



# 2020 SPECIAL REPORT ON FISHING

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**OUTDOOR  
FOUNDATION**

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# 2020 SPECIAL REPORT ON FISHING

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, Americans flocked to quiet streams, roaring rivers and mystical oceans to enjoy recreational fishing. Of course, the majority of anglers enjoyed the ultimate prize—catching fish. But, the activity generally meant much more to its participants. It meant escaping the usual demands of life, soaking in the sights and sounds of nature and bonding with 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 Americans and females—underrepresentative populations with potential for significant growth.

### OVERALL FISHING PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Fishing participation continued growing from 2018 to 2019, reaching the highest participation rate since 2007. The overall participation rate reached 17% of the U.S. population ages 6 and up, or 50.1 million people, who fished at least once during the 2019 calendar year.

The “leaky bucket” analysis measures the annual churn of fishing participants, or those people joining or rejoining the activity and those quitting in a given year. The good news: from 2018 to 2019, there was a net increase of 700,000 fishing participants. The bad news: the annual churn rate, the percentage

of people starting and quitting the activity, also increased to a steep 19%. This could be a sign that fishing participation, although high, is not stable.

As fishing participation has increased in recent years, the frequency of fishing trips has decreased. In 2019, fishing participants went on a total of 880 million outings, which was 3 million less than the previous year. Average annual outings have also been declining, sliding to 17.5 outings per participant.

### FISHING BY CATEGORY

With freshwater relatively accessible throughout the U.S., freshwater fishing attracted 39.2 million participants in 2019. For perspective, this was 28 million more participants than the second most popular fishing category, saltwater fishing. The freshwater participation rate was 13%, which has remained relatively steady over the past 6 years.

Freshwater fishing was not only the most popular type of fishing by participate rate, its participants also embarked on the most outings—an average of 16.1 per person. This was a collective 631 million fishing trips.

Saltwater fishing was the second most popular type of fishing, engaging 4% of the U.S. population, or 13.2 million people. **Unlike freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing participation has been on an upward trend.** Over the past 3 years, the participation rate has increased by 2% and total participants by 3%.

Saltwater fishing participants went on 172.3 million outings. This equates to an annual average of 13.1 days, 3 fewer days than freshwater participants.

**Out of the fishing categories, fly fishing attracted the fewest people, but the category's participation grew the most.** From 2016 to 2019, the participation rate grew by 2% and the total number of participants by 3%. This brought participation up to 2% of the U.S. population or 7 million Americans.

Fly fishing participants went on 76.7 million outings, averaging 10.9 annual outings per participant. Like overall fishing frequency, fly fishing outings have been on a downward trajectory. Average annual outings were down by 3% over the past 3 years.

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Over the past 3 years, youth fishing participation showed signs of growth. Participation among children and adolescents were both up by an average 1%. Among the genders, male children, ages 6 to 12, participated at the highest rate—27%. In the meantime, female adolescents, ages 13 to 17, participated at just 15%, the lowest rate out of the genders and ages.

## HISPANIC PARTICIPATION

Fishing participation among Hispanic Americans continued its explosive growth in 2019. Hispanics participated in fishing at a rate of 12%, the highest recorded in this report. This population also added 1,000 participants, bringing the total number of Hispanic participants to a record high of 4.4 million. In addition to high rates of participation, Hispanics also participated in a high number of average annual outings. Hispanic participants went on an average of 20.3 annual outings each, compared to the general population's 17.5 annual outings.

## FEMALE PARTICIPATION

In 2019, the gender gap in fishing participation continued to close. Female participation numbers grew by an annual average of 3%—from 17.1 million people in 2016 to 17.9 people in 2019. And, the participation rate increased by an annual average of 2% to reach 12%. There were also bright spots among adolescent girls' participation numbers. Among girls, ages 13 to 17, participation grew by 6%, which was the most growth in any female age group.

## PROFILE OF A FISHING TRIP

A majority of participants were successful in catching fish on their most recent trips. What they did with the fish varied—a slightly larger percentage of people released the fish than kept them, while some did both. Fishing venues also varied, from shorelines to boats to riverbanks.

## PERCEPTIONS OF FISHING

Americans primarily fished as a way to escape the usual demands of life. They also loved being close to nature and, of course, catching fish. **Many adult participants did not have specific stereotypes of fishing participants, although a higher percentage of males than females thought participants would look similar to them.**

## FUTURE OF FISHING

Data continued to underscore the importance of introducing fishing to young children to ensure that they would have an appreciation for the activity as adults. **An overwhelming 91% of current fishing participants started fishing during childhood.** After the age of 12, it was much less likely for a person to try fishing in their lifetime. Only 9% of new participants were introduced to fishing when they were ages 13 and up.

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.

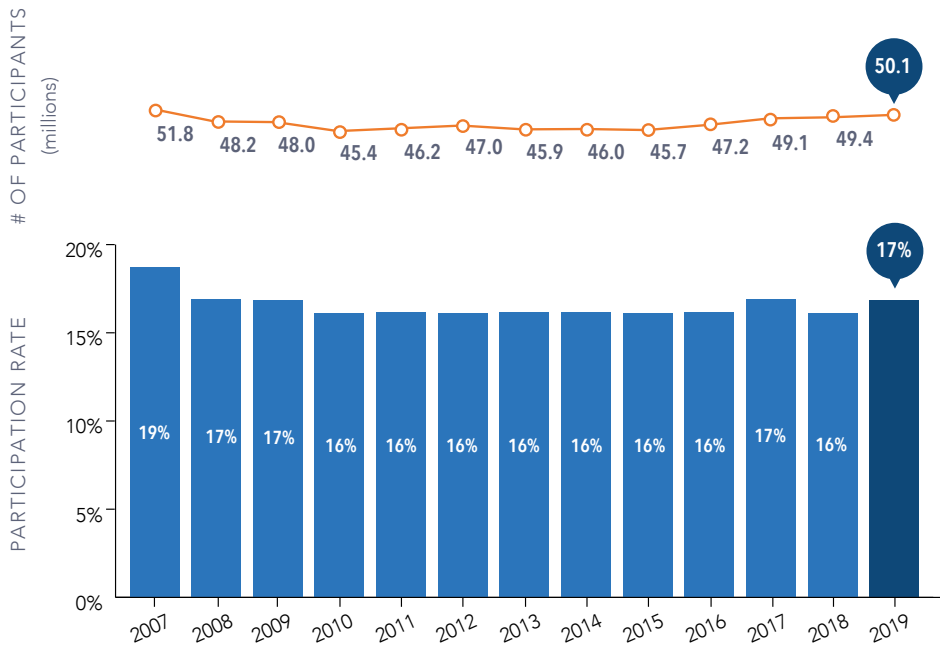



# FISHING PARTICIPATION

# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

In 2019, 17% of the U.S. population ages 6 and up went fishing at least one time. This was a 1%-increase since the year before, and **it represents a decade-long upward trend in fishing participation.**


## PARTICIPATION TRENDING





**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**880M**

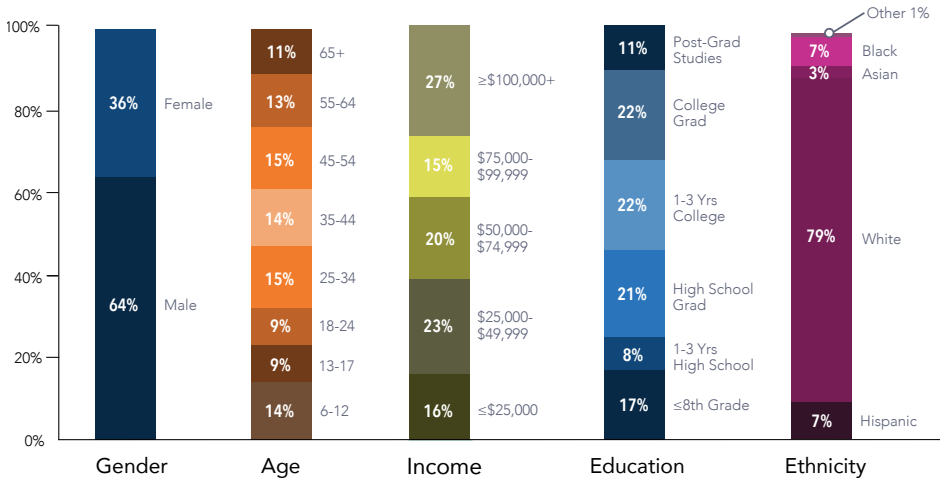
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**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**17.5**



# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

In 2019, fishing was a male-dominated activity with males making up 64% of all participants. Over the last 3 years, however, **female participation saw small increases, indicating that the gender balance could be shifting.**

Unlike incremental changes seen among the genders, age demographics shifted dramatically since 2017. The participation rate among adults, ages 45 to 54, dropped by 2% while the oldest age group increased by 5%.

Caucasians continued to make up a vast majority of fishing participants, and this population’s participation rate continued to grow—increasing an average of 2% over the past 3 years. Over the same timeframe, Asian participation decreased by an average of 3%, while African American participation increased by an average of 2% and Hispanic participation by an even more promising 4%.



**64%**  
**MALE PARTICIPANTS**

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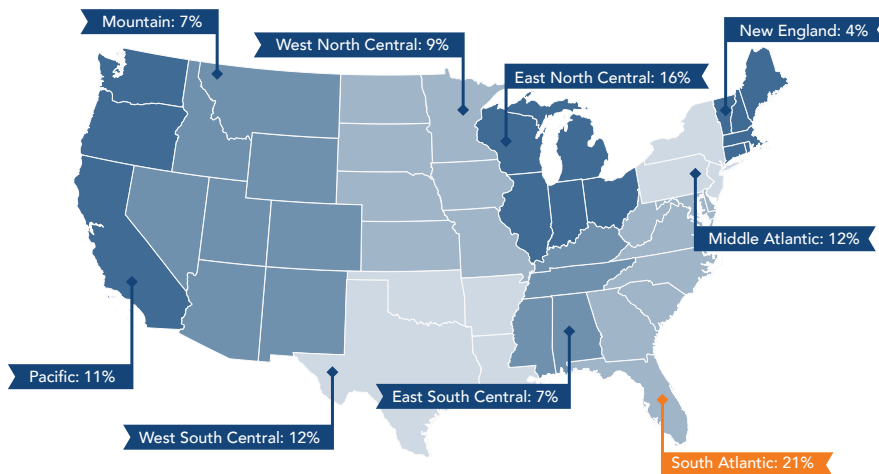


**AGES 65+**  
**5% GROWTH**  
since 2016

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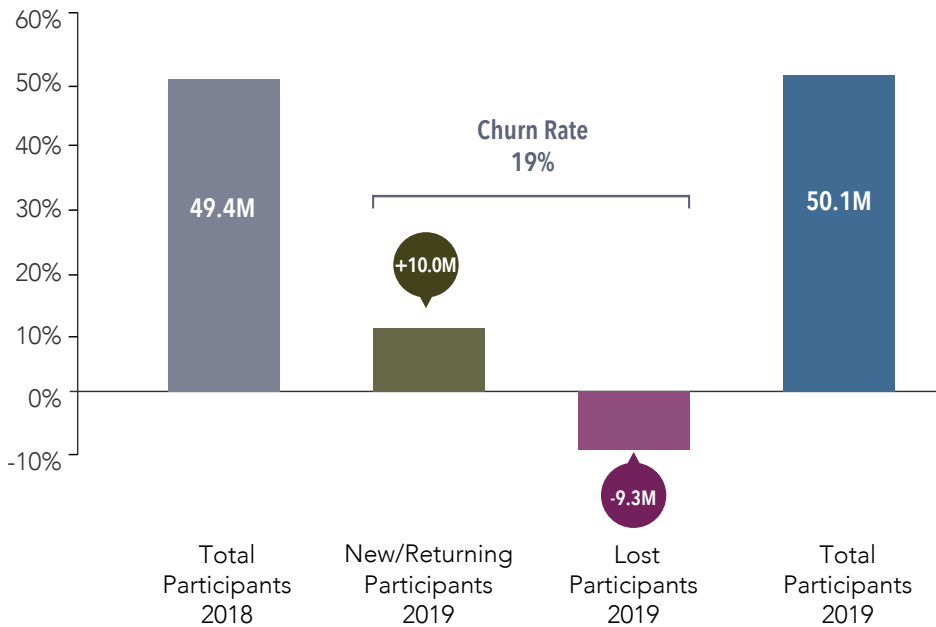
**SOUTH ATLANTIC**  
**HIGHEST PARTICIPATION**



## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES

The South Atlantic region, with ample coastline for fishing, had the highest fishing participation rate at 21%. The participation rate increased by 4% since 2018. The largest jump in participation, however, was in Mountain region, with Montana to the north and Arizona and New Mexico to the south. Although participation here was a moderate 7%, it jumped by a monumental 10% since the year before.

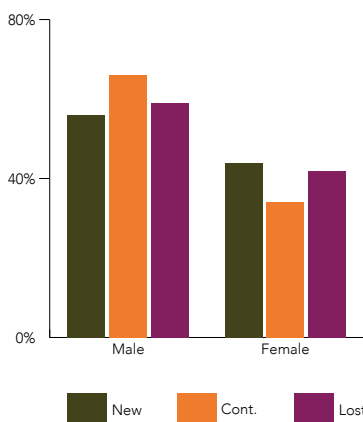
# PARTICIPATION IN-DEPTH



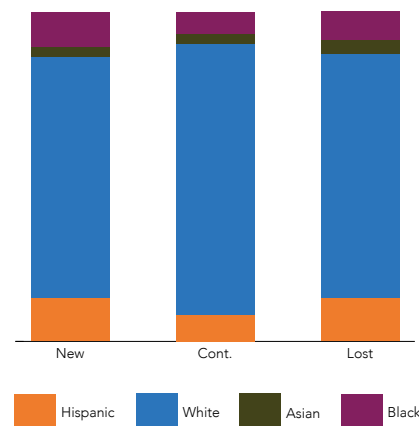
## LEAKY BUCKET ANALYSIS

From 2018 to 2019, there was a net increase of 700,000 fishing participants. The annual churn rate, measuring people joining or rejoining fishing and those quitting, was fairly high at 19%.

## GENDER



## ETHNICITY



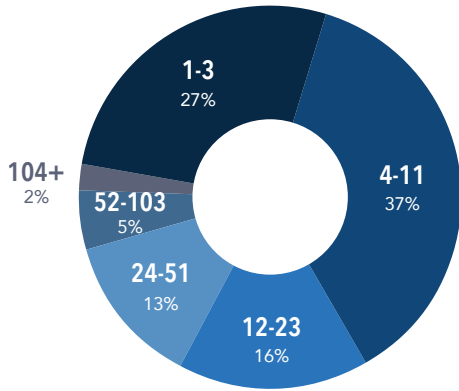
## LEAKY BUCKET: KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

There was more attrition among female fishing participants than male participants.

