

FS 97-18

**A COMPARISON OF OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS
OVER THE PAST DECADE AS REPORTED BY THE
1982-83 AND 1994-95 NATIONAL
RECREATION SURVEYS**

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This report was produced by the joint University of Georgia and U.S.D.A. Forest Service Environmental Resources Assessment Group (ERAG) under the direction of John Bergstrom and Ken Cordell in partial fulfillment of ERAG Cooperative Agreements.

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Introduction

This report discusses trends in the United States related to Americans' leisure activities. In particular, participation estimates from the 1994-95 National Survey of Recreation and the Environment (Cordell et al., 1998) and 1982-83 Nationwide Recreation Survey (U.S. Department of the Interior) are compared. This comparison provides insight on changes over the past decade in recreation behavior and patterns including the percentage of Americans participating in various recreation activities and the frequency of participation.

Outdoor Recreation Trends

In general, participation rates for most activities measured by the 1982-83 Nationwide Recreation Survey and the 1994-95 NSRE (Cordell et al., 1998) increased with few notable exceptions in the intervening decade between the two surveys. Because population has increased approximately 13 percent from 1982-83 to 1994-95, most activities have many more participants in absolute terms between the two surveys, whether the percent participation estimate increased or not.

Overall, Americans seem to be participating in more outdoor recreation activities than they did when surveyed in 1982-83. Participation rates, with few exceptions, rose for most of the listed activities in Table 1 though most stayed very close to the same as the 1982-83 numbers.

Table 1. Percentage of Americans Participating in Outdoor Recreational Activities in 1982-83 and 1994-95.

Activity	Entire U.S.		Region							
			South		Northeast		North Central		West	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Percentage of total sample included in each category	100	100	34	25	22	13	25	23	20	40
Bicycling	32	29	27	25	34	28	38	32	31	31
Horseback riding	9	7	8	7	7	5	10	7	13	9
Golfing	13	15	9	13	14	14	17	19	14	15
Tennis outdoors	17	11	16	11	16	12	17	10	19	11
Outdoor team sports	24	26	24	26	22	27	26	27	23	25
Other outdoor games or sports	13	--	10	--	12	--	16	--	15	--
Boating	28	29	24	29	28	28	34	32	27	27
Canoeing/kayaking	8	8	5	7	12	9	11	9	6	5
Sailing	6	5	4	4	8	6	6	4	7	6
Motorboating	19	24	18	24	15	21	24	27	18	20
Other boating or water-craft sport	6	17	5	17	5	16	6	18	7	16
Waterskiing	9	9	10	9	7	7	10	10	9	9
Swimming outdoors	53	54	50	53	57	58	52	53	52	53
Swimming in an outdoor pool	43	44	40	45	48	48	40	42	44	42
Other outdoor swimming	32	39	30	37	36	45	33	39	27	36
Fishing	34	29	39	32	25	24	37	32	32	26
Hunting	12	9	15	11	9	7	13	11	9	7

Table 1 continued

Activity	Entire U.S.		Region							
			South		Northeast		North Central		West	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Camping	24	26	20	22	19	22	24	27	33	36
Backpacking	5	8	3	6	5	8	3	5	9	13
Camping in developed campgrounds	17	21	14	17	13	18	19	22	25	28
Camping in primitive campgrounds	10	14	7	13	7	10	10	14	16	21
Other camping	4	1	4	1	4	1	3	1	7	2
Day hiking	14	14	9	19	13	22	15	23	23	36
Walking for pleasure	53	67	49	64	54	68	59	68	52	68
Running or jogging	26	26	26	27	25	26	24	23	31	28
Birdwatching or other nature study activities	12	65	8	63	12	60	15	67	12	69
Picnicking	48	49	40	45	45	49	56	52	55	52
Driving for pleasure	48	--	43	--	45	--	54	--	53	--
Sightseeing	46	57	41	54	44	56	50	58	49	60
Off-road vehicle driving (includes motorcycles but not snowmobiles)	11	14	9	15	9	11	12	13	14	17
Ice skating	6	5	3	2	11	10	8	8	5	3
Snow skiing	9	10	3	6	11	14	9	10	15	14
Downhill skiing	6	8	3	6	9	11	5	7	12	12
Cross-country skiing or ski touring	3	3	--	1	4	5	5	5	5	4
Snowmobiling	3	4	--	1	5	5	6	6	2	3
Sledding	10	10	6	5	15	15	13	14	9	9
Other outdoor winter activities	4	--	2	--	6	--	5	--	4	--

