

# **The Use and Benefits Of Local Government Recreation and Park Services City of Edmonton, Alberta**

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- The Canadian survey of the use and benefits of local government recreation and parks services replicated an American Study conducted for the United States' National Recreation and Parks Association (Godbey, Graefe & James, 1992). The instrument used in the US was revised to reflect Canadian culture, institutions and language. The Edmonton survey thus mirrors the Canadian survey in instrumentation and methodology.
- The population from which a representative sample was to be selected consisted of the entire population of Edmonton who were 15 years of age or older. The study specified a sample size of 400 respondents to ensure adequate power and confidence. Interviews were completed between March 29, and May 4, 1996. The sample of 398 residents of Edmonton yielded a sample error of +/- 4.9% with a level of confidence set at 95%.
- Compared to five years ago, 49% of respondents indicated they have less time for recreation and leisure while only 21% reported having more time. The remaining 30% said they had about the same time available as before. Time available for leisure and recreation differed statistically among respondents based on age, size of household and employment status (Table 1).
- When asked about how they felt about their time, over one third of respondents (37%) indicated they always feel rushed. About half (48%) reported that they occasionally feel rushed, while fewer almost never feel rushed (15%). These perceptions about time do not seem to reflect a leisure lifestyle.
- Many residents of Edmonton reported feeling rushed and not having as much time for recreation as they once did; nevertheless, 28% reported that their leisure is more important to them than their work. Thirty-nine percent (39%) said their work was more important. Thirty-two percent (32%) indicated their work and their leisure were equally important. There were statistically significant relationships between the importance of work or leisure and age, gender, household size, and employment status (Table 3).

- In spite of feeling rushed or having less time for recreation, many respondents (33%) reported they had begun a new recreation activity during the past 12 months. The likelihood of taking up a new recreation activity was statistically related to age, marital status, household size, and employment status (Table 4).
- About nine out of ten respondents (91%) indicated that a park, playground or open space was located within walking distance of their home (Table 6). This would seem to suggest that parks are supplied with a high degree of equity.
- Three quarters (75%) of all respondents reported they use their local parks; 46% use them occasionally and 29% use them frequently. Only a quarter (25%) of respondents said they don't use local parks at all (Table 7). Despite a belief that parks are primarily for young people, respondents across all age brackets were equally likely to use parks frequently.
- Respondents were asked to comment on the use of local parks by other members of their household. Household members included anyone who lived with the respondent. Sixty-eight (68%) of respondents indicated that another member of their household uses local parks areas; 36% occasionally, and 32% frequently. Only a fifth (20%) of respondents indicated their household members do not use local park areas at all.
- Respondents were asked to report the degree to which they personally benefit from local parks and then to indicate the specific benefit they perceive. They were then asked to describe the degree and specific benefits received by other household members and the community at large. Although three quarters (75%) of individuals, and 68% of household members reported using local parks directly, almost all respondents, users and non-users alike, stated they benefit either somewhat or a great deal from parks. Table 9 shows that while most respondents (89%) perceive individual benefits, almost all perceive their household (97%) and their community (93%) also benefit from local parks.
- Almost nine out of ten Edmonton residents (89%) stated that they personally benefit from local parks. There was a significant relationship between age, income, education, marital status and perceived level of benefit from local parks.

- Benefits to other household members were cited by 97% of respondents. Significant relationships were associated with age, marital status, and size of household (Table 11).
- Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents reported local parks benefit their community. Very few (3%) felt their community did not benefit at all from local parks. Perception of community benefits was statistically related to income, education, and employment status.
- Respondents were also asked to identify the particular benefit they perceived at the individual, household and community level. The responses were categorized as either personal, environmental, social, economic or facility oriented. At the individual level, virtually all categories of benefits are recognized. At the household level, personal, and social benefits are the most frequently mentioned, while at the community level, respondents perceived mainly social and facility benefits. Economic benefits were rarely mentioned at any level.
- Over one-third (35%) of respondents said they had participated in a recreation or leisure activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place in an outdoor or indoor facility managed by their local government's recreation department. Of those who said they had not participated in the previous year, 49% said that they had participated at some time in the past. Thus, almost 67% of the population surveyed had made use of such services at some time. Almost half (42%) of respondents with multiple person households indicated that another household member had participated in a recreation or leisure activity in the last 12 months.
- The most frequently mentioned categories of activities in which respondents and members of their household participated could be classified as physical or sports. However, festivals/cultural events were also frequently mentioned.
- By combining responses to the use of parks with responses to participation in activities sponsored by the local recreation department, it was possible to identify the percentage of the population who makes any direct use of such services (Table 20). Over four-fifths (81%) of the citizens of Edmonton made use of parks or recreation services during the last twelve months. The greatest percentage of respondents,

(46%) used parks alone, but almost one in three (29%) used both parks and participated in programs or activities sponsored by local recreation departments.

- By combining the use of parks and recreation services by individuals with the use by their household members, it was possible to determine that almost nine out of ten (88%) Edmonton households contained someone who had used parks or recreation services during the last twelve months.
- Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents reported not participating in recreation services during the last 12 months, the majority cited 'lack of time' as the main reason why; few reasons identified problems or issues related to the provision of service, for example, cost, availability, or lack of information. Seventy-one percent (71%) of non-users reported they benefit purely from the existence of such services. This is comparable to the 73% of respondents who reported their community benefits a great deal from having local parks. Clearly, one does not have to be a user to recognize the benefits of local recreation services. Note that four of the top five benefits (53%) reported by non-users were related to providing opportunities for youth.
- Respondents who had used local recreation services in the last 12 months reported the most important benefits attributed to individuals were personal and social in nature. This was also true for benefits to other household members. Benefits associated with the community at large reflected a shift in emphasis towards social benefits first and personal benefits second.
- Respondents were asked "If there were no public parks, recreation programs or facilities, what effect would this have on you and your household?". Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents felt that the absence of such services would impact upon themselves or members of their household. A mere three percent said there would be no impact on the community. This suggests that even though respondents or their household members would not be affected by the absence of parks or recreation services, respondents feel very strongly that such a change would negatively affect their community as a whole. Generally the absence was seen as limiting the things kids could do, reducing the opportunities for individuals to improve their fitness/wellness, and making the community a more boring place to live. This

suggests that whether one personally used these services or not, he or she recognizes that his or her community is much better for having them.

- When respondents were asked if they thought their public parks and recreation services were worth the amount of money which reflects the national average (\$75.00 per person per year), the results were extremely supportive. More than four out of five (84%) respondents felt that their local parks and recreation services are worth \$75.00 (or more) per year per member of their household (Table 29). More than half said they were worth \$95.00, and slightly more than one in four said they were worth \$115.00 or more. The average value reported by respondents who were asked “Are they worth \$115.00?” was \$137.00 per member per year, almost twice the figure given as the national average. Only 13% of respondents did not feel parks and recreation services were worth \$75.00, and most stated non-use of these services as the reason why.
- Respondents were presented with three options, and asked which one they felt should be used to support public parks and recreation services (Table 31). The most popular option was ‘through an equal combination of taxes and user fees’ (62%), followed by ‘mainly through taxes’ (33%), and ‘mainly through fees for users’ (4%).

**The major conclusions of this study are:** The vast majority of the citizens of Edmonton use their local recreation and park services. Use of such services continues across the life cycle. Perceived benefits attributed to such services cover a broad spectrum, but the majority relate to the individual and to society. Users and non-users alike perceived benefits from public parks and recreation services. The absence of local parks and recreation services is seen as having negative consequences for kids, impacting the fitness opportunities of individuals and a detriment to the quality of life in the community. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of the citizens of Edmonton (84%) believe that their public parks and recreation services are worth as much or more than the average they already pay through taxes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	i
INTRODUCTION	1
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	3
PROCEDURES	4
RESULTS	
Background Leisure/Recreation Variables	8
Changes in Amount of Free Time	8
Feeling Rushed	11
Priority of Work and Leisure	12
Beginning a New Recreation Activity	14
Existence of a Park or Playground Within Walking Distance	16
Use Of Parks	
Extent of Local Park Use by Individuals	17
Extent of Local Park Use by Other Household Members	18
Perceived Benefits From Local Parks	
Level of Benefit From Local Parks	20
Extent of Benefit From Parks to the Individual	20
Extent of Benefit From Parks to Other Household Members	22
Extent of Benefit From Parks to the Community	23
Types of Benefit From Local Parks	24
Benefits Of Local Parks On An Individual Level	25
Benefits Of Local Parks On A Household Level	26
Benefits Of Local Parks On A Community Level	27
Use Of Recreation Services	
Use of Recreation Services or Facilities by the Individual	29
Use of Recreation Services or Facilities by Other Household Members	30
Activities in Which Respondents or Household Members Participated	32
Patterns of Park Use and Recreation Service Participation	33
Non-Use of Recreation Services	34



Perceived Benefits From Recreation Services	
Benefits to Non Users	35
Benefits Of Recreation Services to Recent Users	36
Benefits Of Recreation Services on an Individual Level	37
Benefits Of Recreation Services on A Household Level	38
Benefits Of Recreation Services on A Community Level	39
Effect Of the Absence of Parks And Recreation Services	
Effects on the Individual and their Household	40
Effects on the Community	41
Value Of Local Recreation Services And Parks	42
Method Of Financing Local Recreation Services and Parks	44
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	47
REFERENCES	50
APPENDIX A	51
Questionnaire and Frequency Data	
APPENDIX B	65
Operational Definitions	

## INTRODUCTION

In order to generate continued public support for recreation and to design appropriate recreation experiences, it is essential that the expectations and perceptions of the public be known and understood. Experts agree that “...*people spend their time, money, and energy resources with the expectation of receiving benefits, not for the delivery of services themselves. Citizens don’t buy programs or services, they buy expectations of benefits*” (Crompton & Lamb, 1986).

Public perception research provides important data, and can be more revealing than other forms of benefit initiatives. Perception of public recreation will partially determine the public’s willingness to support recreation services. The increased awareness raised by such research becomes critical when service providers compete for public resources.

A recent study in the United States (Godbey, 1992) dealt with the perceptions of the American public on the benefits of local recreation and parks services. This study clearly documented valuable public support for such services through current usage, attitudes toward work and leisure, the benefits perceived from these services and the willingness to pay for public recreation.

