

CHAPTER 2: OUTDOOR RECREATION— THE BIG PICTURE



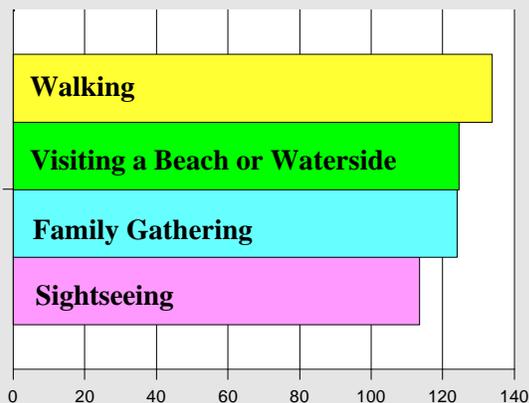


Figure 2.1—The four most popular outdoor recreation activities.

Survey results show that 94.5 percent of Americans 16 years of age or older participated in at least one of the surveyed forms of outdoor recreation in 1994.

A rising national population along with rises in rates of participation translate into growing markets for most outdoor recreation activities.

Everybody's Doing It

Survey results show that 94.5 percent of Americans 16 years of age or older participated in at least one of the surveyed forms of outdoor recreation between 1994 and 1995. That is almost 19 out of 20 people and approximately 189 million participants nationwide. Walking is the most popular activity, with about 134 million participants (fig. 2.1). Visiting a beach or other waterside and gathering outdoors with family and friends each have about 124 million participants 16 and older. And sightseeing has 113 million such participants.

Sightseeing covers a wide range of sites and attractions. The majestic natural attractions that justify an extended vacation are largely concentrated on public land. Transportation, tour services, photography equipment, and lodging and food, however, are provided by private means. Tourism and travel services and facilities that make sightseeing more enjoyable are on the rise. Similarly, souvenirs that help people to fondly remember their experiences come primarily from the private sector. The increase in numbers of retirees indicate a growing demand for sightseeing opportunities. Equipment that supports sightseeing, such as binoculars, cameras and camcorders, may also be in greater demand in the future.

Less Popular But More Expensive

The forms of outdoor recreation just mentioned probably owe some of their popularity to their relatively low cost. A person need not spend a great deal to take a walk or go sightseeing. Other activities are a little less popular, but are of special interest to manufacturers because participants must

purchase equipment and clothing to participate.

A second tier of activities is defined as those that attract 25 to 99 million participants per year (fig. 2.2). This list runs from picnicking, which attracted 98 million participants, to playing basketball, which was enjoyed by 25.6 million.

Picnicking is probably more closely associated with the first tier of activities. It is common and can be done cheaply. Traditionally, sites for picnicking have been provided largely by public agencies. With public budgets constrained, however, private organizations seem likely to play increasing roles in providing high-quality picnic sites.

Attending outdoor sporting events, with 95 million participants, also is near the top of this second list. Interest in outdoor spectator sports is very high. Increasingly, sites for professional sporting events are constructed with a combination of public and private funds. Amateur and professional sports, including outdoor adventure activities, are becoming more popular as spectator events.

Human Powered Outdoor Recreation

Human powered outdoor recreation appeals to many Americans, not only as spectators but as participants as well. There were 57 million bicyclists over age 15 in 1994, representing over 26 percent of the population. As we will see, bicycling is popular with a variety of Americans. In recent years, bicycling has become more diversified, with bicycles being used not only for road touring, but for dirt road and trail riding as well. Bicycling equipment has



An estimated 9 million people do a bit of mountain climbing and 7.4 million have tried rock climbing in the United States.

become more specialized, providing a safer and more technologically-based experience. Bicyclists at all interest levels can be accommodated, from the casual rider to the specialized enthusiast.

One of the most popular human powered outdoor recreation activities is walking. Walking remains popular across all age groups, but is an especially popular activity for older Americans. Over two out of three Americans walked for outdoor recreation in 1994, a total of almost 134 million Americans. Walking accommodates a wide range of income levels, and provides outdoor recreation for pleasure as well as sport and fitness. One of the greatest opportunities for the outdoor industry is in footwear, and walking shoes have become a highly specialized product. Walking apparel also is being manufactured to accommodate a wide range of walking interests.

Human powered outdoor adventure activities also grew in popularity. Overall, 37 percent of Americans participated in some form of adventure outdoor recreation. In 1994, almost one in four Americans went hiking, a total of almost 48 million people. More rigorous outdoor adventure activities were also popular, although to a lesser degree. Backpacking was done by 15 million Americans, almost 8 percent of the population. Rock climbing and mountain climbing, both highly technical and specialized activities, were done by 7.5 million and 9 million Americans respectively. These adventure activities require a certain amount of skill and knowledge, and typically require specialized equipment as well. Their popularity indicates continued opportunities for the outdoor recreation industry.

