

# Free Time



## Noteworthy:

- Total hours of free time increased from an estimated 1,547 million hours in 1961 to 5,514 million hours in 2003. That is a 257% increase in total hours of free time over the study period.
- Hours of free time per person (population 15 years of age and over) per year also increased from 1,793 to 2,176, a 21% increase.
- Although television viewing consumes a large portion of the free time of Canadians (42% in 1986), it is also the activity most readily sacrificed.
- The importance of activities such as live stage performances, attending museums and going to movies is increasing as free time activities.
- Mothers who are employed full-time have the least amount of free time of any cohort, just 3.6 hours per day.
- The value of free time in any year is equal to the increase in free time from 1961, the base year, times the average real wage rate for each year.
- Free time was worth \$3,291 (1998\$) in 1962 and \$74,536 (1998\$) in 2003.

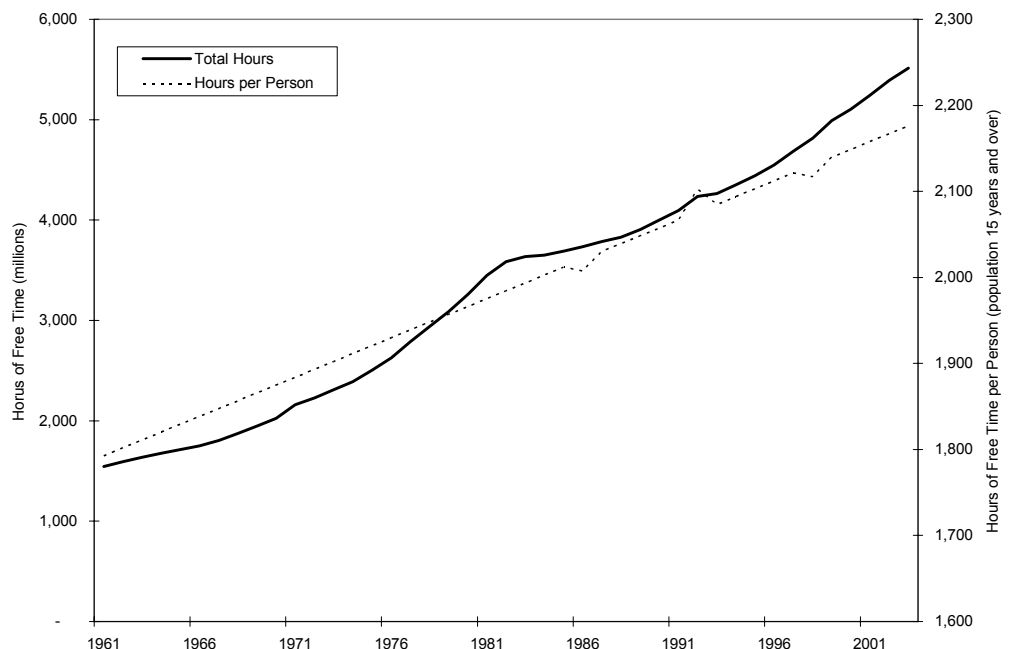
## Free Time in Alberta: How Much?

Total hours of free time increased from an estimated 1,547 million hours in 1961 to 5,514 million hours in 2003. That is a 257% increase in total hours of free time over the study period. Hours of free time per person (population 15 years of age and over) per year also increased from 1,793 to 2,176, a 21% increase. This increase in both total hours

and hours of free time per person is a somewhat surprising result given the increasing participation by women in Alberta's labour force. Employed people have much less free time than their unemployed counterparts, and employed women, faced with the double burden of paid and unpaid work (housekeeping, childcare etc.), have the least amount

of free time. However, it appears as though the effect of Canada's aging population is outweighing the effect of female labour force participation. Retired people average almost twice as much free time as the employed. Thus, as baby boomers move into retirement, Alberta is experiencing an increase in the number of hours of free time per person.