Canada had been a leader in identifying the benefits of recreation. Recent efforts have been made to develop analytical tools to determine the extent of benefits resulting from public recreation services (Harper & Balmer, 1989). The Benefits Catalogue (1992) has also been widely used as an interpretive tool. However, little hard evidence exists about Canadians’ perceptions of benefits associated with public parks and recreation.

Recently, an increased interest in assessing the broadly based benefits of recreation and leisure, particularly related to the provision of public recreation has evolved. This interest was created in part, because of a growing need to justify the allocation of public resources based on sound scientific evidence rather than popular opinion or intuition. It was also evident that there were a limited number of effective assessment tools available to measure the many and varied outcomes of public recreation, such as community development, personal growth, environmental and economic outcomes.

In the absence of hard evidence, there was concern that recreation service providers would have difficulty generating public support for services or would have to compete with other “essential” services such as health care, social services, police, fire or public works.

Identifying and interpreting the benefits associated with public recreation is critical to fostering continued public understanding and support. It also facilitates the development of appropriate recreation experiences for consumers and positions the field among other public services. Survey research is an effective and available means to scientifically assess public perception and provide evidence of the impact of these essential services.

The City of Edmonton, Parks and Recreation Department has demonstrated its interest in emphasizing the benefits of parks and recreation services. In many respects, the department has been a leader in advocating for a benefit management approach to deliver parks and recreation services, and directly contributed to the development of implementation strategies for benefit initiatives (Petersen, 1996). The development and availability of benefits research will continue to enhance the Department's efforts in this regard. Though this study focused on local government parks and recreation services, the researchers and the City of Edmonton both recognize the valuable role played by the City's partners in the delivery of such services, most notably the numerous volunteer, non-profit organizations such as community leagues, sport governing bodies, arts and culture agencies, and other allied groups who serve the community's varied sports, cultural and social interests.

With this in mind, a National survey was developed to determine Canadians' perceptions of the many benefits associated with local government recreation and parks services. This research was supported by the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council. The city of Edmonton was among selected cities who agreed to participate more fully in the research. As a result, citizens of Edmonton were surveyed concurrently with the national population. Although residents of Edmonton participated in the national survey, this focused sampling has produced a unique and valuable data base.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study addresses the following questions:

1. Do the citizens of Edmonton value their local parks and recreation services?
2. What benefits do citizens of Edmonton associate with the existence of local government recreation and parks departments?
3. Are different benefits perceived at the individual, household and community levels and what is their relative strength or importance?
4. What programs, areas and facilities are associated with such benefits?
5. To what extent are local government parks and recreation services utilized by the citizens of Edmonton?
6. What effects would the lack of local parks and recreation services have on individuals, households and communities?
7. How much are the citizens of Edmonton willing to pay for local parks and recreation services and how is this value related to perceived benefits and the use of such services?
8. What are the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the citizens of Edmonton and how are these related to the perception of benefits accrued from local parks and recreation services?

## **PROCEDURES**

Canadians were surveyed as part of a national study of the benefits of parks and recreation services. This study was representative of Canadians from all provinces and territories, in proportion to their population. In addition to collecting this national data, another sample was drawn from the city of Edmonton, producing an unique and specific data base. The Edmonton survey thus mirrors the Canadian survey in instrumentation and methodology.

The Canadian survey replicated an American Study conducted for the United States' National Recreation and Parks Association (Godbey, Graefe & James, 1992). The instrument used in the US was revised to reflect Canadian culture, institutions and language. The development of the survey instrument is explained in the report of the Canadian Study (Harper, Neider, Godbey & Lamont, 1996).

### **Review of Literature**

An understanding of research on the benefits of recreation, leisure, and parks services was gained not only through an extensive review of related research, but also through informal interviews with colleagues. *The Benefits of Leisure* (Driver, Brown & Peterson, 1991) was also reviewed as it encapsulates the bulk of literature existing in this area. Since the publication of this book, more recent literature concerning the benefits of recreation was reviewed, including scholarly works, government publications and reports of non-profit associations.

### **The Survey Instrument**

The US questionnaire was revised based on the recommendations of experts from throughout the US and Canada, including academic researchers from numerous universities and colleges, public employees at several levels of government, and representatives from relevant non-profit organizations. The American survey was redeveloped to reflect a Canadian context. The Canadian survey instrument was then reviewed by public officials at the provincial and municipal government levels, representatives from non-government agencies as well as individuals in the academic community.

Terms for the Canadian study were carefully selected for the interview schedule. For example, "local government recreation and parks department" was selected rather than "municipal" or "urban" as these latter terms may not be specific enough for respondents living in rural areas. Attempts were made to define terms like "local",

“public”, and “benefits” to decrease the likelihood of respondents misinterpreting the terms.

The Canadian study partially “masked” the purpose of the study to respondents. It was determined that introducing the study as an evaluation of the benefits of recreation and parks might predispose respondents to report a higher than actual level of benefits for such services. Thus, the study purpose was framed in the context of recreation activity in general. The telephone interview, therefore, began with questions related to the respondent’s amount of free time and whether he or she had begun any new activities in the past year.

The Canadian study was pilot tested prior to field launch to ensure questions were straight forward and easily understood by respondents. Approximately 20 telephone interviews were conducted using an available sample within metropolitan Winnipeg, Manitoba. Members of the research team monitored the interviews to ensure the skip and rotation patterns were followed correctly and to identify problematic questions or formatting. Changes were made to the questionnaire based upon these initial responses.

Appendix A contains the final version of the telephone interview and a summary of responses to it.

It should be noted that in advance of the pilot study, the survey was reviewed and approved for use by the committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Studies, University of Manitoba, to comply with standards of ethics and confidentiality.

### **Sample Selection**

The population from which a representative sample was to be selected consisted of the entire population of Edmonton who were 15 years of age or older. The study specified a sample size of 400 respondents to ensure adequate power and confidence. Interviewing was monitored to ensure that no more than 55% of the total sample would be male or female. The sample for the telephone interviews was generated using the Angus Reid Group’s in-house national data base for all households in Canada which have telephones. Telephone numbers were selected using a random digit dialing procedure to ensure that all numbers, including new listings and unlisted numbers, had an equal chance of being selected.

## Administration of Telephone Interviews

The Angus Reid Group, a well-known Canadian company specializing in public opinion research, was contracted to conduct the telephone interviews. Several meetings were held with the company to solicit their expertise in telephone survey administration, discuss the interview schedule and other details related to sampling, assignment of interviewers, pilot testing, coding, and data reporting. All interviews were conducted by experienced interviewers within the Field Division of the Angus Reid Group using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

Interviews were completed between March 29, and May 4, 1996. The interview took an average of 16 minutes, with a flow rate of 1.7 completed interviews per hour. Approximate call statistics are described below. The specified sample of 400 residents of Edmonton yielded a sample error of +/- 4.9% with a level of confidence set at 95%. This means that a response reported by 50% of the sample might actually represent as much as 55% or as little as 45% of the entire population of Edmonton. The confidence level suggests that the population mean will fall within the sample's margin of error 19 times out of 20.

## Summary of Call Statistics for Sample of 398 Residents of Edmonton\*

Telephone Code		Number of Calls
Not in service		1144
No answer		1167
Refusals	867	
Terminated within interview	11	
Disqualified	93	
Language problems	94	
Completed surveys	398	
Total contacted		1465
Total calls		4031
Completion rate		68%

\*Call statistics are approximations based on extrapolations from the simultaneously conducted national survey

## Data Analysis

Initially, response frequencies were tabulated for all questions. Statistical comparisons were then made to assess the relationships between study variables outlined in the research questions. Independent t-tests were used to determine

significant relationships between each level of the independent variables, in this case demographics, at each levels of the dependant variable. Additional cross-tabs were also conducted: for example, to determine the percentage of respondents who participated in parks, recreation services, both or neither.

All results reported are based on tests of significance at the .05 level. This means there is less than a five percent probability that such statistically significant results observed in the sample occurred by chance.

### **Limitations**

It should be noted that the sample is only representative of residents of Edmonton who have direct dialing phone services. Residents with other phone service or no phone service are excluded as are residents in facilities or areas served by a small number of phones (e.g. seniors' homes, long-term care facilities). As such, the sample drawn is a very close reflection of the general characteristics of the population of Edmonton. Despite the most sophisticated techniques and procedures, surveys measure public opinion within established statistical limits of accuracy at a specific point in time. Under similar circumstances, one could expect a similar study to produce similar results.

\* Unless otherwise noted, all tables in this report show percentages of responses for those variables found to be statistically significant only. Percentages within tables do not always equal 100 due to rounding, non-responses or where more than one response could be given.



## **RESULTS**

### **BACKGROUND LEISURE AND RECREATION VARIABLES**

#### **Changes in Amount of Free Time**

Compared to five years ago, 49% of respondents indicated they have less time for recreation and leisure while only 21% reported having more time. The remaining 30% said they had about the same time available as before.

Time available for leisure and recreation differed statistically among respondents based on age, size of household and employment status (Table 1). Respondents most likely to report having more time for leisure and recreation were older, between the ages of 55 to 75. Those between the ages of 15 and 35 were more likely to say they had less time. People who lived alone reported having more time (30%) while 58% of people living in households of three or four persons reported having less time for recreation.

Significantly more respondents who were employed full (57%) or part time (43%) reported having less time available compared to retired respondents (14%). On the other hand, significantly more retired (45%) or part time (30%) employed respondents reported having more time for recreation and leisure than did full time employed respondents (10%). This reflects a society where few people are in the labour force after age 65, and where both adults with young families are often working.

