



**CBRE**

# Campground Industry Trends



# Table of Contents

Introduction ..... 1

Campground Industry Overview ..... 3

Trends in Consumer Spending Behavior ..... 22

What is a Campground?..... 25

Visitation and Tourism Statistics ..... 33

Current State of the NPS Campgrounds..... 38

Industry Standards - Reservation Systems and Campground Policies..... 48

Other Public Agency Best Practices for Contracting with the Private Sector ..... 52

Recommendations and Conclusions ..... 54

## **Introduction**

CBRE Inc. (CBRE) was engaged by the National Park Service (NPS or Service) to research the camping industry, to analyze the data and findings, and to proffer a campground modernization and rehabilitation strategy to support the Service's Second Century of Campgrounds. As such, CBRE teamed with a campground subject matter expert to execute this four-phased project.

- Phase One consists of this industry analysis report with the goal of identifying and conveying the state of the industry along with current trends in order to assist the Service in anticipating developing and future expectations for camping services.
- Phase Two involves planning for and conducting site visits to three pilot parks' campgrounds.
- Phase Three entails:
  - Developing an analysis framework that aligns with the Service's Facility Investment Strategy (FIS). This framework, which will include creating new tools and templates, will be utilized at the park-level to develop business cases to assist in decision-making of whether a campground should be modernized, otherwise rehabbed, or remain status quo.
  - Piloting this framework and completing business case analyses for the campgrounds in the pilot parks.
- Phase Four includes:
  - Building a generic campground financial model for the Service to analyze campground operations under both NPS- and concessioner-operated scenarios.
  - Performing financial analyses for the campgrounds in the pilot parks.

In pursuit of the Phase One Industry Report, the CBRE Team conducted detailed secondary research as well as primary research (i.e., direct interviews) with multiple representatives and officers from public land management agencies and trade associations in addition to concessionaires who have hundreds of contracts with decades of service for varied public land management agencies.

Overall, the camping industry is strong. Long-term demand appears robust, and growth is driven primarily through the increase in annual camping households and their higher frequency to camp.

Life stages and life events are increasingly influencing campers' decisions regarding frequency and where to camp. Events such as marriage, beginning a family, retirement, and other factors impact how people camp and what types of accommodations, services, experiences, and amenities they seek and/or expect.

Interestingly, the camping industry can be distilled down into two segments – generation and ethnicity. These two segments provide some of the most relevant data to understanding and predicting camper behavior.

For this project, camping is defined as an outdoor activity involving overnight stays away from home in a shelter, such as a tent, cabin, recreational vehicle (RV), or other temporary accommodation. Typically, campers leave developed areas to spend time outdoors. To be regarded as "camping", a minimum of one night is spent outdoors thus distinguishing it from day-tripping, picnicking, and other similarly short-term recreational activities. Also, campers like to enjoy a wide variety of activities at and around campsites – many of whom select their camping destinations based on available recreational options.

As expected, RV camping typically requires campgrounds with more infrastructure than is needed for rustic camping. Recreational vehicle camping utilization has been steady in recent years with approximately one in four campers opting to use a RV for their primary lodging.

The camping industry is best segmented by generation to more fully understand trends and behavior. The generations are defined as:<sup>1</sup>

- Generation Z – Born after 1997;
- Millennials – Born between 1981 and 1996;
- Generation X – Born between 1965 and 1980;
- Baby Boomers – Born between 1946 and 1964; and,
- Mature – Born between 1928 and 1945.

Moreover, as younger campers continue to be introduced to camping, the industry is poised to see some real changes. Glamping, a popular form of camping, not only attracts new campers but also attracts Millennial campers who are looking for new experiences. This new hybrid suggests the current distribution of overnight accommodations may shift with an increase in “cabin” and “other” and decrease in “rustic tent” in the foreseeable future.

Along with the changes being driven by younger campers, social factors and technology are driving changes in the importance of some campground amenities. One consistent trend is a growing desire to have an experience that is “close to nature”, although this definition may vary from camper to camper.

Of critical importance is the mission of the National Park Service as stated in the original authorizing legislation – “...preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” Our national parks have long been a place for people to escape the real world and get lost in the majesty of nature. These natural resources are the “magnet” that attract campers.

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center

## Campground Industry Overview

Overall, the camping industry is strong and long-term demand appears robust. Growth realized is driven primarily through the increase in annual camping households coupled with their higher frequency to camp. This growth is expected to continue as exiting campers (e.g., Mature and Baby Boomer Generations) are replaced by new campers (e.g., Millennials and Generations X + Z).

Campers come from diverse backgrounds and varied ethnicities. Interestingly, the demographic breakdown of campers is similar to the population of the United States (US) with one notable exception. Asian-American campers represent approximately three times more than their proportion of the US population.

Campers' decisions regarding frequency and where to camp are becoming increasingly influenced by their life stages and life events.<sup>2</sup> Events such as marriage, starting a family, retirement, and other factors impact how people camp and what types of potentially new accommodations, services, experiences, and amenities they try and/or expect. One issue frequently encountered by campers at high demand parks and areas is a lack of availability at both national park campgrounds and private campgrounds when they do not plan ahead.

### National Camping Market Trends

The camping industry is part of a larger segment of the economy known as Outdoor Recreation, which includes auxiliary activities that many campers enjoy. In 2018, this segment generated roundly \$890 billion in economic activity and is detailed in Exhibit 1.

**Exhibit 1 – Activity Revenue 2018**

	<b>Gear, Accessories, and Vehicles</b>	<b>Trip Related</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Camping</b>	\$31,271,155,486	\$135,591,624,999	\$166,862,780,485
<b>Fishing</b>	11,867,666,850	23,908,160,290	35,775,827,140
<b>Hunting</b>	16,059,527,274	11,318,772,808	27,378,300,082
<b>Motorcycle Riding</b>	16,726,560,701	47,428,610,964	64,155,171,665
<b>Off Roding</b>	15,520,574,134	35,996,107,969	51,516,682,103
<b>Snow Sports</b>	12,530,315,740	60,190,242,316	72,720,558,056
<b>Trail Sports</b>	25,342,546,672	176,144,141,213	201,486,687,885
<b>Water Sports</b>	29,059,965,205	110,911,844,967	139,971,810,172
<b>Wheel Sports</b>	13,857,894,195	82,864,146,456	96,722,040,651
<b>Wildlife Watching</b>	12,272,757,581	17,947,854,866	30,220,612,447
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,508,963,838</b>	<b>702,301,506,848</b>	<b>886,810,470,686</b>

<sup>2</sup> Non-North American campers are not included in any known, publicly available and reliable survey data; however, anecdotally they have similar behaviors and preferences to North American campers.

National trends in the camping industry are important to understand when evaluating current performance and anticipating future performance. The camping industry may be grouped into two – generation and ethnicity. These two factors provide some of the most relevant data to understanding and predicting camper behavior. Additionally, understanding the preferences of these groups allows for the anticipating of future camping needs.

Historically, most research into the campground or camping market is funded by the private sector. The Outdoor Recreation Foundation has been issuing research reports since 2004. The earliest of these were broad overviews of the entire outdoor recreation industry. However, as funding for these projects became more challenging to acquire, the reports narrowed their focus to what equipment people were purchasing rather than where, how, and why people were camping. Other research has been performed by the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), but that research focused on the marketing and growth of the recreational vehicle manufacturing portion of the industry. The American Recreation Coalition (ARC) has released some broad-based industry reports. In 2015, Kampgrounds of America (KOA) funded a comprehensive, statistical survey of the camping industry produced by Cairn Consulting Group (Cairn) and released a public report containing a high-level summary; KOA continues to fund an annual update while building its research database with the most recently released report being *The 2019 North American Camping Report 5-Year Trends*. The CBRE Team acquired, examined, and analyzed the detailed, in-depth Cairn data<sup>4</sup> as part of our research. It is fortuitous that for the first time, the 2019 Cairn survey included a question that identified those respondents who camped in a national park the previous year.

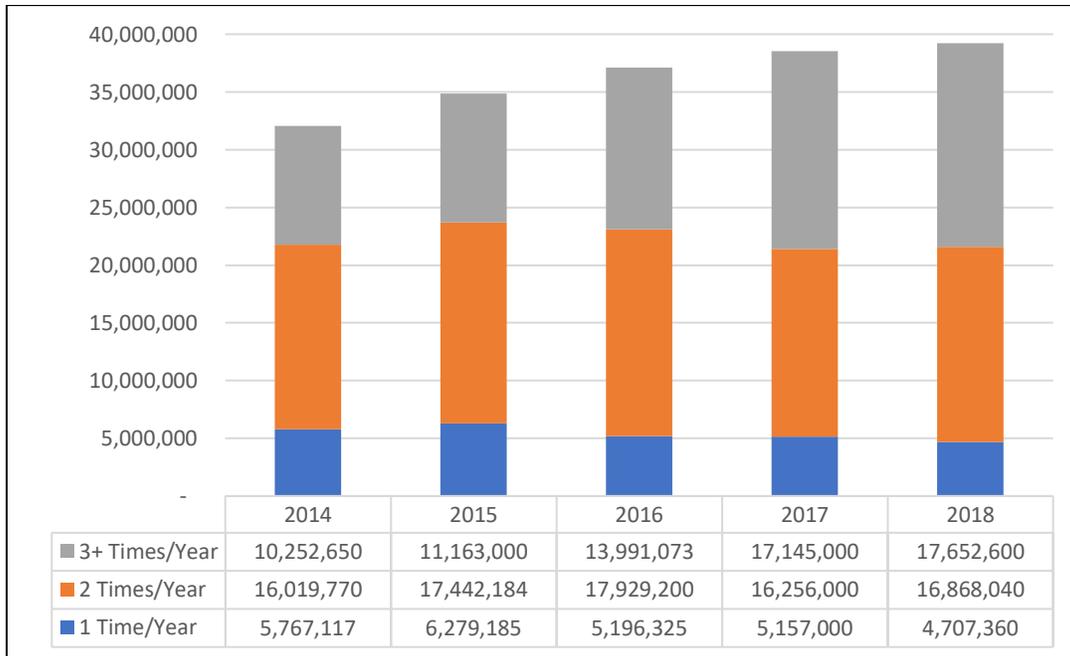
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<sup>3</sup> Outdoor Industry of America 2018 Recreation Economy Report

<sup>4</sup> Survey data consists of random, cross-section of all campers in North America

As illustrated in Exhibit 2, the frequency to camp more than one time per year increased total multiple annual camper nights by more than 8.2 million.

**Exhibit 2 - Annual Camper Nights by Year and Frequency of Camping**



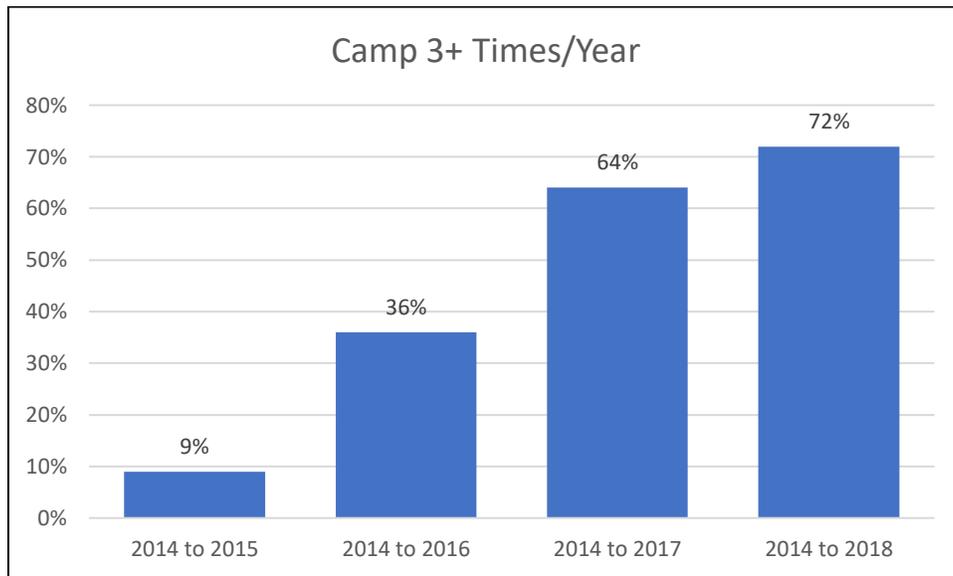
Source: Outdoor Industry Association

New camper households primarily drove this growth, chiefly from the influx of younger and multicultural campers. From 2014 to 2018, there has been a 22 percent increase in annual camper households.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cairn Consulting Group

This influx of younger and ethnically diverse campers has a stronger sense of enthusiasm associated with camping when compared to that of other campers. This enthusiasm manifested itself in new campers taking more camping trips and camping nights annually. As seen in Exhibit 3, since 2014 the percentage of campers who camp three or more times annually has increased by 72 percent.

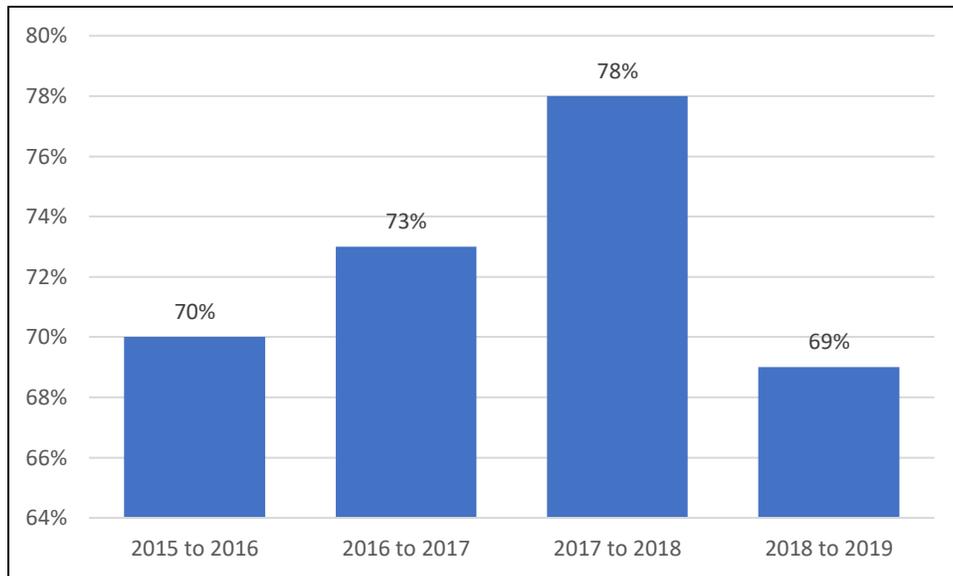
**Exhibit 3 - Growth in Camping Frequency From 2014**



Source: Cairn Consulting

New campers are, in general, somewhat uncertain of how their camping trips might change in the future. From 2015 to 2018, the retention of campers from year to year grew from 70 percent to 78 percent, which is promising. However, 2019 preliminary numbers show a decline in retention from 2018. Because of general uncertainty about life changes and other plans, approximately 17 percent of campers are uncertain about their future camping plans in 2019. This level of uncertainty makes it challenging to speculate if the retention rate is decreasing, holding steady, or continuing to grow.