When looking at ethnicity, white participants had high rates of continuing with the activity. Ethnically diverse participants, on the other hand, tried fishing and quit the activity at higher rates.



# LEVEL OF COMMITMENT



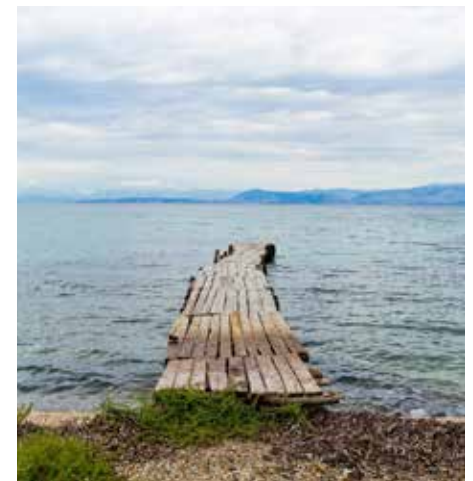
## ANNUAL NUMBER OF OUTINGS

The majority of anglers, 64%, went fishing between 1 and 11 times per year. Only 7% were avid participants, fishing every week or more. Participation among those fishing at least 104 times per year has been on a downward trend, falling an average of 2% over the past 3 years.

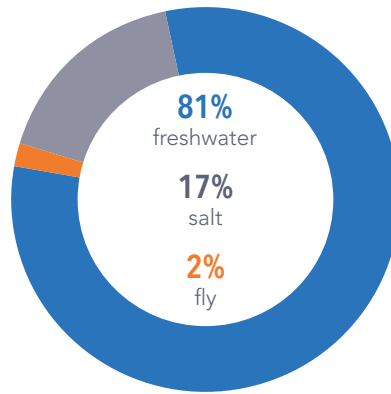
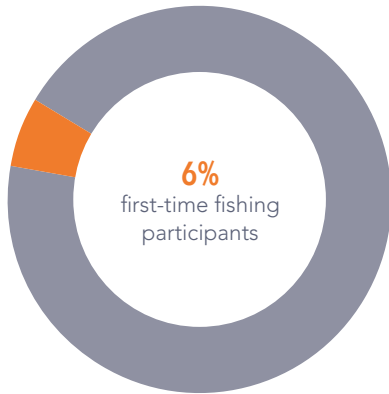
Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Percentage
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	32%
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	29%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	19%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	16%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	2%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING

More than half of participants classified themselves as occasional participants. More than half also would have liked to fish more than they were able to in 2019.



# INTRO TO FISHING



## NEW TO FISHING

Out of 50.1 million fishing participants, 3.1 million were new to the activity. That was 6% of all active fishing participants.

## FIRST TYPE OF FISHING EXPERIENCE

A vast majority of returning or continuing fishing participants—81%—tried freshwater fishing during their first outing. Saltwater fishing came in a distant second at 17%, and at 2%, fly fishing seemed to be the least accessible, perhaps due to specialized techniques and equipment.



**18.8M**

**TOTAL ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
among first timers

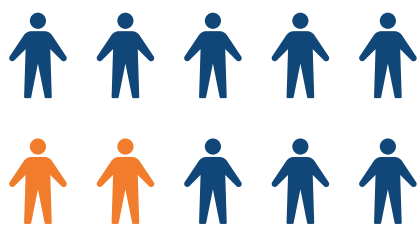


**6 / YEAR**

**AVERAGE # OF OUTINGS**  
among first timers



# TYPES OF FISHING & OTHER ACTIVITIES



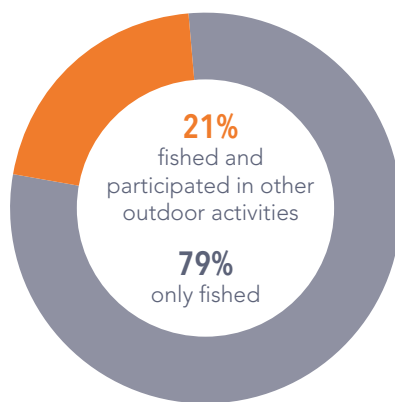
**20%**  
participated in multiple types of fishing

**80%**  
participated in one type of fishing

Types of Fishing	Percentage
Fresh only	62%
Salt only	12%
Fresh and salt	11%
Fly only	6%
Fresh and fly	5%
All types	3%
Salt and fly	1%

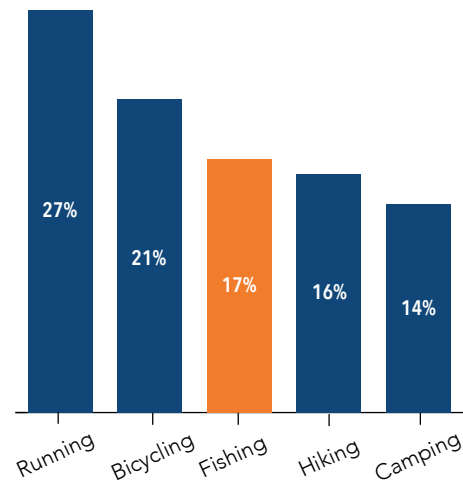
## OVERLAP IN FISHING

Most Americans only participated in one type of fishing. Of the fishing categories that did share participants, the most popular combination was freshwater and saltwater fishing. Just 3% participated in all 3 of the major fishing categories.



## PARTICIPATION IN OTHER OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Fishing participants were generally outdoor activity participants. 79% of fishing participants also engaged in at least one outdoor activity, like camping.



## GATEWAY ACTIVITIES

In 2019, fishing was one of the most popular “gateway” activities, or accessible activities that often lead to other forms of outdoor recreation.

# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

Outside of their fishing endeavors, participants enjoyed a range of activities. Walking for fitness was the most popular crossover activity. Camping was close behind, while bowling and bicycling were also popular.

Outdoor Activities	
Camping	40%
Bicycling	30%
Hiking	28%
Running and jogging	26%
Hunting	22%

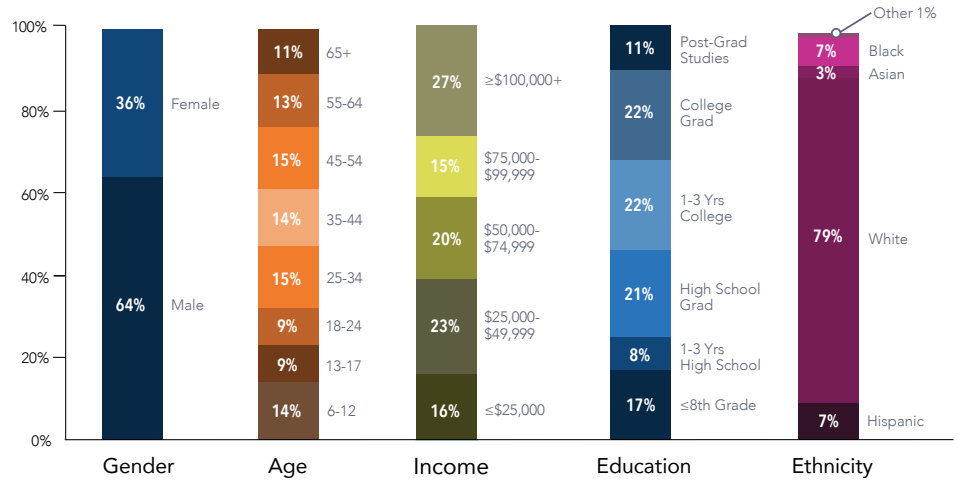
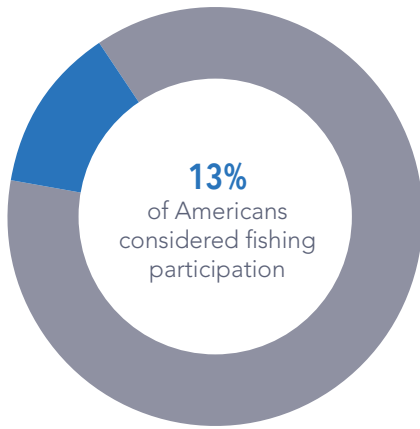
Team Activities	
Basketball	18%
Baseball	13%
Soccer	9%
Football	6%
Softball	6%

Indoor Fitness Activities	
Treadmill	28%
Dumbbells and hand weights	27%
Weight or resistance machines	18%
Stationary cycling	17%
Barbells	18%

Other Activities	
Walking for fitness	44%
Bowling	32%
Golf	18%
Swimming for fitness	18%
Rifle target shooting	14%



# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?

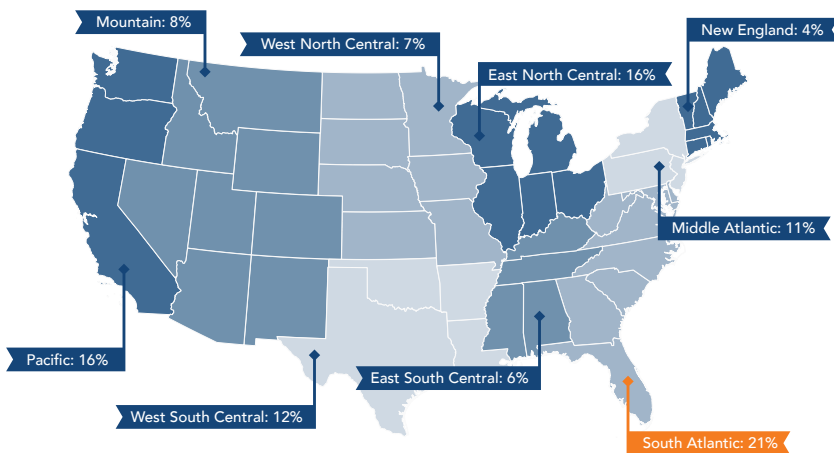


## PEOPLE CONSIDERING FISHING PARTICIPATION

13% of all Americans, or 33.4 million people, were interested in taking up fishing or rejoining the activity. **The percentage of people considering fishing gained an average of 4% over the past 3 years.**

## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The largest gap between those interested in fishing and those actively fishing was among women. While 47% were interested in trying the activity, only 36% actually participated. Among African Americans, 12% were interested in the activity, but only 7% participated. Hispanics and Asians had a similar, albeit slightly smaller, gap in interest versus actual participation.



## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

Similar to active participants, the highest percentage of Americans who considered fishing participation— 21%—were from the South Atlantic.

## CONSIDERING FISHING OVER TIME

In 2019, 13% of Americans thought about participating in fishing.

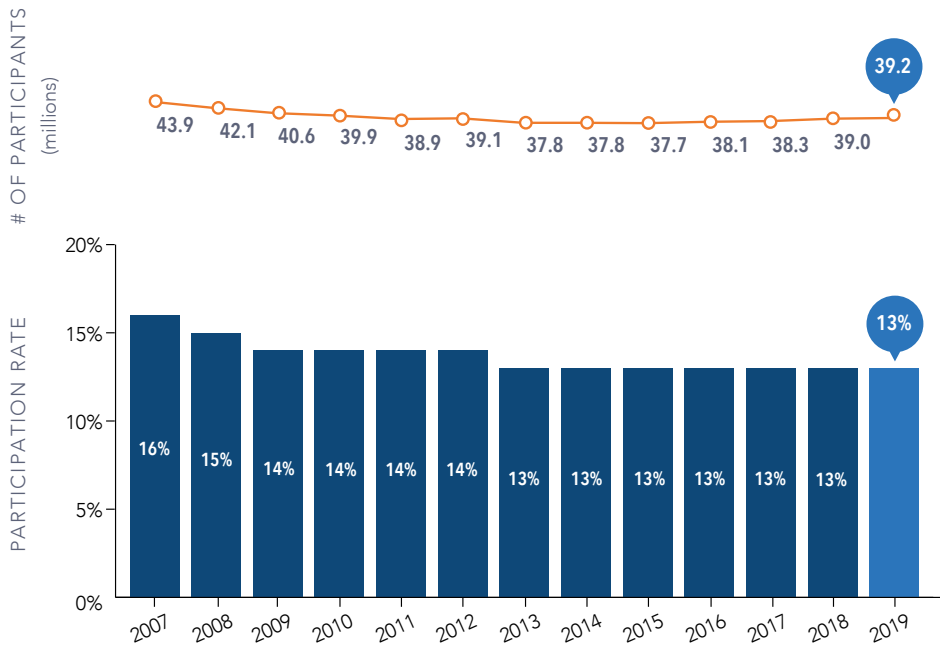
# FRESHWATER FISHING




# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Freshwater fishing was, by far, the most popular type of fishing. Although the category gained 200,000 participants from 2018 to 2019, the participation rate stayed the same. This was due to an overall increase in the U.S. population. Generally, freshwater fishing participation has remained relatively steady. The number of participants has increased by an average of 1% over the past 3 years, while the participation rate has stayed at 13% for the past 7 years.


