



Sport Participation in Canada

Chapter 5

5.0 Sports We Enjoy

5.1 Golf ranks as the most popular sport in 1998

Golf has replaced hockey as the number one sport activity reported. Golf, hockey, baseball and swimming were the sports most frequently reported by adult Canadians in 1998.

According to the GSS, golf has replaced hockey as the number one sport activity reported ¹ in 1998. Over 1.8 million Canadians (or 7.4% of the adult population) reported playing golf on a regular basis compared to 1.3 million (5.9%) in 1992. This interest in golf lies mainly with adult males who made up three-quarters (74%) of all golfers. The number of adult males reporting playing golf increased from 912,000 in 1992 to 1.3 million six years later. As for female golfers, the numbers are substantially lower, yet still impressive with almost 500,000 women reporting playing golf in 1998. Almost 60% of golfers reported playing once or twice a week, and another 20% reported playing 3 or more times a week during the golfing season.

Hockey ranked second among the most popular sports in 1998. One and a half million adult Canadians (6.2% of the population) reported playing hockey, showing little change from the 1.4 million (6.4%) reporting in 1992. As expected, males made up 96% of those playing hockey. Baseball (5.5%) and swimming (4.6%) ranked in third and fourth place.

Snowboarding and in-line skating were two of the newest sports added to the 1998 survey. Approximately 81,000 Canadians reported snowboarding in that year and 70,000 reported in-line skating, together these two sports represent less than 1% of the adult population.

Golf, hockey, baseball and swimming (in descending order) were by far the sports most frequently reported by adult Canadians in 1998. In comparison, the sports of choice back in 1992 were hockey, downhill skiing, swimming and golf. The increasing cost of ski equipment, lift passes and transportation may help explain the decrease in popularity of this sport.

Canadians tend to adopt the type of sport activity that integrates well into their daily lives. Sports that are relatively unstructured, that can be done either inside or outside facilities, and that fit most schedules are the sports most likely to be pursued on a regular basis.

¹ Respondents may indicate participating in more than one sport.

5.2 Men and Women prefer different sports

Swimming, golf, baseball and volleyball were the sports of choice for women 15 years and older, while men preferred hockey, golf, baseball or basketball.

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Interesting regional patterns were observed when it comes to sport preferences. Hockey ranked as the top sport among residents in the Atlantic Provinces, while golf was by far the sport of choice in both the Prairies and in British Columbia. Ontarians were equally active in three sports: golf, hockey and baseball, while residents of Quebec preferred swimming followed by golf and hockey.

Table 5.
Most Played Sports* by Canadians (aged 15 and older), 1998

	Total	Male	Female	Overall Participation Rate (1)	Active Participation Rate (2)	Active Male Rate	Active Female Rate
Population (aged 15 and older)	000s	000s	000s	24,260 %	8,309 %	5,140 %	3,169 %
Golf	1,802	1,325	476	7.4	21.7	25.8	15.0
Hockey (ice)	1,499	1,435	65	6.2	18.0	27.9	2.1
Baseball	1,339	953	386	5.5	16.1	18.5	12.2
Swimming	1,120	432	688	4.6	13.5	8.4	21.7
Basketball	787	550	237	3.2	9.5	10.7	7.5
Volleyball	744	394	350	3.1	9.0	7.7	11.0
Soccer	739	550	189	3.0	8.9	10.7	6.0
Tennis	658	434	224	2.7	7.9	8.4	7.1
Skiing (downhill)	657	342	315	2.7	7.9	6.7	9.9
Cycling	608	358	250	2.5	7.3	7.0	7.9
Skiing (cross-country)	512	208	304	2.1	6.2	4.0	9.6
Weightlifting	435	294	140	1.8	5.2	5.7	4.4
Badminton	403	199	204	1.7	4.9	3.9	6.4
Football	387	347	40	1.6	4.7	6.8	1.3
Curling	312	179	133	1.3	3.8	3.5	4.2
Bowling (10 pin)	282	132	150	1.2	3.4	2.6	4.7
Bowling (5 pin)	200	79	122	0.8	2.4	1.5	3.8
Softball	210	118	92	0.9	2.5	2.3	2.9
Squash	163	x	x	0.7	2.0	x	x
Karate	129	81	48	0.5	1.6	1.6	1.5
Figure skating	121	46	75	0.5	1.5	0.9	2.4
Rugby	104	x	x	0.4	1.3	x	x
Ball hockey	91	x	x	0.4	1.1	x	x
Snowboarding	81	x	x	0.3	1.0	x	x
Water skiing	79	x	x	0.3	1.0	x	x
In-line skating	70	x	x	0.3	0.8	x	x
Racketball	58	x	x	0.2	0.7	x	x
other	323	219	104	1.3	3.9	4.3	3.3

* Respondents may report participating in more than one sport.

(1) The percentage is calculated using the total Canadian population aged 15 and older.

(2) The percentage is calculated over the population participating in at least one sport – the 'Active population'.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998