

Introduction

An understanding of the outdoor recreation participation patterns and preferences of the American people is necessary for effective policy development, planning, and decisionmaking at all levels of government and in the private sector. To enhance this understanding, the Federal Government periodically conducts nationwide recreation surveys. The results of the most recent Nationwide Recreation Survey (NRS) conducted between September 1982 and June 1983, are presented in this report.

The data collected include:

1. Participation rates and volume of activity for selected outdoor recreation pursuits.
2. Favorite activities, reasons why people like them, and constraints on participation.
3. Activities recently started or dropped—and prospective new starts.
4. Travel, in miles and time, as it relates to selected activities and types of destination.
5. Utilization and importance of outdoor recreation opportunities at varying distances from home.
6. National parks ever visited.
7. Public opinion on national park fees and on methods of rationing national park visits.
8. Recent and prospective changes in people's allocation of time and money to outdoor recreation and related travel and purchases.
9. Selected aspects of involvement in outdoor recreation by persons aged 60 and over.
10. Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents as they relate to each of the foregoing information categories.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

At least 22 nationwide questionnaire surveys of outdoor recreation have been conducted between 1959 and 1978, and

several more have occurred since then.¹ Five of these surveys may be regarded as direct antecedents of the present effort.²

The earliest of these, the 1960 National Recreation Survey, was a four-season survey sponsored by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) and conducted, under contract, by the Bureau of the Census in the U.S. Department of Commerce.³ The remaining four (1965, 1970, 1972, and 1977) were all sponsored by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), in the Department of the Interior and its successor, the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS). They were conducted as part of the nationwide outdoor recreation planning process established in response to the findings of ORRRC.

The 1965 National Recreation Survey was patterned after the ORRRC survey and was also conducted by the Census Bureau. It was, however, restricted to post-summer (September) interviews. The 1970 survey was a short mail supplement to that year's

¹Bevins, M.I., and D.P. Wilcox. 1980. *Outdoor Recreation Participation—Analysis of National Surveys, 1959-1978*. Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 686. Burlington, VT.

²The first four of these surveys, conducted in 1960, 1965, 1970, and 1972, resulted in one or more final reports which have since become difficult to find, even in major libraries. Fortunately, all of them (plus a less directly relevant survey conducted in 1971) are described and evaluated in Kirchner Associates, Inc. *Evaluation of Five Previous Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Surveys*, which is Survey Technical Report 1, in Appendix II of The Third Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan, 1979. U.S. Department of the Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, Washington, DC. The most recent antecedent is the 1977 Nationwide Recreation Survey, which is described in appendix I, Survey Summary and appendix II, Survey Technical Reports, of The Third Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan.

³An earlier, limited purpose survey, the 1955 Survey of the Public Concerning the National Parks, will be referred to in Chapter 4, Americans and Their National Parks.

Fishing and Hunting Survey sponsored by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (since renamed the Fish and Wildlife Service) in the Department of the Interior. The 1972 survey was conducted for BOR by Audits and Surveys, Inc., as part of the data gathering effort for the 1973 Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan. The 1977 Nationwide Recreation Survey was a telephone survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation for HCRS. It was a major source of data for the third Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan published in 1979.

Differences of content, wording, and methodology make it difficult—and somewhat hazardous—to compare the results of the present survey to its antecedents of 1970, 1972, or 1977. Comparisons will be made, where possible, to the 1960 and 1965 National Recreation Surveys, which were used as a pattern for certain basic elements of the 1982-83 survey. Additionally, these three surveys share the following characteristics:

1. In-the-home, personal interviews were conducted where possible—with telephone followups where the selected respondent was otherwise unavailable.
2. The eligible population was the United States noninstitutionalized population aged 12 years and older.
3. The survey was conducted by the Census Bureau in accordance with its exacting standards and procedures.

1982-83 SURVEY—A PARTNERSHIP EFFORT

By mid-1981, the BOR and the HCRS had been abolished. Hence the task of organizing and coordinating this survey fell to the successor agency, the National Park Service. During the summer of that year, a consortium of four agencies was formed to conduct the survey—the National Park

Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, and the Administration on Aging in the Department of Health and Human Services. Each contributed to the design and financing of the survey and sponsored certain of the questions.

The Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management jointly sponsored a series of questions about the nature of trips and environments associated with selected outdoor pursuits of concern to wildland managers. (See Appendix C, Survey Questionnaire.) The Administration on Aging sponsored a set of questions which was targeted to aging issues and was asked only of respondents 60 years old or older. The remainder of the survey was sponsored by various elements within the National Park Service.

On September 30, 1981, the prime contract for the conduct of the 1982-83 NRS was let to the Survey Research Center of the University of Maryland. The Center, in turn, subcontracted the conduct of the interviews and the keying of the data to the Bureau of the Census.

PROCEDURES

The following is a brief summary of the way the survey was developed, conducted, and analyzed. A detailed Methodological Report has been prepared and is furnished to researchers and others who purchase the NRS data tape.⁴

The 1982-83 NRS was conducted as a supplement to an ongoing household sample survey, (The National Crime Survey). This arrangement resulted in substantial cost-savings and reduced respondent burden, since interviewer travel costs were borne by the basic survey and the necessary socioeconomic data about each respondent were collected as part of the basic survey (hence the lack of any demographic questions in the NRS questionnaire—see appendix C).

The 1982-83 NRS instrument was developed cooperatively by the agencies participating in the survey. The final development and refinement of the instrument were done by the University of Maryland's Survey Research Center and the U.S. Bureau of the Census in consultation with the cooperating agencies.

