

2016



Saskatchewan
Parks and Recreation
Association

Research Summary

RECREATION AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SASKATCHEWAN



www.spra.sk.ca/survey



INTRODUCTION

Who Are We

We are the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (SPRA), the recognized leader for the wellbeing of people and communities through recreation in the Province of Saskatchewan. We envision a Province where citizens have equitable access to recreation experiences that:

- Contribute to individual mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Result in well-rounded, well-adjusted and contributing members of their community
- Provide connection and attachment to their communities and environment

Research is one of our roles. The objective of this role is to inform, generate awareness of the value of the recreation sector, and demonstrate its contribution to quality of life in Saskatchewan through the use of evidence-based information.

RECREATION IS



The experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.

Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of this survey was to develop and establish a baseline of provincial research that would capture public perceptions on the contributions that parks and recreation make toward community vibrancy and attractiveness, as well as the overall quality of life in Saskatchewan.

This survey aligns with objectives set out in our 2014-2019 Strategic Plan and Recreation Sector Public Relations Strategy. It forms the foundation for long-term research that will continue to demonstrate the benefits of the recreation sector to communities in Saskatchewan.

We intend to share this information and use it to inform the public and key decision-makers, including elected officials, of the connection between recreation and quality of life, provide valuable evidence to support strategic communications and public relations activities, and to influence decision-making at the municipal and provincial level.

Saskatchewan Needs Recreation

By 2020, Saskatchewan will be home to more than 1.2 million people. This is expected to continue as more families and young people choose to remain in Saskatchewan and grow our communities.¹

Recreation has the potential to meet the needs of our growing Province and address social and economic challenges such as increases in obesity and sedentary behavior, inequities that limit participation, the social isolation experienced by young people in Saskatchewan's small towns, reserves and northern communities, and the need for renewed recreation infrastructure in the Province.

These issues matter to the people of Saskatchewan and as our survey revealed, the personal and community benefits of parks and recreation are leading factors by which people in Saskatchewan measure and assess their happiness and quality of life.



IMPACT OF RECREATION IN SASKATCHEWAN

People in Saskatchewan are very satisfied with their quality of life. They have more time for recreation than they did in the recent past, and value a balance between work and life. Across Saskatchewan, there is widespread recognition for the community benefits of recreation, such as encouraging healthy lifestyles, building stronger links in the community and providing positive opportunities for youth.

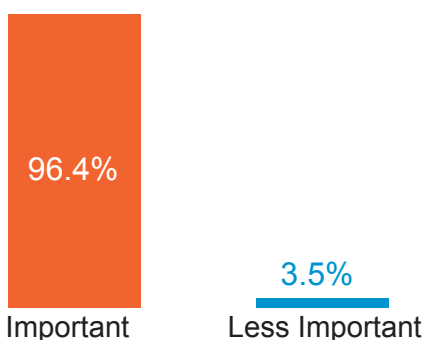


Time for Recreation

The largest group of respondents (**42.4%**) have about the same amount of time for leisure as they did 2-3 years ago, and **one third of respondents (32.4%) say they now have more time for leisure than they did 2-3 years ago.** However, a quarter of respondents (**25.2%**) say they have less time available for leisure than they once did, compared to 2-3 years ago.

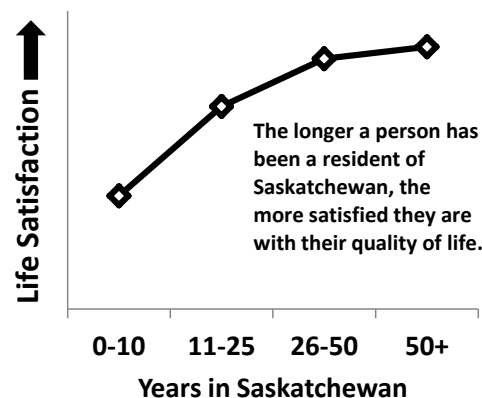
96.4% of people in Saskatchewan who responded to our survey believe that leisure is important to their quality of life.

