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Individual Sports Up, Team Sports Down; Participation as Unpredictable as 2020 Itself

SFIA Topline Participation Report shows tennis, golf, home fitness up, team sports down

SILVER SPRING, MD (Feb. 16, 2021) – Americans started strong, stopped everything when COVID-19 hit, and then pursued pandemic-acceptable sports and fitness activities as the year progressed, according to [SFIA's Annual Topline Participation Report](#) released today. The report measures the participation rates of all Americans, ages 6 and above, tracking 120 sport, fitness and outdoor activities. In addition, this year's report features a special section: COVID-19 Effect on Participation.

Individual sports such as tennis, golf, running, hiking, skateboarding and surfing thrived in 2020. Helping to drive growth was a participant's ability to take part in these activities outdoors and socially-distant. Conversely, team sports, which do not lend themselves to social distancing, struggled to maintain participation. Exacerbating this trend was the significant impact of school and park closures, taking away access to scholastic, travel/competitive and recreational sports. However, SFIA's trend analysis suggests a substantial amount of informal team sports activity, such as backyard play, did take place. To this end, basketball and ultimate frisbee recorded increases in core participation rates.

COVID-19 was a double-edged sword for the fitness industry. With gyms and health clubs being forced to close, fitness participation levels overall decreased in 2020. Fitness activities that could be done at home, like yoga, Pilates and kettlebells, showed robust participation increases. Traditionally popular activities done generally in health clubs or studios, like stationary cycling (group), stair-climbing machine and cardio kickboxing, experienced significant declines.

Notably, the number of totally inactive Americans, defined as those who did not participate in any of the 120 tracked activities, dropped by 7 million. This 2.4 percent decrease from 2019 marks the largest decrease in the number of inactive Americans since SFIA introduced this survey in 2008, one positive sign from a complicated year.

In all, the report indicates that Americans stayed fairly active, but not with the same frequency and avidity as in pre-pandemic times. Americans searched out pandemic-appropriate activities where they could, with varying degrees of success and sustainability.

"2020 brought unprecedented challenges for Americans looking to be physically active, but we find hope in the millions of Americans who changed their habits, venues and activities to somehow exercise and play," said Tom Cove, SFIA President and CEO. "At the same time, we see so many people yearning for their children and themselves to get back on fields, courts and health clubs; we all must work together to provide safer sports and fitness opportunities as soon as possible."

The 2021 Topline Participation Report is free to SFIA members and available for purchase to the public [here](#).

ABOUT SFIA: The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), the #1 source for sport and fitness research, is the leading global trade association of manufacturers, retailers, and marketers in the sports products and fitness industry. SFIA seeks to promote sports and fitness participation, as well as industry

vitality through research, thought leadership, public affairs, industry affairs and member services. For more information, please visit www.sfia.org.

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