

Youth Outdoor Participation Declines

According to a recent report from The Outdoor Foundation, more than 50 percent of Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2007, but despite this positive increase in participation, there was an 11 percent decline in participation in outdoor activities among youth age 6 to 17.

The 2008 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report is a detailed study tracking American participation in outdoor recreation. The report is based on an online survey capturing responses from more than 60,000 Americans ages 6 and older, covering 114 different outdoor activities. It represents a collaborative effort among The Outdoor Foundation, Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association, National Golf Foundation and SnowSports Industries America.

The report offers insights into participation trends in outdoor recreation among all Americans, with particular focus given to youth, diversity and gender.

According to the report, more than 50 percent of Americans participated in outdoor recreation in 2007, getting outside 11.36 billion times—either close to home, in a nearby park or on an overnight trip.

While the increase in participation is good news, the report also revealed over an 11 percent decline in participation in outdoor activities among youth age 6 to 17, with the sharpest declines among youth age 6 to 12.

"Children in America are suffering from the effects of obesity and inactivity at unprecedented levels," said Chris Fanning, executive director of The Outdoor Foundation. "Teaching youth the benefits of a healthy active outdoor lifestyle will ensure healthier children, healthier communities and healthier businesses."

Here are some of the key findings around youth participation in outdoor activities:

- * Participation among youth ages 6 to 17 dropped over 11 percent in 2007.
- * Participation among boys and girls age 6 to 12 experienced the sharpest drop, with girls experiencing the greatest decline, falling from 77 percent to 61 percent. Boys fell from 79 percent to 72 percent.
- * Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family and relatives.
- * For youth, "fun" is by far the most common motivation for participating in outdoor activities. Other motivators include discovery, exploration, new experiences and exercise.

Additional findings of the survey focus on differences in participation based on ethnicity and gender:

- * Participation in outdoor activities is highest among Caucasians for all age groups, and lowest among African-Americans. Participation among African-American youth is lower than Caucasian, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific/Islander youth, and the consequences of this are evident in participation rates throughout adulthood.
- * Although the participation rate in outdoor activities is lower among Hispanics and African-Americans than Caucasians, those who do participate get outside and make more outings than Caucasians.
- * Among males, participation in outdoor activities exceeds participation in indoor activities and team ball sports for ages 25 to 65.
- * Among females, although indoor fitness activities are more popular than team ball sports and outdoor activities for age groups 18 and younger, participation in outdoor activities increases among female participants between 18 and 44.

To download a full copy of the report, visit www.outdoorfoundation.org/research.