Table 1 continued

Activity	Entire U.S.		Region							
			South		Northeast		North Central		West	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Visiting zoos, fairs, or amusement parks	50	50	44	43	48	44	57	50	55	50
Attending outdoor sports events	40	48	37	48	35	48	44	49	42	46
Attending outdoor concerts, plays or other outdoor performances	25	34	20	31	28	38	26	33	31	37
Other activities (not on list)	4	--	3	--	6	--	4	--	5	--
No participation	11	--	13	--	13	--	10	--	9	--

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

Overall, the 1994-95 recreation survey sample seems to have a little older, more educated, and higher income group of respondents than did the 1982-83 recreation survey sample (see first two columns of Table 2). A slightly higher proportion of minorities were captured in the 1994-95 survey and the average household size has decreased in the time between the two surveys. Participation in the selected activities by demographic category shown in Table 2 is different from the 1982-83 effort reflecting the differing demographic proportions of the 1994-95 survey. Apparent changes of note include more males reporting having biked sometime during the year, an increase in the percentage of males who "walk for pleasure," and a host of rather minor differences in activity participation rates that might be considered an effect of the different demographics between the two surveys.

Table 2. Participation of Americans in Selected Outdoor Recreational Activities in 1983-84 and 1994-95 by Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)													
	Total		Bicycling		Golfing		Tennis, outdoors		Team sports, outdoors		Boating		Pool swimming	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sex														
Male	48	48	48	52	73	72	50	53	60	59	56	55	48	49
Female	52	52	52	48	27	28	50	47	40	41	44	45	52	51
Age														
12 to 24 (16 to 24)	27	17	46	23	34	18	50	35	56	33	35	21	42	24
25 to 39	29	33	33	43	30	41	35	37	32	44	36	39	34	40
40 to 59	25	28	17	26	25	27	14	22	11	20	22	27	19	26
60 or more	19	22	4	8	11	15	1	6	1	4	7	12	5	11
Education														
Less than high school	26	13	12	11	8	8	4	14	11	16	12	10	9	11
High school	37	30	37	25	29	21	26	19	39	29	38	27	36	26
less than 4 years of college	19	28	23	30	24	30	26	27	23	30	24	30	27	31
4 or more years of college	19	29	28	34	39	41	44	40	26	26	27	34	29	33
Race														
White	89	83	90	86	98	94	91	84	87	79	98	92	93	88
Black	11	17	10	14	2	6	9	16	13	21	2	8	7	12
Annual family income (dollars)														
Under 5,000	10	2	7	1	5	1	6	1	9	1	5	1	6	1
5,000 to 14,999	30	10	22	6	13	3	19	6	24	7	20	5	20	6
15,000 to 24,999	27	17	29	12	28	10	28	11	28	15	26	13	28	13
25,000 to 49,999	28	38	35	40	43	35	35	35	33	41	40	39	38	40
50,000 or more	5	33	7	41	12	51	12	47	6	36	9	43	8	41
Number of persons in household														
1	11	20	6	15	7	17	8	15	6	13	7	15	6	14
2	29	35	22	30	20	37	22	28	21	25	17	34	24	31
3	20	21	21	24	20	22	21	24	21	25	21	23	22	24
4	20	20	28	26	27	20	28	25	27	29	26	23	26	26
5 or more	19	5	23	6	16	4	21	7	28	8	19	5	23	6