**Exhibit 4 - Retention Rate Among Campers**

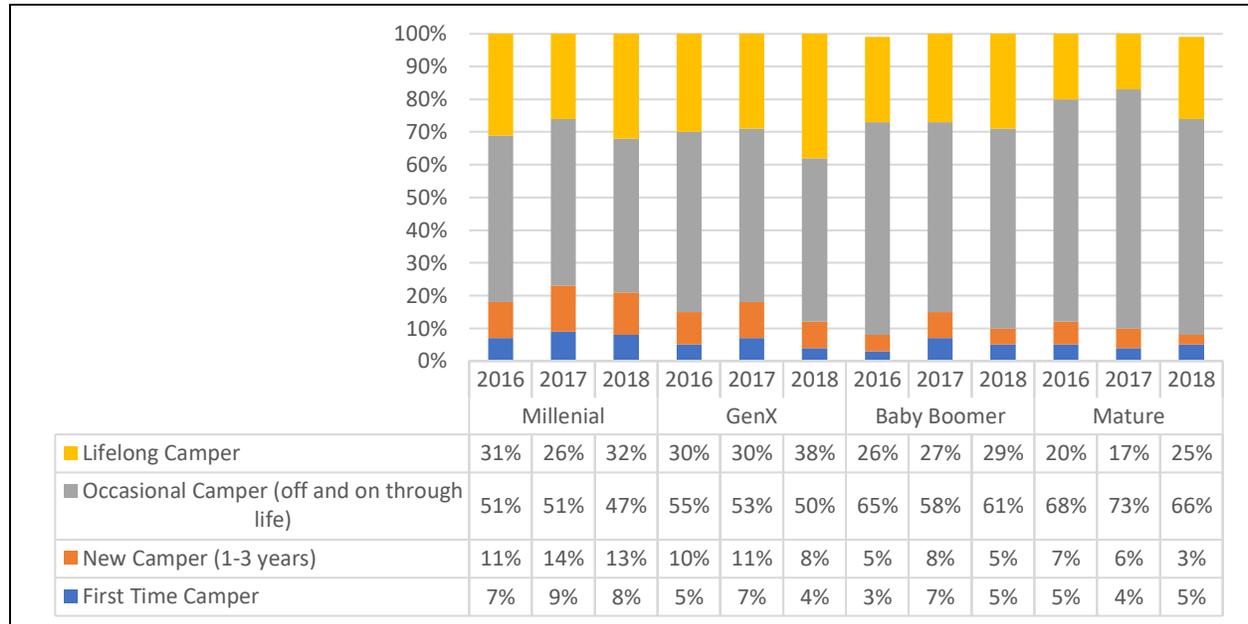


Source: Cairn Consulting

As stated earlier, the most aggressive camping industry growth segment is younger campers, which makes understanding their behavior critical. Children are an important part of Millennial families experiences', and while a majority report that it was their parents who introduced them to camping, one out of five say that they were introduced to camping because it was a great way to travel with kids. They are more likely to self-identify as life-long campers.

In other words, those who start camping early in life tend to continue camping the rest of their lives.<sup>6</sup> Understanding the new camper of today should provide insight into the seasoned camper of tomorrow. Indeed, younger campers are more likely to consider themselves lifelong campers than other generations. By definition, lifelong campers are expected to continue camping their entire lives while providing the industry with stable demand. If the trend of identifying as lifelong campers seen in the Millennial and Generation X (GenX) generations continue for Generation Z (GenZ), and subsequent generations, overall demand should continue to experience stability.

**Exhibit 5 - Campers Identity as Lifelong or Casual Campers**

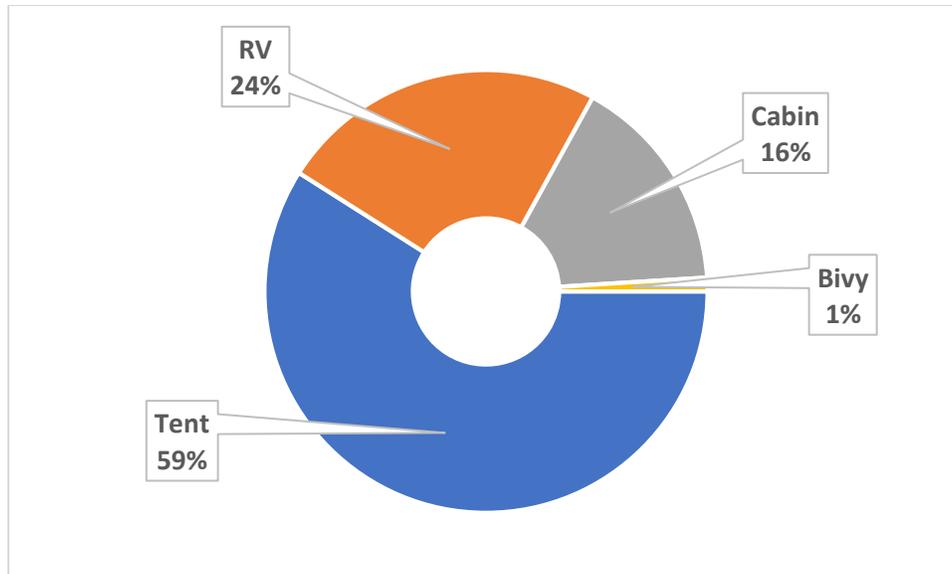


Source: Cairn Consulting

<sup>6</sup> Cairn Consulting Group

Campers utilize a variety of different accommodation types while camping. Tenting is the most popular option followed by recreation vehicles, cabins, and other accommodations.

**Exhibit 6 - 2017 Camping Accommodation Distribution**



Source: Outdoor Industry Association

The notable differences of distribution among accommodation types between new campers and regular campers is that of tenting, cabins, and other accommodations. New campers utilize cabins and other accommodations at higher rates than do regular campers. Cabins in this report refer to any accommodation other than a tent or RV used on a campground or RV park, including all types of cabins and even yurts, glamping tents, and tree houses. This usage is due to several factors, such as new campers likely have not invested in all the required equipment, or they want to acclimate slowly to camping by utilizing a cabin/other accommodation first.

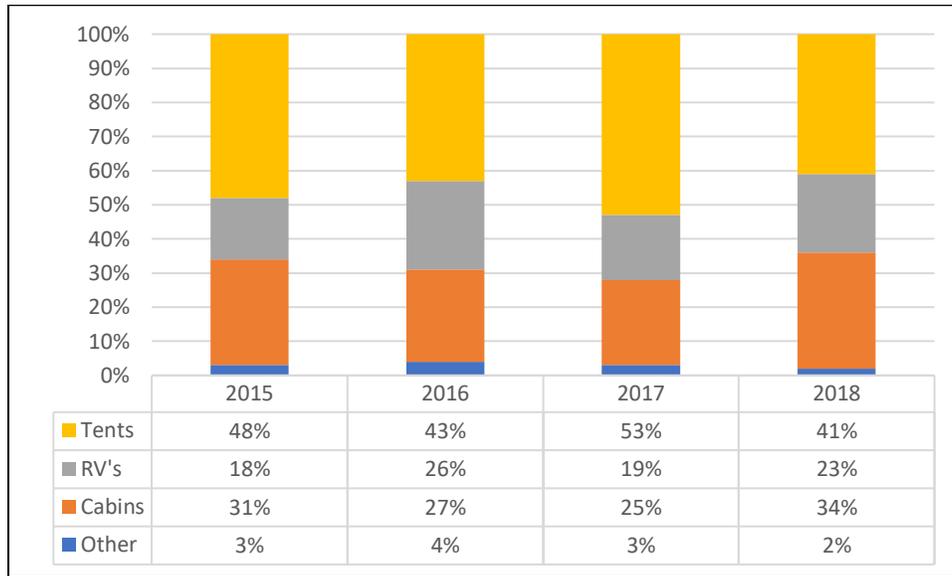
Tent Camping, the most popular form of camping, consists of utilizing a shelter made of sheets of fabric draped over a frame or supported by a rope. In front country campgrounds, most tent campers arrive by car and set up a tent at the campsite while parked next to it.

RV Camping consists of camping in a motor vehicle or trailer designed to be living quarters. There are several types including motorhomes, campervans, caravans (aka travel trailers and camper trailers), fifth wheel trailers, popup campers, and truck campers. RV campers typically look for campgrounds that have water, electrical, and/or sewer connections as on-board resources are limited.

Cabin camping consists of staying in a structure constructed out of any number of materials (e.g., wood). The level of amenities found in a cabin vary greatly from simple, one-room wooden cabins with no utilities to full modern cottages.

Bivy campers are typically seen at backcountry campsites but are occasionally seen at front-country campsites. Bivy is short for bivouac shelter, which is essentially a sack that the campers sleep in out in the open. These sites are typically utilized in the military and by mountaineers.

**Exhibit 7 - Primary Accommodation Type for New Campers**



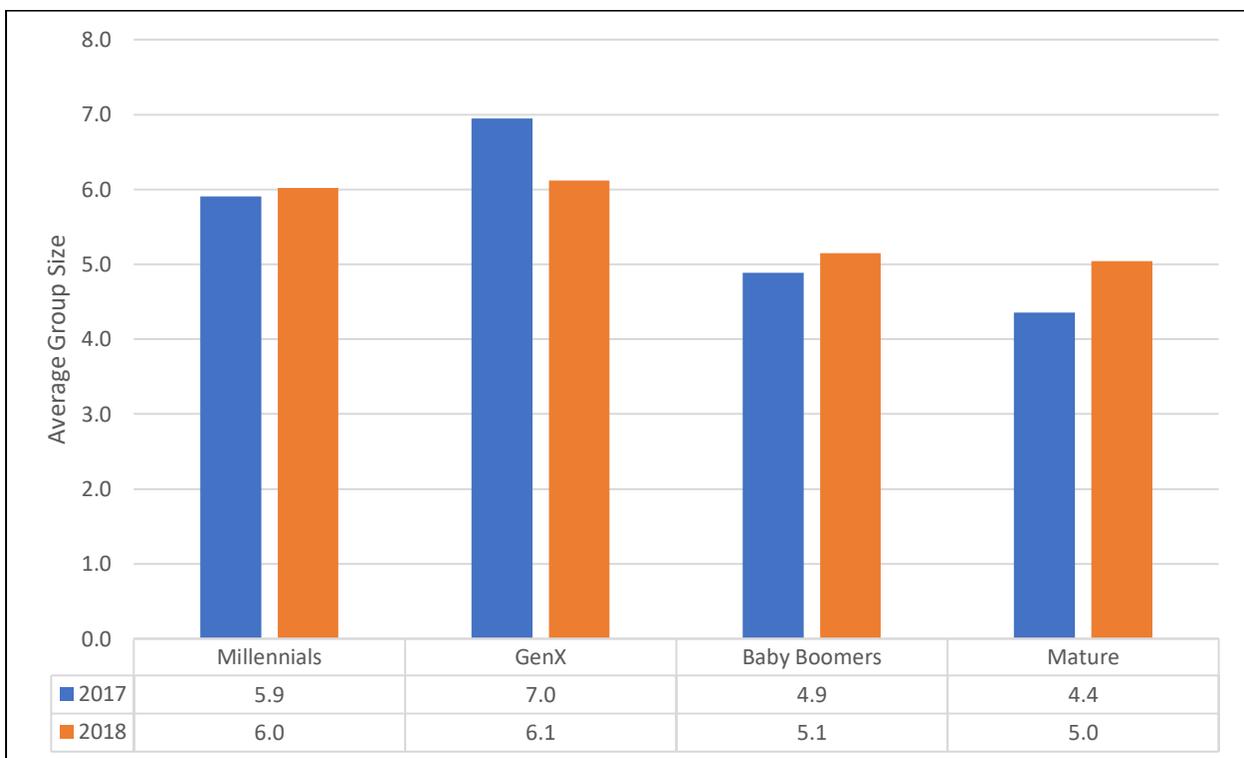
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Group Camping**

When evaluating group camping, it is important to distinguish between two main group types. One group type is organizational (e.g., Scouts of America), and the other group type is comprised chiefly of families and/or close friends. With regard to the latter, it is common for these campers to utilize a variety of accommodations, which has necessitated the development of flexible sites at private campgrounds allowing operators to mix and match sites. The following data pertain to this second type of group camper.

The younger generations, Millennials and GenXers, are more likely to camp with a larger group than other generations.

