

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1994 and 1995, the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) interviewed approximately 17,000 Americans over age 15 in random-digit-dialing telephone samplings. The primary purpose was to learn about the outdoor recreation activities of people over age 15 in the United States. They were asked about their participation in 81 specific recreation activities.

Massive Participation

Results show that 94.5 percent of Americans participated in at least one of the surveyed forms of outdoor recreation in 1994-95. That percentage translates into 189 million participants nationwide. Walking is the single most popular activity, with about 134 million participants. Other activities with over 100 million participants include visiting a beach, gathering outdoors with the family, and sightseeing.

Activities with 60 to 99 million participants include picnicking, visiting a nature center, visiting a historic site, playing yard games, attending outdoor sporting events and concerts, pool swimming, swimming in lakes, streams, rivers, etc., visiting a visitor center, and wildlife viewing. Those with 40 to 60 million participants are hiking, boating, skiing, birdwatching, freshwater and warmwater fishing, water-based nature study, running or jogging, biking, and motorboating. Activities with 25 to 40 million participants are tent camping in developed areas, visiting a prehistoric site, other wildlife viewing, volleyball, off-road driving, softball, fish viewing, golf, basketball, and fish viewing.

A wide range of activities, 48 in total, ranging from snowmobiling to windsurfing attracted less than 25 million participants. Even closed-top canoeing, the most specialized of all the activities listed, attracted almost a million participants. Thus, there are large segments of the population seeking opportunities for a wide range of recreation activities. Many activities—such as caving and mountain climbing—require specific settings while other activities can be enjoyed in more general settings.

Trends Since 1982-83

Since 1982-83, the population of the nation has increased by 13.4 percent and the proportion of people participating in at least one activity has risen from 89 to 94.5 percent. As a result, numbers of participants have increased for almost all activities.

In addition, in 1994-95 new activities were added to the list because of their growing popularity. These activities included orienteering, mountain climbing, rock climbing, caving, and specific kinds of nature viewing.

Participant Demographics

To assist the public land manager in the formulation of management plans for providing recreation opportunities, various characteristics of the participants in individual activities and groups of activities were tabulated. These characteristics include distributions by age, race, sex, income, education, size of household, and number of cars in the household.

As one might expect, participation in activities requiring vigorous exercise is considerably higher for young and middle-aged people than for those over 60. Considerable numbers of people over 60 are participants, however. Many of these older people have greater time to recreate because they are retired, and interest in maintaining physical fitness is growing for people of all ages.

For most activities, participation is low for people with family incomes below \$25,000 per year. Interestingly, it often is also low for people with incomes above \$100,000. Participation is highest for people with family incomes between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year. It appears, therefore, that many outdoor recreation activities are enjoyed primarily by the middle class.

Participation in team sports is greater for African-Americans than for people in other racial groups. For many across all groups, camping is a traditional family activity, and participation increases as family size increases.

Detailed Demographic Statistics

Probably the most important NSRE results are detailed tables that show rates of participation in individual activities and groups of activities. They also show distributions of participants by age, income, sex, race, etc. These tables can assist the land manager in recreation-based decisions and exist on a nation-wide basis, by Forest Service Assessment region (4 total), and by Forest Service region (9 total). In this report, participation by demographic group is shown only for the RPA Region within which the recipient Forest Service office is located.

Public Opinion about Management Issues

The final chapter of this report reviews public opinion and attitudes regarding a variety of management issues and situations. These results reflect the percentage of persons 16 and older who reflect various opinions and values within each Forest Service RPA Region. Results are presented in 17 tables in Chapter 6.