

CHAPTER 6

Aging and Outdoor Recreation

As a result of modern technology, longer life expectancies and the maturing of the baby boom generation, there is now and will continue to be a higher proportion of individuals over 60 years than ever before in the history of the United States. This aging of the population has spawned increased interest in studying the leisure behavior of the elderly. The importance of leisure and recreation activities in the lives of older persons has become clear in recent years. Past research, using a life-cycle perspective, has examined numerous aspects of leisure behavior including such areas as activity involvement, participation in physical activities, and barriers to participation. These studies, however, have been inconsistent in their findings, indicating a need for further research in the leisure patterns of the elderly and how those leisure patterns have changed over time.¹

The final series of questions in the NRS was sponsored by the Administration on Aging to further investigate the involvement of older Americans in outdoor recreation pursuits. The results, presented here, cover three broad areas.

The first section compares respondents aged 60 and older with respondents under 60 years with respect to a variety of leisure behaviors and perceptions. Included here are comparisons related to the average number of activities engaged in during the previous 12 months; the average annual number of activity-days of participation; recent and prospective changes in expenditures of time and money; the importance of having recreation areas at varying distances from home; and the importance of different reasons why individuals: (1) enjoy an activity, (2) don't do an activity as often as they

would like, and (3) stop participating in an activity.

The second and third sections deal exclusively with respondents 60 years old and older. These sections examine participation in club-sponsored outdoor recreation activities, club memberships, outdoor recreation skills and interests, and the role of older Americans in transmitting those skills to others by teaching or coaching. The specific questions identify whether or not an individual participated in any recreational activities sponsored by clubs or organizations, the clubs sponsoring the activities, club memberships, skills the respondent has, which if any are actually being taught and to whom, and what the barriers are to teaching these skills.

COMPARISON OF RESPONDENTS 60 YEARS AND OLDER WITH THOSE UNDER 60

Table 28 summarizes the recreational involvements of respondents 60 years and older. When compared to respondents less than 60 years, as well as to the entire sample, in almost every instance, those respondents 60 years and older showed less involvement in outdoor recreation. Almost one-third (30 percent) of the older group reported no participation in outdoor recreation activities, compared to 7 percent of those under 60 years and 11 percent of the

Table 28. Involvement in Outdoor Recreation, by Age Groups

Indicators of involvement summarized over all activities	Age		Total sample
	60 years and over	Less than 60 years	
Average number of activities participated in once or more in prior 12 months	2.9	8.2	7.2
Percentage of respondents indicating they participate in no outdoor recreation activities	30	7	11
Average number of activity days of participation in previous 12 months	12.4	42.9	37.1
Average number of days respondents used various recreation areas in previous 12 months:			
Yards and similar areas	5.4	7.6	7.2
Neighborhood parks, etc.	2.5	5.1	4.6
Community or regional parks, etc.	1.8	4.6	4.0
More distant parks	1.5	3.1	2.8
Average estimated expenditure for outdoor recreation in previous 12 months (dollars)	391	350	355

¹McGuire, F.A. and F.D. Dottavio. 1984. *Outdoor recreation participation across the lifespan: Abandonment, continuity, or liberation*. Clemson University, Clemson, SC.

total sample. The findings presented in table 28 indicate that respondents 60 years old and older participated, on the average, in about 3 activities during the prior 12 months and logged a total of approximately 12 activity-days. Again, these figures are substantially less than those cited for respondents under 60 years and the total sample. The average number of activities engaged in for the two groups was 8.2 and 7.2, respectively, and the average number of days of participation reported was 42.9 and 37.1, respectively.

Similar patterns emerged when the respondents were asked to indicate how many days in the past 12 months they used recreation areas at various distances from home. While the average number of days of use, in all instances, decreased steadily from yards and similar areas through neighborhood and regional parks to more distant destinations, the more elderly group showed consistently lower averages (ranging from 5.4 days for yards to 1.5 days for more distant parks) than either those under 60 years (7.6 to 3.1 days) or the total sample (7.2 to 2.8 days). The final row in table 28 summarizes the respondents' estimates of how many dollars they spent altogether on outdoor recreation during the prior 12 months. Results here indicate that respondents 60 years and older were spending more money—an average of \$391—on outdoor recreation than those under 60 (\$350) and the total sample (\$355). This is the only index of involvement in outdoor recreation on which the respondents aged 60 and older exceeded the other age categories.