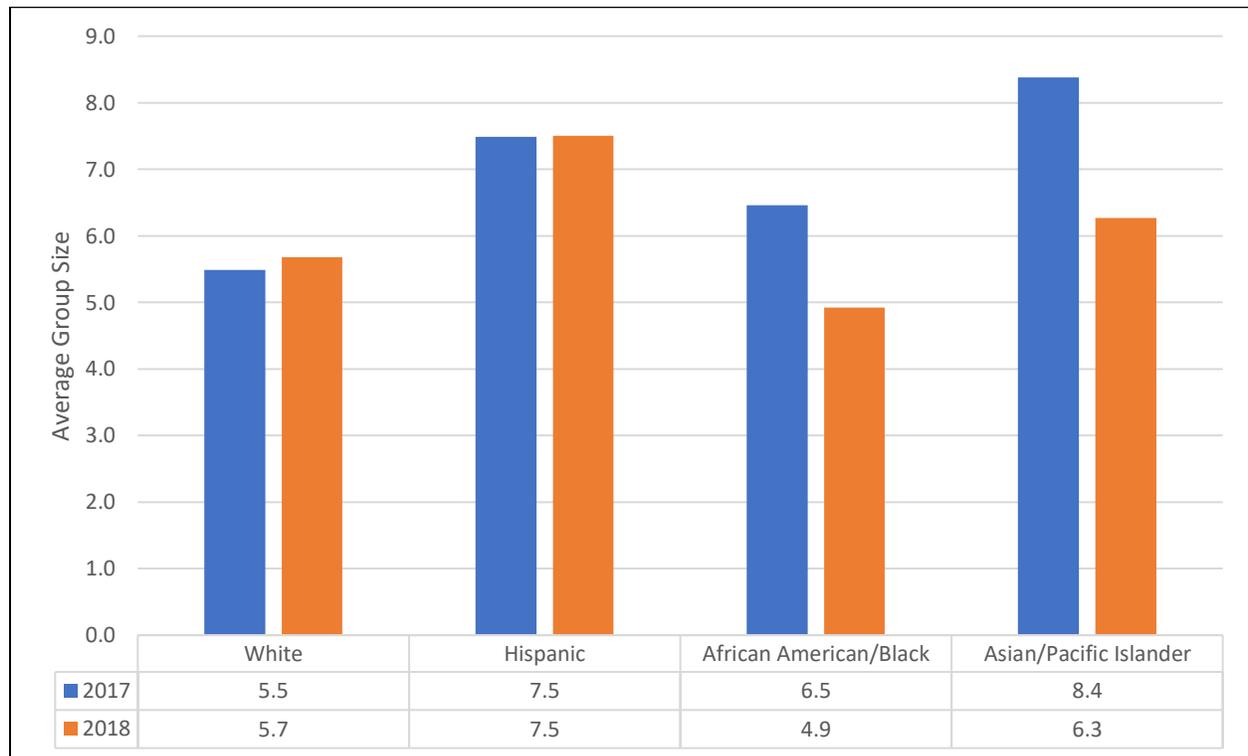
**Exhibit 8 – Average Camping Group Size by Generation**



Source: Cairn Consulting

When segmented by ethnicity, the data show Hispanics camped with the largest average group size in 2018. Additionally, the average group size for both African American and Asian campers decreased from 2017 to 2018.

**Exhibit 9 – Average Camping Group Size by Ethnicity**



Source: Cairn Consulting

**The Impact of RVs on Campgrounds**

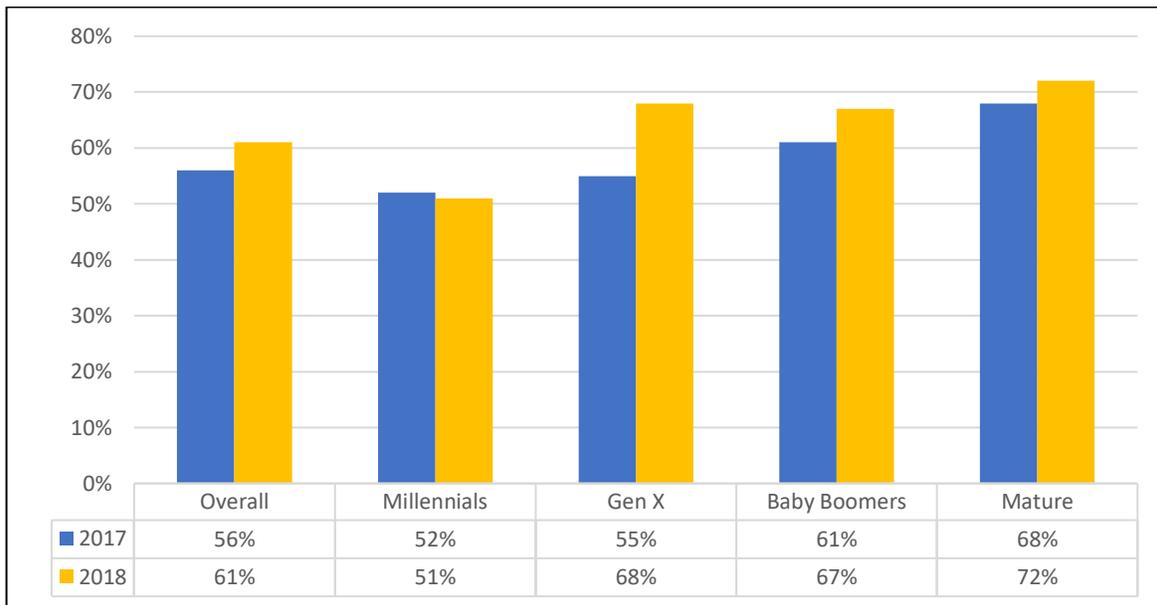
The Recreational Vehicle industry is a key piece of the campground industry as many campers do so with their own or rented RVs. This segment generates approximately \$114 billion annually in economic impact, as reported by the RVIA. Approximately 25 million Americans go RVing annually.<sup>7</sup>

**RV Camping**

Recreational Vehicle camping typically requires campgrounds with more infrastructure than is needed for rustic camping. RV camping utilization has been strong in recent years, and approximately one in four campers uses a RV as their primary lodging. The current trend is RV ownership versus borrowing or renting a rig. This is significant because RV owners are likely to take more trips with their rigs and participate in RVing longer in life.

<sup>7</sup> RVIA

**Exhibit 10 - RV Ownership**

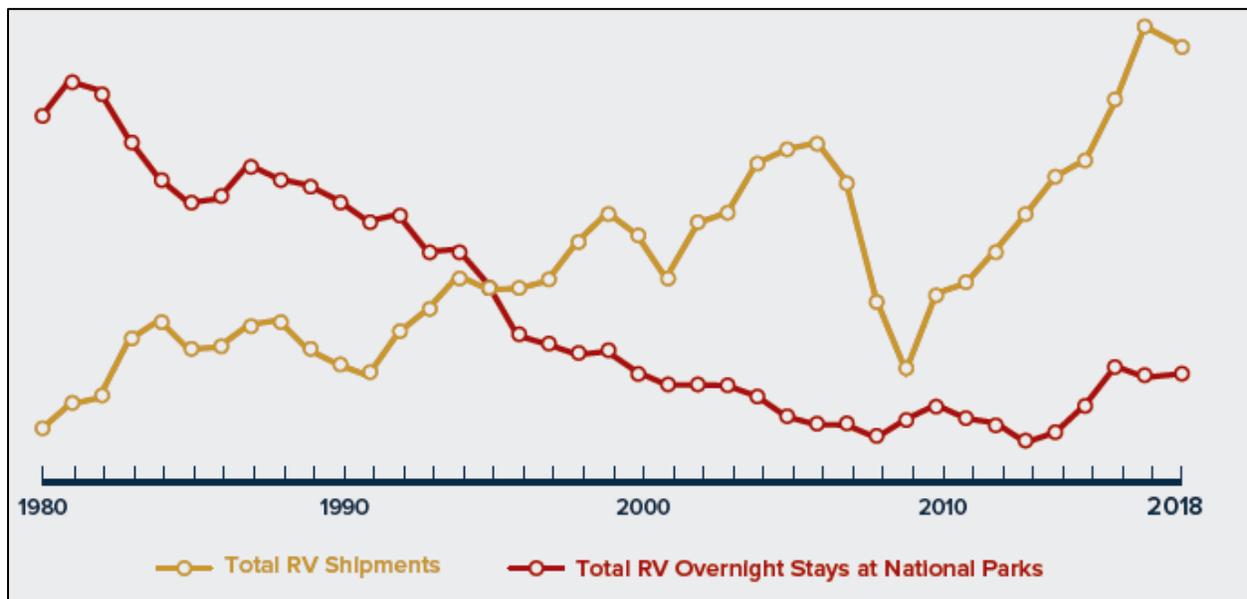


Source: Cairn Consulting

Exhibit 10 shows the change in the percent of RV ownership for those campers who participate in RVing. For example, the RV ownership rate increased overall from 56 percent to 61 percent.

As illustrated in Exhibit 11, NPS campgrounds appear to be under-capturing this demand segment. It is important to note that many of the modern RVs are much heavier and longer than their predecessors and require significant infrastructure and increased energy support.

**Exhibit 11 – Total RV Shipments vs. Total RV Overnight Stays at National Parks**



Source: RVIA

Despite the growth in the RV industry since the 1980s, the overall number of overnight stays for RV users at National Parks is a long-term downward trend. This trend may be reversed with curing deferred maintenance and implementing other worthwhile infrastructure improvements. The CBRE Team believes that the improvements important to implement are those that support RVs without significantly impacting negatively the aesthetics of NPS campgrounds. Initiatives such as reinforcing existing roads, redesigning campgrounds allowing for wider roads and pull-throughs, longer pads, and buried electrical cables, water and/or sewer lines should support modern RVs while keeping the existing feel of campgrounds.

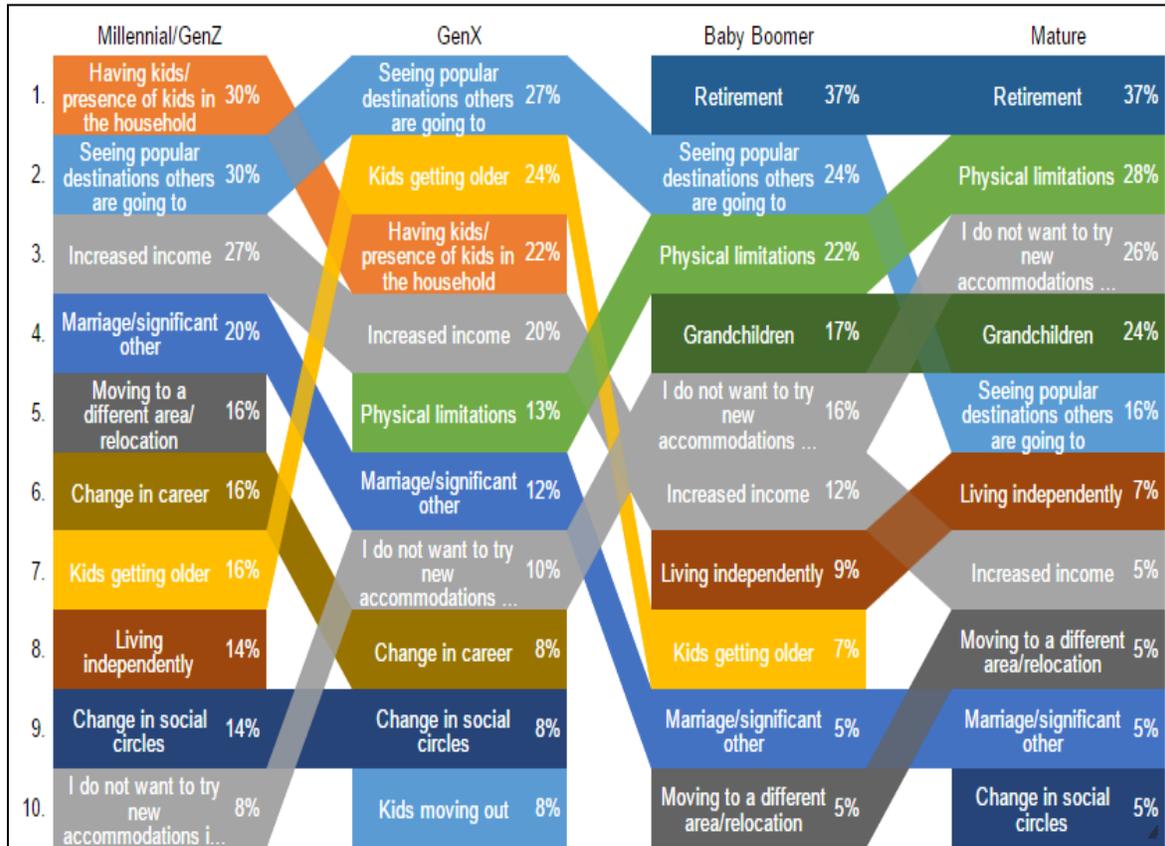
There are also nationally recognized codes for RV campgrounds that are recommended to be adopted by the NPS and are discussed in a subsequent section.

### **National Economic and Demographic Trends**

By drilling down into the various camping industry's demand segments, we can start to appreciate what is driving recent growth. Industry best practices indicate that segmenting campers by their generation provides significant insight into behaviors and the preferences that motivate them.

As stated earlier, life stages and life events have the largest impact on campers' behavior. For example, whether children will be a part of the camping trip is a great influence on the type and location of campground that campers select.

**Exhibit 12 - Ranking of Life Events That Impact Camping 2018**



Source: Cairn Consulting

Economic factors are driving Millennials’ experiences. GenX campers are likely to mention that their children getting older has an impact on their camping experiences. Boomers and Mature campers state retirement is the impetus for new experiences. Among families, having children and children getting older are most likely to impact their experiences, while seeking new destinations has the greatest impact on non-family campers.

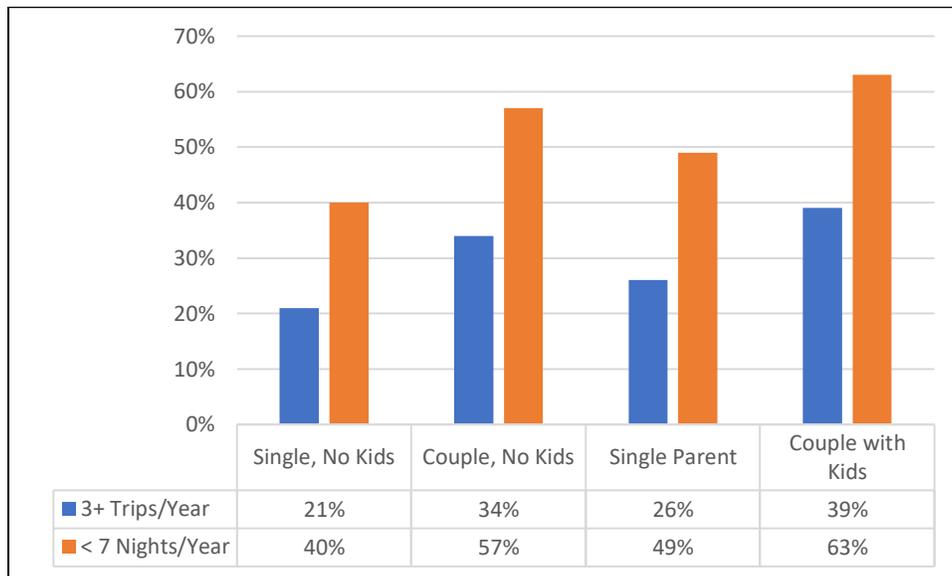
The trend of Millennials seeking popular destinations may be tied to their exposure to these places on social media from their friend’s trips. This exposure can do two things. People who have not camped before will be incentivized to try these new experiences and post them to social media for fear of missing out, and it can eliminate the fear of the unknown of these destinations as they have become more familiar through social media exposure.

