

2011 Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks



Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach

Photo by Toby Gant

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Research partner:

Responsive Management



A kayaker approaches the mangrove coast at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park.
Photo by Volunteer Bruce Kay

INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Recreation and Parks and Responsive Management are pleased to release the 2011 Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey. Responsive Management, a natural resource survey research firm, surveyed Florida residents by telephone between April and September 2011. A survey of tourists was conducted in three waves: May, August and October 2011. Responsive Management completed 3,961 surveys with residents and 2,890 surveys with tourists. This study measures satisfaction with current recreation opportunities and will be used to evaluate the supply, demand and need for recreation opportunities in Florida as part of the 2013 update of *Outdoor Recreation in Florida*, the state's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan.

The study highlights the tight link between recreation and tourism in Florida, determining that **98 percent of Florida's tourists believe that outdoor recreation is important to them**, and 97 percent of tourists are satisfied with outdoor recreation opportunities in the state. Recreation has long served as an economic driver in Florida, as the state remains a major destination for national and international tourism. An estimated 82.3 million visitors made their way to the Sunshine State in 2010, resulting in \$62.7 billion in total tourist spending and the creation of 947,700 jobs to support the tourism industry (VISIT FLORIDA, 2010). As a sign of the importance of outdoor recreation to this impact, the Florida State Park system generated nearly \$970 million in direct economic benefits to local communities, supporting approximately 19,347 jobs.

While recreation provides a statewide and local economic impact, its multiple benefits to local communities should not be overlooked. **Of Florida residents, 96 percent, just over 18 million people, believe recreation is important to them.** Parks and green spaces within a community enhance residents' quality of life, making the area a more desirable and attractive place to live, work and raise a family. The availability of quality recreation opportunities is also a factor considered by businesses seeking to relocate. A 1996 report by the Trust for Public Land found that quality of life is one of the most important factors influencing a business location decision. The availability of recreation opportunities plays a critical role in the quality of life sought by businesses and their employees.



An Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) rider wearing protective equipment.



Two young men tube the Ichetucknee River.



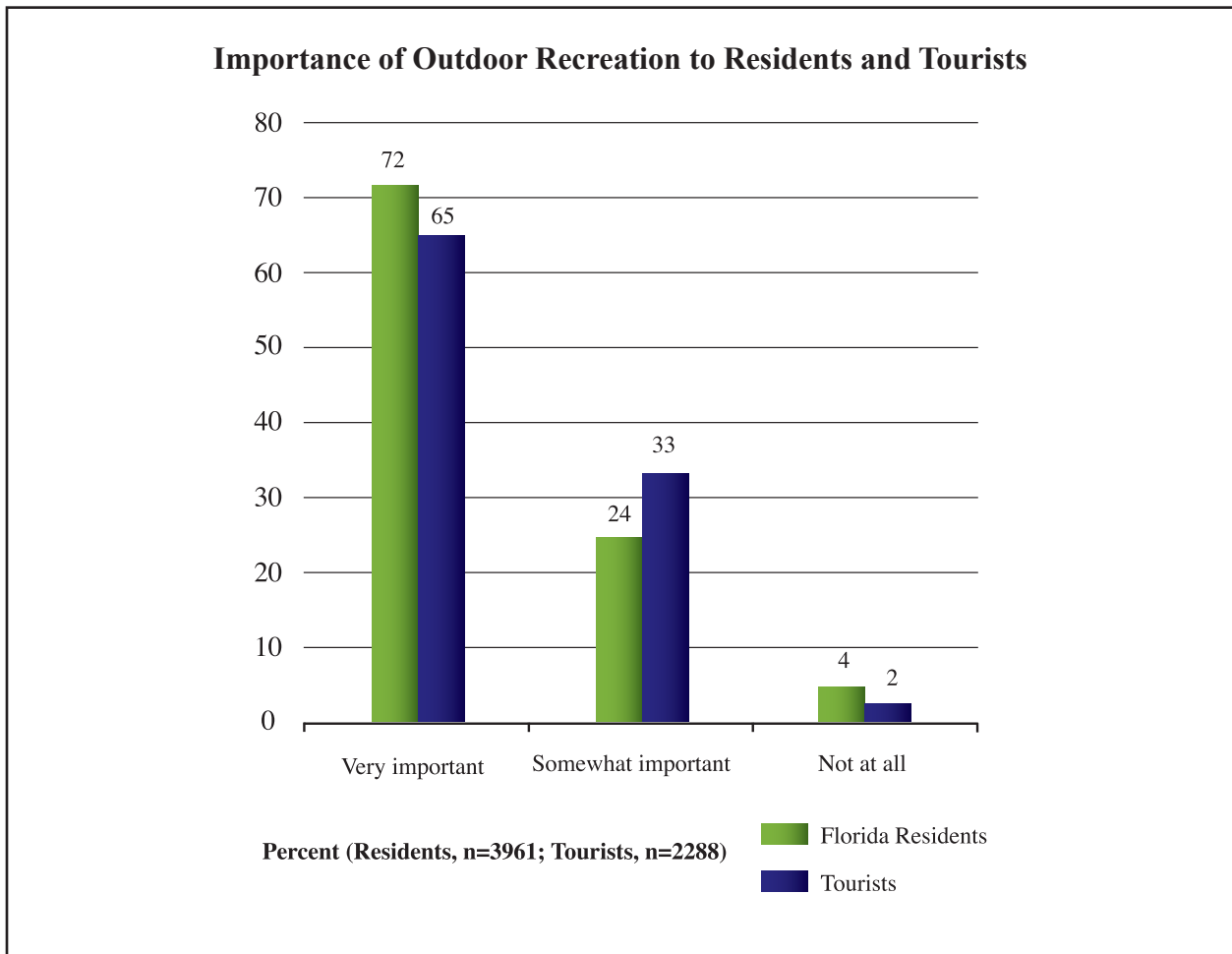
A young man hunts for turkey.