**Table 1. Time Available for Recreation & Leisure: Respondents' Perceptions Compared to Five Years Ago (percent)**

<b>Time Available for Recreation and Leisure Compared to Five Years Ago</b>			
<b>Age</b>	<b>More Time</b>	<b>About the Same</b>	<b>Less Time</b>
15-20	18	9	74
21-35	14	22	64
36-55	18	38	44
56-65	55	27	18
66-75	44	44	13
76+	13	75	13
<b>Gender:</b>			
male	19	28	53
female	22	32	46
<b>Education:</b>			
high school or less	23	21	55
post secondary	17	35	47
post graduate	32	39	29
<b>Income:</b>			
less than \$20,000	22	33	46
\$20,000 to \$59,999	23	29	48
\$60,000 or more	16	32	52
<b>Marital Status:</b>			
not married	22	29	50
married	20	31	49
<b>Household Size:</b>			
one person	30	42	28
two person	20	37	43
three or four person	17	25	58
five or more person	24	21	55
<b>Employment Status:</b>			
full-time	10	33	57
part-time	30	26	43
unemployed	30	20	50
retired	45	41	14
other	29	22	49



## Feeling Rushed

When asked about how they felt about their time, over one third of respondents (37%) indicated they always feel rushed. About half (48%) reported that they occasionally feel rushed, while fewer almost never feel rushed (15%). These perceptions about time do not seem to reflect a leisure lifestyle.

Among those most likely to always feel rushed are people between the ages of 21 and 55 (Table 2). Few people (13%) over the age of 65 always feel rushed. In terms of household size, the more people living in a household, the greater the likelihood they were to always feel rushed. Respondents employed full-time were also more likely to always feel rushed (45%) than those working part-time (25%) or those who are retired (14%).

There were no significant differences between respondents' feelings of being rushed based on gender, level of education, level of household income or marital status.

**Table 2. Feelings About Time (percent)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>How Respondents Feel About Their Time</b>		
	<b>Always Feel Rushed</b>	<b>Sometimes Feel Rushed</b>	<b>Almost Never Feel Rushed</b>
15-20	26	56	18
21-35	41	50	9
36-55	40	50	10
56-65	21	42	36
66-75	13	44	44
76+	13	25	63
<b>Household Size:</b>			
one person	28	46	26
two person	30	50	20
three or four person	40	49	11
five or more person	48	47	5
<b>Employment Status:</b>			
full-time	45	46	8
part-time	25	66	9
unemployed	30	55	15
retired	14	41	45
other	33	47	19

### **Priority of Work and Leisure**

Many residents of Edmonton reported feeling rushed and not having as much time for recreation as they once did; nevertheless, 28% reported that their leisure is more important to them than their work. Thirty-nine percent (39%) said their work was more important. Thirty-two percent (32%) indicated their work and their leisure were equally important.

There were statistically significant relationships between the importance of work or leisure and age, gender, household size, and employment status (Table 3). Males were statistically more likely to indicate a preference for their leisure; women were more likely to value work and leisure equally.

Respondents in one or two person households were more likely to value work and leisure equally than respondents in larger households. Part-time employees were also more likely to value work and leisure equally than full-time employees who said they valued work more. Not surprisingly, retired people were most likely to value their leisure more than work.

There were no differences related to education, income, or marital status.

**Table 3. Importance of Work and Leisure (percent)**

What is more important to you?			
Age	Your Work	Your Leisure	Work & Leisure
15-20	47	38	15
21-35	35	28	37
36-55	43	24	32
56-65	27	36	33
66-75	25	44	25
76+	25	13	50
<b>Gender:</b>			
male	40	34	25
female	37	22	39
<b>Household Size:</b>			
one person	40	20	38
two person	35	27	36
three or four person	39	29	32
five or more person	45	34	19
<b>Employment Status:</b>			
full-time	43	26	31
part-time	32	19	49
unemployed	60	20	20
retired	20	41	34
other	39	36	24

## **Beginning a New Recreation Activity**

In spite of feeling rushed or having less time for recreation, many respondents (33%) reported they had begun a new recreation activity during the past 12 months.

The likelihood of taking up a new recreation activity was statistically related to age, marital status, household size, and employment status (Table 4).

People under 35 years of age were statistically more likely to have made this change than those between 36 and 55. In general, the older respondents were, the less likely they were to have begun a new activity. Respondents from households of five or more people were more likely to begin a new activity than those living in two person households.

Single people were also more likely to start a new recreation activity than married individuals. In addition, more respondents who did not consider themselves employed or unemployed (e.g. students or worked at home) began a new activity than did respondents who were employed full-time, part-time, or who were unemployed.

There were no significant differences by gender, education, or income.

The majority of new activities that respondents reported starting could be categorized as sport or exercise. In all, respondents mentioned 34 different activities were started in the last 12 months. The most frequently mentioned activities are listed in Table 5.

**Table 4. Characteristics of Respondents who Started a New Recreation Activity During The Past Twelve Months (percent)**

	Started Any New Activity(ies)	
	Yes	No
<b>Age</b>		
15-20	50	50
21-35	44	56
36-55	29	71
56-65	24	76
66-75	0	100
76+	13	88
<b>Marital Status:</b>		
not married	42	58
married	28	72
<b>Household Size:</b>		
one person	32	68
two person	30	70
three or four person	32	68
five or more person	47	53
<b>Employment Status:</b>		
full-time	31	69
part-time	30	70
unemployed	55	45
retired	18	82

**Table 5. New Recreation Activities Started in the last Twelve Months**

New Activity	Percentage of Respondents
Walking	12
Weight lifting	10
Jogging	9
Work out/exercise at club	8
Exercise	6
Hockey	6
Swimming	6
Martial arts	5
Arts and crafts	5
Racquetball/squash	5



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Based on n=132, respondents who began an activity in last 12 months

### Existence of a Park or Playground Within Walking Distance

About nine out of ten respondents (91%) indicated that a park, playground or open space was located within walking distance of their home (Table 6). This would seem to suggest that parks are supplied with a high degree of equity.

Young respondents (97% of those aged 15 to 21) were significantly more likely to indicate they had such parks or playgrounds compared to respondents aged 56 to 65 (82%). This may reflect a difference between the young and the old in their definition of “walking distance”.

Education level was related to reporting a park or playground was located within walking distance. While 84% of those with a high school education or less reported having a park within walking distance, 96% of those with post secondary education did so.

There were no significant differences related to gender, income, marital status, size of household or employment status.

**Table 6. Proximity To A Park or Playground (percent)**

	Lived Within Walking Distance of A Park/Playground	
	Yes	No
<b>Age</b>		
15-20	97	3
21-35	92	7
36-55	92	8
56-65	82	18
66-75	88	13
76+	75	25
<b>Education:</b>		
high school or less	84	15
post secondary	96	4
post graduate	93	7

## USE OF PARKS

### Extent of Local Park Use by Individuals

Three quarters (75%) of all respondents reported they use their local parks; 46% use them occasionally and 29% use them frequently. Only a quarter (25%) of respondents said they don't use local parks at all (Table 7).

Despite a belief that parks are primarily for young people, respondents across all age brackets were equally likely to use parks frequently. However, retired respondents were the most likely to report not using parks at all. Significantly more respondents in single or two person households reported not using parks than did respondents with larger households.

There were no significant differences in park use among respondents who were employed full time, part time or those who were unemployed. There were no significant differences related to gender, education level, income, or marital status.

**Table 7. Extent of Local Park Use by Individuals (percent)**

Extent of Personal Park Use			
Household Size	Not at All	Occasionally	Frequently
one person	36	38	26
two person	30	45	25
three or four person	22	47	31
five or more person	14	53	31
Employment Status:			
full-time	26	47	27
part-time	17	51	32
unemployed	25	50	25
retired	43	32	23
other	17	54	29

### **Extent of Local Park Use by Other Household Members**

Respondents were asked to comment on the use of local parks by other members of their household. Household members included anyone who lived with the respondent. Sixty-eight (68%) of respondents indicated that another member of their household uses local parks areas; 36% occasionally, and 32% frequently. Only a fifth (20%) of respondents indicated their household members do not use local park areas at all. Twelve percent (12%) of respondents reported living alone and therefore are not considered in this analysis.

Married respondents were more likely to report household members use local parks than non-married respondents. As household size increased, so too did household members' use of parks.

Higher income respondents (\$60,000+) were also more likely to report occasional park use (44%) by their household members than did those who had incomes under \$20,000 (26%). Like respondents with lower income levels, those with lower levels of education were less likely to report household use of parks than were respondents with post secondary education.

Retired individuals were also more likely not to use parks (45%) than those employed full-time (17%), part time(21%) or unemployed (20%) (Table 8).

There were no significant differences related to age or gender.

**Table 8.      Extent of Local Park Use by Other Household Members    (percent)**

<b>Extent of Park Use By Household Members</b>			
	<b>Not at All</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
<b>Education:*</b>			
high school or less	25	32	34
post secondary	16	40	31
post graduate	14	36	25
<b>Income:*</b>			
less than \$20,000	20	26	33
\$20,000 to \$59,999	19	38	29
\$60,000 or more	15	44	37
<b>Marital Status:*</b>			
not married	18	28	22
married	21	41	37
<b>Household Size:</b>			
two person	36	39	25
three or four person	17	43	40
five or more person	7	43	50
<b>Employment Status:*</b>			
full-time	17	39	31
part-time	21	38	32
unemployed	20	40	30
retired	45	18	20
other	14	38	39

\* Row percentages may not equal 100 due to single member households

## PERCEIVED BENEFITS FROM LOCAL PARKS

### Level of Benefit From Local Parks

Respondents were asked to report the degree to which they personally benefit from local parks and then to indicate the specific benefit they perceive. They were then asked to describe the degree and specific benefits received by other household members and the community at large. A benefit referred to “anything good that happens because public parks are there”. When respondents required further clarification, a benefit was described as “either an improved condition or the prevention of a worse condition”.

Although three quarters (75%) of individuals, and 68% of household members reported using local parks directly, almost all respondents, users and non-users alike, stated they benefit either somewhat or a great deal from parks. Table 9 shows that while most respondents (89%) perceive individual benefits, almost all perceive their household (97%) and their community (93%) also benefit from local parks. Only 3% said that they did not perceive local parks benefit their community.

**Table 9. Level and Extent of Benefit From Parks (percent)**

	Not at All	Somewhat	A Great Deal
<b>Individual*</b>	10	43	46
<b>Household**</b>	2	43	54
<b>Community*</b>	3	20	73

\*Based on n= 398 all respondents

\*\*Based on n= 272 respondents whose household members use parks

### Extent of Benefit From Parks to the Individual

Almost nine out of ten Edmonton residents (89%) stated that they personally benefit from local parks. Forty-six percent (46%) reported receiving a great deal of benefit, and 43% said they benefitted somewhat (Table 10). Few (10%) perceived they do not benefit at all from the existence of local parks.

