



## A Snapshot of the U.S. Angler Population by Region

*Report two of six in a series*

### **Executive Summary**

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Ask a member of the sportfishing community in what region of the country anglers are most avid and you might expect the answer to be the Southeast, given well-known fishing meccas like the Florida Keys, or possibly the West, with California being such a hotspot for fishing. Indeed, Florida and California are consistently among the most popular sportfishing states. But this goes to show how relying on overall participation numbers can be misleading if that's the main statistic driving strategies to grow the sport.

This report, the second in a series produced for the American Sportfishing Association that examines anglers' participation rates and profiles, focuses on the regional differences and found that anglers in the Midwest and Northeast have the lowest rate of "churn," a term that refers to anglers transitioning in and out of the sport from year to year. Other regional details are presented that further investigate the most significant finding from the first report showing close to half of fishing license buyers in any given year do not renew their licenses the following year. However, the overall number of participants remains quite stable from year to year because about the same number of people joins and leaves the angling population each year. Additional findings are provided within.

These results are intended to aid organization and state agencies' effort to grow sportfishing participation. These efforts, commonly referred to as "R3" efforts, include targeted marketing toward retained, recruited, and reactivated anglers, categories that refer to angler participation rates from year to year.

While there were some significant differences among regions (highlighted below), in each region the analysis was consistent with what was found nationally: women, young people, and those who live in urban communities are more likely to lapse in their fishing from year to year. Highlights include:

- **Participation is growing slightly in about one-third of the states.** Between 2004 and 2013, 17 states experienced growth in the number of licensed anglers while the rest showed reductions. Most of the states showing growth are in the West and Southeast.
- **The West attracts the most non-resident anglers.** Nonresidents comprise as much as 29 percent (West) and as little as 19 percent (Midwest and Southeast) of the licensed angler population (it's 20 percent in the Northeast). Regardless of region, roughly 70 percent of all licensed non-resident

anglers will buy a license in the same state in just one out of five years. They may buy in other states in these other years.

- **A higher proportion of anglers remain active in the Northeast and Midwest.** More than 20 percent of anglers purchased a license five out of five years in the Northeast and Midwest—compared to just eight percent and 16 percent of anglers in the Southeast and West, respectively.
- **The annual churn rate is highest in the Southeast and lowest in the Midwest.** In the Southeast, the average annual churn rate is highest, at 53 percent, while it is lowest, 28 percent, in the Midwest, considerably less than the national rate of about 45 percent. The rate is 39 percent in the West and 33 percent in the Northeast.
- **Regardless of region, the churn rate is highest among younger anglers.** The average annual churn rate is highest, with a range of 37-63 percent across all four regions, among licensed anglers between the ages of 18 and 24. Licensed anglers aged 55 to 64 years old have the lowest churn rate of all age groups, with a range of 22-46 percent across all four regions. Nationally, annual churn rates by age group fall within these regional ranges.
- **Regardless of region, the churn rate is higher among women.** The average annual churn rate among women is highest in the Southeast, where 64 percent of female anglers lapse in their fishing license renewals from year to year. It is lowest among women in the Midwest, at 41 percent. The rate is 48 percent in the Northeast and 50 percent in the West. Nationally, the rate is about 55 percent—about 13 percentage points higher than the churn rate for men.
- **Regardless of region, urban anglers have a higher churn rate.** The churn rate ranges from 34-60 percent for urban anglers across all four regions, from 30-55 percent for those residing in suburban communities, and from 24-46 percent for those in rural communities. The national churn rate in urban communities falls within this regional range; however, rural anglers' churn rate ranges lower than the national rate in the Midwest, Northeast, and West.

These findings are based on a comprehensive examination of state fishing license data covering a 10-year period, from 2004-2013, and a five-year period, from 2009- 2013, for 12 states (CO, FL, GA, ME, MI, MN, MS, MT, NH, NY, UT, and WI) to provide a regionally and nationally representative portrait of anglers. Some additional data comes from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* from 2001-2011.