IMPORTANCE AND MOTIVATION

Importance of Outdoor Recreation

Nearly all Florida residents (96 percent) say that outdoor recreation is important to them; this includes 72 percent who think it is *very* important and 24 percent who think it is *somewhat* important.

The results are similar among tourists: 98 percent say outdoor recreation is important to them personally (65 percent saying *very* important and 33 percent saying *somewhat* important).



Why People Recreate

The survey asked Florida *residents* how important each of three factors is when they participate in outdoor recreation, with the following results:

- **Spending time with family and friends** (99 percent overall; 91 percent saying *very* important).
- **Being active and healthy** (98 percent overall; 87 percent saying *very* important).
- **Being close to nature** (94 percent overall; 62 percent saying *very* important).

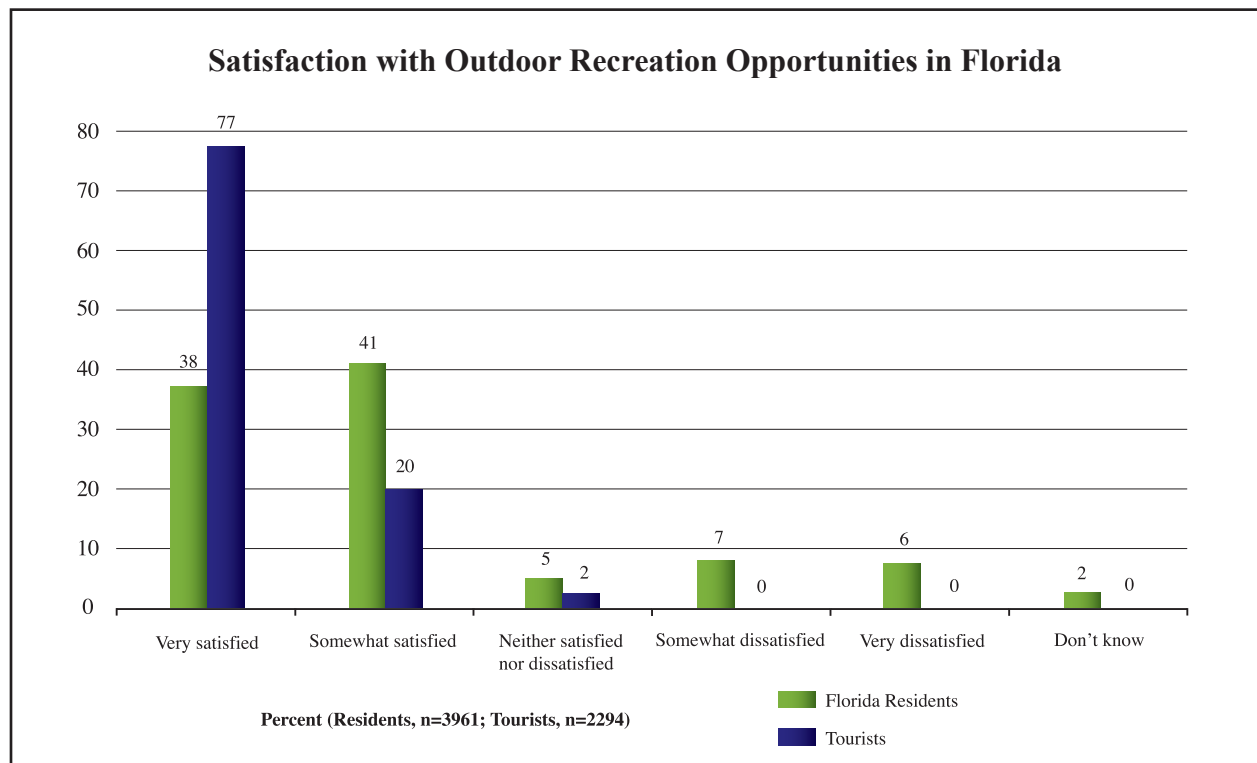
The *tourist* survey results mirror the above results (although relative to residents, tourists place less importance on being close to nature):

- **Spending time with family and friends** (96 percent overall; 85 percent saying *very* important).
- **Being active and healthy** (93 percent overall; 65 percent saying *very* important).
- **Being close to nature** (83 percent overall; 45 percent saying *very* important).