### Understanding Family Camper Preferences

Millennial families are an important demand sub-segment to understand because they represent the future of camping. They are teaching their children a love for the outdoors who, in turn, will hopefully become campers as well in the tradition of their parents. Those who start camping early in life tend to continue camping for the rest of their lives.

Millennial families form the most avid group of Millennial campers and are most likely to identify themselves as new to camping in 2018. They report taking more trips and spending more nights camping and are substantially more likely to camp more often in the future.

**Exhibit 13 - Camping Trips and Camping Nights 2018**

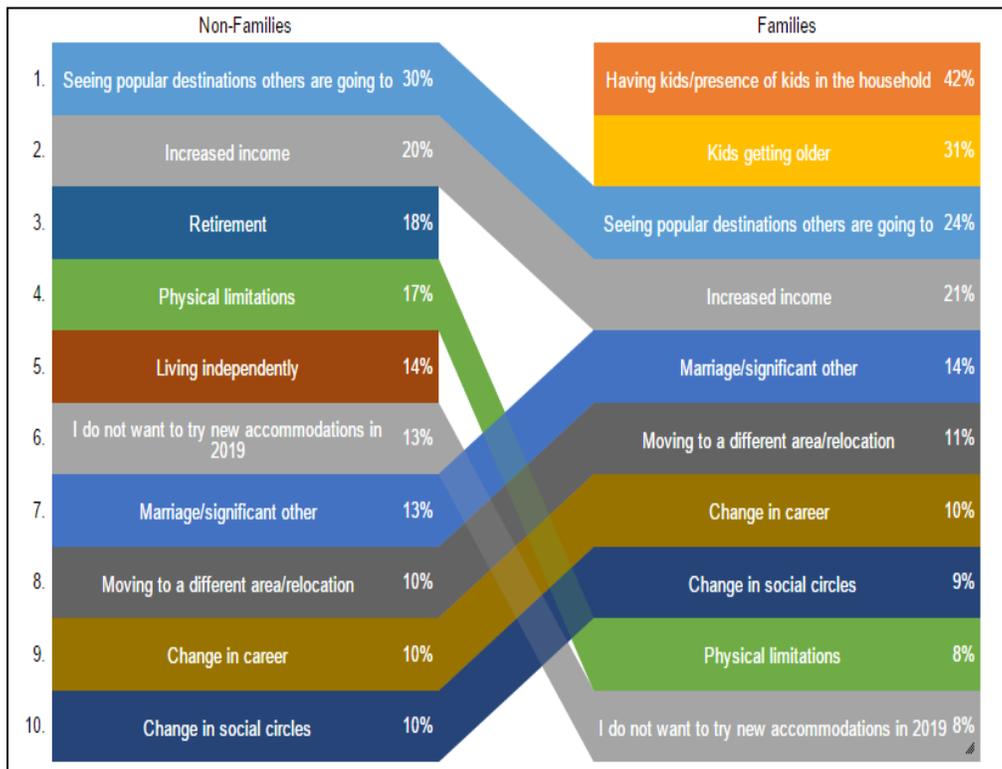


Source: Cairn Consulting

Year-to-Year, families are more likely to seek campgrounds based on the atmosphere, especially locations, that have “kid-friendly” on-site recreation. Children are an important part of their experiences, and while a majority report that it was their parents who introduced them to camping, one out of five state they were introduced to camping because it is a great way to travel with kids; they are more likely to self-identify as life-long campers.

Campers’ decisions are driven by many factors that influence where and how they camp. For families, children are most likely to impact their experiences. For non-family campers, the desire to seek new destinations has the greatest impact. The following exhibit compares the importance of various life events and their impact on camping decisions.

**Exhibit 14 - Rank of Life Events that Impact Camping 2018**



Source: Cairn Consulting

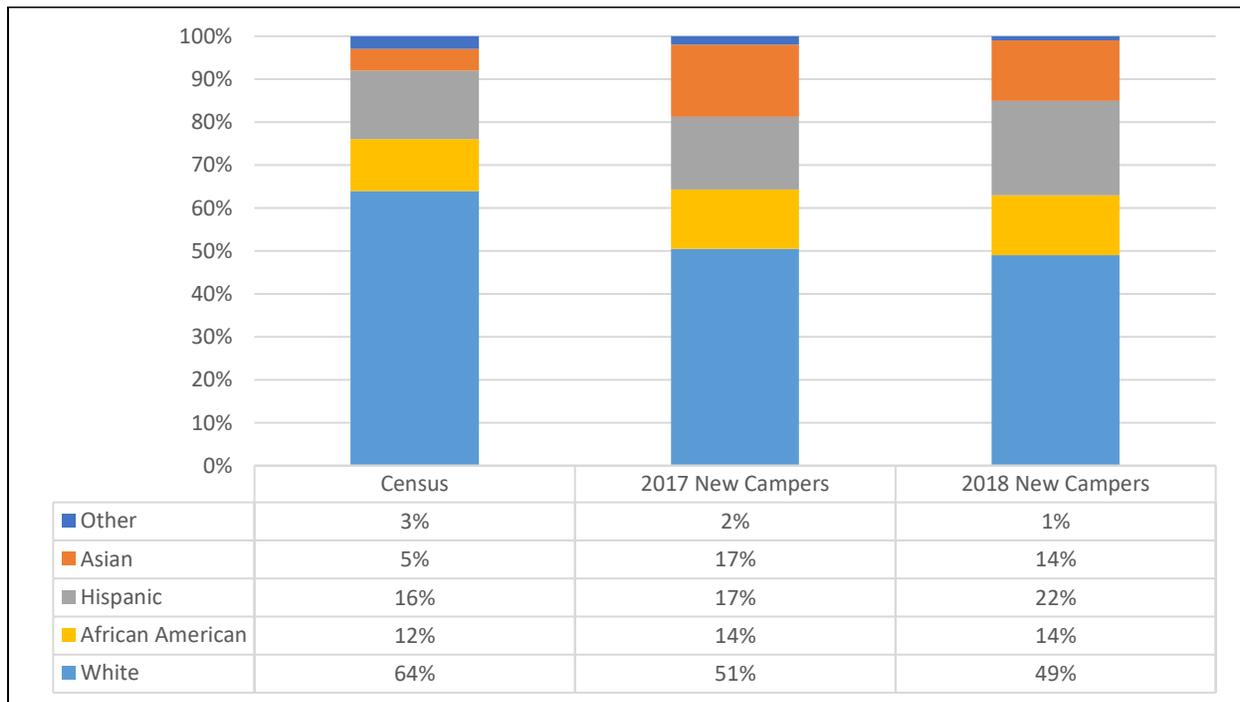
Camping is seen by most campers as a way to escape and relax from the stresses of everyday life. Campers have a wide variety of objectives from just enjoying the campground atmosphere to engaging in physical activities like hiking or swimming. A subsequent section of this report explores in more detail the top camper objectives enjoy while camping.

**Ethnic and Cultural Preferences**

Another important demand segment identified by industry best practices is the ethnic background of campers. Cultural influences greatly impact the decisions and preferences of people, so it is important to understand how culture influences the behavior of various groups.

In 2017 and 2018, approximately half of the newest campers originated from non-white ethnic groups. White and African American campers made up a similar proportion of new campers as they do in census data. In contrast, Asian and Hispanic campers are overrepresented in their numbers as new campers compared to the census data. Hispanic campers exceeded what would be expected in the overall population (22 percent versus 16 percent for census figures), and Asian campers are still represented at a rate three times of what would be expected (14 percent versus five percent for census figures).

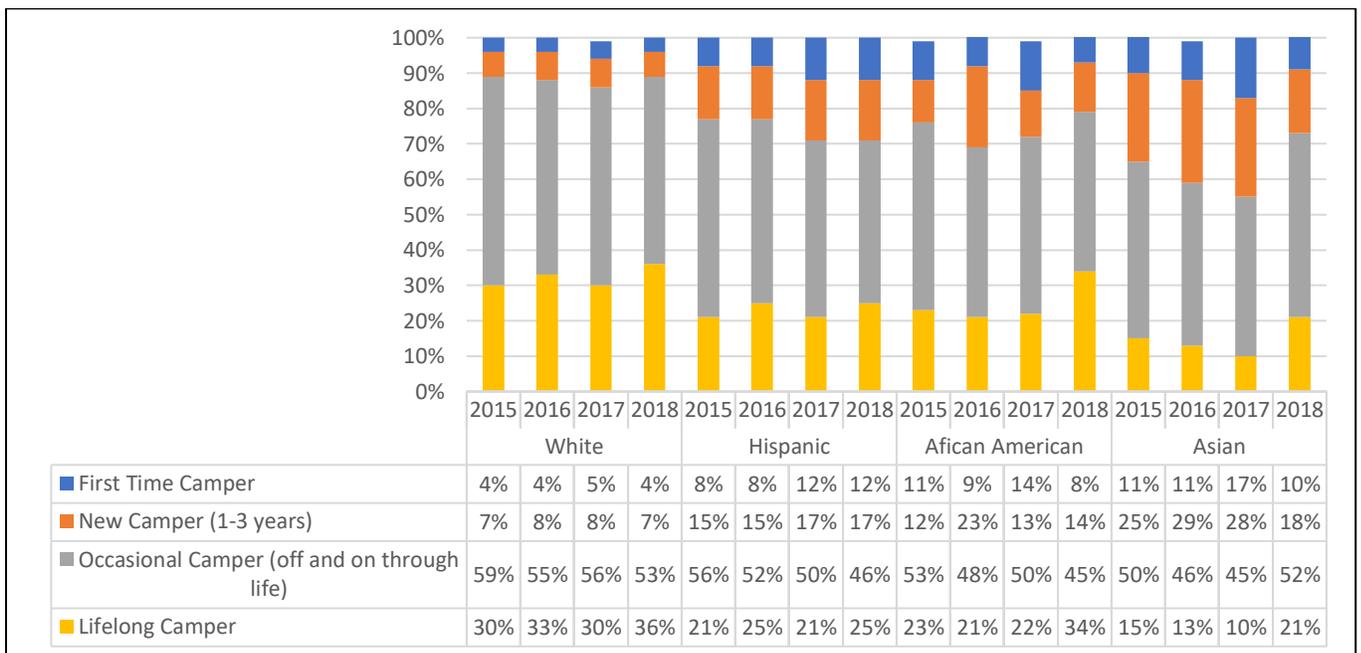
**Exhibit 15 - New Camper Demographic Profile vs Census Demographic Profile of the US**



Source: Cairn Consulting

Although Asian and Hispanic new campers may have over representation as compared to the census data, white campers have the largest percentage of all campers for lifelong camper.

**Exhibit 16 - Camper Type by Ethnicity**



Source: Cairn Consulting

### **African American Campers**

The African American demand segment is important to understand because it is the youngest demographic of the camper segments, with 64 percent Millennial representation. One-third identify as lifelong campers; two-thirds camp in tents, a rate similar to Asian Americans yet below both white and Hispanic campers.

Generally, African American campers reportedly highly value campground atmosphere when selecting a campground. Almost half (48 percent) say that Wi-Fi is not important, which is much higher when compared to both Hispanic (37 percent) and Asian American (35 percent) campers. African American campers who camp in a RV are least likely to own the RV (33 percent) compared to 62 percent overall.<sup>8</sup>

Compared to other campers, African American campers are most likely to state that camping allows them to blow off steam (64 percent versus 54 percent) but are equally likely to identify the benefits of camping such as stress reduction, clearing their minds, and escaping everyday life.<sup>9</sup>

And, overall, the African American camper market could represent a growing camper segment by not only being the youngest camper group (as noted previously) but appear to be using camping as a way to get their children outdoors.

### **Hispanic Campers**

Since 2014, representation among Hispanics has increased by five percentage points in camping participation. Hispanic households represent 11 percent of all camping households, the largest non-white group of campers. Twenty two percent of new campers in 2018 were Hispanic. This segment represents the fastest growing based on ethnicity (up from six percent in 2014 to 11 percent in 2018).<sup>10</sup>

While Hispanic campers are just as dedicated in their camping as other groups of campers, they represent a much more optimistic group reporting a higher likelihood to increase their camper nights (64 percent) and camping trips (50 percent) in the coming year.<sup>11</sup>

Hispanic campers are also trying different types of camping. Their decisions on how and where to camp are being largely influenced by the cultural norms of the group. Over the past four years,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

usage of tents decreased while usage of cabins, whether primitive or luxury,<sup>12</sup> increased by 10 percentage points.<sup>13</sup>

Hispanic campers are also most likely to have tried some type of new accommodation in 2018 (66 percent) and are significantly more likely than other campers to have tried a towable RV (aka fifth wheel) in 2018 (21 percent). Reinforcing the idea that Hispanic campers are seeking new ways of camping and types of camping experiences, they are most likely to want to try an RVing experience (58 percent) or to experience “van life” (22 percent). About one-fourth of Hispanic campers stay in RVs, yet about half do not own the RV they use most, resulting in Hispanic households highly likely (69 percent) to consider renting an RV from a peer-to-peer listing. Hispanics are highly social campers. They are the most likely to camp with multiple generations of family members (74 percent), most likely to camp with larger groups of campers (eight campers on average) when compared to other campers and are more likely than other campers to say that a group outing sparked their interest in camping (25 percent versus 15 percent overall).<sup>14</sup>

Recreation and activities are important to Hispanic campers, with fully half (50 percent versus 40 percent among other campers) stating that on-site recreation is important and are most likely to agree that they like campgrounds with organized activities (44 percent versus 32 percent overall). Hispanics are the group of campers most likely to leave the campground to go shopping (43 percent versus 32 percent among other campers) and enjoy the area nightlife (24 percent versus 15 percent overall).<sup>14</sup>

### **Asian American Campers**

Asian American campers represented approximately seven percent of the overall campers which is up from one percent in 2012. They are the smallest ethnic group, other than “other” but unlike African-American and Hispanic groups they are represented higher than their census figures. 14 percent of new campers in 2018 were Asian Americans, tied with African Americans. This was down from 2017 but up from the 2015 figures.