Table 2 continued

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)													
	Total		Bicycling		Golfing		Tennis, outdoors		Team sports, outdoors		Boating		Pool swimming	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Household cars owned														
None	9	5	6	3	2	1	6	3	6	3	3	1	5	2
1	27	25	22	20	20	18	22	20	21	20	17	17	24	19
2	35	41	38	43	40	47	37	42	36	42	41	44	37	44
3	16	18	20	21	23	20	20	21	18	22	19	22	19	20
4 or more	13	11	15	14	15	14	16	14	19	14	21	16	16	14
Employment status														
At work	55	52	62	59	70	64	66	55	68	60	66	60	64	57
Not at work	5	12	5	14	6	10	5	17	4	15	5	13	5	14
Unemployed	4	3	6	2	4	2	7	2	7	3	5	2	5	2
Keeping house	20	17	13	11	6	8	8	9	7	8	12	11	14	12
Going to school	3	6	6	9	4	7	8	14	6	12	3	8	5	9
Unable to work	2	-	(x)	-	(x)	-	0	-	(x)	-	1	-	(x)	--
Retired	7	10	2	5	5	9	(x)	3	(x)	2	3	6	2	5
Other	5	0	6	0	5	0	6	0	7	0	4	0	5	0
Region														
Northeast	22	25	34	28	14	31	16	23	22	25	15	27		24
North Central	25	20	38	20	17	19	17	22	26	21	24	19		22
South	34	35	27	30	9	29	16	35	24	35	18	34		35
West	20	21	31	23	14	21	19	21	23	20	18	19		20

¹Limited to those activities in which 10 percent or more (550 or more) respondents said they participated once or more in the 12 previous months.

Table 2a. Participation of Americans in Selected Outdoor Recreational Activities in 1983-84 and 1994-95 by Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)													
	Total		Outdoor swimming		Fishing		Hunting		Camping in developed campgrounds		Day hiking		Walking for pleasure	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sex														
Male	48	48	51	53	65	63	88	85	51	53	52	55	40	47
Female	52	52	50	47	35	38	12	15	50	47	48	46	60	53
Age														
12 to 24	27	17	42	23	34	21	33	24	37	23	37	23	29	18
25 to 39	29	33	37	41	34	39	32	40	37	41	36	41	32	37
40 to 59	25	28	1	27	23	28	27	27	21	27	21	27	25	29
60 or more	19	22	5	9	10	13	8	9	5	9	7	9	15	17
Education														
Less than high school	26	13	10	10	22	12	25	15	12	12	7	10	17	10
High school	37	30	37	26	40	32	44	34	40	28	29	22	38	27
less than 4 years of college	19	28	26	30	21	30	19	30	26	31	26	31	21	30
4 or more years of college	19	29	29	34	18	26	13	21	23	28	38	37	24	33
Race														
White	89	83	96	90	91	88	93	93	98	91	98	90	90	85
Black	11	17	4	10	9	12	7	7	2	9	2	10	11	15
Annual family income (dollars)														
Under 5,000	10	2	7	1	7	1	6	1	4	1	7	1	8	1
5,000 to 14,999	30	10	22	6	27	7	28	5	21	7	22	6	26	8
15,000 to 24,999	27	17	29	13	30	15	32	16	30	13	25	12	27	15
25,000 to 49,999	28	38	35	39	31	41	31	45	39	42	37	40	32	40
50,000 or more	5	33	7	41	5	37	3	34	5	36	10	41	6	36
Number of persons in household														
1	11	20	7	15	6	14	5	15	5	13	8	16	10	17
2	29	35	23	32	26	32	26	31	26	31	29	33	29	35
3	20	21	23	24	21	23	22	26	23	24	20	24	21	22
4	20	20	25	25	25	25	23	24	24	25	26	23	21	22
5 or more	19	5	23	5	22	6	25	5	23	7	18	6	19	5

