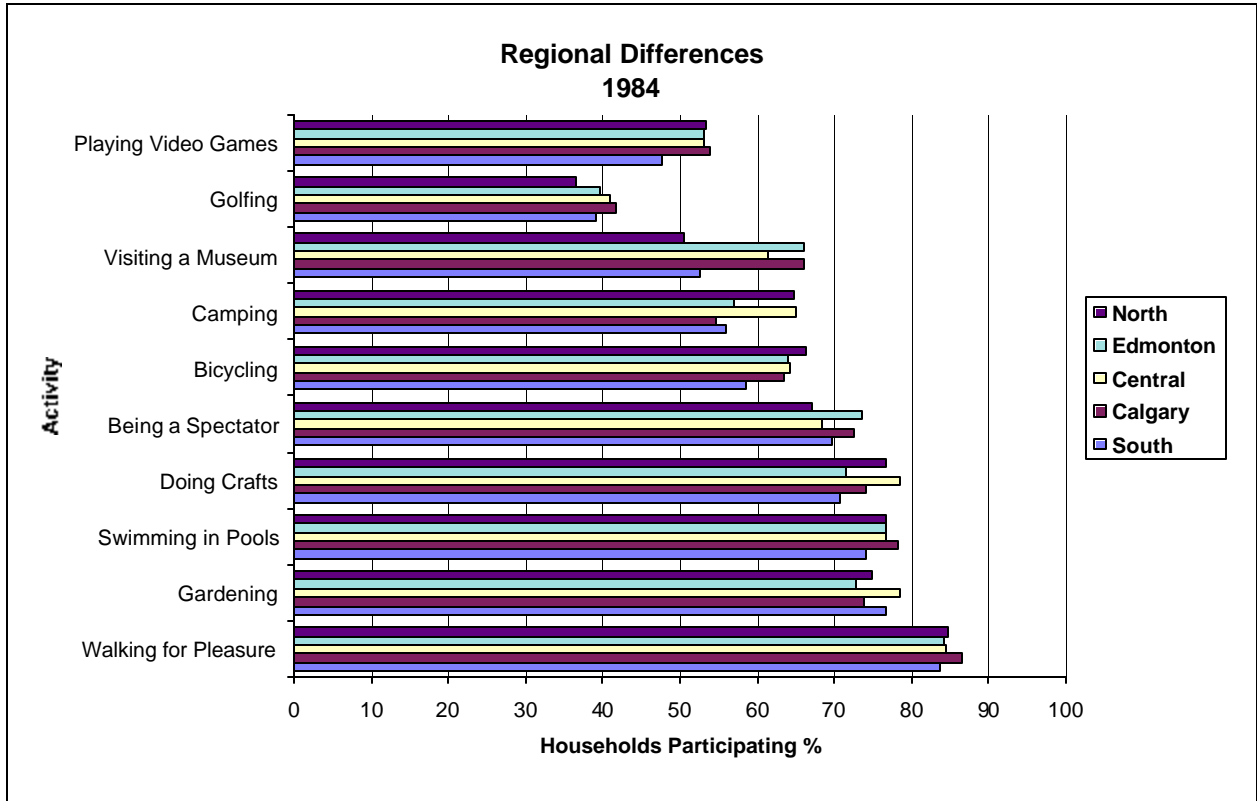


Figure 6

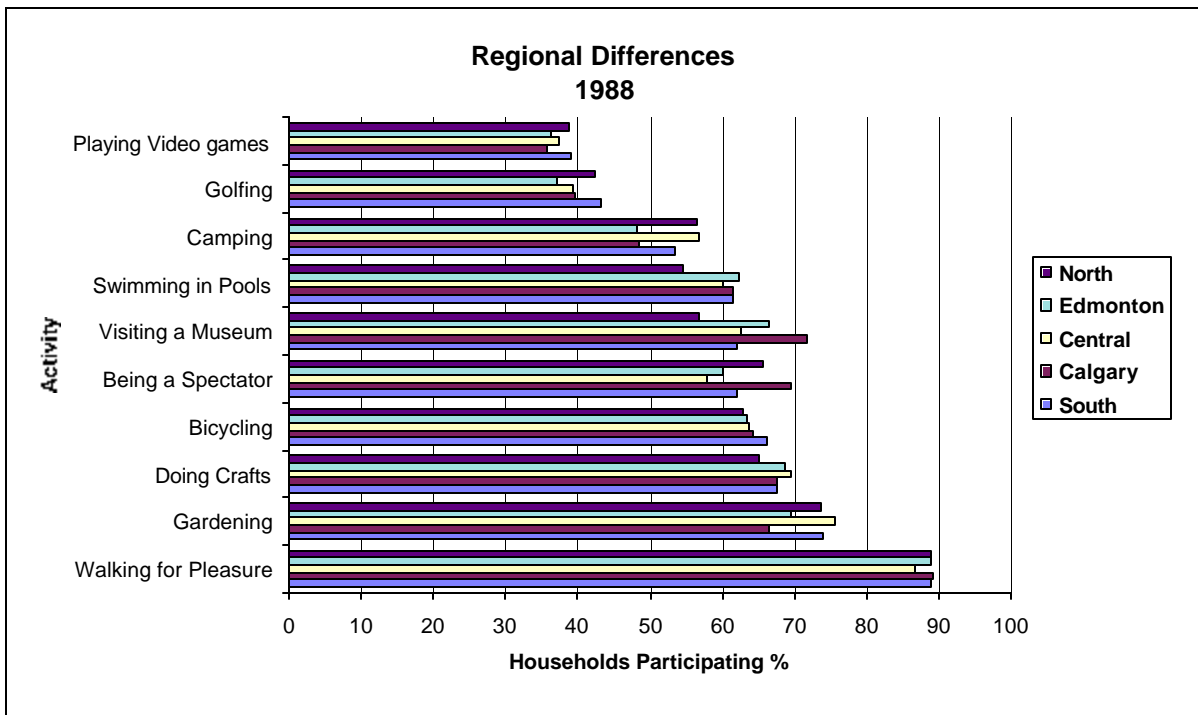


Figure 7

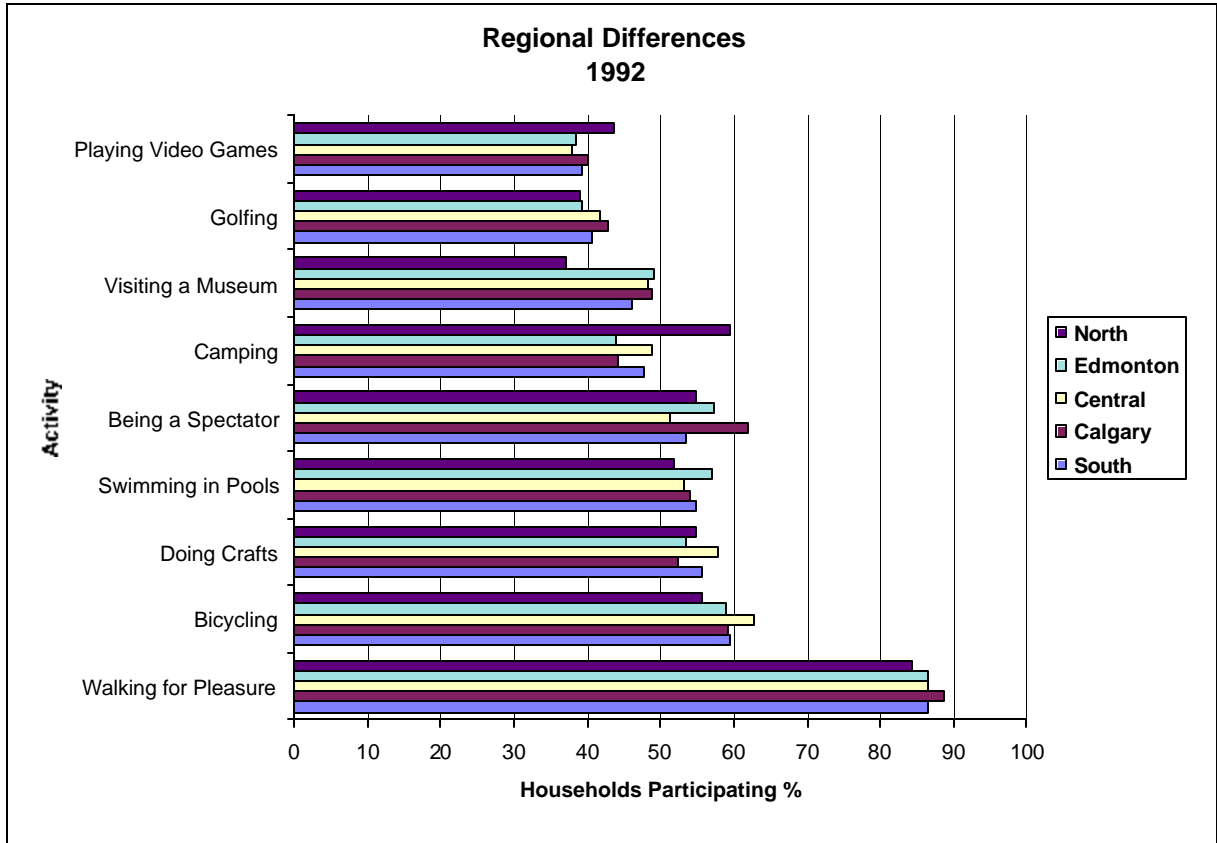


Figure 8

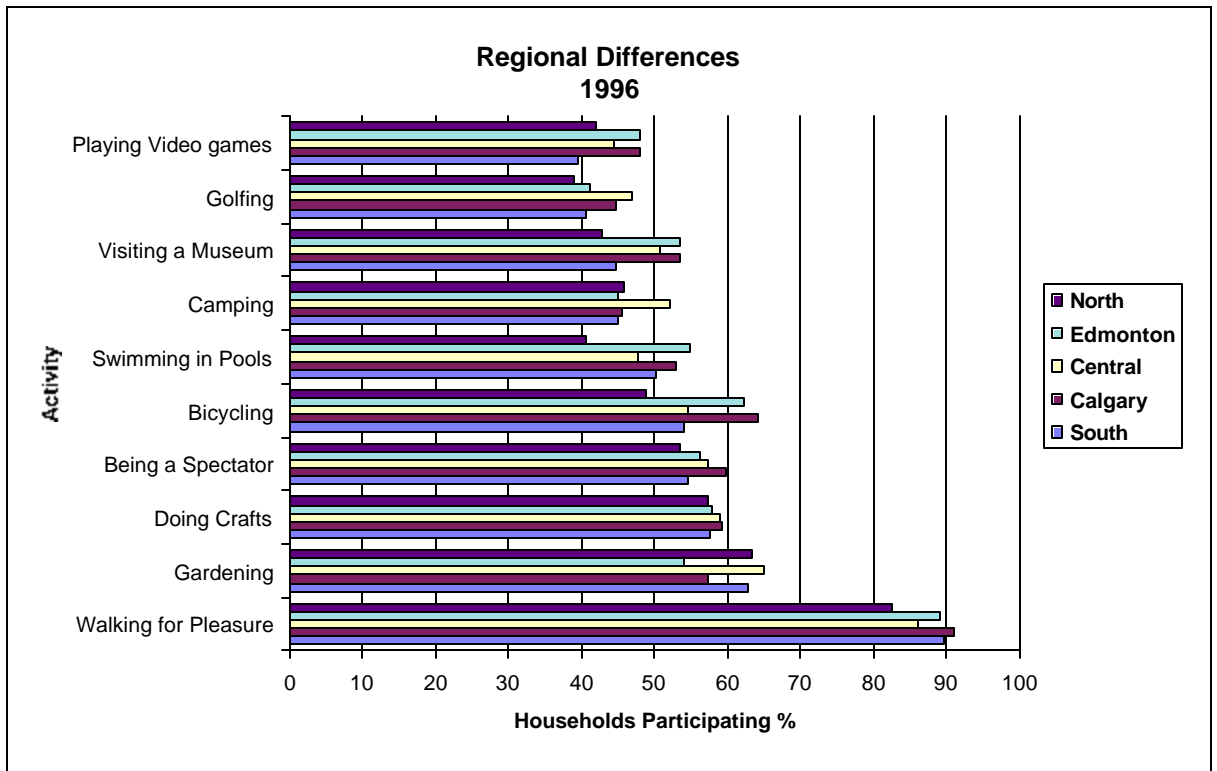
