

Chapter 3: Who Are The Participants?

Results of the NSRE provide some useful data on the characteristics of participants and their families. Some details are provided in the text of this Chapter on the characteristics of participants in individual activities. For the most part, however, the discussion here focuses on groups of related activities.

Fitness Activities

This group of activities includes running or jogging, bicycling, and walking. Some 137 million Americans engage in at least one of these activities. Participation is highest for people 16-24 years old but remains high for people up to 49 years old. Participation decreases considerably for those over age 60 (fig. 3.1). As one might expect, the decrease in participation with age is most pronounced for running and jogging and least pronounced for walking. A little under half of the surveyed people over age 60 continue to walk outdoors.

Race has relatively little relationship to participation in fitness activities. Walking and bicycling are somewhat more popular among Caucasians than among African-Americans and others (including Hispanics). Running and jogging, however, are more popular among minority group members than among Caucasians.

Males and females are nearly equal in participation in fitness activities (49 vs. 51 percent). Running/jogging is slightly more popular with males (58.0 percent) than with females (42.0 percent). As with many activities, participation by females in fitness activities has risen in recent years. At present, the proportion of females walking is slightly higher than the proportion of males. In all fitness activities, participation increases as family income increases (fig. 3.2). Since these activities are not

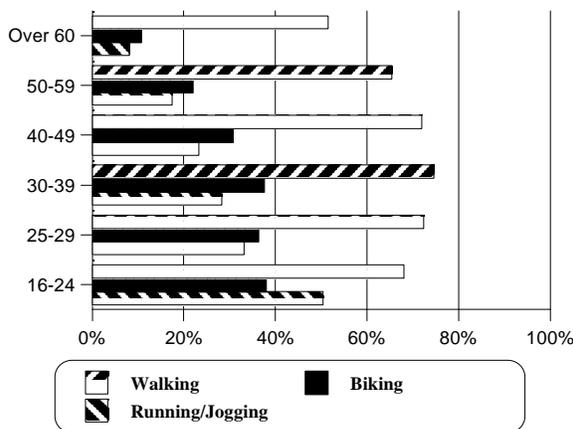


Figure 3.1—Percent of age group participating in fitness activities.

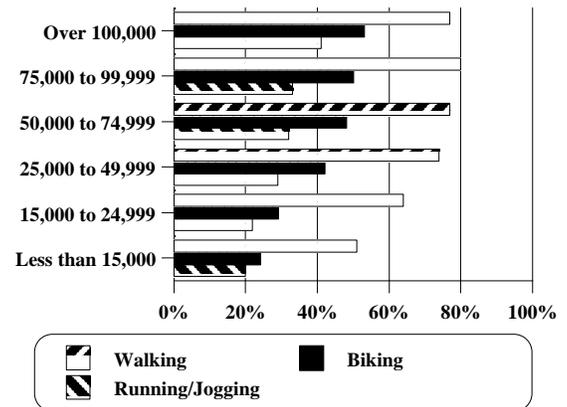


Figure 3.2—Percent of family income level participating in fitness activities.

particularly expensive, one can speculate that the increases in participation with income may be associated with greater amounts of leisure time and greater concern with physical fitness.

The likelihood of an individual participating in a fitness activity increases as number of people in the household increases from one to four. There is no additional participation increase for households with more than 4 members. Participation increases as the number of family members in the household increases.

For those who completed high school, participation in fitness activities increases with increased education. Interestingly, however, participation in running and jogging is highest for those who have not completed high school. A possible explanation is that people 16, 17, and 18 years old who will be completing high school in the next few years are included in the group lacking high school graduation.

As number of cars owned or leased by the household increases, so does participation in fitness activities. Number of cars is a strong indicator of income as well as mobility. Even so, the effects on participation in fitness activities, which do not require high income, are somewhat stronger than we expected.

Individual Sports

Golf and tennis are the individual sports included in the survey. About 44 million Americans over age 15 enjoy golf or tennis or both. Participation in both generally decreases with age, but, not surprisingly, the drop-off is greatest for tennis. About 10 percent of people over age

60 continue to play golf, while only about 6 percent continue to play tennis.

Caucasians are more likely to play tennis and considerably more likely to play golf than African-Americans. Minority group members other than African-Americans, are more likely to play tennis than are Caucasians.

