


IRIS
Internet Research
Information
Series



National Kids Survey

Part II: Do the Demographics of Kids Affect The Time They Spend Outdoors?

A RECREATION Research Report in the IRIS Series¹

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¹ The Internet Research Information Series (**IRIS**) is an internet accessible science report series covering outdoor recreation statistics (**RECSTATS**), wilderness research (**WILDERNESS**) and other human-dimension and demographics research (**DEMOSTATS**) done by the Athens Forest Service Research Group. This research is a collaborative effort between the USDA Forest Service's Southern Research Station and its Forestry Sciences Laboratory in Athens, Georgia; the U. of Georgia in Athens; and the U. of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IrisReports.html>

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Introduction

In Part I of this series of reports from the **National Kids Survey** we described how much time kids have been spending outdoors. To see this report go to:

<http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/nrrt/nsre/IRISRec/IRISRec9rpt.pdf>

From survey results we estimated that 61 percent of kids 6 to 19 have been spending two or more hours outdoors on a typical weekday, and that over three-fourths have been spending two or more hours outdoors on typical weekend days. One half of kids spent as much as 4 or more hours outdoors on a typical weekend day. Less than five percent spent no time outdoors on either weekdays or weekend days. The short-term trend showed a decline in percentage of kids spending ½ hour or less outdoors on weekdays, but no change for weekends. Percentages spending 2-3 and 4 hours outside on weekdays remained pretty much the same from the 2007-08 survey period to the 2008-09 period. Across the entire sample of both boys and girls, only 15 percent reported spending less time, 45 percent reported spending about the same time, and nearly 40 percent estimated spending more time outdoors this year than last.

Much has been said and written about what kids are or are not doing outdoors. Evidence is abundant that communication, entertainment and social networking media occupy a lot of kids' discretionary time. This has led many to conclude, often without any direct research to back their conclusions, that media time is competing directly with time for outdoor activities. Thus it seems that most people believe there is a definite trend of kids spending less time outdoors and that the cause is greater indoor media time. But there seems to be a paucity of direct scientific evidence indicating that kids are spending less time outdoors *because* they are spending more time indoors. Thus, in September 2007 we launched the **National Kids Survey**, which continues today. Our intention is to build a national baseline of data about kid's time and activities outdoors so we can take a more rigorous look at trends. As we all know, without a baseline, one cannot measure change, i.e., trends.

In this report, “**Do the Demographics of Kids Affect The Time They Spend Outdoors?**,” time spent in outdoor activities is compared by age, gender, race and household income.

National Kids Survey

The **National Kids Survey** is conducted as a companion survey with the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE). The NSRE is a general population, random-digit-dialed household telephone survey. Telephoning is accomplished by calling a random, cross-sectional sample of non-institutionalized residents of the United States, 16 years of age or older. The Human Dimensions Research Laboratory at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, an ongoing NSRE cooperator, conducts NSRE household interviews almost daily. The system is computer-assisted (CATI) so the trained interviewers work from a computer monitor and the data are automatically entered as telephone interviews are conducted and responses coded. The average length of an overall interview is restricted to 14 minutes. A proxy household member 20 or older (parent, guardian, grandparent, older sibling, etc.) is interviewed to speak for kids 6 to 15 years old in answering the **National Kids Survey** questions. Teens 16 to 19 are interviewed

directly. If there is more than one child in the household, the child with the last birthday is selected for interviewing (directly or through proxy). The sample size as of April 2009 was 1,201. Data continues to be collected.

Results---Demographics Associated with Time Kids Spend Outdoors

The focus of this Part II **IRIS** research report is on demographics associated with *time* kids spend outdoors. Demographics is defined for this report as kids’ gender, age, race and household income.

Hours per day by gender and age.—Percentages of male and female kids spending various amounts of time outdoors on weekdays and weekends are shown in Table 1,

Table 1.--Amount of time kids spent outdoors on a typical weekday and weekend day during the past week, by gender. (Percentages sum down to 100.)