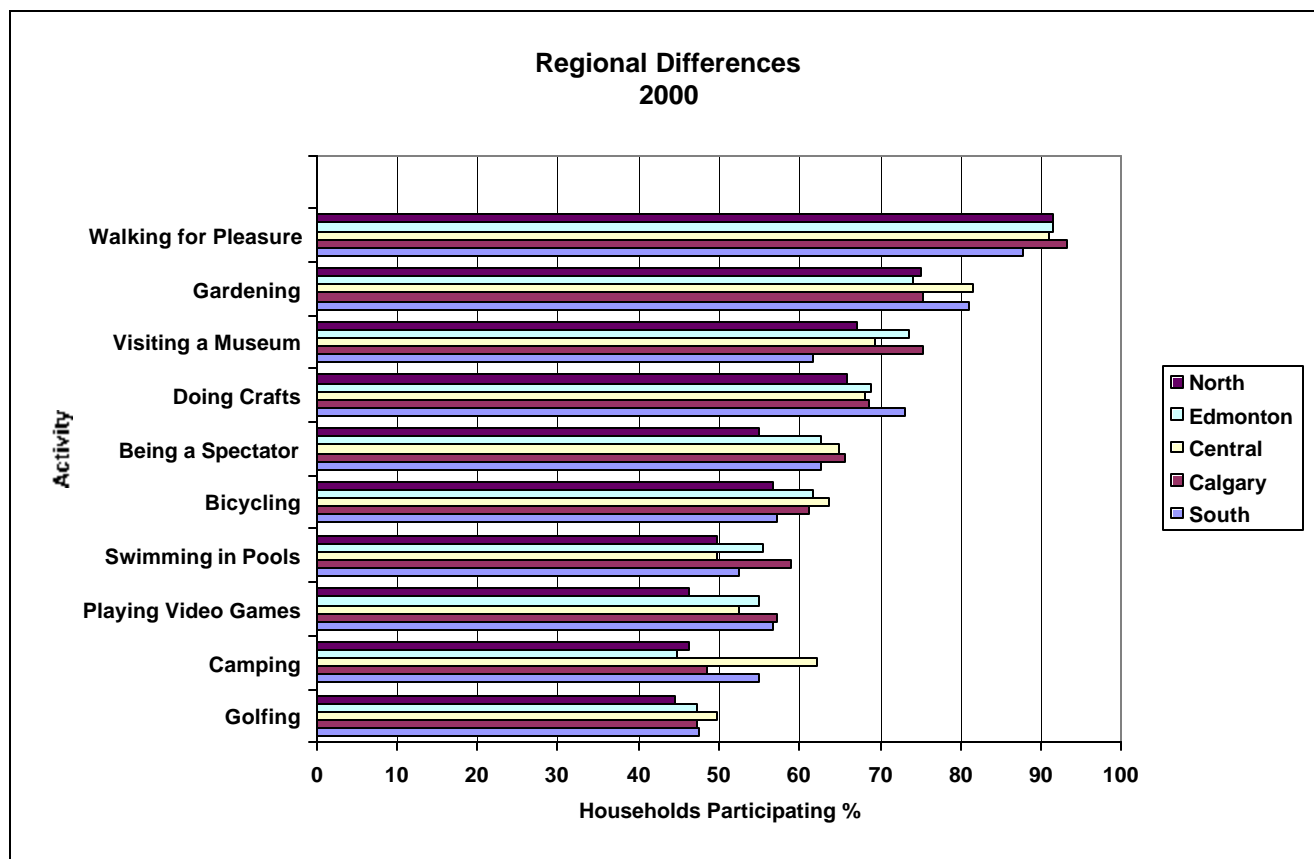


Figure 9



### Implications

The Alberta Recreation Survey gives leisure and recreation practitioners an understanding of users and non-users in the recreation sector, by identifying the types of activities that Albertans desire. The recreation study has shown that walking for pleasure, golfing, camping and bicycling are of the highest interest among Albertans. Are there ways that these activities can be introduced, or reorganized, to better meet the interests of recreation users and potential users?