Significantly more respondents aged 21 to 65 reported a great deal of personal benefit from parks than did the young (15-20), or the elderly (66+). The young were more likely to report benefitting somewhat from local parks. Those who were most likely to report not benefiting at all from local parks were aged 66 to 75.

Similarly, there was a significant relationship between educational level and perceived level of benefit from local parks. Those with post secondary education were more likely to perceive a great deal of benefit from local parks compared to those with a high school or less education. Higher-income people (\$60,000+) also reported receiving a great deal of benefit more often than respondents in lower household income brackets.

Married respondents were more likely to benefit a great deal from parks while those who were single, divorced or widowed were more likely to indicate they benefit somewhat. Retired respondents were more likely than full time employed, part time employed and unemployed respondents to report they do not benefit at all from parks.

There were no differences related to household size.

**Table 10. Extent of Benefit From Parks to the Individual (percent)**

	Extent of Personal Benefit		
	Not at All	Somewhat	A Great Deal
<b>Age</b>			
15-20	6	79	15
21-35	2	52	45
36-55	13	32	53
56-65	12	36	52
66-75	38	31	31
76+	25	38	38
<b>Education:</b>			
high school or less	14	47	36
post secondary	9	41	50
post graduate	4	36	61
<b>Income:</b>			
less than \$20,000	11	50	37
\$20,000 to \$59,999	11	44	44
\$60,000 or more	7	37	56
<b>Marital Status:</b>			
not married	7	54	39
married	12	37	50
<b>Employment Status:</b>			
full-time employed	11	44	44
part time employed	6	40	51

unemployed	5	45	45
retired	25	32	43

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### Extent of Benefit From Parks to Other Household Members

Benefits to other household members were cited by 97% of respondents. Significant relationships were associated with age, marital status, and size of household (Table 11).

Respondents between the ages of 21-35 were most likely to report benefitting somewhat from local parks. Married respondents were also more likely to indicate benefitting somewhat. The larger the household, the more likely respondents were to perceive a great deal of benefit. More respondents from three to four person households reported other members benefit a great deal than did respondents from two person households.

There were no differences based on gender, education, income, or occupational status.

**Table 11. Extent of Benefit From Parks to Other Household Members (percent)**

Extent of Household Benefit			
Age	Not at All	Somewhat	A Great Deal
15-20	0	68	32
21-35	1	49	49
36-55	3	34	62
56-65	6	44	50
66-75	0	20	80
76+	0	0	100
<b>Household Size:</b>			
one person	0	0	100
two person	4	50	44
three or four person	1	41	58
five or more person	0	41	59
<b>Marital Status:</b>			
not married	0	54	46
married	3	39	57

Based on n=272 respondents whose household members use parks (occasionally or frequently)

### Extent of Benefit From Parks to the Community

Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents reported local parks benefit their community. Seventy-three percent (73%) felt their community as a whole benefits a great deal from local parks, while 20% indicated their communities benefit somewhat. Very few (3%) felt their community did not benefit at all from local parks.

Perception of community benefits was statistically related to income, education, and employment status. There were no differences based on age, gender, or size of household.

Respondents with higher incomes were more likely to report a great deal of benefit from local parks, whereas respondents whose household incomes were under \$20,000 were more likely to report receiving no benefit at all. Those with a high school or less education were also the most likely to perceive no benefit at all.

Respondents employed full-time were significantly more likely to report their community benefits a great deal than were respondents employed part time.

**Table 12. Extent of Benefit From Park to the Community (percent)**

Extent of Benefits to the Community			
Education:	Not at All	Somewhat	A Great Deal
high school or less	7	19	69
post secondary	0	23	74
post graduate	0	11	79
Income:			
less than \$20,000	15	22	57
\$20,000 to \$59,999	1	21	74
\$60,000 or more	0	17	80
Employment Status:			
full-time	1	24	72
part-time	4	9	85
unemployed	10	20	50
retired	5	14	75
other	7	19	68

### Types of Benefit From Local Parks

In addition to reporting the extent to which parks provide benefits on an individual, household and community level, respondents were also asked to identify the particular benefit they perceived for each level. The responses were categorized into five areas to explain the range and type of benefits respondents perceived. These categories included Personal, referring to benefits which directly pertain to the individual; Environmental, which dealt with any aspect of the natural environment in a positive way; Social, which concerned some aspect of group behaviour; Economic, which dealt with some positive monetary outcome; and Facility/activity-oriented which related to the benefits of the activity itself. Further description of this categorization can be found in Appendix B.

Table 13 describes the distribution of benefits across this categorization for those perceived on an individual, household and community level. Values are based on percentages of all benefits mentioned. At the individual level, virtually all categories of benefits are recognized. At the household level, personal, and social benefits are the most frequently mentioned, while at the community level, respondents perceived mainly social and facility benefits. Economic benefits were rarely mentioned at any level perhaps reflecting the minimal amount of information available that conveys these benefits to the public.

**Table 13. Types of Benefit From Local Parks at Individual Household and Community Levels (percent)**

	Personal	Environmental	Social	Economic	Facility
Individual	27	30	22	1	19
Household	42	13	24	1	20
Community	18	7	40	2	33

### Benefits Of Local Parks On An Individual Level

In terms of specific individual benefits, the citizens of Edmonton who perceived they benefit from parks identified 26 different benefits. The most frequently mentioned benefits are listed in Table 14. Although one of the most often stated individual benefit of local parks was providing a place for kids to go, more respondents reported benefits related to exercise, well-being, and appreciation for the natural environment. People see parks as places where one can go *for* recreation or as places where just being there *is* recreation; both views are reflected in the list of individual benefits mentioned. The benefit is realized by simply going to the park or when using it for exercise or some other activity. One of the findings with the most far-reaching implications is that individual benefits are directly related to major health issues - stress reduction and exercise.

**Table 14. Key Benefits Local Parks Provide To Individuals**

Benefit	Percentage of Respondents
Place for kids to go	22
Relaxation and peace	22
Open spaces	22
Exercise/fitness/conditioning	20
Nature	17
Place to go	14
Place for recreation	13
Family time together	11
Outdoors/natural resources	9
Fun and entertainment	4

Based on n=352 respondents who perceive they benefit (somewhat or a great deal) from parks

### **Benefits Of Local Parks On A Household Level**

Respondents who reported their household members benefit from parks also identified the most important benefits they felt other household members received. Twenty-eight different benefits were mentioned, the most common are listed in Table 15. Although the benefits to household members are similar to the personal benefits respondents perceived, note the relative importance of family time, and the fact that three out of the top ten benefits mentioned relate to providing opportunities for children, which are classified as social benefits. Again, notice that the two most frequently mentioned benefits pertain to health.

**Table 15. Key Benefits Local Parks Provide To Household Members**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Exercise/fitness/conditioning	31
Relaxation and peace	20
Open spaces	19
Place for kids to go	17
Place to play	17
Family time together	14
Outdoors/natural resources	9
Facilities for the kids	9
Fun and entertainment	8
Social interaction for kids	3

Based on n=265 respondents whose household members benefit (somewhat or a great deal) from parks

### Benefits Of Local Parks On A Community Level

Respondents who reported that their community as a whole benefits from local park areas, specified 29 different benefits. The most frequently mentioned benefits are listed in Table 16. These benefits are very much related to the more traditional view of parks being places for youth activities, physical fitness, and exercise. These responses however clearly stress the benefit of local parks as gathering places, important to promoting family time as well as fostering community awareness and development.

**Table 16. Key Benefits Local Parks Provide To The Community**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Place for kids to go	24
Place for recreation	20
Exercise/fitness/conditioning	20
Place to go	19
Gathering place	17
Activities	12
Family time together	12
Good for kids	9
Green/natural/open space/ fresh air	9
Fun and entertainment	5

Based on n=369 respondents who perceive their community benefits (somewhat or a great deal) from parks



## USE OF RECREATION SERVICES

### Use of Recreation Services or Facilities by the Individual

When respondents were asked if they had participated in a recreation or leisure activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place in an outdoor or indoor facility managed by their local government's recreation department, over one-third (35%) said they had. Of those who said they had not participated in the previous year, 49% said that they had participated at some time in the past. Thus, almost 67% of the population surveyed had made use of such services at some time.

Recent use of local recreation services was statistically related to income and household size (Table 17).

Respondents with incomes above \$60,000 were significantly more likely to have participated in such an activity than were respondents with incomes of \$20,000 to \$59,999. In addition, respondents who lived in a three to four person household were more likely to have participated in an activity (39%) than those who lived alone (26%).

There were no significant differences related to age, gender, education, marital or employment status.

**Table 17. Personal Participation In Locally Sponsored Recreation Programs During the Past Year (percent)**

Individual Participation In Locally Sponsored Recreation Programs		
Income:	No	Yes
less than \$20,000	59	37
\$20,000 to \$59,999	70	29
\$60,000 or more	50	50
Household Size:		
one person	74	26
two person	66	34
three or four person	58	39
five or more person	64	34



### **Use of Recreation Services or Facilities by Other Household Members**

Almost half (42%) of respondents with multiple person households indicated that another household member had participated in a recreation or leisure activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place at a facility managed by their local recreation department.

There were demographic differences among respondents who reported recent participation by a household member based on age, education, size of household, and employment status.

Significantly more respondents who were aged 36 to 55 (50%) reported such activity than did respondents who were aged 15-20 (26%). Respondents with a post secondary education were also more likely to report recent household participation (49%) than those who had completed high-school or less (32%). Not surprisingly, respondents from larger households were more likely to report that someone in their household had participated in a locally sponsored program in the past year than were respondents living in smaller households.

Retired respondents were the most likely to report a household member had not participated recently (78%) compared to those employed full-time (53%) or part-time (54%) (Table 18).

There were no differences based on income, gender, and marital status.