Importance of Leisure



A 52.2% majority of survey respondents say that leisure has become more important to their overall quality of life in the last 2-3 years, as compared to work. The second largest group of respondents, at **44.2%**, say that it has stayed at the same level of importance.

Recreation and Life Satisfaction

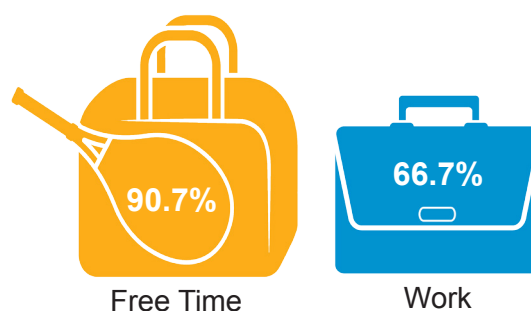




Free time rates ahead of work as a factor determining an individual's quality of life. 90.7% of respondents say that their free time is important, or very important, to their overall quality of life. Free time rates very strongly in achieving a desired quality of life, with a mean response of **4.46 out of 5**. A **50.9%** majority considers free time at the highest level.

While free time is clearly important to the people of Saskatchewan, work also rates highly at **3.81 out of 5**, with **32.0%** saying it's very important. Comparing the mean responses between free time and work, it is clear that Saskatchewan loves its leisure time but work still rates quite high. It is evident that **a balance between work and life is important to the people of Saskatchewan.**

Importance of Free Time in Achieving Quality of Life



Benefits to the Community

When asked to rate the benefits that Recreation Programs, Outdoor Environments and Indoor Facilities have on their communities, over half of our survey respondents rated the following benefits as important or very important:



76.1%

Encouraging healthy lifestyles



67.8%

Providing positive opportunities for youth



65.5%

Attracting visitors to your community



59.0%

Helping build stronger links within the community



57.5%

Making the community visually attractive



55.3%

Attracting business and economic development

Building Stronger Links in Communities

Most people in Saskatchewan agree (73.5%) that providing residents with access to recreation facilities and services is a practical way to build a sense of community among different groups of people.

71.9% of survey respondents rate helping build stronger links within the community as a large or very large benefit to the community recreation services.

Women, newcomers to Saskatchewan, those born in Canada, households with children and First Nations people are all more likely to agree or strongly agree that recreation facilities and services are a practical way to build community.



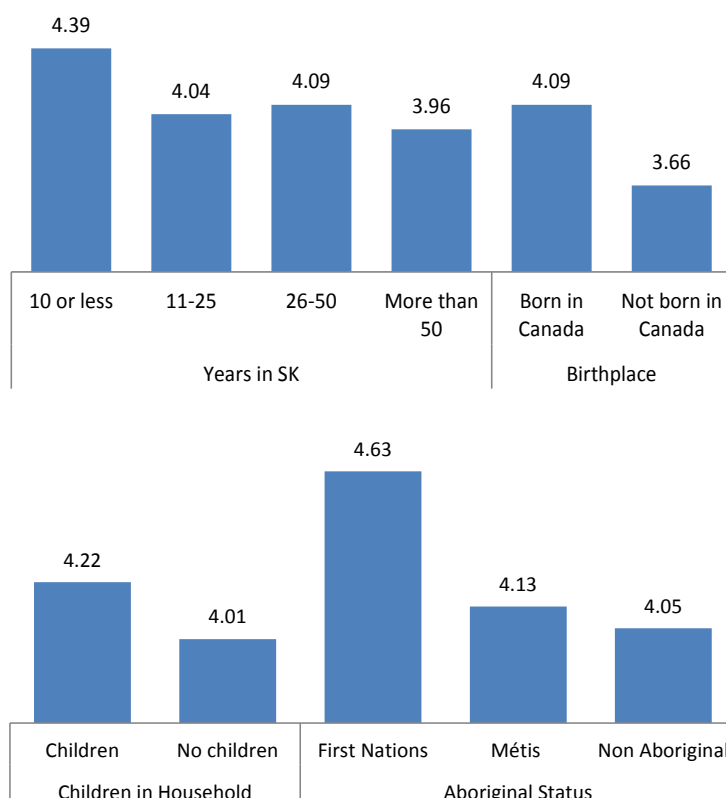
Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles

