## 2019 SPECIAL REPORT ON FISHING



RECREATIONAL Boating \& Fishing FOUNDATION

OUTDOOR FOUNDATION

## CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....  1
Fishing ..... 3
Freshwater Fishing ..... 16
Saltwater Fishing ..... 21
Fly Fishing ..... 26
Youth Participation ..... 31
Hispanic Participation ..... 38
Female Participation ..... 47
First-Time Participation ..... 55
Profile of a Fishing Trip ..... 62
Perceptions of Fishing ..... 67
Future of Fishing ..... 72
Methodology ..... 74

Recreational Boating \& Fishing Foundation 500 Montgomery Street, Suite 300 Alexandria, VA 22314 www.TakeMeFishing.org/Corporate

The Outdoor Foundation 2580 55th St, Suite 101
Boulder, CO 80301
www.OutdoorFoundation.org
© Recreational Boating \& Fishing Foundation and Recreational Boating \& Fishing Foundation logo are registered trademarks of Recreational Boating \& Fishing Foundation.
® The Outdoor Foundation and The Outdoor Foundation logo are registered trademarks of The Outdoor Foundation.

# 2019 Special Report on Fishing Executive Summary 

Americans took the nation's waterways by storm in 2018. An impressive 49.4 million people headed to oceans, rivers, lakes and streams in pursuit of fish, but also much more. Whether spin fishing on a local lake, big game fishing with a charter or tying on the just right dry fly, fishing participants were unified not just by a love of fishing, but also by the unique way it connects participants to nature and loved ones.

For the tenth year in a row, the Outdoor Foundation and Recreational Boating \& Fishing Foundation have teamed up to produce the Special Report on Fishing to provide a comprehensive look at overall trends in participation as well as detailed information on specific fishing categories.

Insights include motivations, barriers and preferences of key groups. The report also identifies opportunities for engaging new audiences in fishing and examines less tangible perceptions about the sport. Special sections are dedicated to youth, Hispanic American and female participation, which are populations with potential for significant growth.

## Overall Fishing Participation Trends

Fishing participation continued its 11-year upward trajectory, adding 300,000 participants and reaching its highest number of participants since 2007. At the same time, the participation rate dipped slightly by $0.1 \%$, bringing the fishing rate to $16.4 \%$. This was due to the increasing population of the United States.

The "Leaky Bucket" illustrates the annual churn of fishing participants, or those people joining/ rejoining the activity and those quitting in a given year. From 2017 to 2018, there was significant
churn in fishing participation. While 9.1 million people stopped fishing, 9.4 million started. All of this change led to a fairly high churn rate of $18.5 \%$, but also resulted in a net gain of 300,000 fishing participants.

In 2018, participants spent a collective 883 million days fishing, averaging 17.9 annual fishing days per person. These average outings were down by an average of $2.1 \%$ over the past 3 years.

## Fishing by Category

Freshwater fishing maintained its dominance as the most popular type of fishing, with nearly double the number of participants as saltwater and fly fishing combined. And, it appears that freshwater fishing is still on the upswing. The category has grown an average of $1.2 \%$ since 2016, bringing it to 39.0 million participants.

Freshwater participants fished the most often out of the fishing categories. These participants embarked on a total of 632 million fishing trips and each averaged 16.2 days on the water.

Saltwater fishing was the second most popular type of fishing, engaging $4.3 \%$ of the U.S. population, or 12.8 million people. After years of steady growth, saltwater fishing's participation rate slipped by $1.8 \%$ from 2017 to 2018. Nonetheless, the big picture still indicates growth-the number of participants increased by an average of 2.4\% from 2016 to 2018.

Not surprisingly, saltwater fishing was most popular in the South Atlantic region, which primarily includes the southern states along the Eastern Seaboard. A significant 35.0\% of saltwater fishing participants live in this region.

Fly fishing has the fewest participants, but the number and percentage of participants has been increasing the most. Since 2016, the participation rate has increased by an average of $3.7 \%$, and the number of fly fishing participants has jumped by an average of $4.5 \%$.

Also encouraging for fly fishing, the category had the highest rate of first-time participants. In 2018, $17.4 \%$ of participants were new to the category.

