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# Recreation Statistics Update<sup>1</sup>



Update Report No. 2  
September, 2004



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## Trends in Activity Participation Since Fall 1999<sup>2</sup>

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The first United States National Recreation Survey was conducted in 1960. At that time the population of this country was just at 180 million. Our population has grown by over 115 million since 1960, and it is projected to continue growing rapidly. In recent years, population has risen at a fast pace, from about 281 million in 2000 to 288 million in 2002, and reaching almost 295 million thus far in 2004.

The outdoor recreation participation numbers reported in the table below reflect this growth in our population. Shown are percentages of population 16 or older participating in each of a wide array of activities. Because of varying sample sizes across the periods during which surveying was done, some cells did not have sufficient data for calculating participation estimates and are left blank. The source of these participation statistics is the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE). The most recent NSRE was the 8<sup>th</sup> of the United States on-going National Recreation Surveys. It ran from September 1999 through to February, 2004.

Activities in the table are listed from highest overall percentage of the population participating (walking at 82.5%) to the lowest (windsurfing at 0.8%). Topping the lists for all time periods are walking, outdoor family gatherings, gardening, viewing/photographing natural scenery, and visiting nature centers. Across the years of surveying, there seem to be two general trends. First, percentages of the population participating increased for many activities between Fall 1999 and Spring 2004. For example, visiting nature centers went from 57% in late 1999 to over 60% in early 2004. Outdoor swimming went from almost 44 in 1999 to almost 53% in 2004. The second trend generally is that for many activities, participation percentages dipped from Fall 2001 to Summer 2002, probably in reaction to the hijackings and tragedies that occurred on 9/11, 2001. Overall, however, outdoor recreation participation has increased over the 5 time periods covered.

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<sup>1</sup>This update is based on research information generated for the Forest Service's 2005 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Assessment Update Report.

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Outdoor recreation participants by activity and season in millions of participants and percentage of population.

Activity	Fall 1999 to Summer 2000 (n=21,762)	Fall 2000 to Summer 2001 (n=25,916)	Fall 2001 to Summer 2002 (n=10,767)	Fall 2002 to Summer 2003 (n=10,898)	Fall 2003 to Spring 2004 (n=3,503)	Fall 1999 to Spring 2004, Full Sample (n=72,846)
Walk for pleasure	179.7 84.0	175.8 82.1	169.0 79.0	182.0 85.1	,	176.6 82.5
Family gathering	157.3 73.5	158.7 74.2	157.8 73.7	164.3 76.8	,	158.9 74.2
Gardening or landscaping for pleasure	,	150.5 70.3	126.6 59.2	,	,	139.0 64.9
View/photograph natural scenery	115.2 53.8	127.0 59.4	122.4 57.2	136.3 63.7	152.4 71.2	125.1 58.5
Visit nature centers, etc.	122.3 57.1	121.2 56.6	116.8 54.6	118.1 55.2	130.5 61.0	120.9 56.5
Picnicking	118.1 55.2	117.0 54.7	113.7 53.1	111.1 51.9	112.5 52.6	115.8 54.1
Driving for pleasure	114.9 53.7	103.3 48.3	102.7 48.0	136.1 63.6	125.5 58.6	112.7 52.7
Sightseeing	115.6 54.0	105.0 49.1	101.7 47.5	128.2 59.9	,	111.5 52.1
Attend outdoor sports events	,	110.0 51.4	105.6 49.4	,	,	108.6 50.8
Visit historic sites	100.6 47.0	96.0 44.9	91.5 42.7	97.6 45.6	110.1 51.4	97.7 45.7
View/photograph wildflowers, trees, etc.	87.6 40.9	93.5 43.7	88.9 41.5	105.4 49.3	122.1 57.1	93.8 43.8
View/photograph other wildlife	87.0 40.6	94.1 44.0	86.8 40.6	102.8 48.0	121.4 56.7	93.1 43.5
View beach	84.4 39.4	89.0 41.6	90.6 42.3	118.0 55.1	118.3 55.3	91.7 42.9
Swimming in lakes, streams, etc.	93.7 43.8	85.5 39.9	84.4 39.5	97.8 45.7	112.7 52.7	90.3 42.2
Swimming in an outdoor pool	,	88.7 41.4	91.0 42.5	,	,	89.1 41.6
Attend outdoor concerts, plays, etc.	,	88.7 41.5	85.7 40.0	,	,	87.7 41.0
Bicycling	83.8 39.1	85.6 40.0	80.8 37.8	79.9 37.3	78.8 36.8	83.2 38.9
Yard games, e.g., horseshoes	,	85.8 40.1	76.0 35.5	,	,	83.2 38.9
Boating	78.3 36.6	77.6 36.3	75.3 35.2	81.7 38.2	91.1 42.6	78.5 36.7
Fishing	73.5 34.4	73.0 34.1	68.9 32.2	75.7 35.4	78.5 36.7	73.1 34.2
Running or jogging	,	71.4 33.4	67.9 31.7	,	,	70.5 32.9
Day hiking	71.8 33.5	68.3 31.9	70.6 33.0	64.7 30.2	82.6 38.6	69.9 32.6

