

# 2024 SPECIAL REPORT ON FISHING



a partnership project of:

**OUTDOOR  
FOUNDATION**



RECREATIONAL  
BOATING & FISHING  
FOUNDATION

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 brought encouraging news (easing inflation, strong employment data, COVID in the rearview mirror) alongside troubling developments (AI concerns, deepening political partisanship, global strife). Amid the good and bad, fishing remained a gateway to health and wellbeing. More than a hobby, fishing represented a way of life, a connection to wildlife, and a sustainable way to support your family and community. Whether on lakes, rivers, streams or seas; from shorelines, boats or embankments; millions of Americans were united in 2023 by the love of fishing.

For the 14th consecutive year, the Outdoor Foundation (OF) and the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) partnered to produce the Special Report on Fishing to provide a comprehensive review of fishing participation trends, including detailed information on specific fishing categories. Insights include motivations, barriers, demographics and preferences of groups including youth, Hispanic Americans, and females. **For the first time, this report also includes detailed data on fishing participation from 2007 to 2023 among Black Americans.**

## Overall Fishing Participation Trends

In 2023, 57.7 million Americans ages 6 and over took to the nation's waterways to enjoy recreational fishing, a 6 percent increase from 2022. Fishing's participation rate, 19 percent, and the number of anglers topped the all-time records set in 2020 amid COVID-related shutdowns.

Nearly 7 in 10 participants fished 1 to 11 times in 2023—less than one outing per month. Participation among more frequent anglers has gradually declined since participation tracking began in 2007. Just 31 percent fished once a month or more in 2023, down from 41 percent in 2007. *See page 4 to learn more.*

The “leaky bucket” analysis measures the annual churn of fishing participants—those joining or rejoining the activity compared to those quitting. Following modest declines in 2021 and modest gains in 2022, there was a sizable net increase of 3.2 million fishing participants in 2023. 15.4 million new or returning anglers fished, while

12.3 million left the sport. The churn rate held steady at -23 percent. *See page 6 for more on the leaky bucket.*

## Fishing by Category

Nearly 43 million Americans ages 6 and over freshwater fished in 2023. Freshwater's national participation rate held steady at 14 percent. Average annual outings of 15 and total outings of 632 million were comparable to those seen the year prior. *See page 13 for more on freshwater fishing.*

Saltwater fishing's growth continued in 2023, as participation increased 5 percent to 15 million participants. This was the highest number of saltwater anglers on record, exceeding 2020 by 500,000 anglers, and pre-COVID 2019 by nearly 2 million. Average annual outings per participant and total saltwater outings fell slightly year over year. *See page 17 for more on saltwater fishing.*

2023 brought a fly fishing milestone, as participation topped 8 million for the first time. For just the second time, the national participation rate reached 3 percent. Average outings per participant held steady at 11, while total outings declined slightly to 80 million. *See page 21 for more on fly fishing.*

## Youth Participation

Fishing's national participation rate among children ages 6 to 12 declined in 2023, and was lower than in 2020. The trajectory of participation among the nation's 13 to 17 year olds, however, diverged from that of younger children. The number of anglers ages 13 to 17 rose from 4.9 million in 2022 to 5.6 million in 2023, an increase of 14 percent. *See page 25 for more on youth participation.*

## Black Participation – NEW IN 2023

5.2 million Black Americans ages 6 and over fished in 2023, the highest number since activity tracking began in 2007. The participation rate—a record 14 percent—has increased an average of 11 percent over each of the last 3 years. All styles of fishing saw strong year-over-year

increases in participant numbers and participation rate. *See page 32 for more on Black participation.*

## Hispanic Participation

Fishing participation nearly doubled in a decade among Hispanic Americans ages 6 and over, increasing from 3.5 million in 2013 to 6.3 million in 2023. Participant numbers grew an average of 15 percent annually since 2020. The participation rate also jumped, from 13 percent in 2022 to 16 percent in 2023. *See page 38 for more on Hispanic participation.*

## Female Participation

Both the number of female participants and the female fishing participation rate reached all-time highs. Participant numbers increased 5.5 million in a decade, rising from 15.8 million in 2013 to 21.3 million in 2023. Females represented 37 percent of total anglers, 40 percent of first-time participants, and 45 percent of those considering fishing. *See page 44 for more on female participation.*

## Profile of a Fishing Trip

Only 18 percent of anglers typically fished alone, reiterating that fishing remained a shared activity in 2023. Nearly 8 in 10 participants usually fished in groups of 2 to 5 anglers. 87 percent of participants caught at least one fish on their most recent trip. 43 percent opted to release their catch, 36 percent kept it, and about 1 in 5 reported doing both. Nearly half of fishing trips were spontaneous, while about 4 in 10 were planned a week prior. *See page 51 for insight into a typical fishing trip.*

## Perceptions of Fishing

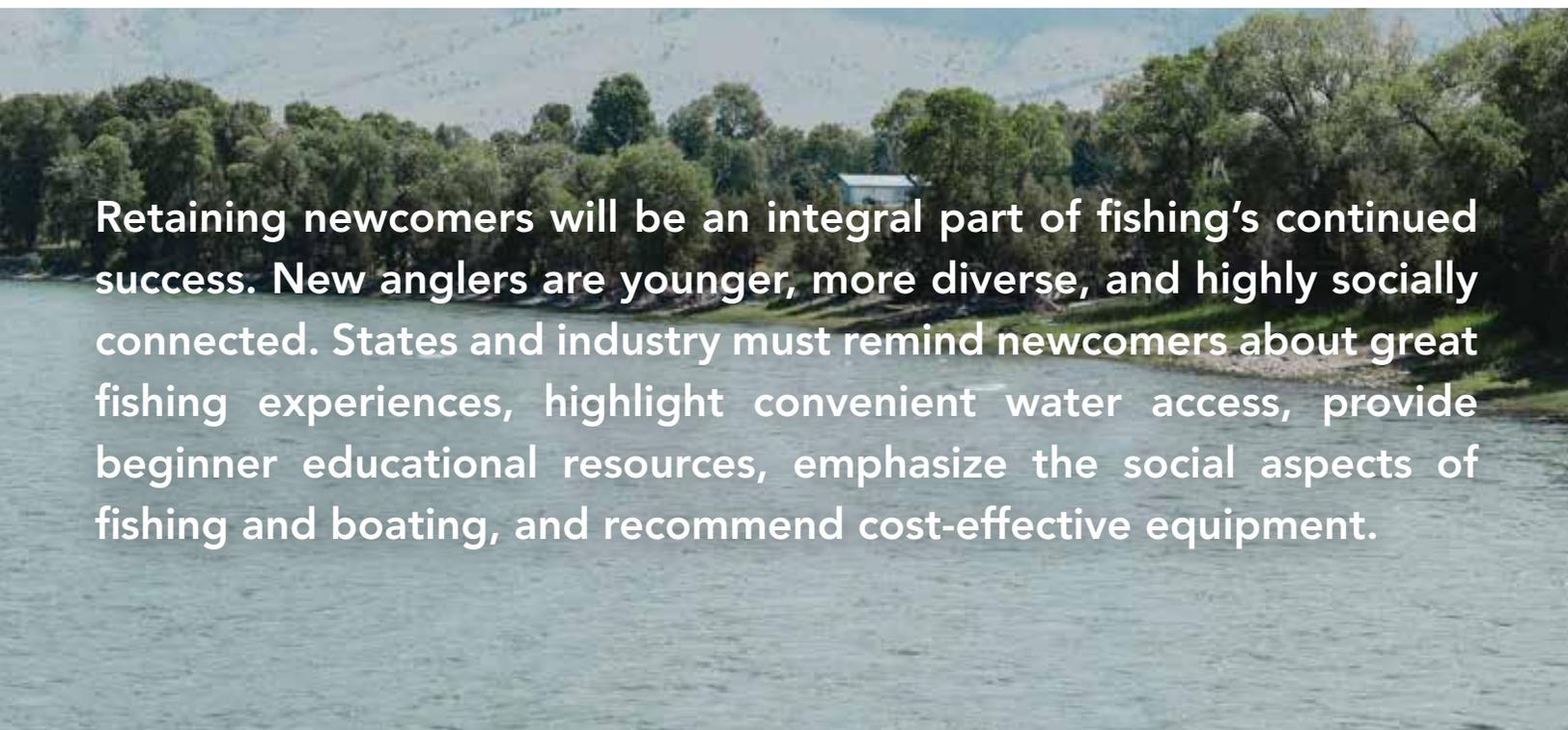
Relaxation was a key driver for first-time fishing participants in 2023. Many new anglers reported that the desire to share time with family and friends also inspired fishing. The most cited factors that prevented the enjoyment of fishing were crowded fishing spots and not catching fish. Other frustrations included being outdoors, unclean waters and the expense associated with gearing up for fishing. *See page 55 to learn more about perceptions of fishing.*

## Future of Fishing

**Data continues to underscore the critical importance of introducing fishing at a young age, as 87 percent of current fishing participants fished before the age of 12. Participation rates fell sharply after a child turned 18, making families with young children one key to growing future participation.**

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

Retaining newcomers remains an integral part of fishing's continued success. New anglers are younger, more diverse, and digitally connected. States and industry must remind newcomers about great fishing experiences, highlight convenient water access, provide beginner educational resources, emphasize the social aspects of fishing and boating, and recommend cost-effective equipment. *See page 60 to learn more about the future of fishing.*



**Retaining newcomers will be an integral part of fishing's continued success. New anglers are younger, more diverse, and highly socially connected. States and industry must remind newcomers about great fishing experiences, highlight convenient water access, provide beginner educational resources, emphasize the social aspects of fishing and boating, and recommend cost-effective equipment.**

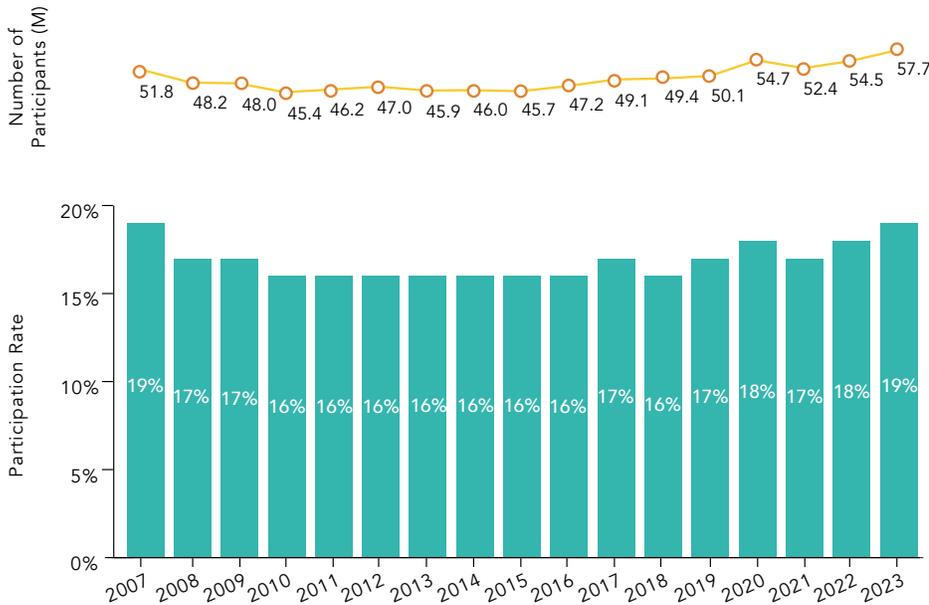
# FISHING PARTICIPATION



# FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

In 2023, 19 percent of the American population ages 6 and up went fishing at least once, up from 18 percent in 2022. 57.7 million Americans fished in 2023—an impressive 3.2 million more than the year prior. The number of participants topped the previous high in 2020 and was the highest on record. The national participation rate tied a record set in 2007.



# 57.7M

TOTAL #  
OF PARTICIPANTS

*3.2M increase from 2022*

# 19%

NATIONAL  
PARTICIPATION RATE

*up from 16% a decade ago*



# 889M

TOTAL #  
OF OUTINGS

*10M fewer than 2022*



# 14

AVERAGE ANNUAL  
OUTINGS

*down from 18 a decade ago*

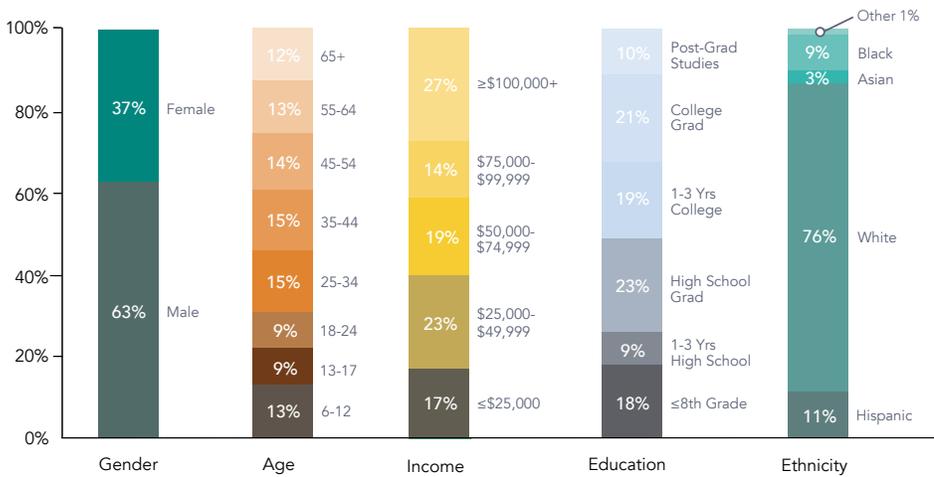


# 3.0M

MORE PARTICIPANTS  
IN 2023

*vs. 2020*

# WHO PARTICIPATED?



**63%**  
MALE PARTICIPANTS

## PARTICIPATION RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC

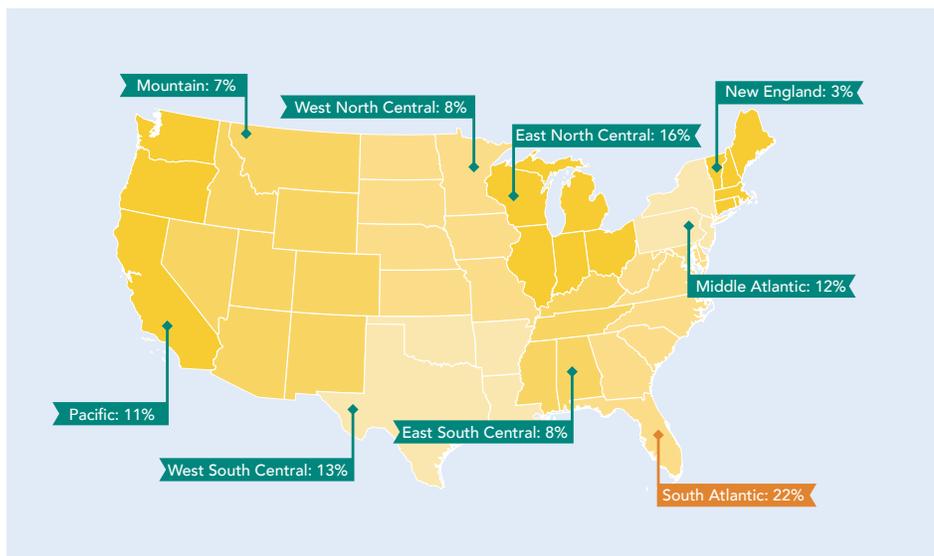
21.3 million women fished in 2023, the highest number since participation tracking began in 2007. Females made up 37 percent of fishing participants.

As in 2022, 25 percent of participants were 55 or older. Half of anglers reported attending at least some college. Income distributions were approximately in line with national averages, with 4 in 10 participants reporting annual household income either below \$50,000 per year, or over \$75,000 per year.

Fishing participants were less diverse than the U.S. population. 76 percent of participants in 2023 were White (down from 86 percent in 2007) versus 59 percent nationally. Large gaps remained for Hispanics (11 percent of fishing participants versus 19 percent of the U.S. population), Black anglers (9 percent versus 13 percent) and Asian participants (3 percent versus 6 percent).



**65+**  
FASTEST GROWING AGE COHORT



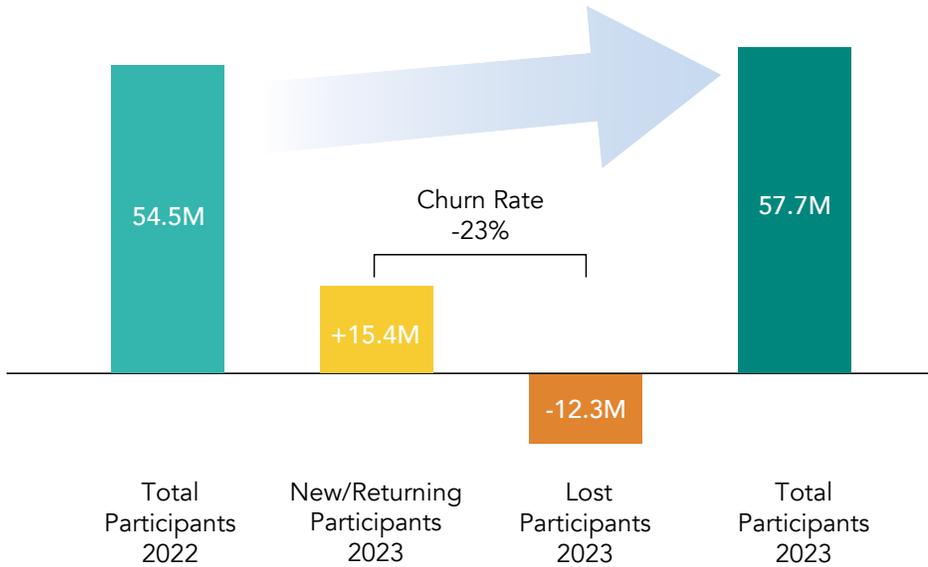
## PARTICIPATION BY REGION

The South Atlantic region, comprised of eight states with ample coastline and abundant interior lakes and waterways, was home to 22 percent of anglers in 2023, nearly 13 million participants in total. Compare this to the vast American Midwest (West North Central and West South Central) and its 12 million participants. The combined Mountain and Pacific regions had over 10 million participants, while New England and Middle Atlantic had nearly 9 million.