## Youth Participation

Children, ages 6 to 12, participated in fishing at a rate of $24.1 \%$, which is an average $1.9 \%$ growth in the participation rate over the last 3 years. In the meantime, participation among adolescents, ages 13 to 17 , increased an average of $4.0 \%$ over the past 3 years.

## Hispanic Participation

Fishing participation among Hispanic Americans continued its rapid growth in 2018. The participation rate reached 4.4 million people, or $11.5 \%$ of all Hispanic Americans. As seen in previous years, Hispanics tended to be avid participants, embarking on 21.9 average annual outings per participant. That is 3 more fishing days than the average participant.

## Female Participation

In 2018, female participation numbers reached an all-time high at 17.7 million. The participation rate was the second-highest on record at 11.5\%.

Growing female fishing participation has great potential. In 2018, 10.0\% of non-participating females were thinking about giving fishing a try. On the other hand, a very small percentage of females actually tried fishing. In fact, a mere 0.8\% of female participants were first-timers in 2018.

## First-Time Participants

First-time participants tried fishing because they thought it would be relaxing, and they chose
to continue fishing simply because they loved it. Those who stopped fishing tended to have access issues or wanted to pursue other outdoor activities.

## Profile of a Fishing Trip

Fishing trips tended to be planned within a week of taking off, and some were completely spontaneous. Before the trips, most participants got fishing information from loved ones and bought their licenses at stores. The trip itself usually consisted of two adult participants who fished as their primary activity, and importantly, caught at least one fish.

## Perceptions of Fishing

Adult participants were usually introduced to fishing by family members or friends. Interestingly, these participants also considered spending time with loved ones a primary motivation to fish. Those who did not want to continue fishing cited limited access to waterways, travel distance and a preference for other outdoor activities as the reasons.

## Future of Fishing

Nearly 78\% of current adult participants were introduced to fishing during childhood. After the age of 12, it was much less likely for a person to try fishing. The future of fishing looks bright though. More than half of participants were already planning on going fishing at least 8 times next year.

By understanding the demographics, motivations and barriers of participants, the fishing industry can better reach America's youngest citizens to nurture a new generation of fishing enthusiasts. Connecting youth to fishing will ensure that our nation's waterways are protected, our communities are healthy and our industry is thriving.

## Fishing Participation



In 2018, 16.4\% of the U.S. population, ages 6 and up, went fishing at least once. Due to population growth, the participation rate decreased $0.1 \%$, while the number of participants increased by 300,000.


## Participant Demographics

Americans, ages 6+




## The Leaky Bucket

## Fishing Participants, ages 6+



The "Leaky Bucket" indicates that there was a significant rate of participant attrition from 2017 to 2018. While 9.4 million Americans started fishing or returned to the activity, a nearly equal amount left. This resulted in a high annual churn rate of $18.5 \%$, which is an increase from the previous year's $12.0 \%$ churn rate. Despite this, there was a net gain of 300,000 participants from 2017 to 2018.

## Leaky Bucket Profile

Fishing Participants, ages 6+



## Lost Participant Demographics

Americans, ages 6+

highest percentage of lost participants


|  |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Reasons for Not Continuing to Fish | Fishing Participants, ages $18+$ |
| Limited access to waterways |  |
| Too far to travel | $33.3 \%$ |
| Prefer other outdoor activities | $33.3 \%$ |
| Lack of time | $33.3 \%$ |
| Physical limitations | $26.7 \%$ |
| Illness | $26.7 \%$ |
| Did not catch anything | $13.3 \%$ |
| Did not enjoy it | $13.3 \%$ |
| Lost interest | $6.7 \%$ |
| Expensive | $6.7 \%$ |
| Smell of fish | $6.7 \%$ |
| Other | $6.7 \%$ |

## Annual Outings



| Perceived Level of Fishing Participation | Fishing Participants, ages 6+ |
| :--- | ---: |
| Occasional participant, would like to fish more | $32.5 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, fish as often as I want | $29.7 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more | $18.9 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want | $16.3 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, but would like to fish | $1.7 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing | $1.0 \%$ |

New to Fishing in 2018
Fishing Participants, ages 6+


## 1st Fishing Experience

Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Note: This question was asked of current fishing participants and is not a breakdown of those that fished for the first time in 2018.