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Visit a wilderness or primitive area	72.1 33.7	67.2 31.4	64.8 30.3	74.2 34.7	75.9 35.5	69.6 32.5
View/photograph birds	64.4 30.1	67.0 31.3	62.6 29.2	73.9 34.5	83.1 38.8	67.1 31.4
Freshwater fishing	63.8 29.8	62.3 29.1	58.3 27.3	65.7 30.7	64.2 30.0	62.4 29.2
Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	58.8 27.5	63.6 29.7	57.1 26.7	59.9 28.0	,	60.5 28.3
Visit a farm or agricultural setting	60.2 28.1	59.9 28.0	55.4 25.9	60.5 28.3	,	58.9 27.5
Developed camping	54.0 25.2	58.6 27.4	55.4 25.9	57.9 27.1	67.1 31.4	57.0 26.6
Snow/ice activities	55.3 25.8	58.8 27.5	53.9 25.2	54.0 25.2	60.6 28.3	56.2 26.3
Visit other waterside (besides beach)	58.5 27.3	52.9 24.7	51.8 24.2	,	,	54.8 25.6
Motorboating	52.4 24.5	52.2 24.4	50.8 23.7	,	62.5 29.2	52.6 24.6
View/photograph fish	48.0 22.4	52.0 24.3	48.8 22.8	57.6 26.9	66.5 31.1	51.7 24.1
Outdoor team sports	47.0 22.0	49.9 23.3	48.9 22.9	47.2 22.0	,	48.5 22.6
Warmwater fishing	49.8 23.2	47.6 22.2	45.2 21.1	,	,	47.9 22.4
Mountain biking	45.0 21.0	46.5 21.7	42.3 19.8	44.1 20.6	40.8 19.1	44.9 21.0
Visit prehistoric/archeological sites	44.1 20.6	44.4 20.7	41.2 19.3	47.7 22.3	47.3 22.1	44.3 20.7
Boat tours or excursions	,	40.5 18.9	42.7 20.0	,	,	41.1 19.2
Drive off-road*	37.6 17.6	37.4 17.5	36.8 17.2	49.5 23.1	47.8 22.4	39.7 18.5
Inline skating or rollerblading	,	47.2 22.0	24.7 11.5	,	,	37.8 17.7
Golf	,	35.7 16.7	35.4 16.5	,	,	35.6 16.6
Primitive camping	33.1 15.5	35.2 16.5	33.3 15.6	39.9 18.6	35.7 16.7	34.5 16.1
Sledding	,	32.2 15.1	31.8 14.9	,	,	32.1 15.0
Basketball outdoors	,	31.4 14.7	26.1 12.2	,	,	30.0 14.0
Coldwater fishing	28.3 13.2	29.5 13.8	25.4 11.9	30.3 14.2	29.5 13.8	28.5 13.3
Hunting	24.1 11.3	24.5 11.5	21.3 10.0	24.6 11.5	25.9 12.1	24.0 11.2