SATISFACTION

The overwhelming majority of Florida residents (80 percent) are satisfied with the outdoor recreation opportunities in their county. Among tourists, satisfaction with opportunities is even higher: 97 percent of tourists are satisfied, including 77 percent who are *very* satisfied.

Respondents’ opinions of the quality of facilities in their home counties are also positive: 78 percent rate the facilities excellent or good. On the other end, 20 percent rate them fair or poor.

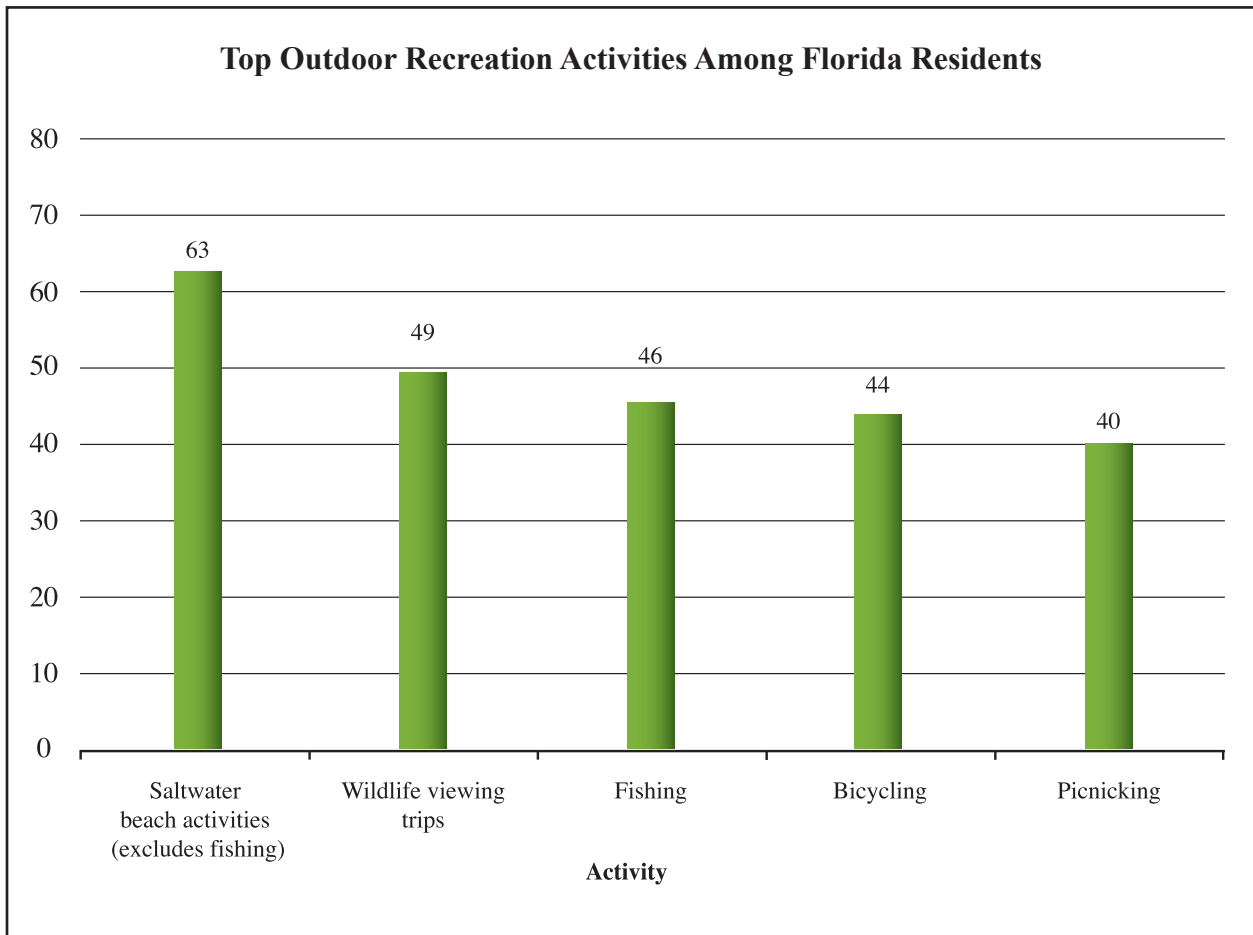


Tourists gave high ratings to the amount of opportunities available in Florida: 95 percent rate them excellent or good.