## Fishing Lifecycle by Age

Americans, ages 6+


## Overlap in Fishing Participation

Fishing Participants, ages 6+




## Crossover Activities

Fishing Participants, 6+

| Outdoor | Participation <br> Rate | $3-$ Year <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Camping | $37.3 \%$ | $-0.4 \%$ |
| Bicycling | $29.0 \%$ | $-0.6 \%$ |
| Hiking | $28.5 \%$ | $6.0 \%$ |
| Running | $26.1 \%$ | $-0.3 \%$ |
| Hunting | $23.4 \%$ | $1.5 \%$ |


|  | Participation <br> Rate | $3-$ Year <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Team | $15.9 \%$ | $-1.8 \%$ |
| Basketball | $13.0 \%$ | $-0.5 \%$ |
| Baseball | $8.3 \%$ | $-3.3 \%$ |
| Soccer | $6.6 \%$ | $n / a$ |
| Softball | $5.9 \%$ | $-3.5 \%$ |
| Tackle Football |  |  |


|  | Participation <br> Rate | $3-$ Year <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Indoor Fitness | $25.6 \%$ | $-3.2 \%$ |
| Free Weights | $25.1 \%$ | $2.9 \%$ |
| Treadmill | $17.7 \%$ | $0.2 \%$ |
| Weight Machines | $16.9 \%$ | $4.0 \%$ |
| Stationary Cycling | $13.5 \%$ | $2.0 \%$ |
| Elliptical Trainer |  |  |


|  | Participation <br> Rate | 3-Year <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Other | $43.4 \%$ | $-1.4 \%$ |
| Walking | $30.8 \%$ | $-2.8 \%$ |
| Bowling | $19.9 \%$ | $-2.7 \%$ |
| Golf | $16.5 \%$ | $1.6 \%$ |
| Swimming | $16.4 \%$ | $1.5 \%$ |
| Target Shooting |  |  |

AAG $=$ Average Annual Growth Rate

## Demographics of Considering Participants

Considering Participants, ages 6+

highest percentage of participants


Considering Participants, ages 6+

## People Considering Fishing Over Time

Considering Participants, ages 6+


Interest in fishing participation has been steadily growing since 2011. In 2018, the most nonparticipating Americans yet-13.5\%-expressed interest in fishing. This unprecedented growth in interest is great news for the future growth of fishing.

## FRESHWATER

 FISHING
## Freshwater Fishing Participation

Americans, ages 6+


Freshwater fishing participation continued to have a dominant lead over the other two fishing categories. The participation rate inched up by $0.1 \%$ to $13.0 \%$, and the number of participants increased by 700,000 to 39 million.


## Participant Demographics

Freshwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+



Freshwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+

## Annual Outings

## Freshwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+



|  | Freshwater Fishing Participants, <br> ages 6+ |
| :--- | ---: |
| Perceived Level of Fishing Participation | $33.9 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, would like to fish more | $29.1 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, fish as often as I want | $18.0 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more | $16.5 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want | $1.7 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, but would like to fish | $0.9 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing |  |

New to Fishing in 2018
Freshwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Fishing Lifecycle by Age
Freshwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+


$$
\begin{gathered}
\text { SALTWATER } \\
\text { FISHING }
\end{gathered}
$$

## Saltwater Fishing Participation

Americans, ages 6+


Saltwater fishing was the second most popular type of fishing in the United States with $4.3 \%$ of Americans, or 12.8 million people, participating in the activity. Participation in saltwater fishing decreased slightly from 2017 to 2018, but it still maintained a $2.4 \%$ average annual growth over the past three years.


## Participant Demographics

Saltwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+



## Annual Outings

Saltwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+


|  |  |
| :--- | ---: |
| Perceived Level of Fishing Participation | Saltwater Fishing Participants, <br> ages 6+ |
| Occasional participant, fish as often as I want | $28.0 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, would like to fish more | $25.1 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more | $23.3 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want | $21.9 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing | $0.8 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, but would like to fish | $0.8 \%$ |

New to Fishing in 2018
Saltwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Fishing Lifecycle by Age
Saltwater Fishing Participants, ages 6+


## FLY FISHING

## Fly Fishing Participation

Americans, ages 6+



In 2018, the number of fly fishing participants increased to 6.9 million participants, which was an alltime high for the activity. Although the participation rate held steady from 2017 to 2018, its 3 -year average annual growth was the strongest among the 3 fishing categories. Since 2016, the fly fishing participation rate had an average annual growth of $2.7 \%$.