Males are almost three times as likely to play golf as females. Numbers of male and female tennis players are more nearly equal. Participation in both sports rises rapidly as family income increases. As household size increases, so does the rate of participation in tennis, while the rate of participation for golf remains similar. No clear relationship between family size and participation exists for golf. There is a strong positive relationship between years of education and playing golf. No clear trend is apparent for tennis. For both sports, likelihood of participation increases as numbers of cars in the household increase. That relationship is stronger for golf than for tennis.

Outdoor Team Sports

The outdoor team sports surveyed include baseball, softball, football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and handball. About 53 million Americans play one or more of these sports. In all these sports, participation decreases markedly with age. Nearly half of the surveyed people age 16-24 participate in at least one of the outdoor team sports. Only 4 percent of those over age 60 do so.

African-Americans and other minority group members are somewhat more likely to play team sports than are Caucasians. This difference holds true for all of the sports except soccer.

Males are far more likely to compete in outdoor team sports than are females. This difference has been decreasing in recent years, however. Participation in team sports increases somewhat with increases in family income. At over \$100,000 in income, however, participation is lower than for middle incomes. As the number of people and the number of family members living in the household increases, participation in team sports increases markedly. A person living in a household of five or more is more than twice as likely to participate in team sports as is a person living alone. As amount of education increases, the likelihood of participation in team sports decreases. Participation rises markedly as number of cars in the household increase. Mobility may be the most important factor explaining this relationship.

Attending Outdoor Spectator Events

This activity group includes attending outdoor concerts and sporting events. About 118 million Americans over

age 16 participate in one or both of these spectator activities. For both activities, attendance decreases with age. Concert attendance is similar among racial groups. Caucasians are somewhat more likely to attend outdoor sporting events than are minority group members. Slightly more males than females attend outdoor concerts (36 vs. 33 percent), but considerably more males than females (54 vs. 42 percent) attend outdoor sporting events.

For many reasons, including rising costs of admission, attendance decreases as family income decreases. Household size and family size have a slight positive relationship with concert attendance. However, the likelihood of attending an outdoor sporting event increases considerably as household and family size increases.

Outdoor spectator participation increases as education level increases. It also increases as the number of cars in the household increases.

Viewing or Studying Activities

This group of activities includes visiting nature centers, visitor centers, prehistoric sites, or historic sites; bird watching; wildlife viewing; fish viewing; studying nature near water; sightseeing; and visiting a beach or waterside. Some 153 million Americans over age 15 do at least one of the activities on this list. These activities are often a part of vacation trips, and they undoubtedly are often key events making vacations memorable.

Participation in these activities, as a group, increases until about age 40, then declines (fig. 3.3). The lower percentages of participation for people 60 and over are somewhat surprising—one might expect retirees to participate often in these activities. In any case, the popularity of all these activities is rather high.

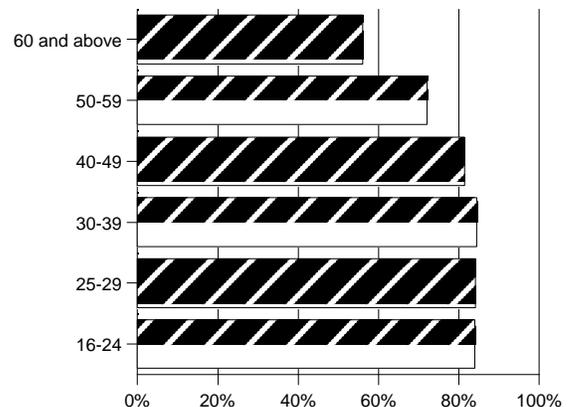


Figure 3.3—Percent of age group participating in viewing or studying.

Viewing and studying are more popular among Caucasians than among African-Americans and other minority group members. Among minority group members, participation is slightly lower for African-Americans than for others. Males and females participate about equally in these activities.

In general, viewing and studying increase with family income for incomes below \$100,000 (fig. 3.4). Participation drops slightly for those in families with incomes over \$100,000. The percentage of people enjoying these activities increases as numbers in the household and family members increase from one to four.