**Table 18. Other Household Members' Participation in Locally Sponsored Recreation Programs During the Past Year (percent)**

<b>Household Participation In Locally Sponsored Recreation Programs</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
15-20	56	26
21-35	52	44
36-55	49	50
56-65	68	24
66-75	92	8
76+	100	0
<b>Education:</b>		
high school or less	62	32
post secondary	49	49
post graduate	57	43
<b>Household Size:</b>		
two person	71	23
three or four person	48	50
five or more person	34	59
<b>Employment Status:</b>		
full-time	53	45
part-time	54	42
unemployed	50	44
retired	78	19
other	52	40

### Activities in Which Respondents or Household Members Participated

The thirty five percent (35%) of respondents who reported participating in a locally sponsored program in the past year identified 41 different activities. Respondents also identified 35 separate activities in which their household member(s) participated. Table 19 displays the most frequently mentioned categories of activities in which respondents and members of their household participated. Most of these activities could be classified as physical or sports. However, festivals/cultural events were also frequently mentioned. While there is little difference in the relative ordering of activities, there are slight differences between the preferences of individual respondents and household members.

**Table 19. Recreation Activities In Which Individual Respondents and Household Members Participated (percent)**

Activity	Individual*	Household**
Physical recreation	60	66
Team sports	34	53
Festivals/cultural events	19	8
Cultural recreation	8	9
Outdoor recreation	6	5
Individual sports	5	6

\*Based on n=140 respondents who participated in recreation programs within the last 12 months

\*\*Based on n=146 respondents whose household members participated in recreation programs within the last 12 months

### Patterns of Park Use and Recreation Service Participation

By combining responses to the use of parks with responses to participation in activities sponsored by the local recreation department, it was possible to identify the percentage of the population who makes any direct use of such services (Table 20). Over four-fifths (81%) of the citizens of Edmonton made use of parks or recreation services during the last twelve months.

**Table 20. Individual Use of Parks and Recreation Services**

Type of Use	Percent
Used Parks Alone	46.2%
Used Both Parks and Recreation Services	28.6%
Used Recreation Services Alone	6.5%
Used Neither	18.6%
<b>TOTAL use of parks and recreation services</b>	<b>81.3%</b>

The greatest percentage of respondents, (46%) used parks alone, but almost one in three (29%) used both parks and participated in programs or activities sponsored by local recreation departments.

By combining the use of parks and recreation services of individuals with the that of their household members, it was possible to determine that almost nine out of ten (88%) Edmonton households contained someone who had used parks or recreation services during the last twelve months.

### **Non-Use of Recreation Services**

Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents reported not participating in recreation services during the last 12 months. Table 21 shows the most frequently mentioned reasons why they did not participate.

Lack of time was the most popular reason for not participating in recreation services in the last 12 months (51%). Although many reported the lack of time, this is more likely reflective of low priority, lack of motivation and lack of interest. Quite clearly, few reasons identify problems or issues related to the provision of service, for example, cost, availability, or lack of information. Only a small fraction of non-users cited 'lack of interest' in using such services. Thus, almost the entire population of Edmonton uses (81%) parks and recreation services, or is interested in using them.

**Table 21. Reasons For Not Using Recreation Services During Last Year**

<b>Reasons For Non-Participation</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Don't have enough time to participate	51
Not interested in parks & recreation services	16
Use facilities/programs/services offered elsewhere	6
Don't have enough information	4
Due to a disability	4
They aren't planned for people like me	4
Pregnancy	2
Health constraints	2
Too expensive	2

Based on n=251 respondents who have not participated in a recreation program within the last 12 months

## PERCEIVED BENEFITS FROM LOCAL RECREATION SERVICES

### Benefits to Non Users

Users and non users of recreation services were asked about the benefits of such services. The 63% of respondents who had not participated directly in a recreation service provided by their local recreation department in the last year were asked if they received any benefits from the existence of these services in their community. Seventy-one percent (71%) of these respondents reported they benefit purely from the existence of such services. This is comparable to the 73% of respondents who reported their community benefits a great deal from having local parks. Clearly, one does not have to be a user to recognize the benefits of local recreation services. This supports the idea that use and benefit are not necessarily linked.

There were few demographic differences among respondents. However, there was a tendency for more respondents of three to four person households to report they benefit from recreation services than respondents of two person households.

Respondents who had not participated in a program in the last 12 months but still felt they benefited from the existence of the programs, specified the benefits they received (Table 22). Note that four of the top five benefits (53%), are related to providing opportunities for youth.

**Table 22. Key Benefits From Recreation Services to Non-Users**

Benefits	Percent
Community Awareness	18
Gives Kids Some Place To Go	16
Keeps Kids Busy	13
Good For Kids	12
Keeps Kids Off The Street	11
Exercise/Fitness/Conditioning	11
Relaxation/peace	9
Knowing That The Services Are There	8
Health	4
Fun/Entertainment	4
Place to go/Something to do	4
Good for the family/Family time	4
Learning/Education	3
Place for seniors to go	3
Enjoy outdoors/Greenspace/Nature	3
Variety/variety of programs	3
Meet people/Socialize/Get together	3

Based on n=179 respondents who have not participated in a recreation program within the last 12 months, but feel they benefit from recreation services offered in their community

### **Benefits Of Recreation Services to Recent Users**

Respondents who had used local recreation services in the last 12 months were asked about the benefits they received from their participation. They were also asked to report the benefits enjoyed by other household members who had also participated. Lastly, recent participants were asked to identify the benefits their community receives from such services (Table 23).

The most important benefits attributed to individuals are personal and social in nature. This is also true for benefits to other household members. Benefits associated with the community at large reflect a shift in emphasis towards social benefits first and personal benefits second.

**Table 23. Types of Benefit From Recreation Services at Individual Household and Community Levels (percent)**

	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Environmental</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Facility</b>
<b>Individual</b>	60	2	36	3	0
<b>Household</b>	52	2	44	2	1
<b>Community</b>	29	1	65	4	2

### **Benefits Of Recreation Services on an Individual Level**

Respondents who participated in recreation or leisure activities in the last 12 months reported 19 different benefits from having local recreation services. The most frequently mentioned benefits are listed in Table 24. The most important individual benefits associated with the use of local recreation services are a mix of personal and social benefits. One's health and wellness is a recurring theme reflected in the benefits individuals associate with their participation in public recreation services. This is reinforced by the many references to fitness, health, relaxation, fun and socialization benefits.

**Table 24. Key Benefits Recreation Services Provide To Individuals**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Exercise/Fitness Conditioning	30
Health	10
Community Awareness/Sense of	7
Fun/Entertainment	6
Meet People	6
Relaxation/Peace	5
Group Participation	4
Family Time Together	3
Something to do/Get out	2

Based on n=140, respondents who participated in last 12 months



## Benefits Of Recreation Services on A Household Level

Respondents whose household member(s) participated in recreation or leisure activities in the last 12 months indicated the most important benefits that other members of their household gain from having local recreation services. The most popular benefits are listed in Table 25. Three of the four most commonly reported benefits are considered personal benefits, while the remainder are social benefits. As with benefits on an individual level, there is a significant appreciation for the health benefits of participating in public recreation services. Recreation services are also recognized for their contribution to one's learning as well as to their positive implications for kids.

**Table 25. Key Benefits Recreation Services Provide To Household Members**

Benefit	Percentage of Respondents
Exercise/Fitness Conditioning	42
Fun/Entertainment	15
Group Participation	18
Learning/Education	12
Good for Kids	10
Keeps Kids Busy	10
Community Awareness	8
Meet People	7
Relaxation and Peace	6
Place for Kids to Go	5

Based on n=146, household members who participated in last 12 months

### **Benefits Of Recreation Services on A Community Level**

Almost all respondents (97%) felt their community benefits from the existence of recreation services. The most popular benefits are shown in Table 26. Seven of the eight most commonly reported community benefits are considered social. Likewise, four of the ten most popular benefits are directly related to youth.

**Table 26. Key Benefits Recreation Services Provide To The Community**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Community Awareness	22
Exercise/Fitness Conditioning	17
Group Participation	16
Meet People	15
Gives Kids Some Place to Go	11
Keeps Kids Busy	11
Good for Kids	10
Keeps Kids Off the Street	10
Fun and Entertainment	8
Health	5
Something to Do	5

## EFFECT OF THE ABSENCE OF PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES

### Effects on the Individual and their Household

Respondents were asked “If there were no public parks, recreation programs or facilities, what effect would this have on you and your household?”. Seventy four percent (74%) of respondents felt that the absence of such services would impact upon themselves or members of their household. All responses were grouped into 24 different categories; Table 27 lists the most common.

Most responses related to lowering the quality of life. There were few demographic differences among the respondents. However, there was a trend for younger respondents, or those with post graduate education or less, or for respondents from larger households to report that an absence of parks or recreation services might have a greater impact upon them.

**Table 27. The Impact of the Absence of Public Parks, Recreation Programs and Facilities on the Individual and their Household**

Impact	Percentage of Respondents
Nothing to Do/Boring	14
Not a Great Place to Live	10
No Place for Kids to Go	9
Less Exercise/Fitness/Conditioning	8
Poor Community Spirit	7
Dull/Boring Place to Live	6
Have to Travel Further/Go Elsewhere	6
Less Fun/Entertainment	5
Go Out Less Often	5
Stress	5
None	27

## Effects on the Community

Respondents reported a total of 25 different ways the absence of public parks, recreation programs and facilities would impact their community as a whole. Table 28 lists the most popular responses. Most of the commonly reported impacts are related to the social environment.

The impact of an absence of parks or recreation programs is consistent with the type of personal and social benefits individuals perceive as a result of such services. Kids would be limited in what they could do, individuals would have fewer opportunities to improve their fitness/wellness, and their lives and their community generally would be more boring.

**Table 28. The Impact of the Absence of Public Parks, Recreation Programs or Facilities on the Community**

Impact	Percentage of Respondents
No Place for Kids to Go	27
Poor Community Spirit/Sense of Community	21
More Kids in Trouble	20
Nothing to Do/Boring	14
Not a Great Place to Live	13
Less Exercise/Fitness/Conditioning	9
Dull/Boring Place to Live	7
Less Fun/Entertainment	6
Stress	3
Poorer Health	3
Harder to Meet People	3
None	3

It is interesting to note that 27% of respondents reported there would be no effect on themselves or their households if such public services were not available, but only 3% said the community would not be affected. This suggests that even though respondents or their household members would not be affected by the absence of parks or recreation services, respondents feel very strongly that such a change would negatively affect their community as a whole. This suggests that whether one personally used these services or not, he or she recognizes that his or her community is much better for having them.