Encouraging healthy lifestyles is rated by people in Saskatchewan as the most important community benefit provided by indoor recreation facilities (4.25 out of 5) and organized recreation programs (4.19 out of 5).

Encouraging healthy lifestyles is also rated as one of the largest benefits provided by outdoor parks, playgrounds and paths (4.12 out of 5), second only to making the community visually attractive, which was rated slightly higher - with a mean score of 4.20 out of 5.



Recreation Facilities and Services are a Practical Way to Build Community Among Diverse Groups of People



Positive Opportunities for Youth

More than half of respondents to our survey (56.3%) strongly agree that participation in recreation programs help young people stay on the right track.



69.4% of respondents say that providing positive opportunities for youth is a large or very large benefit of recreation programs and services. Households with children are significantly more likely to consider this a large or very large benefit than respondents who do not have children living at home.

Additional Benefits of Parks and Green Spaces

80.1% of respondents to our survey say that making the community visually attractive is a large or very large benefit provided by outdoor recreation environments.

57.5% of respondents rated attracting visitors to the community as a large or very large benefit of outdoor recreation environments.



CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

Recreation plays a vital role in helping the people of Saskatchewan connect with nature. Connecting with nature is associated with improved mental and physical health, enhanced creativity and positive social behaviors. Saskatchewan communities can also see the economic benefits associated with ecotourism.

79.7% of People in Saskatchewan Agree That Green Spaces Make a Large Contribution to Communities in Saskatchewan

Parks and the Outdoors are Important to the People of Saskatchewan

74.3% of those surveyed agree or strongly agree that having access to a park is important to them or someone in their household.

86.1% agree or strongly agree that they value parks and open spaces for the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. Of that group, more than half strongly agree with that statement (59.8%).

Usage of parks and green spaces is very high across the Province. 82.4% of people in Saskatchewan have used a recreation area, park or biking and walking trail in the last year.

People in Saskatchewan aged 18-34 access outdoor environments more than any age group. Within the 84.2% of households where someone has used an outdoor environment, use is highest among the youngest (90.4%) and lowest among the eldest (76.3%).

We believe that parks and green spaces help our communities grow and the people of Saskatchewan agree with us. 79.7% of respondents believe that green spaces make a large or very large contribution to communities in Saskatchewan.