## Participant Demographics

Fly Fishing Participants, ages 6+

highest percentage of participants


Fly Fishing Participants, ages 6+

## Annual Outings

Fly Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Perceived Level of Fishing Participation
Fly Fishing Participants,
ages 6+

| Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more | $29.2 \%$ |
| :--- | :---: |
| Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want | $26.2 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, fish as often as I want | $25.0 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, would like to fish more | $17.7 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, but would like to fish | $1.1 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing | $0.7 \%$ |

New to Fishing in 2018
Fly Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Fishing Lifecycle by Age
Fly Fishing Participants, ages 6+


# YOUTH <br> PARTICIPATION 

## Youth Fishing Participation



The participation rate among children, ages 6 to 12 , marginally dipped from $24.2 \%$ to $24.1 \%$, but the actual number of participants grew from 6.8 million to 7.3 million. This equates to an average change of $1.9 \%$ in the participation rate over the last 3 years.


## Adolescent Fishing Participation



The participation rate among adolescents, ages 13 to 17 , has grown an average of $4.0 \%$ over the past 3 years. The number of adolescent participants continued its 5-year growth trend, bringing the total number of adolescent fishing participants to 4.4 million.


## Youth Participation by Gender

Fishing Participants, ages 6-12, 13-17


## Participation in Fishing Among Adults with Children

Fishing Participants, ages 18+


## Annual Outings

Youth Fishing Participants, ages 6-12, 13-17


Ages 6-12


Ages 13-17

## Perceived Level of Fishing Participation

Occasional participant, would like to fish more
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing

Fishing Participants,
ages 6-12
31.6\%

23.2\%
36.7\%
20.9\%
17.1\%
0.6\%
1.4\%

## Top Crossover Activities

Fishing Participants, ages 6-17

| Outdoor | Participation Rate | $\begin{array}{r} \text { 3-Year } \\ \text { AAG } \end{array}$ | Team | Participation Rate | $\begin{array}{r} \text { 3-Year } \\ \text { AAG } \end{array}$ |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Bicycling | 43.6\% | -0.7\% | Baseball | 27.3\% | 0.4\% |
| Camping | 42.2\% | -0.2\% | Basketball | 26.5\% | -1.5\% |
| Running | 29.7\% | 1.0\% | Soccer | 21.3\% | -1.9\% |
| Hiking | 27.6\% | 5.4\% | Tackle Football | 12.4\% | -0.3\% |
| Hunting | 18.7\% | 1.6\% | Flag Football | 7.9\% | -2.6\% |
| Indoor Fitness | Participation Rate | $\begin{array}{r} \text { 3-Year } \\ \text { AAG } \end{array}$ | Other | Participation Rate | $\begin{array}{r} \text { 3-Year } \\ \text { AAG } \end{array}$ |
| Free Weights | 15.9\% | -1.7\% | Bowling | 38.6\% | -2.0\% |
| Treadmill | 13.6\% | 8.3\% | Walking | 23.7\% | -0.7\% |
| Dance | 12.0\% | 8.1\% | Swimming | 17.5\% | 2.8\% |
| Barbells | 10.6\% | 1.6\% | Sledding | 15.0\% | -3.6\% |
| Weight Machines | 10.3\% | 0.9\% | Table Tennis | 14.0\% | -0.1\% |

$A A G=$ Average Annual Growth Rate

## Demographics of Considering Participants

Youth Considering, ages 6-17

highest percentage of participants


Youth Considering, ages 6-17

## HISPANIC PARTICIPATION

## Hispanic Fishing Participation

Hispanics, ages 6+


The number of Hispanic American fishing participants jumped to 4.4 million people, the highest number of Hispanic participants yet. Even though the overall participation rate dropped slightly by $0.2 \%$, there was still a strong $8.3 \%$ three-year average annual growth among Hispanic participants.