Gender and Time Outdoors Per Day	Male		Female	
	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day
None	2.5	4.1	2.6	4.9
Less than 1/2 hour a day	3.6	0.9	6.2	3.6
About 1/2 hour a day	6.9	3.2	10.2	5.0
About 1 hour	19.6	10.3	26.6	14.4
2-3 hours	32.0	24.9	30.8	29.5
4 or more hours	35.4	56.6	23.6	42.6

Generally, somewhat higher percentages of both male and female kids spend no time outdoors on weekends (4 to 5 percent versus 2 to 3 percent). However, smaller percentages of both males and females spend an hour of less outdoors on weekends as compared with weekdays. The most significant shift in time outdoors between weekdays and weekends for both males and females is in percentages spending 4 or more hours on weekend days. For males, that percentage goes from 35 percent on weekdays up to nearly 57 percent on weekend days. For females, the percentage spending 4 or more hours outdoors increases from 24 on weekdays to 43 percent on weekend days. Around 81 percent of males and 72 percent of females spend 2 or more hours outdoors on weekend days.

Percentages of kids of different ages spending different amounts of time per day outdoors is shown in Table 2. Higher percentages of kids age 6 to 15 spend 2 or more hours outdoors compared with kids 16 to 19. This difference between kids under 16 and those 16 to 19 is especially pronounced when comparing percentages spending 4 or more hours per day on weekends and noting that much higher percentages of kids under 16 were outside 4 or more hours. Consistent with these comparisons is that a larger percentage of kids 16 to 19 reported spending no time outdoors on weekends—almost 8 percent.

Generally, the percentage of kids spending no time outdoors goes up on weekend days for all age groups, although neither the percentages nor the differences are large. The percentages spending less than ½ hour and up to an hour per day go down across all ages on weekends compared with weekdays. The largest shift between weekdays and weekends is in percentages spending 4 or more hours outdoors for all age groups. For kids 6 to 9 years old, the percentage more than doubles from 23 to 53 percent (30 percent greater on weekends); for kids 10 to 12 the shift is from 33 to 57 percent (24 percent greater on weekends). The shift for kids 13 to 15 is from 34 to 51 percent (17 percent greater), and for kids 16 to 19, the shift is less dramatic, 31 to 39 percent. Across all age groups, percentages spending 2-3 hours per day drops somewhat on weekends.

Table 2.--Amount of time kids spent outdoors on a typical weekday and weekend day during the past week, by age group. (Percentages sum down to 100.)

Age and Time Outdoors Per Day	6-9		10-12		13-15		16-19	
Time	Week-day	Weekend-day	Week-day	Weekend-day	Week-day	Weekend-day	Week-day	Weekend-day
None	2.4	2.6	3.9	4.5	1.8	3.1	2.3	7.7
Less than 1/2 hour a day	4.4	2.0	2.8	1.1	5.1	1.0	6.9	4.4
About 1/2 hour a day	8.9	2.0	7.4	4.6	8.2	3.8	9.4	6.2
About 1 hour	26.4	10.4	25.2	6.0	17.4	12.0	22.0	19.6
2-3 hours	35.1	29.5	28.2	26.9	33.6	29.2	28.0	23.1
4 or more hours	22.8	53.4	32.6	57.0	33.9	50.9	31.4	39.1

Hours per day by Race.--A higher percentage of Hispanic kids (56 percent) spend 4 or more hours per day outdoors on weekends than either White or Black kids (Table 3). A somewhat higher percentage of White kids spend 4 or more hours per day on weekends relative to Black kids. A smaller percentage of Hispanic kids spend no time outdoors on weekends when compared with White or Black kids. Relative to White kids, higher percentages of Hispanic and Black youth spend 4 or more hours outdoors on weekdays.

The greatest shifts in hours per day from weekdays to weekends are for Hispanic youth spending about one hour outdoors (from 22 on weekdays down to 8 percent on weekends); for White youth spending 4 or more hours (26 up to 50 percent), and for Hispanic youth spending 4 or more hours per day (37 up to 56 percent). The percentage of Black youth spending no time outdoors moves from just over 2 percent on weekdays to over 6 percent on weekend days.

Table 3.--Amount of time the young person spent outdoors on a typical weekday and weekend day during the past week, by race/ethnicity. (Percentages sum down to 100.)