# PARTICIPATION IN-DEPTH

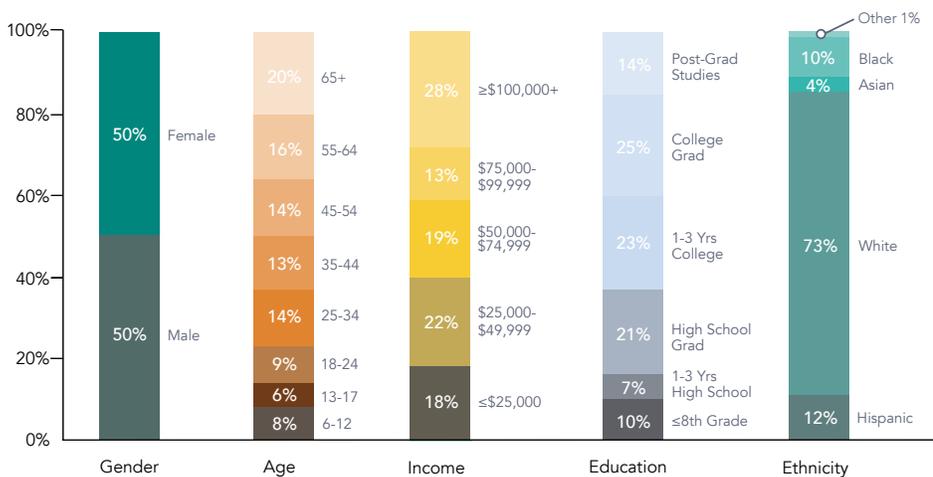
## LEAKY BUCKET ANALYSIS

Between 2022 and 2023 there was a net gain of 3.2 million fishing participants. The annual churn rate (which compares how many joined or continued fishing to those quitting the sport) was -23 percent, the same level seen in 2022.



## LOST PARTICIPANTS

Lost participants in 2023 tended to be older, with half over the age of 45. About 4 in 10 reported an annual household income over \$75,000, and over 6 in 10 had at least some college education.



**4.2M**  
FIRST-TIME  
PARTICIPANTS



**42.3M**  
CONTINUING  
PARTICIPANTS  
*and 11.2M returning*

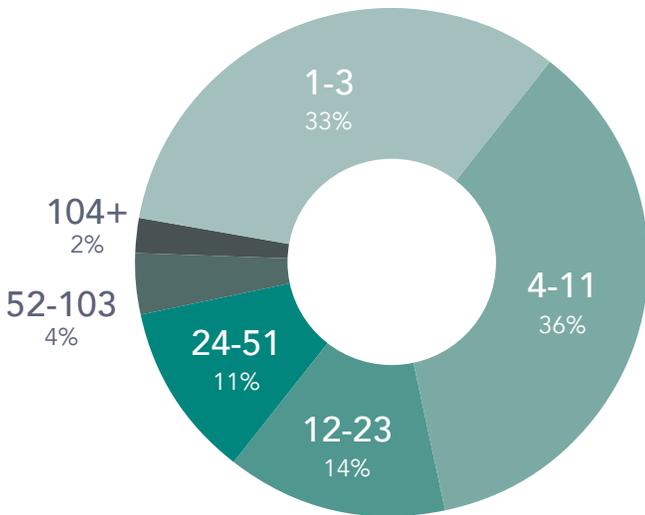


**12.3M**  
LOST  
PARTICIPANTS

# LEVELS OF COMMITMENT

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

Nearly 7 in 10 anglers in 2023 went fishing 1 to 11 times—less than once a month. Fewer participants indicated that they fished more than once a week. A decade ago, about 8 percent reported weekly outings, but in 2023 that share fell to just under 6 percent. The least active tranche was also the fastest growing, as those reporting just 1 to 3 outings in 2023 have grown their share among total participants an average 12 percent annually since 2021.



## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING

When asked, 35 percent of anglers in 2023 described themselves as “avid” fishing participants. If the term “avid” described someone who fishes once per month or more, it would roughly match the perception that anglers held of themselves. Just under half wished they could fish more.

PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	31%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	30%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	18%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	17%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%



**6%**  
MOST AVID  
PARTICIPANTS



**1-11**  
**TRIPS**  
ANNUALLY FOR 69%  
OF PARTICIPANTS

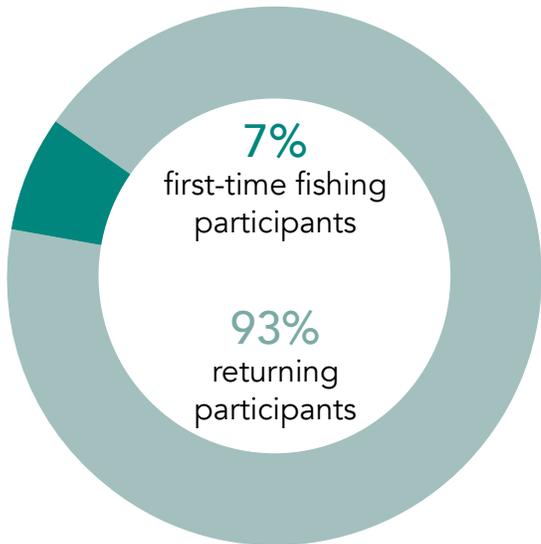


**35%**  
SELF-DESCRIBED  
AS AVID  
PARTICIPANTS

# INTRO TO FISHING

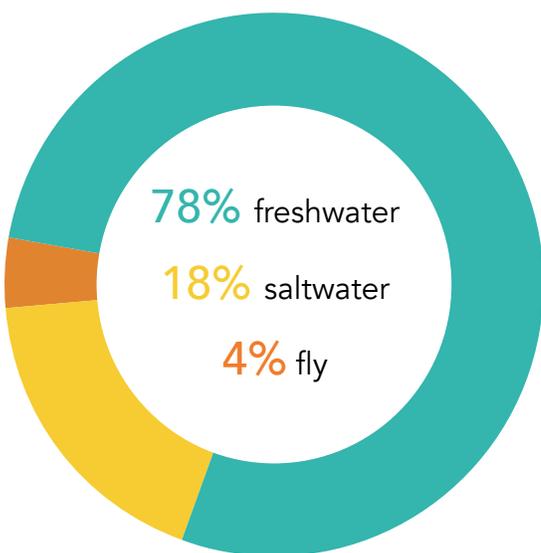
## NEW TO FISHING

Of the 57.7 million fishing participants in 2023, 4.2 million were new to the sport. These newcomers represented 7 percent of total participants.

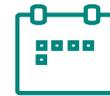


## FIRST TYPE OF FISHING EXPERIENCE

Almost 4 in 5 anglers said the first type of fishing they experienced was freshwater fishing. This has changed little over the prior decade, with only slight increases for fly fishing since 2014. Total outings by first-timers hit a record 27 million in 2023. Average annual first-timer days reached 7, the highest level since 2016.



**27M**  
TOTAL ANNUAL  
OUTINGS  
*among first-timers*



**7 / YEAR**  
AVERAGE # OF  
OUTINGS  
*among first-timers*



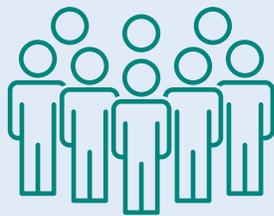
**40%**  
OF FEMALE  
PARTICIPANTS WERE  
FIRST-TIMERS  
*vs. 37% of total  
participants*

# TYPES OF FISHING & OTHER ACTIVITIES

## LITTLE OVERLAP IN FISHING

In 2023, Americans remained dedicated to their preferred form of fishing. Less than 1 in 5 participated in more than one type, a ratio consistent for over a decade. To help sustain and expand the sport, anglers should introduce current participants (48 percent of whom indicated they'd like to fish more often) to a new type of fishing. Freshwater anglers were the most likely to say they'd like to fish more at 48 percent, versus 47 percent of saltwater and 39 percent of fly participants.

TYPES OF FISHING	PERCENTAGE
Freshwater only	58%
Saltwater only	15%
Freshwater and Saltwater	11%
Fly Fishing only	8%
Freshwater and Fly Fishing	4%
Fly Fishing and Freshwater and Saltwater	3%
Saltwater and Fly Fishing	1%



81%  
participated in one  
type of fishing



19%  
participated in multiple  
types of fishing

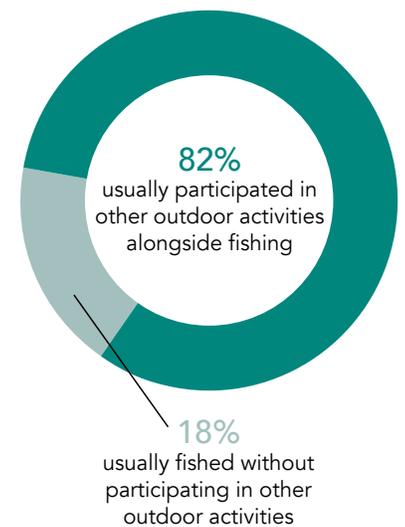
# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

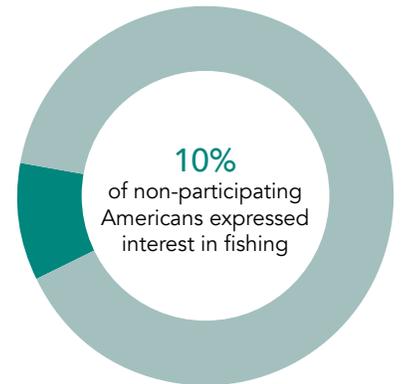
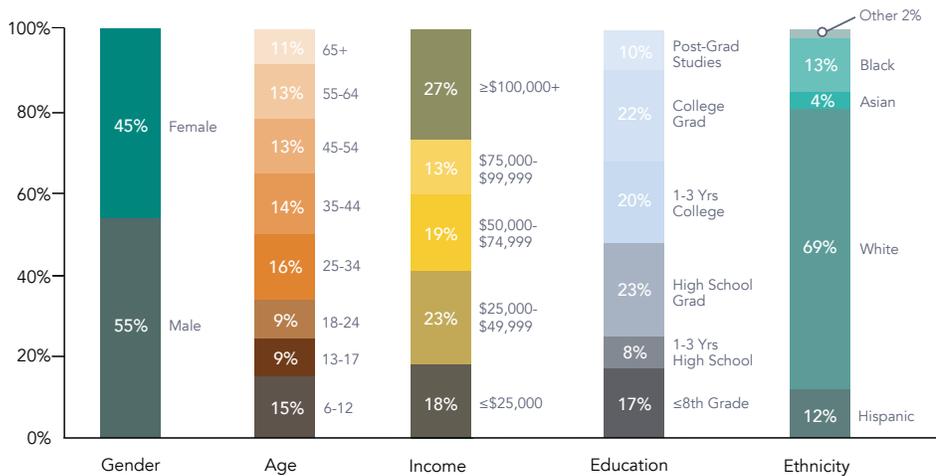
Fishing participants enjoyed a wide range of outdoor activities, including camping, walking, hiking and bicycling.

### Which activities did you participate in outside of fishing?

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	PERCENTAGE
 Camping	44%
 Walking	40%
 Hiking	32%
 Bicycling	31%
 Running	22%
 Birdwatching/Wildlife Viewing	21%
 Hunting	18%
 Kayaking	15%



# AMERICANS CONSIDERING FISHING

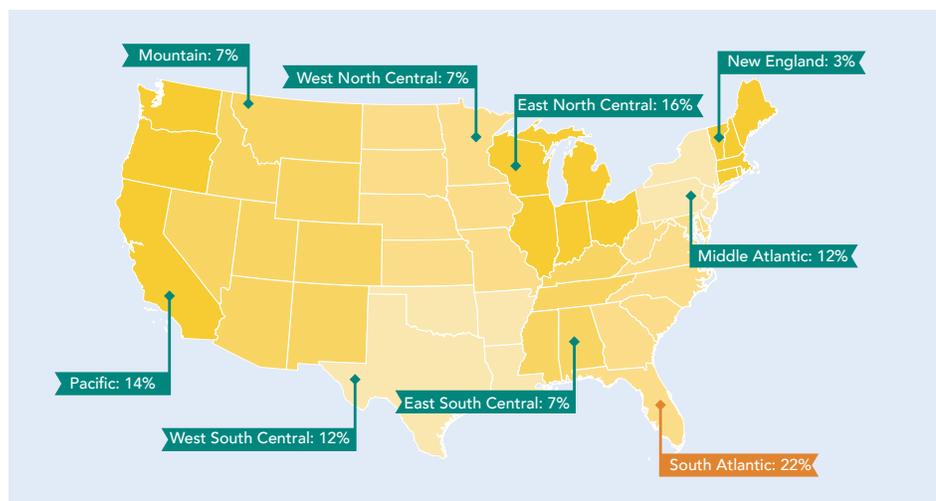


## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THOSE CONSIDERING

Millions of Americans who did not fish in 2023 expressed interest in the sport. Among the 25 million Americans who considered fishing in 2023, 11.6 million were female, 3.5 million were Black, and 3 million were Hispanic. Over 15 million Americans with household incomes over \$75,000 considered fishing, as did more than 12 million with a high school education or less.

## PEOPLE CONSIDERING FISHING

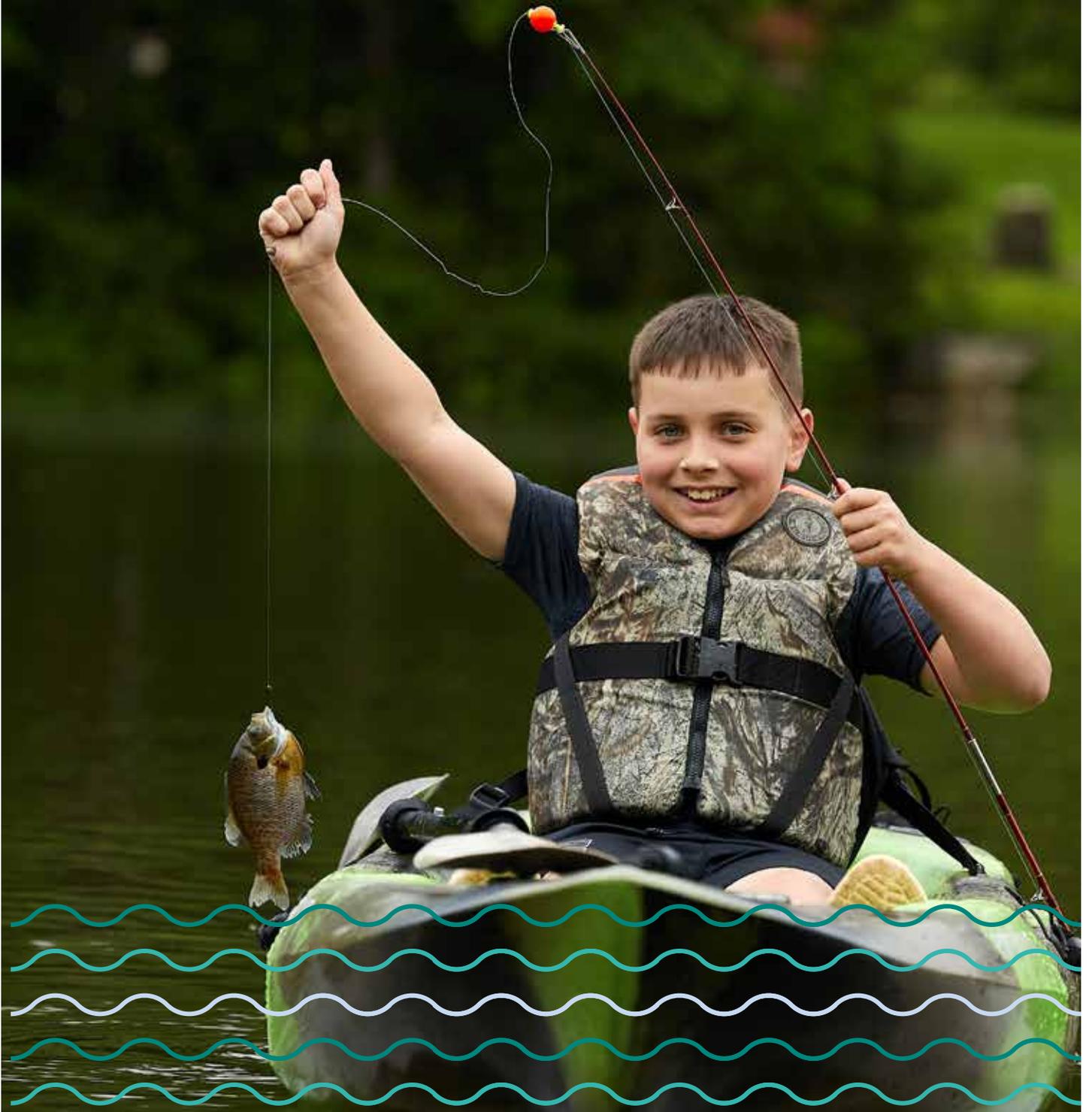
Over 5 million youths ages 6 to 17 considered fishing, representing an enormous opportunity to grow fishing's future. These interested youths are more diverse than fishing's current participant population, emphasizing the need for outreach to underrepresented groups whose influence will continue to grow.



## THOSE CONSIDERING FISHING BY REGION

The map of those considering fishing largely mirrors the map of current participation, with higher concentrations of interest in South Atlantic, Middle Atlantic, East North Central and Pacific, and lower levels in inland regions of Mountain and West North Central.

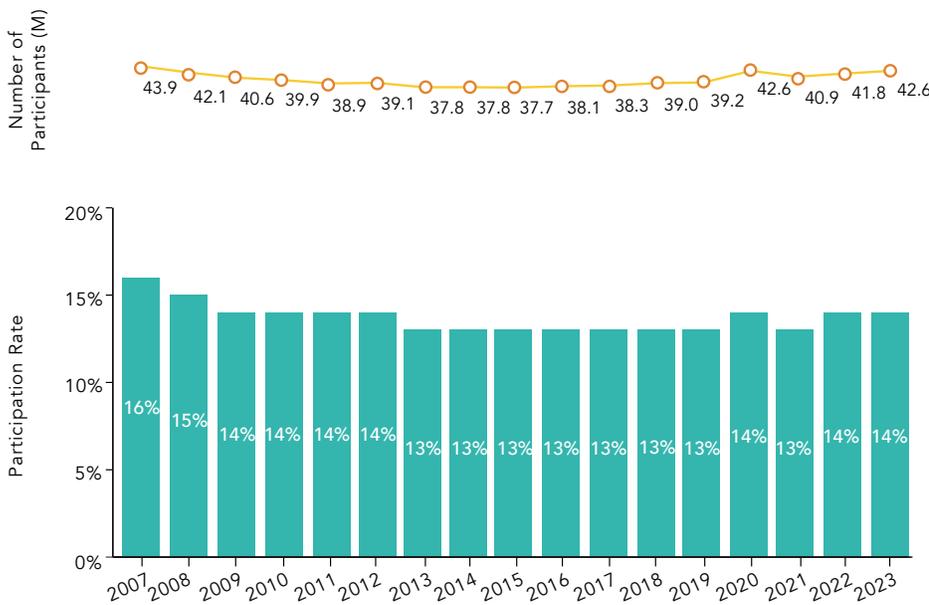
# FRESHWATER FISHING



# FRESHWATER FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Freshwater remained the most popular type of fishing. In 2023, 71 percent of fishing outings were freshwater trips, and 58 percent of participants reported they only freshwater fished (though this was a 5 percent decline from the year prior). 3.4 million more Americans participated in 2023 than in 2019, solidifying freshwater's post-COVID gains.



