

Let's Get Active!

Planning Effective Communication Strategies

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT MONITORING PROGRAM



Trail use in Canada

The types of trails in Canada are varied and can include land-based routes including designated footpaths, multi-usage tracks, bicycle routes, boardwalks, pre-existing rail lines, and designated access roads, or water-based trails, such as waterways and portage routes. The 2014-2015 Physical Activity Monitor asked Canadians (18 years and older) about their use of trails, the frequency of use, and in what season the trail is typically used. This bulletin summarizes these findings. Two later bulletins in this series examine the types of sports or activities conducted on the trail (Bulletin #11) and the reason for using the trails (Bulletin #12).

Use of Trails

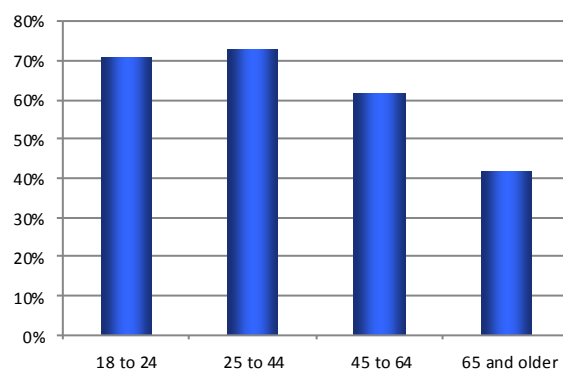
Roughly two-thirds of Canadian adults (64%) indicate that they have used a trail in the past 12 months. Residents of Alberta and the Yukon are more likely than the average to indicate that they use trails.

Participant characteristics - Although there are no differences by gender, there is a general decrease in trail use by increasing age (71% of 18 to 24 year olds to 42% of 65 years and older). Adults who did not complete secondary school are least likely to use a trail compared to the average, and are less likely than those with a post-secondary education. Similarly, relatively fewer adults who have completed secondary school use a trail compared to university educated adults. Compared to the average, homemakers and retirees are least likely to indicate that they have used a trail in the 12 months prior to the survey. Adults who are widowed, divorced or separated are least likely to use trails compared to those who are married (or living with a partner) or who are single (or never married).

Household and community characteristics - Adults living in higher income households generally are more likely than adults living in lower income households to say that they have used a trail in the 12 months prior to the survey.

FIGURE 1

Trail use by age

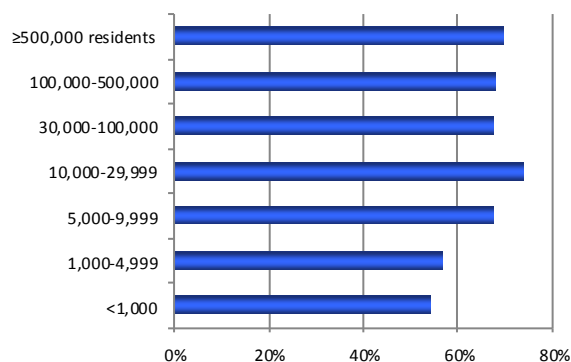


2014-2015 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Residents of the largest communities (500,000 or more residents) are more likely than those living in smallest (1,000 residents or less) to use trails.

FIGURE 2

Trail use by community size



2014-2015 Physical Activity Monitor, CFLRI

Frequency of use of trails

Trail users were asked about the frequency in which they have used trails in the past year. Responses were categorized into three categories indicating low (49% of trail users; 3 times or less per year), moderate (26% of users; between 3 and 50 times per year), and high usage (25% of users; more than 50 times per year).

There are no significant differences in the frequency of use of trails by participant, household, or community characteristics, with the exception of several regional differences. Residents of Quebec are significantly more likely, whereas those in the Yukon are less likely than the national average to indicate low use of trails. A greater proportion of residents living in Newfoundland and Labrador and the Northwest Territories indicate moderate and high usage of trails compared to the national average. Residents of the Yukon are also more likely to indicate high usage of trails compared to the national average.

Seasonality of trail use

Adults were asked in what season that they use the trails most frequently, and adults were permitted to answer with more than one response. As such,

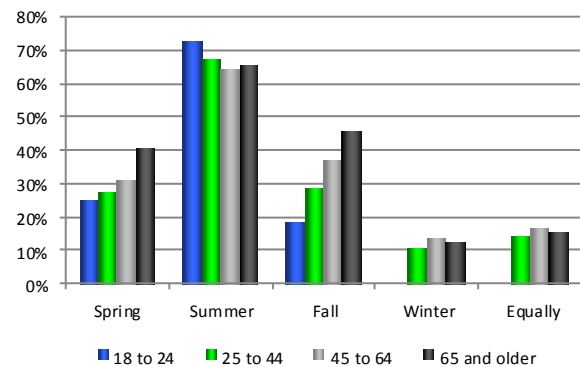
- 68% say that they use trails in the summer
- 30% indicate use of trails in the fall
- 29% mention using trails primarily in spring
- 12% primarily use trails in the winter
- 13% use trails *equally* in all seasons.

Compared to the national average, residents of Nova Scotia are more likely to use trails in the spring. A greater proportion of adults living the Northwest Territories say that they use trails in the winter compared to the national average, whereas those living in the Yukon are more likely to use trails in all seasons. Residents of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are more likely, whereas those in Alberta and British Columbia are less likely than the average to use trails in the fall.

Participant characteristics - Relatively more men than women indicate that they use trails equally in all seasons. The seasonality of trail use is also related to age. Older adults (65 years and older) are most likely to use trails during the spring and, along with 45 to 64 year olds, also the fall. Retirees are more likely than the average to use trails in the fall and to indicate that they use trails equally in all seasons. Single or never married adults are least likely to use trails in the fall

FIGURE 3

Seasonality of trail use by age



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Household and community characteristics - Adults in the highest income households (\$100,000 or more per year) are more likely than adults living in middle income households (\$40,000 to \$59,999 per year) to use trails equally in all seasons. Adults in the largest communities are more likely to report using trails in the summer compared to adults living in the smallest communities. On the contrary, adults in small communities (<5,000 residents) are more likely than those in the largest communities to use trails in the winter.

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