Table 2a continued

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)													
	Total		Outdoor swimming		Fishing		Hunting		Camping in developed campgrounds		Day hiking		Walking for pleasure	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Household cars owned														
None	9	5	4	2	4	2	3	1	3	2	4	2	8	3
1	27	25	22	19	22	17	17	12	18	18	21	19	26	23
2	35	41	38	44	38	45	35	42	40	42	40	42	37	43
3	16	18	19	21	20	21	22	25	18	23	18	22	17	19
4 or more	13	11	17	14	16	15	24	20	21	16	17	14	13	12
Employment status														
At work	55	52	67	59	63	60	69	70	64	59	64	58	55	55
Not at work	5	12	5	15	5	12	4	10	5	15	6	15	5	13
Unemployed	4	3	6	2	6	3	7	2	5	2	5	3	5	3
Keeping house	20	17	12	11	13	10	5	4	15	10	12	10	20	15
Going to school	3	6	5	8	3	8	5	8	4	9	5	9	3	7
Unable to work	2	-	(x)	--	1	--	1	--	(x)	--	(x)	--	1	--
Retired	7	10	1	5	5	7	4	6	2	5	2	5	5	8
Other	5	0	4	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	6	0	6	0
Region														
Northeast	22	25	36	23	25	16	9	14	13	17	13	18	54	20
North Central	25	20	33	25	37	27	13	30	19	26	15	24	59	25
South	34	35	30	33	39	38	15	39	14	29	9	27	49	33
West	20	21	27	19	32	18	9	16	25	28	23	31	52	21

Table 2b. Participation of Americans in Selected Outdoor Recreational Activities in 1983-84 and 1994-95 by Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)													
	Total		Jogging		Birdwatching, etc.		Picnicking		Driving for pleasure		Sightseeing		Visiting zoos, etc.	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sex														
Male	48	48	55	58	45	44	44	46	47		47	49	47	48
Female	52	52	46	42	55	56	56	54	53		53	51	53	52
Age														
12 to 24	27	17	52	33	22	11	29	16	27		27	16	35	16
25 to 39	29	33	35	38	29	32	36	39	36		35	36	36	40
40 to 59	25	28	12	22	27	34	24	30	24		25	31	20	29
60 or more	19	22	1	7	22	23	12	16	14		13	17	10	14
Education														
Less than high school	26	13	8	16	13	8	16	9	16		15	8	15	8
High school	37	30	32	24	36	28	38	28	38		36	26	37	25
less than 4 years of college	19	28	26	27	24	30	22	31	23		23	31	24	31
4 or more years of college	19	29	34	33	27	35	24	33	23		26	35	25	37
Race														
White	89	83	87	79	96	87	90	85	92		91	87	91	87
Black	11	17	13	21	4	13	10	15	8		9	13	9	14
Annual family income (dollars)														
Under 5,000	10	2	8	2	8	1	7	1	6		6	1	6	1
5,000 to 14,999	30	10	23	7	25	8	25	7	26		24	7	24	6
15,000 to 24,999	27	17	27	13	27	16	29	15	29		28	14	29	13
25,000 to 49,999	28	38	35	38	32	39	32	41	32		34	40	34	40
50,000 or more	5	33	8	40	9	36	6	36	7		8	39	7	40
Number of persons in household														
1	11	20	7	16	11	18	8	16	9		9	17	7	15
2	29	35	20	28	37	41	25	33	29		29	36	24	34
3	20	21	21	24	18	20	23	22	23		22	21	21	22
4	20	20	27	25	21	19	24	23	22		23	21	25	24
5 or more	19	5	25	7	14	4	21	6	18		17	5	22	5

Table 2b continued

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)													
	Total		Jogging		Birdwatching, etc.		Picnicking		Driving for pleasure		Sightseeing		Visiting zoos, etc.	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Household cars owned														
None	9	5	7	3	5	3	6	3	4		4	2	6	3
1	27	25	22	20	29	23	25	22	25		24	22	24	21
2	35	41	37	43	35	43	38	44	38		39	44	37	45
3	16	18	17	20	17	20	18	19	18		18	20	19	20
4 or more	13	11	17	14	14	11	14	12	15		14	13	15	12
Employment status														
At work	55	52	64	57	52	51	60	57	60		61	56	60	57
Not at work	5	12	5	16	7	12	6	13	5		5	12	5	13
Unemployed	4	3	7	3	4	3	4	2	5		4	2	5	2
Keeping house	20	17	8	8	22	19	18	15	17		17	14	17	14
Going to school	3	6	8	13	2	4	3	6	3		3	6	4	6
Unable to work	2	-	(x)	--	2	--	1	--	1		1	--	1	--
Retired	7	10	x	3	6	10	4	7	4		4	8	4	7
Other	5	0	8	0	6	0	5	0	5		5	0	5	0
Region														
Northeast	22	25	25	19	12	21	45	20	45		44	20	48	19
North Central	25	20	24	22	15	27	56	26	54		50	25	57	27
South	34	35	26	36	8	34	40	32	43		41	33	44	32
West	20	21	31	23	12	19	55	22	53		49	22	55	22