Green Space is the Most Important Contributor to Community Quality of Life



Green Space

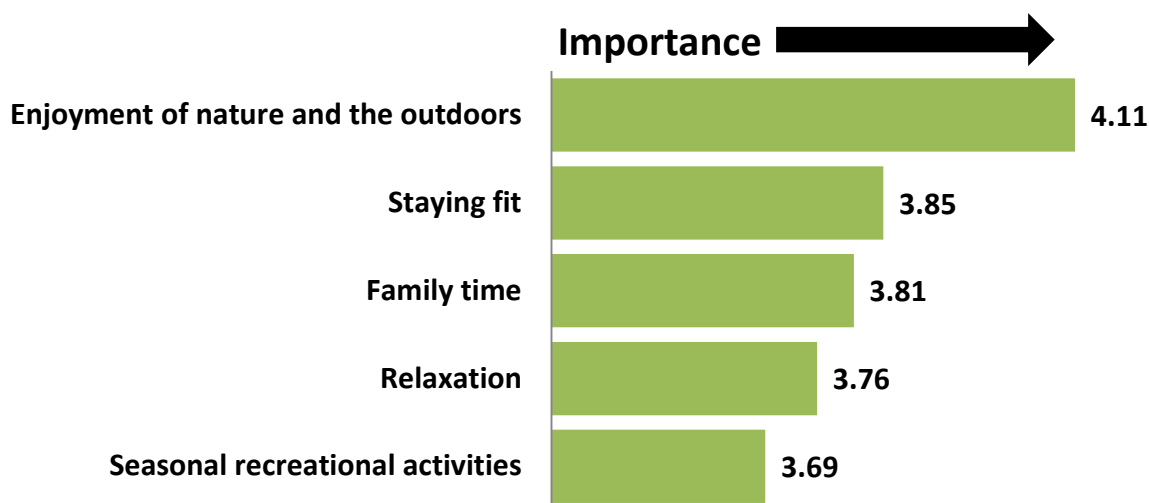


High Speed Internet

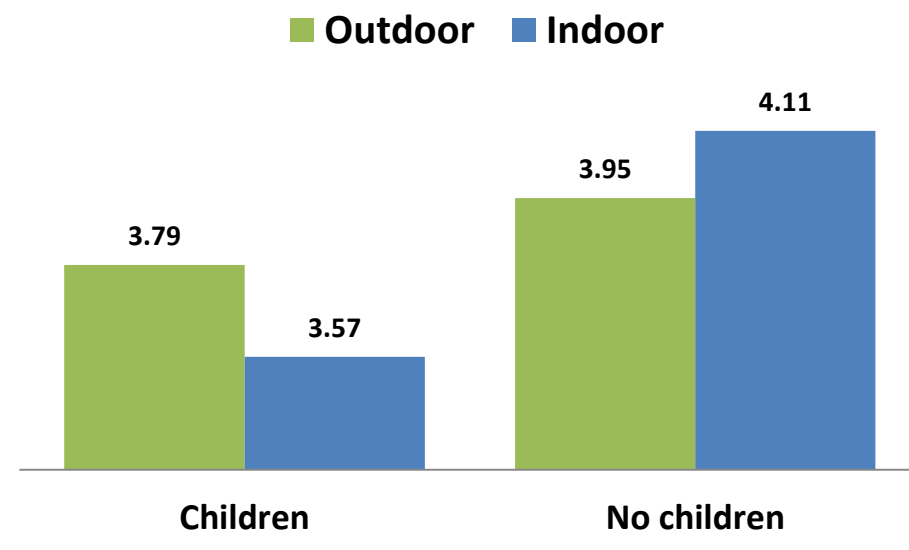


Personal Benefits of Nature and the Outdoors

76.2% of respondents rate enjoyment of nature and the outdoors a large benefit provided by outdoor recreation environments, with **46.2%** rating this as a very large benefit. The opportunities that outdoor environments provide for staying fit rated as the second highest benefit, with a mean score of **3.85 out of 5**. People who earn between \$40,000 and \$120,000 per year are more likely to rate enjoyment of nature and the outdoors as a large or very large benefit of outdoor recreation. Households with children are more likely to rate having access to a park as a large benefit of outdoor recreation.



How Households with Children and Without Children Rate Outdoor and Indoor Facilities or Spaces





ACCESS AND USE

While examining the data related to how people in Saskatchewan perceived their quality of life, we noticed that there was a positive correlation between people's perceived quality of life and their access and use of recreation opportunities in their communities. This includes outdoor recreation environments, indoor facilities and organized recreation programs and services.

88.7% say their home is close enough to outdoor recreation destinations to make them practical to use

Access to Recreation Improves Quality of Life

We found that **90% of people in Saskatchewan** who say that they are satisfied with their quality of life, also indicated that there are organized recreation services in their community and that they are practical to use. Similarly, **65.2%** of those satisfied with their quality of life have recently used an indoor recreation facility.

Our study shows that **quality of life improves with increased usage of recreation programs**, rising to **45.5%** for those who are satisfied with their quality of life from 20.5% among those who are dissatisfied.

