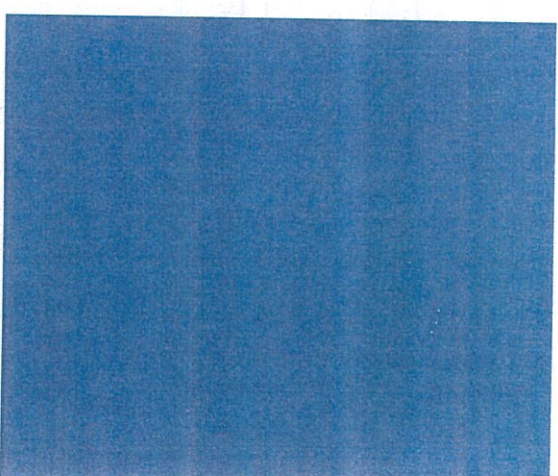


OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION REPORT 2008



A look at trends in American participation in outdoor activities with a focus on youth, diversity and the future of the outdoors.

Produced by
The Outdoor Foundation®

Excerpts from this report for the Youth Recruitment & Retention Committee
July 20, 2009
See outdoorfoundation.org/research/participation.2008.html
for the full report



Starting Young: A Lifetime in the Outdoors

Exploring the outdoors has been a childhood right of passage for hundreds of years – resulting in whole and healthy children and leading to passionate outdoor enthusiasts and committed stewards of our natural resources. Over the past few decades, the critical connection between children and nature has faded. This has had a serious impact on the overall health and well-being of our children and country, our population and planet.

The Outdoor Foundation® produced this annual report, *Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, 2008*, to help national organizations understand and reverse the growing inactivity crisis among our kids and the growing disconnect between children and the outdoors.

Participation Grows, Youth Lag Behind

The good news is participation in outdoor recreation increased in 2007. Our survey, conducted in early 2008, found that American participation in 2007 increased to 50.0%. This means that 138.4 million Americans took part in outdoor activities, getting outside for a total of 11.37 billion outdoor excursions.

The bad news is that from 2006 to 2007, there was an 11.6% drop in participation in outdoor activities among American children ages 6 to 17. Today, children increasingly spend much of their free time indoors or in structured sedentary activity. This trend contributes, researchers say, to skyrocketing rates of childhood obesity (1 in 5 children are clinically obese), as well as increases

in depression (more than 3 million in treatment) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (increased 30% since 1997) among children. In turn, young people who grow up without experiencing nature are far less likely to be active participants in the outdoors and champions of the environment as adults – resulting in a negative compounding effect on the health of our children and our natural world.



Among boys ages 6 to 12, participation in outdoor recreation dropped from 79% to 72% in 2007. Among girls of the same age, participation dropped from 77% to 61%. This drop, concerning in and of itself, opened a significant gap between the participation rates of boys and girls ages 6 to 12 – 72% to 61%. In 2006, participation in outdoor activities among these two groups were nearly equal – 79% for boys and 77% for girls.

Diversity in the Outdoors

As we work to strengthen our children's

YOUTH at a glance

Participation among youth ages 6 to 17 dropped over 11% in 2007.

Participation among boys and girls ages 6 to 12 dropped significantly from 2006 to 2007. Girls had the biggest decline, falling from 77% to 61%. Boys fell from 79% to 72%.

The participation declines open a significant gap between the participation rates of boys and girls ages 6 to 12. In 2006, participation in outdoor activities among these two groups were nearly equal – 79% for boys and 77% for girls.

Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family and relatives. Few youth cite the media, experienced mentors and outdoor education programs as motivations to begin participating in outdoor recreation.

For youth, “fun” is by far the most common motivation for participating in outdoor activities. Other motivators include discovery, exploration, new experiences and exercise.

Youth of all ages who do not participate in outdoor activities cite a lack of interest as their primary reason. Lack of interest is followed by a lack of time, competition from other responsibilities (primarily schoolwork) and a preference for screen media such as TV, computers and video games.

While youth participation fell, participation among Americans ages 18-64 increased in 2007.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

A Troubling Drop in Youth Participation

While overall participation in outdoor activities increased slightly in 2007, participation among youth ages 6 to 17 dropped over 11%. This concerning decline comes as efforts around the country connecting youth and the outdoors are just beginning to gain national attention. There is hope - despite this drop, youth still participate in outdoor activities at a higher rate than other age groups - but significant work remains.