## PARTICIPATION TRENDING





**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**631M**

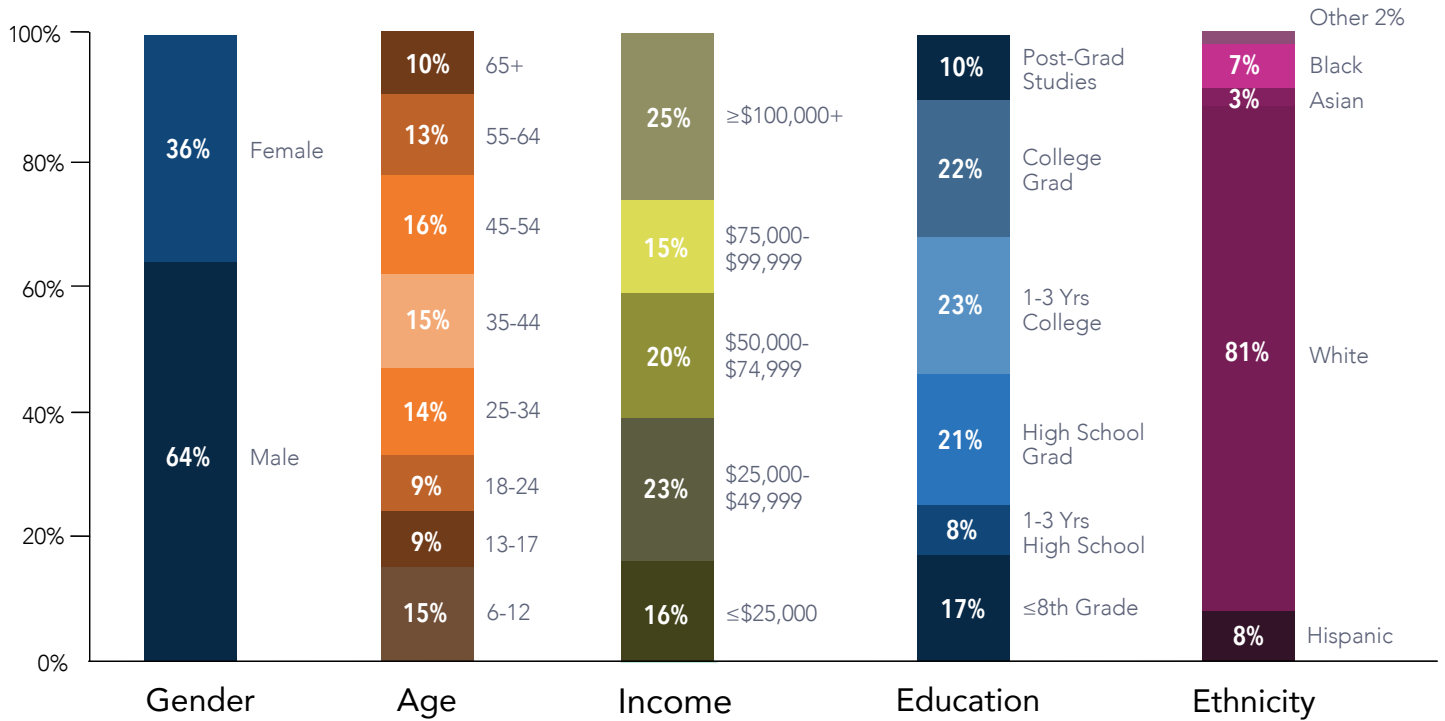
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**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**16.1**

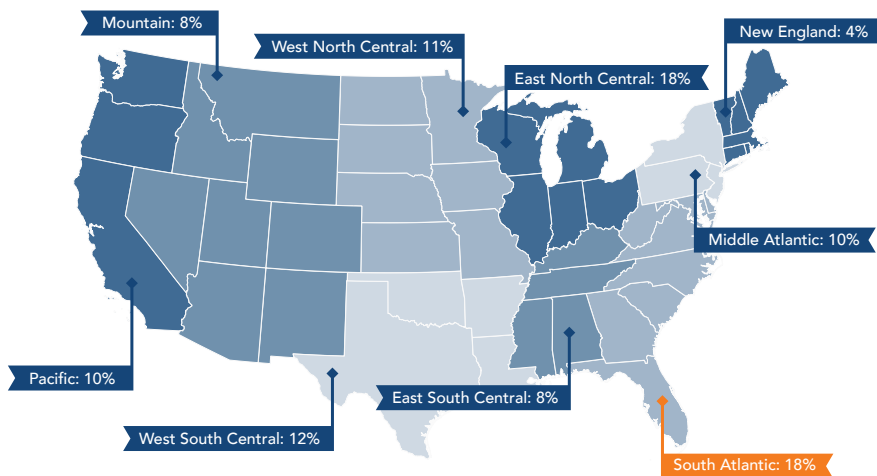


# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

Freshwater fishing was the least diverse type of fishing, with 81% of its participants identifying themselves as white. The largest increase in diverse participants was among the Hispanic American population. Hispanic participation increased by an impressive 7% since 2017. Similar to overall fishing, freshwater participation growth among Americans ages 65 and up was also notable. Over the last 3 years, the participation rate among America’s seniors increased by 4%.

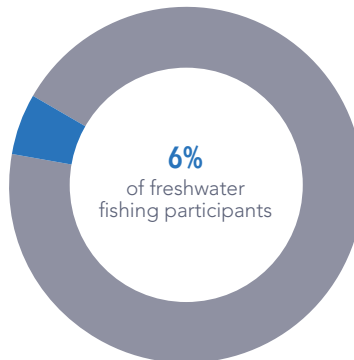
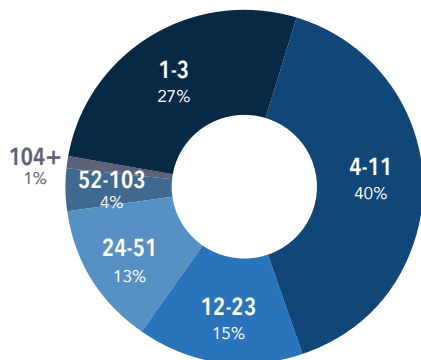


## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES

The geographic breakdown of freshwater fishing participation was similar to the breakdown of all fishing participation. The South Atlantic region had the largest percentage of freshwater fishing participants, but it experienced little growth over the last 3 years. In the meantime, participation in the East South Central increased by an average of 2%, and the Mountain region shot up by 5%.



# LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION



## ANNUAL NUMBER OF OUTINGS

Compared to the general fishing population, freshwater fishing participants took slightly fewer outings. The decline in frequent outings seemed to be a trend among freshwater anglers. For example, avid freshwater participants, taking at least 104 annual outings, dropped by more than 5% since 2016.

## FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

6% of freshwater fishing participants, or 2.3 million people, were new to the activity in 2019. This is an average increase of 4% since 2017. Females made up the highest percentage of new participants, but new male participation has been growing—up 6% over the last 3 years.



Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Percentage
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	33%
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	29%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	19%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	16%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	2%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING

62% of fishing participants see themselves as “occasional” participants. Regardless of their perceived level of fishing participation, 52% of anglers wanted to fish more than they were able to in 2019.

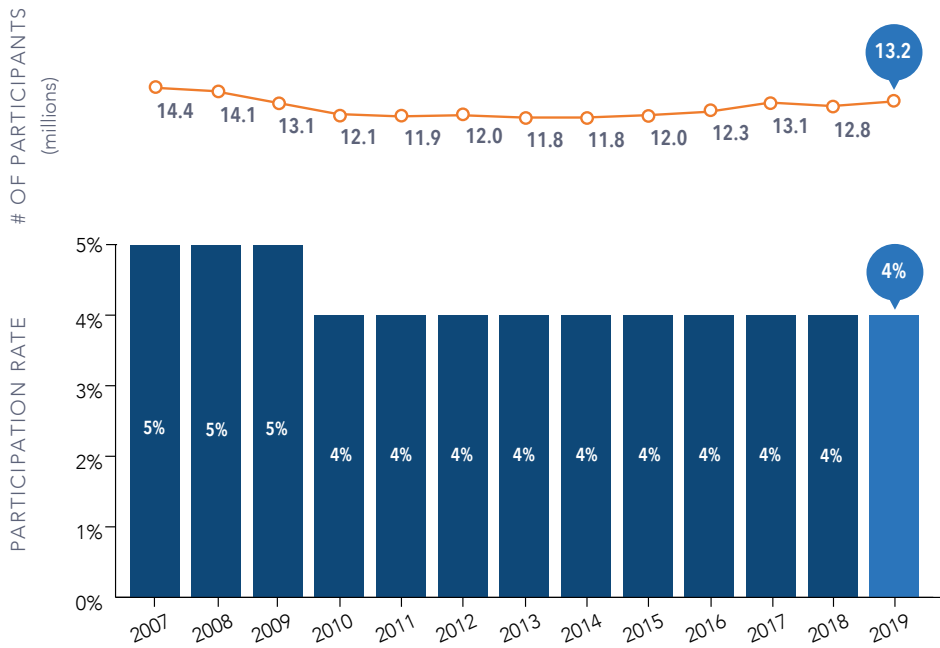
# SALTWATER FISHING




# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

In 2019, 4% of the population, or 13.2 million people, fished along America’s coastlines and in its oceans. While the saltwater fishing participation rate has been level since 2010, the number of participants has experienced healthy growth, an average of 3% since 2017.


## PARTICIPATION TRENDING





**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**172.3M**

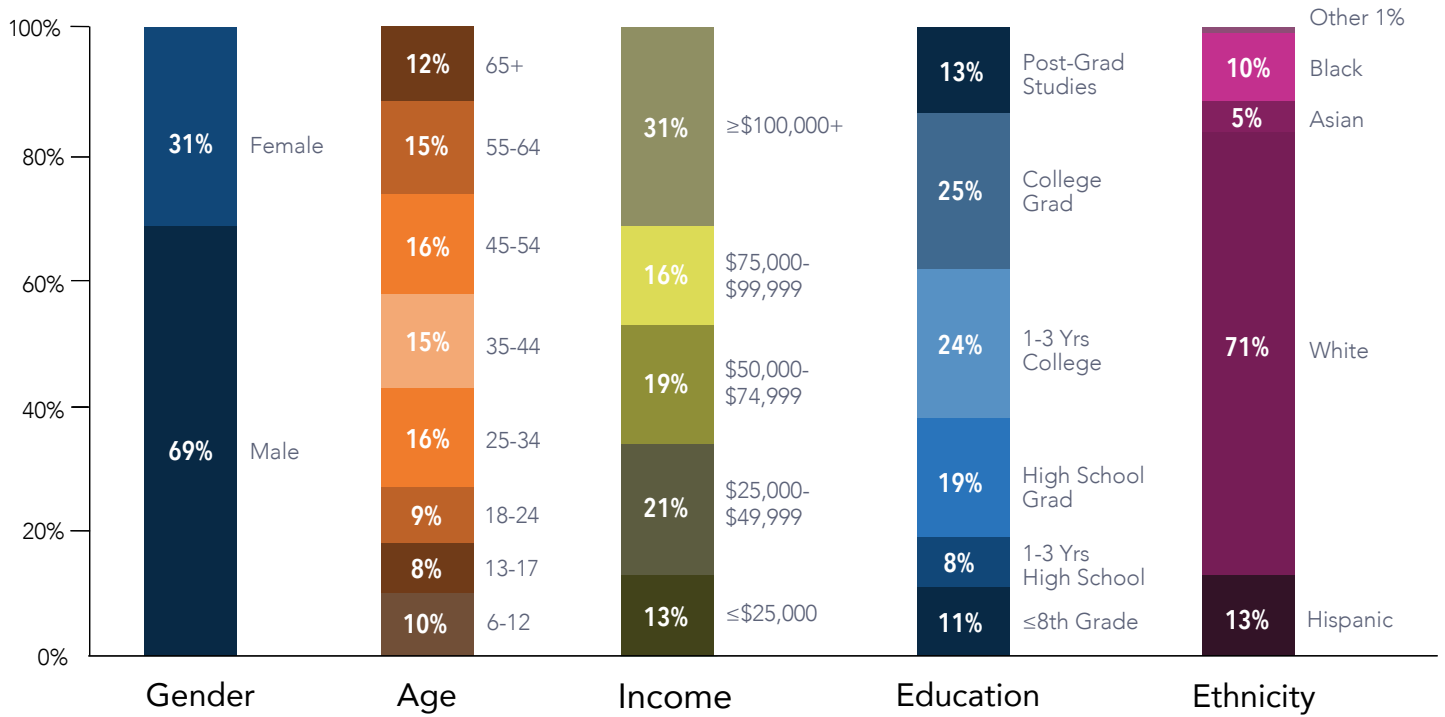
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**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**13.1**

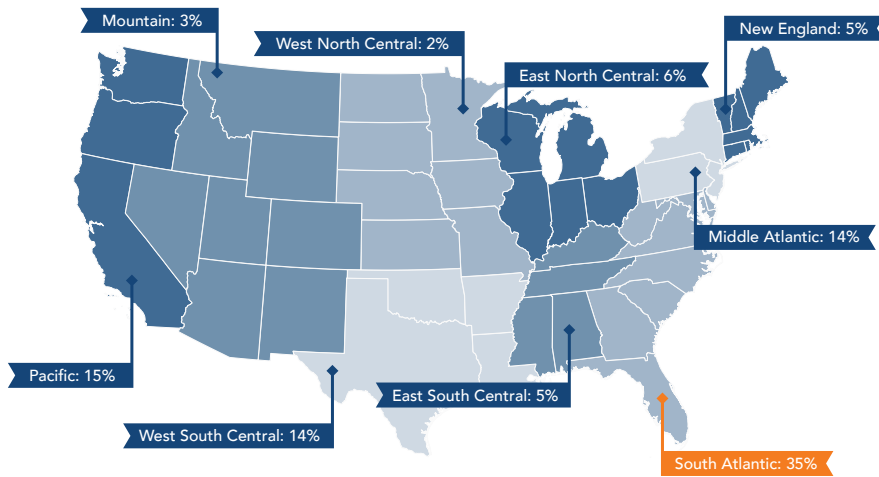


# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

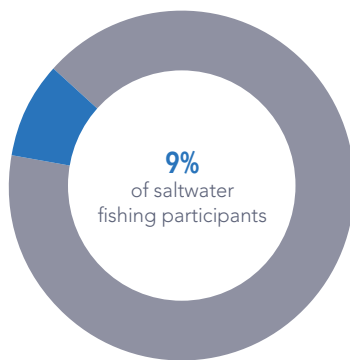
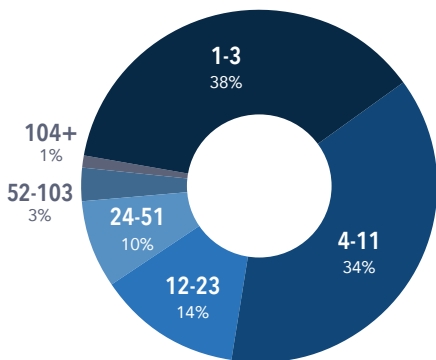
Saltwater fishing was the most diverse type of fishing out of the categories. The most promising participation increases, however, were among young adult participants, ages 18 to 24; Americans in households making \$25,000 to \$49,444 per year; and those with an 8th grade education or less.



## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES

Not surprisingly, saltwater fishing participation was highest in the South Atlantic region, which includes states bordering parts of the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico.

# LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

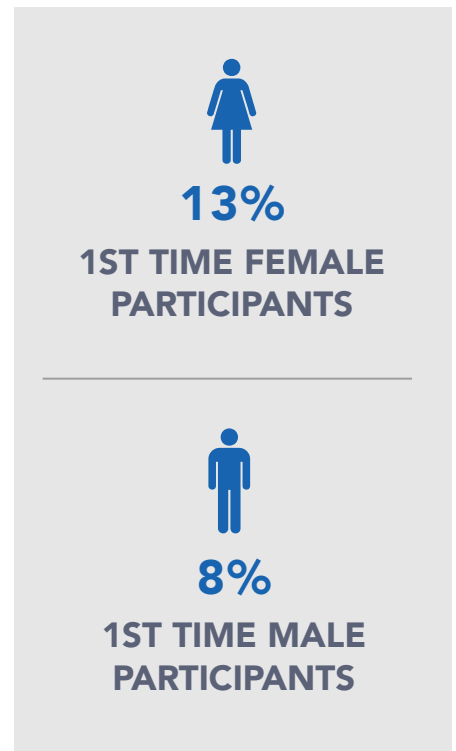


## ANNUAL NUMBER OF OUTINGS

The second-most popular fishing type by participation rate also had the second-highest average annual outings per participant at 13.1. The frequency of outings, however, has been on a downward trend since 2014 and dropped by 4% from 2018 to 2019.

## FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

9% of saltwater participants, or 1.2 million people, were new to the category in 2019. Females had the highest percentage of new participants at 13%. New male participation, on the other hand, dropped by 3% from 2018 to 2019.



Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Percentage
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	28%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	27%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	23%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	21%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	1%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING

At 44%, a higher percentage of saltwater participants described themselves as "avid" anglers than the overall fishing population (at 35.2%). Interestingly, 49% were satisfied with the amount of fishing they did in 2019, which is higher than the overall fishing population (at 45%).

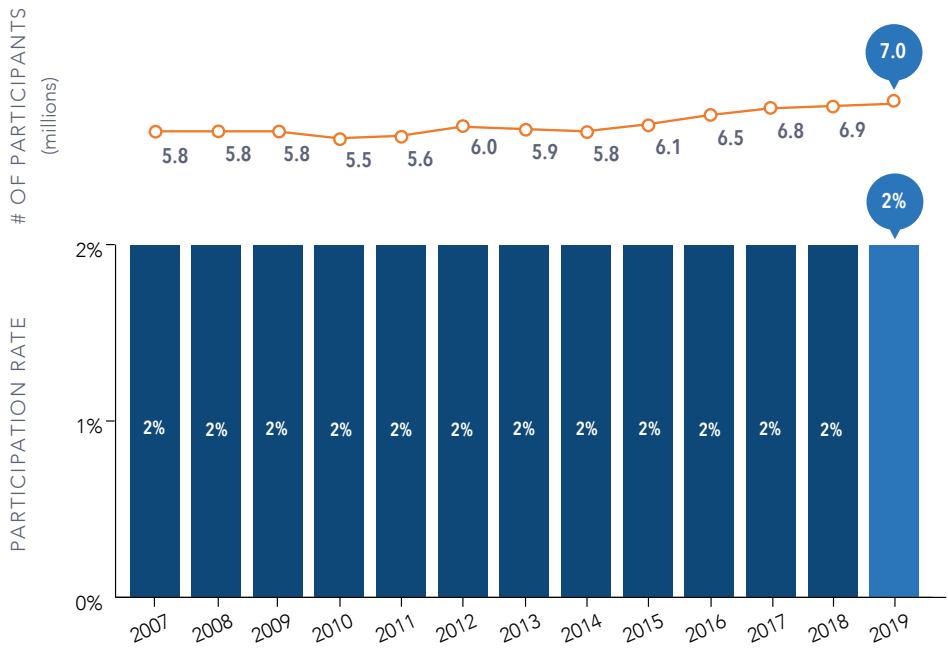
# FLY FISHING




# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Fly fishing was the least popular type of fishing out of the categories, but the activity has continued to gain participants. From 2018 to 2019, fly fishing grew by 100,000 people, keeping the participation rate at 2% but bringing the total number of participants to a record 7 million.


## PARTICIPATION TRENDING





**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**76.7M**

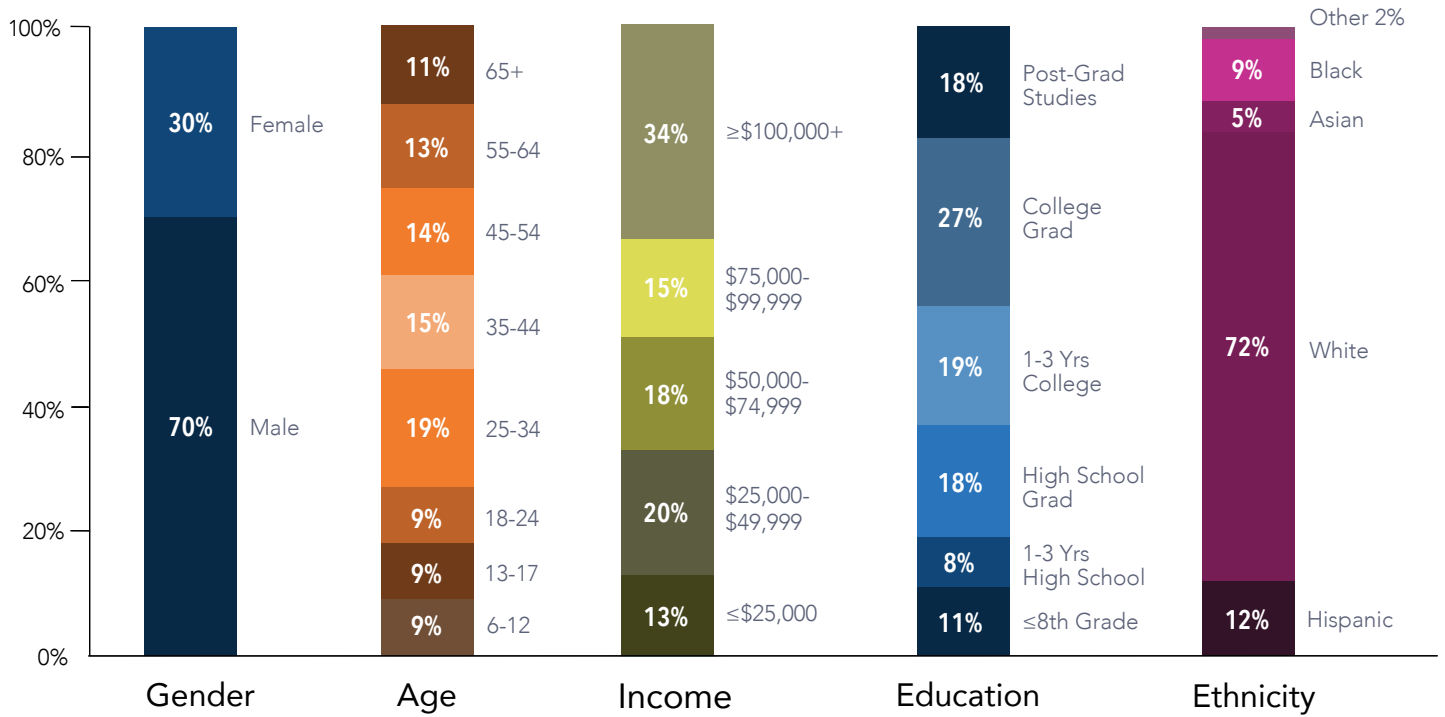
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**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**10.9**



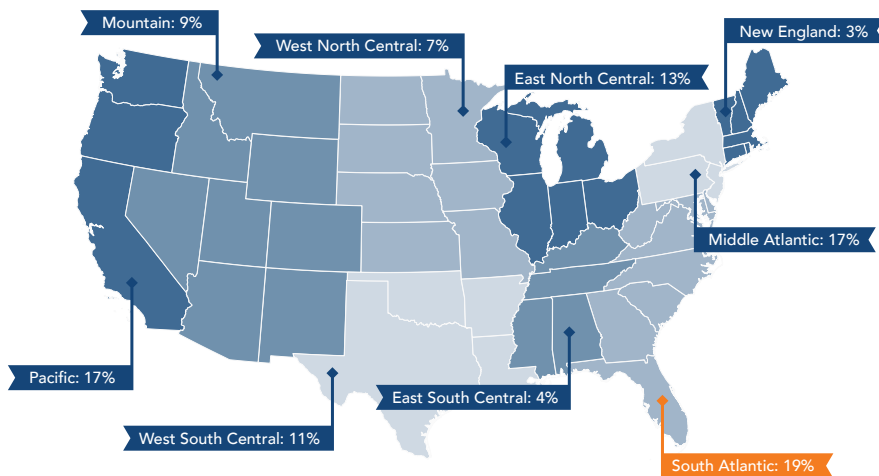
# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

Males made up 70% of fly fishing participants, making it the most male-dominated fishing category. Fly fishing also had a high percentage of participants with annual household incomes over \$75,000—49% compared to 42% of overall fishing participants.

The most accelerated growth in participation was among Hispanics. From 2018 to 2019, Hispanic participation increased by 10%. Also significant, over the past 3 years, participation among children grew by 5% and among adolescents by 2%.

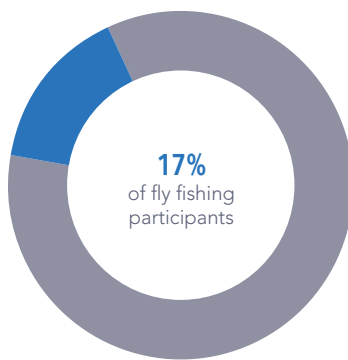
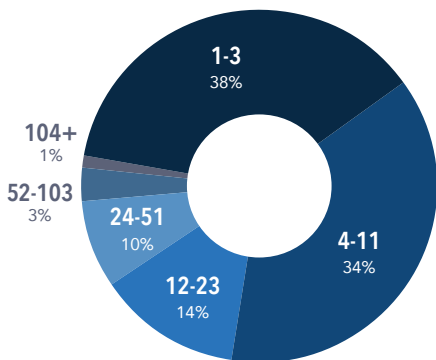


## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES

There was dramatic fluctuation in fly fishing participation by region. While the South Atlantic had the highest participation rate, the largest increase in participation took place in the Mountain region, which shot up by 12% in just 3 years. From 2018 to 2019, participation in the Middle Atlantic increased by an impressive 9%, and—on the other side of the spectrum—participation in the East South Central fell by 16%.



# LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

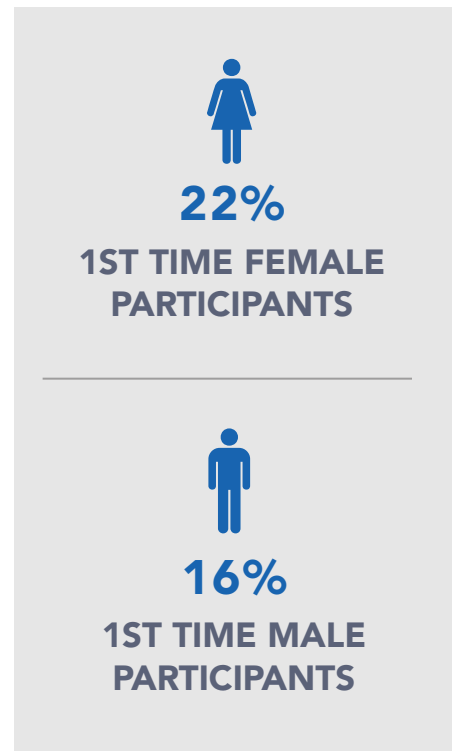


## ANNUAL NUMBER OF OUTINGS

Fly fishing participants went on the least number of outings, an annual average of 10.9 days. These outings have been declining since 2012 and have lost an average of 3% over the past 3 years.

## FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

Compared to other fishing categories, fly fishing had an especially high percentage of first time participants. 17% of all fly fishing participants, or 1.2 million people, were new to the activity in 2019. Females first-timers made up a significant 22% of all female fly fishing participants.



Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Percentage
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	28%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	25%
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	25%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	19%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	2%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING

More than half of fly fishing participants, 53%, described themselves as "avid" participants. This was the highest percentage of self-described avid participants out of the fishing categories.

# YOUTH PARTICIPATION




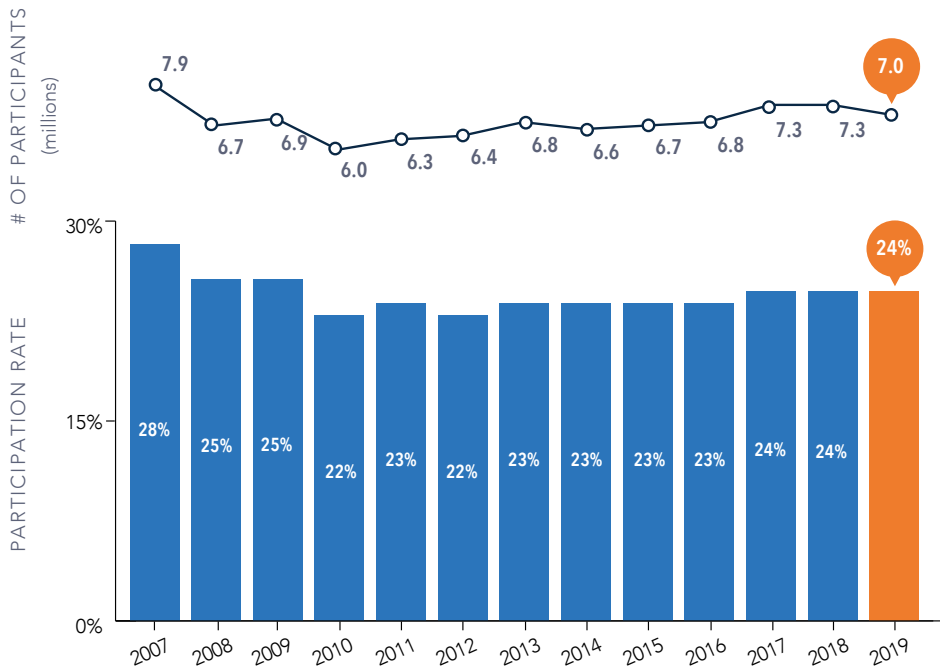
# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

## CHILDREN, AGES 6-12

Youth fishing participation continued its upward trajectory in 2019. Participation rates among the youngest generation, those ages 6 to 12, rose by an average of 2% since 2017.


# PARTICIPATION TRENDING

## CHILDREN, AGES 6-12



**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**84.5M**

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**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**12**



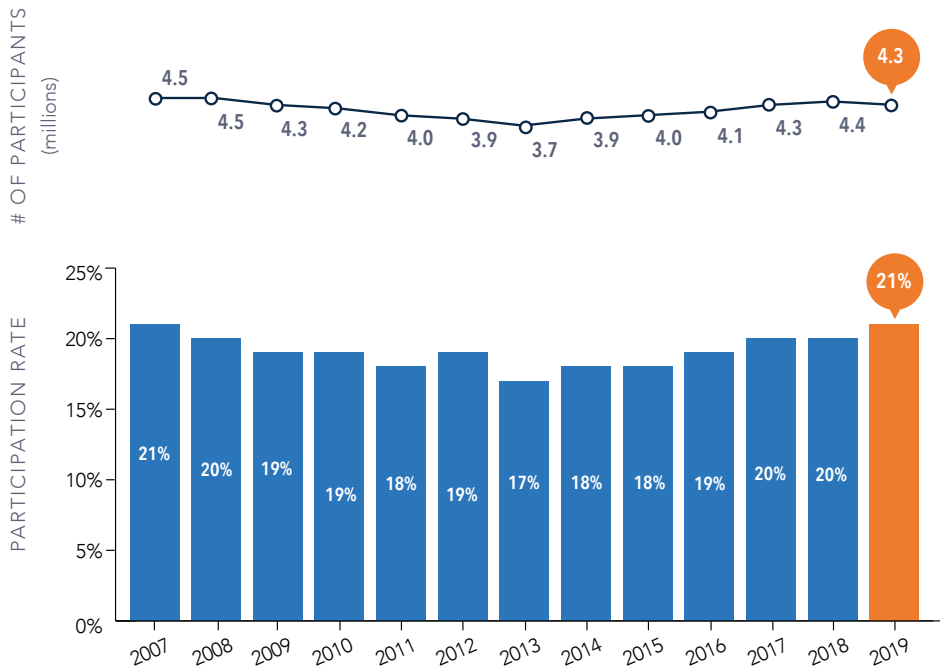
# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

## ADOLESCENTS, AGES 13-17

Like their younger counterparts, adolescent fishing participation rates increased by 2% over the past 3 years.