Asian American campers are most likely to say that a variety of sources influence their decisions; the influence of both social media and travel bloggers is directly related to the age of the camper. Younger campers tend to use social media where older generations prefer the travel blogs or guides and handbooks. They are the group most likely to express a desire to try glamping and their relatively high use rates of social media likely has an impact on this outcome.

Asian American campers are significantly more likely to say that their desire to try new lodging allows them to travel in comfort and travel further distances. They are most likely, out of the

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<sup>12</sup> Data unavailable to quantify number of cabin subsets

<sup>13</sup> Cairn Consulting Group

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

other ethnic groups, to travel 100 miles or further from home for a camping trip. However, despite their expressed desire for glamping and trying new accommodations they and African American campers stay at National Parks at the highest rates. This suggests that the desires for glamping and a variety of accommodation types is being satisfied with existing offerings.

## Trends in Consumer Spending Behavior

Determining accurate national trends in consumer spending for the campground industry is not possible as the industry is comprised of many small, independent operators who do not report data (unlike the hotel industry that is more transparent). As such, there is no one central industry organization that collects and analyzes overall industry performance.

The total economic impact of the camping industry can be measured more easily. In 2018, the Outdoor Industry Association reported that the camping segment of the Outdoor Recreation Economy realized over \$31 billion of gear, accessory, and vehicle sales and over \$135 billion in direct trip-related spending. This resulted in an overall economic impact of nearly \$167 billion.

In June 2019, RVIA reported that the RV segment of the Outdoor Recreation Economy realized a \$25.6 billion economic impact.

**Exhibit 17 - Recreational Vehicle Economic Impact**



Source: RVIA

Although national campground industry consumer spending is not available, anecdotal information gathered from numerous operator interviews may give insight.

The typical daily rates for campsites range from a low of approximately \$20 for primitive tent sites to approximately \$100 for full hook-up, premium pads. This price range may grow or shrink depending on the geographic area of the campground, the size of the pad, and available connections.

Some examples of the differences in pricing are, for example, the typical rates at United States Forest Service (USFS) campgrounds. Fees for campgrounds (not park entrance fees) vary from

free to \$30 per day for individual sites (double and group sites cost more). Typical add-on fees run from \$5 to \$12 per day for pets, second vehicle, extra guests, boat launch, etc.

Camping and day use permits are the backbone of the campground industry. However, depending on where the campground is located, retail and rental fees can sometimes generate a substantial portion of an individual campground's total revenue.

An interesting example of an existing lakeside concession-operated campground, on quasi-government land and completely renovated circa 2010, with approximately 140 short- and long-term RV sites plus approximately five camping cabins realized the following sales in 2018:

- \$900,000 – Gross Sales
  - \$300,000 – Extended Stay (half of the sites)
  - \$400,000 – Short term (half of the sites)
  - \$20,000 to \$30,000 – Day use fees<sup>15</sup>
  - \$70,000 to \$80,000 – Retail and firewood
  - \$80,000 to \$90,000 – Equipment rental, boat launch

In most typical campgrounds, the campsite or RV pad rental will be the revenue driver not retail or equipment rental sales. On average, camp stores will account for approximately eight to 10 percent of gross revenue. Other revenue departments' contribution to the top line will vary to a greater degree due to the campground's location and how aggressively operators pursue these revenue streams.

Below is an example revenue and expense statement from a typical USFS concessionaire-operated campground.

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<sup>15</sup> The concessionaire recognized the full amount and paid the owner (quasi-government agency) a portion of this fee in its contractual lease payment (franchise fee in NPS terminology)

**Exhibit 18 – Example Concessionaire Revenue & Expense Statement**

		<b>Percent of Revenue</b>	
<b>Sales/Revenue</b>		<b>100%</b>	
Sales and Lodging Tax		7%	
Cost of Goods Sold		4%	
	Wages		34%
	Payroll Taxes & Workers Comp		6%
<b>Wages and wage related</b>		<b>40%</b>	
	Interest and Depreciation		5%
	Insurance		4%
	Property Taxes		0%
<b>Asset and Asset Protection</b>		<b>9%</b>	
	Trash and Septic		5%
	Electric, Water, Phone/Internet		7%
	USFS Bills for Collection		2%
<b>Utilities</b>		<b>14%</b>	
	Maintenance, Janitorial, Storage		4%
	Vehicles		4%
<b>Fuel and Operating Supplies</b>		<b>8%</b>	
	Credit Card Processing and Bank Fees		1%
	Office, Accounting, Legal, Marketing		2%
	Fees, Licensing		0%
<b>Office and Financial</b>		<b>3%</b>	
<b>Fees to Government</b>		<b>10%</b>	
<b>Concessionaire Profit</b>		<b>5%</b>	

**Exhibit 19 – KOA Holiday Campgrounds**

<b>Kampgrounds of America, 2017 Average Dollars per Camper Night 5,001 to 10,000 Camper Nights</b>	
<b>Registration</b>	\$50.53
<b>Store Sales</b>	6.82
<b>Store Costs</b>	(4.16)
<b>Other Income</b>	2.89
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$56.07</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	
<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>	11.92
<b>Utilities</b>	5.28
<b>Operating Supplies</b>	2.27
<b>Royalties</b>	5.05
<b>Property Tax</b>	1.62
<b>Repairs and Maintenance</b>	4.51
<b>Advertising</b>	.77
<b>Auto Expense</b>	.77
<b>Insurance</b>	1.56
<b>Misc. Expense</b>	6.83
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>40.58</b>
<b>Operating Profit</b>	<b>\$15.49</b>

Source: KOA Franchise Disclosure Document April 2019

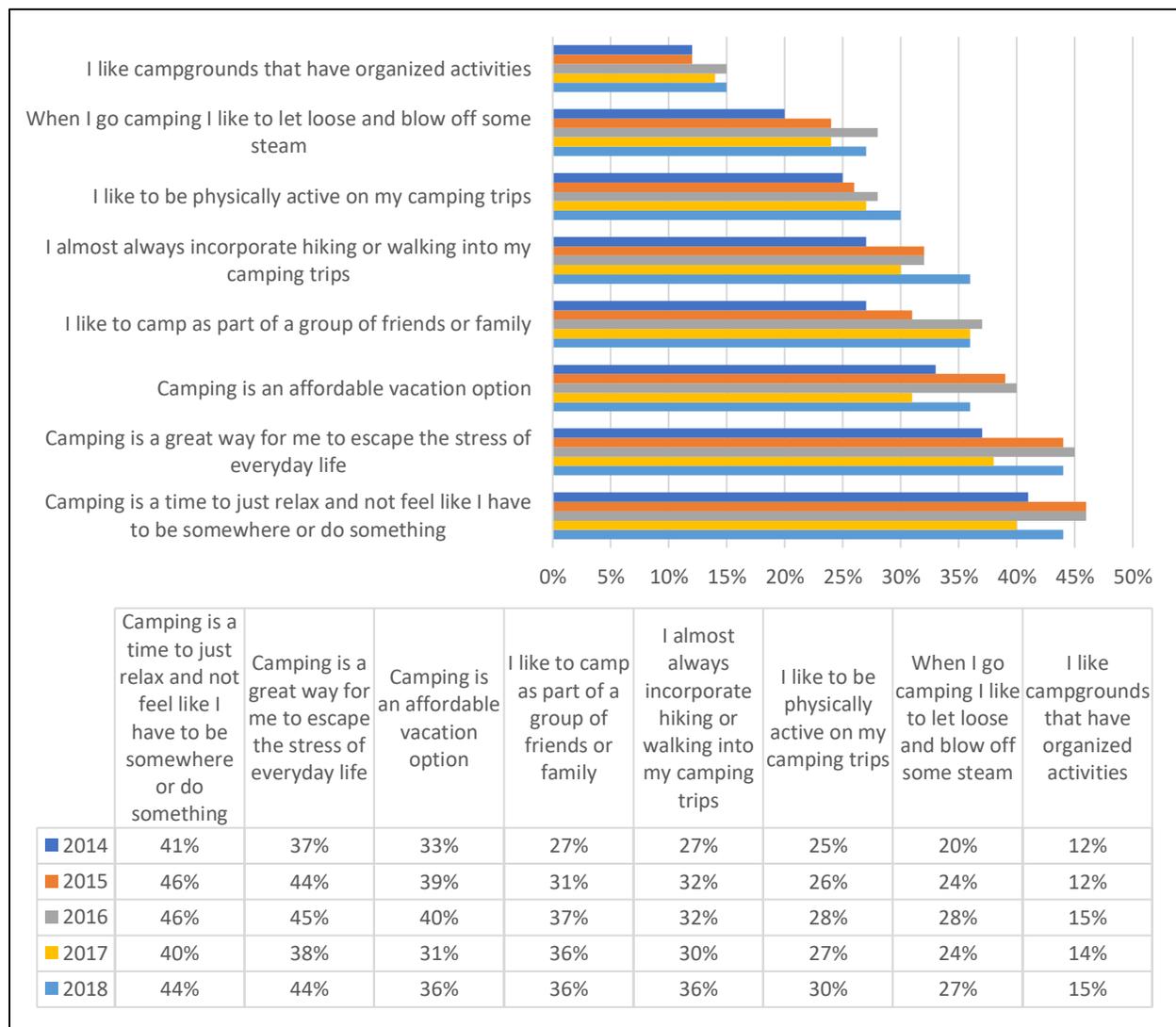
<sup>16</sup> “Keeping Parks Open Using Public-Private Partnerships” <https://vimeo.com/35061607>

## What is a Campground?

Campgrounds will vary greatly depending upon whom you ask. Everyone has a different image of the ideal camping trip, with a different set of amenities and services. These expectations are important to understand when planning or redesigning a campground so resources may be leveraged efficiently to provide campers with the experiences desired. The following section examines various camping options that go above and beyond rustic camping.

Campers enjoy a wide variety of activities at and around campsites. Many campers select their camping destinations based on what is available to do recreationally. This consideration is especially true among non-family campers.

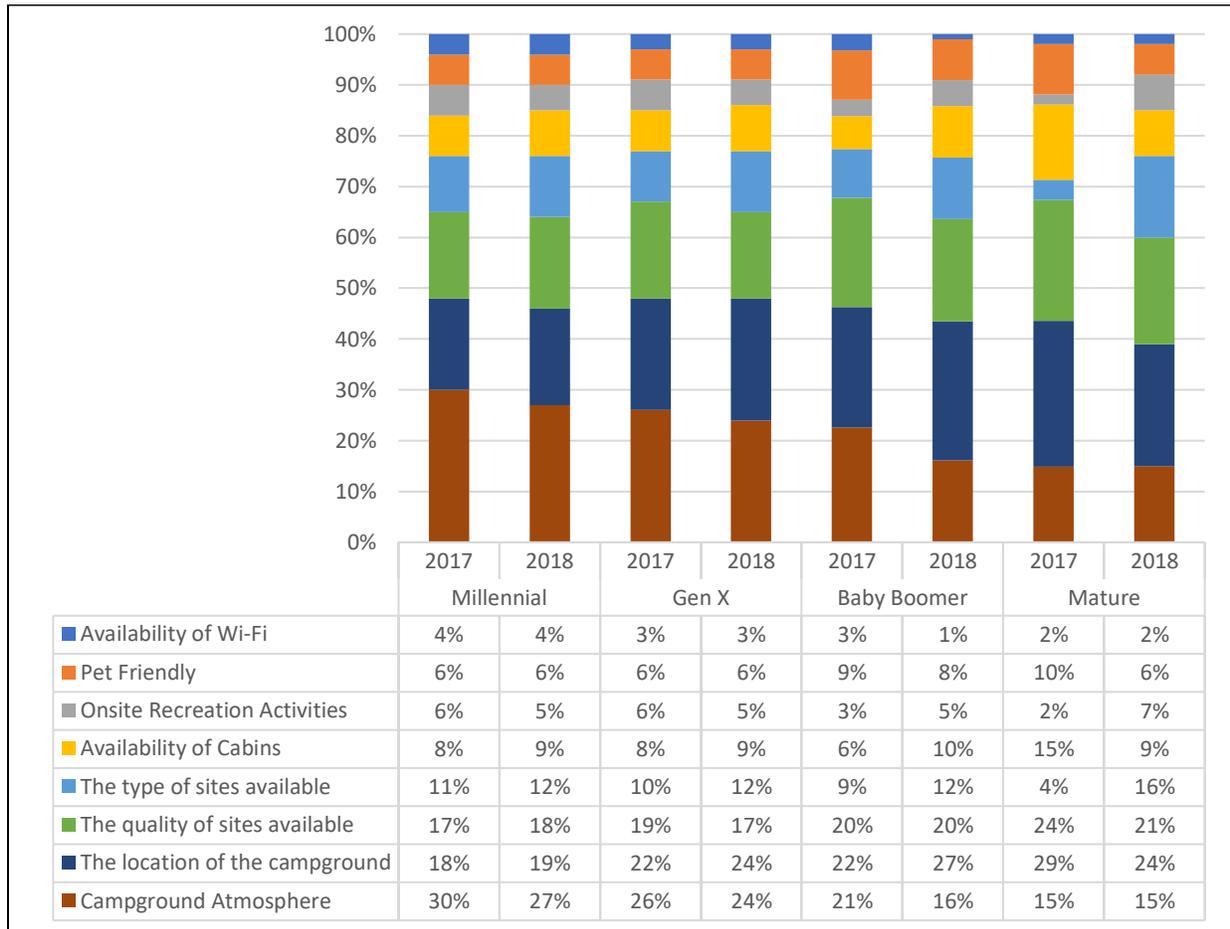
**Exhibit 20 - Breakdown of Camper Camping Objectives**



Source: Cairn Consulting

Camper expectation is driven in no small part by the age of the camper with different generations valuing different factors as most important to selecting a campground. Older campers are less likely to value campground atmosphere and recreation activities, but they are more likely to value location and type/quality of site.