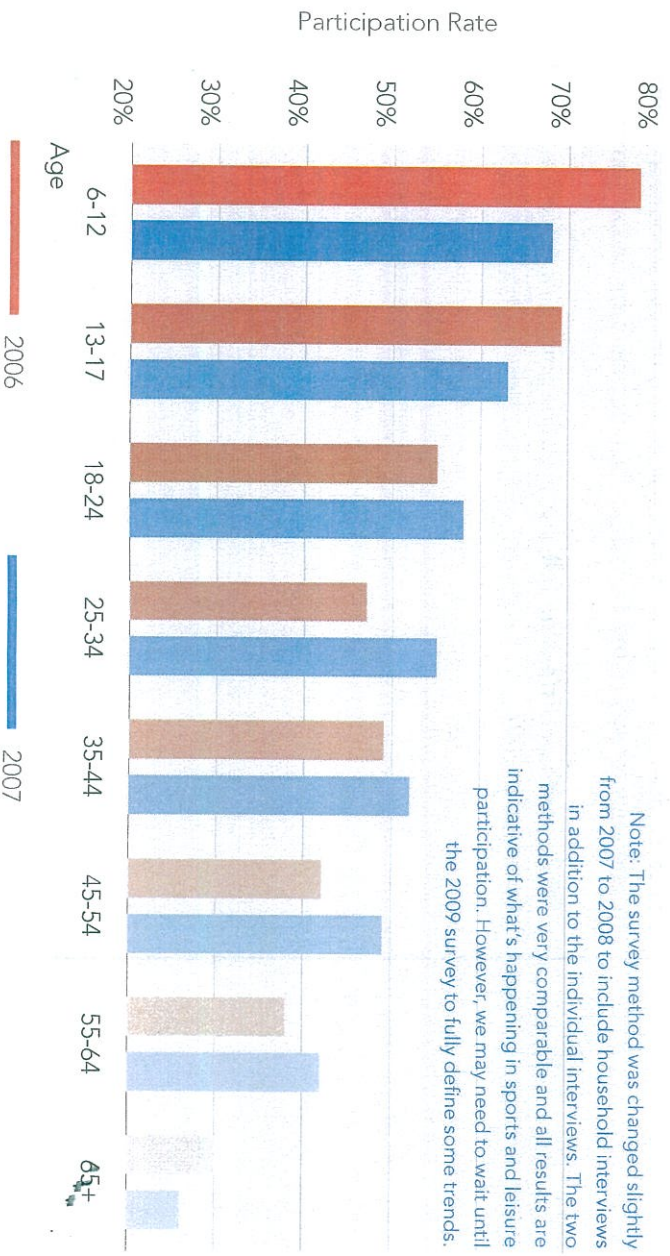


A connection with the outdoors is shown to benefit children emotionally, socially, cognitively and physically in a number of different studies. This drop indicates a greater disconnect with the outdoors among our children and greater risk of increased obesity and associated health problems.

While youth participation fell, participation among Americans ages 18 to 64 increased in 2007. In order to ensure future generations of outdoor participants, adult participants must share their passion for the outdoors. Connecting youth with the outdoors ensures future generations of conservationists, healthier individuals, healthier communities and healthier businesses.

Participation in Outdoor Activities by Age

A 2006 and 2007 Comparison



Profile of Youth Participants, Ages 6 to 17

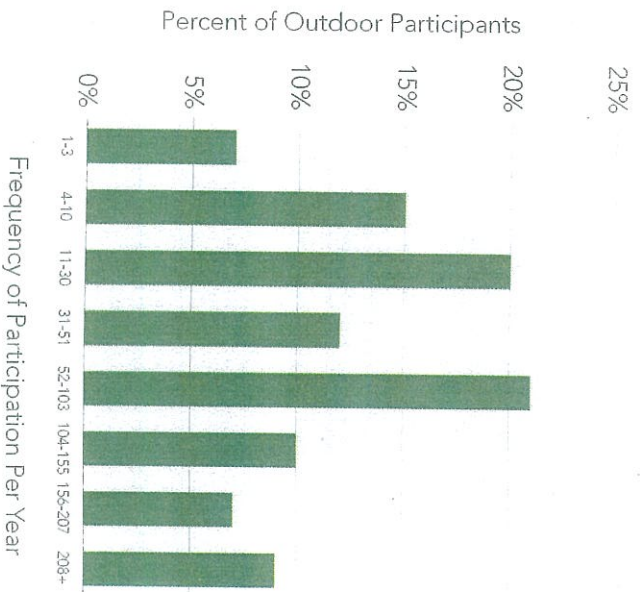
Among youth, the rate of participation in outdoor activities is higher than the rate for team ball sports and indoor fitness activities. A higher percentage of youth participate in outdoor recreation than any other age group. A higher percentage of youth take part in outdoor activities at least twice a week as well.

Yet, 42% of youth participants take part in an outdoor activity only 30 times a year or less. The infrequency of their participation in outdoor activities suggests youth are not satisfying the minimum recommended activity levels suggested by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Frequency of Participation in Outdoor Activities

Youth, Ages 6 to 17





Favorite Outdoor Activities of Youth, Ages 6 to 17

By frequency of participation

- 1. Bicycling (Any Type):**
1.15 billion outings / 74 outings per bicyclist
- 2. Running/Jogging/Trail Running:**
962 million outings / 86 outings per jogger (trail or road)
- 3. Skateboarding:**
361 million outings / 62 outings per skateboarder
- 4. Fishing (Any Type):**
192 million outings / 15 outings per angler
- 5. Camping (Within ¼ Mile of Vehicle/Home):**
77 million outings / 8 outings per camper