46.9% of those who say leisure has become more important to them have used a recreation program or service, compared to **31.3%** of those who say leisure has become less important.

Parks, Playgrounds and Paths are Seen as Widely Available and are Widely Used

Saskatchewan is full of opportunities for active living outdoors and respondents to our survey indicated a high level of awareness of the opportunities for outdoor recreation available in their communities.

A vast majority of respondents (94.6%) report there is a park, playground, outdoor recreation area, playground or walking and bike path in their neighbourhood or community. **88.7%** say their home is close enough to one of these outdoor recreation destinations to make it practical to use.

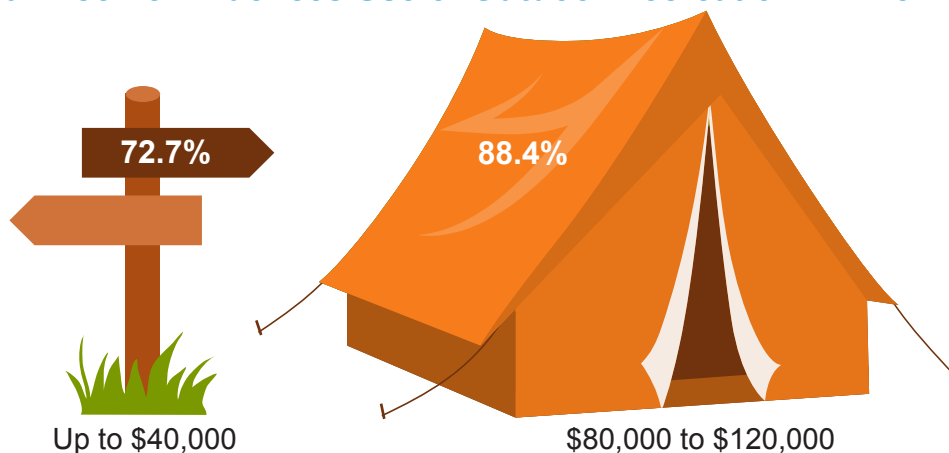
82.4% of respondents to our survey report that someone in the household has used a park, playground or biking and walking path in the last 12 months. Of this group, **52.1%** believe they or someone in their household used a park, outdoor recreation area or path about the same in the past year as 2-3 years ago and **39%** think they are more likely to use them. Within the **82.4%** of households where someone has used an outdoor environment, **use is highest among the youngest (90.4%) and lowest among the eldest (76.3%).**





Use of outdoor recreation environments rises with income, with **72.7%** in the lowest segment and **90.7%** in the highest. Reported use is much higher for respondents with children in the home (**91.5%**) than for others without children (**78.8%**).

Annual Income Influences Use of Outdoor Recreation Environments



Cities and Towns Feel Like They Have More Access to Recreation

Respondents in towns and cities are more likely (between **89%** and **97%** respectively) to feel they live close enough to a park, playground or path to make it practical. Farm and acreage residents feel like they have significantly less access (**61.8%**).

Indoor facilities are accessible

77.1% of people in Saskatchewan who responded to our survey report there is an indoor recreation facility in their local community and **79.0%** feel it is close enough to make its use practical. While these facilities are close enough to use on a regular basis, only **60.9%** of the households surveyed used indoor recreation environments in the last year.

Publicly operated facilities are the most popular indoor recreation areas in Saskatchewan. Our survey respondents indicated that when they or someone in their household is seeking a leisure activity, these individuals would most often turn to a publicly-operated community facility (3.58 out of 5) or friends and family (**3.62 out of 5**). **72.8%** of the indoor recreation facilities used most often are publicly operated.

People from small cities or large towns, with populations between 5,000 and 20,000, are much more likely to use their publicly operated indoor facilities (**91.2%**) than people who live in cities with a population over 20,000 (**70%**).