RECREATION PARTICIPATION

Residents

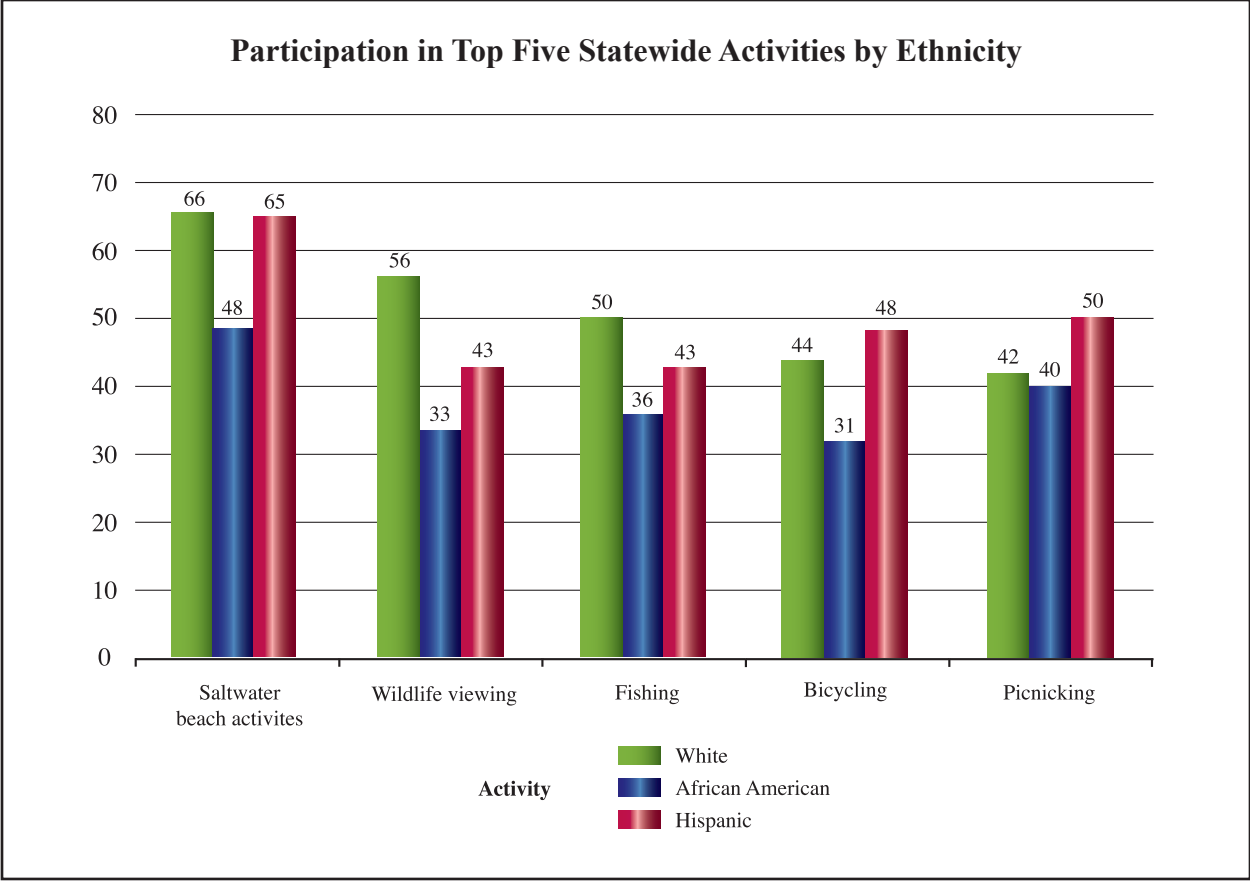
The study found that saltwater beach activities (excluding fishing) were the most popular with Florida residents, with 63 percent enjoying this activity in the past 12 months. Wildlife viewing was slightly higher than fishing in popularity among residents.



Friends swim in the Gulf of Mexico at St. Andrews State Park.



A father and son fish at Hillsborough River State Park.
Photo by Joi Kneiss



This graph shows response rates within each ethnic group. For example, of Hispanic respondents, 43 percent participate in fishing.

The survey found a lower overall participation rate among African American respondents. Fifteen percent of African American respondents said they did not participate in any of the 26 activities listed on the survey.