The Alberta Recreation Survey addresses why people are not presently participating in leisure and recreation activities. The survey also provides

insight into regional variations in desired activities and their barriers. Regional variations include differences in available facilities, personal preferences, community composition and organization.

In order to attract participants, it is important to understand the reasons for non-participation. The Alberta Recreation Survey has identified barriers to participation by gender, age, income, and regional variation. Recreation practitioners can alter their current programs, and organize new programs, in a manner that addresses concerns with recreation participation and maximize on participation.

**Table 1 – Participation Rates by Community Size Group**

<b>Communities Larger than 500,000</b>								
	81	84	88	92	96	00	Change since 1981	Change since 1996
Walking For Pleasure	88.7	85.6	89.6	88.1	90.5	92.2	3.5	1.7
Visiting A Museum	77.8	67.9	70.6	49.2	53.8	75.3	-2.5	16.5
Gardening	69.3	71.1	64.9	*	54.8	73.8	4.5	19.0
Doing Crafts	77.5	72.7	66.6	51.7	57.7	68.6	-8.9	10.9
Being A Spectator	73.4	*	66.8	59.4	58.2	63.2	-10.2	5.0
Bicycling	*	63.2	63.0	58.2	63.6	60.6	-2.6	-3.0
Playing Video Games	43.4	52.9	35.2	38.1	48.0	56.0	12.6	8.0
Swimming In Pools	*	*	61.5	54.7	53.0	56.3	-5.2	3.3
Camping	64.3	53.8	46.3	42.5	44.8	45.6	-18.7	0.8
Golf	35.0	41.1	37.7	40.1	42.4	45.4	10.4	3.0
<b>Communities 6,000-65,000</b>								
	81	84	88	92	96	00	Change since 1981	Change since 1996
Walking For Pleasure	84.1	85.0	90.7	89.1	89.6	92.8	8.7	3.2
Gardening	78.3	74.1	73.1	*	59.0	76.3	-2.0	17.3
Doing Crafts	75.8	73.8	66.7	56.5	60.2	67.8	-8.0	7.6
Visiting A Museum	75.1	59.8	65.5	47.9	51.5	66.4	-8.7	14.9
Bicycling	*	64.5	70.9	64.0	58.6	62.9	-1.6	4.3
Being A Spectator	74.4	*	62.6	57.3	57.5	62.3	-12.1	4.8
Swimming In Pools	*	*	62.8	58.1	55.4	53.8	-9.0	-1.6
Camping	65.7	61.7	51.7	49.3	47.9	53.5	-12.2	5.6
Golf	40.1	42.8	43.6	47.9	47.2	53.0	12.9	5.8
Playing Video Games	48.0	51.6	37.4	43.4	44.6	52.1	4.1	7.5
<b>Communities Smaller than 6,000</b>								
	81	84	88	92	96	00	Change since 1981	Change since 1996
Gardening	79.8	79.7	75.4	*	67.8	89.7	9.9	21.9
Walking For Pleasure	86.0	83.7	87.4	84.6	87.2	84.5	-1.5	-2.7
Doing Crafts	80.5	74.6	69.6	57.1	62.0	70.6	-9.9	8.6
Visiting A Museum	67.2	55.5	60.2	43.6	46.1	68.6	1.4	22.5
Being A Spectator	75.8	*	61.1	56.0	53.9	64.4	-11.4	10.5
Camping	65.8	61.3	55.9	50.0	50.2	55.2	-10.6	5.0
Swimming In Pools	*	*	58.6	54.1	49.3	54.1	-4.5	4.8
Bicycling	*	62.5	62.7	58.5	55.1	53.1	-9.4	-2.0
Playing Video Games	43.0	52.6	38.4	41.5	45.2	51.0	8	5.8
Golf	33.9	36.4	40.3	39.3	43.6	40.7	6.8	-2.9

\*Data not available for this variable in this time period