**42.6M**

FRESHWATER PARTICIPANTS

**14%**

NATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATE



**632M**

TOTAL OUTINGS



**15**

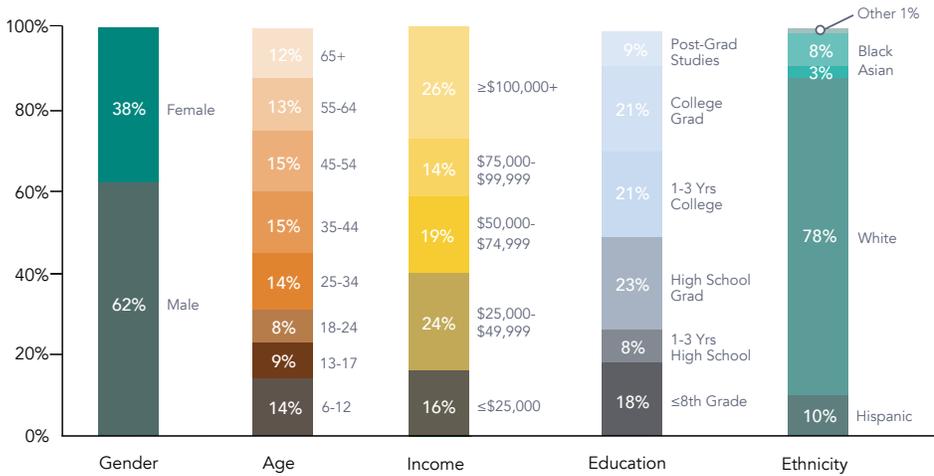
AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS



**+3.4M**

MORE PARTICIPANTS THAN IN 2019  
*(pre-COVID)*

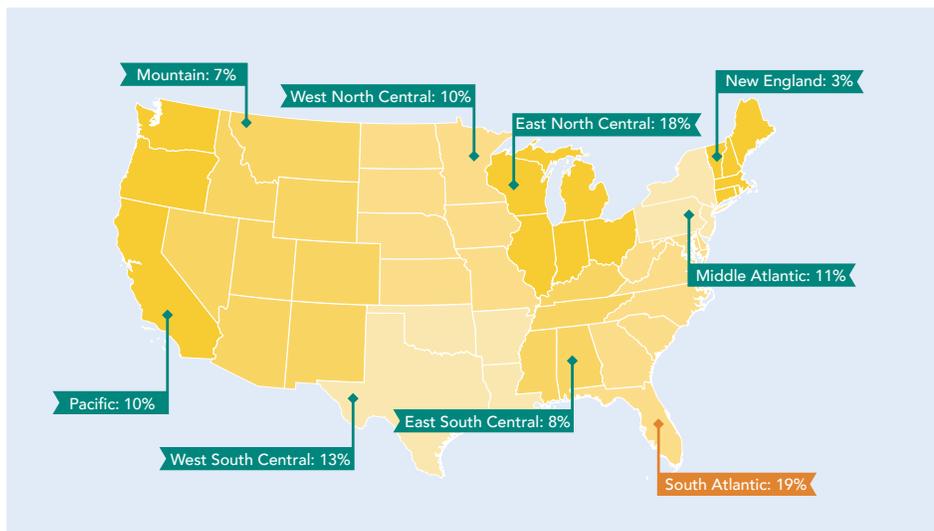
# WHO PARTICIPATED?



**45%**  
OF FRESHWATER  
ANGLERS WERE  
UNDER 35

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The share of Black and Hispanic participants among total freshwater anglers grew an average 5 and 11 percent, respectively, over each of the last 3 years. Freshwater anglers 65 and older grew their share of total freshwater participants, increasing to 12 percent in 2023 from 9 percent a decade ago. 51 percent reported some college education and 60 percent reported household income levels at or below the approximate national median income, both largely unchanged from the year prior.



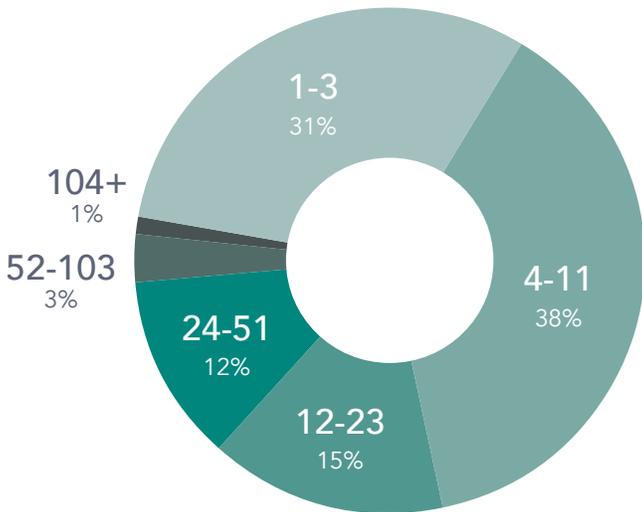
## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

Unlike saltwater fishing's center in South Atlantic and fly fishing's outpost in Mountain states, freshwater anglers were more evenly distributed around the country. About 4 in 10 Americans live in the US Census' South region, stretching from Texas to Delaware, and just over 4 in 10 freshwater anglers resided there. The Midwest areas of East North Central and West North Central were overrepresented, containing almost 30 percent of freshwater participants on just over 20 percent of the overall population.

# LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

Among the freshwater frequency levels measured, only one segment has grown steadily since participation tracking began in 2007. Unfortunately, that was the least frequent participation level of just 1-3 annual outings. Nearly 7 in 10 freshwater anglers fished less than once per month.



## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

61 percent of freshwater participants described their fishing activity as occasional in 2023. The percentage who wanted to fish more equaled that of those who fished as often as they liked—48 percent.

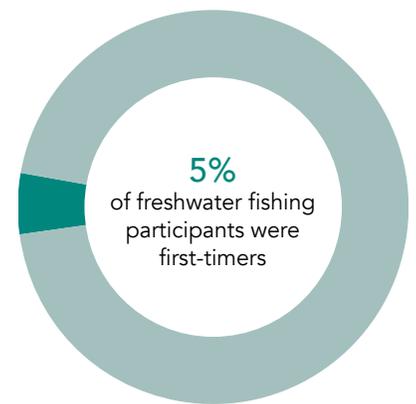
PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	31%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	30%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	18%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	17%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%

**2.2M**  
FIRST-TIME  
FRESHWATER  
PARTICIPANTS  
IN 2023

*vs. 2.3M in 2019 (pre-COVID)*

**-200K**  
FIRST-TIME  
FRESHWATER  
PARTICIPANTS

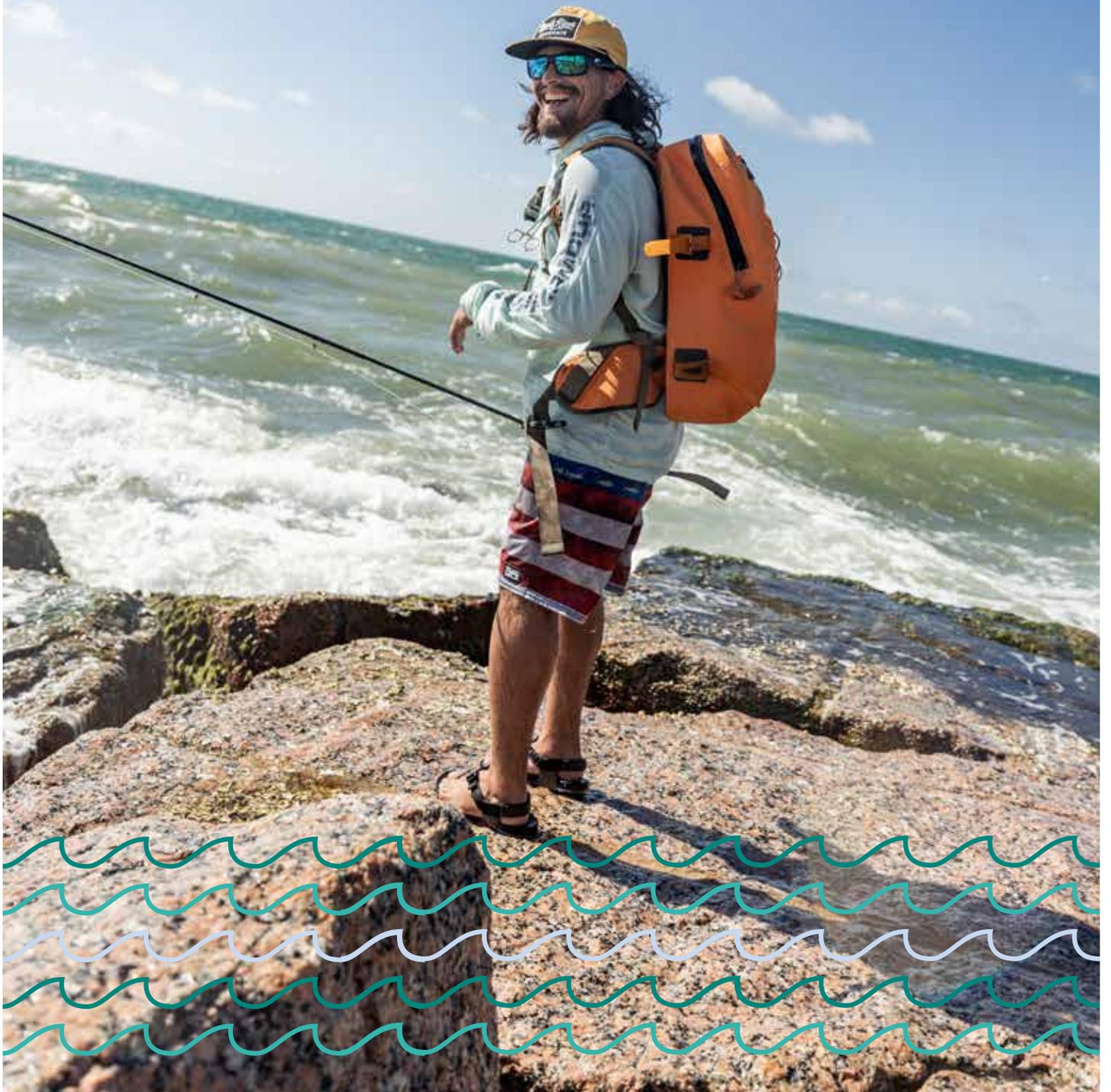
*in 2023 vs. year prior*



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

First-time freshwater participants fell to 2.2 million in 2023, falling from 2.4 million the year prior, and down from a record 2.9 million in 2020. Female first-time freshwater anglers fell below 1 million for the first time since 2017.

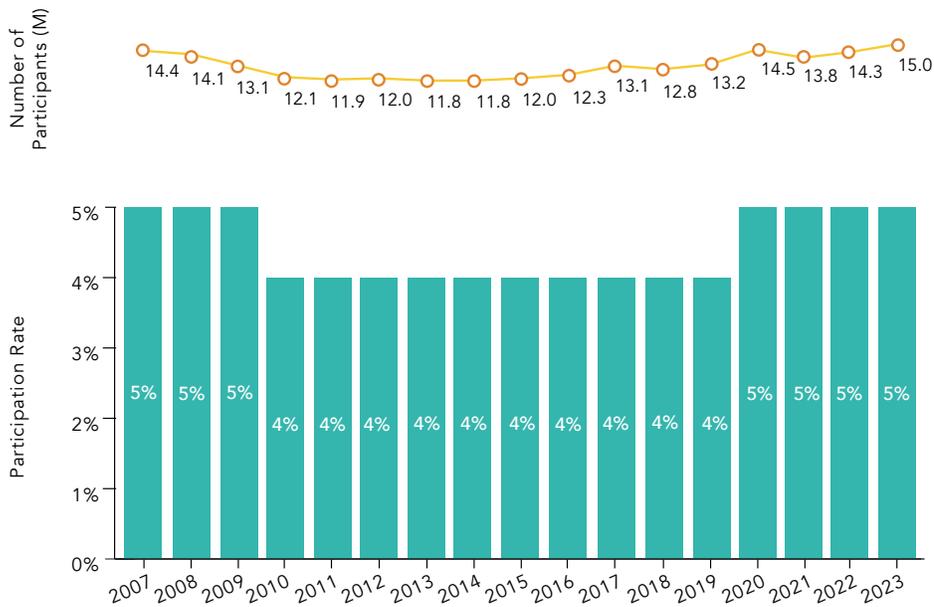
# SALTWATER FISHING



# SALTWATER FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Building on solid growth in 2022, saltwater participation increased 5 percent in 2023 to an impressive 15 million participants. This was the highest number of saltwater anglers on record, exceeding 2020 by 500,000 anglers, and pre-COVID 2019 by nearly 2 million. Average annual outings per participant and total saltwater outings fell slightly year over year.



# 15M

# OF SALTWATER PARTICIPANTS

# 5%

NATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATE



# 177M

# OF OUTINGS



# 12

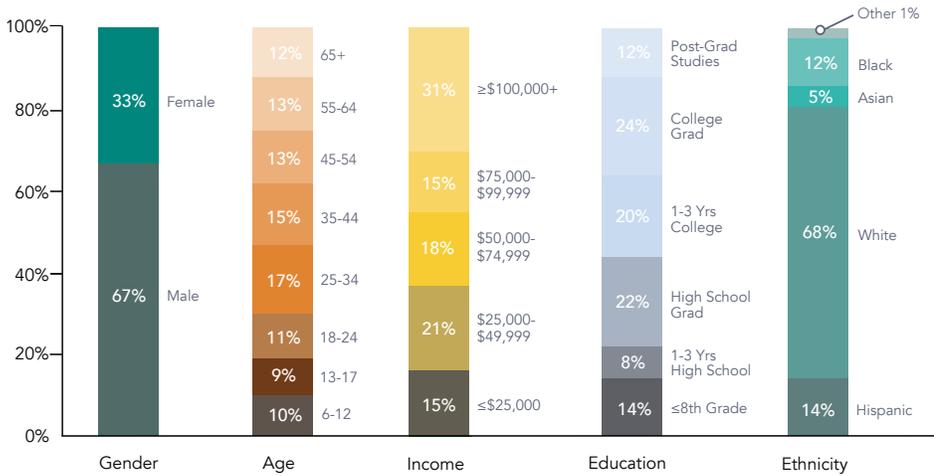
AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS



# +5%

PARTICIPANT GROWTH  
*vs. 2022*

# WHO PARTICIPATED?

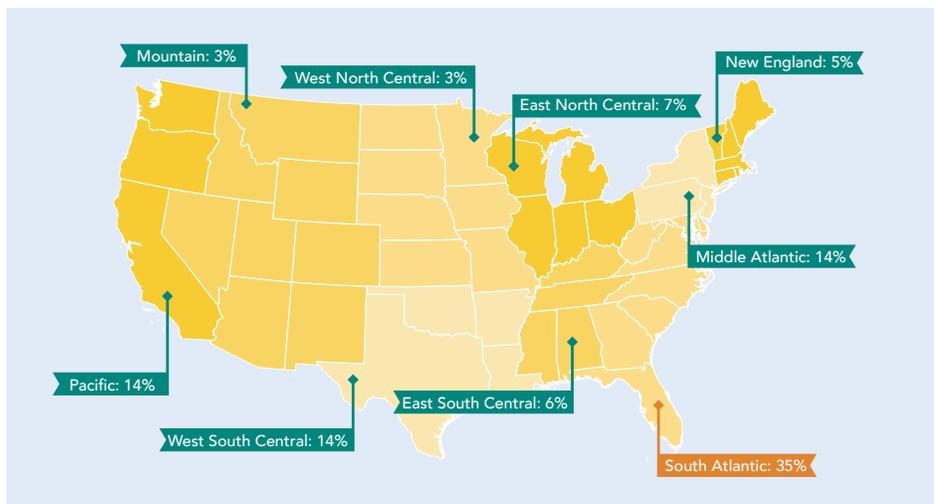


## MOST DIVERSE TYPE OF FISHING

*over 3 in 10 multicultural participants*

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

As in 2022, saltwater fishing maintained the most diverse participant base, with Hispanic, Black and Asian Americans representing 14 percent, 12 percent and 5 percent of participants, respectively. Saltwater had 68 percent White participants, versus 78 percent in freshwater and 73 percent in fly. Anglers ages 18 to 24 grew their participant share an average 10 percent each year since 2021. Since tracking began in 2007, about 3 in 10 saltwater anglers reported household incomes of over \$100,000 per year.



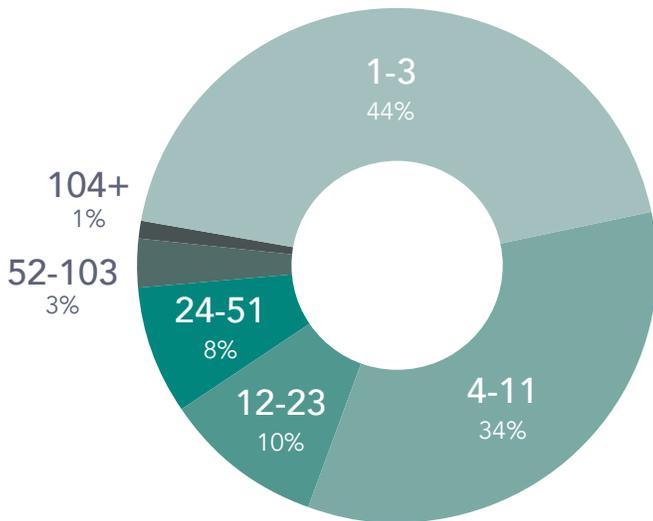
### REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

As expected, saltwater participants were concentrated in coastal regions. The South Atlantic region alone contained 35 percent of all participants, while the Gulf of Mexico (excluding Florida) and Pacific regions had 20 and 14 percent of participants, respectively. East South Central, which includes Alabama and Mississippi, grew their share of saltwater anglers by 9 percent each year for the past three years.

# LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

Total saltwater outings have fallen from a 2020 peak of 195 million, but at 177 million in 2023 remained above 2019 levels. After four years at 13, the average number of saltwater outings per participant fell to 12 in 2023. Nearly 4 in 5 saltwater participants reported fishing less than once a month, and just 12 percent fished twice a month or more.



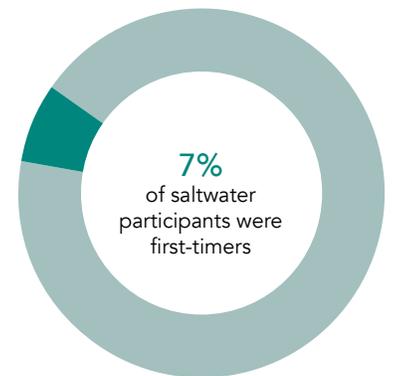
## PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

54 percent of saltwater anglers described themselves as occasional participants, versus 41 percent who said they were avid anglers. Participants were evenly divided between those who fish as often as they want (48 percent) and those who wanted to fish more often (47 percent).