People born in Canada may have higher expectations for access than do respondents born in other countries. **78.8%** of Canadian-born respondents feel they are close enough to indoor facilities to use them, while **92.5%** of residents not born in Canada feel they are close enough. Respondents aged 18-34 show a similar pattern: **71%** of them feel close enough to use an indoor facility, versus **79%** overall. However, the overall sentiment is that indoor facilities are considered by most to be close enough to use.

Families access recreation facilities more than any other group in Saskatchewan. **74%** of households with children have accessed a recreation facility in the last 12 months, compared to **55.8%** for those without children. Use is also higher among those who have resided in Saskatchewan for more than 10 years (**70%**), as opposed to those who have lived in Saskatchewan for less than 10 years (**53.3%**).



Organized recreation programs are accessible but are used less frequently

Saskatchewan's recreation providers bring a high level of quality to the organized programs and services that they provide to communities, but these programs are not being used by a majority of respondents. Of the households we surveyed, only **42.3%** report that someone in the household has used an organized recreation program in the last 12 months. This low usage statistic isn't due to a lack of awareness or accessibility. **85.6%** of survey respondents report there are organized recreation programs in their local communities and **87.1%** say these programs are close enough to make use of them practical. Additionally, those who have used recreation services (**76.1%**) rate their quality as good or very good.

Only 64.2% agree or strongly agree that they can afford to participate in most of the recreational activities they want to be part of

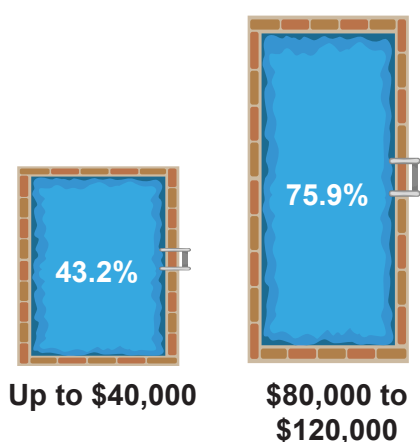
Affordability Impacts Access and Use

Income and the lack of affordable recreation opportunities remain a barrier to participation for many households across Saskatchewan. Only **64.2%** agree or strongly agree that they can afford to participate in most of the recreational activities they want to be part of.

Use of organized recreation programs rises with income.

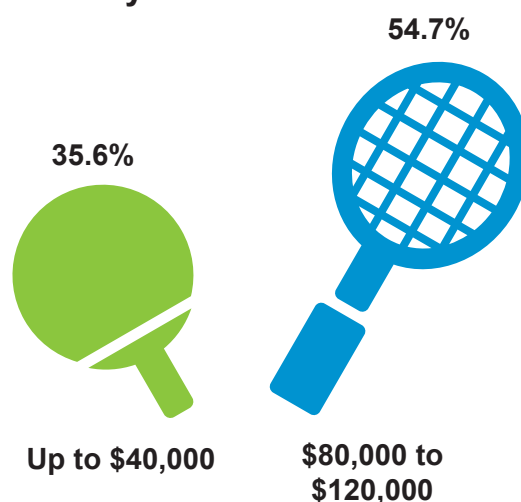
Only **35.6%** of households with annual incomes up to \$40,000 say that they have used a recreation program or service in the last 12 months. This is in sharp contrast to the **54.7%** of households who earn between \$80,000 - \$120,000 per year and have used a recreation program or service in the last year.

Indoor Facilities Use in the Last Year - By Annual Income



People's perceived level of access to organized recreation programs rises with annual income, from **77.7%** in the lowest segment (under \$40,000) to **93.1%** in the top segment (more than \$120,000).

Recreation Program Use in the Last Year - By Annual Income



Use of organized recreation programs is 10% higher in towns and smaller cities than any other population size in the Province. The amount of reported use between people who live on farms and acreages (**38.9%**) and residents of large cities (**38.6%**) is nearly identical.