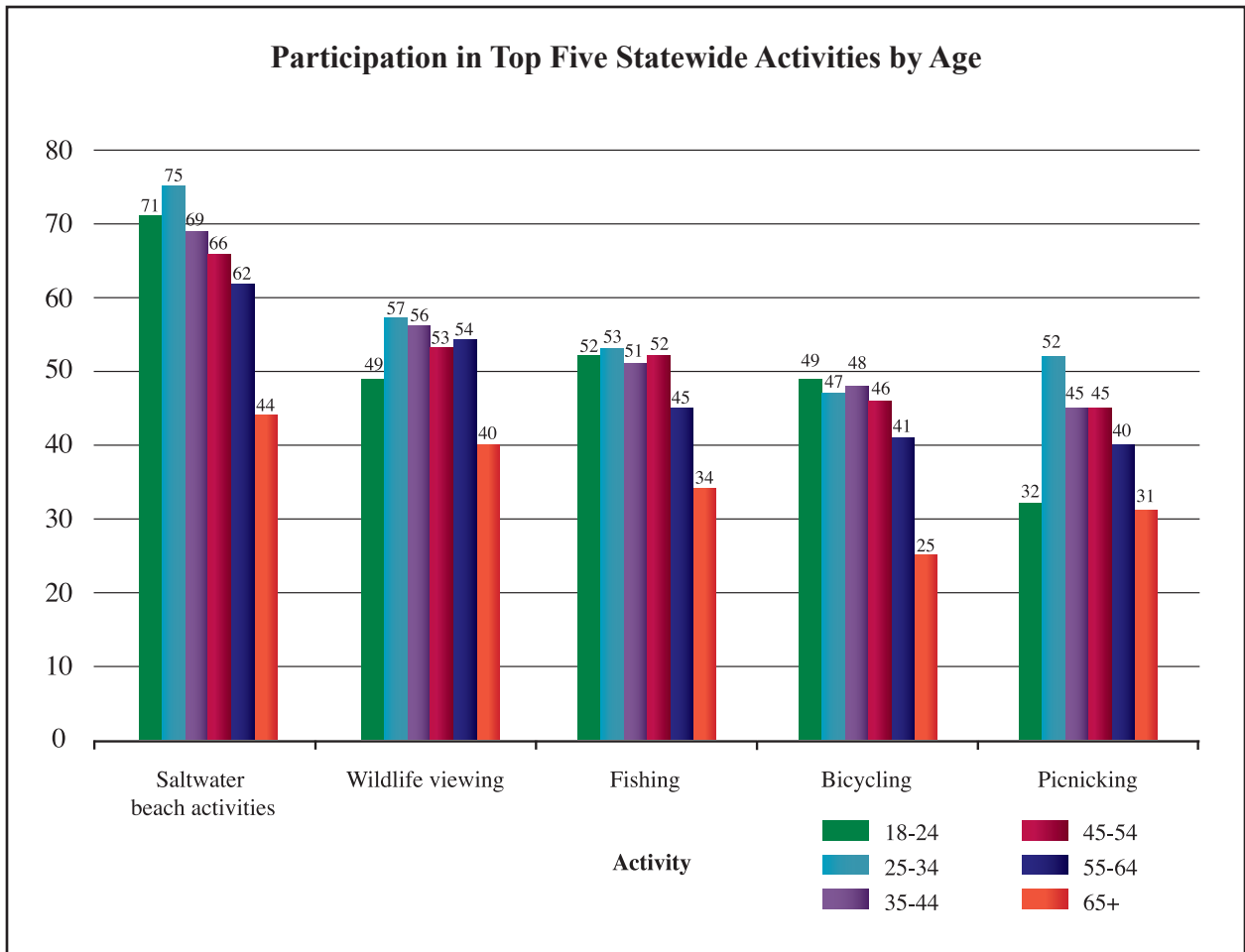
A boy and girl walk along the beach during a field trip to Honeymoon Island State Park.
Photo by Sherry Werner



A group conducts research on the Grasshopper Sparrow at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park.
Photo by Bill Combs Jr.



A man and woman fish from the pier at Fort Clinch State Park.



This graph shows response rates within each age group.

The survey found a lower overall participation rate among respondents ages 65 and older. Twenty percent of respondents in the 65+ age category said they did not participate in any of the 26 activities listed on the survey.



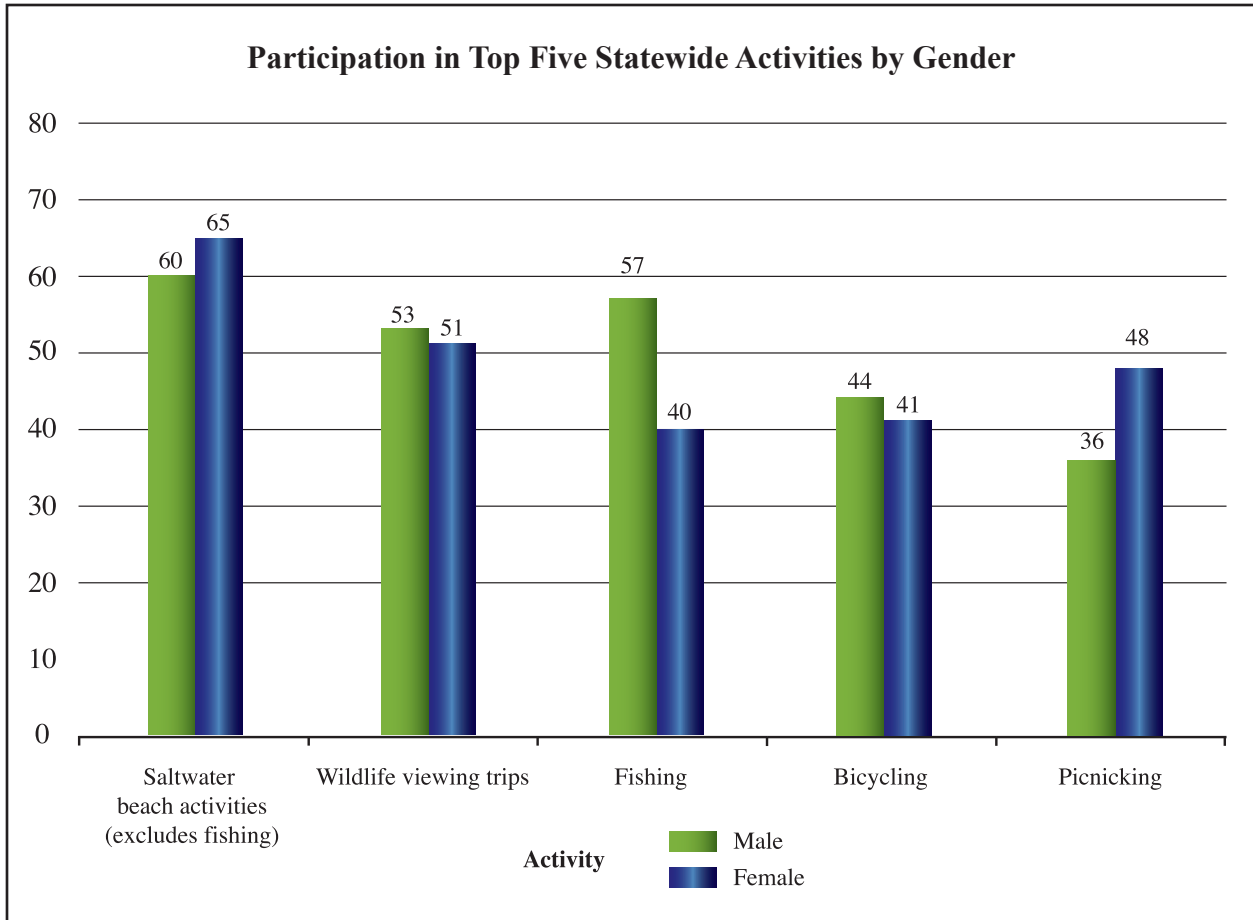
A woman sits under a beach umbrella at Caladesi Island State Park.