PERCEIVED LEVEL OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	28%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	26%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	21%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	20%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	2%

**177M**  
TOTAL OUTINGS  
*5M higher than 2019  
(pre-COVID)*

**12**  
AVERAGE OUTINGS  
PER PARTICIPANT



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

7 percent of saltwater anglers in 2023 were first-timers, the lowest level on record. Among these 1.1 million first-timers, roughly 650,000 were male and 450,000 were female.

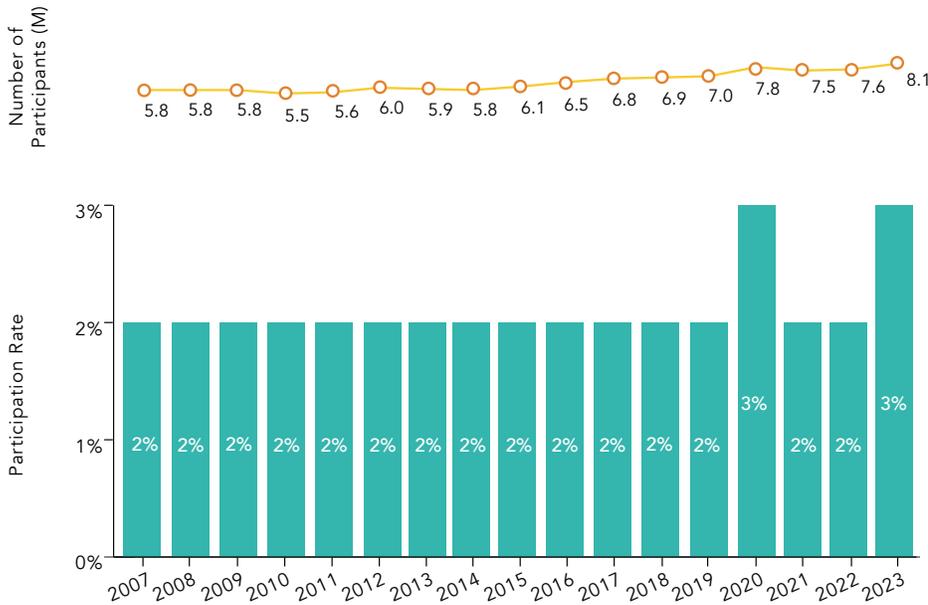
# FLY FISHING



# FLY FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

2023 brought a fly fishing milestone, as participation topped 8 million for the first time. The increase of 500,000 participants was the second highest one-year jump on record, topped only by the 800,000 increase in 2020. For just the second time the national participation rate reached 3 percent. Average outings held steady at 11, while total outings declined from 82 million to 80 million.



# 8.1M

## # OF FLY FISHING PARTICIPANTS

# 3%

## NATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATE



# 80M

## TOTAL OUTINGS



# 11

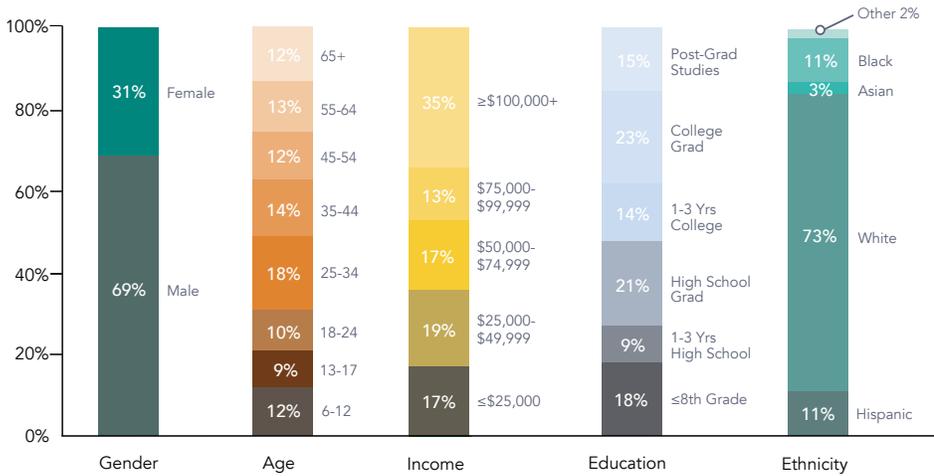
## AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS



# +6%

## GROWTH IN PARTICIPANTS

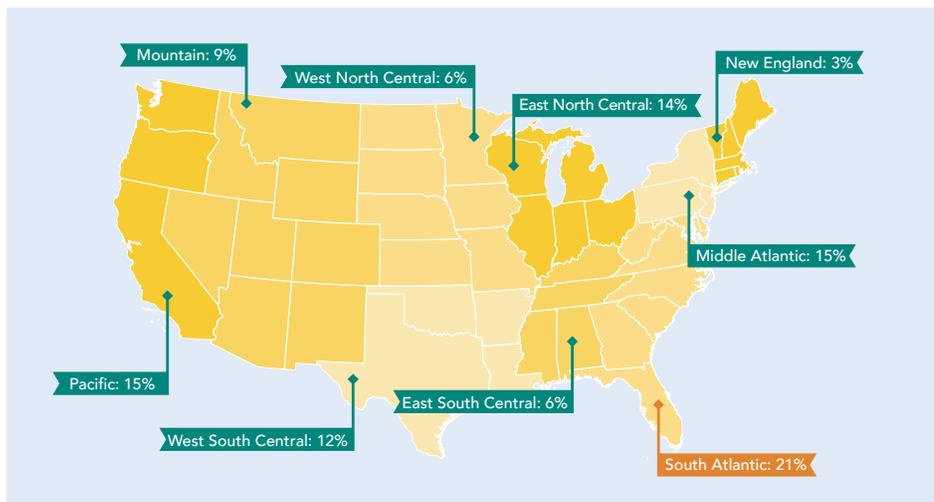
# WHO PARTICIPATED?



## HIGHEST INCOME AND EDUCATION LEVELS IN FISHING

### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Fly fishing remained the most male-dominated fishing category in 2023, with 69 percent male participants. This 70/30 male to female ratio has changed little in the last decade. Similarly, the share of non-White participants has held steady at approximately less than 3 in 10 for over a decade. 48 percent of participants reported annual household income over \$75,000, versus 50 percent a year ago.



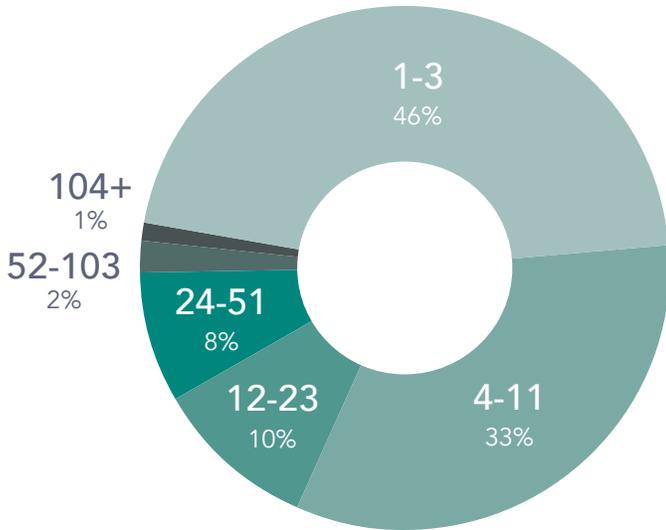
### REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

The East South Central and West South Central regions grew their share of fly fishing participants, both increasing an average 10 percent each of the past three years. West North Central moved in the opposite direction, as its share of fly-fishing participants declined 7 percent annually during the same three year period.

# LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

Fly fishing had the lowest proportion of very active anglers. Just 3 percent participated more than once per week in 2023, down from 6 percent a decade earlier. Nearly half participated only 1 to 3 times. Like other types of fishing, participant numbers have increased while frequency of participation declined. Fly fishing participants in 2023 reported 11 average annual outings, unchanged from the year prior.



## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

54 percent fly fished as often they want, versus 39 percent who wanted to fly fish more often. Half of participants described themselves as avid participants, much higher than the 35 percent of freshwater and 41 percent of saltwater anglers did. 43 percent considered themselves occasional participants.

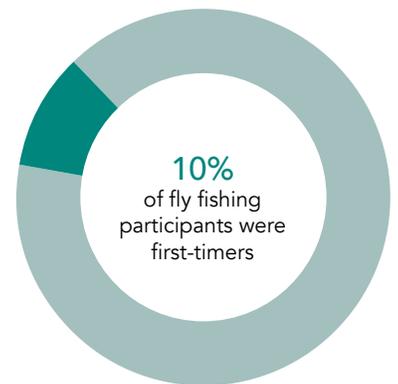
PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	29%
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	25%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	21%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	18%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	4%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	3%

# 11%

OF FEMALE FLY FISHING PARTICIPANTS WERE FIRST-TIMERS

# 10%

OF MALE FLY FISHING PARTICIPANTS WERE FIRST-TIMERS



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

Compared to other categories, fly fishing had a high level of first-time participants in 2023. 1 in 10 fly fishing participants were first-timers, versus 7 percent in saltwater and 5 percent in freshwater. All forms of fishing have seen declines in first-timers, in both absolute numbers and share of total participants, pointing to a possible COVID-era hangover among new entrants.

# YOUTH PARTICIPATION

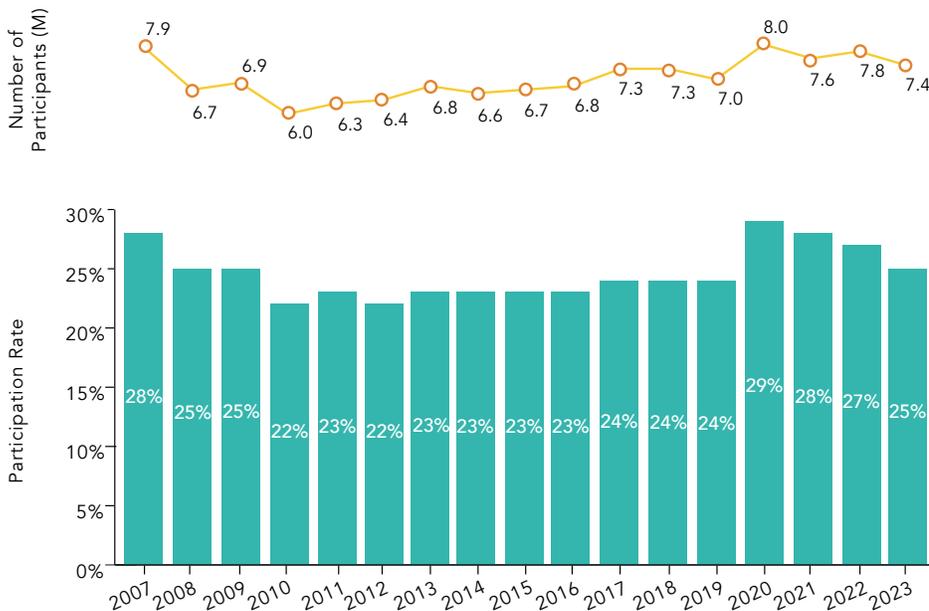


# YOUTH PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

### CHILDREN AGES 6-12

The continued decline in participant numbers and the participation rate among ages 6 to 12 represents a disappointing trend. Fishing's national participation rate among children ages 6 to 12 dipped 2 percentage points in 2023, down 4 points from 2020. The number of 6 to 12 year olds that fished in 2023—7.4 million—returned to the average seen in the 3 years that preceded COVID in 2020.



# 7.4M

## # OF CHILD FISHING PARTICIPANTS

ages 6 to 12

# 25%

## NATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATE

ages 6 to 12



# 108M

# OF  
OUTINGS



# 15

AVERAGE ANNUAL  
OUTINGS



# -600K

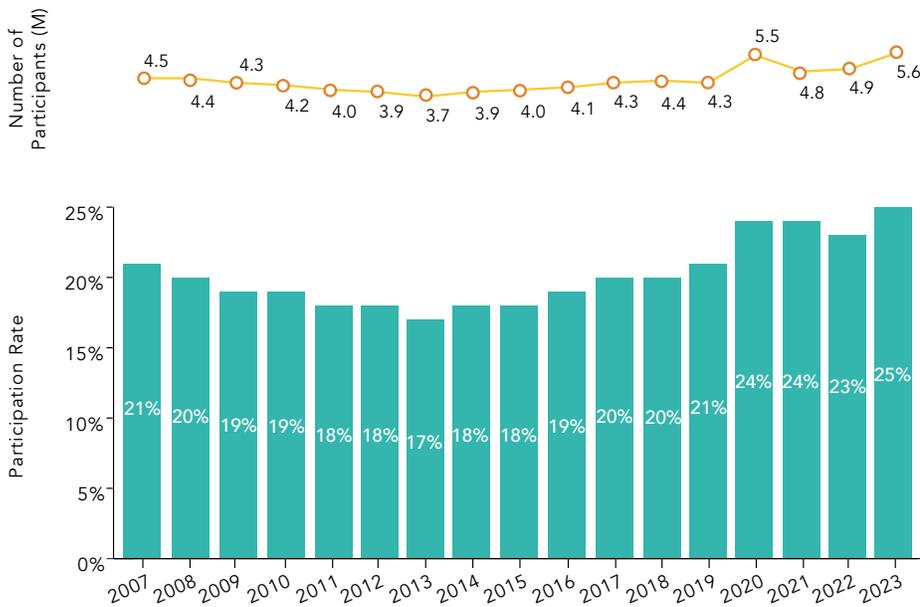
CHILD PARTICIPANTS  
vs. 2020

# YOUTH PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

### ADOLESCENTS AGES 13-17

In 2023, trajectory of participation among the nation's 13 to 17 year olds diverged from that of younger children. The number of anglers ages 13 to 17 rose from 4.9 million in 2022 to 5.6 million in 2023, an increase of 14 percent. The participation rate rose from 23 percent to 25 percent. These levels were the highest on record, topping those in 2020.



# 5.6M

# OF ADOLESCENT FISHING PARTICIPANTS  
ages 13 to 17

# 25%

NATIONAL PARTICIPATION RATE  
ages 13 to 17



## 82M

# OF OUTINGS



## 15

AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTINGS



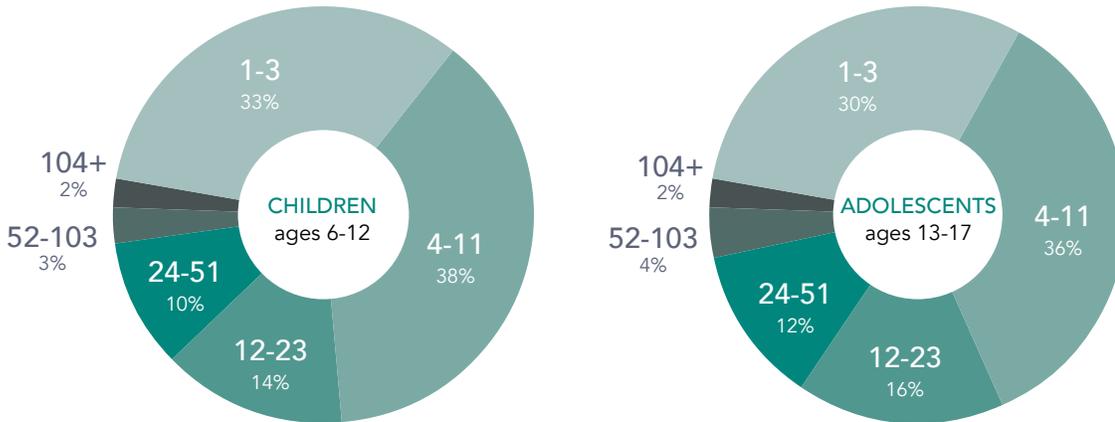
## +700K

ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANTS  
vs. 2022

# LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

Total annual outings among children 6 to 12 increased 2 percent to 108 million in 2022, the highest level on record. Outings among adolescents held steady at 82 million, down from 2020's record but still higher than 2019. 34 percent of adolescents fished more than one time per month, versus 29 percent of younger children, about the same as five years ago.



## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

59 percent of children ages 6 to 12 and 57 percent of adolescents ages 13 to 17 called themselves occasional participants. 37 percent of children and 39 percent of adolescents considered themselves avid anglers. Children were more likely than adolescents to say they wanted to fish more.

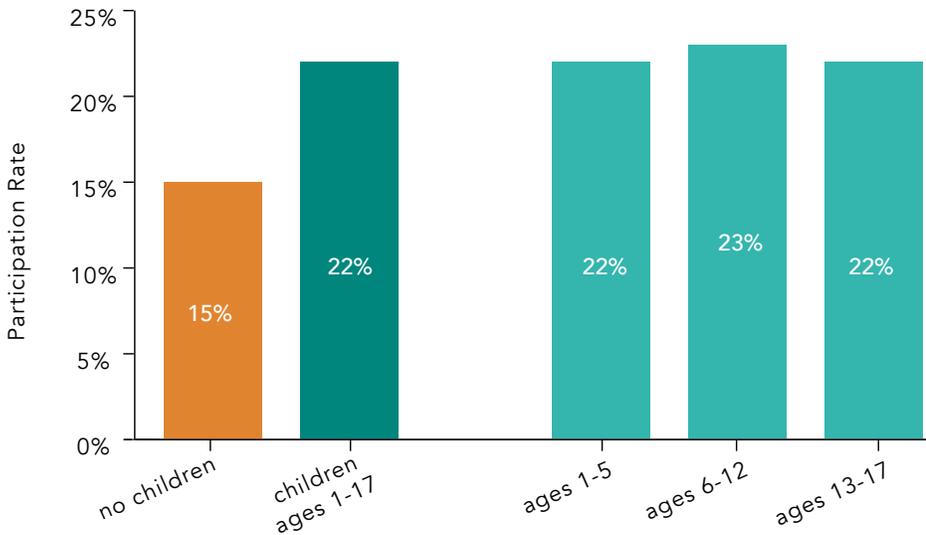
PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	CHILDREN	ADOLESCENTS
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	30%	35%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	29%	22%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	19%	20%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	18%	19%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%	2%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	1%	2%

# PARTICIPATION IN-DEPTH

## PARTICIPATION AMONG ADULTS WITH KIDS

Adults with children in their households, particularly younger children, participated in fishing at much higher levels than adults without children. In 2023, 22 percent of U.S. households with children fished, while just 15 percent of households without children fished. These levels have remained stable since participation data collection began in 2007.

Having children in a household encourages—but is not necessarily required for—participation growth. Over the past three years, the participation rate in households with adolescents ages 13 to 17 reported annual growth averaging 5 percent. During the same period, participation in households with no children grew 4 percent.



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

3 percent of children and adolescents, 1.6 million in total, tried fishing for the first time in 2022. This was slightly above the five-year annual average of 1.5 million new youth anglers. New participant trends among youths remained encouraging, with 12 percent average annual growth in participants and the participation rate for the last three years.

