

GETTING > YOUTH > ACTIVE



Photo Courtesy of Big City Mountaineers



Jack Affleck © Vail Resorts 2011



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Inactivity Among American Youth



Outdoor Industry Foundation® (OIF) research identifies Youth as one of the four key consumer segments with the greatest potential for new participation in outdoor activities. As part of our Toolkits for the Trade series, this Toolkit takes a targeted look at Youth and makes the case that our industry can and should play a key role in getting youth active outdoors.

Other Toolkits for the Trade include a focus on Getting Women Active (1/05), Getting Hispanics Active (8/06) and Getting Singles 45+ Active (1/07)



How Much Physical Activity do Young People Need?

According to the USDA and U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Dietary Guidelines:

"Children and adolescents should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week."

Youth Population

According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics:

There were approximately 73 million people under the age of 18 living in the United States in 2003, or 25% of the population.

This age group is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. In 2003:

- ★ 60% of U.S. children were White
- ★ 16 percent were Black
- ★ 4 percent were Asian.

The proportion of Hispanic youth has grown the fastest increasing from 10% in 1980 to 19% in 2003.

Inactive Americans – It Starts Young

"America loves to think of itself as a youthful nation focused on fitness. But behind the vivid media images of robust runners, Olympic Dream Teams, and rugged mountain bikers is the troubling reality of a generation of young people that is, in large measure, inactive, unfit, and increasingly overweight."

– Promoting Better Health for Young People through Physical Activity and Sports: A Report to the President

With the wild enthusiasm over video games, the Internet and the endless supply of TV channels, children and teenagers have little need to walk out their front door to find entertainment. Add to that parental safety concerns of unsupervised activity and the urban sprawl that has made automobile transportation a necessity for most activities, and we've got an entire generation growing up indoors.

Studies show that young children are still as active as ever, but that physical activity levels off as the child ages and then begins to decline in adolescence and teen years. According to the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey data of students grades 9-12 from 2003:

- ★ Regular participation in "vigorous physical activity" dropped from 68.5% among 9th graders to 55% of 12th graders
- ★ Only 28.4% of students attended daily physical education classes and the prevalence dropped from 37.9% of 9th graders to 18.2% of 12th graders
- ★ Of the 28% enrolled in PE classes, one fifth did not exercise or play sports for an average of more than 20 minutes
- ★ 42.4% did not participate in any type of school or community sports team during the 12 months prior to the survey.

Further surveys have shown that walking and bicycling have dropped 40% among children ages 5-15 between 1977 and 1995, and even further in the decade. And another survey shows that while a high percentage of students live within a mile of their school, only about 1/3 actually walk to school.

How Much Time are Kids Really Spending in Front of the Tube?

Exposure by Age				
	8-18 yrs	8-10 yrs	11-14 yrs	15-18 yrs
Average daily use				
TV	3:04	3:17	3:16	2:36
Videos/DVDs	0:47	0:53	0:46	0:44
Movies	0:25	0:31	0:23	0:21
All screen media	4:15	4:41	4:25	3:40

*Time is in hours

TV dominates a youth's time; 80% of kids watch every day averaging more than three hours a day. More than half of all kids have a television in their bedroom. Additionally, kids spend more than one hour a day at the computer, not including school work.

In 2004 teens spent a whopping \$169 billion dollars on clothing, electronics, activities and other personal items.

The Costs of Inactivity

There is a cost to youth inactivity. In a recent interview with USA Today, Frances Kuo, Director of the Human-Environment Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign explained, "New research indicates that our intuition is right: Kids are spending way too much time with media and not enough time outside" and attention spans are suffering. Children who spend a lot of time outdoors have longer attention spans than those who spend a lot of time with media like TV and video games.

Inactivity and lifestyle lead to obesity. The costs are dire and easily quantified. In recent years, it has been estimated that in the U.S. as many as 30% of boys and 40% of girls are at risk for being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. There is an additional risk for serious emotional scarring due to the stigmas of being very overweight. From a monetary perspective, hospital visits have increased for obese children as well; racking up more than triple the costs in the past 20 years: \$35 million in 1979-1981 to \$127 million in 1997-1999. National health-care costs related to obesity just for adults are estimated to range from \$98 billion to \$129 billion annually (in 2004 dollars).

Obesity Among Americans and American Youth

When inactivity is paired with larger portion sizes and the increased availability of fast and processed foods, it all adds up to a hard-to-hide problem – FAT.

Despite the new labels on food, the increase in number and types of health clubs, the prevalence of weight loss clinics, and the fervor over low-carb vs. low-fat vs. low-calorie diets, Americans haven't been reducing their waistlines. On the contrary, we have the highest percentage of obese people in the world; in fact, obesity has been on the rise for the past two decades and approximately 30.4% of the population is obese (BMI>30).

Many studies show that childhood weight problems can lay the foundation for lifelong weight problems, so early intervention is key. In the United States instances of overweight and obesity are on the rise. 16% of children ages 6-19 are overweight (1999-2002) based on their target BMI for their gender and age and 31% are at risk of being overweight.

Over the past three decades, the prevalence of obesity in kids aged 2-5 and 12-19 has increased more than 100% and for kids between the ages of 6-11, it has risen more than 200%.

It is predicted that between 2000 and 2010 the teen population will increase by 7% with a 43% increase in the number of Hispanic teens.



A Call to Action

Many in the outdoor industry have already acknowledged the need to embrace the youth market and the need to invite youth into outdoor activities. We know “trusted sources” like family, friends and community organizations have the greatest influence in getting youth to try an outdoor activity. There are literally hundreds of programs already in place that are reaching out to youth either regionally or nationally and inspiring them to don a backpack, pitch a tent, find a new trail, or learn how to paddle. Outdoor Industry Foundation encourages you and your organization to support these programs through donations of time, product or funds. To find the right program for you or your company to partner with, please visit the Outdoor Industry Foundation searchable database at www.outdoorindustry.org/programsearch.php

With your assistance, we hope to reverse the inactivity trend in American youth and help them become outdoor enthusiasts and establish healthy practices that keep them physically fit for life. Today’s youth are tomorrow’s protectors of our earth.

On a Positive Note

Participation in active outdoor activities is actually on the increase for 16-24 year old young adults. Activities they are most likely to be spending their time doing: Paved Road Biking, Fishing, Hiking, Mountain Biking and Trail Running. An activity dominated by young adults? Rock climbing! Not only are more young adults getting outdoors, they are doing it more often than in the past. On average, these young adults participate in more than 4 different outdoor activities.

Please view the online GETTING YOUTH ACTIVE Toolkit at <http://www.outdoorindustry.org/research.tools.html> for more information.

