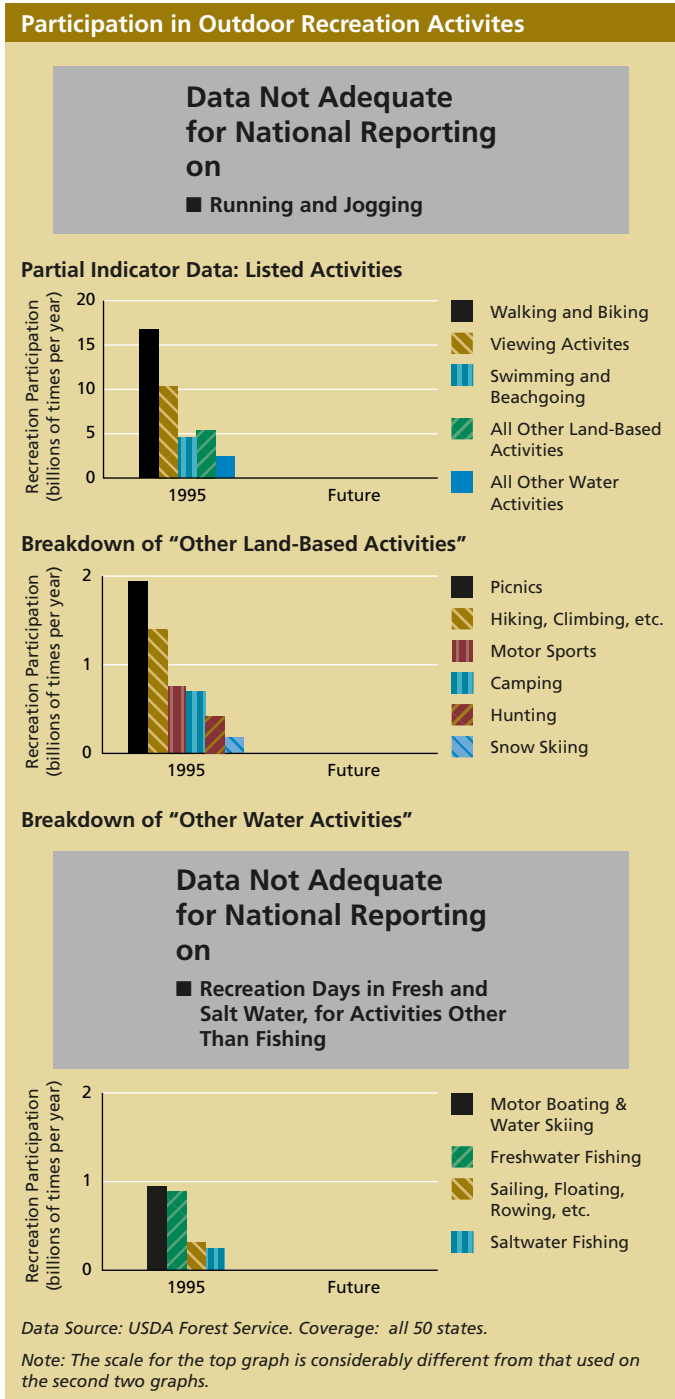




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SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent Pattern	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen Contaminants Physical	Plants and Animals Communities Ecological Productivity	Food, Fiber, and Water Recreation and Other Services

Outdoor Recreation



What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important?

This indicator reports the number of times Americans over the age of 15 took part in a variety of outdoor recreational activities. (Each time someone took part in an activity is counted: if the activity took place over multiple days, each day counts as a separate event, and if a person took part in several activities on a single day, each activity is counted as a separate event.)

Outdoor recreation is highly popular, with many people taking part in at least one of the listed activities over the course of the year. Recreation is a benefit that is derived from ecosystems, in much the same way as we derive products such as food, fiber, and water (p. 58) from these systems.

What Do the Data Show? Walking and biking are by far the most common outdoor recreation activity for which information is available. Americans over the age of 15 walk outdoors or bike about 17 billion times per year. Nature viewing and swimming and beachgoing are next in terms of overall popularity, totaling another 15 billion times per year. The lower graphs break out annual participation in "all other land-based activities," and "all other water activities," showing participation in outdoor social activities like picnics and family gatherings, and in hiking, boating, and fishing.

Why Can't This Entire Indicator Be Reported at This Time? The data presented here are from an extensive national survey. However, the list of recreational activities about which data are collected is not exhaustive, and the survey currently does not distinguish between fresh and salt water for many aquatic activities.

Discussion This indicator reports the number of times people participated in various activities, not how long they spent, so an hourlong walk and a day at the beach count the same (as noted above, each day in a multiday trip is counted as a separate event). Therefore,

the fact that people participated more frequently in some activities (such as walking) does not necessarily mean that they spent more time on this than another activity.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 217.