

Exercise Walking Leads Top 10 in Sports Participation for 2008

Exercise walking, which experienced 7.6% growth in 2008, remains the No. 1 participant activity surveyed by NSGA, a position it has held since 1990. Data contained in NSGA's annual "Sports Participation - Series I and II" reports, which will be available in May, shows 96.6 million Americans walked for exercise in 2008.

Swimming, with a 6.1% increase, moved ahead of exercising with equipment for the No. 2 spot. With its increase, swimming attracted 63.5 million participants. Exercising with equipment attracted 63.0 million participants, statistically in a dead heat with swimming, held the No. 3 position.

Bowling and camping (vacation/overnight) were also in a statistical dead heat, with bowling claiming 49.5 million participants for the No. 4 spot. Camping (vacation/overnight) claimed the No. 5 spot with 49.4 million participants.

New to the Top 10 was hiking, with 38.0 million participants. This pulled it to the No. 9 position. Falling from the Top 10 was power boating. Its almost 13% decline in participation to 27.8 million participants sent it to the 15th spot.

Rounding out the Top 10 were bicycle riding, No. 6 with 44.7 million participants; fishing, No. 7 with 42.2 million participants; workout at club, No. 8 with 39.3 million participants; and weight lifting, No. 10 with 37.5 million participants;

Among traditional team sports, basketball was the leader, attracting 29.7 million participants. Baseball followed, with 15.2 million participants, softball, with 12.8 million participants, volleyball, with 12.2 million participants, and tackle football, with 10.5 million participants. Only tackle football showed a drop in participation, down 3.7%.

Of the 41 sports in the 2008 survey, 26 increased in participation. Fifteen showed declines. Activities newly surveyed for the 2008 report include cheerleading and canoeing.

For the survey, a participant is someone age seven or older who takes part in a sport or activity more than once in a calendar year. "Sports Participation in 2008 - Series I and II" cover 41 sports, recreation and fitness activities. Participation rates for all 41 sports surveyed may be viewed on the NSGA website (www.nsga.org).