### Free Time in Alberta, 1961 to 2003

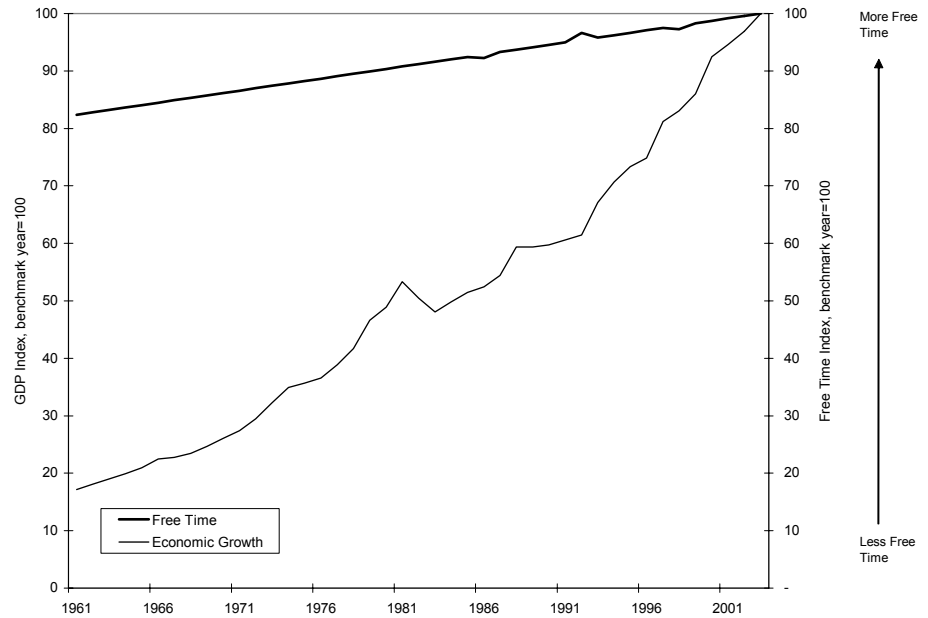


Source: Trend extrapolated from from Statistics Canada, General Social Survey Data

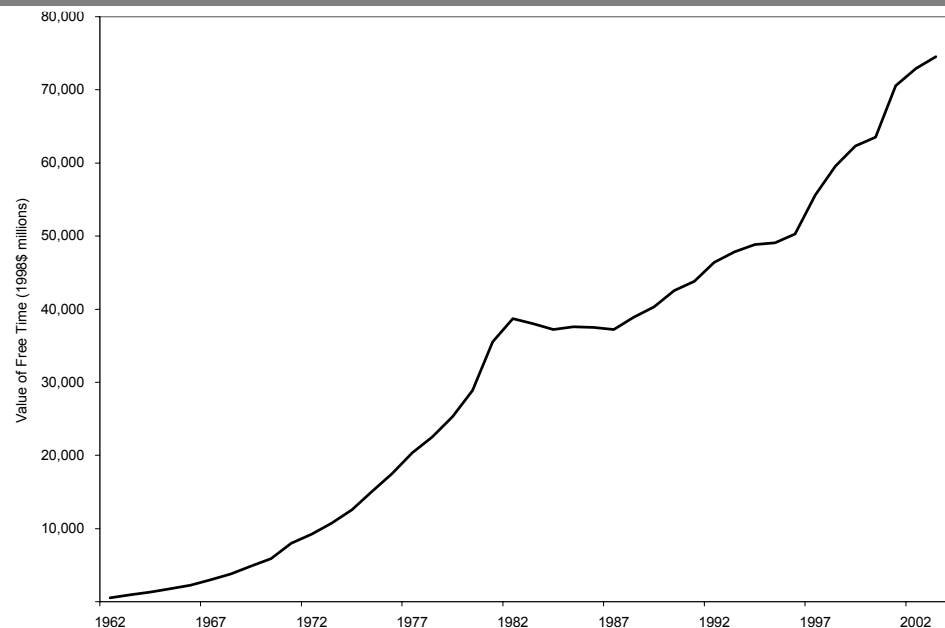
# So What?

Free time is the time over which Albertans have the most discretion. With this time, individuals can choose to read a book, go for a run, visit a friend or watch television. The figure to the right shows free time in Alberta as an index. The figure also shows the trend in provincial GDP (as an index) over the study period. For the free time index, 100 is set equal to the highest number of hours per person (population 15 years and over) devoted to free time over the study period in Alberta. Deviations from that year are then measured as change in the index over time. We call the year in which the most hours of free time occurred in the province the benchmark year. In this case our benchmark year is 2003. In 2003, we estimate that an average of 5.9 hours per person (population 15 years and over) per day were “free time.” Thus, the index indicates that as hours of free time have increased over the study period, Alberta moved closer to the benchmark year and further from zero. Despite the trend in the index towards more free time, not all ages or both sexes enjoy an abundance of free time in Alberta. Women, and especially mothers, are increasingly stressed for time as they juggle work, family, and household commitments. Mothers who are employed full-time have the least amount of free time of any cohort—just 3.6 hours per day. As one would expect, given the increase in total hours devoted to free time over the study period, the economic value of gained free time 2003 is substantial. The value of free time in each year is measured as the increase in hours of free time from 1961, the base year, times the average real wage rate for each year. Thus, free time was worth an estimated \$3,291 (1998\$) in 1962 and \$74,536 (1998\$) in 2003.

## Alberta Free Time Index: Where are we today?



## Big Bucks: The Value of Free Time in Alberta, 1961 to 2003



The value of gained free time in Alberta from 1961 to 2003 was an estimated \$74,536 (1998\$).

As an index, free time in Alberta in 2003 ranked 100 on a scale of 0 to 100 where 100 is the highest level of free time from 1961 to 2003 (see figure above).