Table 29 details the percentages of respondents who gave selected reasons (from a list) why they enjoy their favorite activities. The reasons given were consistent across all age categories, the most frequent being "to enjoy nature and the outdoors" and "to get exercise or keep in shape."

Table 30 reports selected constraints to participation in respondents' favorite activities. The most frequently cited reason, in all cases, for not participating as often as an individual would like was lack of time. Almost one-third (30 percent) of those 60 years and older, twice as many under 60 (60 percent) and over half (56 percent) of the entire sample mentioned lack of time as a barrier to participation. The second most frequently cited constraint for the older group was personal health (22 percent) followed by not having anyone to do the activity with (14 percent). For those respondents under 60, as well as for the entire sample, the second and third most frequent constraints were "not enough money" and "no places to do the activity around here."

Table 31 identifies selected reasons why people have stopped participating in particular recreation activities. When respondents were asked to indicate whether or not during the prior 2 years, they had stopped participating in any outdoor recrea-

Table 29. Reasons for Enjoying Favorite Activities, by Age Groups

(Percentage of respondents who gave selected reasons why they enjoy their favorite activities¹)

Reason	Age		Total sample
	60 years and over	Less than 60 years	
Enjoy nature and outdoors.	72	68	68
Get exercise or keep in shape.	59	68	66
For peace and quiet	46	47	47
Get away from problems ²	44	57	56
To be with family or friends	35	55	53
Like people who do activity	30	35	34
Own and enjoy using equipment	23	27	27
Enjoy solitude	21	26	25
Something new or different.	18	22	21
Other reasons (not on list).	14	9	10

¹Percentages are based on the respondents who cited one or more activities they "particularly enjoyed."

²"To get away from day-to-day living or problems."

Table 30. Constraints on Favorite Activities, by Age Groups

(Percentage citing constraint¹)

Reasons	Age		Total sample
	60 years and over	Less than 60 years	
Not enough time.	30	60	56
Personal health reasons.	22	6	8
No one to do activity with.	14	18	17
Not enough money.	12	21	20
No place to do activity	11	20	19
Inadequate transportation or too far	10	15	14
Crowded activity areas	7	14	13
Personal safety problems in activity areas	4	5	5
Poorly maintained activity areas	3	6	5
Pollution problems in activity areas	2	4	4
Inadequate information on activity areas	1	5	5
Other reasons (not on list)	14	11	11

¹Percentage of respondents who gave selected reasons why they do not do their favorite activities "as often as they would like". Percentages are based on those respondents who cited one or more activities they "particularly enjoyed."

tion activities that they used to do, only 16 percent of those 60 years and older said yes compared with 21 percent of those under 60. A followup question asked respondents who had stopped an activity why they stopped. The reasons given mirrored those found in table 30. Sixty-seven percent of the older respondents reported health-related reasons for stopping an activity followed by "no people to do the activity with" (12 percent). All other reasons listed for stopping an activity were cited by less than 10 percent of those respondents 60 years and older. Conversely, respondents

under 60 most frequently cited lack of time (39 percent) as the reason they quit an activity. For the nonelderly, health reasons (23 percent) and lack of people to do the activity with (21 percent) also played fairly substantial roles in their decisions to stop participating. For all groups, poor maintenance and pollution at the activity sites were the least frequently cited reasons for stopping an activity.

Several other questions in the NRS asked respondents to compare the time and money they currently spend on outdoor recreation to what they spent 2 years prior

Table 31. Reasons for Discontinuing a Recreation Activity, by Age Groups
(Percentage citing reason¹)

Reason	Age		Total sample
	60 years and over	Less than 60 years	
Personal health reasons	67	23	33
No one to do activity with	12	21	19
Not enough time	9	39	33
No place to do activity around here	8	15	14
Inadequate transportation or too far to travel	5	9	8
Personal safety problems in activity areas	3	5	5
Not enough money	3	18	15
Crowded activity areas	1	10	8
Poorly maintained activity areas	(x)	4	3
Pollution problems in activity areas	(x)	2	2
Inadequate information on activity areas	(x)	3	2
Other reasons (not on list)	15	23	21

x Less than one half of one percent.

