

Census Bureau's abstract: A tome on the range of Americans' lives

Annual report details who we are, what we like, where we spend

Boston Globe

WASHINGTON — Cable and sneakers and day-care providers; flex time and soft drinks and cohabitation; movies and Web sites and cell phones that ring — these are a few of our favorite things.

If that was not already obvious, the federal government confirmed it Friday with the delivery of its massive annual Statistical Abstract of the United States, the official national snapshot of who we are, what we like, how we live and work and where we spend money.

The tome, compiled by the Census Bureau from dozens of sources, features all of the old standards ("Death Rates, by leading causes") as well as about 100 new charts, from the number of telecommuters to one with the provocative title "Number of Male Sex Partners in Lifetime, by Selected Characteristics."

The portrait of America that emerges is of a population that by and large is living well (it cannot get big enough homes or vehicles) — if not living a bit beyond its means (1.2 million personal bankruptcies filed last year). It is enjoying every fruit of the technological revolution, from answering machines (58 million own them) to ATM cards (11 billion transactions in 1997).

According to the abstract, Americans say they are observing traditional and community values by attending religious services (60 percent say they belong to organized religions) and volunteering, which 49 percent of adults profess to do every week.

The data also tend to confirm some of the most important trends of the decade. In 1997, 63.6 percent of married women with children under age 6 worked full time or part time, compared with 18.6 percent in 1960. Sixty percent of the nation's children under 6 get out-of-home child care, with nearly one-third of them in day-care centers.

More than one-quarter of all American workers, men and women alike, now take advantage of some flexible working arrangements, according to 1997 data.

Another big trend is the growth of home-based businesses. In 1997 more than 4.1 million people were self-employed at home, more than half of them men. In 1991, 19.9 million Americans were able to do job-related work at home, primarily by telecommuting. In 1997, the number was 21 million.

The hottest occupations are computer specialists and computer engineers. The data book projects that both fields will more than double by 2006.

Surfing the Internet is by far the

AMERICA BY THE NUMBERS

The Census Bureau released the 1997 update to its annual statistical profile of the nation; here is a look at some of the data:

POPULATION	RECREATION																														
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 267.9 million people in the U.S. in 1997, estimated. 270 million estimated for 1998 274.6 million estimated for 2000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 66 percent of adults went to the movies in 1997 41 percent of adults went to sports events 57 percent of adults went to amusement parks \$37.8 billion was spent on fishing in 1996 \$20.6 billion was spent on hunting \$29.2 billion was spent on wildlife watching 																														
Fastest-growing states Percentage population change from 1990 to 1997: <table border="1"> <tr><td>Nevada</td><td>39.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Arizona</td><td>24.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>Idaho</td><td>20.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Utah</td><td>19.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Colorado</td><td>18.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Georgia</td><td>15.6%</td></tr> <tr><td>Washington</td><td>15.3%</td></tr> <tr><td>Texas</td><td>14.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>New Mexico</td><td>14.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Oregon</td><td>14.1%</td></tr> </table>	Nevada	39.5%	Arizona	24.3%	Idaho	20.2%	Utah	19.5%	Colorado	18.2%	Georgia	15.6%	Washington	15.3%	Texas	14.4%	New Mexico	14.2%	Oregon	14.1%	Recreational activities Millions of people engaging in these activities in 1996: <table border="1"> <tr><td>Exercise walking</td><td>73.3</td></tr> <tr><td>Swimming</td><td>60.2</td></tr> <tr><td>Bicycling</td><td>53.3</td></tr> <tr><td>Exercising with equipment</td><td>47.8</td></tr> <tr><td>Camping</td><td>44.7</td></tr> </table>	Exercise walking	73.3	Swimming	60.2	Bicycling	53.3	Exercising with equipment	47.8	Camping	44.7
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Immigrants to the United States In 1996, by region of birth <table border="1"> <tr><td>Total</td><td>915,900</td></tr> <tr><td>Asia</td><td>307,800</td></tr> <tr><td>Central America and Mexico</td><td>207,900</td></tr> <tr><td>Europe</td><td>147,600</td></tr> <tr><td>N. America</td><td>132,600</td></tr> <tr><td>S. America</td><td>61,600</td></tr> <tr><td>Africa</td><td>52,900</td></tr> </table>	Total	915,900	Asia	307,800	Central America and Mexico	207,900	Europe	147,600	N. America	132,600	S. America	61,600	Africa	52,900	Music recordings Top genres, by percentage of all recordings sold <table border="1"> <tr><td>Rock</td><td>32.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Country</td><td>14.4%</td></tr> <tr><td>R&B</td><td>11.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>Rap</td><td>10.1%</td></tr> </table>	Rock	32.5%	Country	14.4%	R&B	11.2%	Rap	10.1%								
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INCOME

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SOURCE: 1997 Statistical Abstract of the United States

New York Times News Service

biggest national craze. More than 62 million Americans now have access to the Internet at home or at work, and 43 million say they have used it in the last 30 days. About 35 million Americans own personal computers, and the share of schools with Internet access is at 78 percent, projected to grow to 95 percent in 2000.

Gadgets are big. According to the abstract, the number of cellular phone subscribers has jumped to 55 million from 5 million in 1990. About 63 million Americans pay for cable TV, and 79 million have VCRs. People in this country spent \$10.5 billion on computer software in 1996 and \$9.9 billion on compact discs.

Americans love their leisure. In 1997, 66 percent of adults attended movies, 41 percent watched a sporting event and 57 percent went to an amusement park. Travel, tennis and bowling are up; boating and playing golf were off slightly in 1996, but going to professional baseball games and watching college women's basketball are attracting bigger crowds than ever.

Facts little known about Ameri-

cans, outside of the federal abstract, are that:

- Herb gardening is more popular than lawn care.

- 10 percent of all adults sing in groups, 5 percent go to the opera and 1 percent play classical music.

- 31 percent of all households own a dog, 27 percent have a cat and 4.6 percent have pet birds.

The nation's concern with sexually transmitted diseases and the focus on fertility treatments this year opened another area of data analysis by the Census Bureau, which decides what goes into the abstract, said Lars Johanson, the bureau statistician in charge of the data book.

For example, the abstract includes data on the number of unmarried women who have had intercourse in the last 12 months (12.7 million, or 60 percent). Among that group, 31 percent reported that a partner used a condom every time during intercourse, while 32 percent said condoms were never used.

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