Photo by Colleen Braun



A woman and man fish while three boys play with toys along the coast at Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park.

Photo by Keith Jurgensen



This graph shows response rates within each gender group.

Tourists

Similar to residents, tourists participate most in saltwater beach activities (49 percent), though viewing wildlife is a close second (47 percent). Picnicking, outdoor pool activities and cultural site visits round out the most popular activities for tourists.

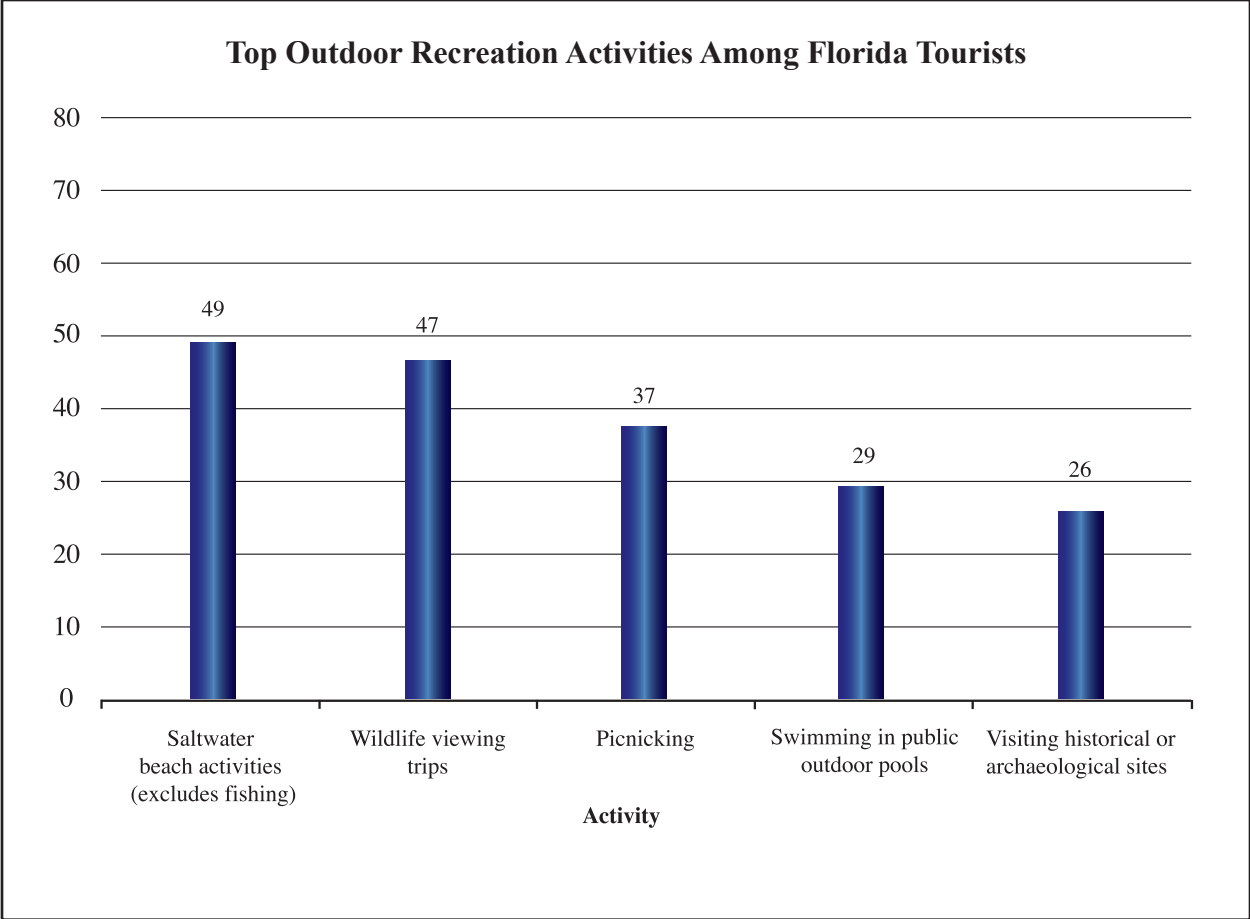


A bicyclist crosses a bridge at Alafia River State Park.