## FEMALE

*participation rate among:*

**CHILDREN: 25%**

**ADOLESCENTS: 19%**

## MALE

*participation rate among:*

**CHILDREN: 26%**

**ADOLESCENTS: 30%**

## 1.6M

**KIDS AGES 6 TO 7  
WERE FIRST-TIME  
PARTICIPANTS**

*in 2023*

# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

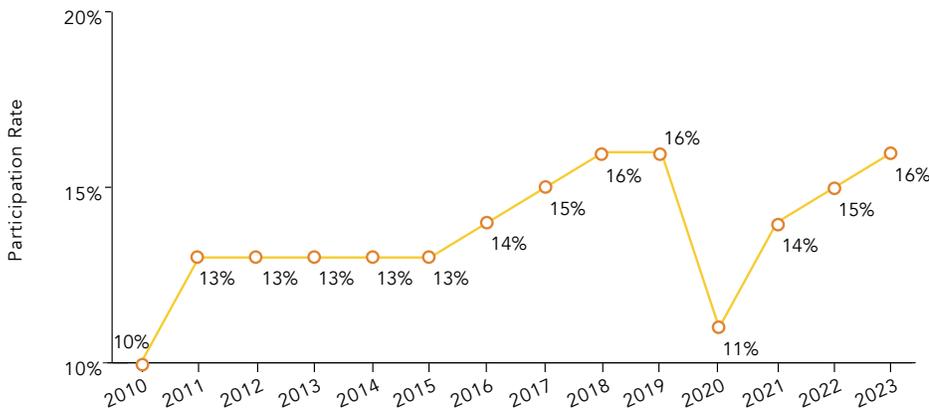
## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

Outside of their fishing pursuits, participants ages 6 to 17 enjoyed a wide variety of other outdoor activities.

### Which activities did you participate in outside of fishing?

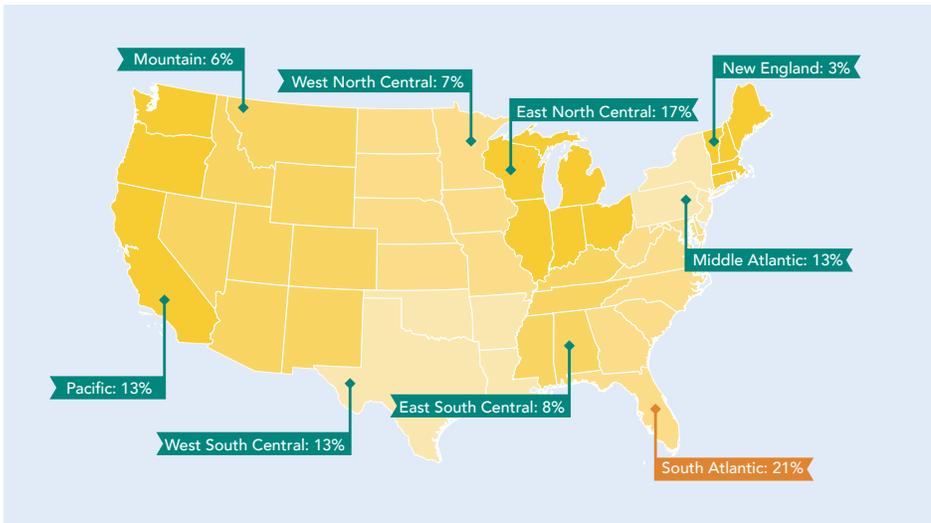
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES		PERCENTAGE
	Camping	49%
	Bicycling	44%
	Hiking	29%
	Running	26%
	Hunting	16%
	Kayaking	16%

# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?



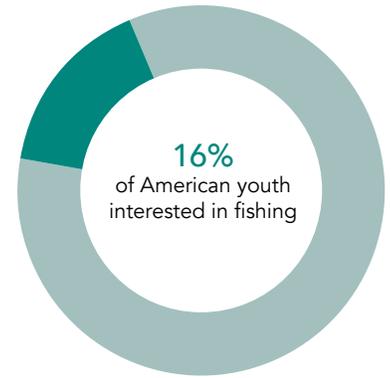
## CONSIDERING FISHING OVER TIME

16 percent of non-participating American youths ages 6 to 17 expressed interest in fishing in 2022, up from 11 percent in 2020 and 10 percent in 2010.



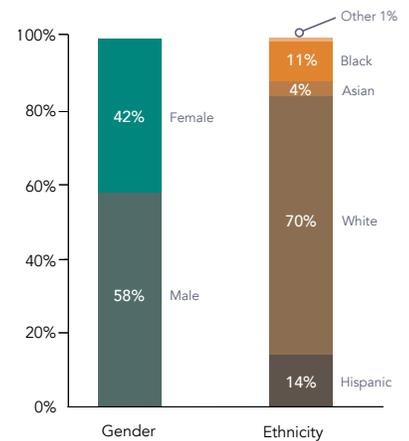
## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

Like the broader population contemplating but not participating in fishing, the young and interested tended to live on the Atlantic coast, the East North Central region (home to the Great Lakes), and states on the Pacific coastline.



## YOUTH CONSIDERING PARTICIPATION

In 2023, 24 percent of those considering but not yet participating in fishing were under the age of 18, totaling 5.1 million young Americans.



## CONSIDERING DEMOGRAPHICS

Among young Americans who are interested in fishing, the share who are Black and Hispanic has slowly declined for over a decade. This underscores the need for expanded outreach to engage underrepresented populations.

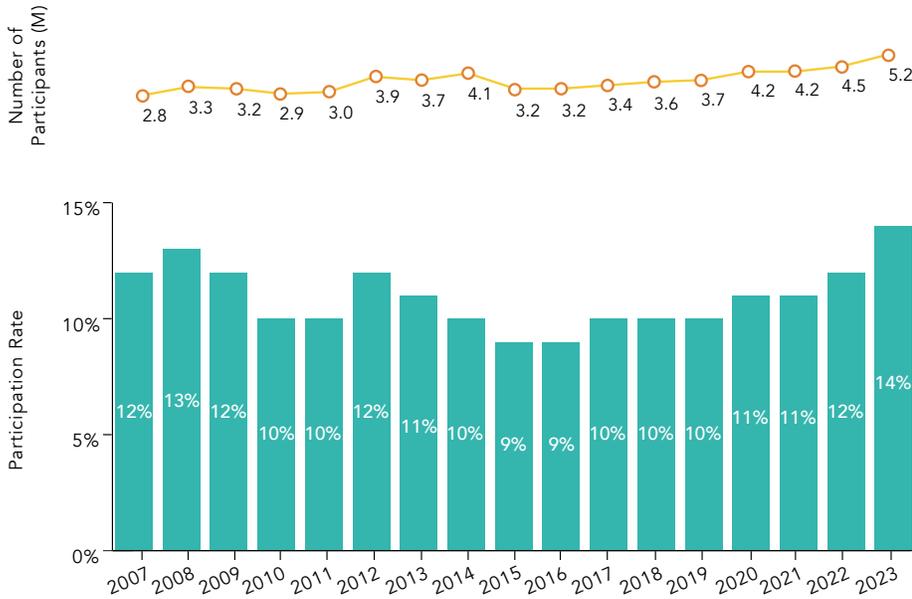
# BLACK PARTICIPATION



# BLACK FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Over 5.2 million Black Americans ages 6 and over fished in 2023, the highest number since tracking began in 2007. Their participation rate—a record 14 percent in 2023—has increased an average of 11 percent over each of the last 3 years. All styles of fishing saw strong year-over-year increases in participant numbers and the participation rate.



TYPE OF FISHING	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (M)	PARTICIPATION RATE
All fishing*	5.2	14%
Freshwater	3.8	19%
Saltwater	1.9	9%
Fly	0.9	4%

\*Participants may have reported participating in more than one type of fishing.

# 5.2M

TOTAL #  
OF BLACK  
PARTICIPANTS

# 14%

NATIONAL  
PARTICIPATION RATE

## PARTICIPATION BY FISHING CATEGORY

Black anglers are a powerful growth driver of fishing participation. In the last 3 years, annual average participation rate growth was roughly 14 percent for each fishing style. Nearly 2.5 million more Black anglers went freshwater fishing in 2023 than did in 2007 when activity tracking began. During that period, saltwater fishing gained 800,000 Black participants, and fly fishing gained 600,000.



# 61M

TOTAL #  
OF OUTINGS



# 12

AVERAGE ANNUAL  
OUTINGS

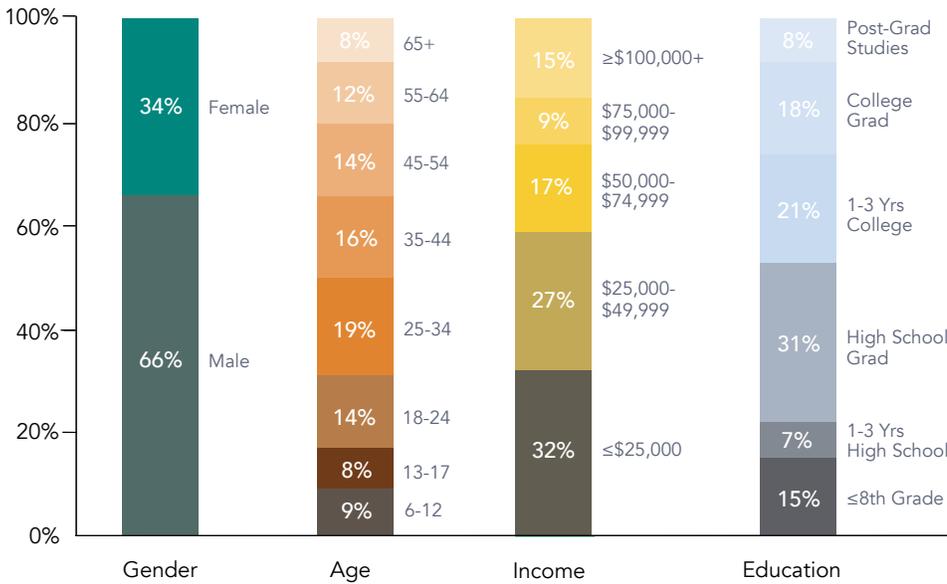


# 1.5M

MORE BLACK  
PARTICIPANTS

*in 2023 than a decade earlier*

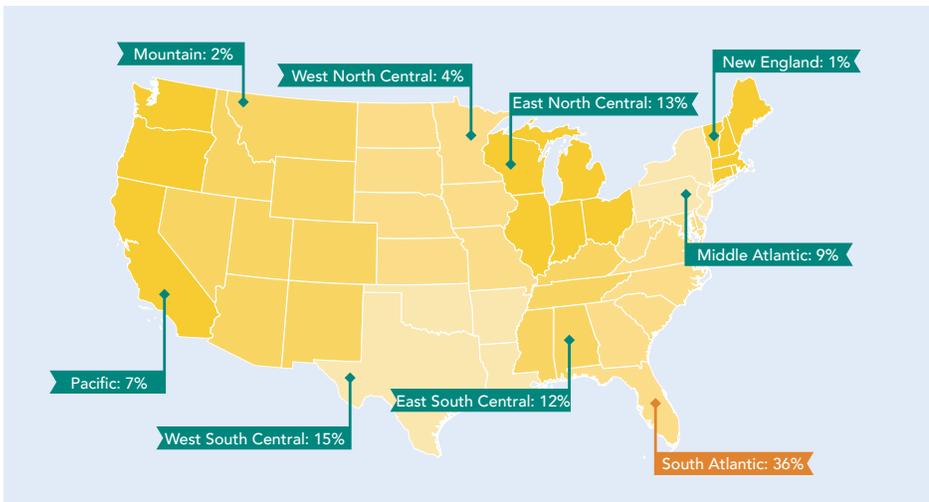
# WHO PARTICIPATED?



**AGES  
18-24**  
AGE GROUP  
WITH MOST SHARE  
GROWTH

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Half of Black participants in 2023 were under the age of 35, with strong growth recorded among anglers ages 18 to 34. Unusually, 2023 brought higher share growth among the young than the old. For example, anglers ages 13 to 17 and ages 18 to 24 each grew 10 percent in 2023, while declining 4 percent for those 65+. Nearly 1 in 4 Black anglers had household income over \$75,000, and almost half completed at least some college. At 34 percent, female participation was just below the overall participant population of 37 percent.



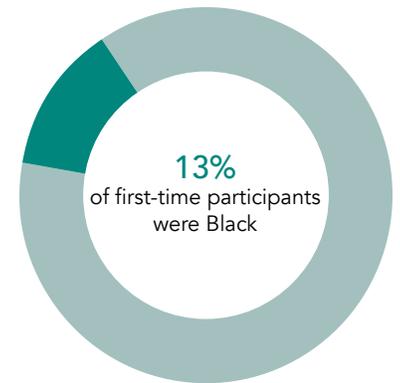
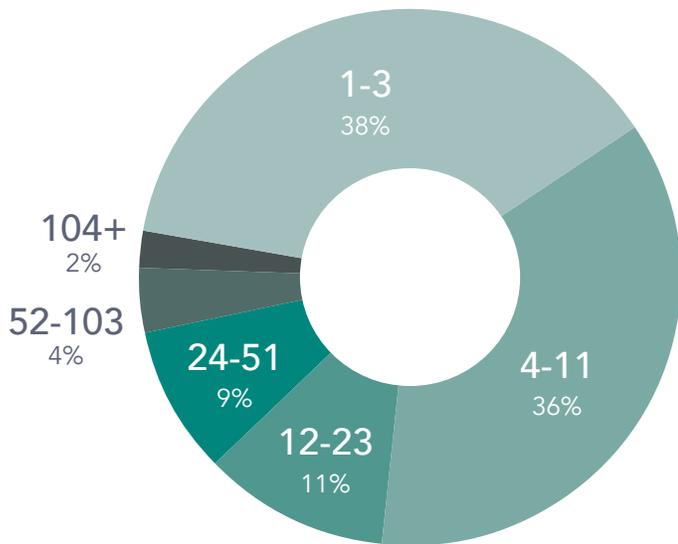
## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

The South Atlantic region was home to nearly 4 in 10 Black fishing participants in 2023. Add in East South Central and West South Central, and this contiguous block would contain nearly two-thirds of Black anglers in the country.

# LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

The only growing activity segment of Black fishing participants is the least active one, as those fishing just 1 to 3 times a year increased to 38 percent of total anglers, up from 22 percent a decade prior. The most dedicated anglers, those fishing once per week or more, fell from 14 percent of Black participants in 2008 to just 4 percent in 2023.



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

5 percent of Black Americans ages 6 and over tried fishing for the first time in 2023. These 1.8 million new anglers made up 13 percent of all new participants.

## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

46 percent of Black anglers considered themselves to be avid participants, the same number that self-described as occasional participants. 44 percent wished they could fish more often.

PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	27%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	25%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	21%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	19%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	5%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	4%

# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

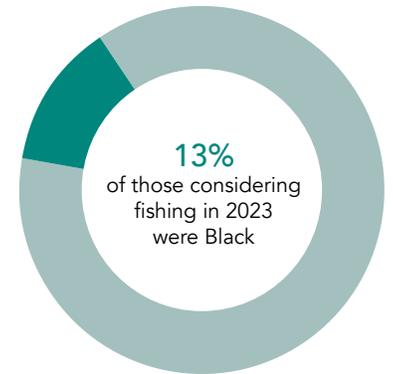
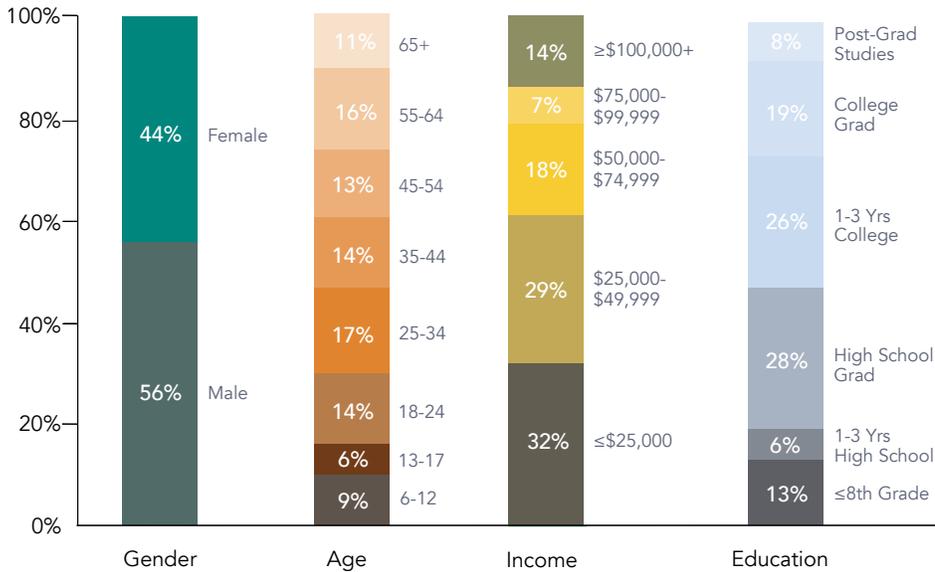
## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

In addition to fishing, Black participants enjoyed a huge variety of other activities. The most popular were camping, running, and bicycling.

Which activities did you participate in outside of fishing?

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES		PERCENTAGE
	Camping	25%
	Running	20%
	Bicycling	20%
	Hiking	15%
	Swimming	14%
	Hunting	7%

# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?

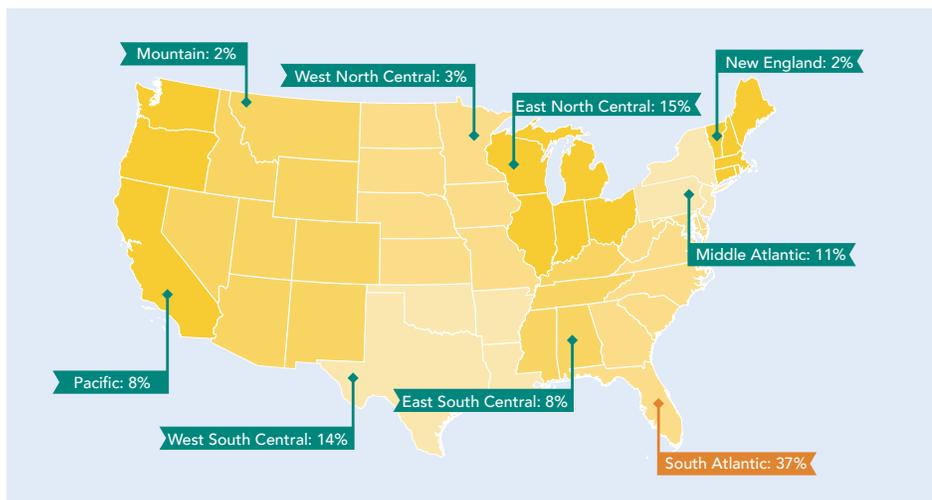


## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE CONSIDERING FISHING

Among Black Americans considering fishing, just 15 percent were under age 18, versus 24 percent for the total number of people considering fishing. 44 percent were female, far less than the 34 percent share of female Black anglers in 2023.