¹Percentage of respondents who gave selected reasons why they stopped doing a recreation activity.

NOTE: Percentages are based on those respondents who said they stopped an activity in the prior 2 years (19 percent of the total sample).

Table 32. Changes in Time and Money Spent for Outdoor Recreation, by Age Groups
(Percentage of respondents¹)

Type of expenditure	Age		Total sample
	60 years and over	Less than 60 years	
Current time spent on outdoor recreation compared to 2 years ago			
More	8	21	18
About same	58	46	48
Less	34	33	33
Estimated future time spent on outdoor recreation			
More	16	43	37
About same	65	51	53
Less	19	7	9
Current percentage of money spent on outdoor recreation compared to 2 years ago			
Larger	29	41	39
About same	51	39	41
Smaller	20	20	20
Estimated future percentage of money to be spent on outdoor recreation			
Larger	27	48	46
About same	60	43	45
Smaller	12	9	10

¹Percentage of respondents who gave various estimates of past and future changes in expenditures of time and money for outdoor recreation.

to the interview and to estimate how that time and money expenditure would change in the next 2 years. Table 32 compares the responses to each of these questions for individuals 60 years and older and those under 60 years. The largest numbers (58 percent of those 60 and older and 46 percent of those under 60) of individuals in both groups indicated they were spending about the same amount of time on outdoor recreation compared to 2 years ago. Over one-third in each group said they were spending less time while only 8 percent of those 60 and older and 21 percent of those under 60 reported spending more time on outdoor recreation than they did 2 years before.

Different results occurred when respondents were asked to project future outdoor recreation involvement. Again, the majority of individuals in both groups reported they would be spending about the same amount of time on outdoor recreation in 2 years. However, 19 percent of the more elderly respondents said they would spend less time compared to only 7 percent of those under 60. The reverse was true of the spending more time category with 43 percent of those under 60 and 16 percent of those 60 and over indicating increasing involvement over the next 2 years.

Results of the questions about the amount of money spent on outdoor recreation revealed that over half of the respondents 60 and older were spending about the same as they did 2 years before and expected to be spending about the same 2 years later. A little more than one-fourth (27 percent) of the aging respondents expected to be spending more in the future. Just the reverse was true for those under 60, the largest proportions of whom said they were spending more than 2 years earlier (41 percent) or expected to be spending a larger percentage of their money on outdoor recreation in the future (48 percent). Slightly fewer people cited no change in expenditure over the prior 2 years or expected to be spending the same proportion of their money on outdoor recreation in the future (39 and 43 percent, respectively).

CLUB ACTIVITY AND MEMBERSHIPS OF INDIVIDUALS 60 YEARS AND OLDER

Table 33 summarizes the recreational involvement of individuals 60 years and older in club-sponsored recreational activities. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had participated in any outdoor recreation activities which were sponsored by a club or organization, the names of the organizations or clubs, and whether or not they held memberships in these clubs or organizations.

Table 33. Club-Sponsored Outdoor Recreation Activities by Respondents Aged 60 and Older

Type of club or organization	Percentage participating ¹	Type of club or organization	Percentage participating ¹
Senior citizen group	22	Union/employee organization . . .	3
Church group	19	Garden club	3
Country club	11	Cultural organization	3
Sportsmen club	10		
Fraternal organization	7	Ethnic organization	3
Charitable organization	6	Other club or organization	21

¹Percentages based on those respondents aged 60 and older who said they participated in one or more club sponsored outdoor recreation activities during the prior 12 months.

Table 34. Outdoor Recreation Skills and Teaching Activities of Respondents Aged 60 and Older

(Percentage of respondents)

Skill	Having skill	Teaching skill ¹	Skill	Having skill	Teaching skill ¹
Total having or teaching any outdoor recreation skill	16	24	Hunting	14	20
Bicycling	2	0	Camping	12	9
Horseback riding	1	0	Hiking	2	0
Golf	12	19	Birdwatching or other nature study	6	3
Tennis	5	7	Downhill skiing	2	7
Team sports	12	19	Frisbee-horseshoes	4	7
Canoeing	1	0	Archery	1	4
Sailing	2	2	Target shooting	3	6
Motor boating	6	6	Training exhibit animals	2	3
Swimming	13	9	Game skill	4	4
Fishing	25	29	Gardening	13	17
			Coaching, officiating	1	0

¹For each skill, the "actively teaching" percentage (second column) is based only on those respondents (first column) who claimed to have a teachable level of proficiency in that skill.