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Backpacking	23.3 10.9	21.7 10.1	21.5 10.0	22.9 10.7	26.7 12.5	22.5 10.5
Tennis outdoors	,	22.8 10.6	21.5 10.0	,	,	22.4 10.5
Saltwater fishing	21.2 9.9	23.0 10.7	22.3 10.4	,	,	22.2 10.4
Volleyball outdoors	,	23.1 10.8	20.1 9.4	,	,	22.3 10.4
Rafting	20.7 9.7	20.5 9.6	21.4 10.0	,	31.6 14.8	21.3 10.0
Softball	,	22.3 10.4	19.0 8.9	,	,	21.4 10.0
Canoeing	20.4 9.5	21.5 10.0	18.4 8.6	,	24.5 11.4	20.7 9.7
Jet skiing	19.9 9.3	20.7 9.7	20.0 9.3	,	27.7 12.9	20.7 9.7
Horseback riding (general)	21.1 9.8	20.5 9.6	19.3 9.0	20.6 9.6	19.6 9.2	20.4 9.6
Big game hunting	18.0 8.4	18.6 8.7	16.5 7.7	,	,	18.0 8.4
Downhill skiing	17.8 8.3	18.8 8.8	17.4 8.1	17.6 8.2	16.6 7.7	18.0 8.4
Football	,	16.8 7.9	18.4 8.6	,	,	17.2 8.1
Waterskiing	17.6 8.2	17.1 8.0	16.6 7.8	,	,	17.2 8.0
Horseback riding on trails	17.1 8.0	16.3 7.6	15.5 7.2	16.6 7.8	15.4 7.2	16.4 7.6
Handball or racquetball outdoors	,	16.0 7.5	17.2 8.0	,	,	16.3 7.6
Soccer outdoors	,	15.1 7.1	18.1 8.5	,	,	15.9 7.4
Small game hunting	15.4 7.2	15.6 7.3	13.6 6.4	,	,	15.1 7.1
Snorkeling	14.0 6.5	14.7 6.9	14.6 6.8	,	,	14.4 6.7
Ice skating outdoors	,	14.5 6.8	13.6 6.3	,	,	14.2 6.6
Baseball	,	14.2 6.6	12.7 5.9	,	,	13.8 6.4
Mountain climbing	,	13.0 6.1	14.5 6.8	,	,	13.4 6.3
Snowmobiling	11.6 5.4	12.2 5.7	10.8 5.0	12.6 5.9	12.8 6.0	11.9 5.5
Sailing	10.8 5.0	11.0 5.2	11.5 5.4	,	,	11.0 5.2

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Snowboarding	9.7 4.5	11.2 5.2	10.9 5.1	11.3 5.3	14.0 6.5	10.8 5.1
Rock climbing	,	9.3 4.3	8.8 4.1	,	,	9.1 4.3
Rowing	9.6 4.5	9.1 4.3	8.1 3.8	,	,	9.1 4.3
Caving	,	9.1 4.3	8.7 4.1	,	,	9.0 4.2
Anadromous fishing	9.3 4.3	9.2 4.3	7.7 3.6	,	,	9.0 4.2
Kayaking	6.7 3.1	8.2 3.8	9.2 4.3	,	14.0 6.5	8.1 3.8
Cross country skiing	8.4 3.9	8.0 3.8	7.5 3.5	7.0 3.3	6.4 3.0	7.8 3.6
Ice fishing	,	6.1 2.9	4.6 2.1	,	,	5.7 2.7
Migratory bird hunting	5.1 2.4	5.1 2.4	4.3 2.0	,	,	4.9 2.3
Snowshoeing	,	4.3 2.0	5.0 2.3	,	,	4.5 2.1
Scuba diving	4.0 1.8	4.0 1.9	4.5 2.1	,	,	4.1 1.9
Orienteering	,	3.9 1.8	3.3 1.5	,	,	3.7 1.7
Surfing	3.1 1.4	4.0 1.9	3.9 1.8	,	,	3.7 1.7
Windsurfing	1.8 0.8	1.7 0.8	1.4 0.6	,	,	1.7 0.8

, Missing values indicate the activity was not included in the NSRE during those time periods.

\* Off-road is defined as off of paved or graveled roads.

This Recreation Statistics Update Report is based on recent data that updates the estimated participation statistics reported in **Outdoor Recreation for 21<sup>st</sup> Century America**, published by Venture Publishing, College Station, PA. Copies of **Outdoor Recreation for 21<sup>st</sup> Century America** may be obtained from Venture Publishing at their website (<http://www.venturepublish.com>) or telephone at 1-814-234-4561. To see more of our research, please visit our website (<http://www.srs.fs.fed.us/trends>).