## Participant Demographics

Hispanics, ages 6+


highest percentage of participants


## Annual Outings

Hispanic Fishing Participants, ages 6+


|  | Hispanic Fishing Participants, <br> ages 6+ |
| :--- | ---: |
| Perceived Level of Fishing Participation | $34.0 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, fish as often as I want | $31.0 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, would like to fish more | $19.5 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more | $14.2 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want | $0.7 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing | $0.6 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, but would like to fish | ( |

## Average Annual Outings by Ethnicity

Fishing Participants, ages 6+


|  |  |
| :--- | ---: |
| Ethnic Group, ages 6+ |  |
| Caucasian | Total Outings (millions) |
| Hispanic | 700.3 |
| African American | 94.0 |
| Asian | 62.0 |
| Other | 17.2 |

New to Fishing in 2018
Hispanic Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Fishing Lifecycle by Age
Hispanics, ages 6+


## Top Crossover Activities

Hispanic Fishing Participants, ages 6+

| Outdoor | Participation Rate | 3-Year <br> AAG | Team | Participation Rate | 3-Year AAG |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Camping | 38.7\% | -2.8\% | Basketball | 20.3\% | -1.5\% |
| Running | 33.3\% | -0.3\% | Baseball | 18.8\% | -0.1\% |
| Bicycling | 32.7\% | 1.0\% | Soccer | 15.6\% | -0.7\% |
| Hiking | 27.7\% | 9.2\% | Softball | 9.8\% | -2.9\% |
| Hunting | 22.7\% | -0.2\% | Flag Football | 8.8\% | -0.1\% |
| Indoor Fitness | Participation Rate | 3-Year <br> AAG | Other | Participation Rate | 3-Year AAG |
| Free Weights | 32.5\% | -3.5\% | Walking | 40.9\% | -0.3\% |
| Treadmill | 26.5\% | 5.7\% | Bowling | 34.3\% | -2.5\% |
| Barbells | 19.0\% | -0.4\% | Golf | 21.2\% | -4.4\% |
| Weight Machines | 18.5\% | -0.4\% | Swimming | 20.5\% | 1.2\% |
| Stationary Cycling | 17.0\% | 2.2\% | Tennis | 14.2\% | 3.5\% |


| Reasons to Continue Fishing | Hispanic Fishing Participants, ages 18+ |
| :---: | :---: |
| Love fishing | 30.9\% |
| Catching fish | 27.3\% |
| Relaxing | 20.0\% |
| Being outdoors | 20.0\% |
| Peaceful | 16.4\% |
| Fun | 14.5\% |
| Eating fish | 14.5\% |
| Bonding with family | 7.3\% |
| Water | 7.3\% |
| Sociable | 7.3\% |
| Excitement | 7.3\% |
| Thrill of chase | 5.5\% |
| Quiet | 5.5\% |
| Lifelong interest | 3.6\% |
| Break from the norm | 3.6\% |
| Boats | 3.6\% |
| Warm | 1.8\% |
| Other | 12.7\% |

## Demographics of Considering Participants

Hispanics Considering, ages 6+

highest percentage of participants


## FEMALE PARTICIPATION

## Female Fishing Participation

Females, ages 6+


Female fishing participation was strong in 2018. The number of participants was at a record high, while the participation rate was the highest since 2007. Indeed, the three-year average annual growth in participation rate was a noteworthy $4 \%$.


## Participant Demographics

Females, ages 6+

highest percentage of participants


Female Fishing Participants, ages 6+

## Annual Outings

Female Fishing Participants, ages 6+


| Perceived Level of Fishing Participation | Female Fishing Participants, <br> ages 6+ |
| :--- | ---: |
| Occasional participant, would like to fish more | $34.9 \%$ |
| Occasional participant, fish as often as I want | $33.2 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want | $14.5 \%$ |
| Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more | $14.2 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, but would like to fish | $1.8 \%$ |
| Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing | $1.4 \%$ |

New to Fishing in 2018
Female Fishing Participants, ages 6+


Fishing Lifecycle by Age
Female Fishing Participants, ages 6+


## Top Crossover Activities

Female Fishing Participants, ages 6+

| Outdoor | Participation <br> Rate | $3-$ Year <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Camping | $38.0 \%$ | $-0.3 \%$ |
| Hiking | $30.6 \%$ | $7.8 \%$ |
| Bicycling | $27.9 \%$ | $0.3 \%$ |
| Running | $27.5 \%$ | $0.0 \%$ |
| Birdwatching | $22.6 \%$ | $-2.0 \%$ |


|  | Team |
| :--- | :--- |
| Basketball |  |
| Soccer |  |
| Baseball |  |
| Softball |  |
| Volleyball |  |