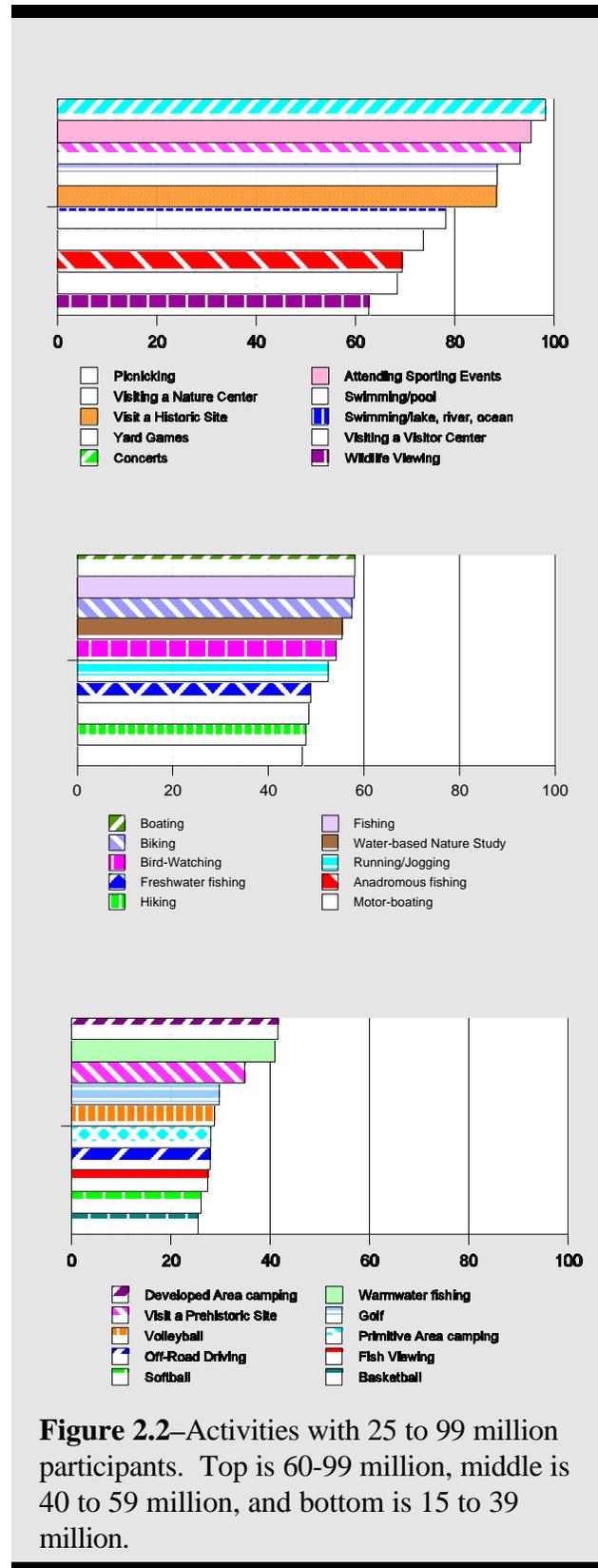


Figure 2.2—Activities with 25 to 99 million participants. Top is 60-99 million, middle is 40 to 59 million, and bottom is 15 to 39 million.

Human powered boating activities were also popular in 1994. Over 7 percent, or about 15 million Americans, went rafting in that year. Another 14 million went canoeing, almost 10 million went sailing, over 8 million went rowing, and almost 3 million went kayaking. Although only 1 percent of Americans went sailboarding or windsurfing in 1994, that percentage represents over 2 million people. These activities are surprisingly popular, considering their novelty. Human powered boating activities are highly specialized outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities usually depends on either specially-produced equipment and services from the outdoor recreation industry. Motor-boating and related activities, such as waterskiing and jet skiing, were also extremely popular. Almost one in four Americans went motor-boating, representing 47 million people.

As always, swimming was a popular activity of Americans. Over one in two Americans went swimming in 1994, a total of almost 109 million people. Specialized swimming activities were also popular. Snorkeling and scuba diving were represented by 14.5 million Americans, and 2.6 million Americans went surfing.

Mass Markets

All of the outdoor recreation activities included in the survey represent enough people and interest to be considered mass markets. Percentages of interviewees who reported participation, and estimates of numbers of American participants over age 15 are shown in the table at the end of this Chapter. Even windsurfing, the least popular of the listed activities, attracted more than 2 million participants.