Table 2c. Participation of Americans in Selected Outdoor Recreational Activities in 1983-84 and 1994-95 by Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)					
	Total		Attending outdoor sports		Attending outdoor cultural performances	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sex						
Male	48	48	53	54	46	50
Female	52	52	47	46	54	50
Age						
12 to 24	27	17	37	22	36	22
25 to 39	29	33	33	37	34	38
40 to 59	25	28	22	29	21	27
60 or more	19	22	8	13	9	14
Education						
Less than high school	26	13	11	11	12	10
High school	37	30	36	26	32	24
less than 4 years of college	19	28	26	29	24	30
4 or more years of college	19	29	27	34	33	37
Race						
White	89	83	91	86	91	85
Black	11	17	9	14	10	15
Annual family income (dollars)						
Under 5,000	10	2	6	1	7	1
5,000 to 14,999	30	10	22	6	25	7
15,000 to 24,999	27	17	28	13	26	14
25,000 to 49,999	28	38	36	39	35	39
50,000 or more	5	33	8	42	8	40
Number of persons in household						
1	11	20	7	15	10	18
2	29	35	24	32	28	34
3	20	21	21	22	22	23
4	20	20	25	25	22	21
5 or more	19	5	23	6	18	5

Table 2c continued

Characteristic	Respondents who said they participated once or more in previous 12 months (Percentage of participants)					
	Total		Attending outdoor sports		Attending outdoor cultural performances	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Household cars owned						
None	9	5	5	2	7	3
1	27	25	21	19	25	23
2	35	41	38	44	37	41
3	16	18	20	21	18	20
4 or more	13	11	16	14	14	13
Employment status						
At work	55	52	64	57	63	57
Not at work	5	12	5	14	5	15
Unemployed	4	3	5	2	5	2
Keeping house	20	17	12	11	14	12
Going to school	3	6	5	8	4	8
Unable to work	2	-	1	--	1	--
Retired	7	10	3	7	3	7
Other	5	0	5	0	5	0
Region						
Northeast	22	25	35	20	28	22
North Central	25	20	44	25	26	24
South	34	35	37	35	20	32
West	20	21	42	20	31	22

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

Many people try different recreation activities during the course of a year. While participation in an activity is important information, a truer measure of actual, intensive participation in an activity is whether a person took a trip specifically for an activity. Specific activities as shown in Table 3 represent some core activities that are regularly participated in over all regions in the U.S. For the most part participation rates for the listed activities rose in the general population between the 1982-83 and 1994-95 surveys with the exception of “other camping.” The percentage of respondents who took a primary purpose trip out of those that said they had participated in the activity over the prior 12 months showed a healthy increase in the latest NSRE. Overall, of the respondents who said they participated in at least one of the listed activities, approximately 90 percent said they took a primary purpose trip for the activity in the 1994-95 NSRE. Specific activities across the board showed marked increases from the 1994-95 NSRE.

Table 4 reports the annual volume of recreation activities per participant. For the most part it seems that Americans are taking about the same numbers of trips in selected activities that they were back in 1982-83. A few activities showed a noticeable departure from that norm, fishing, hunting, and cross country skiing. These three activities showed a marked trend towards Americans recreating for more days than they did in 1982-83.