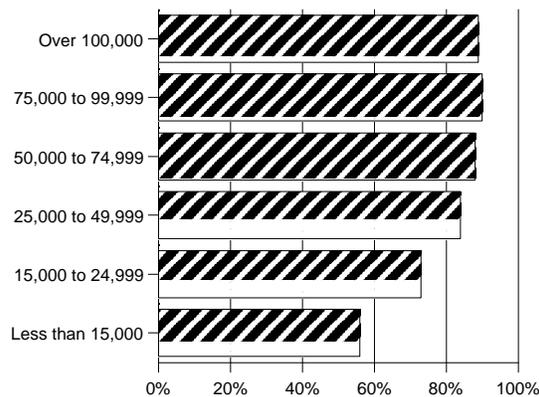


Figure 3.4– Percent of family income level participating in viewing or studying.

Participation levels off for those in larger households. Participation rises sharply with increases in level of education and increases in number of cars in the household.

Snow and Ice Activities

Snow and ice activities are enjoyed by 36 million Americans over age 15. These activities include ice skating, snowboarding, sledding, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing (with its various forms), and snowmobiling. Among these activities, the most popular is sledding with 20.5 million participants. Downhill skiing ranks second with 16.8 million, and ice skating with 10.5 million. Snowboarding has the least number of participants (4.5 million), however, this activity is becoming increasingly more popular in recent years.

As one might expect for such activities, which require considerable energy expenditures, participation is highest for the young, and drops off noticeably for people over 50 (fig. 3.5). Even so, 1.8 million people over 50 did some sledding in 1994-95, and 1.3 million did some downhill skiing.

Among racial and ethnic groups, African-Americans are least likely to participate in snow and ice activities. Participation is almost twice as high among other minority groups, and almost three times as high among Caucasians. Thus, for sledding, 18.9 million of the participants are Caucasian, and only 1.5 million are minority group members. For downhill skiing, 15.3 million are Caucasian and only 1.6 million are minority group members.

Males are more likely to participate in most snow and ice activities than females. For instance, participation of females in snowboarding and downhill skiing is almost half that of males.

The likelihood of engaging in a snow or ice activity rises steadily as household income rises (fig. 3.6). Downhill skiing in particular is relatively expensive and ski runs are seldom located close to population centers. For many, therefore, downhill skiing entails a major trip and an overnight stay as well as the cost of the lift, food, and services. Participation increases as number of people in the household increases from one to four. There is no increase

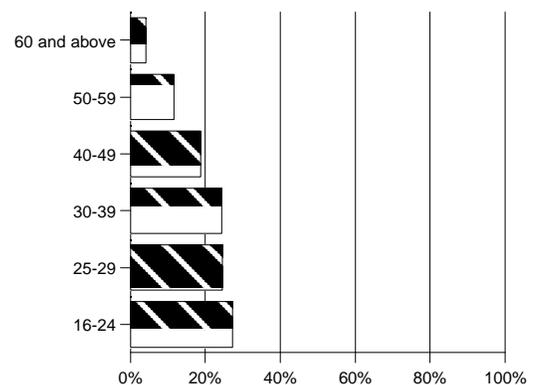


Figure 3.5– Percent of age group participating in snow and ice activities.

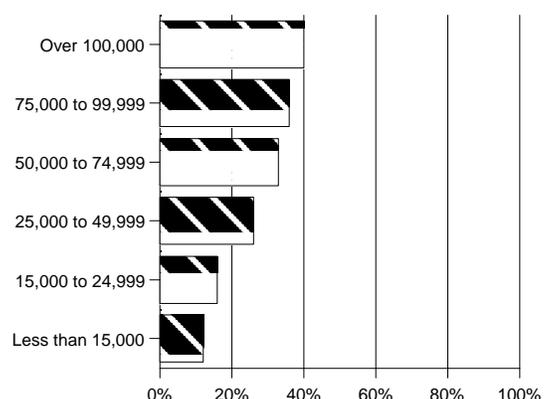


Figure 3.6– Percent of family income level participating in snow and ice activities.

for households with more than four people. The likelihood of enjoying snow and ice activities is higher among people who have completed college than for those who have not. Participation increases sharply as number of cars in the household increases.