Participation
Rate

3-Year AAG

|  | Participation <br> Rate | $3-$ Year <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Indoor Fitness | $28.5 \%$ | $1.9 \%$ |
| Treadmill | $23.9 \%$ | $-2.5 \%$ |
| Free Weights | $20.1 \%$ | $6.6 \%$ |
| Yoga | $19.5 \%$ | $-3.4 \%$ |
| Dance | $18.2 \%$ | $2.7 \%$ |
| Stationary Cycling |  |  |


|  | Participation <br> Rate | $3-Y e a r$ <br> AAG |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| Other | $51.5 \%$ | $-2.2 \%$ |
| Walking | $32.2 \%$ | $-3.0 \%$ |
| Bowling | $19.3 \%$ | $1.8 \%$ |
| Swimming | $11.7 \%$ | $-1.8 \%$ |
| Tennis | $11.3 \%$ | $2.8 \%$ |
| Target Shooting |  |  |

$A A G=$ Average Annual Growth Rate

| Reasons to Continue Fishing | Female Fishing Participants, ages 18+ |
| :---: | :---: |
| Catching fish | 36.2\% |
| Peaceful | 31.4\% |
| Relaxing | 28.0\% |
| Fun | 26.6\% |
| Love fishing | 25.6\% |
| Eating fish | 19.3\% |
| Being outdoors | 17.4\% |
| Bonding with family | 15.0\% |
| Water | 10.6\% |
| Excitement | 9.2\% |
| Thrill of chase | 4.8\% |
| Quiet | 4.8\% |
| Challenging | 3.9\% |
| Sociable | 2.9\% |
| Break from the norm | 2.9\% |
| Lifelong interest | 2.4\% |
| Boats | 2.4\% |
| Warm | 2.4\% |
| Other | 5.3\% |

## Demographics of Considering Participants

Females Considering, ages 6+

highest percentage of participants


## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

# First-Time Participation 

Americans, ages 6+




In 2018, there were 3.0 million new fishing participants, or $6.0 \%$ of the U.S. population trying fishing for the first time. Both the actual number of participants and the participation rate remained flat from 2018 to 2019.


## Demographics of First-Time Participants

First-Time Participants, ages 6+

highest percentage of participants


|  |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Reasons for Trying Fishing for the First Time | First-Time Fishing Participants, |
| ages $18+$ |  |
| friend or relative took me | $36.4 \%$ |
| Ease of access to fishing | $14.3 \%$ |
| Experience excitement and adventure | $10.0 \%$ |
| Fishing trip as part of a vacation or group outing | $7.9 \%$ |
| Disconnect from electronics | $6.4 \%$ |
| Fished as a kid and want to try again | $3.6 \%$ |
| Seeking solitude | $3.6 \%$ |
| Want to take my children | $2.9 \%$ |
| Try catching my own food | $2.9 \%$ |
| Experiment with a new hobby | $2.9 \%$ |
| Other | $2.9 \%$ |


|  |  |
| :--- | ---: |
| Expectations for a First Fishing Trip | First-Time Fishing Participants, |
| ages | $18+$ |
| Relaxing and unwinding | $52.9 \%$ |
| Catch up with family and friends | $40.0 \%$ |
| Spend time in the outdoors | $35.0 \%$ |
| Exciting time catching a lot of fish | $31.4 \%$ |
| Try something new; maybe catch fish | $28.6 \%$ |
| Teach my children about fishing and nature | $20.0 \%$ |
| No expectations | $20.0 \%$ |
| Competition for the biggest or most fish | $18.6 \%$ |
| Other | $1.4 \%$ |


|  |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Perceptions of Fishing Before Participating | First-Time Fishing Participants, <br> ages |
| Time consuming | $40.0 \%$ |
| Exciting way to spend time outdoors | $38.6 \%$ |
| Uninteresting | $32.9 \%$ |
| Requires too much equipment | $23.6 \%$ |
| Easy to learn | $19.3 \%$ |
| Only for serious outdoors people | $16.4 \%$ |
| Not for someone like me | $15.7 \%$ |
| Intriguing | $11.4 \%$ |
| Too much of a financial investment | $9.3 \%$ |
| Stress free activity | $2.1 \%$ |
| Other | $7.9 \%$ |


| Do you still agree with you initial perceptions of fishing? | First-Time Fishing Participants, |
| :--- | ---: |
| (1 = lowest / $5=$ highest $)$ |  |