Table 35. Reasons for Not Teaching Outdoor Skills

(Cited by respondents aged 60 and older)

Reasons	Percentage	Reasons	Percentage
Have not been asked	44	No teaching abilities/uncomfortable teaching	10
Not enough time	35	No equipment or supplies	6
Not interested	28	No transportation	2
Personal health reasons	21	Other reasons (not on list)	13
No contact with organizations	14		

NOTE: Percentages are based on those respondents who indicated having one or more teachable skills.

Results indicated that only 13 percent of those respondents aged 60 and older had taken part in any outdoor recreation activities sponsored by a club or organization during the last 12 months. Twenty-two percent of these individuals cited senior citizen groups as the sponsoring organization. Nearly one-fifth (19 percent) cited church groups and only about 1 out of 10 indi-

viduals indicated participating in country club- and sportsmen's club-sponsored activities. Other groups cited included fraternal, charitable, union/employee, cultural, and ethnic organizations, as well as garden clubs. More than half of the participants in club-sponsored outdoor activities were members of the sponsoring group.

OUTDOOR RECREATION INTERESTS AND SKILLS OF INDIVIDUALS 60 YEARS AND OLDER

This section of the survey looks exclusively at respondents 60 years and older—what skills they have, which skills they teach and to whom, and what keeps the non-teachers from teaching. To examine these questions, respondents were first asked if they had any outdoor recreation skill or interest which they thought they could help others learn or practice. The 16 percent who responded yes to that question were then asked to list those skills (up to three). An additional question asked the same individuals if they were currently teaching those skills to others. Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) indicated that they were actually teaching their skills to others.

Table 34 combines all this information and compares which skills individuals say they have and which of those skills they were actually teaching at the time of the interview. The teachable skills most frequently cited by respondents 60 years old and older were fishing (25 percent); hunting (14 percent); swimming and gardening (13 percent each); and golf, camping, and team sports (12 percent each). The second column shows the percentage of those respondents citing each skill who said they were actually teaching at the time of the interview. As was true of the first column, fishing and hunting led the list. Twenty-nine percent of the fishermen and 20 percent of the hunters reported actually teaching their sport. Nearly one-fifth of the respondents having golf, team sport, and gardening skills said they were actively teaching.

Most were teaching skills to family or friends (56 percent and 46 percent, respectively). Nearly one-quarter of those teaching were teaching members of various organizations, while only 12 percent reported teaching other persons.

The final table in this section (table 35) lists selected reasons why people don't teach the skills they have. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate, by choosing reasons from a list, why they don't teach the recreation skills or interests they have. From the results reported here, it appears that the primary reason is that they haven't been asked (44 percent). Over one-third cited lack of time (35 percent) while over one-quarter (28 percent) were simply not interested in teaching. Only 10 percent indicated that they didn't know how to teach or wouldn't feel comfortable teaching.

SUMMARY

In general, respondents 60 years and older can be characterized as much less active than those under 60 years. During the 12 months prior to the interview, they par-

ticipated on the average in three activities for approximately 12 activity-days and spent almost 400 dollars. They typically cited enjoyment of nature as the reason for enjoying their favorite activities; not enough time as their reason for not doing their favorite activities as often as they would like; and personal health as the reason for discontinuing a recreational activity. Respondents 60 years

and over were spending about the same amount of time and money as they had in the 2 years prior to the survey and predicted this to be the case in the future. Overall, few individuals reported participating in club-sponsored activities. Of those that did, however, it was primarily with senior citizen or church groups of which they were members. Lastly, results indicated that the

role of senior citizens in teaching outdoor recreation skills seems to be centered around hunting, fishing, golfing, gardening, and team sports—most of which were being taught to friends and family. The primary reason cited by respondents for not teaching skills to others was never being asked.