Race and Time Outdoors Per Day	White		Black		Hispanic	
	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day
None	2.1	4.3	2.3	6.4	2.1	2.4
Less than 1/2 hour a day	5.5	2.5	2.0	3.3	6.3	1.0
About 1/2 hour a day	9.9	4.2	10.1	5.1	3.9	2.4
About 1 hour	23.1	12.7	19.5	12.2	22.1	7.8
2-3 hours	33.1	26.6	31.4	26.3	28.1	30.4
4 or more hours	26.3	49.8	34.7	46.7	37.5	56.1

Hours per day by Family Income.—Somewhat lower percentages of youth in the highest income category spend no time outdoors (Table 4). Interestingly, the percentage spending 4 or more hours outdoors on weekdays generally trends downward with greater family incomes. Higher percentages of kids in families with incomes from \$25,000 up to \$99,000 spend 4 or more hours outdoors on weekends relative to those in households with both the lowest and the highest incomes. Generally, the greatest shift in hours allocated from weekdays to weekend days is in the category of 4 or more hours per day for all income categories. The shift is more pronounced for households with incomes above \$50,000, and it is especially pronounced for incomes from \$75,000 to \$99,000.

Table 4.--Amount of time kids spend outdoors on a typical weekday and weekend day during the past week, by annual family income. (Percentages sum down to 100.)

Family Income and Time Per Day	<\$25,000		\$25,000-\$49,999		\$50,000-\$74,999		\$75,000-\$99,999		\$100,000-\$149,999		\$150,000+	
	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day	Week-day	Weekend day
None	1.7	4.7	2.7	3.3	2.1	4.5	1.9	3.3	5.2	2.5	0.9	1.2
Less than ½ hour a day	5.2	2.0	5.9	1.5	5.2	2.1	4.2	2.4	1.7	0.5	6.3	3.8
About ½ hour a day	11.1	5.8	5.5	3.2	6.9	2.2	9.0	4.0	8.6	5.8	15.1	3.6
About 1 hour	17.2	15.4	22.3	7.5	25.3	11.4	24.9	9.0	31.6	10.8	23.2	10.9
2-3 hours	30.8	28.3	27.2	27.5	33.8	28.2	33.4	22.8	28.7	32.4	35.7	32.8
4 or more hours	34.0	43.7	36.3	57.0	26.7	51.5	26.6	58.4	24.2	48.0	18.8	47.8

Summary

Sixty-one percent of kids 6 to 19 reported spending two or more hours outdoors on a typical weekday. Over three-fourths reported two or more hours outdoors on typical weekend days (fall

2007 to spring 2009). When compared by gender, around 81 percent of males and 72 percent of females spend 2 or more hours outdoors on weekend days. At the opposite end of hours per day, somewhat higher percentages of both male and female kids spend no time outdoors on weekends (4 to 5 percent). As well, smaller percentages of both males and females spend under one hour on weekend days as compared with weekdays. The most significant shift in time outdoors between weekdays and weekends for both males and females is in percentages spending 4 or more hours on weekend days. When compared by age, higher percentages of kids age 6 to 15 spend 2 or more hours outdoors compared with kids 16 to 19. This difference between kids under 16 and those 16 to 19 is especially pronounced when comparing percentages spending 4 or more hours per day on weekends. Consistent with these comparisons is that a larger percentage of kids 16 to 19 spend no time outdoors on weekends—almost 8 percent. Generally, the percentage of kids spending no time outdoors goes up on weekend days for all age groups.

When compared by race, a higher percentage of Hispanic kids (56 percent) spend 4 or more hours per day outdoors on weekends than either White or Black kids. A somewhat higher percentage of White kids spend 4 or more hours per day on weekends relative to Black kids. A smaller percentage of Hispanic kids spend no time outdoors on weekends, when compared with White or Black kids. When compared by family income, somewhat lower percentages of youth in the highest income category spend no time outdoors. Interestingly, the percentage spending 4 or more hours outdoors on weekdays generally trends downward with greater family income. Higher percentages of kids in families with incomes from \$25,000 up to \$99,000 spend 4 or more hours outdoors on weekends relative to those in households with both the lowest and the highest incomes.

In subsequent reports on results of the **National Kids Survey**, we will provide updated data on the activities kids undertake outdoors, reasons they do not spend more time outdoors, and demographic comparisons of activities and reasons outdoors.