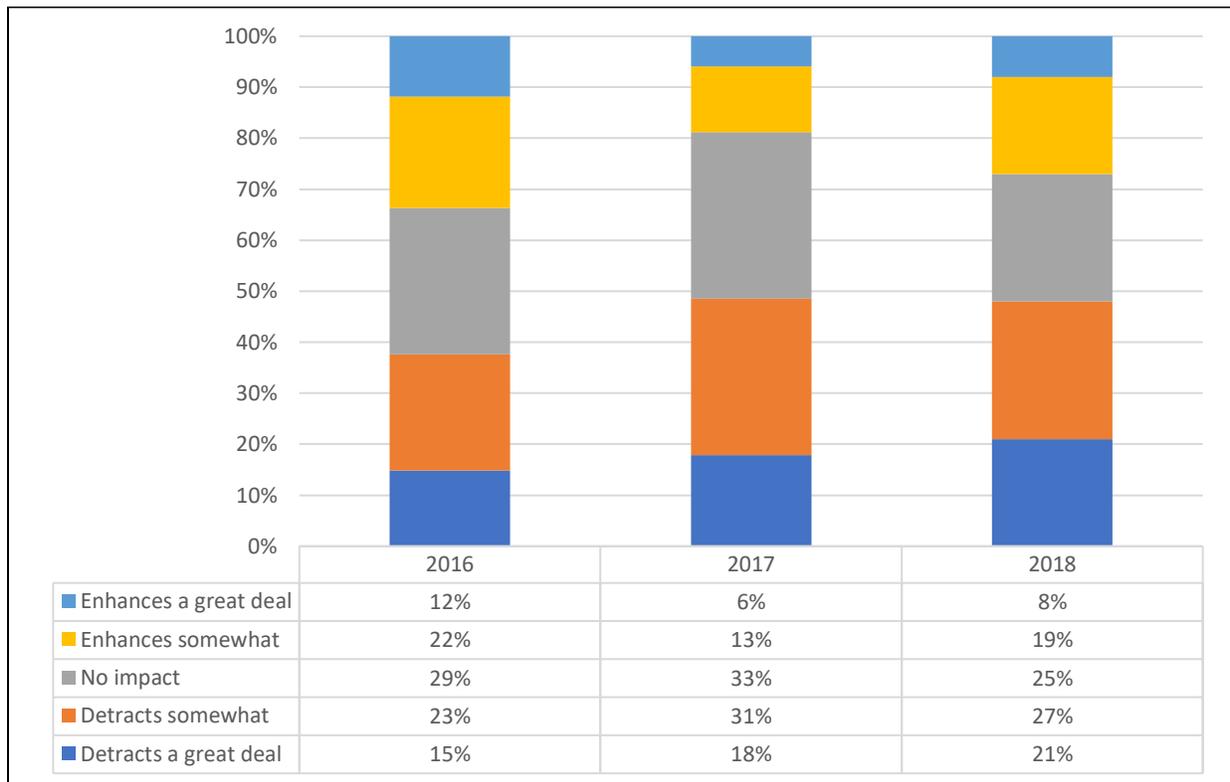
**Exhibit 21 - The most important factor when making a camping decision by generation**



Source: Cairn Consulting

The proportion of campers who state that the use of technology detracts from their experiences has remained stable in recent years. However, there is an increase in the percentage who say it enhances their experiences with a corresponding drop in those who say it has no impact. This growing camper segment who say technology detracts from their experience is an important segment to understand.

**Exhibit 22 - Impact of Technology on Camping Trip**

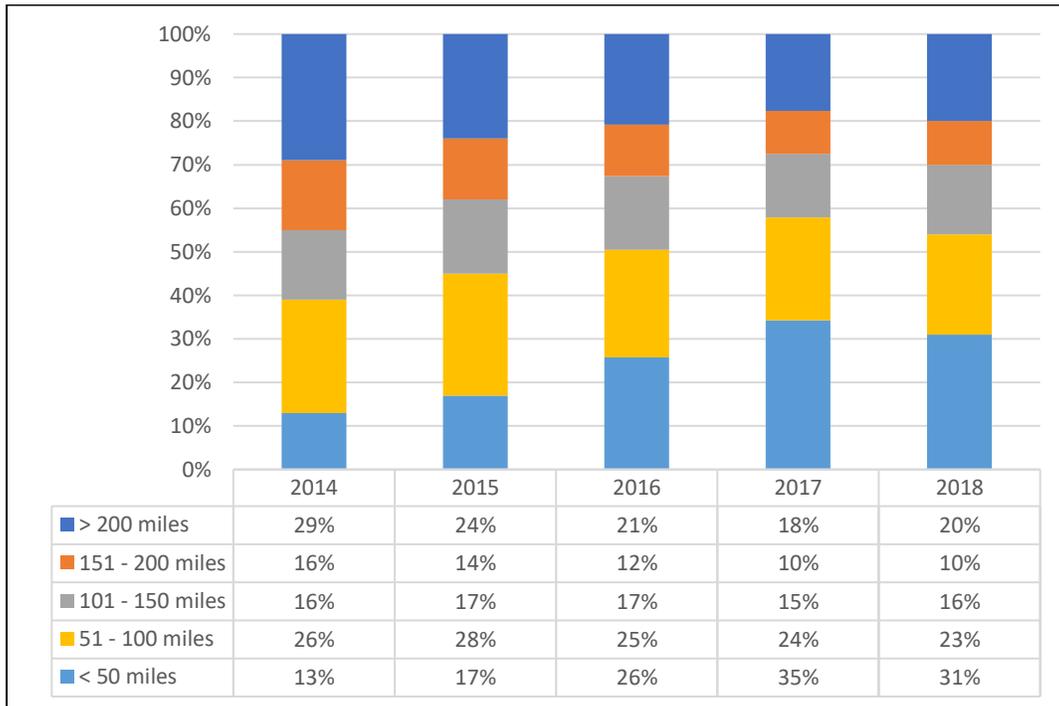


Source: Cairn Consulting

The above chart illustrates that there is a dichotomy in the camper community regarding the use of technology. For instance in 2018, 48 percent of campers’ report that technology detracts from camping in some way, while 27 percent indicate it enhances their experience. A solution to providing both groups of campers with the experience they are seeking is to provide primitive tenting sites with charging stations. This amenity may be inconspicuous for those looking to escape technology.

As illustrated in Exhibit 23, an emerging trend is for campers to recreate closer to home (within 50 miles) and less likely to travel more than 150 miles when selecting campgrounds. This is a shift from the past where campers were most likely to travel more than 150 miles and least likely to camp within 50 miles of their homes.

**Exhibit 23 - Distance Traveled to Camp**



Source: Cairn Consulting

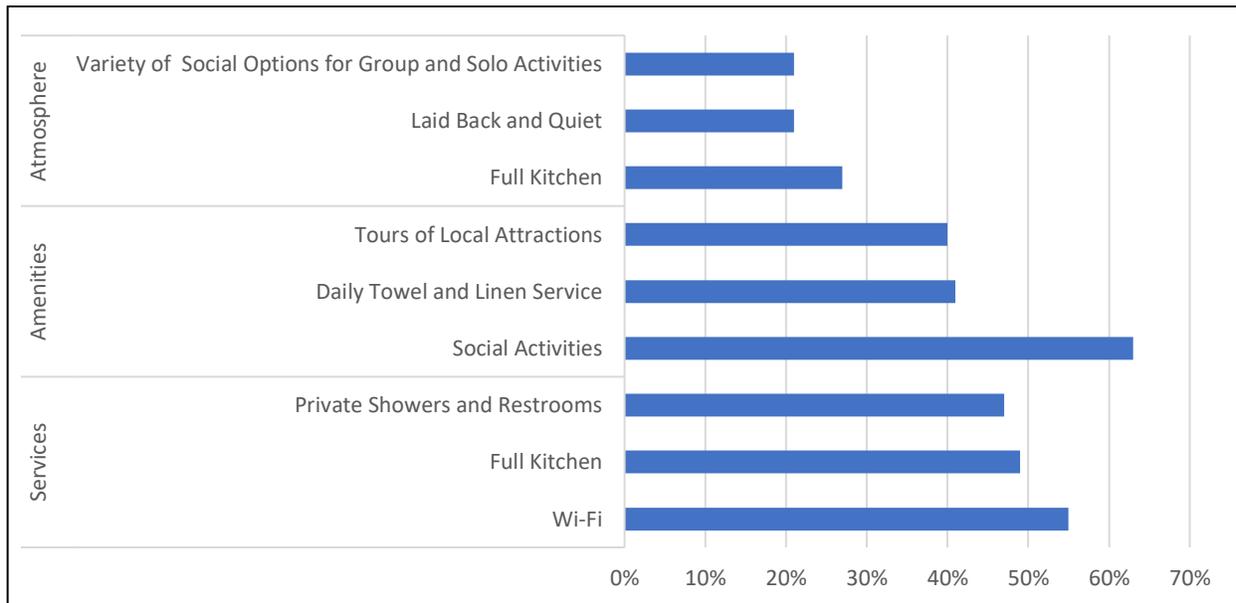
As noted earlier, the growth in the camping industry is driven by new campers who take more frequent trips than those in the past. This behavior has a direct impact on the distance campers may be willing to travel. Campers are driving a shorter distance to their destinations, in part, because time is such an important commodity. Shorter drives mean more recreation time from a limited vacation time window.

**Glamping**

“Glamping” is a manufactured term that combines Glamorous and Camping. Glamping is defined by KOA as a form of camping involving accommodations and facilities more luxurious than those associated with traditional camping. Glamping is a recent trend as younger generations look to experience the outdoors in ways that appeal to them. Glamping provides a higher level of accommodation with modern luxuries while still being located in the “outdoors”.

Glamping accommodations vary greatly, and each can provide a unique experience. Reportedly, cabins are the most desired accommodation for glampers who camp in North America. Other glamping accommodations include yurts and canvas safari style tents. In association with these accommodations, glampers are looking for amenities and services (e.g., Wi-Fi, full kitchens, daily towel and linen service) that are not typically associated with traditional camping.

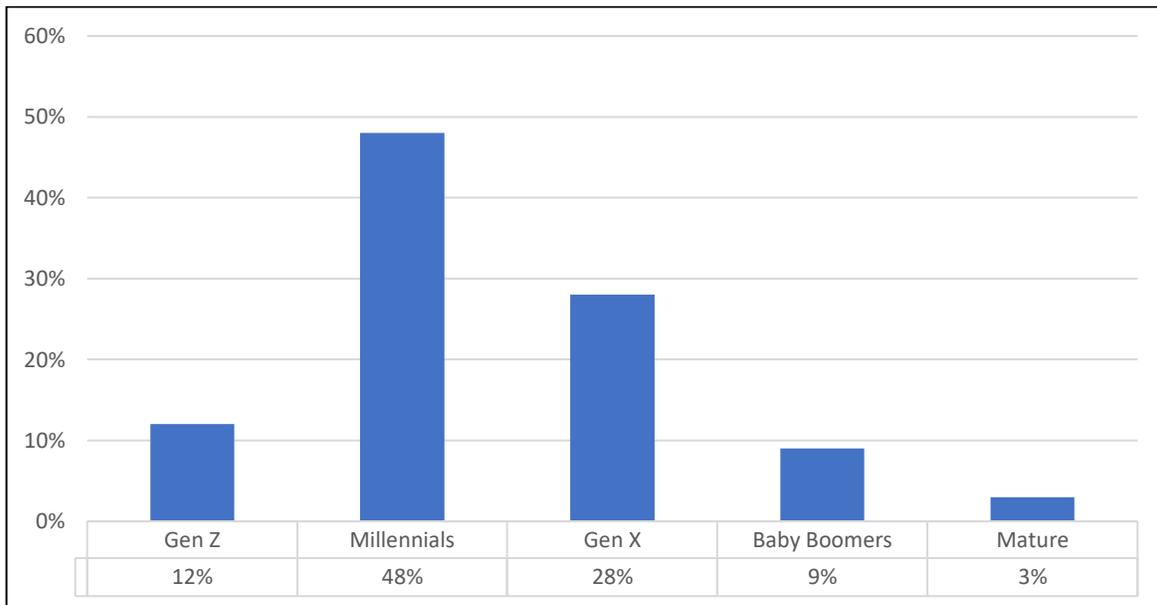
**Exhibit 24 - Top Services, Amenities, and Atmosphere preferences for Glampers 2018**



Source: Cairn Consulting

Although Millennials and GenX are the generations behind the rising popularity of glamping, glamping is enjoyed by all generations. These generations are more diverse than previous camper generations meaning that their interests are more varied. Seventy six percent of leisure travelers who have glamped in the past two years are Millennial or GenX. In terms of overall campers, 26 percent report having been glamping.

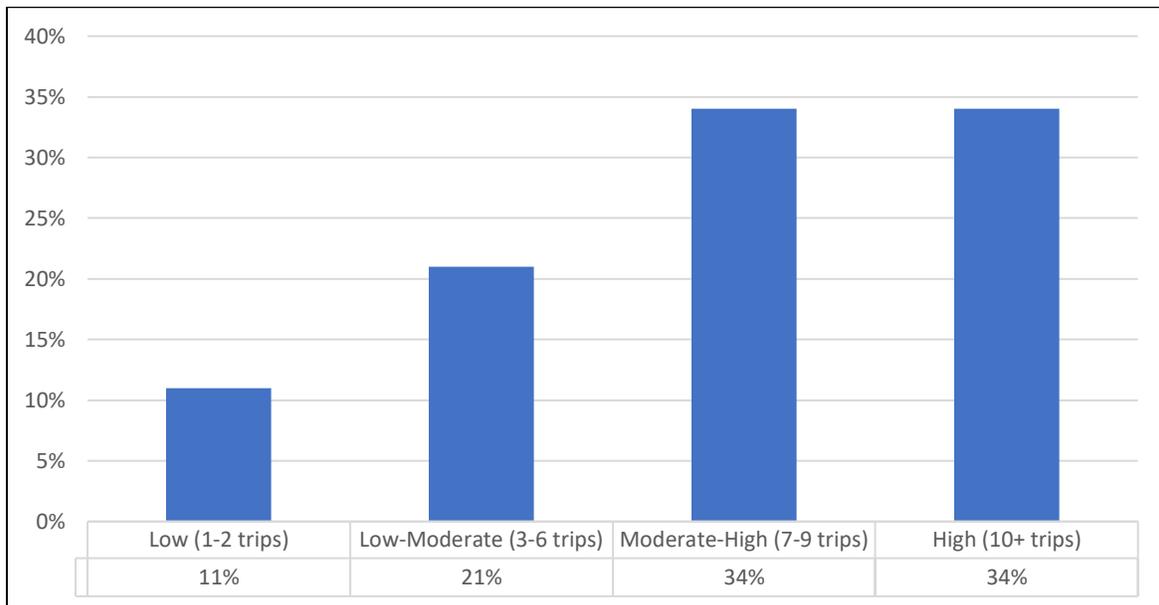
**Exhibit 25 - Leisure Traveler Participation in Glamping by Generation 2018**



Source: Cairn Consulting

One of the reasons for the growth of glamping in popularity is a desire reported amongst campers to experience a unique vacation option. Those campers camp the most frequently, taking seven or more trips a year, comprising 68 percent of all glampers.