Camping

This group includes various forms of camping in developed campgrounds as well as in undeveloped primitive areas. About 53 million Americans over age 15 camp. Of the two types, developed camping is more popular. In general, the likelihood of camping declines as a person ages (fig. 3.7). However, camping with a recreation vehicle (RV) is similar for all age groups. African-Americans are considerably less likely to camp than are Caucasians or other minority group members. Men are about 1.5 times as likely to camp as are females (31 vs. 22 percent). The gender difference is small for developed areas but quite large for primitive areas. The likelihood of camping increases with household income through \$75,000 per year, but declines at the highest incomes (fig. 3.7). Camping is often a family activity, and participation increases as household size increases. Level of education does not appear to be related to the probability of a person camping. The probability increases sharply as the number of cars in the household increases, however.

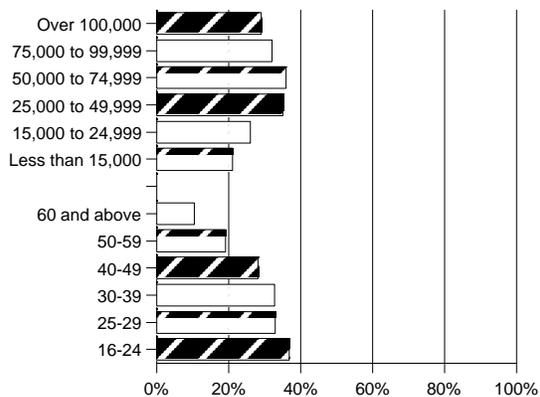


Figure 3.7– Percent of family income level and age group participating in camping.

Hunting

This group includes big game, small game, and migratory bird hunting. Of the three, big game and small game hunting are about equally popular. Migratory bird hunting is considerably less popular. About 18.6 million Americans over 15 years old hunted in 1994-95. The popularity of hunting has declined in recent decades, while the popularity of viewing birds and wildlife has grown. The latest survey reveals that about 62 million

people view wildlife, while less than 19 million hunt. Many do both.

Until a person reaches age 60, the probability that he or she will hunt declines only slightly with age (fig. 3.8). Hunting is most popular among Caucasians and least popular among African-Americans. Caucasians are three times more likely to hunt than African-Americans and two times more likely to hunt than other minorities. Men are more than five times as likely to hunt as are women (17 vs. 3 percent).

People with household incomes less than \$15,000 per year are considerably less likely to hunt than are people with higher incomes. For people with incomes above \$15,000, effects of income on the probability of hunting are quite small (fig. 3.8). Participation in hunting generally increases as household size and family size increases.

People who have completed college are somewhat less likely to hunt than are people with lower education levels. No other effects of education on hunting participation are apparent. Participation rises rapidly as number of cars in the household increases.

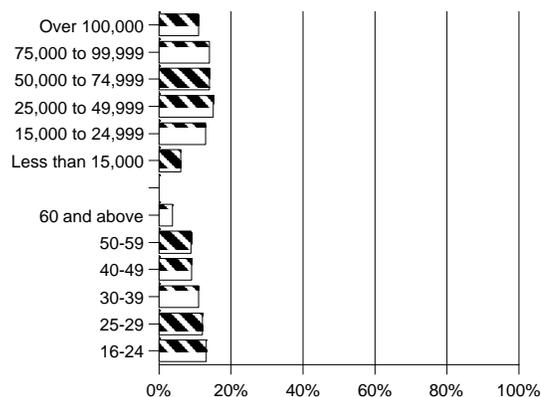


Figure 3.8– Percent of family income level and age group participating in hunting.

Fishing

This group of activities includes freshwater, warmwater, coldwater, saltwater, anadromous (migratory), and catch and release fishing. Almost 58 million Americans over age 15 fished in 1994-95. Freshwater and warmwater fishing are the most popular with ice and anadromous fishing being the least popular fishing activities. Participation in all types of fishing decreases as a person ages, but the sport remains popular among people over age 60 (fig. 3.9). Fishing is more popular among Caucasians than among minority group members. Men

are considerably more likely to fish than are women (38 vs. 21 percent).

People with household incomes above \$25,000 are more likely to fish than are people with lower incomes (fig. 3.9). Participation increases as number of people and family members in the household increases. Effects of education level on participation are small. As the number of cars in the household increases from one to three or more, the probability of participation almost doubles.

