

It's a Jungle Gym Out There! An Introduction to Outdoor Recreation

The scientists in this study used the *random draw* approach to select a *sample* of people for the study. Because scientists cannot study everyone or everything in the United States or even everyone or everything in a particular group, they pick a *sample*. A *sample* is a number of people or things carefully selected because they are similar to the larger population. They are picked randomly, which means that everyone or

everything in the whole population has an equal chance of being picked without showing preference. For this study, scientists used a computer-generated random list of household phone numbers from across the entire United States. Once a household was contacted by phone, a person in that household was asked a series of questions about their *outdoor recreation* activities.

Discovery

Brainstorm: Make a list of ten of your favorite things to do outside, such as bicycle riding, nature activities, and sports. A student volunteer can be picked to list these activities on the board. Each activity should be listed once, even if more than one person chose it. Then, go through the list and count the number of students who said they have done each of the activities in the past year. Calculate the percent of students who said they did each. (See page 20 for help with calculating percentages.) Save this list. You will be creating your own chart to show how you and your classmates participate in outdoor recreation

Introduction

Do you like to play outside? If you are like most Americans, you answered yes! Almost everyone in the United States enjoys *outdoor recreation*, which is an activity that is done outside for fun and enjoyment. But what if you couldn't go swimming, because there were no pools to swim in? Unless we understand what kinds of *outdoor recreation* activities people like, we cannot provide facilities and places for them to do the things they like to do. So that government and private businesses can provide the kinds of places and things that people want to do for *outdoor recreation*, scientist H. Ken Cordell and his colleagues studied what people across the

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary in article marked in italics

Outdoor recreation

An activity done outdoors for enjoyment

Questionnaire

Printed or written form of questions used to gather information

Random Draw

To pick someone or something without showing preference

Sample

A small subset group, representative of the entire group

Trend

A behavior pattern occurring and developing over a period of time

Adapted from:
Cordell, H. K., B. L. McDonald,
B. Lewis, M. Miles, J. Martin, and J.
Bason. 1996. "United States of
America". In Cushman, G., Veal, A. J.,
and J. Zuzanek, Eds. World Leisure
Participation in the Global Village,
Wallingford, Oxon, UK: CAB
International.

United States like to do for *outdoor recreation*. Their study was a kind of science called social science. Social science helps scientists to describe people's attitudes and behaviors. Understanding people's attitudes and behaviors helps to better meet their needs.

Methods

To find out what kinds of *outdoor* recreation people like, Dr. Cordell and his colleagues developed a *questionnaire* that included questions about what people do for fun outdoors, and how often they do those activities. Many of the same questions had been asked in past *questionnaires*, enabling the scientists to

look at *outdoor recreation trends*. By understanding trends, scientists can begin to predict what might happen in the future. The scientists also asked people where they most often did outdoor recreation activities. For example, you might play most often in your backyard, but sometimes your family takes a vacation to a national park or to the beach. Dr. Cordell and his colleagues asked these questions by telephone. They asked over 17,000 people over the age of 15 years these questions, and entered their responses into a computer. The computer calculated how many people did different outdoor recreation activities. It also enabled the scientists to tell park and forest managers what kind of outdoor recreation activities people like you and your family enjoy doing.

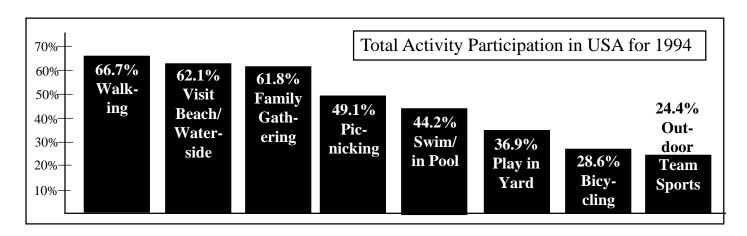
Reflection

1 What question are the scientists trying to answer?

2 How would **you** find out what Americans like to do for outdoor recreation?

Results

Dr. Cordell and his colleagues found that 94.5% of Americans said they participated in some form of *outdoor recreation*. Then the participants told them exactly which activities they took part in. Most activities are enjoyed by both males and females, but for some activities, males participate more than females. The scientists also found some differences in participation between younger and older people. What do you think they found? What they found was that for activities that take a lot of energy, younger people participate more often. For activities that don't require as much energy, older people participate as much as younger people. For example, older people don't do outdoor team sports very much, but they like to watch birds and wildlife, visit historic areas, go sightseeing, and visit nature centers. Another factor that influences what people do and where they go includes income. How and why do you think income influences participation?



Dr. Cordell and his colleagues found that *outdoor recreation* activities are becoming more diverse and more popular. Activities like snowboarding, roller-blading, and bungee jumping were unknown 20 years ago. They found that Americans continue to participate in *outdoor recreation*, and Dr. Cordell predicts that participation will continue to increase in the future.

Further Discovery

Using the bar chart at above as a guide, draw bars on the empty chart below that match five of the activities you listed at the beginning of this article. On the left side of the chart, you see percentages marked from 10% to 100%. Your teacher will help you construct the bar chart using those percentages. Use colored pencils to color each bar a different color. Compare your bar chart with your classmates'. Do they look the same? Why or why not? What does your chart tell you about your classmates' outdoor recreation activities?

100% — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —	
90%	
80%	
70%———————————	
60%	
50%	
40% — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —	
30% ————————————	
20% — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —	
10%	
Activities	

Reflection

- 1 What are the advantages of using the telephone to ask people questions?
- 2 What are the disadvantages of using the telephone to ask quesitons?
- 3 What other ways could scientists find out what people like as outdoor recreation?
- 4 Do you agree with Dr. Cordell's prediction that participation in outdoor recreation will increase in the future? Why or why not?