## PEOPLE CONSIDERING FISHING

11 percent of Black Americans considered fishing in 2023. This represented 3.5 million potential participants, the highest level since 2019 and above the 10-year average of 3.3 million considering.



## THOSE CONSIDERING FISHING BY REGION

Nearly 1 in 4 considering fishing in 2023 resided in the South Atlantic region. Far fewer lived in the Mountain, Pacific, and New England areas.

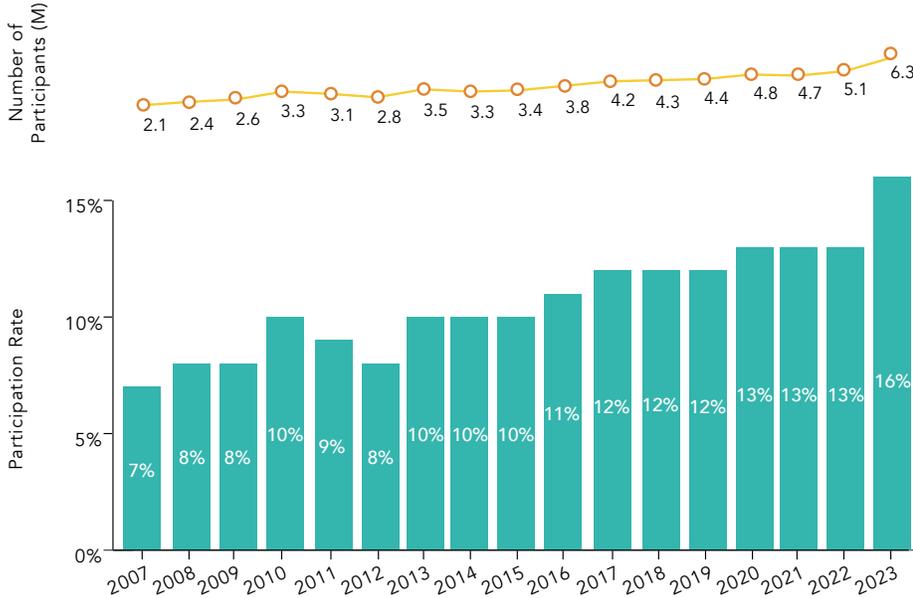
# HISPANIC PARTICIPATION



# HISPANIC FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Fishing participation nearly doubled in a decade among Hispanic Americans ages 6 and over, increasing from 3.5 million in 2013 to 6.3 million in 2023. Participant numbers grew an average of 15 percent annually since 2020. The participation rate also jumped, from 13 percent in 2022 to 16 percent in 2023.



**6.3M**

TOTAL #  
OF HISPANIC  
PARTICIPANTS

**16%**

NATIONAL  
PARTICIPATION RATE

TYPE OF FISHING	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (M)	PARTICIPATION RATE
All fishing*	6.3	16%
Freshwater	3.5	9%
Saltwater	2.1	5%
Fly	1.0	3%

\*Participants may have reported participating in more than one type of fishing.

## PARTICIPATION BY FISHING CATEGORY

2023 reiterated that Hispanic anglers remain a critical and increasingly influential constituency in the recreational fishing industry. Hispanic participant numbers in 2023 exceeded COVID-influenced highs in 2020 among freshwater, saltwater and fly fishing.



**98M**

TOTAL #  
OF OUTINGS



**16**

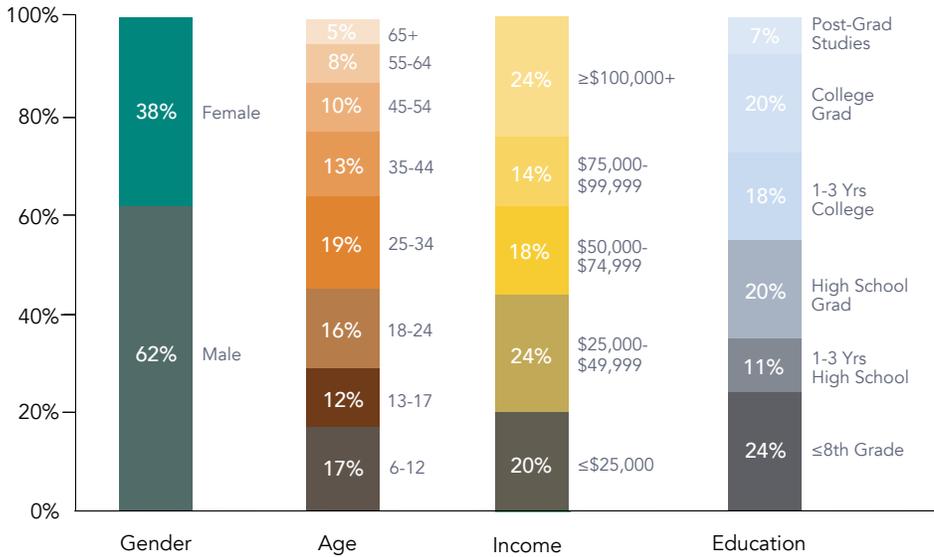
AVERAGE ANNUAL  
OUTINGS



**1.5M**

MORE HISPANIC  
PARTICIPANTS  
*in 2023 than in 2020*

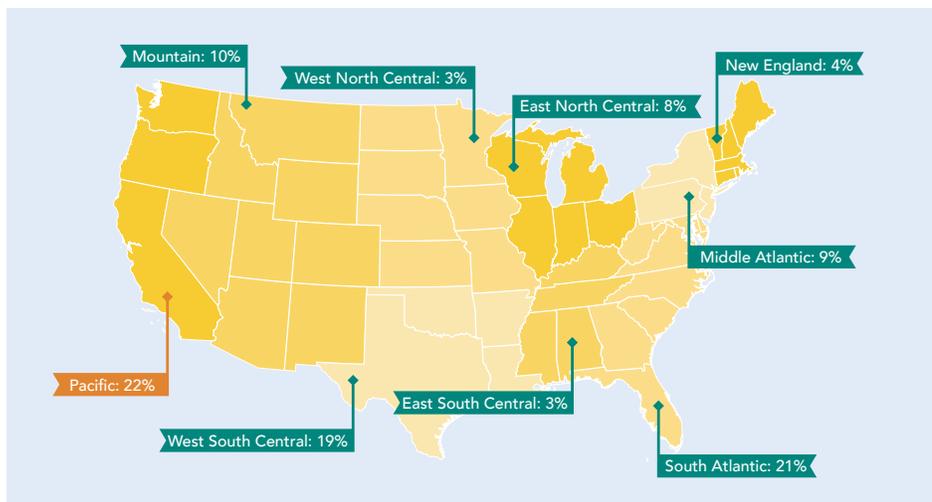
# WHO PARTICIPATED?



**AGES  
18-24**  
AGE GROUP  
WITH MOST SHARE  
GROWTH  
2023 vs. 2020

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The diversity of age ranges with recent share growth among Hispanic anglers highlights the broad appeal of fishing across the age spectrum. Over the last three years, Hispanic anglers ages 65+, young adults ages 18 to 24, and children ages 6 to 12 all showed substantial share increases. Share gains were also seen among those reporting annual household income below \$25,000 per year, and among those with high school diplomas and less.



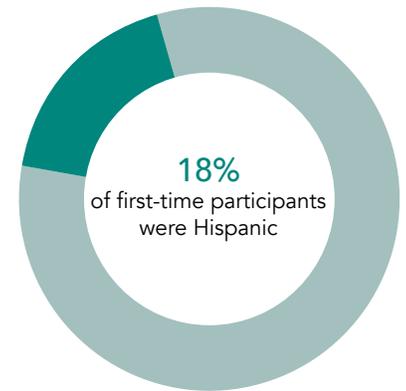
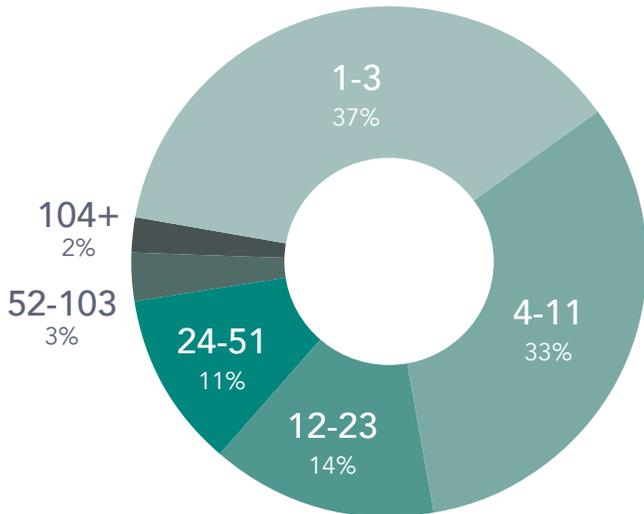
## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

The American West and Southwest, comprised of the Pacific and Mountain regions, were home to nearly 1 in 3 Hispanic participants. The Midwestern regions of East North Central and West North Central, spanning the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes, strongly grew their share of total Hispanic participants, up 27 percent and 11 percent from the year prior, respectively, albeit from a small base.

# LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

The fastest growing segment of Hispanic participants in 2023 was those that fished just 1 to 3 times. 37 percent fished 1 to 3 times (versus 28 percent in 2019). 33 percent fished 4 to 11 times. In 2007, 10 percent of Hispanic anglers reported fishing more than once a week, but by 2023 that fell to just 5 percent.



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

2 percent of Hispanic Americans ages 6 and over tried fishing for the first time, representing over 800,000 new anglers in 2023. Hispanics represented 18 percent of the overall 4.1 million new participants.

## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

A majority of Hispanic fishing participants, 58 percent, considered themselves occasional participants. The same percentage wished they could fish more often. Their growing share of the U.S. population and strong interest in fishing more frequently confirms that Hispanics will continue to be a key demographic going forward.

PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	31%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	27%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	21%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	16%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	2%

# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

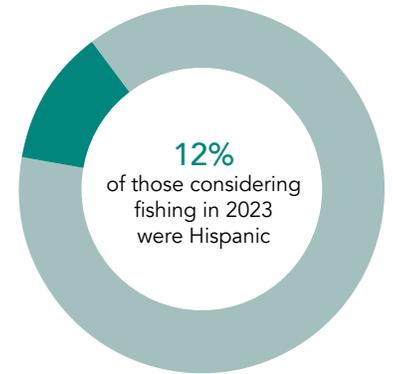
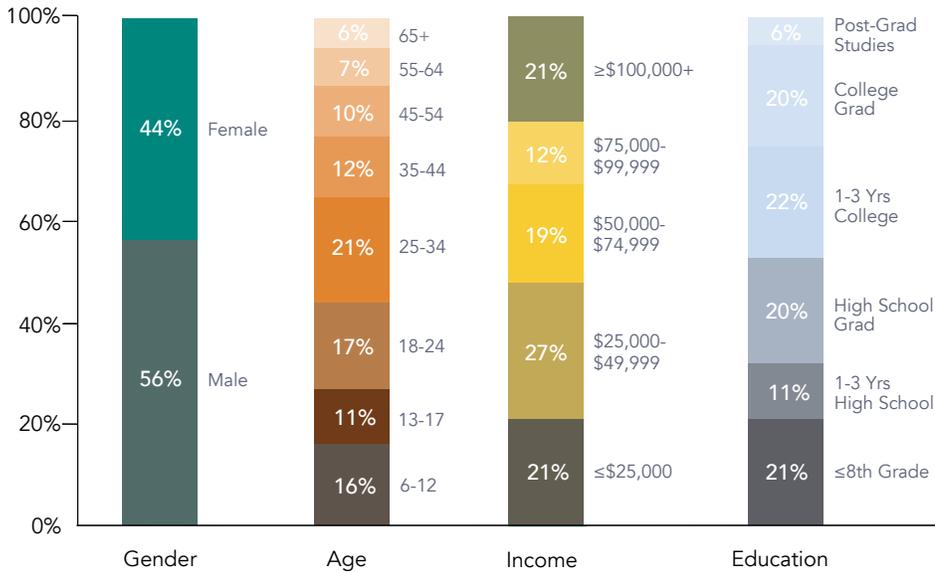
## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

In addition to fishing, Hispanic participants enjoyed a huge variety of other activities. The most popular outdoor activities were camping, bicycling, hiking and running.

### Which activities did you participate in outside of fishing?

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES		PERCENTAGE
	Camping	44%
	Bicycling	35%
	Hiking	31%
	Running	31%
	Hunting	17%
	Kayaking	15%

# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?

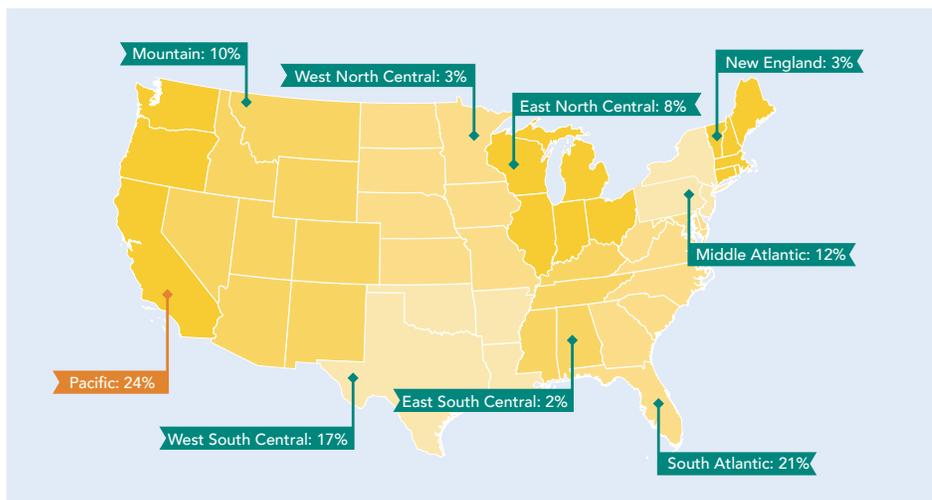


## DEMOGRAPHICS OF PEOPLE CONSIDERING FISHING

44 percent of Hispanics interested in fishing were under the age of 25, and another 33 percent were younger than 45. This underscores the need for experienced participants to introduce the sport to younger generations. 44 percent of Hispanics considering fishing were female, down from 46 percent the year prior.

## PEOPLE CONSIDERING FISHING

9 percent of Hispanics in the U.S. considered fishing in 2023. This represented 3 million potential participants for the second year in a row, just below the 10 year average of 3.1 million interested in fishing.



## THOSE CONSIDERING FISHING BY REGION

Hispanics that were considering fishing were not evenly spread across the country, as 34 percent lived in the Mountain and Pacific regions. Far fewer Hispanics considering fishing resided in the West North Central and East South Central regions, and in New England.

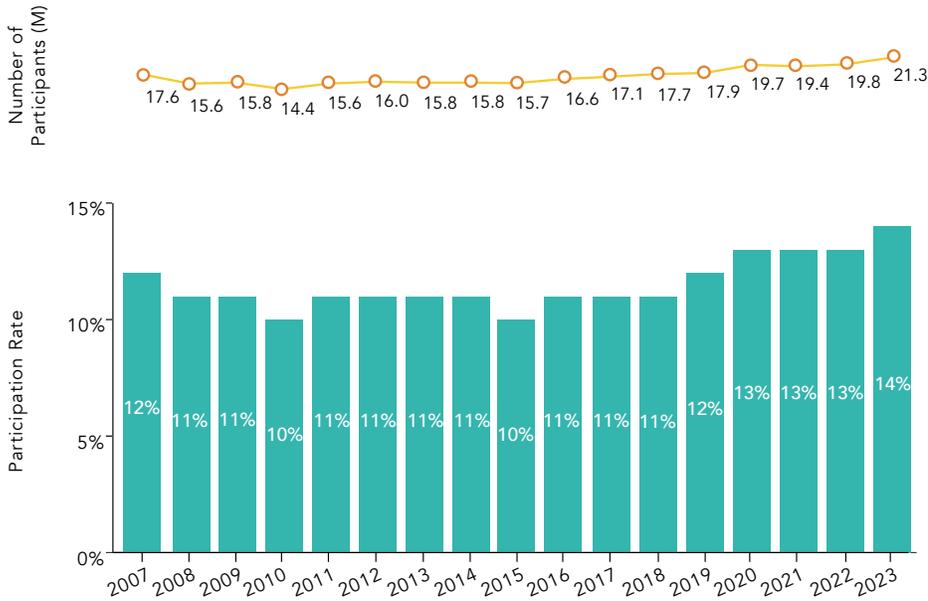
# FEMALE PARTICIPATION



# FEMALE FISHING PARTICIPATION

## PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Both the number of female participants and the female fishing participation rate reached an all-time high in 2023. Participant numbers grew by 5.5 million in a decade, from 15.8 million in 2013 to 21.3 million in 2023. Females represented 37 percent of total anglers, 41 percent of first-time participants, and 45 percent of those considering fishing.



# 21.3M

TOTAL #  
OF FEMALE  
PARTICIPANTS

# 14%

NATIONAL  
PARTICIPATION RATE



# 289M

TOTAL #  
OF OUTINGS



# 14

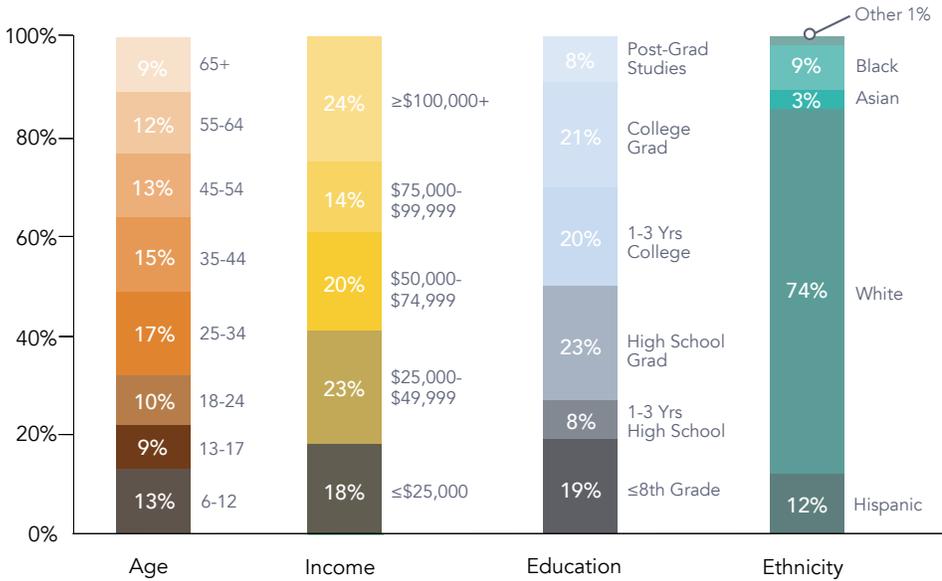
AVERAGE ANNUAL  
OUTINGS



# +3%

INCREASE IN  
PARTICIPATION RATE  
*avg annually since 2020*

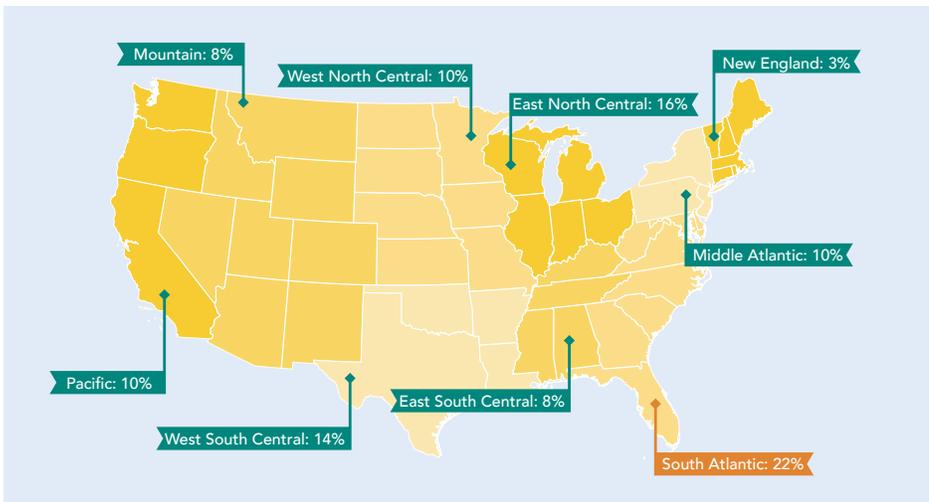
# WHO PARTICIPATED?