Photo by Connie Dossin



Five friends sit around a picnic table enjoying each other's company and playing a guitar at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park.

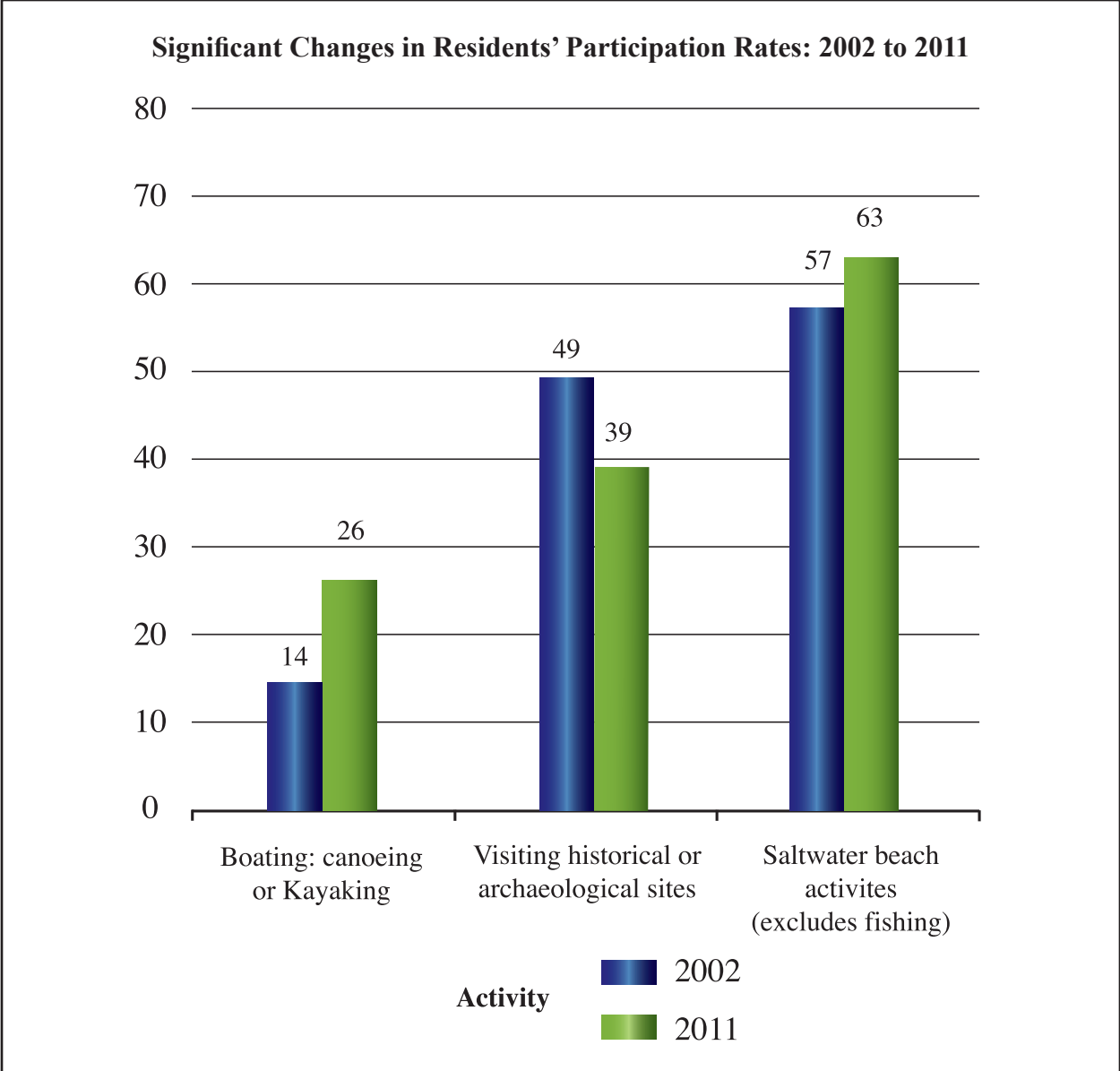


NUMBER OF DAYS OF PARTICIPATION

The survey looked at the number of days residents engaged in the various activities. Based on the mean and median days of participation, the activities with the most avid participation, in order, are bicycling, basketball, baseball/softball, soccer, golfing, tennis, football, saltwater beach activities, off-road vehicle driving, swimming in outdoor pools and hunting.