**Exhibit 26 - Frequency of Vacation Trips Among Glampers 2018**



Source: Cairn Consulting

These results are not surprising as these campers have likely experienced most camping options and are looking for something different.

Glamping has major appeal to those who want to experience nature without “roughing it”. Glamping provides the middle ground option of being out in nature with all of the modern luxuries we have come to enjoy.

Also, glamping provides those leisure travelers who have not experienced camping an option to slowly acclimate themselves. They are able to experience the outdoors while still enjoying the modern luxuries of a hotel. Additionally, new glampers likely do not have the typical camping gear that more seasoned campers possess. Glamping provides these travelers with an option to try camping without investing too much financially into the activity. Glamping could ultimately become a new avenue to attract non-campers to the joys of being outdoors before trying their hand at more rustic camping.

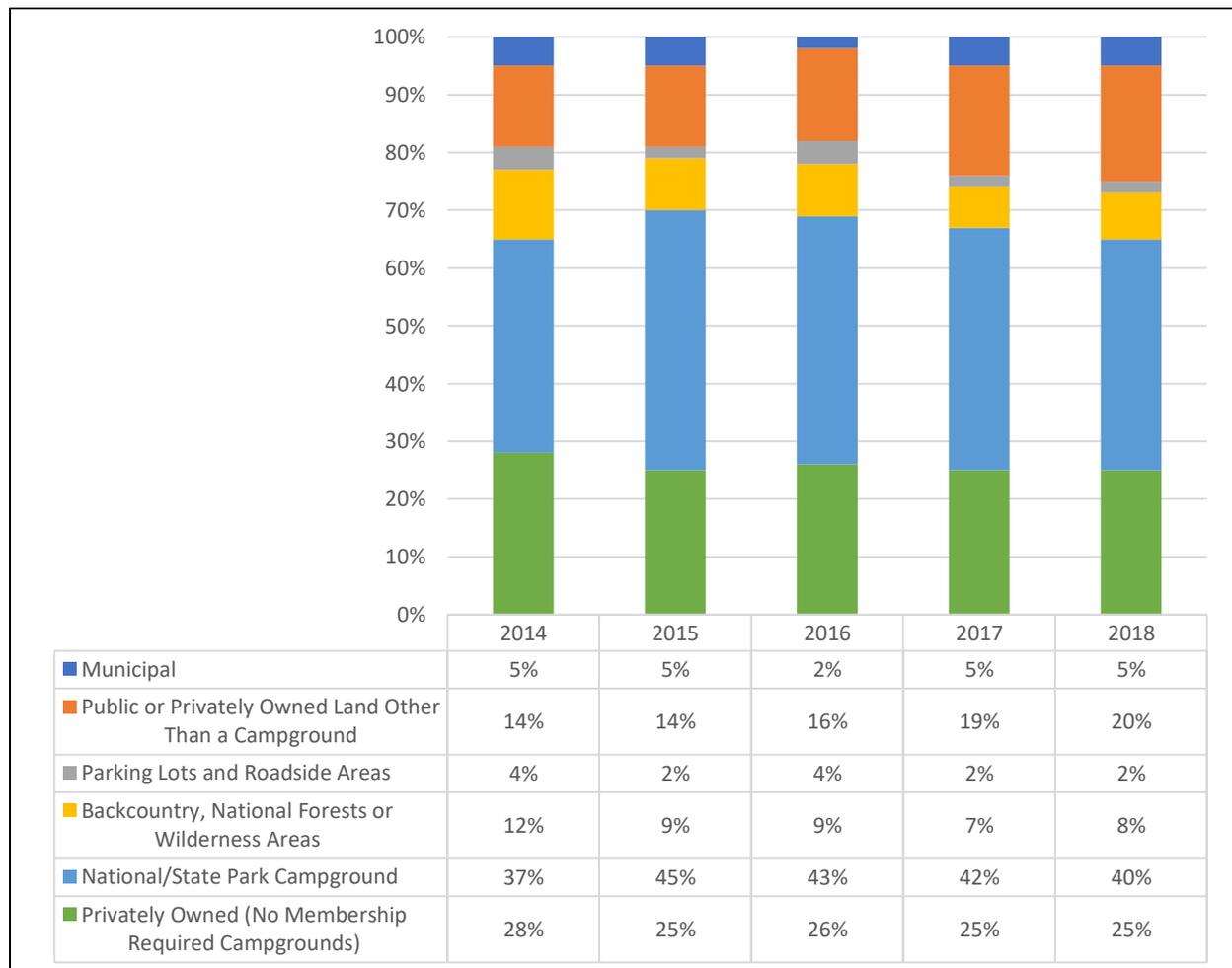
## Visitation and Tourism Statistics

The camping industry is rather disjointed in the sense that there are many independent operators, few national franchisors, and varied levels of government-operated campgrounds. Additionally, there exists no third-party reporting mechanism to collect, aggregate, and analyze the visitation performance of the entire industry.

### What types of campgrounds are campers using?

Demand for various types of campgrounds (e.g., Municipal, State, Federal, Privately-owned) has remained relatively stable over the past five years. The largest share of campground demand is realized at national or state campgrounds, approximately 40 percent of all camper nights.

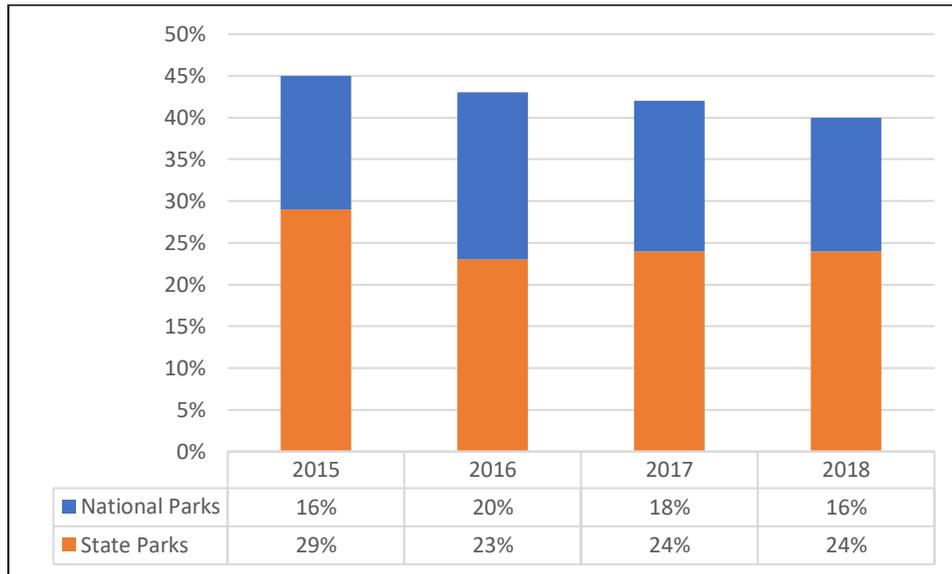
**Exhibit 27 - Breakdown of camper nights by type of campground owner**



Source: Cairn Consulting

Taking a closer look at the breakdown between national and state campgrounds in Exhibit 26, the share of National Parks appears to have returned to its normalized level given the 2016 NPS Centennial, whereas demand for State Parks remained relatively unchanged during the same period.

**Exhibit 28 - Proportion of Camper Nights at National vs. State Parks**



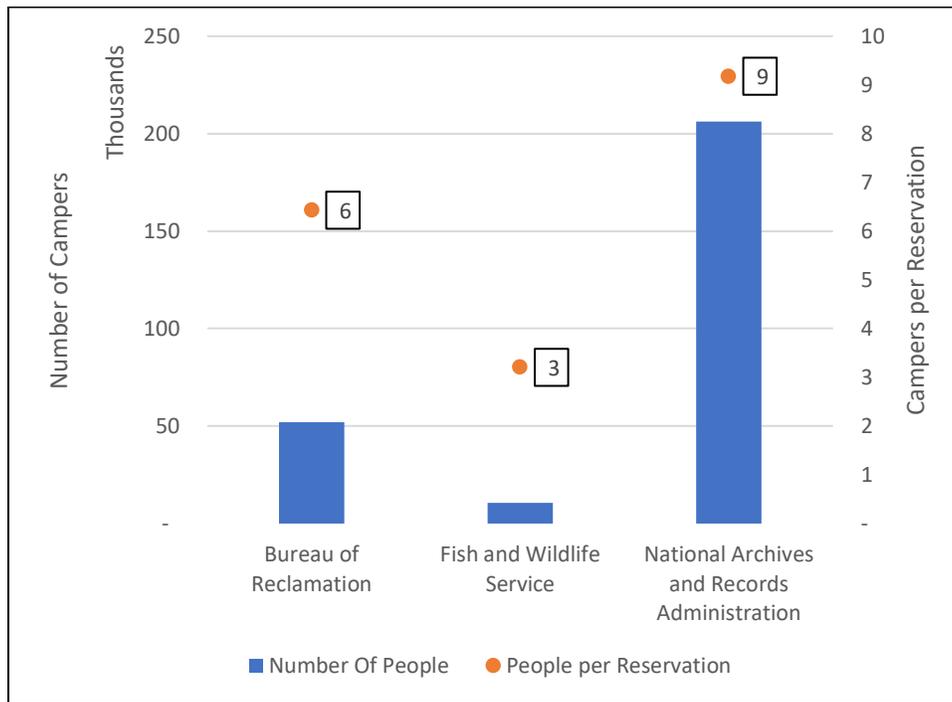
Source: Cairn Consulting

The number of camping instances across all campgrounds in the US is not currently available. This unknown is primarily due to the fragmented organization of the private sector, with franchisees and many independent operators having no publicly centralized reporting repository to understand the full spectrum of the industry. Visitation numbers at national parks and other government operated campgrounds are available through respective agencies as well as Recreation.gov.

However, the data provided by Recreation.gov may not be the most reliable. A primary concern is the data do not contain the full reservation set as there are many walk-in only sites that are reserved at their respective parks without being entered into the Recreation.gov system. Additionally, when analyzing the data, there appear to be several anomalies that suggest lack of fidelity.

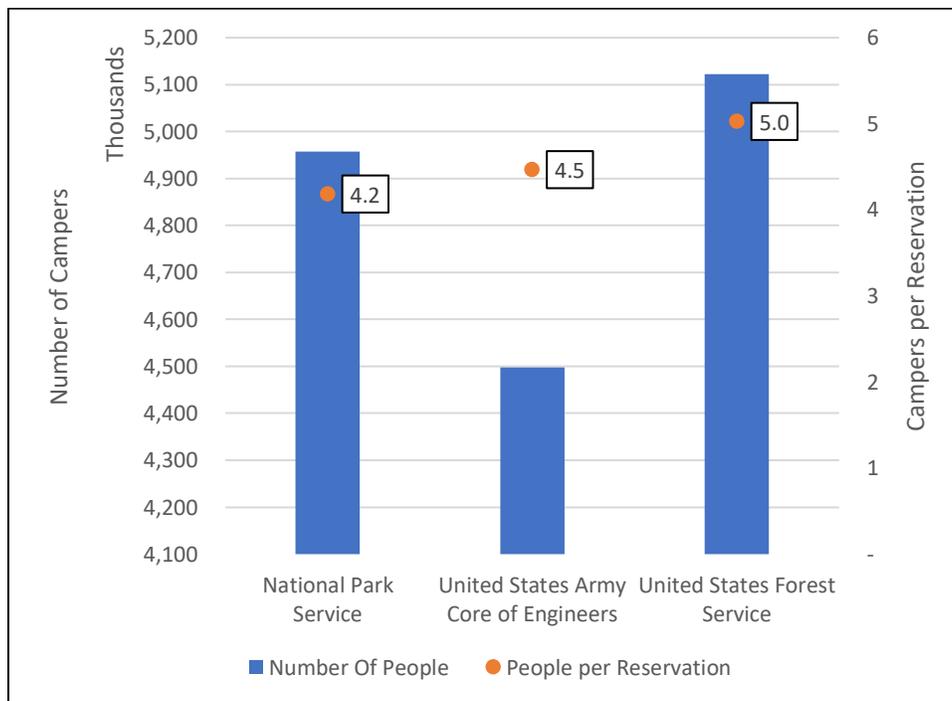
The following two charts illustrate the number of campers and the number of campers per reservation made through Recreation.gov during 2018.