## **VALUE OF LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICES**

Respondents were informed that on average, people in Canada pay about \$75.00 per person per year in local taxes for parks and recreation services. This figure was calculated from a variety of municipal and provincial government reports. As such, this figure does not necessarily reflect the actual public expenditure for parks and recreation services for any specific community, although, in the City of Edmonton, it is a very good approximation. The intention was to provide a reference point to which respondents could react.

When respondents were asked if they thought their public parks and recreation services were worth the amount of money which reflects the national average, the results were extremely supportive. More than four out of five (84%) respondents felt that their local parks and recreation services are worth \$75.00 (or more) per year per member of their household (Table 29). More than half said they were worth \$95.00, and slightly more than one in four said they were worth \$115.00 or more.

Respondents' judgments of the value of their local parks and recreation services were statistically related to a number of demographic variables. Significantly more respondents aged 21 to 65, thought such services were worth \$75.00 (or more) than did the respondents aged 66+, or those under 20.

Respondents with a post secondary education were also more likely to see the value of these services than those with a high-school or less education. Likewise, respondents from higher-income households (\$60,000+) thought such services were worth the cost more so than respondents from lower-income households. Lastly, respondents living in two member households were generally more supportive of the public expenditures for parks and recreation services than were respondents living in very large households (5 or more people).

**Table 29. Value of Parks and Recreation Services per Individual Household Member**

<b>Value of Parks and Recreation Services per Individual Household Member</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondent</b>
less than \$35.00	2
\$35.00	2
\$55.00	9
\$75.00	31
\$95.00	28
\$115.00 or more	24

Respondents who indicated they thought their local government parks and recreation services were worth \$75.00 per year per household member were subsequently asked if they were willing to pay progressively higher amounts of money for parks and recreation services.

Those who indicated they would pay \$75.00 were asked if they were willing to pay \$95.00. Sixty-two percent (62%) indicated they would pay \$95.00. Of these, significantly more respondents who had incomes in excess of \$60,000 were willing to pay this amount than were respondents who earned less than \$20,000.

Respondents who indicated a willingness to pay \$95.00 were asked if they would pay \$115.00. Forty-one percent (41%) of these respondents indicated they would pay \$115.00 for such services. More respondents who lived in single person households expressed a willingness to spend this amount than did respondents who lived in two person households. There were no significant relationships among the other demographics.

Respondents who answered 'yes' to the question "Are they worth \$115.00?" were then asked "How much are these services worth per household member per year?". The average value reported was \$137.00 per member per year, almost twice the figure given as the national average.

On the other hand, the few respondents (13%) who did not feel parks and recreation services were worth \$75.00, were asked if they were willing to pay progressively lower amounts. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents who were not willing to pay \$75.00 indicated they would pay \$55.00 for such services. Finally, 41% of

respondents who were not willing to pay \$55.00 indicated they would pay \$35.00 for parks and recreation services. There were no demographic differences among respondents willing to pay these amounts. Respondents who felt such services were not worth \$75.00 provided the reasons listed in Table 30, the most common being they did not use these services (Table 30).

**Table 30. Reasons Public Parks And Recreation Services Are Not Worth \$75.00 Per Member Per Year.**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
Don't Use Them	45
Too Expensive/ Can't Afford Them	8
Pay too Much in Tax Already	8
Very Few Services/ Programs	8
Not Accessible/ Not Available Here	8
Not Enough Up-keep	6
How is Money Being Used	4
No Time to Use	4
Other Important Things to Spend Money On	4

### **Method Of Financing Public Parks and Recreation Services**

Respondents were presented with three options, and asked which one they felt should be used to support public parks and recreation services (Table 31). The most popular option was 'through an equal combination of taxes and user fees' (62%), followed by 'mainly through taxes' (33%), and 'mainly through fees for users' (4%).

The method of financing local parks and recreation services was statistically related to household size. Significantly more respondents from single person households supported an equal combination of taxes and user fees than did respondents from two person households. On the other hand, significantly more respondents from two person households reported such services should be supported mainly through taxes than did respondents from single or three to four person households.



**Table 31. Support for Public Parks and Recreation Services**

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>Taxes</b>	<b>User Fees</b>	<b>Taxes and User Fees</b>
<b>Age:</b>			
15-20	24	9	65
21-35	30	5	64
36-55	36	3	60
56-65	39	3	52
66-75	31	0	63
76+	38	0	63
<b>Gender:</b>			
male	37	4	57
female	29	4	66
<b>Education:</b>			
high school or less	32	3	61
post secondary	33	5	63
post graduate	43	4	54
<b>Income:</b>			
less than \$20,000	24	2	67
\$20,000 to \$59,999	33	5	61
\$60,000 or more	38	3	59
<b>Marital Status:</b>			
not married	27	5	65
married	37	3	59
<b>Household Size:</b>			
one person	22	4	70
two person	43	2	53
three or four person	31	5	63
five or more person	29	5	66
<b>Employment Status:</b>			
full-time	34	5	60
part-time	36	6	55
unemployed	20	10	65
retired	39	0	59
other	28	4	67



## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

**The following represent the major conclusions of this study:**

- 1.** The vast majority of the citizens of Edmonton, more than eight out of ten (81%), use their local recreation and park services. Park use is slightly more prevalent than other forms of use. These services are well used by all segments of the population.
- 2.** Use of such services continues across the life cycle, dispelling the notion that parks and recreation services are primarily for the young. However, there is a general decline in the percentage of those who use such services after age 65.
- 3.** Perceived benefits attributed to such services cover a broad spectrum, but the majority relate to the individual and to society. In terms of individual benefits, exercise and health related benefits were the most frequently mentioned. Economic benefits were rarely associated with local parks and recreation services.
- 4.** While various benefits to youth are frequently recognized as household and community benefits, almost no benefits are associated with the elderly, the 'poor' or the disadvantaged. Although the public values such services for themselves, others, and the community as a whole, they do not perceive them as fulfilling some sort of social welfare role. Parks and recreation services are thus viewed by the public as a service for all people.
- 5.** While considerable benefits are perceived at the individual, household and community level, almost three out of four residents (73%) of Edmonton perceive local parks benefit their community "a great deal" a mere three percent (3%) saw no benefit at all.
- 6.** While users of such services would be expected to identify benefits, seventy-one percent (71%) of non-users also perceived benefits from public parks and recreation services, the most prevalent associated with opportunities for youth and in making their community a better place to live.

7. Asked to consider what effect the absence of local parks and recreation services would have on themselves and members of their household, three out of four respondents recognized how this would limit what kids could do, how everyone would have fewer opportunities to improve their fitness and health, and how the lives of all residents and their community generally would be more boring.

8. An overwhelming majority of the citizens of Edmonton (84%) believe that their public parks and recreation services are worth as much or more than the average they already pay through taxes.

The citizens of Edmonton consider their local government's parks and recreation services to be a very worthwhile public expenditure. Support transcends all demographics, and includes those who make little or no use of such services. This is evident in the fact that one-third of respondents believed public parks and recreation services should be funded 'mainly through taxes', although the majority opted for financing through 'an equal combination of taxes and user fees'. It is important to note that one in three respondents (33%) supported the financing of public recreation services 'mainly through taxes' at a time when many communities across Canada are requiring the users to pay more of the direct costs of such services.

This study revealed that almost all citizens of Edmonton use and or perceive benefits from their public parks and recreation services, regardless of age, gender, education, income, marital status, or employment status. Although the public perceives a range of benefits from such services, many of these benefits are associated with "kids", in spite of the fact this study revealed an extensive use across the life cycle. Non-users in particular associate the benefits for such services with youth. Few respondents viewed these services in terms of economic benefits. Interestingly, practitioners and experts in the field of parks and recreation often view their services as meeting the needs of the less fortunate, or fulfilling a larger social mandate. Although these 'social' benefits were not explicitly cited by respondents, there was a strong level of endorsement for community benefits, which would seem to indicate the public's recognition of the benefits such services provide to all members of the community.

Exercise, fitness and health related benefits were overwhelmingly recognized in the public's mind. Relaxation and peace, contact with nature, family time together, and a greater sense of community and community spirit were also associated with public parks and recreation services. To some extent, these latter benefits also contribute to one's overall health and wellness. The public's perceptions of benefits seems to

suggest that there is a public awareness of local park and recreation agencies as health and wellness organizations. Public recreation services may wish to appreciate and explore the implications of this more fully. As such, the provision of such services may need to be more directly linked to health policy.

As found in the American study (1992), this research also clearly supports the idea that local recreation and park services provide places where people go *as* recreation and *for* recreation. Just being in a park or other recreation facility is seen as a benefit in and of itself. They provide spaces for kids, for families to be together, and for the public to meet. The very presence of such places is sufficient for benefits to be recognized and is supported by the positive comments of non-users.

North American life is often seen as increasingly private, suburbanized and self-centered. Against this backdrop, this study found that local recreation and park services are associated with a greater sense of community. Community level benefits were overwhelmingly recognized by all respondents in this study. Public recreation services are seen as the glue that brings people and communities together, a major element providing an exception to the trend towards isolation in society.

Finally, in an era of cynicism towards and suspicion of government, in a time of growing anti-tax sentiment, more than four out five (84%) citizens of Edmonton believe their local recreation and park services are worthy of public support. In fact, they believe they are worth as much or more than the amount they believe to be currently paying. The growing health consciousness of Canadians and their longing for a greater sense of community suggests that public parks and recreation services should continue to enjoy the public's support. As our society ages however, it may be important to broaden the appeal of such services or at least to publicize the availability and benefits of these services to the fastest growing segment of Canada, the elderly. A leisure education strategy aimed at the total community seems worthy of consideration.

**Clearly, the residents of Edmonton  
love their public parks and recreation services!**

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## Appendix A

### Perceived Benefits Questionnaire and Frequency of Responses

# Perceived Benefits Questionnaire

## City of Edmonton

### Recreation Participation Patterns

First, I'd like to ask you some general questions about your recreation activities.

