

OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION AND NAXION RELEASE SPECIAL REPORT ON THE ‘NEW OUTDOOR PARTICIPANT’: MORE DIVERSE PARTICIPANTS ATTRACTED TO OUTDOORS AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Close-to-Home Activities with Low Barrier to Entry are Main Drivers for New Participants

BOULDER, Colo. (March 31, 2021) —Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) today released exclusive insights about Americans’ engagement in outdoor activities amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The special report examines demographics and psychographics of the new outdoor participant — defined as someone who participated in an outdoor activity for the first time during the pandemic or after a significant lapse.

In response to member requests, OIA commissioned the one-time special report from research partner NAXION. The report reveals that these new participants are more likely to be female, younger, living in an urban area and slightly more ethnically diverse than existing participants. These new participants primarily sought socially distanced outdoor activities in order to spend time with loved ones safely, to exercise, stay healthy or to reduce screen-time fatigue. The report also found that new participants are largely motivated by outdoor recreation opportunities with low barriers to entry that are available and accessible within 10 miles of their homes, including walking, running, biking and hiking.

“This one-of-a-kind report further shows the pandemic has brought in new participants as well as some new behaviors. Time outside is an antidote to the stress of the pandemic and can be a continued source of fun, joy, wonder, and a boost to our mental and physical health. The outdoor industry and its partners can serve a growing and changing need for outdoor recreation by championing funding and policies – such as 30x30 conservation initiatives, the ‘Parks, Jobs and Equity Act’ and the ‘Great American Outdoors Act’ – that provide more opportunities for all to experience close-to-home recreation and help everyone recreate responsibly,” said Lise Aangeenbrug, executive director of Outdoor Industry Association.

New participants found the outdoors to be a safe and accessible way to spend time with friends and family amid tight pandemic restrictions that limited indoor gatherings. Additionally, people cited that the pandemic's impact has inspired them to re-evaluate priorities, seeking positive life changes and reducing screen time.

“Initial findings of the special new participant report show strong overall increases in outdoor recreation by a slightly more demographically and socioeconomically diverse participant base. This highlights the need to ensure equitable access to the outdoors for all. We can do this by helping to create programming, policy and content around close-to-home recreation and geared toward this broader, more diverse audience of new outdoor participants,” said Stephanie Maez, managing director at the Outdoor Foundation.

“Most new participants hold a strong intent to continue their outdoor pursuits while about 25 percent say that travel, resuming other activities and family demands will challenge their free time and ability to continue to recreate as they currently do. Now is the time to embrace new participants and develop programming for them to continue their outdoor pursuits.”

The special report highlights the following opportunities to increase retention of new outdoor participants:

- Create more outdoor recreation opportunities close to home: Parks and open areas near where people live are a crucial part of growing participation. The pandemic has shown that there is a demand for close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Invest in programming that engages families in the outdoors.
- Help new participants make their activities more social as restrictions lift.
- Develop programs and services with the specific goal of diversifying the participant base.

- Develop strategies for encouraging people to start with activities such as walking, running, hiking and birdwatching, which have relatively low barriers to entry.
- Position outdoor recreation as:
 - an antidote to the mental health consequences of the pandemic.
 - a way to get out from behind the screens that have dominated pandemic life.
 - a method to maintain the focus on what is important in life.

[View the 2021 Special Report in full: The New Outdoor Participant \(COVID and Beyond\)](#)

[Initial research](#) from the Outdoor Foundation Annual Outdoor Participation report reflects data gathered during the 2020, identifying tremendous increases in outdoor participation across all activities including hiking, camping and fishing amid the pandemic. The full 2020 Outdoor Foundation Annual Participation Report will be released this Summer. If you would like to be notified when that report is released, [click here](#).

About Outdoor Industry Association

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the leading trade association for the outdoor industry and the title sponsor of Outdoor Retailer. OIA unites and serves 1300 manufacturer, supplier, sales representative and retailer members through its focus on trade and recreation policy, sustainable business innovation and outdoor participation. OIA is based in Boulder, Colo., with offices in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit outdoorindustry.org.

About Outdoor Foundation

The Outdoor Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Outdoor Industry Association, is a national 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to getting people outside for their health, the health of communities and the health of the outdoor industry. Through community investment and groundbreaking research, the Outdoor Foundation works with many

partners to get more people outside more often. Visit outdoorfoundation.org for more information.

About NAXION

NAXION is a broadly-resourced, nimble boutique that relies on advanced research methods, data integration, and sector-focused experience to guide strategic, data-driven business decisions. Built on decades of experience and hundreds of engagements, NAXION has supported some of the world's largest companies in their brand and enterprise strategy. NAXION provides intelligent analysis and interpretation to guide marketing decisions that matter.