**24%**  
ANNUAL  
HOUSEHOLD  
INCOME \$100,000+

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Females comprised 37 percent of participants in 2023, up from 36 percent in 2022. Just under half of female anglers reported completing at least some college. 74 percent were White, versus 76 percent of the overall fishing population, and 12 percent were Hispanic, versus 11 percent of total anglers.



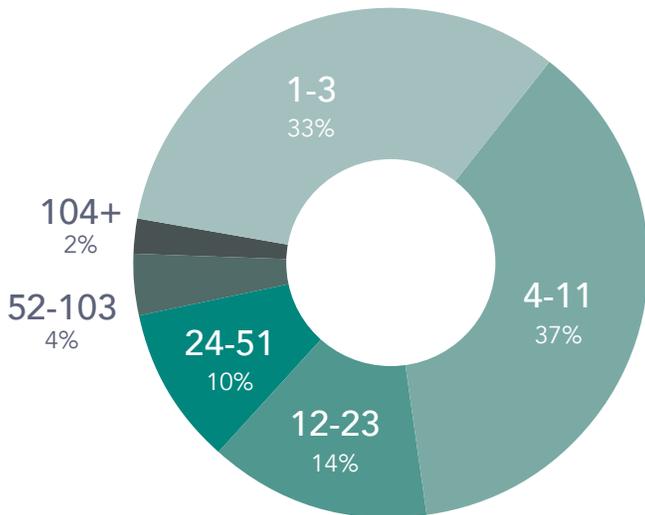
## REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

The South Atlantic region was home to the highest percentage of female fishing participants, 22 percent. Fewer female anglers came from the New England, Middle Atlantic and Pacific regions, all of which lost share in 2023.

# LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

## ANNUAL OUTINGS

Average annual outings by female participants fell from 15 in 2022 to 14 in 2023. As with other fishing populations, the subset of the least frequent participants slowly grew. 1 in 3 anglers fished only 1 to 3 times, and over 7 in 10 fished less than once per month. Female anglers took 289 million of the total 889 million outings reported in 2023.



## PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION

66 percent of female participants described themselves as occasional anglers, while 48 percent reported they would like to fish more often. These perceived participation levels were roughly comparable to those reported by other groups.

PERCEIVED LEVELS OF FISHING PARTICIPATION	PERCENTAGE
Occasional participant, fish as often as I want	33%
Occasional participant, would like to fish more often	33%
Avid fishing participant, would like to fish more often	15%
Avid fishing participant, fish as often as I want	14%
Don't fish currently, but would like to fish	3%
Don't fish currently, not interested in fishing	2%

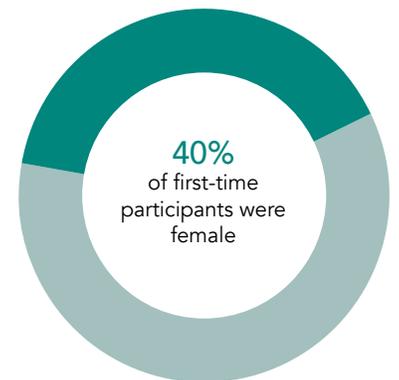
# 289M

## OUTINGS IN 2023

versus 261M a decade ago

# 48%

## OF FEMALE ANGLERS WOULD LIKE TO FISH MORE OFTEN



## FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

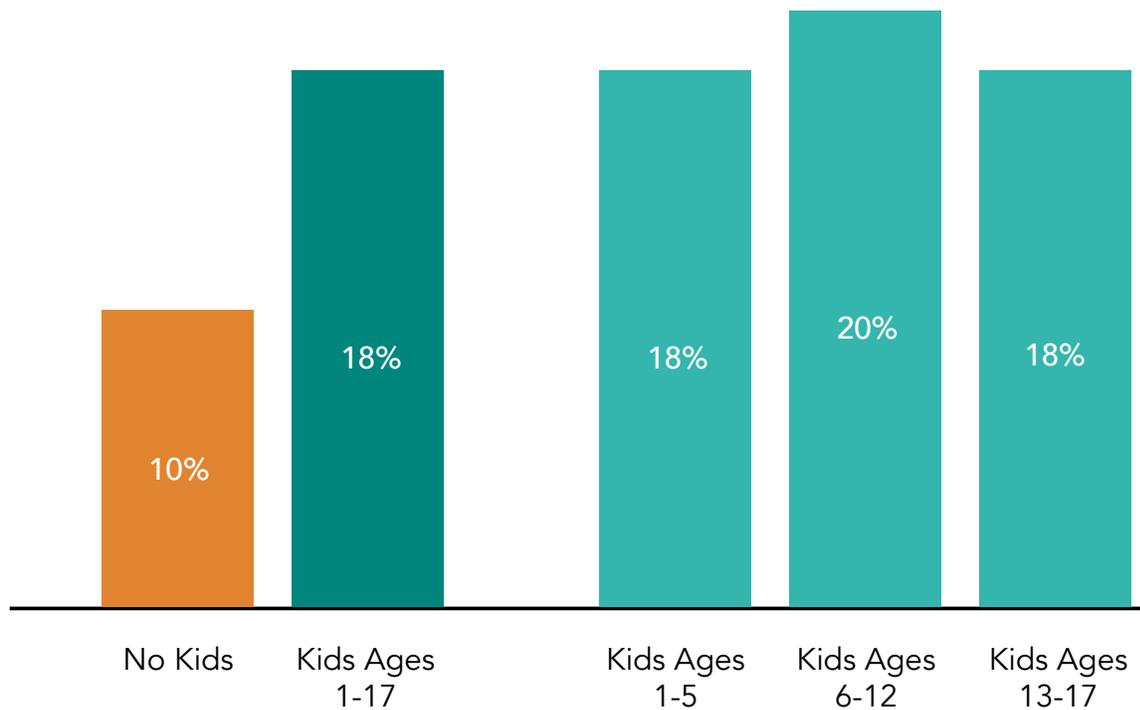
The number of first-time female participants held steady at 1.7 million in 2023. Both the number and participation rate of female first-timers have remained roughly consistent since 2020.

# THE INFLUENCE OF KIDS

## PARTICIPATION AMONG FEMALES WITH KIDS

Females were more likely to fish if they had children in their households, particularly kids ages 6 to 12. 20 percent of US households with a child ages 6 to 12 also had a female fishing participant, compared to just 10 percent that did not include children.

Having children in a household encourages—but is not necessarily required for—participation growth. On average since 2021, adult female fishing participation grew 4 percent in households with children, and 2 percent in households without kids.



# ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF FISHING

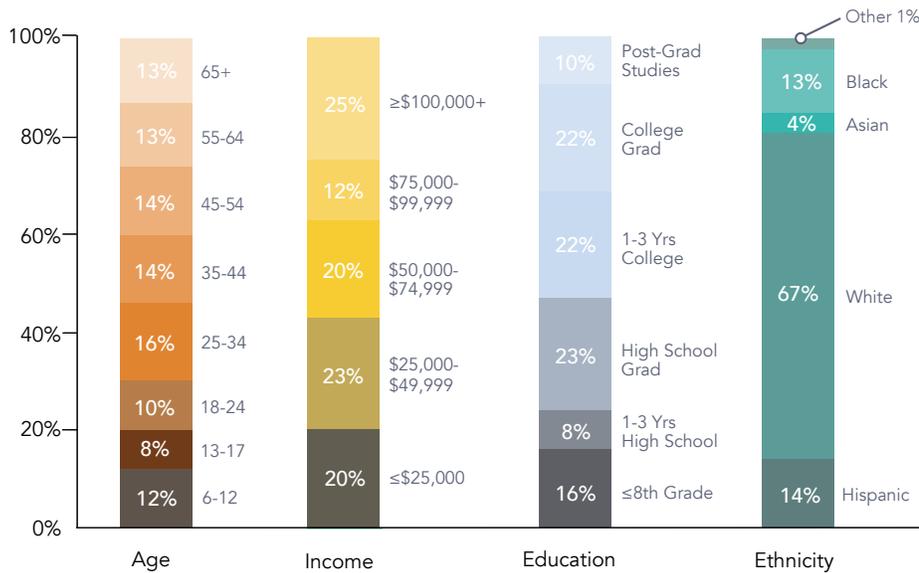
## TOP CROSSOVER ACTIVITIES

In addition to fishing, female anglers ranked camping, hiking, and bicycling among their preferred outdoor activities.

### Which activities did you participate in outside of fishing?

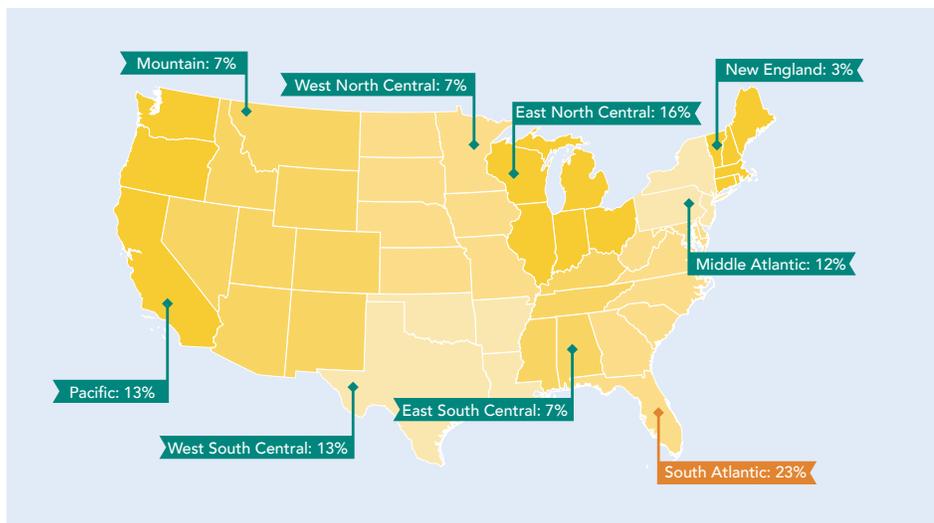
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES		PERCENTAGE
	Camping	44%
	Hiking	32%
	Bicycling	30%
	Running	31%
	Kayaking	16%
	Hunting	13%

# WHO CONSIDERED FISHING?



## CONSIDERING PARTICIPATION DEMOGRAPHICS

Interested females were more diverse, had somewhat lower educational attainment levels and had lower household incomes than both the overall group considering fishing and the total participant population. 3 in 10 females who expressed interest in fishing in 2023 were under the age 25.



## CONSIDERING PARTICIPANTS BY REGION

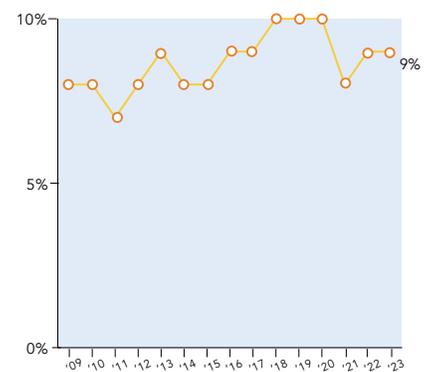
Nearly 4 in 10 females considering fishing lived along the Atlantic coast, while another 2 in 10 resided along the Pacific coast. Just like female fishing participants and the total pool of fishing participants, the highest percentage of females who were interested in fishing lived in the South Atlantic region.

# 11.6M

NON-PARTICIPATING FEMALES CONSIDERED FISHING

## CONSIDERING FISHING PARTICIPATION

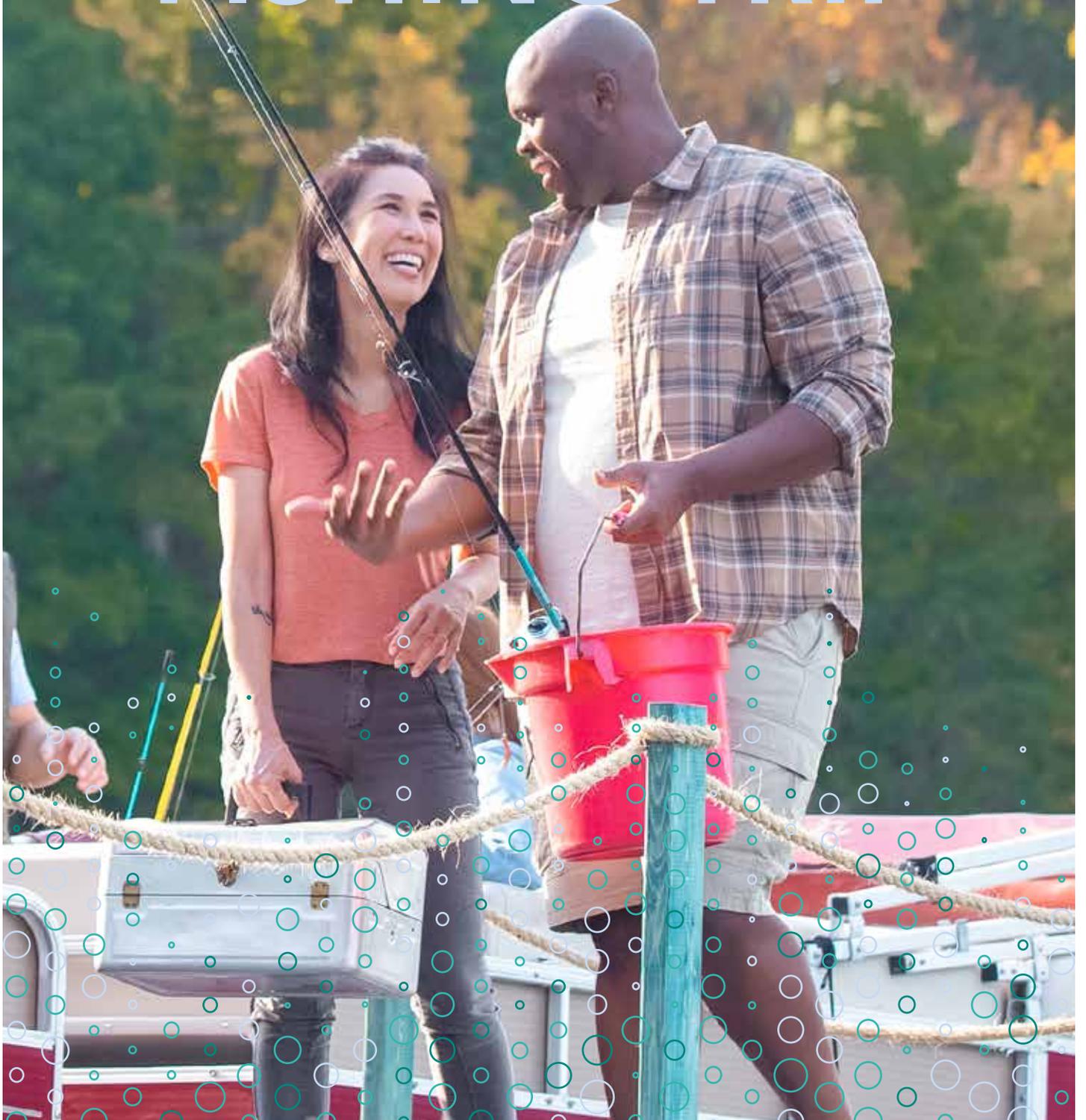
Nearly 12 million women considered fishing, almost 9 percent of American females ages 6 and over, which was roughly in line with the year prior. 13 percent of females considering fishing were Black, versus 9 percent of actual participants. The same dynamic applied to Hispanics, as 14 percent of aspiring anglers were female versus 12 percent of female participants.



## CONSIDERING FISHING OVER TIME

For over a decade, between 8 and 10 percent of females ages 6 and over considered but did not participate in fishing.

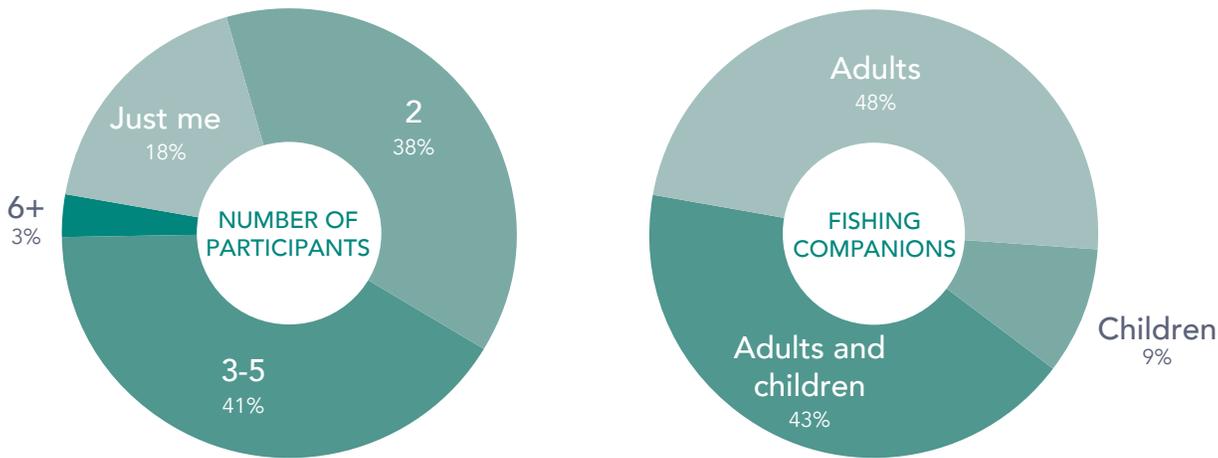
# PROFILE OF A FISHING TRIP



# A TYPICAL FISHING TRIP

## FISHING COMPANIONS

Only 18 percent of anglers typically fished alone, reiterating that fishing remained a shared activity in 2023. Nearly 8 in 10 participants usually fished in groups of 2 to 5 anglers. Males were more likely than females to fish alone, at 21 percent versus 12 percent, and females were more likely to fish in groups of 3 or more, at 48 percent to 42 percent. 3 in 4 participants ages 65 and older typically fished alone or with one companion.