Table 3. Trips or Outings Taken by Americans to Engage in Selected Outdoor Recreation Activities in 1982-83 and 1994-95

Activity	Respondents who reported that they engaged in selected activity		Participants who took trip to engage in selected activity ¹	
	1982	1994	1982	1994
All activities ²	32	56	70	90
Canoeing/kayaking	4	8	54	78
Freshwater fishing other than trout or salmon	16	24	54	85
Hunting, other than big game	7	7	63	85
Backpacking/hiking	6	24	43	80
Campground camping	13	21	68	93
Other camping	2	1	52	--
Off-road driving	4	14	39	71
Cross-country skiing	2	3	57	78
Snowmobiling	1	4	40	67

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

¹Participants are those respondents who said they engaged in the activity once or more in the 12 months prior to the interview - whether or not on a trip or outing taken specifically for that purpose.

²Refers to activities listed on this table only.

Table 4. Annual Volume of Recreational Activities in the U.S. Per Participant in 1982-83 and 1995-95 By Activity-Day Categories.

Activity	1 to 2 days		3 to 10 days		11 to 25 days		More than 25 days	
	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Bicycling	12	14	32	32	19	19	38	36
Horseback riding	47	48	27	26	8	8	17	18
Golfing	28	--	34	--	17	--	21	--
Tennis outdoors	23	--	42	--	19	--	16	--
Outdoor team sports	13	--	30	--	18	--	38	--
Canoeing or kayaking	51	50	39	41	8	6	3	3
Sailing	56	48	30	33	6	11	8	7
Motorboating	33	29	39	39	17	18	12	14
Swimming in outdoor pool	14	13	38	38	19	18	29	32
Other outdoor swimming	19	18	42	45	20	20	19	16
Fishing	21	8	43	30	21	23	15	39
Hunting	19	11	42	37	22	27	17	25
Backpacking	39	41	47	41	9	11	6	8
Camping in developed campgrounds	26	24	51	52	16	16	7	8
Camping in primitive campgrounds	36	30	47	48	12	15	6	7
Other camping	35	--	44	--	16	--	5	--
Day hiking	28	29	47	40	14	16	12	15
Birdwatching or other nature study activities	15	17	29	30	14	16	42	37
Off-road vehicle driving (includes motorcycles but not snowmobiles)	23	23	39	40	21	16	17	21
Downhill skiing	34	33	44	49	16	13	7	5
Cross-country skiing or ski touring	51	37	35	47	10	11	4	5
Snowmobiling	40	46	36	32	14	11	10	11

NOTE: Percentage of participants (respondents who said they participated in the activity once or more in the prior 12 months) who gave different estimates of the number of different days on which they participated during the 12 months.

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

The length of respondent's trips is also important and interesting information for recreation

area manager's. Length of trip for an activity is highly correlated to the type of activity engaged in, of course, but for most of the selected activities shown in Table 5 the amount of time spent on a trip for the activity falls into the middle category of 5 to 24 hours. This varies somewhat from activity to activity with the longer trips being in the camping categories. Time spent on hunting and backpacking/hiking has seemingly dropped from the 1982-83 recreation survey to the 1994-95 recreation survey and people appear to be taking shorter, day trips to engage in these activities. However, within a day, people seem to be taking more hours for the trip and activity in which they are participating.

Table 5. Trips Taken by Americans for Outdoor Recreation by Activity and Length of Trip in 1982-83 and 1994-95

Activity	Length of trip												All trips ³	
	4 hours or less				5 to 24 hours				Over 24 hours					
	Number		Percent ⁴		Number		Percent		Number		Percent		Number	Percent
	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	1982	
All trips or outings	573	--	20	--	863	--	30	--	1455	--	50	--	2909	100
Canoeing/ kayaking	34	--	15	--	91	--	44	--	82	--	40	--	208	7
Freshwater fishing	222	--	25	--	354	--	39	--	327	--	35	--	905	31
Hunting	79	26	22	18	128	90	36	62	145	30	41	20	355	12
Backpacking/ hiking	79	103	22	19	128	319	36	60	145	110	41	21	355	12
Campground camping	--	--	--	--	83	8	12	2	699	445	100	98	703	24
Other camping	--	--	--	--	14	--	16	--	87	--	100	--	88	3
Off-road driving	87	68	48	30	54	127	32	49	42	48	23	21	187	6
Cross- country skiing	37	19	39	26	34	36	36	50	23	17	25	44	94	3
Snowmobiling	11	15	22	23	13	38	27	57	25	13	51	20	49	2

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

³Totals do not add up across columns because of missing data about length of stay. The final column represents the total number of trips taken for these activities.