**n=398**

1. Compared to five years ago, would you say you have  
21% more time for recreation and leisure  
30% about the same amount of time, or  
49% less time for recreation and leisure?

2. (a) Have you begun any new recreation activities during the past twelve months?

**n=398**

- 33% Yes  
67% No

- 2.(b) (If yes) What activity have you begun?

- 2.(c) Any others? (Total Mentions).

**n=132** (top five of 34, percentages based on respondents who began an activity in last 12 months)

walking	12%
weight lifting	10%
jogging	9%
exercise work-out at club	8%
exercise	6%
swimming	6%

3. In general, how do you feel about your time? Would you say you ...

**n=398**

- 37% always feel rushed even to do things you have to do  
48% only sometimes feel rushed, or  
15% almost never feel rushed?

4. What is more important to you?

**n=398**

- 39% your work, or  
28% your leisure?  
32% both are equally important (volunteered answer)



1% DK/NS

### Local Park Use and Benefits

5. Is there a park, playground, or open space within walking distance of your home?

**n=398**

<u>91%</u>	Yes
<u>9%</u>	No
<u>&lt;1%</u>	DK/NS

6. How often do you personally use your local park areas for any purpose? (These areas would include any public parks, playgrounds, and other open space in your community.)

**n=398**

<u>25%</u>	Not at all
<u>46%</u>	Occasionally
<u>29%</u>	Frequently
<u>&lt;1%</u>	DK/NS

7.(a) Now please think about the benefits of public parks. By benefit we mean anything good that happens because public parks are there. To what degree do you feel you personally benefit from your local park areas? (add even if you don't use them, if answer to #6 is not at all), (If further clarification is needed, say that a benefit is either an improved condition or the prevention of a worse condition).

**n=398**

<u>10%</u>	Not at all
<u>43%</u>	Somewhat
<u>46%</u>	A great deal
<u>1</u>	DK/NS

7.(b) (If somewhat or a great deal) What is the most important benefit you feel you receive from your local parks? (First Mention)

7.(c) Any other benefits? (Total Mentions).

**n=352** (top five of 26, percentages based on respondents who benefit somewhat or a great deal from public parks)

place for kids to go	22%
relaxation and peace	22%
open space	22%
exercise/fitness/conditioning	20%
nature	17%

8. Now I would like you to think about other members of your household; this would include a spouse, children, relatives, friends or anyone else who lives with you. How often do other members of your household use your local park areas?

**n=398**

<u>20%</u>	Not at all
<u>36%</u>	Occasionally
<u>32%</u>	Frequently

12% No other household members (skip to #10)

<1% DK/NS

9.(a) To what degree do you feel the members of your household benefit from your local park areas?

**n=272** (percentages based on respondents whose household members occasionally or frequently use local park areas)

2% Not at all

43% Somewhat

54% A great deal

1% DK/NS

9.(b) (If somewhat or a great deal): what do you think is the most important benefit other members of your household receive from your local parks? This may be different from your personal benefits or it may be the same. Please don't feel restricted in mentioning any that come to mind.

9.(c) Any other benefits?

**n=265** (top five of 28, percentages based on respondents whose household members benefit somewhat or a great deal from local parks)

exercise/fitness/conditioning 31%

relaxation and peace 20%

open space 19%

place for kids to go 17%

place to play 17%

10.(a) Now I would like you to think of your community as a whole; that is, the village, town or city where you live. To what degree do you feel your community as a whole benefits from your local park areas?

**n=398**

3% Not at all

20% Somewhat

73% A great deal

4% DK/NS

10.(b) (If somewhat or a great deal): what do you think is the most important benefit your community as a whole receives from having local parks?

10.(c) Any other benefits? (Total mentions).

**n=369** (top five of 29, percentages based on respondents whose community benefits somewhat or a great deal from local parks)

place for kids to go 24%

place for recreation 20%

exercise/fitness/conditioning 20%

place to go 19%

gathering place 17%

11.(a) Next, we'd like to know about your participation in any recreation activities organized by your local government's recreation and parks department. This include such things as sports leagues, educational or instructional classes, and special artistic or cultural events in your community. During the past 12 months, have you participated in any recreation or leisure activity that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by your local government's recreation and parks department? (If yes, go to Q14)

**n=398**

35% Yes  
63% No  
2% DK/NS

11.(b) (If no) Have you ever participated in any recreation activities organized by your local recreation and parks department?

**n=258** (percentages based on respondents who have not participated in an activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

49% Yes (go to Q11c)  
48% No (go to Q 12)  
3% DK/NS

11.(c) (If Yes): what were these activities or events?

**n=126** (top five of 17, percentages are based on respondents who have not participated in an activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department, but have participated sometime in the past)

team sports	35%
swimming	13%
individual sports	15%
classes	11%
exercise	11%

12. Are there any particular reasons why you have not participated during the past 12 months?

**n=251** (percentages are based on respondents who have not participated in an activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

16% I'm not interested in local recreation and park services.  
4% I don't participate because I don't have enough information about them.  
4% Park and recreation services aren't planned for people like me  
51% I don't have enough time to participate.  
1% Local recreation and park services are too expensive.  
1% There aren't other people for me to participate with.  
6% I use facilities, programs or services offered by other community agencies.  
4% I can't because of a disability.  
1% I have no means to get there, transportation.

- 5% none
- 2% DK/NS
- 15% Other? Please list

13.(a) Even though you haven't participated directly in any services of your local recreation and parks department during the past year, do you think you receive any benefit from the fact that your community has such services?

**n=251** (percentages are based on respondents who have not participated in an activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

- 71% Yes
- 25% No (Skip to Q 16)
- 4% DK/NS

13.(b) If yes, what is the most important benefit you receive from these services?

13.(c) Any others? (Total Mentions)

**n=179** (top five of 27, percentages are based on respondents who have not participated in an activity in the last 12 months that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department, but still benefit from such services)

community awareness	18%
gives kids some place to go	16%
keep kids busy	13%
keeps kids off the street	11%
exercise/fitness/conditioning	11%

14.(a) What activities did you participate in? Any others?

**n= 140** (top five of 41 - Percentages base on respondents who have participated in activities in the last 12 months that were sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

<u>Individual activities</u>		<u>Collapsed Activities</u>	
swimming/water park	19%	rec.physical activity	41%
festival/cultural events	19%	team sports	34%
baseball	17%	festival/cult. events	19%
skating	8%	swimming	19%
hockey	8%	cultural events	8%
		outdoor rec.	6%
		individual sports	5%

14.(b) You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. What is the most important benefit you feel you received from participating in \_\_\_\_\_?

14.(c) Any other benefits? **n=140**

**see Appendix C**

15. All in all, what is the most important benefit you feel you received from participating in activities which were sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by your local recreation and parks department?

**n= 140** (top five of 19 - Percentages base on respondents who have participated in activities in the last 12 months that were sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

exercise/fitness/conditioning	30%
health	10%
community awareness	7%
fun/entertainment	6%
meet people	6%

16.(a) Did any other members of your household participate in any recreation or leisure activity during the past 12 months that was sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by your local recreation and parks department?

**n=351** (percentages based on respondents who have other members in their household)

<u>42%</u>	Yes
<u>54%</u>	No
<u>4%</u>	DK/NS

16.(b) If yes): What activities did they participate in?

**n=146** (top five of 35, percentages based on respondents who have other members in their household, who participate in activities in the last 12 months what were sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

swimming/water park	37%
hockey	15%
soccer	14%
baseball	12%
skating	11%

17.(a) What do you feel is the most important benefit other members of your household gain from having local recreation services?

17.(b) Any other benefits to your household?

**n=146** (top five of 22, percentages based on respondents who have other members in their household, who participate in activities in the last 12 months what were sponsored by or took place on areas or facilities managed by the local parks and recreation department)

exercise/fitness/conditioning	42%
group participation	18%
fun/entertainment	15%
learning/education	12%

good for kids	10%
keeps kids busy	10%

18.(a) What do you feel is the most important benefit your community as a whole gains from having local recreation services?

18.(b) Any other benefits to your community?

**n=398** (top five of 27)

community awareness	22%
exercise/fitness/conditioning	17%
group participation	16%
meet people	15%
gives kids someplace to go	11%
keeps kids busy	11%

19.(a) If there were no public parks, recreation programs and facilities, what effect would this have on you and your household?

19.(b) Any other effect?

**n=398** (top five of 24)

nothing to do/boring	14%
not a great place to live	10%
no place for kids to go	9%
less exercise/fitness/conditioning	8%
poor sense of community	7%
none	27%

19.(c) And what about your community? What effect would it have?

19.(d) Any Other? **n=398** (top five of 25)

no place for kids to go	27%
poor community spirit	21%
more kids in trouble	20%
nothing to do/boring	14%
not a great place to live	13%
none	3%

### **Willingness to Pay for Recreation Benefits**

20. The next questions deal with funding sources for local recreation and park services? On the average, people in the Canada pay about \$75.00 per person per year in local taxes for recreation and park services. The amount you actually pay may be more or less, but \$75.00 is the national average. Do you feel that your local recreation and park services are worth \$75.00 per member of your household each year?

**n=398**

<u>84%</u>	Yes
<u>13%</u>	No
<u>2%</u>	DK/NS

21. (If yes): Do you feel these services are worth \$95.00 per household member each year?

**n=345** (percentages are based on respondents who are willing to pay \$75.00 and DK/NS)

<u>62%</u>	Yes
<u>28%</u>	No
<u>10%</u>	DK/NS

22. Are they worth \$115.00 per year?

**n=248** (percentages are based on respondents who are willing to pay \$95.00 and DK/NS)

<u>41%</u>	Yes
<u>47%</u>	No
<u>13%</u>	DK/NS

23. How much are these services worth per household member per year?

**n=229** (percentages are based on respondents who are willing to pay \$95.00 and DK/NS)

Response: mean=\$137.00; s.d.=136; s.e.= 12; median=\$90.00

24. Why do you feel these services are not worth \$75.00 per household member every year?

**n=53** (top five of 12, percentages are based on respondents who are not willing to pay \$75.00)

don't use them	45%
not accessible	8%
very few services/programs	8%
too expensive/can't afford them	8%
pay too much in tax already	8%
not enough upkeep	6%

25. Do you feel these services are worth \$55.00 per year?

**n=53** (percentages are based on respondents who are willing to pay \$75.00)

<u>68%</u>	Yes
<u>25%</u>	No
<u>8%</u>	DK/NS

26. Do you feel these services are worth \$35.00 per household member?

**n=17** (percentages are based on respondents who are willing to pay \$55.00)

<u>41%</u>	Yes
<u>35%</u>	No



**24%** DK/NS

27. (If no) How much are these services worth to you?