Awareness of the availability of organized programs rises with age, measuring **76.2%** for persons aged under 35 years and rising to **89.9%** for those over 55. However, use of organized programs is highest among the middle-aged (**55.1% vs 42.3%** overall) and lowest among those over 55 years old (**34%**).



CONDITION OF RECREATION ENVIRONMENTS AND FACILITIES

Recently, the Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (2016) noted that 46% of sport and recreation facilities are in poor, very poor and fair condition, and requiring attention.²

Provincially, we are facing a massive recreation infrastructure deficit, requiring more than \$695 million in maintenance³

The condition of our province's indoor recreation facilities received a mean score of **3.92 out of 5**, which is higher than the condition of outdoor parks, playgrounds and paths. These outdoor environments are rated good and very good at **70.1%**, with a mean of **3.89 out of 5**. We consider these high scores to be the result of work in the last few years to fund improvements to facilities, through grant programs such as the Community Rink Affordability Grant.

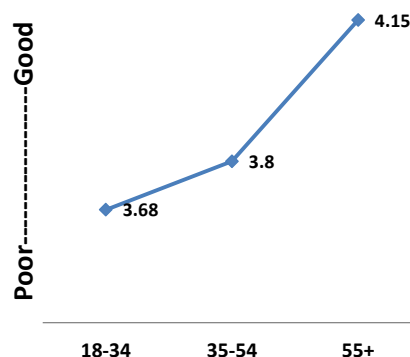
The condition of outdoor recreation environments are rated just slightly lower than indoor facilities, even though more people say they used an outdoor recreation environment in the last year. The condition of indoor facilities and outdoor environments were both rated higher among respondents without children at home, with a mean score of **3.95 out of 5** for outdoor areas and **4.11 out of 5** for indoor facilities.

Ratings given to the condition of outdoor recreation environments rise as community population rises, from **3.54 out of 5** among those on a farm or acreage to **4.05 out of 5** for those living in the large cities. **People in small cities give the highest ratings to the condition of indoor recreation facilities (4.27 out of 5)**, while those on farms and acreages and those in small towns give lower ratings (**3.44 and 3.88 respectively**).

People who were born in Canada (**3.88 out of 5**) rate the condition of outdoor recreation environments lower than those born outside the country (**4.20 out of 5**).

The condition of outdoor environments is rated higher by those who report that they are satisfied with their quality of life (3.97 out of 5) than those who are dissatisfied with their quality of life (**3.48 out of 5**).

How Age Groups Rate Indoor Recreation Facilities





SURVEY METHOD

This document highlights responses to questions asked of people across Saskatchewan in a survey conducted throughout April and May of 2015. The Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association commissioned Praxis Analytics to conduct the survey.

The project included 917 interviews completed with residents of Saskatchewan aged 18 or older. Respondents were contacted by email through an online survey, or by telephone. The sample was gathered across the Province in ten regions: one for each major city, one for the North, and five that make up the southern smaller city-town-rural areas. It is structured according to population, gender and age. Where necessary, the final data set was adjusted to parallel demographics for age, gender and census division. The composite constitutes a non-probability sample to which margins of error are not applicable. However, a sample of this size sourced at random from the general population aged 18 or older would yield a general margin of error of plus or minus 3.23% at 95% confidence.

This report includes frequency of response information for all queries in the survey, as well as cross tabulations significant at 95% confidence.

FURTHER READING

Recreation and the Quality of Life in Saskatchewan: Research Report (2016), www.spra.sk.ca/survey
A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015: Pathways to Wellbeing, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association
Living in Saskatchewan Communities: A Quality of Life Study (2014), Community Initiatives Fund
Leisure Services in Saskatchewan (2008), Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association
National Benefits Hub: Research That Supports Recreation, www.benefitshub.ca

REFERENCES

- 1 Saskatchewan Plan for Growth, 2012
- 2 Canadian Infrastructure Report Card, 2016
- 3 Investing in Healthy People and Communities through Recreation Infrastructure, 2006



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