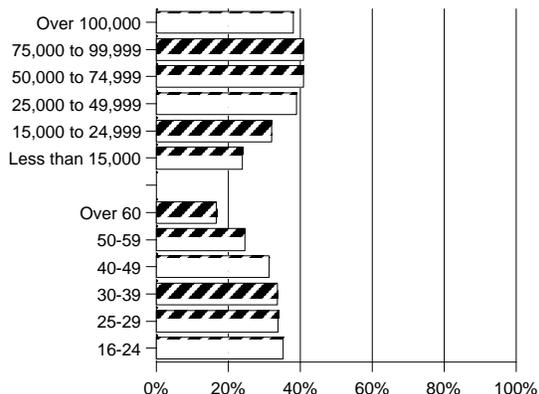


Figure 3.9– Percent of family income level and age group participating in fishing.

Boating

This group of activities includes sailing, canoeing, kayaking, rowing, floating or rafting, motorboating, water skiing, jet skiing, and sailboarding/windsurfing. About 58 million Americans over age 15 did at least one kind of boating in 1994-95.

Among boating activities, canoeing, kayaking, rowing, and rafting require a lot of physical exertion. It is not surprising, therefore, that participation in these more active forms of boating declines with age, particularly among people over 60. In 1994-95, 14.1 million people did some canoeing. Only 1.9 million of those people were over 60. Floating or rafting was enjoyed by 15.2 million people. About 1.4 million were over 50 years of age.

In contrast, motorboating, which requires little exertion, is popular for people of all ages. Of the 47 million people who did some motorboating in 1994-95, 10.6 million were over 50.

Caucasians are two to four times more likely to enjoy boating than are minority group members. Men are somewhat more likely to enjoy boating than are women (34 vs. 25 percent). Since boats are often expensive, it is not surprising that boating participation markedly increases as household income increases (fig. 3.10). Participation also increases as number of people in the household and family members in the household increases

from one to three, then levels off for larger households. Perhaps because of a correlation with income, participation also increases as level of education increases. Perhaps for similar reasons, participation doubles as number of cars in the household increases from zero to one and doubles again from one to three or more.

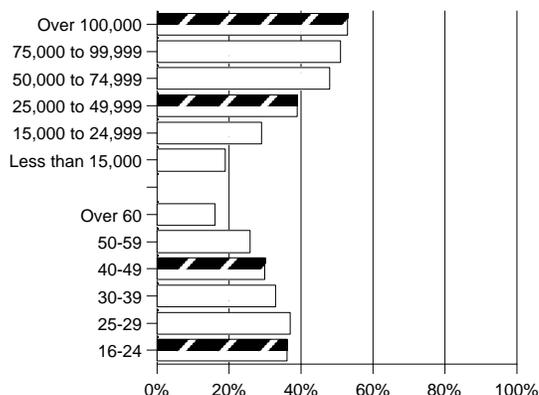


Figure 3.10– Percent of family income level and age group participating in boating.

Swimming

Activities in this group include surfing, pool swimming, non-pool swimming (in lakes, ponds, ocean, or river), and snorkeling or scuba diving. Just under 109 million Americans over age 15 swam at least once in 1994-95.

In 1994-95, people 16-24 were about three times as likely to swim as were people over 60 years old (fig. 3.11). Nevertheless, of the 88.5 million people who swam in pools in that year, 17.5 million were over 50. And of the 78.1 million people who swam in places other than pools, 14.3 million were over 50.

Caucasians are considerably more likely to swim than are minority group members, with African-Americans least

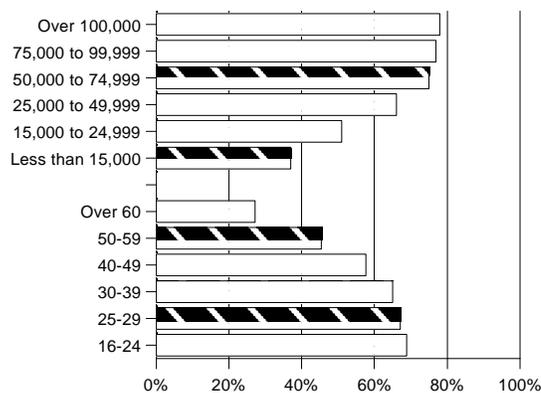


Figure 3.11–Percent of family income level and age group participating in swimming.

likely to participate in all swimming activities. Men are a bit more likely to swim than are women, however, these were two to four times more males participating in surfing and snorkeling than women.

