

## Fitness and sport survey

Results of the most comprehensive study undertaken in Canada on participation in fitness and amateur sport activities were made public recently by Iona Campagnolo, Minister of State, Fitness and Amateur Sport.

The study, undertaken in October 1976, shows that 59 per cent of the population over 14 years of age participates in at least one physical activity; walking is the most popular. In addition to walking, calisthenics (19 per cent), jogging/running (15 per cent), bicycling (13 per cent), and swimming (9 per cent) account for a majority of all exercise participation. "Enjoyment" is the reason Canadians choose most often (48 per cent) as a reason for exercising, while "doctor told me to" (3 per cent) is the least mentioned one. "For good health" and "good for me in general" also are given as motives for exercise by over 40 per cent of Canadian exercise participants. Half the population participates in at least one sport, the most popular of which is swimming.

The survey was conducted in collaboration with Statistics Canada. Approximately 70,000 Canadians, selected at random, were interviewed.

A significant finding is that 26 sports attract more than 100,000 participants each, a testimony to the scope and diversity of interests of Canadians in physical activity. Furthermore, results indicate that access to opportunities for physical activity still varies widely according to location, income, education and other socioeconomic and demographic factors.

### Participation by region

Sport participation ranges from a low of 36 per cent in Newfoundland to a high of 55 per cent for both British Columbia and Alberta. British Columbia also has the highest rate for exercise participation. By contrast, the Atlantic provinces are again below the national average rate of participation.

The amount of variation in provincial participation rates is large enough to warrant explanation, either for reasons related directly to sports or other reasons. For example, data from other recreation surveys show that people in Newfoundland spend significantly more time watching television than those in British Columbia. Although this does not necessarily ac-



count for the differences in sport participation rates, it provides an example of what the data in the survey might be able to explain. Other explanations might refer to barriers to participation such as the differences in access to facilities or the amount of leisure time available.

The survey also provides reliable estimates of sport participation for the 22 major metropolitan areas in the country. For example, Saskatoon has the highest participation rate at 67 per cent followed by Regina at 64 per cent. Montreal and Sudbury have the lowest participation rates at 47 per cent.

The sport activity most participated in by Canadians is swimming, with over 5.5 million participants representing 32 per cent of all Canadians over age 14. The remainder of the ten most popular sports are: ice skating (17 per cent), tennis (13 per cent), golf (11 per cent), ice hockey (8 per cent), cross-country skiing (8 per cent), alpine/downhill skiing (7 per cent), curling (5 per cent), alley bowling (4 per cent), and baseball/softball (2 per cent).

### Influences on participation

If age and sex are considered jointly, some interesting observations bearing on the social context of a sport emerge. While the female rate of participation in most sports drops as young people make the transition into marriage and family life, cross-country skiing shows a relative increase in female participation; more females than males 20 years and over report some involvement in this sport,

whereas among young people, male participants predominate.

Generally, there is a positive association between levels of income and participation in sports. The participation rate of individuals who reported incomes of less than \$15,000 a year is approximately 50 per cent, whereas of those with higher annual incomes, about 68 per cent indicate some participation in sports.

Of the respondents with an occupation in the white collar or service categories, 59 per cent participate in a sport. This compares with 48 per cent for those who never worked or did not work in the labour force during the past five years. The latter group contains housewives; however, it also includes young

