

**OUTDOOR RECREATION PATTERNS OF PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL
DISABILITIES: FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF RECREATION
AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

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Recreation, including outdoor recreation, is an important, meaningful, and nearly universal experience that carries numerous civil and personal benefits (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991; Recreation Roundtable, 1994). These benefits are largely the same for people with and without disabilities (McAvoy & Lais, 1999), yet historically there has been a lack of recreation services and facilities accessible to people with disabilities (Smith, Austin, & Kennedy, 2001). While increased accessibility to public outdoor recreation resources has been legislated, little is known about the outdoor recreation participation patterns of people with disabilities. The National Survey of Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) is an on-going study of the outdoor recreation participation of people living in the United States. According to Cordell (1999), the NSRE represents the only current comprehensive study of outdoor recreation trends in the U.S. The 1999 survey included questions concerning participation in 73 outdoor recreation activities and information on whether or not participants have been diagnosed with a disability. Data were collected through a nationwide telephone survey conducted by the National Forest Service. Participants (N=17,224) were randomly selected respondents selected using random-digit-dialing telephone survey techniques. Respondents were 16 years of age and older and were asked to respond to one of two similar versions of the NSRE survey. Questions related to disability were asked only of respondents who indicated that they had been diagnosed with a disability. Of all respondents reporting any disability or illness (n=2,187), respondents with physical disabilities (n=532) were chosen for the current analysis because the prima facie similarity of characteristics of physical disabilities in relation to participation in outdoor recreation activities and because the sample was sufficient in size to provide statistical power. Chi-square analyses were performed to compare people with physical disabilities to people without disabilities across 73 different dichotomous (did or did not participate in last 12 months) participation variables. Results suggested that there were significant differences between the outdoor recreation participation of people with physical disabilities and people without disabilities. People without disabilities were significantly more likely to have participated in 51 of the 73 outdoor recreation activities included in the survey. People with physical disabilities were significantly more likely to have participated in only two of the activities ("nature study" and "bird watching") than people without disabilities ($X^2 = 13.26, p < .000$ and $X^2 = 4.72, p < .030$). There were no significant differences in participation for 20 activities. It appears that people with physical disabilities are less likely than people without disabilities to participate in most of the outdoor recreation activities included in the survey. Future research can examine barriers to outdoor recreation participation of people with disabilities, attitudes of people with disabilities to outdoor recreation activities, facilities, and services, and preference and participation differences among people with different types of disabilities.

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