Swimming is not an expensive activity, however, there is a positive relationship with swimming activities and income. The likelihood of a person swimming increases as household income increases to \$100,000 per year (fig. 3.11). Participation rates for pool and non-pool swimming double from the lowest income class to the highest, and quadruple for surfing and snorkeling. Participation increases as number of people in the household increases up to four. Further increases in household numbers do not increase participation. As education level increases, so does swimming participation. And, as with virtually all activities, participation increases as number of cars in the household increase.

Outdoor Adventure

This group includes the traditional activities of hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding, plus orienteering, mountain climbing, rock climbing, caving, and off-road driving, which have only recently become popular. The popularity of all of these activities except horseback riding has grown rapidly in recent years. About 74 million Americans over age 15 participated in one of these activities in 1994-95. Hiking, whose popularity rose very rapidly, drew the most participants—47.8 million. Backpacking, another muscle-powered activity with a rapidly growing group of participants, attracted 15.2 million in 1994-95.

As one might expect for activities that require a lot of physical exertion, participation is greatest for the young and decreases with age (fig. 3.12). But people over 50 are well represented. Some 8.3 hikers and 1.6 million backpackers were over 50. Of the 7.5 million people who did some rock climbing in 1994-95, 700,000 were over 50.

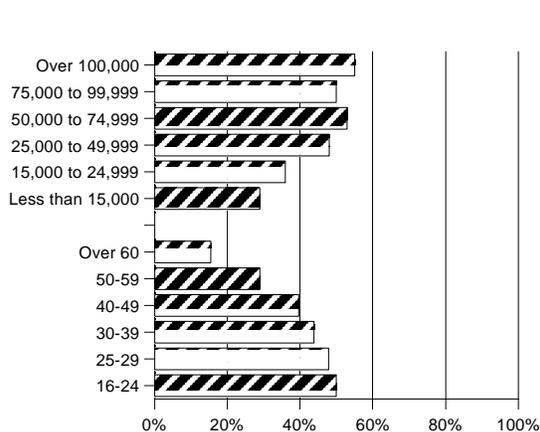


Figure 3.12— Percent of family income and age group participating in outdoor adventure activities.

Caucasians are much more likely to seek adventure activities than are African-Americans. Other minority group members, however, participate about as frequently as Caucasians. Men are slightly more likely than women to enjoy adventure activities (55 vs. 45 percent). In general, the likelihood of participation in outdoor adventure activities rises as income rises through \$75,000 per year (fig. 3.12). At incomes about \$75,000 participation does not rise appreciably.

Participation percentage increases as number of people in the household increase. It also increases with level of education. And it rises strongly as number of cars in the household increase.

Traditional Social Activities

This group includes family gatherings, picnics, and yard games. About 136 million Americans over age 15 participated in at least one of these activities in 1994-95. These are among the most popular outdoor recreation activities, and they probably always will be. They are particularly favored by families with young children, so participation is greatest for adults ranging from 25 to 40 years old (fig. 3.13). Participation is somewhat, but not much greater for Caucasians than for minority group members. Minority group members do participate less in yard games. Similar numbers of men and women participate in these activities (50 percent each). There is a general rise in participation as household income increases to \$100,000 (fig. 3.13). Participation also generally increases as the size of the household increases. Similarly, as the number of family members in a household increase, so do participation rates, especially for yard games.

There is a small increase in likelihood of enjoying these activities as level of education increases. And there is an increase as number of vehicles in the household increase.

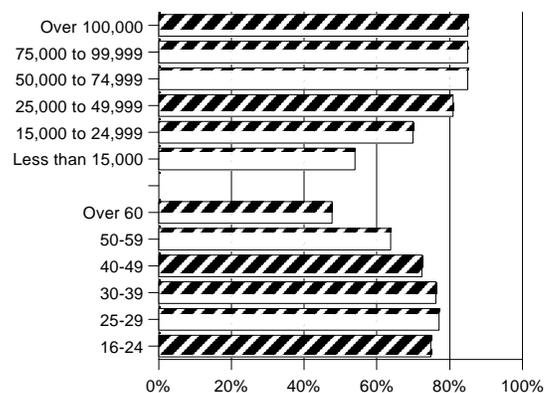


Figure 3.13— Percent of family income level and age group participating in traditional social activities.