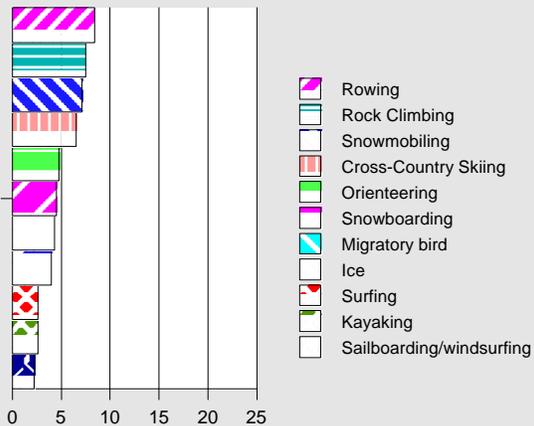
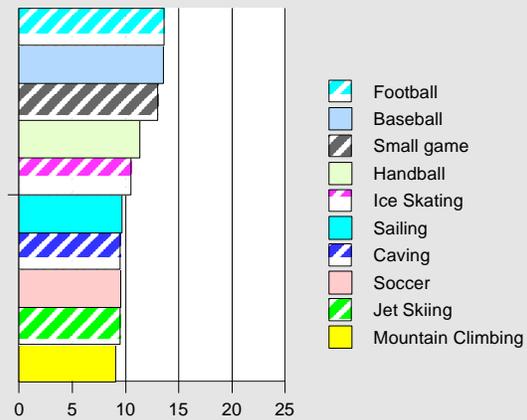
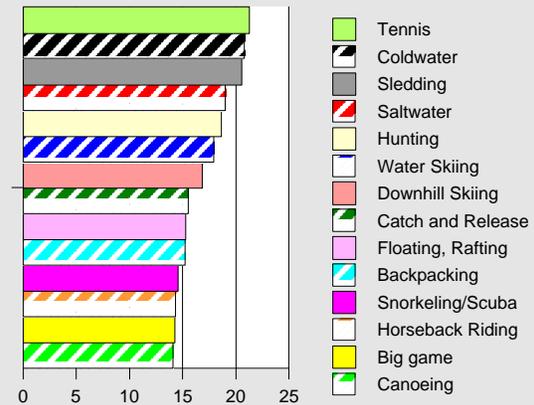


Figure 2.3—Activities with less than 25 million participants. Top is 14-25, middle is 9-13.9, and bottom is 0-8.9.

Among the 13 groups of outdoor recreation activities listed earlier, all types of outdoor viewing had the most participants—an estimated 153 million Americans over 15 years old. More than three-fourths of respondents said they participated in at least one outdoor viewing activity. A little over two-thirds participated in one or more fitness activities, and a slightly smaller proportion participated in outdoor social activities (yard games, picnicking, and family gatherings). Fitness activities attract about 137 million participants, and outdoor social activities attract 136 million.

Trends Since 1982

In the search for emerging investment opportunities, understanding recent trends in participation in individual activities is important. Table 2.1 compares percentages of participation and millions of participants in 1982 and 1994-95 for individual activities and groups of activities that were included in both surveys.

For most activities, there are millions more participants in 1994 than there were in 1983. Among human powered activities, numbers of hikers had the largest increase—93.5 percent. Backpacking, another human-powered outdoor recreation activity, increased 73 percent. The number of people who walk for recreation increased by 42 percent, from 94 million to 134 million. The number of nonpool swimmers increased from 56 to 78 million, and the number of pool swimmers increased from 76 to 88 million.

Table 2.1—Percentages and millions of Americans who participated in outdoor recreation activities in 1982 and 1994. (Only activities common to both surveys are shown.)

Activity	Number in 1982-83 (millions)	Number in 1994-95 (millions)	Percent Change
Bicycling	56.5	57.4	+1.6
Horseback Riding	15.9	14.3	-10.1
Golf	23.0	29.7	+29.1
Tennis	30.0	21.2	-29.3
Outdoor Team			
Sports	42.4	53.0	+25.0
Boating	49.5	58.1	+17.4
Sailing	10.6	9.6	-9.4
Motorboating	33.6	47.0	+39.9
Water Skiing	15.9	17.9	+12.6
Swimming/pool	76.0	88.5	+16.4
Swimming/river, lake, or ocean	56.5	78.1	+38.2
Fishing	60.1	57.8	-3.8
Hunting	21.2	18.6	-12.3
Hiking	24.7	47.8	+93.5
Walking	93.6	133.7	+42.8
Running/ Jogging	45.9	52.5	+14.4
Bird Watching	21.2	54.1	+155.2
Picnicking	84.8	98.3	+15.9
Sightseeing	81.3	113.4	+39.5
Off-Road Driving	19.4	27.9	+43.8
Ice Skating	10.6	10.5	-0.9
Downhill Skiing	10.6	16.8	+58.5
Cross-Country			
Skiing	5.3	6.5	+22.6
Snow-mobiling	5.3	7.1	+34.0
Sledding	17.7	20.5	+15.8
Camping (overall)	42.4	52.8	+24.5
Developed Area	30.0	41.5	+38.3
Primitive Area	17.7	28.0	+58.2
Backpacking	8.8	15.2	+72.7
Attending a			
Sports Event	70.7	95.2	+34.7
Attending an Outdoor			
Concert or Play	44.2	68.4	+54.7

The number of downhill skiers rose from under 11 million to almost 17 million, an increase of 58.5 percent. Over the same period—from 1983 to 1994—there was an increase of 24 percent in cross-country skiing.