# PARTICIPATION TRENDING

## ADOLESCENTS, AGES 13-17



**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**75.6M**

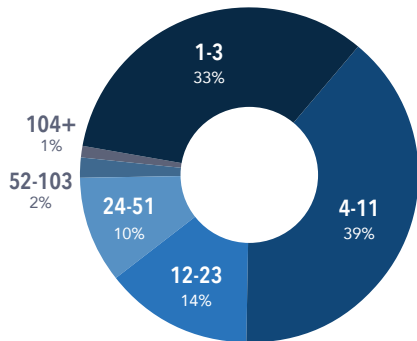
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**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**17.6**

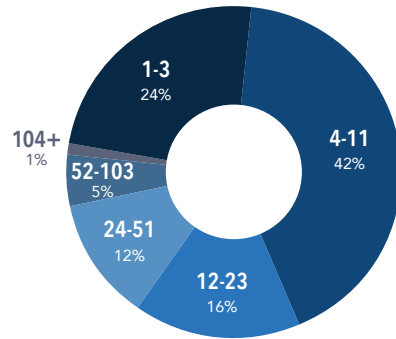


# LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

**CHILDREN,  
AGES 6-12**



**ADOLESCENTS,  
AGES 13-17**



## ANNUAL OUTINGS

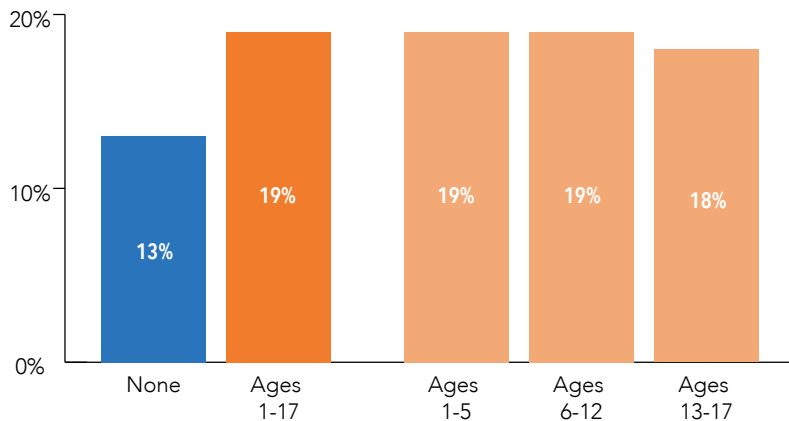
Children went on fewer fishing outings than adolescents. While children averaged just 11.2 fishing outings per year, adolescents averaged 14.8.

Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Children	Adolescents
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	31%	25%
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	26%	35%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	20%	21%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	19%	17%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%	1%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%	1%

## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING

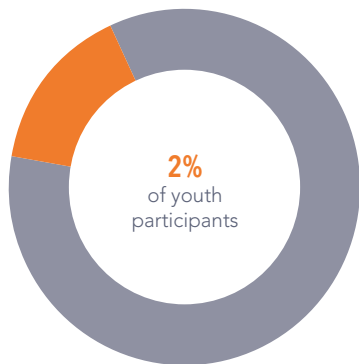
57% of children and 60% of adolescents considered themselves occasional fishing participants. While children tended to say that they would like to fish more, adolescents often felt that they got their fill of fishing. A slightly higher percentage of children than adolescents reported being avid participants.

## PARTICIPATION IN-DEPTH



### PARTICIPATION RATE AMONG ADULTS WITH CHILDREN

Adult participants with children in their households engaged in fishing at higher levels than adults without children. 19% of adults with children under age 18 fished, while 13% of adults without children fished. Those with younger children, ages 1 to 12, participated at higher levels than those with adolescents, ages 13 to 17.



### FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

2% of youth, aged 6 to 17, tried fishing for the first time in 2019. This was a promising 3-year annual average increase of 10%, bringing the total number of first time youth participants to 1.2 million. The number of participants also increased by 10% since 2017.



# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

Outside of their fishing pursuits, youth participants generally favored various outdoor activities. Of all of the activities, the most popular were camping and bicycling.

Outdoor Activities	
Camping	44%
Bicycling	44%
Running	31%
Hiking	28%
Hunting	19%

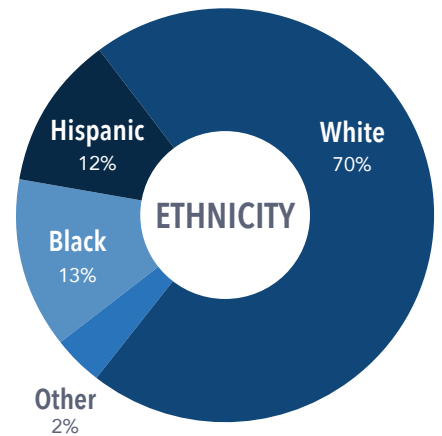
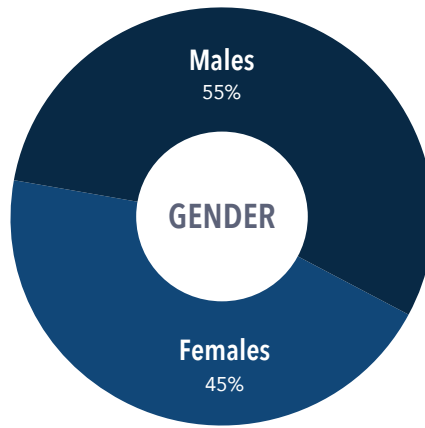
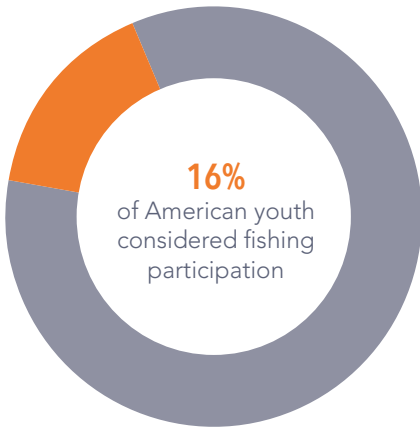
Team Activities	
Baseball	28%
Basketball	28%
Soccer	21%
Tackle football	13%
Flag football	8%

Indoor Fitness Activities	
Dumbbells	16%
Treadmill	15%
Cardio dance	13%
Barbells	11%
Weight machines	11%

Other Activities	
Bowling	38%
Walking for fitness	24%
Swimming for fitness	19%
Sledding	14%
Tennis	14%



# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?

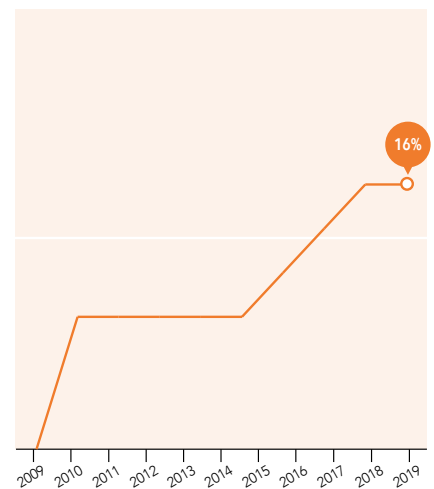
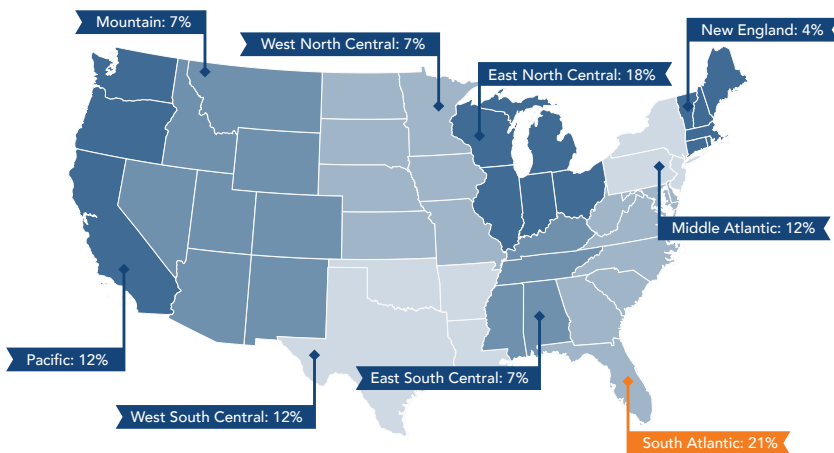


## CONSIDERING FISHING PARTICIPATION

Youth aged 6 to 17 had the highest rate of considered fishing participation. 16% of American youth, or 6 million people, considered fishing in 2019.

## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

A far higher percentage of ethnically diverse youth considered fishing, rather than actively participated. In addition, children were more intrigued by fishing than their adolescent counterparts. While 55% of considering participants were children, only 45% were adolescents.



## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

Like the general population contemplating fishing participation, potential youth participants also tended to live in the South Atlantic region of the U.S.

## CONSIDERING FISHING OVER TIME

16% of American youth thought about participating in fishing in 2019.



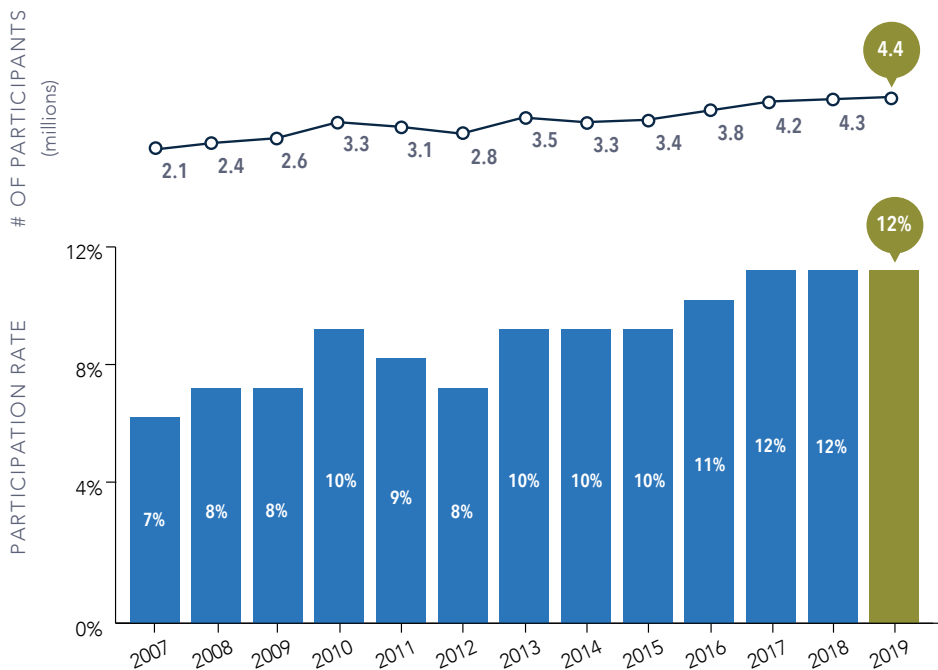



# HISPANIC PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Hispanic Americans participated in fishing at a rate of 12%, which has been constant since 2017. This population also added 100,000 participants, bringing the total number of Hispanic participants to a record high of 4.4 million. In addition to this population's rapid participation growth, Hispanics also take more average annual trips than the overall population—20.3 outings each compared to 17.5 outings.


## PARTICIPATION TRENDING





**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**90.2M**

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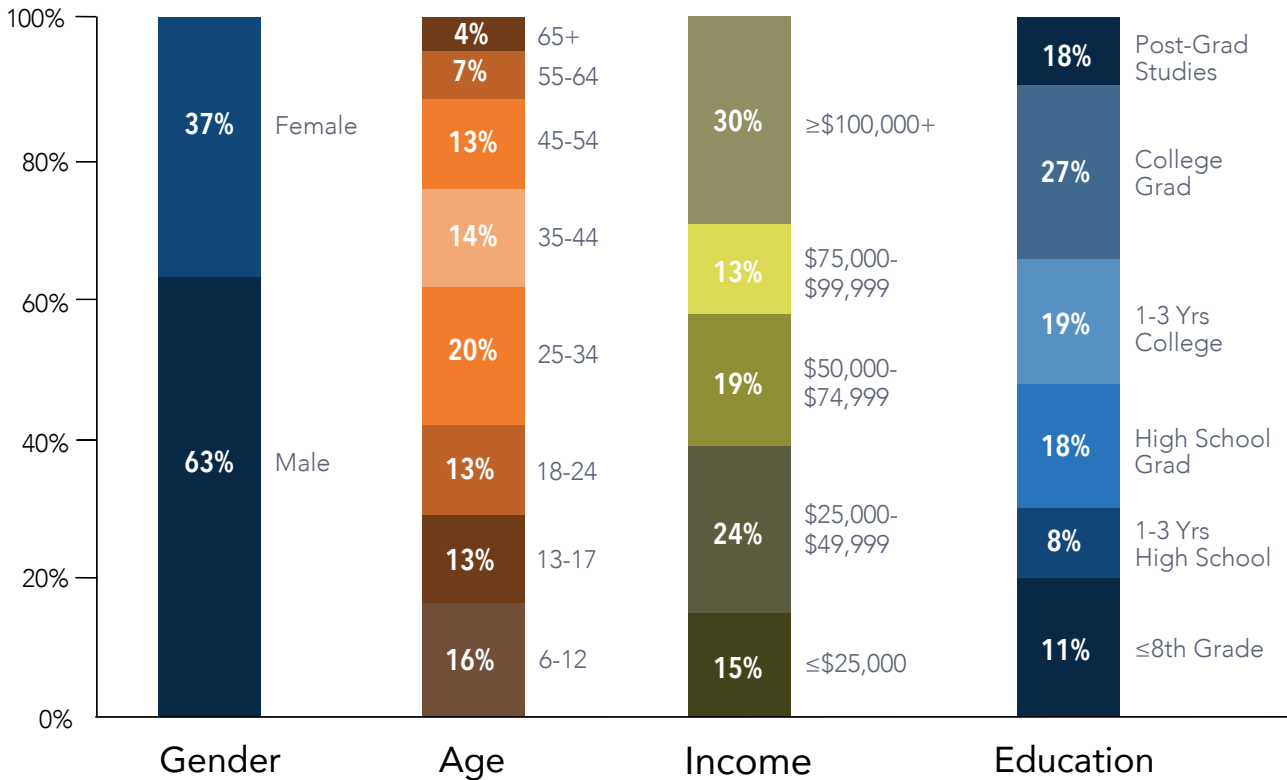
**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**20.3**

Kind of Fishing Participation	Participation Rate	Number of Participants (millions)
Freshwater	8%	3,053
Saltwater	5%	1,740
Fly	2%	849

### PARTICIPATION BY FISHING CATEGORY

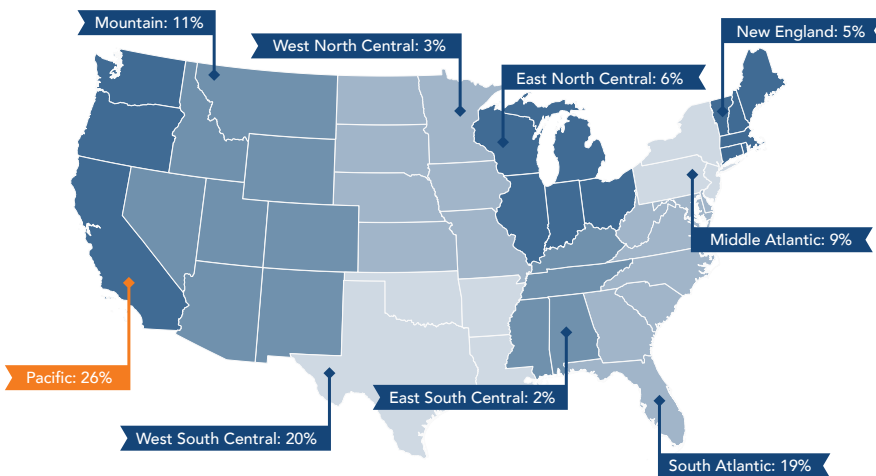
The number of Hispanics participating in freshwater fishing grew by an average of 9% since 2017 and the participation rate by 7%. Fly fishing had the most growth since 2018—with the participation rate jumping by a significant 10%.

# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

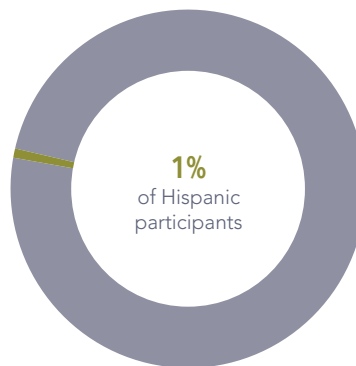
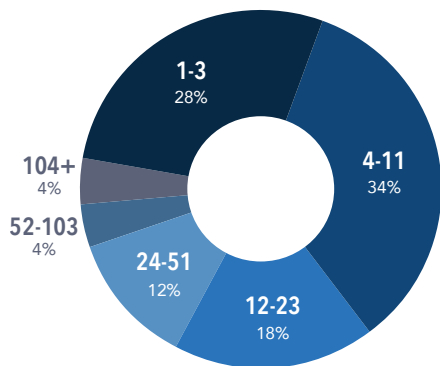
While most age groups lost participants over the last 3 years, participation among the oldest Hispanic Americans grew by 8%. The most participation growth over this time period was among those making under \$50,000. Participants making under \$25,000 increased by an annual average of 3% and those making \$25,000 to \$49,999 increased by 5%.



## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES

Hispanic fishing participants tended to live in the Pacific region of the United States, even though this region lost 5% of its participation over the past year. Other notable changes from 2018 to 2019—the West North Central increased its regional participation rate by 13%, and New England lost 19%.

## LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

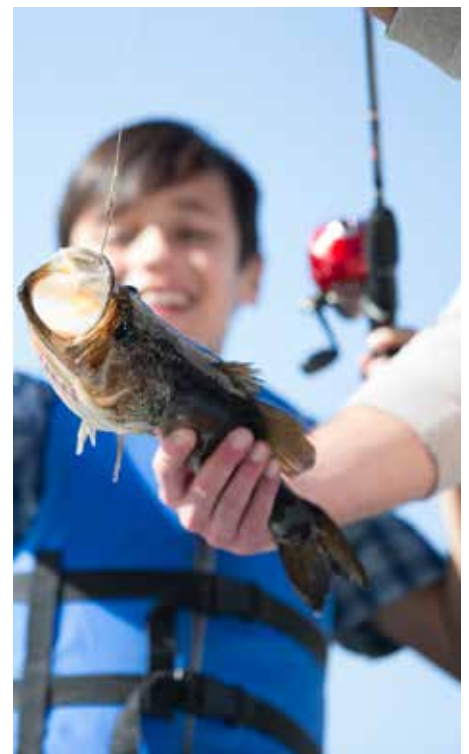


### ANNUAL NUMBER OF OUTINGS

Hispanic participants went on an average of 2.8 more fishing outings than the general fishing population—20.3 outings—compared to 17.5. Although Hispanics tended to fish more often than the typical fishing participant, this group’s average annual outings plummeted by 7% from 2018 to 2019.

### FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

1% of Hispanic fishing participants, or 500,000 people, tried fishing for the first time in 2019. This was an 11% jump in the first time Hispanic participation rate, but still a comparatively low rate of first time participation.



Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Percentage
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	33%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	31%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	19%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	15%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	2%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

### PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

A majority of Hispanic fishing participants, 64%, saw themselves as “occasional” participants. This self-perception was inconsistent with their actual fishing participation, which was much higher than the overall fishing population.

# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

At 41%, walking for fitness tied with camping as the most popular activity among Hispanic American fishing participants. Running, bicycling and bowling were also popular pasttimes.

Outdoor Activities	
Camping	41%
Running	34%
Bicycling	34%
Hiking	29%
Hunting	21%

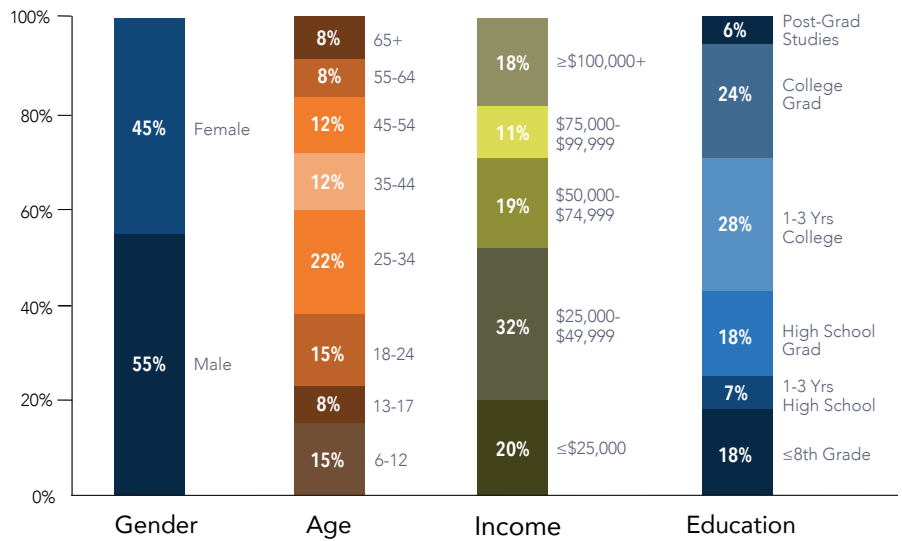
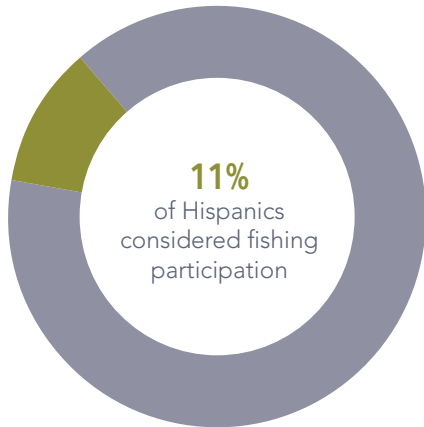
Team Activities	
Basketball	22%
Baseball	19%
Soccer	15%
Softball	10%
Flag football	9%

Indoor Fitness Activities	
Dumbbells	31%
Treadmill	29%
Barbells	18%
Weight machines	18%
Stationary cycling	18%

Other Activities	
Walking for fitness	41%
Bowling	34%
Swimming for fitness	21%
Golf	20%
Yoga	17%



# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?

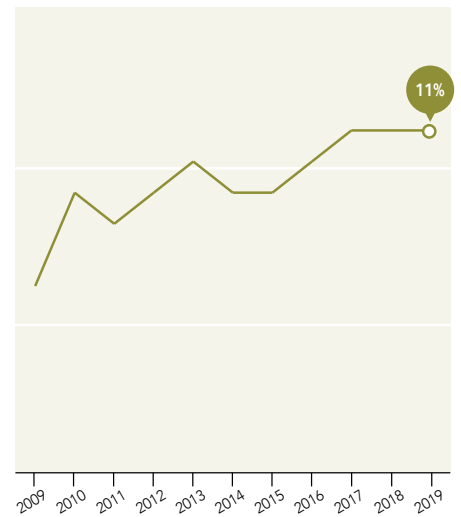
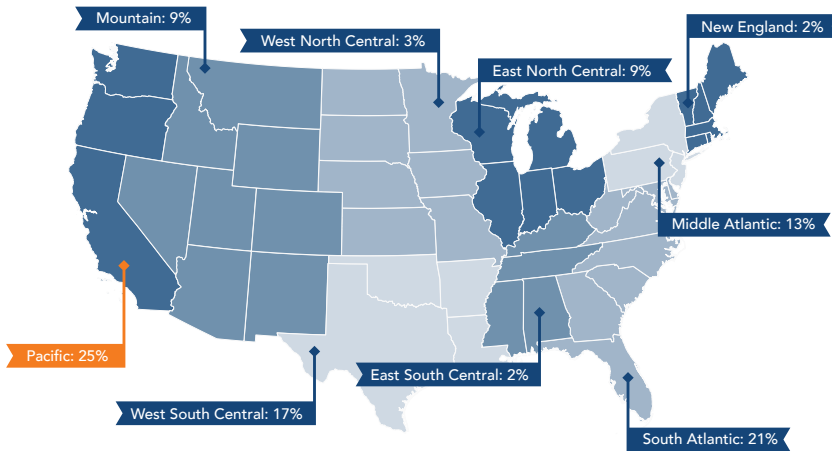


## CONSIDERING FISHING PARTICIPATION

11% of Hispanics in the U.S. considered fishing participation in 2019. This represents 3.8 million people who could join fishing, increasing overall participation numbers and diversifying the activity.

## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

While only 37% of Hispanic females participated in fishing, 45% were interested in trying the activity. Similarly, Hispanics with lower household incomes considered fishing participation at a higher rate than those that actually participated.



## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

Hispanics considering fishing participation did not follow overall geographic trends. The highest percentage of Hispanics considering fishing, 25%, lived on the other side of the nation, in the Pacific region.

## CONSIDERING FISHING OVER TIME

Hispanics considering fishing participation has remained at 11% for the last 3 years.

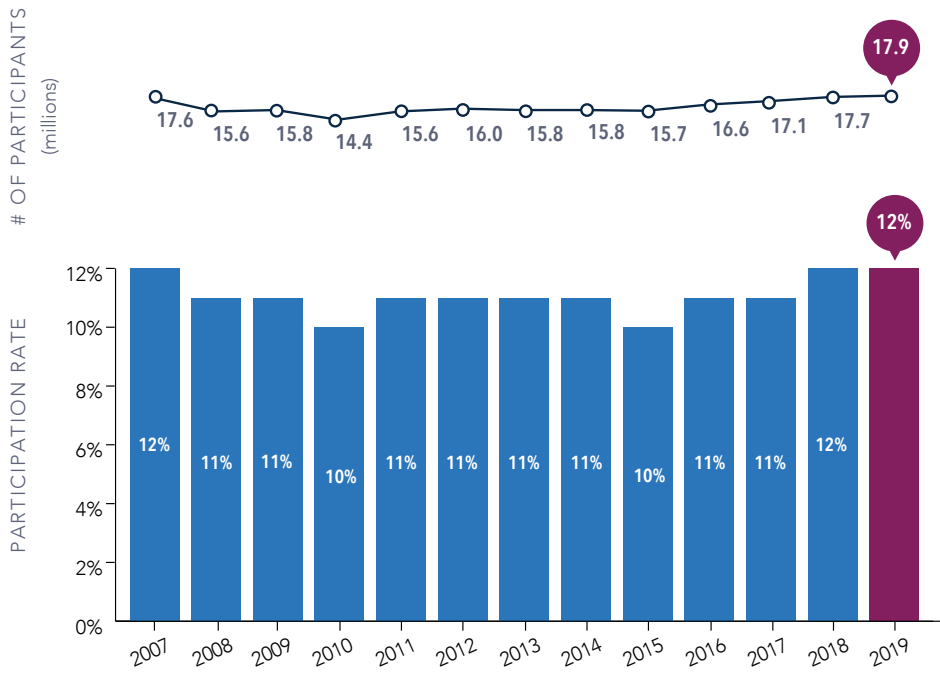
# FEMALE PARTICIPATION




# PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

While female fishing participation lagged behind male participation, the gender gap continued to shrink. Since 2017, female participation numbers grew by an annual average of 3%—from 17.1 million people to 17.9 people. And, the participation rate increased from 11% to 12%.