TRENDS IN PARTICIPATION

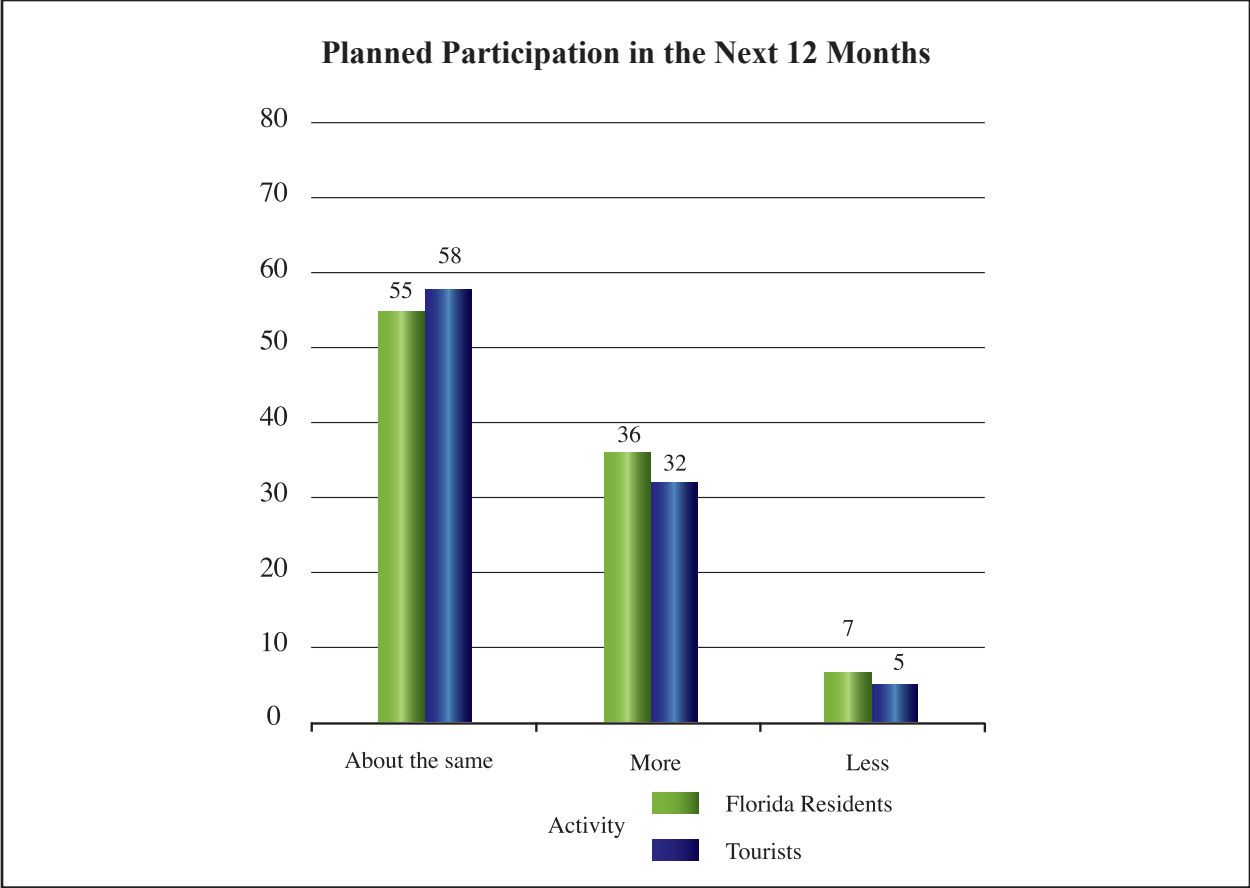
These results were compared with a similar study conducted in 2002. Most activities have participation rates in 2011 that are consistent with the 2002 rates. There are three exceptions: canoeing/kayaking participation rose from 14 percent to 26 percent, participation in saltwater beach activities rose from 57 percent to 63 percent, and the rate of visiting historic or archeological sites fell from 49 percent to 39 percent.



2012 PARTICIPATION

The survey asked Florida residents whether they expect to participate in outdoor recreation activities more, about the same amount, or less in the next 12 months compared to the past 12 months. While the majority of residents said about the same (55 percent), the percentage who said more (36 percent) is much greater than the percentage who said less (7 percent).

The tourist survey asked the same question, with similar results: the majority (58 percent) said about the same, 32 percent said more and 5 percent said less.



The tourist survey asked about the likelihood that respondents would visit Florida again in the next 12 months, with 75 percent saying they are very likely to do so.

TRAVELING TO RECREATE

The majority of Florida residents travel less than 20 miles to participate in outdoor recreation. The mean distance traveled is 23.7 miles; the median is 10 miles. In the North Central region, however, 30 percent of residents participating in outdoor recreation traveled 50 or more miles. This region includes the following counties: Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor, Union and Wakulla.

OPINIONS ON OPPORTUNITIES

The overwhelming majority of Florida residents (91 percent) support Florida maintaining its current levels of outdoor recreation services and opportunities; 70 percent expressed *strong* support.

Among tourists, a large majority support maintaining the current levels of outdoor recreation services and opportunities in Florida as well: 91 percent support overall, including 68 percent who *strongly* support.

The facilities most desired by Florida residents, in order, are community parks, biking paths, playgrounds for children and outdoor public swimming pools.

CONCLUSION

The 2011 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey confirms that outdoor recreation opportunities are very important to Florida's residents and tourists. By contributing to the quality of life for residents and the state's desirability as a tourist destination, outdoor recreation in Florida stimulates the economy and creates jobs. Going forward, this study will inform state, county and municipal planners, as well as private sector recreation suppliers, in continuing to provide satisfactory facilities and services.