## FISHING LOCATION TYPES

Participants fished from a variety of locations in 2023, with shorelines, riverbanks, and boats topping the list. Kayak fishing nearly doubled its share of anglers in the last decade, growing more than 6 percent on average annually each of the past three years.

FISHING LOCATION TYPES*	PERCENTAGE
Shoreline	48%
Riverbank	47%
Boat	45%
Pier / jetty	24%
Kayak	7%
Other	5%



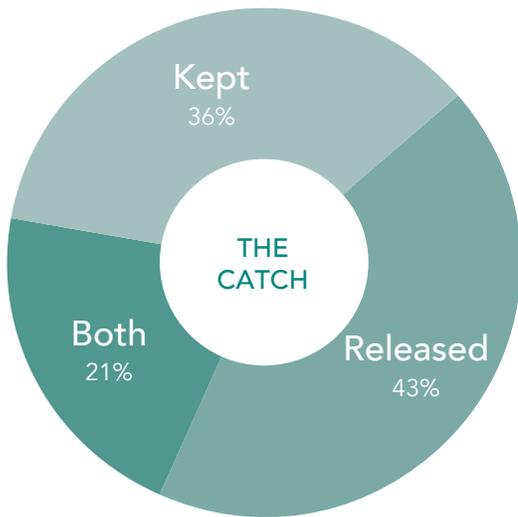
**78%**  
OF ADULT  
PARTICIPANTS  
BOUGHT FISHING  
GEAR/EQUIPMENT  
*in the last 12 months*

\*Participants may have reported fishing in more than one location type.

# A TYPICAL FISHING TRIP

## THE CATCH

87 percent of participants caught at least one fish on their most recent trip. 43 percent opted to release their catch to swim another day. 36 percent kept it, and about 1 in 5 reported doing both.

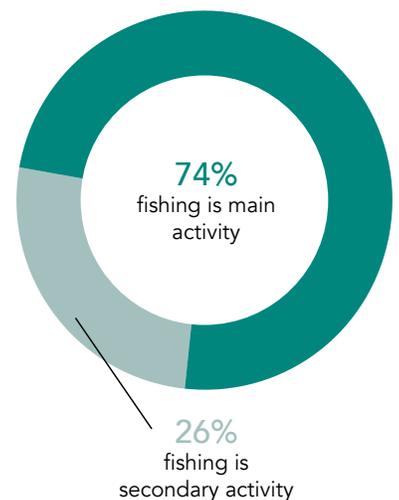


**87%**  
OF PARTICIPANTS  
CAUGHT FISH

## THE OUTING

As in 2022, 74 percent of anglers in 2023 typically considered fishing their “primary activity” rather than a side event. When a complementary activity was undertaken, camping, boating, picnicking, and hiking were the most popular activities.

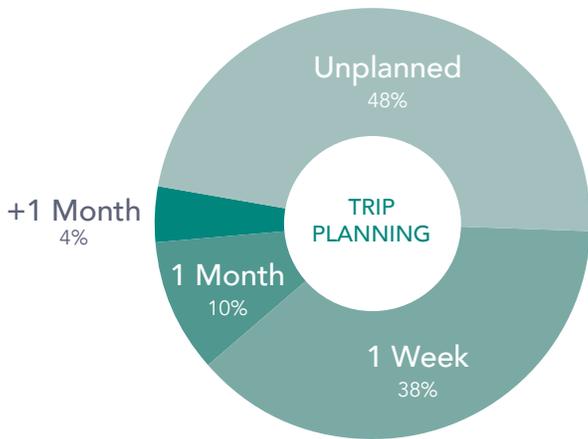
ACTIVITIES DURING A FISHING TRIP	PERCENTAGE
Camping	77%
Boating	48%
Picnicking	45%
Hiking	41%
Day at the park	40%
Beach trip	31%
Kayaking/canoeing	28%



# HOW DID PARTICIPANTS PREPARE FOR THEIR TRIPS?

## TRIP PLANNING

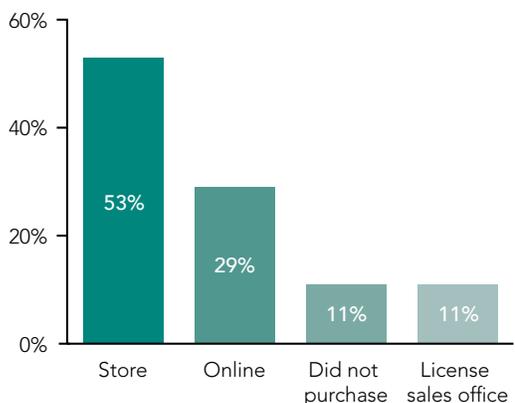
Nearly half of fishing trips were spontaneous, and about 4 in 10 were planned one week prior. Anglers under 30 were the least likely to undertake unplanned or spontaneous outings. Female anglers were more likely than males to report their most recent fishing trip was unplanned, at 56 percent to 43 percent.



FISHING INFORMATION SOURCES	PERCENTAGE
Friends	56%
Family	50%
Fishing specific website	33%
Wildlife fishing guide	24%
General outdoor websites	22%
Retail stores	18%
Fishing specific magazine	13%
Outdoor magazines	12%
Online retail stores	11%

## FISHING LICENSE

More than half of fishing licenses, 53 percent, were purchased at a store. Online sales held steady at 29 percent in 2023. 11 percent of participants did not purchase a fishing license at all, similar to the year prior. Among those not purchasing a license, many said they fished in private waters. Others cited age and not knowing a license was needed.

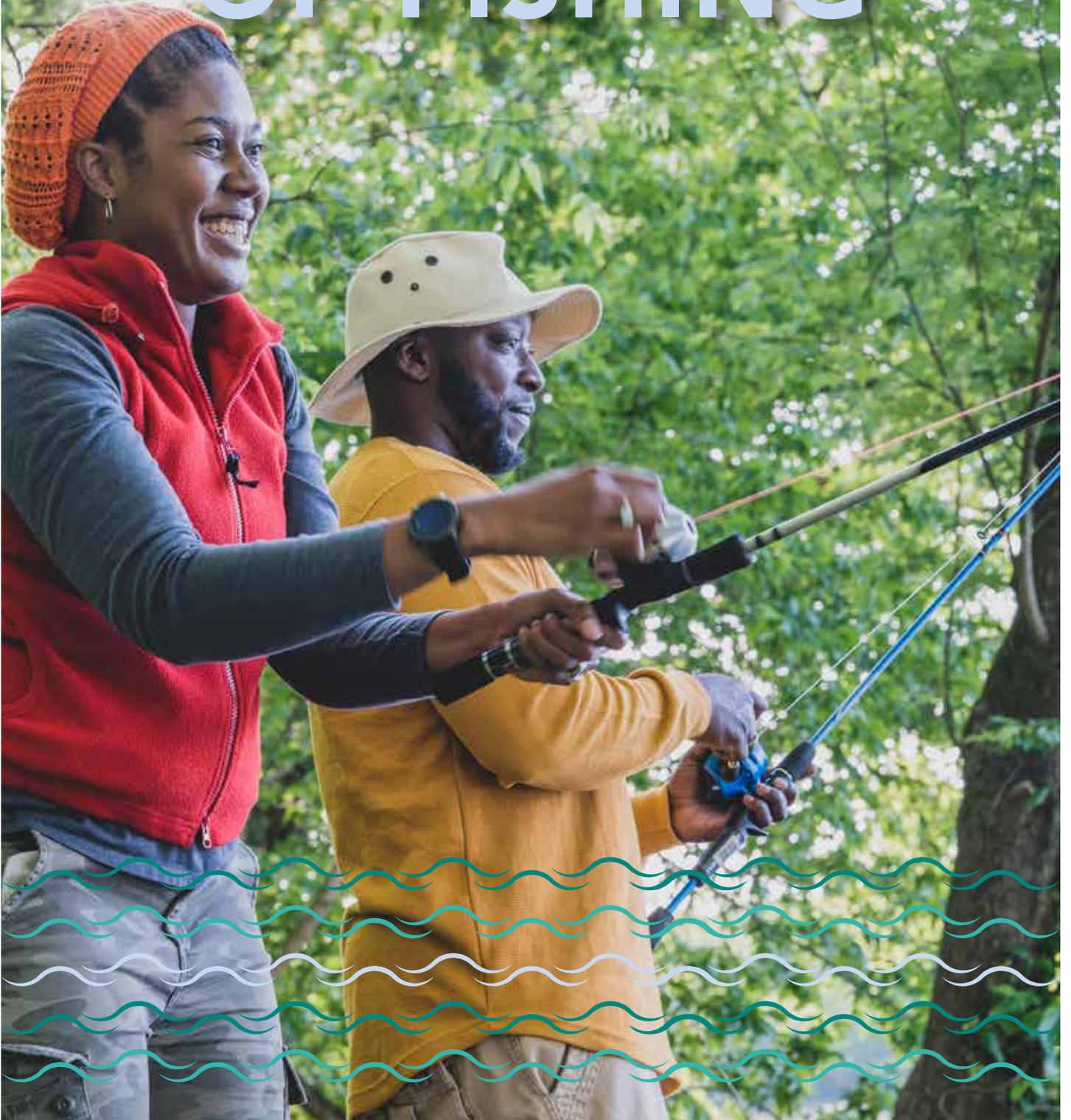


LOCATION OF LICENSE PURCHASE\*

REASON FOR NO FISHING LICENSE	PERCENTAGE
Fished in private waters	25%
Did not know I needed one	20%
Did not because of my age	15%
Not needed where I fish	12%
I own a lifetime license	11%
I never purchase a fishing license	11%
Too expensive	8%

\*Participants may have reported more than one location.

# PERCEPTIONS OF FISHING



# ATTITUDES OF FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANTS

## EXPECTATIONS FOR A FIRST FISHING TRIP

Relaxation was a key driver for first-time fishing participants in 2023. Many new anglers reported the desire to share time with family and friends also inspired fishing.

DRIVERS FOR A FIRST FISHING TRIP	PERCENTAGE
Relax and unwind	52%
Spend time with family and friends	47%
Exciting time catching a lot of fish	38%
Experience the great outdoors	38%
Compete to see who could catch the biggest/most fish	24%
No expectations, thought I'd give it a try	24%
Try something new, maybe catch a few fish	14%
Teach my children about fishing and nature	14%

**52%**  
OF FIRST-TIMERS  
SAW FISHING AS A  
CHANCE TO RELAX  
AND UNWIND

## PERCEPTIONS OF FISHING BEFORE PARTICIPATING

Fishing was generally seen as a stress-free, easy, and exciting way to spend times outdoors. Among first-time anglers, negative expectations of fishing—that it's time consuming, uninteresting, and requires too much equipment—were reported much less often than positive perceptions.

PERCEPTIONS OF FISHING BEFORE PARTICIPATING	PERCENTAGE
Stress free activity	66%
Exciting way to spend time outdoors	42%
Easy to learn	42%
Time consuming	34%
Uninteresting	20%
Only for serious outdoors people	19%
Intriguing	15%
Not for someone like me	15%

**66%**  
SAID FISHING IS A  
STRESS FREE  
ACTIVITY

# FISHING STEREOTYPES

## STEREOTYPES OF FISHING PARTICIPANTS

When asked which characteristics best described the type of person fishing was for, most participants held no stereotypes and indicated that anyone could be angler. Males were more likely to describe a fishing participant as a sportsman or an active person. Females were slightly more likely to describe an angler as a quiet type of person, or a person with children.

FISHING STEREOTYPES	ALL	MALE	FEMALE
Could be anyone/no stereotype	64%	63%	66%
Outdoor type of person	28%	28%	28%
Sportsman	17%	20%	12%
Active person	17%	18%	15%
A quiet type of a person	13%	12%	13%
Families with children	13%	12%	13%
Educated person	6%	7%	4%
Older person than me	5%	6%	3%
Younger person than me	4%	4%	3%
A lazy person	1%	1%	1%



**OUTDOORSY**  
MOST COMMON  
FISHING STEREOTYPE

# FEELINGS ABOUT FISHING

## TOP 10 BENEFITS OF FISHING

Americans fished to catch fish, of course. They also fished to enjoy nature, to escape the stresses of everyday life, and to spend time with family and friends.

BEST THINGS ABOUT FISHING	PERCENTAGE
Catching fish	52%
Enjoying the sounds and smells of nature	52%
Being close to nature	51%
Getting away from the usual demands of life	51%
Spending time with family or friends	47%
Observing the scenic beauty	36%
The "chase" (strategy, site tackle selection etc.)	33%
Experiencing excitement/adventure	30%
Experiencing solitude	25%
Reliving childhood memories of going fishing	24%



**52%**  
CITED ENJOYING  
NATURE AS A  
BENEFIT OF FISHING

## POSITIVE FISHING MEMORIES OR ASSOCIATIONS

In terms of positive memories of fishing, about 8 in 10 participants cited spending quality time with family and friends. This was consistent regardless of gender, age or ethnicity. Males were a bit more likely to be reminded of connecting with a simpler way of life or learning a new skill.

POSITIVE FISHING MEMORIES OR ASSOCIATIONS	ALL	MALE	FEMALE
Spending quality time with family or friends	78%	78%	78%
Spending time outdoors immersed in nature	74%	74%	74%
Reminds me of my childhood	62%	61%	63%
Enjoying the water	47%	47%	47%
Connecting with a simpler way of life	46%	45%	47%
Learning a new skill	36%	38%	33%



**78%**  
EQUATED FISHING  
WITH QUALITY TIME  
WITH FAMILY AND  
FRIENDS

# FISHING BARRIERS

## OBSTACLES TO ENJOYMENT

The most cited factors that prevented the enjoyment of fishing were crowded fishing spots and not catching fish. Other frustrations included being outdoors, unclean waters and the expense associated with gearing up for fishing.

RANK	OBSTACLES TO ENJOYMENT
1	The fishing spots were crowded
2	Not catching any fish
3	Being outdoors - bugs, heat, cold, weather, etc.
4	The lakes and rivers weren't very clean
5	The expense - equipment, bait, supplies, etc.
6	Baiting the hooks or taking the fish off the hook
7	Not having the right equipment
8	The hassle
9	Lack of knowledge
10	Don't like to touch fish/worms

## REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

When asked to rank resources that help increase their enjoyment of fishing, participants first suggested information on local, close to home fishing destinations. They also indicated that more accessible and affordable fishing equipment and boats and fishing equipment could boost their participation. These rankings were largely unchanged from the prior year.

RANK	OBSTACLES TO ENJOYMENT
1	Local information on nearby bodies of water
2	Easier/more affordable access to boats
3	Easier/more affordable access to fishing equipment
4	Comprehensive mobile guides that you can access on the water
5	How-to's and tutorial videos
6	Short lessons/information session(s) from a state agency or local guide
7	Resources and information on voice activated devices



**CROWDS**  
MOST REPORTED  
BARRIER TO FISHING



**LOCAL INFO**  
MOST HELPFUL  
BOOST TO FISHING  
PARTICIPATION

# FUTURE OF FISHING



# FISHING MOTIVATIONS

## REASONS FOR STARTING TO FISH

In 2023, first-time anglers said their top reasons to start fishing included to spend time with family, or for the excitement and adventure of fishing.

RANK	MOTIVATIONS TO START FISHING
1	Spend time with family
2	Experience excitement/adventure
3	A friend or relative took me
4	Wanted to try out a new hobby
5	Fished as a child and wanted to try again
6	Wanted to try catching my own food
7	To disconnect from electronics
8	Solitude
9	Wanted to take my children fishing
10	Fishing as part of a vacation or group outing

## REASONS FOR STOPPING FISHING

Fishing doesn't connect with everyone. The leading reasons for stopping fishing in 2023 included lack of time, boredom, or physical limitations.

RANK	REASONS FOR STOPPING
1	Lack of time
2	Boring
3	Physical limitations
4	Lost interest
5	Too far to travel
6	Didn't enjoy it
7	Illness
8	Smell of fish
9	Didn't catch anything
10	Prefer other outdoor activities

# FUTURE OF FISHING

## DID YOU FISH AS A CHILD?

RBFF research demonstrates the critical importance of introducing fishing at a young age, as 87 percent of current fishing participants fished as a child. 62 percent of anglers fondly remember fishing as a child, and 24 percent sought to recapture that positive experience through fishing in 2023.



## NUMBER OF TIMES PARTICIPANTS EXPECT TO FISH

The future of fishing remains bright thanks to dedicated returning participants. Among adult anglers in 2023:

- 99% expect to fish during 2024
- 34% expect 20+ outings in 2024
- 38% expect 8 to 20 outings in 2024
- 27% expect fewer than 8 outings in 2024



**34%**  
ANTICIPATE 20+  
OUTINGS NEXT  
YEAR



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

# METHODOLOGY

## 2023 Participation Data

All participation statistics are from a nationwide study conducted during the 2023 calendar year by Sports Marketing Surveys USA (SMS). Under the guidance of the Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) and seven other sports industry associations that make up the Physical Activity Council (PAC), the participation study was designed and launched by Digital Research (DRI). All other data is attributable to the SFIA/SMS research partnership.

## Sample Specification

During 2023, a total of 18,000 online interviews were carried out with a nationwide sample of individuals from U.S. proprietary online panels representative of the U.S. population for people ages 6 and older. Strict quotas associated with gender, age, income, region, and ethnicity were followed to ensure a balanced sample.

The 2023 participation survey sample size of 18,000 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 5 percent has a confidence interval of plus or minus 0.32 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

A weighting technique was used to balance the data to reflect the total U.S. population ages 6 and above. The following variables were used: gender, age, income, ethnicity, household size, region, and population density. The total population figure used was 306,931,382 people aged 6 and older.

Activity reported is based on a rolling 12-month participation rate. All charts represent data from U.S. populations ages 6 and over, unless otherwise specified. If you have specific questions regarding the methodology, please contact Sports Marketing Surveys at [info@sportsmarketingsurveysusa.com](mailto:info@sportsmarketingsurveysusa.com).

## 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 6 to 12, and they are asked to complete the survey together. Respondents ages 13 to 17 are contacted in a manner similar to respondents ages 6 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 2023 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: Outdoor Foundation (OF); National Golf Foundation (NGF); Snowsports Industries America (SIA); Tennis Industry Association (TIA); USA Football; United States Tennis Association (USTA), Health and Fitness Association; Sport and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA); and People for Bikes.

## Notes

Unless otherwise noted, the data in this report was collected during the 2023 participation survey, which focused on American participation in the 2023 calendar year. Please note that some information includes data that was collected during previous surveys, as some questions are not asked every year.

# 2024 SPECIAL REPORT ON FISHING

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