## PARTICIPATION TRENDING





**# OF TOTAL OUTINGS**  
**293.5M**

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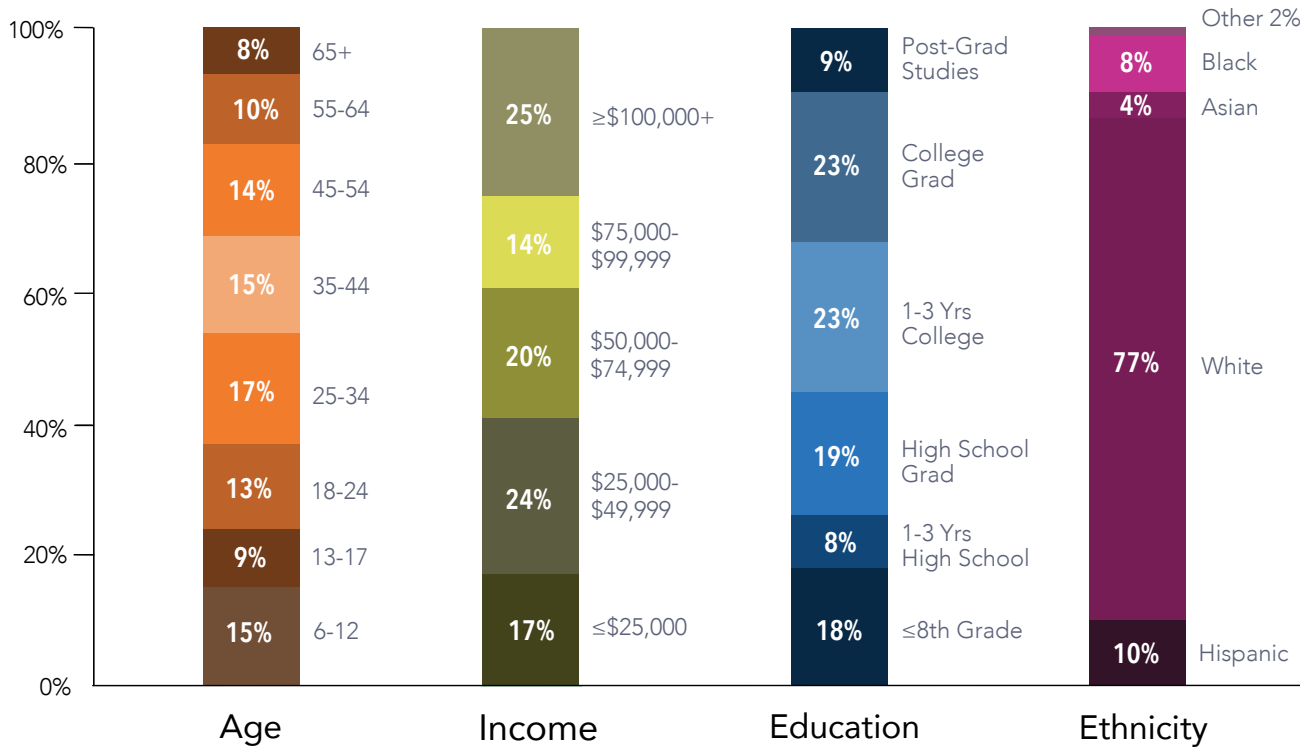


**AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS**  
**16.4**



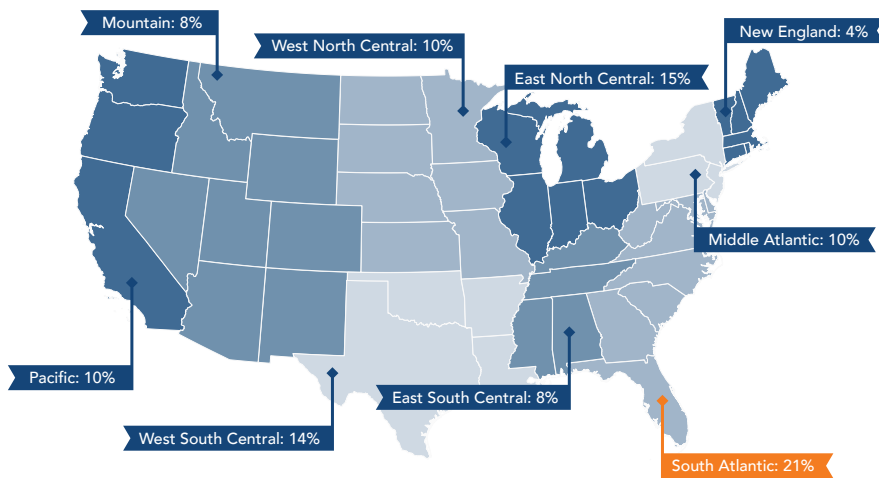


# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

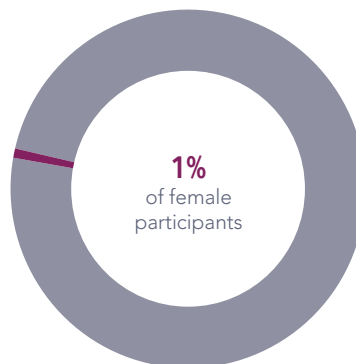
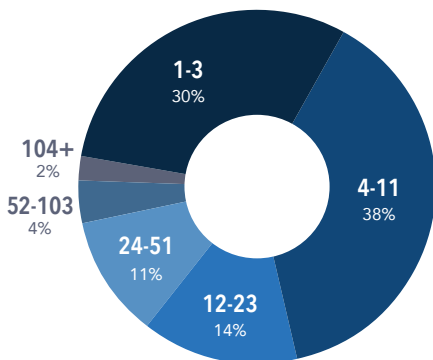
There was promising participation growth among adolescent girls over the last 3 years. Fishing participation among girls, ages 13 to 17, grew by 6%—the most growth in any age group. Not surprisingly, education rates also shifted. Participation among those with 1 to 3 years of high school shot up by 8%. The other bright spot for growth during this 3-year period was among Hispanics. Participation among Hispanic women grew by 6%.



## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION RATES

At 21%, the South Atlantic had the highest percentage of female fishing participants. Female participation in this region continued to grow from 2018 to 2019, up by 3%. The most growth over the year, however, was in East South Central, which had a 5% regional participation increase. On the other hand, the East North Central region's female participation rate declined by 4% over the same time period.

## LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION



### ANNUAL NUMBER OF OUTINGS

Female fishing participants averaged 16.4 outings per year, lower than the general fishing population's 17.5 annual outings. Female outings have decreased over the years, but losses were minimal when compared to other fishing populations.

### FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

1% of female fishing participants, or 1.3 million people, were new to fishing in 2019. This was a sizeable 5% jump in the first time female participation rate over the last 3 years.



Perceived Level of Fishing Participation	Percentage
Occasional participant, would like to fish more	35%
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	33%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more	15%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	14%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	2%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

### PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

More than any other group, females classified their fishing participation as "occasional". While 62% of the overall fishing population said they were occasional participants, 67% of all female participants said the same. Of the female occasional participants, 35% would have liked to fish more, while 33% were content with the frequency of their fishing trips.

# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

In addition to fishing, more than half of all female participants also walked to stay fit. This population's interests were diverse though—popular activities ranged from bowling to running on the treadmill to hiking.

Outdoor Activities	
Camping	41%
Hiking	30%
Bicycling	29%
Running	28%
Birdwatching/wildlife viewing	23%

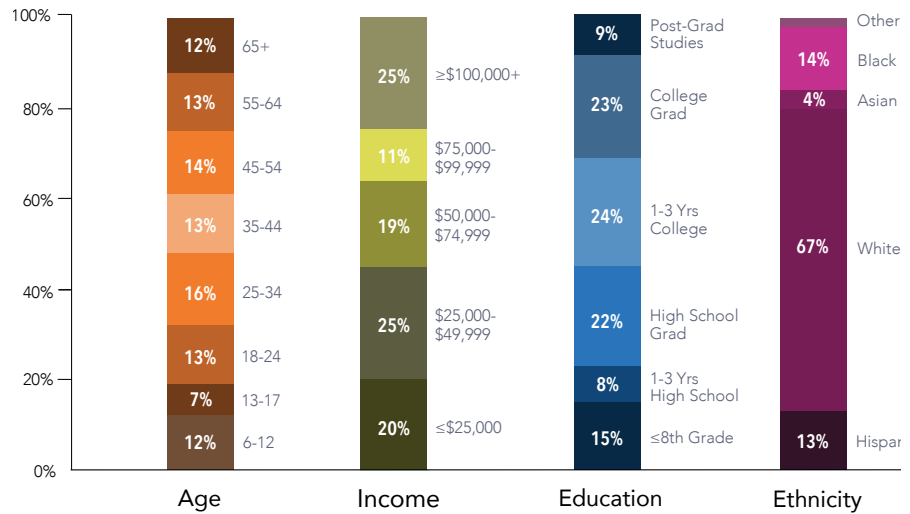
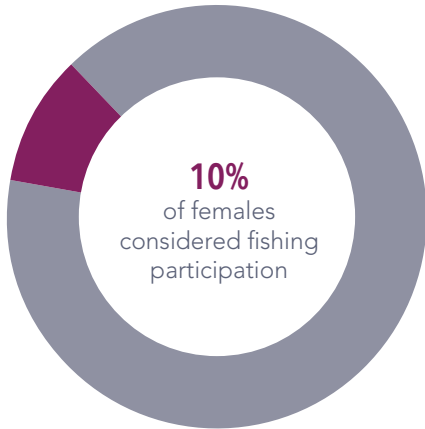
Team Activities	
Basketball	10%
Soccer	7%
Volleyball	7%
Baseball	6%
Softball	6%

Indoor Fitness Activities	
Treadmill	31%
Dumbbells	24%
Cardio dance	20%
Stationary cycling	19%
Elliptical machine	16%

Other Activities	
Walking for fitness	51%
Bowling	33%
Yoga	24%
Swimming for fitness	21%
Yoga	17%



# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?

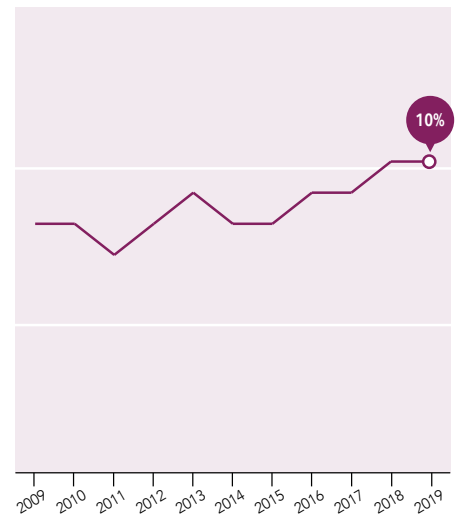
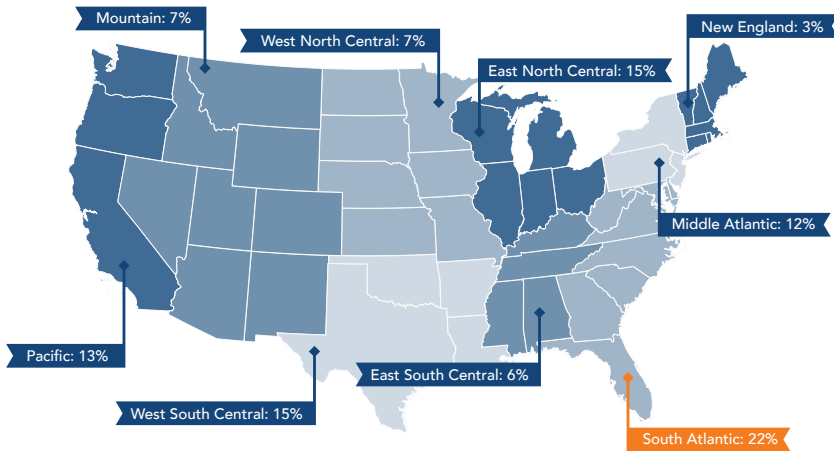


## CONSIDERING FISHING PARTICIPATION

10% of females, or 13.7 million people, considered fishing in 2019. This was a much higher percentage than those who tried fishing for the first time and an average increase of 5% over the last 3 years.

## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Females who considered fishing participation skewed older than active participants. While only 8% of all female participants were 60 and over, 12% in the same age category considered fishing. They also tended to have lower household incomes and lower education levels. The biggest difference was among African Americans. Only 8% participated, but 14% considered participating.



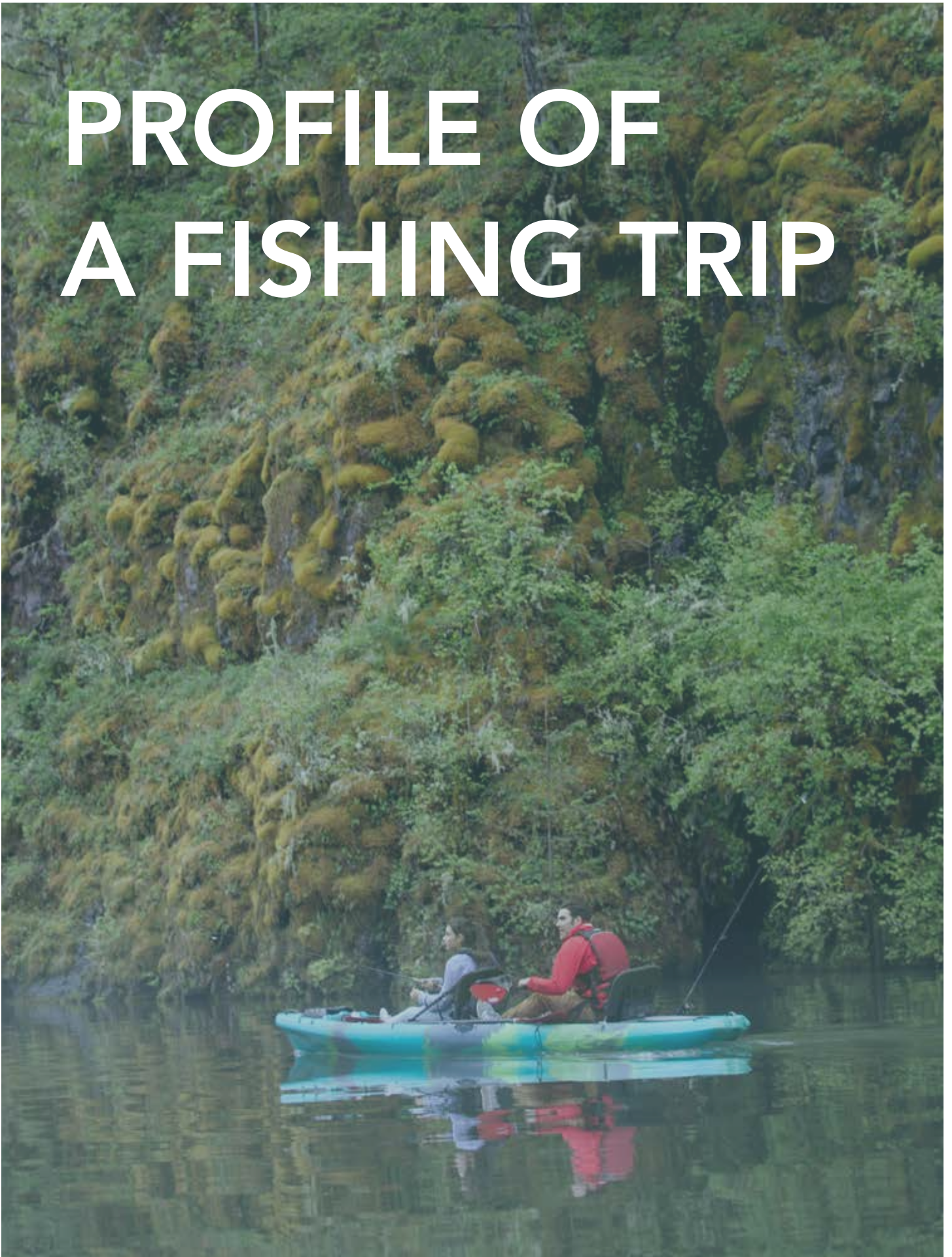
## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

Like active female fishing participants, the highest percentage of females who were interested in fishing also lived in the South Atlantic region.

## CONSIDERING FISHING OVER TIME

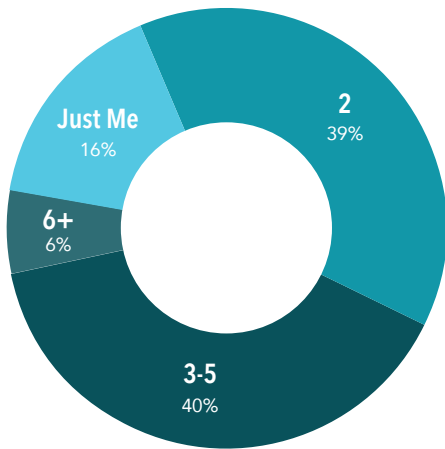
Female interest in fishing rose by an average of 5% over the past 3 years but stayed at 10% from 2018 to 2019.

