

Monitoring outdoor recreation trends in Finland

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Background and objectives

In Finland, systematic monitoring of outdoor recreation trends started relatively late, at the end of 1990s. The Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla) initiated the first large population survey on outdoor recreation in 1997. Now the national outdoor recreation demand inventory (LVVI) has been conducted twice, in 1998–2000 and 2009–2010 (Sievänen 2001, Sievänen and Neuvonen 2011). The aim of the national recreation monitoring studies are to produce comprehensive, up-to-date information on outdoor recreation demand, to monitor changes in outdoor recreation, and to measure the demand for natural resources for recreational purposes.

Methodology of national outdoor recreation demand inventory

The methodologies of the two nationwide population surveys (LVVI), both in their data collection and statistical calculations, have been designed to produce comparable demand information over time. The survey questionnaires have been designed carefully to sustain comparability, and all measurements of the key issues are kept the same. Some alterations were necessary, however, mainly because of the changes in the overall survey environment and because of the need to keep expenses reasonable.

The principal method is a survey with a large sample of 15–74 years old Finns. The first LVVI collected data by telephone interview and mail questionnaire, and the data collection was conducted over 24 months with a subsample every second month covering all months of the year. The data amounted to 10,600 responses in total. The second LVVI data collection also covered two years, but this time the data was collected in six subsamples, twice in winter, twice in spring-summer and twice in the autumn. The data consists of 8,895 responses in total. Data for both surveys were collected by Statistics Finland.

In both studies, a careful examination of the representativeness of the data was made with the help of validation surveys and the use of weights in calculations for statistics.

Outdoor recreation trends

In Finland, there is trend information on a large number of issues concerning outdoor recreation (Neuvonen and Sievänen 2011): participation rates and frequencies for 86 recreation activities, characteristics of close-to-home recreation occasions and nature trips, the use of different types of recreation area, and so on. Overall participation in outdoor recreation has not changed much in ten years. One remarkable change is that the oldest age group, people aged between 65–74, is now participating more actively in outdoor recreation than the same group did ten years ago. The number of visits to nature has slightly increased, too. Now people have a larger variety of outdoor activities in which they participate compared to ten years ago. Many

changes have taken place concerning the popularity of different activities. Participation has increased in activities such as running (participation rate 31%), spending time at the recreation home (65%), boating (49%), gathering and chopping small wood (42%), forest work in leisure time (16%) and camping in back country (13%). A strong increase has been seen in bird watching (22%) and other types of nature study activities. The biggest relative growth concerns long-distance skating and snowshoeing, as well as Nordic walking and geocaching as new activities. Only a few activities such as fishing and roller boarding are seeing a decreasing participation rate.

In most cases, the annual number of occasions that people participate in an outdoor activity has decreased. This may be caused by the fact that people now participate in more activities than they did ten years ago. On average, every Finn participates in 13 outdoor activities; this number was 11 a decade ago. What is interesting is that there are now more young people who have berry and mushroom picking or hunting skills than there were ten years ago. In addition, 41% of the population have regular access to a recreation home, which significantly supports access to nature and offer opportunities for nature-based recreation. These trends suggest that outdoor recreation participation can be expected to retain its central role as a leisure activity in the future. Hence, it is important to provide some prospects to decision-makers and managers as to how outdoor recreation may change, reflecting the changes in population such as demography and socio-economic structure, and changes in the recreation environment, such as climate change, water quality or landscape structures in the countryside.

Reporting

The main outputs of the LVVI studies are Outdoor Recreation Statistics 2000 and 2010, which include a wide array of information of participation in outdoor recreation by different population groups, descriptions of recreation occasions and nature trips, and information on disposable personal recreation resources such as ownership of equipment or skill capacity. In addition, comparisons of the changes in outdoor recreation over the last ten years are compiled in a report (Sievänen and Neuvonen 2011).

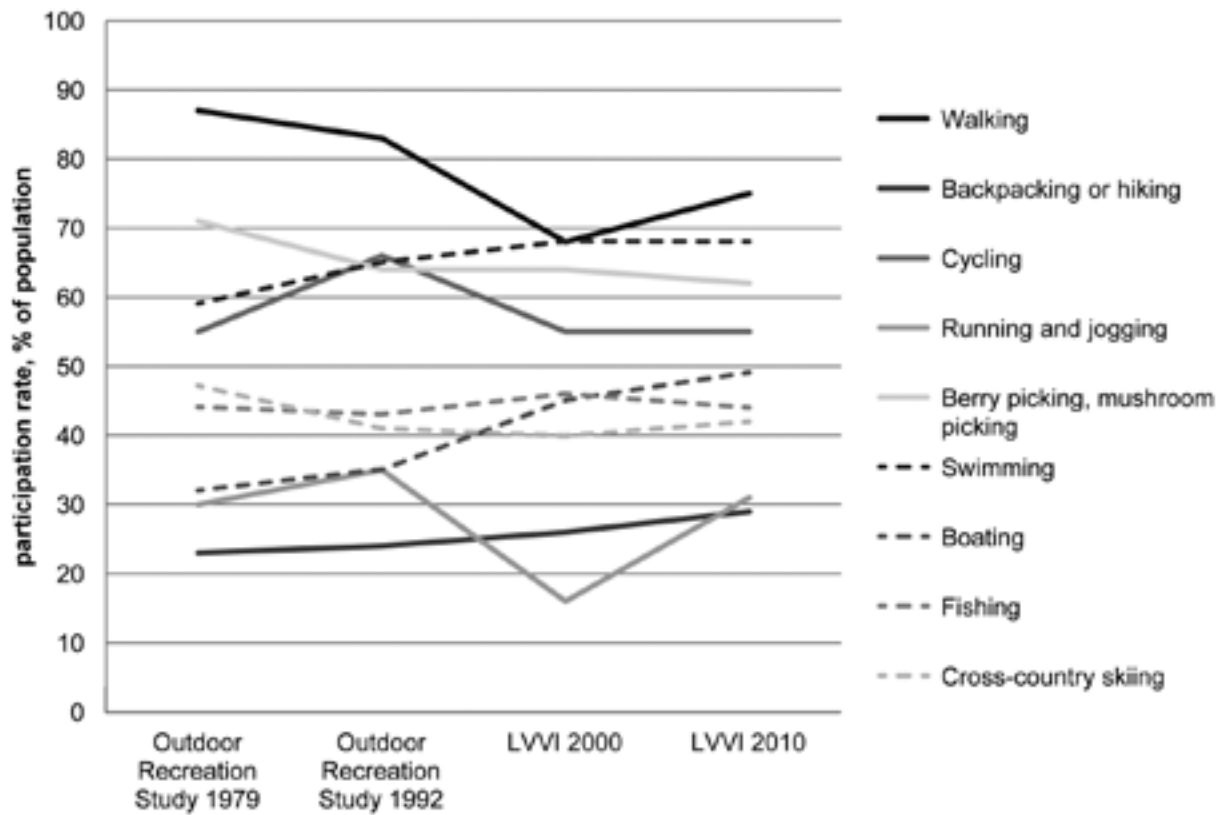


Figure 1. Long-term trends of participation rates of selected outdoor recreation activities in Finland.

Neuvonen, M. & Sievänen, T. (2011). Outdoor Recreation Statistics 2010. www.metla.fi/metainfo/lvvi/http://www.metla.fi/metainfo/monikaytto/lvvi/tietoa-ulkoilusta-en.htm.
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Sievänen, T. & Neuvonen, M. (eds.) (2011). Luonnon virkistyskäyttö 2010. [Outdoor Recreation 2010]. Metla Working Papers 212. p.190.