



Recreation Statistics Update¹

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Trends and Demographics of Off-road Vehicle Users²

As the U. S. population grows, so too does demand for outdoor recreation. Demand for off-road vehicle driving and riding has especially grown. In 1960, when the first of the U. S. National Surveys was done for the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, off-road motorized recreation was not even on the “radar” as a recreational activity. There were, of course, many who rode motor cycles on back country trails, there were many who used 4-wheel-drive vehicles (such as jeeps) to gain access to the back country, with and without roads, but there was no recognition of off-road motorized recreation as a population-wide outdoor activity. But this has changed.

From 1982 to 2000-01, driving motor vehicles off-road (ORV) became one of the fastest growing activities in the country, growing in number of participants over 12 years old by over 100 percent (Cordell et al. 2004, page 37). This growth has continued, as Table 1 below shows. Based on surveying done between the fall of 1999 and the summer of 2000, it was estimated that 37.6 million people 16 or older (17.6% of people that age or older) had ridden or driven motor vehicles off-road at least once in the last 12 months. That number increased incredibly to an estimated 49.6 million by fall 2003/spring 2004 (rising to 23.2% of the population).

Table 1.–Trend in millions and percentage of population 16 or older participating at least once in the last 12 months in off-road motorized vehicle driving or riding

Activity	Fall 1999 to Summer 2000 (n=21,762)	Fall 2000 to Summer 2001 (n=25,916)	Fall 2001 to Summer 2002 (n=10,767)	Fall 2002 to Summer 2003 (n=10,898)	Fall 2003 to Spring 2004 (n=3,503)
Drive off-road*	37.6 17.6%	37.4 17.5%	41.4 19.3%	49.5 23.1%	49.6 23.2%

* Off-road is defined as off of paved or graveled roads.

¹This update is based on research information generated for the Forest Service’s 2005 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Assessment Update Report.

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Given the very rapid growth in the activity of driving motor vehicles off-road, it seems important to better understand who the ORV participants are. Table 2 provides estimates of the numbers of participants by demographic characteristic across three time periods. All data are from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE). Across time periods, we can see that most ORV participants were under 50, male, white and urban. As well, across all demographics in Table 2, numbers of people participating were increasing. Increasing especially rapidly were participants who were 30-50 years old, female, Hispanic, and urban. As participation in this activity rises over time, it will be important to track the changing makeup of ORV participants.

Table 2.--Number of people in the U.S. age 16 or older (in millions) participating at least once in the last 12 months in off-road vehicle use, 1999-2004.

Demographic	Fall 1999 - Summer 2000	Fall 2001- Summer 2002	Fall 2003 - Summer 2004
Total Participating	37.6	41.4	49.6
Age - Under 30	15.1	15.3	18.2
Age - 30-50	16.3	18.6	21.7
Age - 51 & older	6.1	7.4	9.6
Male	23.2	24.9	29.8
Female	14.6	16.7	20.0
White	30.6	34.8	38.9
Hispanic	2.9	2.7	9.3
Non-metropolitan	10.0	10.8	13.6
Metropolitan	27.3	29.9	34.2

This Recreation Statistics Update Report is based on recent data that updates the estimated participation statistics reported in **Outdoor Recreation for 21st Century America**, published by Venture Publishing, College Station, PA. Copies of **Outdoor Recreation for 21st Century America** may be obtained from Venture Publishing at their website (<http://www.venturepublish.com>) or telephone at 1-814-234-4561. To see more of our research, please visit our website (<http://www.srs.fs.fed.us/trends>).

References

Cordell, H. Ken, et al. 2004. Outdoor Recreation for 21st Century America. State College, PA: Venture Publishing Inc. 293 p.