## Stereotypes of Fishing Participants

First-time Fishing Participants, ages 18 +


|  | First-Time Fishing Participants, |
| :--- | ---: |
| Reasons to Continue Fishing | ages |

# PROFILE OF A FISHING TRIP 

## Planning Fishing Trips

Fishing Participants, ages 18+



| Where Fishing Information is Obtained | Fishing Participants, ages 18+ |
| :---: | :---: |
| Friends | 55.8\% |
| Family | 45.4\% |
| Fishing specific websites | 23.5\% |
| Retail stores | 21.1\% |
| General outdoor websites | 19.8\% |
| Outdoor magazine | 16.6\% |
| Online retail stores | 11.5\% |
| Other | 5.7\% |



## Where Fishing License Purchased

Fishing Participants, ages 18+


|  |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Why Fishing Licenses Are Not Purchased | Fishing Participants, ages $18+$ |
| No license needed for senior citizens | $40.0 \%$ |
| Have a lifetime license | $30.0 \%$ |
| No license needed for saltwater fishing | $10.0 \%$ |
| Free fishing in state | $7.5 \%$ |
| Went fishing on a charter boat | $5.0 \%$ |
| Free fishing for Native Americans | $5.0 \%$ |
| Someone else purchased for me | $5.0 \%$ |
| Cost | $5.0 \%$ |
| Have a three-year license | $2.5 \%$ |
| Fished commercially | $2.5 \%$ |
| Forgot | $2.5 \%$ |

## Age of Fishing Companions

Fishing Participants, ages $18+$



# Number of Fishing Companions 

Fishing Participants, ages 18+


|  |  |
| :--- | ---: |
| Fishing Locations | Fishing Participants, ages 6+ |
| Shoreline | $50.3 \%$ |
| Boat | $49.7 \%$ |
| River bank | $44.3 \%$ |
| Pier or jetty | $26.6 \%$ |
| Kayak | $5.1 \%$ |
| Other | $4.9 \%$ |

## Typical Fishing Trip

Fishing Participants, ages 18+


Fishing Participation Inspired by Environmental Conservation

Fishing Participants, ages 18+


$$
\begin{gathered}
\text { PERCEPTIONS } \\
\text { OF FISHING }
\end{gathered}
$$

| The Best Things About Fishing | Fishing Participants, ages 18+ |
| :---: | :---: |
| Spending time with family or friends | 34.3\% |
| Enjoying the sounds and smells of nature | 31.7\% |
| Getting away from the usual demands of life | 31.4\% |
| Catching fish | 30.9\% |
| Being close to nature | 23.4\% |
| Observing the scenic beauty | 19.4\% |
| The "chase" (finding the right spot, tackle and fish) | 13.4\% |
| Experiencing solitude | 12.3\% |
| Being with people who enjoy the same things | 10.0\% |
| Reliving my childhood memories of going fishing | 9.4\% |
| Catching my own food | 8.5\% |
| Experiencing excitement and adventure | 8.5\% |
| Sharing the enjoyment of fishing with a child | 8.5\% |
| Being with people who share the same values | 7.5\% |
| Affordability | 7.5\% |
| Because it is cool | 4.5\% |
| Getting exercise | 4.3\% |
| Developing my skills and abilities | 3.8\% |
| Talking to new and varied people | 3.1\% |
| Gaining a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence | 2.6\% |
| Nothing | 2.8\% |


|  |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Reason to Continue Fishing | Fishing Participants, ages $18+$ |
| Catching fish | $34.8 \%$ |
| Peaceful | $29.4 \%$ |
| Relaxing | $26.0 \%$ |
| Love fishing | $26.0 \%$ |
| Fun | $25.7 \%$ |
| Being outdoors | $18.6 \%$ |
| Eating fish | $18.0 \%$ |
| Bonding with family | $11.0 \%$ |
| Water | $10.1 \%$ |
| Thrill of chase | $6.5 \%$ |
| Sociable | $6.1 \%$ |
| Quiet | $5.5 \%$ |
| Excitement | $5.5 \%$ |
| Lifelong interest | $3.5 \%$ |
| Break from the norm | $3.0 \%$ |
| Challenging | $2.7 \%$ |