# PROFILE OF A FISHING TRIP

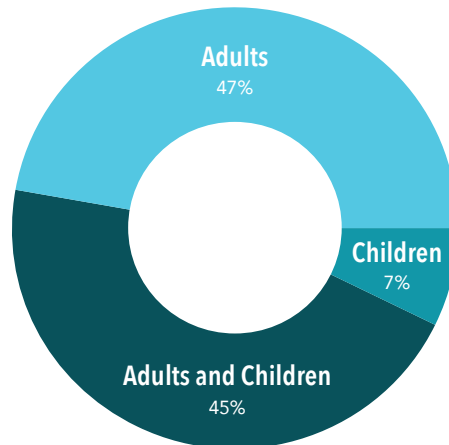


# A TYPICAL FISHING TRIP

## NUMBER OF COMPANIONS




## AGE OF COMPANIONS



## FISHING COMPANIONS

A majority of participants, 79%, went fishing with 2 to 5 companions. While male participants were more likely to fish alone, female and Hispanic participants tended to fish with larger groups. Almost an equal amount of adult anglers shared trips with other adults or with a mix of adults and children. A small percentage embarked on outings with children and no other adults.



**76%**  
OF ADULT PARTICIPANTS  
BOUGHT FISHING  
GEAR OR EQUIPMENT  
in the last 12 months

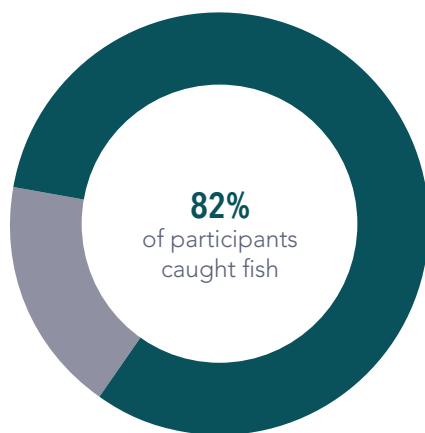
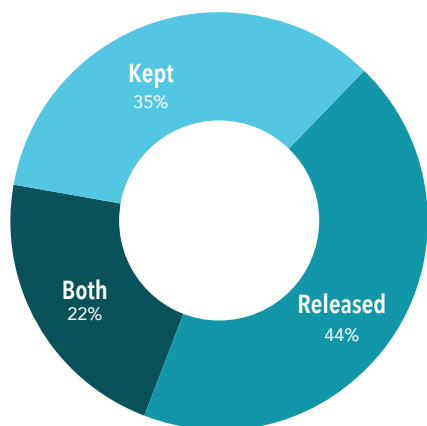
Locations Fished From	Percentage
Shoreline	51%
Boat	49%
Riverbank	46%
Pier or jetty	27%
Kayak	6%

## FISHING LOCATION TYPES

Participants fished from a variety of locations. While the highest percentage fished from shorelines, boats and riverbanks were also popular.

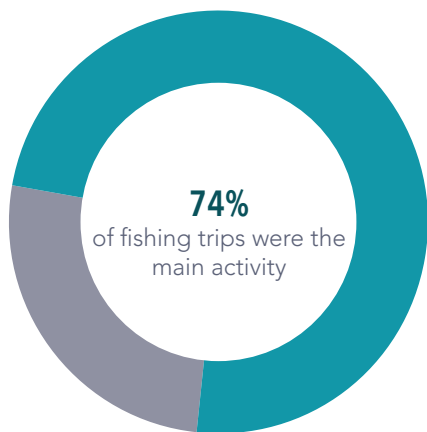


# A TYPICAL FISHING TRIP



## THE CATCH

82% of participants were successful in catching at least one fish on their most recent trip. What they did with the catch varied. A slightly higher percentage of participants released what they caught rather than keeping it to eat or doing a combination of keeping and releasing their catch.

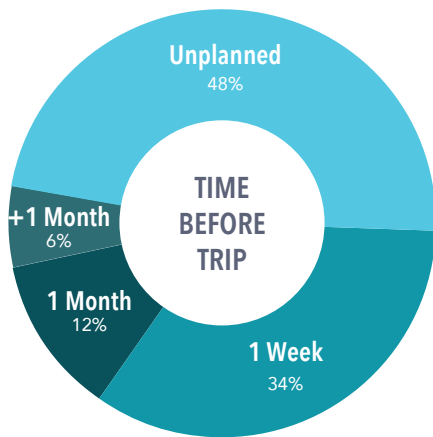


Activities Participated in Along with Fishing	Percentage
Camping	84%
Hiking	47%
Boating	47%
Picnicking	43%
Day at the park	37%
Beach trip	30%
Kayaking or canoeing	25%

## THE OUTING

During most trips, fishing was considered the main event, instead of a side activity. When participants did add on a complementary activity, 84% of them camped. Hiking and boating came in a distant second, both at 47%.

# HOW DID PARTICIPANTS PREPARE FOR THEIR TRIPS?



Fishing Information Sources	Percentage
General outdoor website	61%
Friend	30%
Online retail store	23%
Fishing guide	20%
Retail store	15%
Fishing-specific website	15%
Outdoor magazine	11%

## TRIP PLANNING

Fishing trips were fairly spontaneous, with 48% being unplanned and 82% being planned within a week of the trip. 56% of adult females said that their last fishing trip was unplanned, making them the most spontaneous out of the populations measured. Prior to the trip, the majority of anglers used websites as a means of finding information on fishing destinations, fish species, equipment and more.

Fishing License Purchase Location	%
Store (independent agent)	63%
Online	20%
License sales office	9%
Did not purchase	12%

## FISHING LICENSES

At 63%, a majority of fishing licenses were purchased from stores. 12% of participants did not purchase a fishing license at all. Of those participants, 32% said that they fished in private waters.

Reasons Not to Purchase Fishing License	Percentage
Fished in private waters	32%
Did not know I needed one	23%
Do not need to because of my age	12%
Never purchase a fishing license	11%
Fished on a charter boat	8%
Expensive	8%
Fished out of state and did not want to purchase one	4%
Own a life-time license	3%



# PERCEPTIONS OF FISHING



# ATTITUDES OF FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

Expectations for a First Trip	Percentage
Relaxing and unwinding	71%
Spending time outdoors	61%
Spending time with family and friends	56%
Trying something new; maybe catch a few fish	52%
Exciting time catching a lot of fish	32%
No expectations	25%
Teach my children about fishing and nature	22%
Competition to see who could catch the biggest or most fish	21%

## EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST TRIP

The highest percentage of first time participants expected that their first fishing trip would be a time to relax and unwind. More than half also saw their first outing as an opportunity to spend time outdoors, hang out with family and friends and try something new.



## ATTITUDES OF FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS

Perceptions of Fishing Before Participating	Percentage
Stress-free activity	59%
Exciting way to spend time outdoors	50%
Easy to learn	35%
Intriguing	31%
Time-consuming	24%
Only for serious outdoors people	21%
Uninteresting	18%
Requires too much equipment	15%

### PERCEPTIONS OF FISHING BEFORE PARTICIPATING

Before experiencing a fishing trip, 59% of participants saw the activity as a stress-free way to spend free time. More than 61% of females were attracted to fishing for this reason. Half of all participants also thought fishing could be an exciting way to spend time outside.

Change in Perception After First Time Fishing	Rating (1=lowest   5=highest)
An exciting way to spend time outdoors	4.3
Stress-free activity	4.3
Intriguing	4.1
Easy to learn	4.1
Time consuming	3.9
Too much of a financial investment	3.3
Only for serious outdoors people	2.8
Requires too much equipment	2.7
Uninteresting	1.7
Not for someone like me	1.5

### CHANGE IN FISHING FIRST TIME FISHING PERCEPTION

Perceptions after a first fishing trip shifted just slightly. The highest average rating was among those seeing fishing as an exciting way to spend time outdoors and the second highest was among those seeing fishing as a stress-free activity.

# FISHING STEREOTYPES

Which describes the type of person fishing is for...	Male Participants	Female Participants
No stereotype	60%	68%
Outdoorsy	28%	21%
Someone like me	23%	12%
Sportsman	20%	12%
Quiet	18%	10%
Educated	7%	4%
Older	6%	4%
Younger	5%	2%
Lazy	2%	2%
Not for someone like me	1%	1%

## STEREOTYPES OF FISHING PARTICIPANTS

Most fishing participants did not have a stereotype of anglers. Of those that did have a stereotype, the highest percentage thought a fishing participant would be outdoorsy. 28% of males stereotyped fishing participants as outdoorsy, while only 21% of females did the same. Perhaps the most striking difference was between the genders—23% of males said a fishing participant looked like themselves, while only 12% of females reported the same.



## FEELINGS ABOUT FISHING

Best Things About Fishing	Percentage
Getting away from the usual demands	38%
Being close to nature	32%
Catching fish	32%
Enjoying the sounds and smells of nature	30%
Spending time with family or friends	29%
Sharing the enjoyment of fishing with a child	16%
Experiencing excitement/adventure	15%
The thrill of the "chase" of catch fish	14%
The scenic beauty	14%
Catching my own food	14%

Positive Fishing Memories or Associations	Percentage
Spending time outdoors	80%
Spending time with family or friends	79%
My childhood	56%
Enjoying the water	54%
Connecting with a simpler way of life	48%
Learning a new skill	48%

## TOP 10 THINGS ABOUT FISHING

Americans primarily fished as a way to escape the usual demands of life. They also loved being close to nature and, of course, catching fish.

## POSITIVE FISHING MEMORIES

While the highest percentage of male participants associated fishing with spending time outdoors, slightly more females associated the activity with spending time with friends or family. Hispanic participants were split at 76%.

# FISHING BARRIERS

Obstacles to Enjoyment	Rating (1=Highest   5=Lowest)
Boring	4.6
Don't like to touch fish and worms	4.5
Baiting the hooks or taking the fish off the hook	4.3
The hassle	4.2
Lack of knowledge	4.2
Not having the right equipment	4.1
The expense	4.1
Lakes and rivers were not clean	4.0
Being outdoors	3.9
Not catching fish	3.9
Crowded fishing locations	3.7

## OBSTACLES TO ENJOYMENT

Boredom was the top reported barrier to fishing enjoyment. The next reasons were more physical—not enjoying handling the fish and worms and disliking baiting the hooks or touching the fish once caught.

Resources Making It Easier to Fish	Rating (1=Highest   5=Lowest)
Information on nearby bodies of water	3.8
Easier or more affordable access to boats	3.7
Easier or more affordable access to fishing gear	3.5
Comprehensive mobile guides that you can access on the water	3.2
How-tos and tutorial videos	3.1
Short lessons or information sessions from state agencies or local guides	3.0
Resources and information on voice-activated devices	2.8

## REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Adult fishing participants thought that information on nearby bodies of water would make it easier for people to fish. Easier access to boats came in second.

# FUTURE OF FISHING



# FISHING MOTIVATIONS

Motivations to Start Fishing	Percentage
Try out a new hobby	54%
A friend or relative took me	53%
Experience excitement	50%
Spend time with family	46%
Ease of access to fishing	39%
Disconnect from electronics	37%
Fished as a kid but not as an adult	36%
Solitude	30%
Low cost of fishing equipment	27%
Fishing trip as part of a vacation or group outing	26%

Motivations to Stop Fishing	Percentage
Lack of time	67%
Boring	33%
Lost interest	33%
Prefer other outdoor activities	33%
Did not catch anything	17%
Did not enjoy it	17%
Physical limitations	17%
Smell of fish	17%

## REASONS TO START FISHING

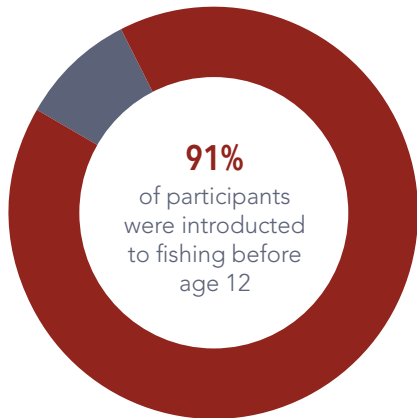
The top reasons for trying fishing for the first time included trying out a new hobby, tagging along with a loved one and embarking on an adventure. An even higher percentage of female participants, 66%, said a friend or relative took them fishing for the first time, and 64% said they were motivated by spending time with family.

## REASONS TO STOP FISHING

Lack of time was, by far, the top reason for participants quitting fishing. Living busy lives with tight schedules has been a challenge for participants in other outdoor activities as well.



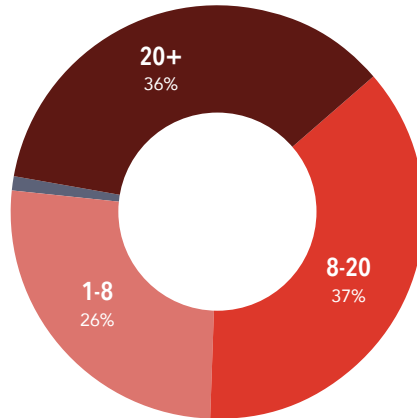
# FUTURE OF FISHING



## DID YOU FISH AS A CHILD

Data continues to underscore the importance of introducing fishing at a young age. **An impressive 91% of current adult fishing participants also fished during childhood. Only 9% of current participants tried fishing at age 12 or older.**

When comparing populations, current male anglers participated as children at the highest rate, much higher than females and Hispanics did.



## NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICIPANTS PLANNED TO FISH

The future of fishing was bright. 99% of adult participants planned to fish during the following year. 36% of participants planned 20 or more fishing trips and 37% planned 8 to 20.



91%  
**OF PARTICIPANTS  
FISHED AS KIDS**



99%  
**OF PARTICIPANTS  
PLANNED TO FISH THE  
NEXT YEAR**



# METHODOLOGY

During the 2019 calendar year, a total of 18,000 online interviews were conducted with a nationwide sample of individuals from U.S. proprietary online panels representative of the U.S. population for people ages six and older. Strict quotas associated with gender, age, income, region, and ethnicity were followed to ensure a balanced sample.

The 2019 participation survey sample size of 30,999 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 U.S. A sport with a participation rate of five percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.27 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

A weighting technique was used to balance the data to reflect the total U.S. population ages six and above. The following variables were used: gender, age, income, household size, region and population density. The total population figure used was 302,756,603 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 *2020 Special Report on Fishing* is produced by the Physical Activity Council (PAC), which is a partnership of leading organizations in the U.S. 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 2019 participation survey, which focused on American participation in the 2019 calendar year. Please note that some information includes data that was collected during previous surveys, as some questions are not asked every year.

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