**n=10** (percentages are based on respondents who are willing to pay \$35.00)

0-3.00 90%

8-11.00 10%

28. In your opinion, should public parks and recreation services be supported

**n=398**

**33%** Mainly through taxes

**4%** Mainly through fees for users, or

**62%** Through an equal combination of taxes and user fees

**2%** DK/NS

### **Demographics**

Finally, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself to help us interpret the information for our study. Please remember that your responses will be held confidential and used only for statistical purposes.

29. What kind of residence do you live in?

**n=398**

**72%** Single family home

**4%** Semi-detached family home

**10%** Town house or condominium

**13%** Apartment building

**1%** Mobile home

**1%** Other see Appendix B

30. Which of the following best describes the size of community-that is village, town or city -in which you live?

**n=398**

**6%** Farm, remote or isolated community

**9%** Village or town under 10,000 people

**5%** Town of 10,000 to 20,000 people

**7%** City of 20,000 to 50,000 people

**3%** City of 50,000 to 100,000

**2%** Urban area (100,000 to 250,000 people)

**63%** Metropolitan area (over 250,000 people)

**4%** DK/NS

31. How many years have you lived in your present location?

**n=398**

**12%** Less than one year

**26%** 1 to 4 years

**24%** 4 to 10 years

**37%** More than 10 years

**1%** DK/NS

32.(a) Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

**n=398**

1 person	13%	5 persons	10%
2 persons	31%	6 persons	4%
3 persons	20%	7 persons	1%
4 persons	21%	DK/NS	1%

32.(b) How many of these are aged:

**n=398**

Age	Number of Other Household Members					
	none	one	two	three	four	five
12 or younger	67%	15%	10%	7%	1%	0
13 to 19	74%	18%	6%	2%	<1%	0
20 to 34	55%	22%	20%	2%	1%	<1%
35 to 49	54%	21%	25%	0	0	0
50 to 64	79%	9%	11%	0	0	0
65 or older	91%	4%	5%	0	0	0

33. In general, compared to other persons your age would you say your health is?

**n=398**

**25%** Excellent

**38%** Very good

**25%** Good

**8%** Fair

**3%** Poor

**1%** DK/NS mean = 3.8. std. dev= 1.0, std. error = 0.1

34. On a scale of one to five, with five being very high, in general, how happy are you?

**n=398**

**32%** 5

**45%** 4

**18%** 3

**2%** 2

**1%** 1

**2%** DK/NS mean = 4.1. std. dev= 0.8, std. err = \*

35. Which of the following categories best describes your current marital status?

**n=398**

**25%** single (never married)

**55%** married

**7%** common law

**7%** divorced

**2%** separated

**2%** widowed

**1%** DK/NS

36. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

**n=398**

<u>2%</u>	Eighth grade or less
<u>11%</u>	Did not graduate from high school
<u>26%</u>	High school graduate
<u>16%</u>	some college, university or technical school
<u>17%</u>	College or technical school diploma
<u>19%</u>	University graduate
<u>3%</u>	Some post graduate work
<u>4%</u>	Post Graduate degree
<u>2%</u>	DK/NS

37. In what year were you born? (age) see Appendix B

**n=398**

<u>9%</u>	15 to 20
<u>32%</u>	21 to 35
<u>42%</u>	36 to 55
<u>8%</u>	56 to 65
<u>4%</u>	66 to 75
<u>2%</u>	76 +
<u>3%</u>	DK/NS

38. In what Country were you born?

**n=398**

<u>84%</u>	Canada
<u>9%</u>	Europe
<u>2%</u>	Asia
<u>1%</u>	United States
<u>1%</u>	Latin America/Caribbean
<u>2%</u>	Other (Specify)
<u>2%</u>	DK/NS

39. Which of the following categories apply to you? Are you: (Check all that apply)

**n=398**

<u>55%</u>	Employed full-time
<u>13%</u>	Employed part-time
<u>5%</u>	Unemployed
<u>11%</u>	Retired
<u>11%</u>	A student
<u>7%</u>	At home
<u>1%</u>	DK/NS

40.(a) Our ancestors come from all over the World. How would you describe your own ethnic background?

**n=398**

<u>38%</u>	British Isles
<u>21%</u>	Canadian
<u>13%</u>	German
<u>9%</u>	French
<u>8%</u>	Ukrainian
<u>4%</u>	Polish
<u>3%</u>	Dutch
<u>4%</u>	Native/Metis/Inuit
<u>23%</u>	other (n=31, see appendix)
<u>3%</u>	DK/NS

40.(b) How many years have you lived in Canada?

**n=398**

mean=37. years; s.d.=15.6; s.e.=0.8

41. What is your main language, that is, the language in which you are most at ease or prefer to communicate?

**n=398**

<u>97%</u>	English
<u>1%</u>	French
<u>2%</u>	other (n=6)

42.(a) Do you have a disability or handicap?

**n=398**

<u>9%</u>	Yes
<u>90%</u>	No
<u>1%</u>	DK/NS

42.(b) If yes, are you:

**n=36** (percentages are based on respondents who have a disability)

<u>53%</u>	mobility impaired
<u>6%</u>	mentally or learning impaired
<u>6%</u>	heart condition
<u>3%</u>	visually impaired
<u>3%</u>	back problems
<u>8%</u>	breathing problems
<u>19%</u>	other (specify _____)

42.(c) Does your disability affect your choice of participation in public recreation activities?

**n=36** (percentages are based on respondents who indicated having a disability)

<u>83%</u>	Yes
<u>14%</u>	No
<u>3%</u>	DK/NS

42.(d) Does your disability affect your accessibility to public parks?

**n=36** (percentages are based on respondents who indicated having a disability)

<u>22%</u>	Yes
<u>75%</u>	No
<u>3%</u>	DK/NS

43. In federal politics, which party do you yourself associate most closely with your own political views?

<u>19%</u>	Liberal
<u>6%</u>	New Democrat
<u>12%</u>	Conservative
<u>18%</u>	Reformist
<u>&lt;1%</u>	Independent
<u>1%</u>	Green party
<u>8%</u>	none
<u>2%</u>	Other (specify _____)
<u>36%</u>	DK/NS

44. Which of the following best describes your total household income during 1995?

<u>4%</u>	under \$10,000
<u>8%</u>	\$10,000 to \$19,999
<u>24%</u>	\$20,000 to \$39,999
<u>25%</u>	\$40,000 to \$59,999
<u>16%</u>	\$60,000 to \$80,000
<u>12%</u>	over \$80,000
<u>11%</u>	DK/NS

45. For recording purposes could we have your postal code?

## Appendix B

### Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following terms were defined to mean:

### **Local Park Areas**

Local park areas were “any public parks, playgrounds and other open space in your community.

### **Recreation Activity**

By recreation activity we mean, “recreation activities organized and supported by your local government’s parks and recreation department This includes things such as sports leagues, instructional/recreation classes, and special artistic or cultural events in your community.

This definition was not meant to imply only those services directly provided by the local parks and recreation department. It is recognized that many programs and services are provided by volunteer sport, recreation and cultural associations, leagues and organizations. Where the respondents identified program participation, they did not differentiate between service providers. Therefore the results of this study can be applied equally to any groups or organizations that play a role in providing the programs identified herein.

### **Household**

Household includes, “other members of your household which could include a spouse, children, relatives, friends or anyone else who lives with you.”

### **Community**

Community means, “the village, town or city where you live.”

### **Benefit**

“a benefit is either an improved condition or the prevention of a worse condition.”

### **Benefit of Public Parks**

“By benefit we mean anything good that happens because public parks are there.”



## **Typology of Benefits**

The categories or typology of benefits described in this study were first developed in a study by Harper and Balmer (1989) and included Personal, Social, Economic, Environmental and Intangible Benefits.

This typology served as the basis for a study in the United States by Godbey, G., Graefe, A., and James. W. (1992). 'The Benefits of Local Recreation and Parks Services: A Nationwide Study on the Perceptions of the American Public.' In this study, the typology included a Facility benefit and deleted Intangible benefits.

The benefits typology used in this study include Personal, Environmental, Social Economic and Facility benefits. For the purpose of this study these terms are defined to mean:

### **Personal Benefits**

Parks and recreation services play an essential role in contributing to personal health and wellness of individuals. This occurs through improved physical and mental health, stress management and reduction, improved self-esteem, development of positive self-image, individual growth and development, and the provision of positive active lifestyle choices.

### **Environmental Benefits**

Local government parks and recreation organizations serve an important role in environmental stewardship. They are involved in the preservation and protection of natural areas and the development open spaces. This involves the provision of green space which contributes to healthy cities, maintenance of trees and grass that attenuate noise and absorb pollutants, environmental advocacy, urban buffers, water retention systems, play spaces, environmental interpretation and education and sustainable development.

### **Social Benefits**

Parks and recreation services and programs are essential for the development of healthy, active and vibrant neighbourhoods and communities. This is accomplished by providing leadership opportunities that increase the commitment of citizens to the health of their community, promote community partnerships, increase civic pride, reduce anti-social behaviour, promote understanding and cultural harmony, provide opportunities for family recreation and reduce negative behaviour affecting communities.

### **Economic Benefits**

Parks and recreation programs and services contribute to the local economy by attracting tourists, creating jobs, stimulating retail sales and motivating business relocation and expansion. In addition, recreation reduces health care costs by promoting active lifestyles, improves work place productivity and morale, and provides affordable opportunities for participation.

### **Facility Benefits**

Parks and recreation departments provide places to gather and meet which foster community awareness and relationships. This includes places where people go as recreation as well as for recreation. The act of (Godbey, 92) being in a park or other local recreation setting in and of itself is viewed as a benefit." Facilities provide a meeting place for the public, places for families and places for kids to go and to grow.