| How big an obstacle to your enjoyment of fishing is...? |  |
| :--- | :--- |
| $(1=$ lowest / $5=$ highest) |  |
| Being outdoors (e.g. mosquitoes, heat) |  |
| Not catching fist |  |
| Crowded fishing spots | 2.4 |
| The expense (e.g. equipment, bait) | 2.4 |
| The hassle | 2.4 |
| Polluted waterways | 2.2 |
| Lack fishing knowledge | 2.2 |
| Baiting the hooks |  |
| Lack of equipment | 2.2 |
| Boring | 2.2 |
| Do not like touching fish and worms | 2.1 |



|  |
| ---: |
| Fishing Participants, ages $18+$ |
| $35.2 \%$ |
| $27.4 \%$ |
| $19.4 \%$ |
| $18.9 \%$ |
| $15.2 \%$ |
| $8.9 \%$ |
| $32.3 \%$ |

Which resources would make it easier to fish?
(1 = lowest / 5 = highest)

| Easier/more affordable access to boats | 3.6 |
| :--- | :---: |
| Easier/more affordable access to fishing equipment | 3.5 |
| Comprehensive mobile guides that you can access on the water | 3.2 |
| Short lessons/information sessions from a state agency or <br> local guide | 3.1 |


|  |  |
| :--- | :---: |
| Positive Fishing Memories or Associations | Fishing Participants, ages $18+$ |
| Quality time with family or friends | $68.0 \%$ |
| Being immersed in nature | $63.8 \%$ |
| Reminds me of childhood | $46.6 \%$ |
| Enjoying the water | $37.2 \%$ |
| Connecting with a simpler way of life | $35.4 \%$ |
| Learning a new skill | $32.9 \%$ |
| Other | $2.0 \%$ |
| None | $3.2 \%$ |

## FUTURE OF FISHING

Fishing as a Child
Fishing Participants, ages 18+


# Planned Fishing Participation for Next Year 

Fishing Participants, ages $18+$


## Methodology

During the 2018 calendar year, a total of 20,069 online interviews were carried out with a nationwide sample of individuals from the US Online Panel of over one million people operated by IPSOS. The total panel is maintained to be representative of the US population for people ages six and older. Over sampling of ethnic groups took place to boost response from typically under responding groups. Data is based on Nielsen's measure of the Hispanic population in the United States, ages 6 and up, which is $37,185,894$ individuals.

The 2019 participation survey sample size of 20,069 completed interviews provides a high degree of statistical accuracy. All surveys are subject to some level of standard error - that is, the degree to which the results might differ from those obtained by a complete census of every person in the US. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.31 percentage points at the $95 \%$ confidence level.

A weighting technique was used to balance the data to reflect the total US population ages six and above. The following variables were used: gender, age, income, ethnicity, household size, region, population density, and panel join date. The total population figure used was 300,652,039 people ages 6 and older.

## Youth Interviews

All interviews of children under 13 were carried out following the guidelines set out in the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA).

No children were contacted directly. The panel is a balanced sample of households with children in each age group, but contact is always made through designated adult panelists. The adult panelist receives the survey invitation on behalf of a specified child, age six to 12, and they are asked to complete the survey together. Respondents ages 13 to 17 are contacted in a manner similar to respondents age six to 12 , but they are asked to complete the survey themselves.

## About the Physical Activity Council (PAC)

The survey that forms the basis of the 2018 Special Report on Fishing is produced by the Physical Activity Council (PAC), which is a partnership of leading organizations in the US sports, fitness and leisure industries. While the overall aim of the survey is to establish levels of activity and identify key trends in sports, fitness and recreation participation, each partner produces detailed reports on specific areas of interest. Partners include: the Outdoor Foundation (OF); National Golf Foundation (NGF); Snowsports Industries America (SIA); Tennis Industry Association (TIA); USA Football; United States Tennis Association (USTA), International Health and Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA); and Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA).

## Notes

Unless otherwise noted, the data in this report was collected during the latest 2019 participation survey, which focused on American participation in the 2018 calendar year. Please note that some information includes data that was collected during previous

A partnership
project of:

# OUTDOOR FOUNDATION 



RECREATIONAL
Boating \& Fishing
FOUNDATION

© 2019
All Rights Reserved