⁴Percent of all activity trips

For a select number of activities there are characteristics of respondents trips that were compared between the two surveys (Table 6). Average number of trips taken by respondents were much greater in the 1994-95 survey for hunting and backpacking but the same for developed camping and offroad driving. One-way travel time for all four comparable activities was lower in the 1994-95 survey indicating more trips taken closer to home. Party size, or number of people in the group, for the above four activities saw a one person increase for all but the hunting category. Lastly, respondents were asked about user fees for their activity. Data was somewhat scarce for this question but on average approximately 30 percent of respondent trips had user fees attached to them. Overall the trend from the 1982-83 survey to the 1994-95 survey seems to be shorter trips, but more of them, with slightly larger party sizes.

Table 6. Characteristics of Outdoor Recreational Trips and Outings Taken by Americans in 1982-83 and 1994-95.

Characteristic	All trips or outings	Trips or outings to engage in:											
		Canoeing/ kayaking		Fresh-water fishing		Hunting, not big game		Back-packing/ hiking		Camp-ground camping		Off-road driving	
		1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Average number of trips or outings per participant	6	3	--	9	--	9	15	5	16	4	4	12	11
Average one-way travel time (hours) ⁵	5	4	--	3	--	5	2	6	2	9	4	3	2
Travel to other destinations on same trip (percent yes)	20	22	--	16	--	11	90	28	94	31	94	20	90
Average number of people in the traveling party ⁶	4	7	--	3	--	3	3	4	5	5	6	3	4
User fee: Percent	32	59	--	28	--	16	29	17	33	70	23	8	42

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

⁵Rounded to nearest hour.

⁶Rounded to the nearest person.

Some outdoor recreation activities occur in remote locations which may or may not be accessible by motor vehicles. Of the trips to these types of locations, even if the general area is accessible the actual activity may take place away from the main road or facility. Examining the activities in Table 7 we see that from the 1982-83 survey to the more recent survey that people generally are recreating in areas less accessible by motor vehicle, and that the actual area that they go to for their recreation is farther from the road than 12 years ago. These results point to a trend of gaining popularity for more dispersed recreation.

Table 7. Destination Characteristics of Outdoor Recreational Trips and Outings Taken by Americans in 1982-83 and 1994-95

Characteristic	All trips or outings	Trips or outings to engage in:									
		Canoeing/kayaking	Fresh-water fishing	Hunting, not big game		Back-packing/hiking		Camp-ground camping		Off-road driving	
	1982	1982	1982	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994	1982	1994
Place accessible by motor vehicle ⁷	87	95	92	86	65	72	22	96	--	91	89
Usual distance of participant to roads or trails ^{1 8}											
Less than ½ mile	50	56	73	48	40	25	18	74	--	26	33
½ to 3 miles	34	34	21	40	44	44	48	23	--	49	34
Over 3 miles	16	10	7	12	15	31	32	4	--	25	30

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

⁷Figures based only on outings or trips where the activity was pursued in a place away from cities or towns.

⁸Refers to roads or trails open to motor vehicle use. For outings or trips to drive off improved roads, the question was rephrased to refer to the distance from an improved road, rather than a trail or road open to motor vehicle use.