The instrument, instructions, and ancillary materials were pretested in June 1982.

Interviewing took place during September 1982, and in January, April, and June 1983. Since these may be regarded as, respectively, the post-summer, post-fall, post-winter, and post-spring months, a seasonally balanced sample was achieved. This is a major advantage in a survey of outdoor recreation, a phenomenon which varies so greatly from season to season. From 1,397 to 1,466 completed interviews were obtained in each of those 4 months, for a total sample of 5,757.

During the four survey months, the Census Bureau assigned its interviewers 6,720 NRS cases. These were pre-identified individuals in crime survey households—no more than one per household. Crime survey interviews had been conducted previously in these households as many as six times, at intervals of 6 months. After the National Crime Survey's final or exit interview, the selected individual was asked to participate in the Nationwide Recreation Survey. Of the 6,720 assigned cases, 5,757 (about 85 percent) resulted in completed interviews, 315 (5 percent) refused to participate, and 648 (10 percent) were unavailable or were not interviewed for a variety of reasons.

Of the 5,757 completed interviews, most (81 percent) were conducted in the respondent's home at the time of the final Crime Survey visit. If the pre-identified individual was unavailable at that time, the interviewer left an Information Card Booklet⁵ and arranged to conduct the interview by telephone at a later time. Fourteen percent of the completed interviews were conducted in this manner. In the remaining 5 percent of the successfully completed cases, the Information Card Booklet could not be found at the time the interviewer phoned. In that event, an alternative (long form) questionnaire was used, in which the activity list, national park list, and other multiple-choice responses were read to the respondent instead of by the respondent.

As are all sampling surveys, the current NRS is subject to numerous sources of error—most of unknown magnitude but hopefully small.⁶ By contrast, the magnitude of sampling error—the difference between a number derived from a sample and the corresponding (true but unknown) quantity in the sampled population—can be estimated.

Appendix B examines sampling error as it affects the reliability of the NRS.

CAUSE AND EFFECT— A WORD OF CAUTION

In general, this report presents the results of the 1982-83 NRS in a descriptive, rather than an analytical, manner. In chapter 2, for instance, changes in the status of certain activities between 1960 and 1982-83 are described with no attempt to suggest reasons or causes for those changes. Other investigators are already analyzing these underlying cause-and-effect relationships, and more such analyses are expected in the future.

In certain instances, where the data may be easily misunderstood, alternative interpretations are offered as a warning against facile conclusions.

ORDER OF PRESENTATION

The results of the 1982-83 NRS are presented in this report, generally, in a sequence corresponding to that of the questions in the questionnaire. Certain cross-comparisons are made and, in those cases, information will necessarily be presented out of questionnaire sequence.

This approach will help those readers who wish to refer to the questionnaire (appendix C) periodically to increase their understanding of what the data mean. The question sequence is, moreover, an essential element of the survey method. Each question, or series of questions, instills in the respondents certain expectations, definitions, and mind sets which will influence their interpretation of the following questions. For example, the questions on activities particularly enjoyed were deliberately placed first on the questionnaire to ensure that the spectrum of activities considered by the respondents would be determined by their own definition of outdoor recreation. After reading the activity list (in the 2-Series of questions), the respondent's definition of outdoor recreation is strongly conditioned by that list throughout the rest of the interview. By contrast, the questions on national park fees and policies were placed after the list of national parks, since the sponsors of those questions wanted responses based on *their* definition, rather than the respondent's definition, of what a national park is.

Chapters 1 and 2 address the various recreation activities from the viewpoints of participation, constraints, choices of favorites, and the reasons for those choices—as well as certain aspects of starting new activities and quitting old ones. This information was derived from the 1-Series and the 2-Series of questions (question 1.a, 1.b, etc. See appendix C). Chapter 1 is about the outdoor recreation involvements of different kinds of people. Chapter 2 examines each listed ac-

⁴Robinson, John P., and Cindy Kahn. 1984. *The 1982-83 Nationwide Recreation Survey: A Methodological Report*. Prepared by Survey Research Center, University of Maryland, for the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.

Others may purchase the Methodological Report as a separate item. Information may be obtained from the Recreation Resources Assistance Division, National Park Service, USDI, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC. 20013-7127. Telephone 202/343-3780.

⁵The Information Card Booklet, often called a "flashcard booklet" was used by the respondent as an aid in answering certain questions designed to elicit reactions to a limited or structured array of choices. The booklet is described and illustrated in the Methodological Report.

⁶Examples are nonresponse error (compensated, in part, by a weighting procedure described in the Methodological Report), recall error, and those interviewer and data processing errors which remain undetected after editing.

tivity in terms of the numbers and kinds of people who participated in it or chose it as a favorite. Chapter 3 examines selected spatial aspects of outdoor recreation—certain kinds of trips, and the importance and utilization of recreation resources at different distances from home. The data underlying these results were derived from the 3-series

and 4-series of questions. Chapter 4 reports the results of the 5-series of questions which addressed the respondent's past experience of national park visits, willingness to pay for future visits, and opinions on certain national park policy issues. Chapter 5, based on the 6-series of questions, examines recent and prospective changes in people's

allocations of time and money to outdoor recreation. Finally, chapter 6 addresses the data derived from the 7-Series of questions, which are about aging and outdoor recreation. These questions were asked only of those respondents 60 years old or older.