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Hispanic Americans and Outdoor Recreation¹

A Research Brief in the IRIS Series²

January, 2012

¹ Athens Research Group, Southern Research Station, USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA (H. Ken Cordell, Project Leader).

² The Internet Research Information Series (IRIS) is an internet accessible science report series covering outdoor recreation statistics (RECSTATS), natural lands research (NATLAND) and other human-dimension and demographics research (DEMOSTATS) related to natural resources. This research is a collaborative effort between the USDA Forest Service's Southern Research Station and its Forestry Sciences Laboratory in Athens, Georgia; the University of Georgia in Athens; and the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IrisReports.html>

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Hispanic Population Growth

In 1970 the Hispanic population in the U.S. was estimated by Census at 9.6 million, 4.7 percent of the population overall. In 2010, the estimate was 47.8 million, 15.5 percent, giving Hispanics the highest growth rate in the country. How does this fast growing segment of our population recreate in the out-of-doors?

This IRIS Research Brief addresses this question by examining outdoor recreation participation rates among Hispanics age 16 and older. The data source is the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE). NSRE is an on-going general population telephone survey conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Georgia and the University of Tennessee since 1999.

The Data and Analysis

In the survey, respondents are asked to identify themselves racially and/or ethnically. One specific question was, “Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?” In this research brief, we summarize a few statistics about outdoor recreation participation by those who answered “yes” to this question, and who thus identified themselves as Hispanic. The primary statistic of interest is participation rate, which is the percentage of Hispanics that engages in each of the activities named by the NSRE telephone interviewer. The respondent was counted as a participant if they had participated in an activity one or more times during the past 12 months.

The analysis for this IRIS Research Brief is based on NSRE data from interviews conducted from August 2008 to October 2011. Nationwide, the NSRE sample during this period included 538 Hispanics. A post-stratification weighting program was applied to these data so that the demographic profile of the NSRE Hispanic sample was in alignment with that of the U.S. Census of Population. For context, demographic characteristics and recreation participation

rates for both Hispanics and non-Hispanics is presented. Weighted data and the recent Census estimates for demographics are shown in Table 1. Compared to the non-Hispanic sample (the other 84.5 percent of the U.S. population), slightly higher percentages of the Hispanic sample are male, younger, represented in the lower income and education categories, and likely to live in metropolitan areas.

Table 1—Demographic characteristics of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic NSRE national samples and U.S. Census

Demographic	Stratum	Hispanic Sample Percent	Non-Hispanic Sample Percent	U.S. Census Percent
Gender	Male	51.8	48.0	48.8
	Female	48.2	52.0	51.2
Race/ethnicity	White, Non-Hispanic	.	78.9	68.7
	Black, Non-Hispanic	.	16.1	12.0
	American Indian, Non-Hispanic	.	0.9	0.7
	Asian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	.	4.1	4.7
	Hispanic	100.0	0.0	14.0
Age	16-24	18.6	15.4	16.2
	25-34	24.4	15.6	17.2
	35-44	23.1	16.3	17.2
	45-54	14.8	18.3	18.5
	55-64	8.9	14.4	14.4

Demographic	Stratum	Hispanic Sample Percent	Non- Hispanic Sample Percent	U.S. Census Percent
	65+	10.2	20.0	16.4
Annual family income	<\$15,000	16.4	15.3	10.1
	\$15,000-\$24,999	14.6	11.7	10.7
	\$25,000-\$49,999	25.8	24.1	29.1
	\$50,000-\$74,999	15.8	18.2	22.3
	\$75,000-\$99,999	11.8	12.8	12.5
	\$100,000-\$149,999	8.2	10.8	9.6
	\$150,000+	7.4	7.1	5.7
Education	Less than high school	25.9	19.6	19.6
	High school graduate	31.3	27.9	28.6
	Some college	26.6	27.2	27.4
	College degree	11.4	16.4	15.5
	Post-graduate degree	4.8	8.9	8.9
Place of Residence	Non-metro resident	7.9	16.8	16.4
	Metro area resident	92.1	83.2	83.6

Source: NSRE 2008-11, Hispanic= 538, non-Hispanic= 12,393. Interview dates: 8/08 to 10/11. 2009 Census Estimates. Note: Percentages within each demographic group may not sum exactly to 100 due to rounding. Gender, race, and age are 2009 Census estimates.

Findings

Outdoor recreation activity participation by Hispanics and non-Hispanics is presented in Table 2. Sample sizes vary by activity because not every activity was asked in every NSRE application. Of 29 nature-based activities, Hispanics had higher participation rates (i.e., were more likely to participate than non-Hispanics) in 12 of them (highlighted in Table 1 in gray). The five activities with the greatest difference, where Hispanic participation was greater by 5 or more percentage points, are visiting prehistoric sites, bicycling, swimming in lakes/ponds/etc., visiting a beach, and saltwater fishing. Conversely, the activities for which non-Hispanic participation rates were 6 or more percentage points higher were viewing or photographing birds, motorboating, viewing or photographing natural scenery, boating (in general), and viewing and photographing other wildlife besides birds.

Table 2—Percentage of Hispanic and non-Hispanic U.S. residents age 16 and older participating in outdoor recreation activities, 2008-2011. Activity percentages where Hispanic participation is greatest are highlighted in gray.

Activity	Percent participating	
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
View/photograph natural scenery	67.8	59.3
Visit a beach	48.1	54.6
View/photograph flowers, etc.	54.7	52.4
Swimming in lakes, ponds, etc.	45.0	52.3
Visit historic sites	45.8	50.5
Sightseeing	56.0	50.4
Driving for pleasure	52.8	49.0
View/photograph other wildlife	53.6	47.4
Bicycling	35.0	42.3

Activity	Percent participating	
	Non-Hispanic	Hispanic
Visit a farm or agricultural setting	35.4	38.8
Fishing	35.6	33.9
Day hiking	35.1	33.5
Boating	37.9	30.7
Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	35.2	30.0
View or photograph birds	40.1	29.9
Visit prehistoric sites	20.3	28.0
Warmwater fishing	27.2	22.4
Mountain biking	17.5	21.2
Coldwater fishing	14.6	17.9
Motorboating	25.9	16.7
Saltwater fishing	10.0	15.9
Use personal watercraft	10.2	9.6
Rafting	9.4	8.3
Snowboarding	5.1	7.5
Canoeing	11.7	6.3
Kayaking	7.6	6.3
Cross-country skiing	2.5	5.6
Orienteering	3.1	5.5
Small game hunting	8.3	4.4

Source: NSRE Versions 4, 5 and 7. N=12,931. Interview dates: August 2008 to October 2011.

Observation

One observation that emerges from these results is the popularity of water-based recreation among Hispanics, especially visiting beaches and swimming, and interest in historic sites and bicycling. Another observation is that among non-Hispanic groups there is obviously a greater interest in outdoor viewing/learning/photographing activities, especially viewing or photographing birds, wildlife, and natural scenery. As the United States' population continues its evolution, differences in preferences for outdoor recreation activities among ethnic and racial groups which are growing at different rates will more and more shift overall population participation rates and numbers. Activities favored by Hispanics will rise a bit faster because of higher growth of that segment of the U.S. population. Activities favored by non-Hispanics may rise, but not as fast, and perhaps some will decline somewhat because that segment is growing more slowly. Recreation planning that adequately anticipates these shifts will pay off handsomely through enabling timely adaptations in management emphasis.