There also were large increases in camping, particularly in primitive areas. The number of people who camp in primitive areas rose from a little under 17 million in 1983 to 28 million in 1994. Over the same period, the number who camp in developed areas rose from 30 million to 41.5 million. And the number of backpackers increased by 73 percent—from 9 to 15 million.

Some people participate in an activity once or twice a year. Others, the enthusiasts, may do so more frequently. To suppliers of outdoor recreation equipment and services, therefore, the frequency of participation is important. Table 2.2 compares rates of participation in 1994 with those in 1983. This table can only display rates of participation for activities listed in the 1982 and 1994 surveys.

Study of table 2.2 suggests that for people who engage in the listed activities, there has been relatively little change in the number of days of participation in the last 12 years. An exception is birdwatching, where the percentage of infrequent birdwatchers has increased dramatically. This increase in the number of days of participation probably indicates that more individuals are novice birdwatchers, and that the popularity of this activity is growing rapidly. Table 2.1 confirms increased participation of 155% in birdwatching since 1982.

Large numbers in the left column of table 2.2, which represents 1 or 2 days of activity, suggest that many people are trying the activity. Large percentages in the right column represent high percentages of participants with sufficient interest to pursue an activity for more than 25 days in a given year. Most of the people who engaged in

these activities did not do so very often. Many participated only once or twice. We do not know whether they will continue to pursue these activities occasionally or become avid enthusiasts, but their initial interest represents a potential market for outdoor recreation manufacturers and retailers.

Some changes in the frequency of activity seem particularly important. In sailing, the number of people who do so once or twice a year is down, but the numbers who do so more frequently are up. These numbers probably mean that “enthusiastic” sailing is increasing in popularity. The increase in popularity of experienced backpacking is indicated by the increased percentages of people who are doing that activity more than 10 days a year. The same is true for primitive camping. Not only have the numbers of primitive campers increased as indicated in table 2.1, but the proportion of those people who camp more than 10 days a year also has increased.

Table 2.1 shows a major increase in the number of people who enjoy downhill skiing. Table 2.2, however, suggests that the proportion of all skiers who enjoy all types of skiing more than 10 times a year has dropped. In cross-country skiing, the pattern

In addition to millions of new customers for traditional activities, there are customers for adventure activities that were rarely pursued 15 years ago.

is different. Not only have the number of cross-country skiers risen by 24.5 percent; the proportions of people who enjoy that activity frequently also have grown.

Table 2.2—Comparison of 1982 to 1994 number of days spent in each activity.

Activity and year	1 to 2 days	3 to 10 days	11 to 25 days	More than 25 days
	-----Percent of			
participants-----				
Bicycling				
1982	12	32	19	38
1994	14	32	19	36
Horseback riding				
1982	47	27	8	17
1994	48	26	8	18
Sailing				
1982	56	30	6	8
1994	48	33	11	7
Motorboating				
1982	33	39	17	12
1994	29	39	18	14
Pool swimming				
1982	14	38	19	29
1994	13	38	18	32
Nonpool swimming				
1982	19	42	20	19
1994	18	45	20	16
Fishing				
1982	21	43	21	15
Freshwater fishing only				
1994	21	40	20	19
Camping and related				
Backpacking				
1982	39	47	9	6
1994	41	41	11	7
Developed camping				
1982	26	51	16	7
1994	24	52	16	8
Primitive camping				
1982	36	47	12	6
1994	30	48	15	7
Hiking				
1982	28	47	14	12
1994	29	40	16	15
Birdwatching and other nature study				
1982	15	29	14	42
1994	48	30	10	13

Off-road vehicle driving				
1982	23	39	21	17
1994	23	40	16	21
Downhill skiing				
1982	34	44	16	7
1994	33	49	13	5
Cross-country skiing				
1982	51	35	10	4
1994	36	47	11	5
Snowmobiling				
1982	40	36	14	10
1994	46	32	11	11
1994 adventure activities:				
Mtn. climbing	56	36	6	2
Rock climbing	60	30	8	2
Caving	79	18	2	0.1
Orienteering	51	37	7	5

Table 2.3 provides an accounting of the percentage and estimated number of participants in all activities asked by the NSRE.