

NGF survey finds golf more popular than ever

By JAY FINEGAN

JUPITER, Fla. — There's plenty of encouraging news for the golf industry in a recent report issued by the National Golf Foundation (NGF), headquartered here. The 2000 edition of its "Golf Participation in the United States" — based on a large-scale survey — is packed with demographic data and analysis about the state of golf in the country.

Among the key findings are these:

- Rounds of golf played in the United States last year climbed to a record high of 564 million, a seven percent increase over 1998 levels. So-called "core golfers," people age 18 or older who played at least eight times last year, accounted for 87.6 percent of all rounds played.

- Among all U.S. golfers, including core, avid, occasional and junior players, the average golfer played 21.3 rounds last year.

- The number of junior golfers, those aged 12 to 17 who played at least once last year, jumped by nearly 20 percent from 1994 levels.

Market Facts, Inc., of Chicago, conducted the research for the NGF. It collected responses from more than 52,000 households, or 109,000 individuals, and also used 1999 updates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The survey pegged the total number of American golfers at 26.4 million, including 21.3 million men and 5.1 million women. In 1994, the number stood at 24.3 million players. The junior golfers in this mix numbered 2.03 million last year, with 89 percent of them male.

For overall profiles, the average male golfer last year was 39.1 years old, enjoyed a household income of \$68,041, and played 22.4 rounds. On the female side, the average age was 42.2, with a household income of \$68,908, and 17 rounds played.

The research found a strong correlation between education levels and the likelihood that a person plays golf. For example, 15.1 percent of all college graduates played golf last year, versus 5.2 percent for high school graduates and 2.7 percent of non-high school grads.

Similarly, household incomes were key indicators of golf participation. More than 20 percent of people from families earning \$100,000 and up played some golf last year. But only 3.4 percent of those with incomes under \$20,000 did so. Closer to the national household income average, in the \$40,000 to \$49,999 range, 11.5 percent of respondents reported playing.

By occupation, 42.9 percent of all golfers are in a group that

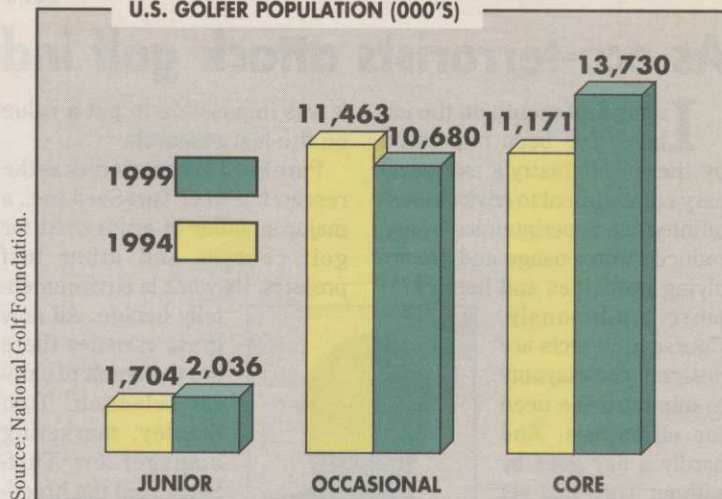
performs professional, managerial or administrative work. Among sales people and clerical staffers, 13.1 percent play golf. The rates drop to 10.2 percent for blue-collar workers and 8.8 percent for the retired or unemployed.

On a regional breakdown, the survey found the highest golf participation rate — 15.7 percent — in the West North Central states, including the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas,

Missouri and Minnesota. East North Central states, including Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin ran a strong second at 15.6 percent.

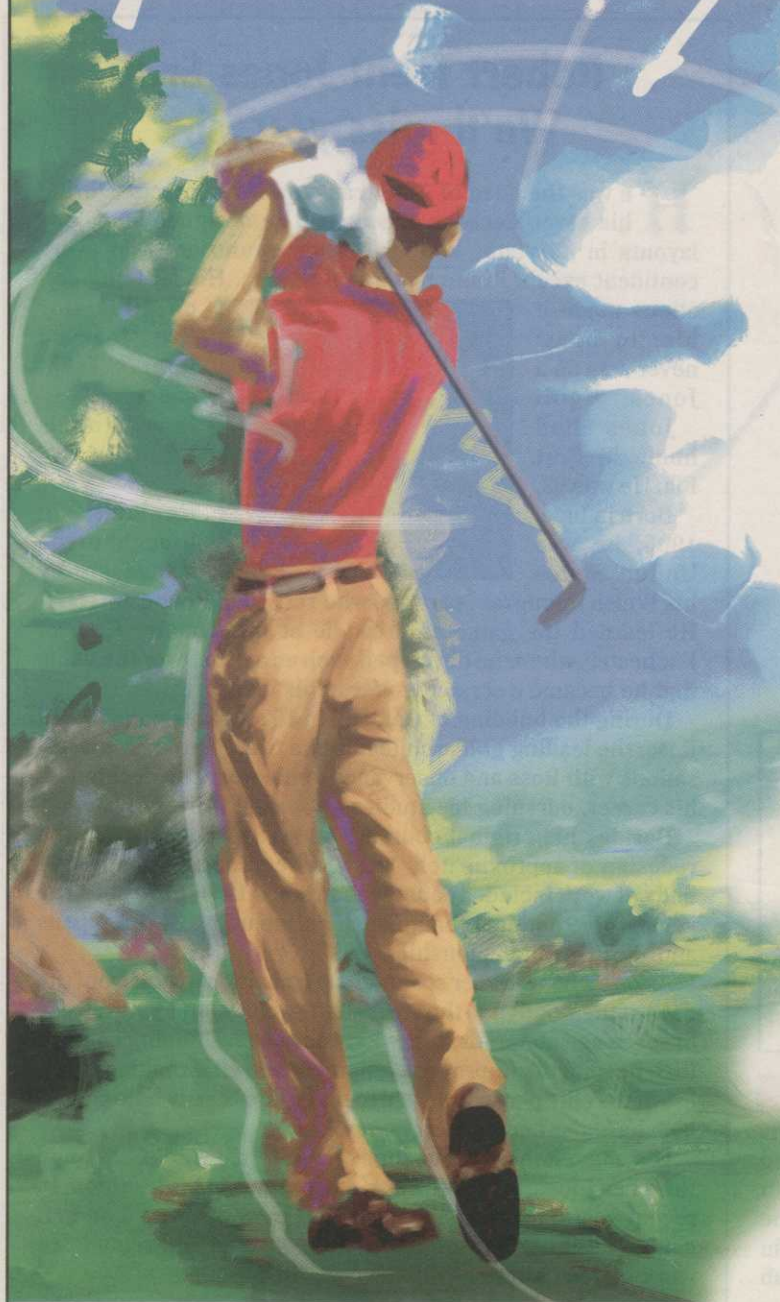
New England rang up the third highest rate, 11.9 percent, followed by the Mountain states at 11.5 percent and the Mid Atlantic at 11 percent. Bringing up the rear, at a 7.8 percent participation level, were the East South Central states of Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky.

U.S. GOLFER POPULATION (000'S)



Source: National Golf Foundation.

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