Many Americans do not participate in outdoor recreation as much as they would like. Though a large majority of Americans do get out in the great outdoors to pursue recreation and reported many favorites activities, they also listed a number of reasons as to why they didn't get to do their favorite activities as often as they might like (Table 8). Respondents for all categories of "reasons they did not participate as much as they would like" in the 1994-95 sample were more limited than their 1982-83 counterparts. The most often listed restriction from both time periods was that of time. Fifty-six percent of the 1982-83 recreating population and 71 percent of the 1994-95 recreators said that they did not have enough time to do their favorite activity. "Not enough money" was cited as the next most cited reason for not participating as much as they would like. "Personal safety problems" was listed quite highly among several of the activities, such as biking and walking. "Crowded activity areas" was ranked highly in the golfing, swimming, fishing, and camping activities.

Table 8 - Percent of Problems or Restrictions Leading to Americans Not Participating in their Favorite Outdoor Recreational Activity as Much as They Would Desire in 1982-83 and 1994-95.

Reason	Percent- age of those who cited any activity as parti- cularly enjoyed ¹		Percentage of those who particularly enjoyed activity																			
			Bicycling		Golf		Tennis		Swimming		Fishing		Hunting		Hiking		Walking		Camping		Softball	
	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94	82	94
Not enough time	56	71	40	98	56	92	53	71	37	76	53	88	51	91	53	96	41	88	63	87	34	91
Not enough money	20	42	3	22	16	46	6	14	9	41	16	61	20	43	9	34	1	7	31	56	3	23
No place to do activity	19	--	7	--	2	--	10	--	16	--	9	--	13	--	12	--	4	--	15	--	8	--
No one to do activity with	17	28	9	30	10	28	22	29	8	28	8	24	6	13	9	34	8	37	15	15	16	36
Inadequate transportation or too far to travel	14	12	3	4	4	0	5	0	9	17	8	9	7	6	11	14	4	2	13	17	5	5
Crowded activity areas	13	21	2	15	10	31	13	14	12	26	6	27	5	13	4	14	1	8	13	33	4	14
Personal health reasons	8	24	2	11	6	10	4	21	4	13	5	11	5	13	5	8	8	11	4	9	7	14
Inadequate activity information	5	19	1	20	0	0	1	0	3	17	3	17	4	17	5	18	1	13	6	24	2	18
Poorly maintained activity areas	5	13	2	11	1	3	4	7	4	19	2	7	1	7	2	10	1	6	1	17	2	14
Personal safety problems in activity areas	5	12	7	15	(x)	0	1	0	2	6	2	6	3	7	4	8	7	18	2	7	(x)	0
Pollution problems in activity areas	4	13	1	15	-	3	1	0	3	19	4	17	1	13	4	14	1	7	1	15	-	5
Other reasons (not on list)	11	19	-	13	-	13	-	21	-	33	-	11	-	17	-	18	-	18	-	11	-	18

SOURCE: Cordell, et al, "Outdoor Recreation Participation Trends," Chapter 5 in upcoming book *Outdoor Recreation Wilderness in America*.

Summary and Conclusions

¹Percentages are based on the total (76 percent of all respondents) who cited one or more activities they "particularly enjoyed."

Comparisons between participation estimates from the 1982-83 Nationwide Recreational Survey and 1994-95 National Survey of Recreation and the Environment indicate that in the intervening decade between the two surveys the proportion of Americans participating in most outdoor recreational activities increased. Observed increases in participation rates however are by and large not very dramatic. The demographic background of outdoor recreation participants is also relatively stable except perhaps the age of participants. Consistent with the overall aging of the American “baby boomer” population, the mean age of outdoor recreation participants in the U.S. has increased in the years between 1982-83 and 1994-95.

The total number or frequency of trips taken per participant in America is very similar in 1994-95 as compared to 1983-84 for most activities. There does appear to be a trend from 1982-83 to 1994-95 towards more day trips taken closer to home. The mean length of trips also appears to have increased between 1982-83 and 1994-95. This trend in trip length may be related to an overall trend suggested by the 1982-83 and 1994-95 surveys suggesting that the total time available for outdoor recreation has decreased since 1982-83. If people have less total time during the year to devote to outdoor recreation, they may be attempting to make the most of this limited time by taking fewer trips closer to home where they spend more time on site per trip. This change in recreational behavior would maximize on-site recreation time relative to travel time and travel costs.

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