
Recreation Statistics Update



Update Report No. 9
May, 2005



Western and Mid-Western Metropolitan Residents' Participation in Nature-based Outdoor Tourism Activities¹

Western Metropolitan Areas and Their Residents.—The United States is an increasingly urban nation. Four of every 5 residents now live in a metropolitan area. At the time of the 2000 Census this meant that almost 226 of the Nation's 281 million residents (80%) were living in one of the 276 U.S. metropolitan areas. This was up from 77 percent in 1990. Metro residency is projected to continue its growth adding by 2020 48 million people. Of the largest metro areas in the country, two are in the West, Los Angeles and San Francisco-Oakland. Two are in the Mid-West, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston.

In Recreation Statistics Update No. 8 (April 2005), we described nature-based outdoor tourism activity participation rates for the major eastern metro areas of the U.S. In this Update (No. 9), we describe the nature-based activity participation rates for 8 western or mid-western metro areas (i.e., metros west of the Mississippi River). They include Dallas-Ft. Worth, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Phoenix, San Francisco, and Seattle. We refer to the activities listed in the accompanying table as tourism activities because participation in them usually requires travel out of the city to public and private areas with developed recreation sites, wildlife, trails, lakes, streams or snow cover. The source of outdoor tourism activity participation rates is the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), a nationwide survey of people 16 or older.

Of the metro areas across the country, Dallas-Fort Worth in the Country's southern Mid-West has been one of the fastest growing--29% growth since 1990. In many of these fast growing Mid-West and West metro areas, the population is quite racially and ethnically diverse. In Los Angeles and Houston, less than one-half the population is non-Hispanic White (39% and 48 %, respectively). More than 2 of every 5 Los Angeles

¹Authors: K. Cordell and C. Betz, Project Leader and Outdoor Recreation Planner (respectively), USDA Forest Service, Athens, GA; G. Green, Assistant Professor, University of Georgia, Athens, GA; Floyd Thompson, National Program Leader - Tourism & FS Byways, USDA Forest Service, Washington, DC; Angela West, National Program Lead - Tourism & Community Service, Bureau of Land Management, Washington, DC; and M. Fly and B. Stephens, Professor and Senior Research Associate (respectively), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN. Collaborator: Gregory Super, USDA Forest Service, Washington, DC; and David Nowak, Project Leader, USDA Forest Service, Syracuse, NY.

residents (40%) are Hispanic, followed by Houston (29%) and Dallas-Fort Worth (22%). The San Francisco metro area has by far the largest Asian American population at 18%, followed by Los Angeles (10%). Houston and Los Angeles have the lowest median ages at 32 years each.

Western Metro Residents' Participation in Outdoor Tourism Activities.—The table below features 20 nature-based outdoor tourism activities. They are listed in order by percentage of the U.S. population 16 or older who participated between 2000 and 2004 (last column in the table). In the second to left of the last column, participation percentages of the combined populations of the 8 western metro areas listed across the top of the table are shown. In the column just left of the last column, the ratio of western-to-eastern metro area percentages participating in each activity are shown. Eastern metro participation was discussed in Update No. 8. The numbers in the column under each metro area name is the ratio of the percentage of people in each western metro area who participate in an individual activity divided by the overall percentage participating across the 8 western metro areas combined. Converting the data to ratios more readily shows readers which activities and which metro areas have larger or smaller percentages of people participating. Especially noteworthy are ratios larger than 1.5 (indicating much higher percentages of a particular metro area population participating) or a ratio less than 0.7 (indicating a much lower participation rate). The actual metro participation percentage for each activity is shown in parentheses below each respective ratio.

Generally, larger percentages of Denver, Minneapolis, Phoenix and Seattle populations participate in nature-based tourism activities relative to all the major western metro areas combined. The population of Los Angeles participates at the lowest rates across the 20 activities, followed closely by Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth. The exception for Houston and Dallas are relatively high participation rates for warmwater fishing, big game hunting and small game hunting. Relatively high percentages of Denver residents participate in most of the activities listed, especially primitive camping, coldwater fishing, downhill skiing and cross-country skiing. Minneapolis residents are also fairly active with especially high participation rates in warmwater fishing, canoeing, big game hunting, small game hunting, and cross-country skiing. Phoenix residents participate at relatively high rates only in the two hunting activities. Seattle residents are high relative to western metro areas generally in primitive camping, coldwater fishing, backpacking, rafting, canoeing, and cross country skiing.

Relative to total U.S. population of persons 16 or older, western metro residents participate at notably higher rates in day hiking, developed camping, driving off road, primitive camping, coldwater fishing, backpacking, and small game hunting. Western metro residents participate at a notably lower rate only in canoeing. Relative to eastern metro areas, western metro residents participate at notably higher rates in day hiking, developed camping, driving motor vehicles off road, primitive camping, coldwater fishing, backpacking, and small game hunting. For all other activities, participation rates compared between western and eastern metro residents are similar. Following are the

top ten activities by overall participation rate for the U.S. with the western metro area or areas having the highest participation rates identified:

- Picnicking Denver and Seattle
- Viewing wildlife Denver and Minneapolis
- Swimming Minneapolis
- Day Hiking San Francisco and Seattle
- Visiting a wilderness Denver and Seattle
- Bird watching Minneapolis
- Developed camping Seattle
- Warmwater fishing Dallas- Ft. Worth and Minneapolis
- Mountain biking Denver and Minneapolis
- Driving off road Denver and Phoenix

Participation ratios for nature-based outdoor tourism activities by major Western metropolitan area and U.S. population overall, 2000-2004.

Activity	Dallas-Ft. Worth	Denver	Houston	Los Angeles	Minneapolis	Phoenix	San Francisco	Seattle	Western Metro Areas	Ratio West to East	U.S. Total
Picnicking	0.85 (46)	1.20 (64)	0.91 (49)	0.94 (50)	1.13 (61)	0.91 (49)	1.07 (57)	1.23 (66)	53.7	1.01	54.2
View/ photograph other wildlife	0.99 (40)	1.30 (53)	0.93 (38)	0.80 (33)	1.38 (56)	1.00 (41)	1.05 (43)	1.23 (50)	40.9	1.01	45.2
Swimming in lakes, streams, etc.	0.84 (33)	0.95 (38)	1.00 (40)	0.97 (38)	1.30 (51)	0.95 (38)	1.01 (40)	1.13 (45)	39.4	0.93	42.3
Day hiking	0.58 (24)	1.10 (46)	0.62 (26)	1.04 (43)	0.95 (39)	1.05 (44)	1.25 (52)	1.21 (50)	41.5	1.41	32.6
Visit a wilderness or primitive area	0.71 (24)	1.25 (43)	0.76 (26)	0.89 (31)	1.16 (40)	1.19 (41)	1.10 (38)	1.39 (48)	34.4	1.06	32.6
View/ photograph birds	0.95 (28)	0.91 (26)	0.87 (25)	0.89 (26)	1.47 (43)	0.99 (29)	1.09 (32)	1.17 (34)	29.1	0.91	32.5
Developed camping	0.82 (24)	1.20 (35)	0.64 (19)	0.90 (26)	1.13 (33)	0.88 (25)	1.18 (34)	1.47 (43)	29.0	1.39	26.7
Warmwater fishing	1.68 (25)	1.22 (18)	1.25 (18)	0.60 (9)	2.60 (38)	1.23 (18)	0.58 (9)	0.71 (10)	14.6	0.93	22.4