**Exhibit 29 - Number of Campers and Campers/Reservation by Agency 2018**



Source: Recreation.Gov

**Exhibit 30 - Number of Campers and Campers/Reservation by Agency 2018**



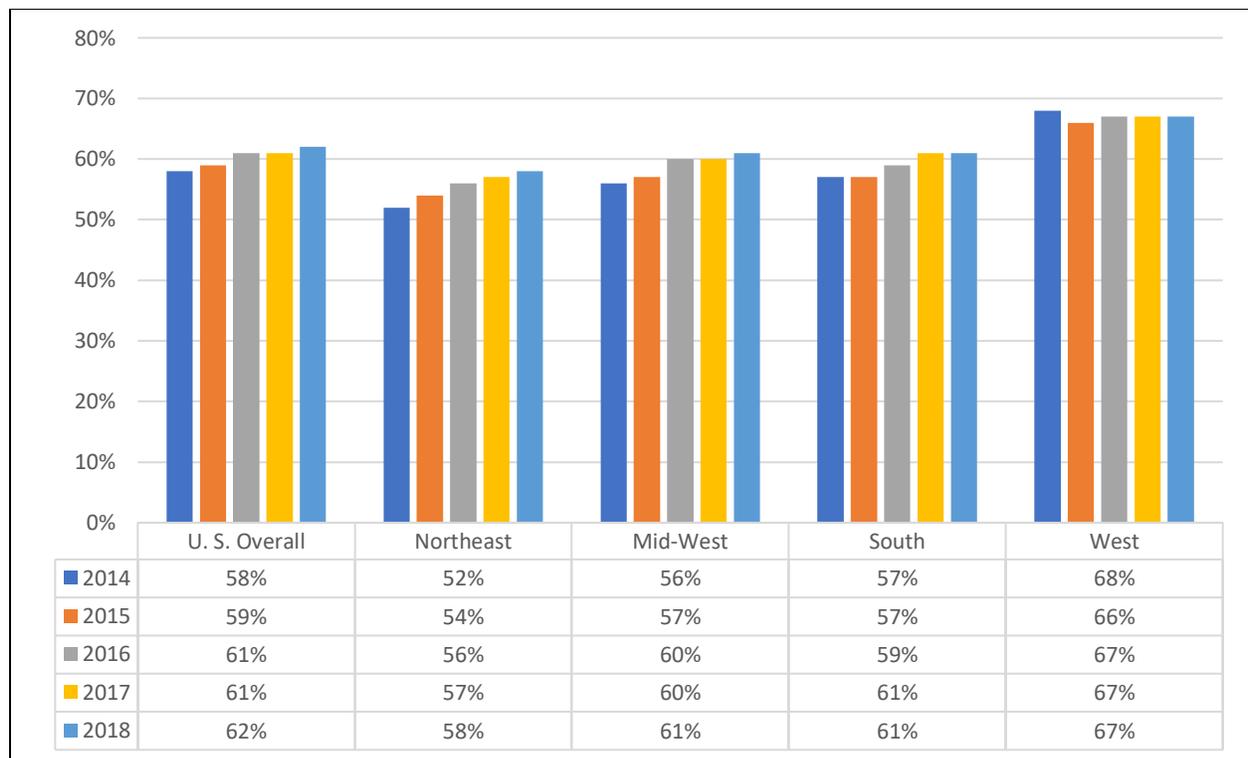
Source: Recreation.Gov

Excluded from the charts are the numbers for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The data from Recreation.gov indicate that BLM accommodated over 136 million campers from almost 55 thousand reservations, which equates to over 4,300 campers per reservation. The NPS numbers, as provided by Recreation.gov, conflict with other reported data from the Service. The NPS reported a total of over six million tent and RV campers for this same period, some of which may be walk-in reservations. However, improved data collection and analyses should provide the insight necessary to draw actionable conclusions.

**Regional Markets**

Since 2014, camping frequency has increased six percentage points in the Northeast and four points in the US Overall. The Mid-West and the South regions also experienced growth since 2014, although it was less dramatic than that seen in the Northeast. Additionally, the West region saw a slight decrease in camping frequency since 2014, but those utilization numbers have remained relatively constant since 2015. As previously mentioned, due to there not being any centralized data source for the campground industry the following data are the best available.

**Exhibit 31- Household Camping Frequency by Region**



Source: Cairn Consulting

The regions are comprised of the following states:

<b>Northeast</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>Midwest</b>	<b>West</b>
Pennsylvania	Texas	Ohio	California
Delaware	Oklahoma	Michigan	Oregon
New Jersey	Arkansas	Illinois	Washington
New York	Alabama	Indiana	Nevada
Connecticut	Mississippi	Missouri	Idaho
Massachusetts	Louisiana	Wisconsin	Montana
Rhode Island	Tennessee	Minnesota	Wyoming
Vermont	Kentucky	North Dakota	Colorado
New Hampshire	Georgia	South Dakota	Utah
Maine	Florida	Kansas	Arizona
	North Carolina	Iowa	New Mexico
	South Carolina	Nebraska	
	Virginia		
	West Virginia		
	Maryland		

## **Current State of the NPS Campgrounds**

The Service owns and operates many diverse front country campsites. According to the Service's Facility Management Software System (FMSS), as of Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, this portfolio includes:

- 502 front country campgrounds
  - 26 are concessioner-operated
- 16,648 campsites
  - 2,115 are in concessioner-operated campgrounds

These campgrounds provide an array of amenities such as:

- 1,015 comfort stations at 346 campgrounds
- 14 camp stores at 11 parks
- 1,889 campsites with electrical hook-ups across 36 campgrounds
- 33 campgrounds with Wi-Fi
- 12,730 tent pads
- 8,585 RV pads
- 426 campgrounds with water stations
- 130 campgrounds with year-round hot showers
- 3,534 fire rings across 556 campgrounds
- 130 campgrounds with dumping stations
- 60 amphitheaters at 55 campgrounds

The National Park System is extremely well-utilized. Across the system there were approximately 318 million visitors with more than six million overnight front country camping visits.

One of the top priorities of the NPS is to better collect, retain, and analyze data generated from the campground operations. The Service's ability to understand and better manage their campgrounds will necessitate integration of data from Recreation.gov, where campsite reservations are made, and data generated at the campgrounds on such things as walk-in campers and amenity use. This goal can be particularly challenging in the more remote campgrounds where access to the Internet can be limited. Just as critical is the understanding of relevant financial metrics. Knowing exactly what expenses are associated with each campground, and the revenues they generate, is essential for decision-makers.

Another challenge confronting the NPS is deferred maintenance. The reported current deferred maintenance for campgrounds exceeds \$331 million, with approximately \$30 million in concession-assigned campgrounds.

## **Campers Perception of National Parks**

Overall, the public's perception of the NPS is very positive. The NPS has always provided Americans with an affordable vacation option at the most beautiful places in our country. As a result, many private operators have opened campgrounds near national parks to capitalize on these campers.

The most prevalent issue reported by campers is finding a campsite. This frustration may be caused by campers not making reservations in a timely manner because they did not know they could, or needed to, or because the campers did not think there would be a challenge renting a site.

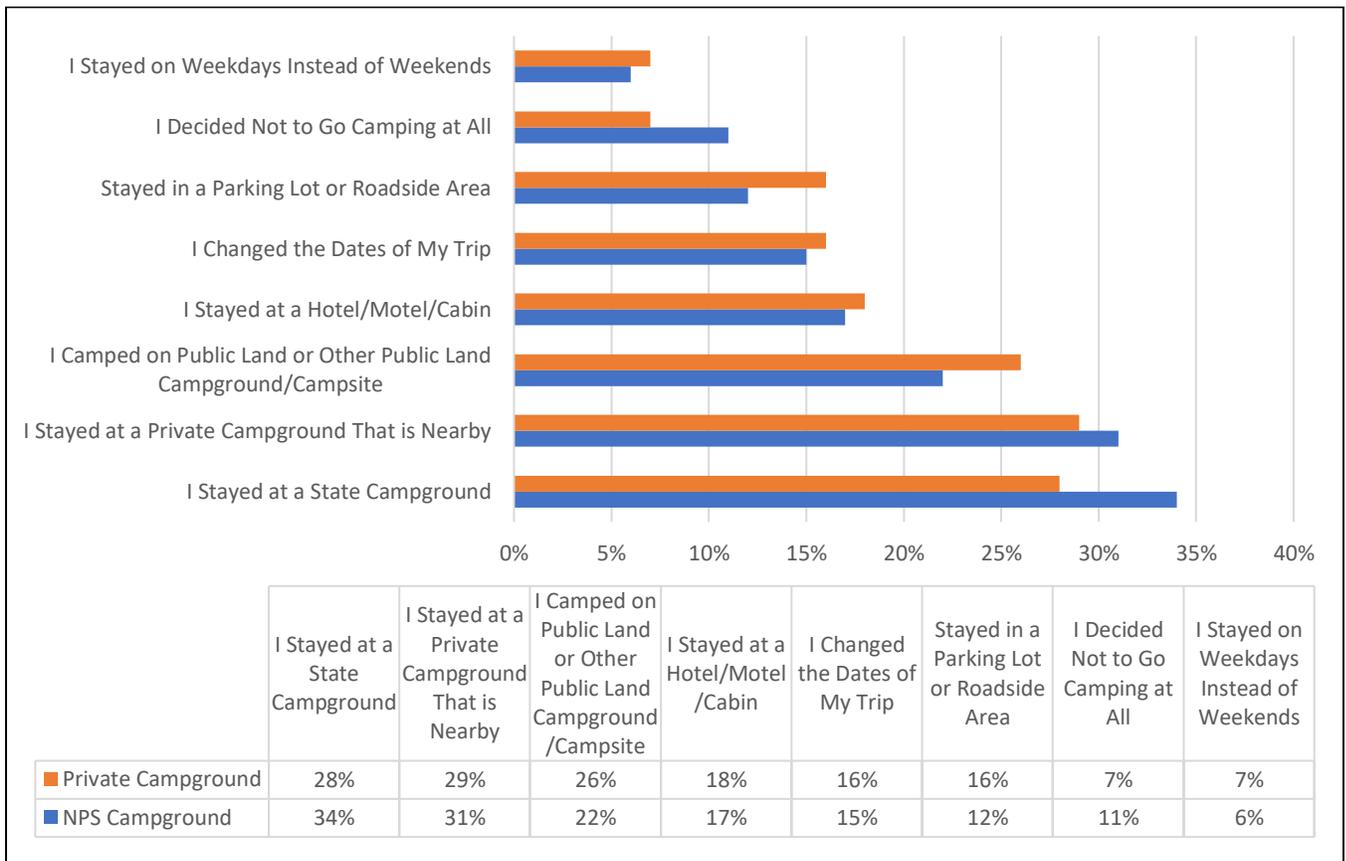
Consistently for the past several years, approximately six out of every 10 camper nights is spent on public lands and/or campgrounds. This utilization places higher demands on these lands and systems as campers seek a variety of experiences.

As for campers who stayed at national park campgrounds in 2018, reportedly 30 percent had challenges obtaining campsites while only 20 percent of campers who stayed at private campgrounds reported similar challenges. One of the main complicating factors was how far in advance the campers tried to make reservations. Approximately half of campers who waited until the week prior had some issue or difficulties at national parks, compared to only 20 percent of campers who planned three or more months out. Campers who experienced problems getting a campsite either did not camp or sought lodging at hotels, motels, or parking lots. The most common solution among national park campers was to stay at a state park, while private campground campers were equally likely to seek another private campground or state park campground.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cairn Consulting Group

**Exhibit 32 - Camper Solutions to Issues Finding a Campsite 2018**



Source: Cairn Consulting

**Camper Amenity Preferences at all Campgrounds**

Choosing between staying at an NPS campground or a private campground comes down to camper’s perception of the campground and what amenities and services they desire. Over time, these preferences have remained relatively stable. Exhibit 32 shows the relative importance of amenities as reported by campers who camp at any type of campground.

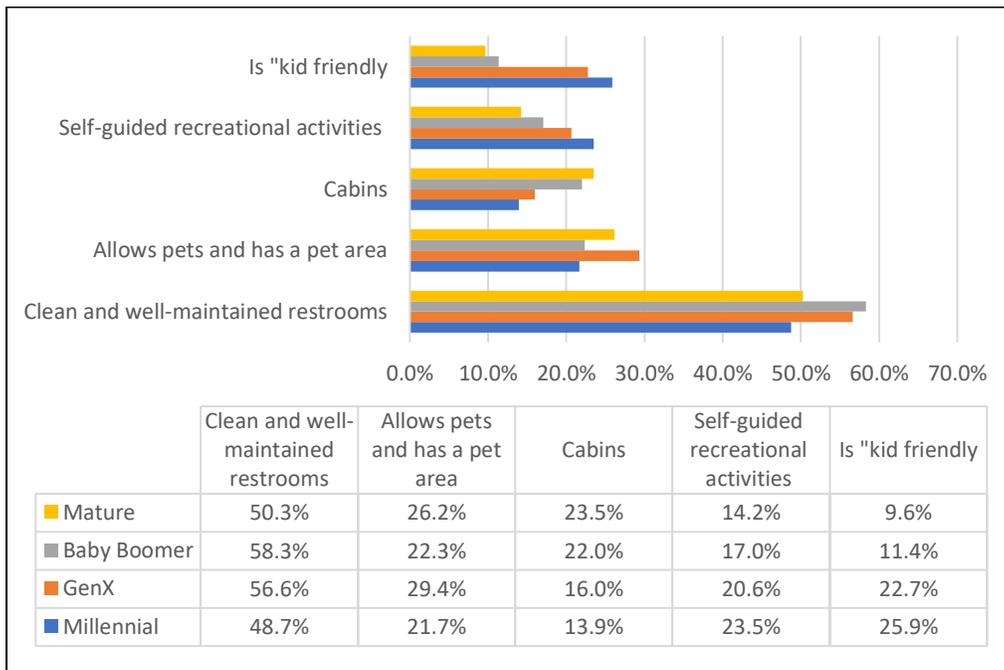
**Exhibit 33 – What Campers Value**

<b>WHAT ARE THE TOP OFFERINGS CAMPERS VALUE IN A CAMPGROUND</b>						
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	change since 2014
clean and well-maintained bathrooms	50%	47%	44%	44%	49%	-1%
is "kid-friendly"	20%	21%	20%	26%	21%	1%
self-guided recreational activities	17%	24%	20%	20%	20%	3%
allows pets and has a pet area	19%	22%	19%	20%	23%	4%
free Wi-Fi	19%	20%	20%	17%	16%	-3%
cabins	16%	16%	16%	15%	15%	-1%
safety lighting	17%	16%	16%	15%	15%	-2%
a campground store	15%	13%	15%	15%	15%	0%
full service RV sites	12%	13%	12%	11%	14%	2%
easy-in easy-out pull through sites	11%	14%	12%	11%	13%	2%
being around other campers with similar interes	7%	9%	9%	9%	10%	3%
swimming pool	10%	9%	10%	8%	11%	1%
uses sustainable practices	6%	9%	8%	8%	8%	2%
on site food service	7%	7%	9%	7%	7%	0%
organized recreational activities	4%	6%	7%	7%	6%	2%
professional, trained staff	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	0%
expanded hours of operation	3%	4%	5%	5%	4%	1%
owner on site	6%	5%	5%	4%	4%	-2%
exercise room	2%	3%	5%	3%	3%	1%
none of these, prefer primitive camping	8%	6%	5%	7%	5%	-3%

Source: Cairn Consulting

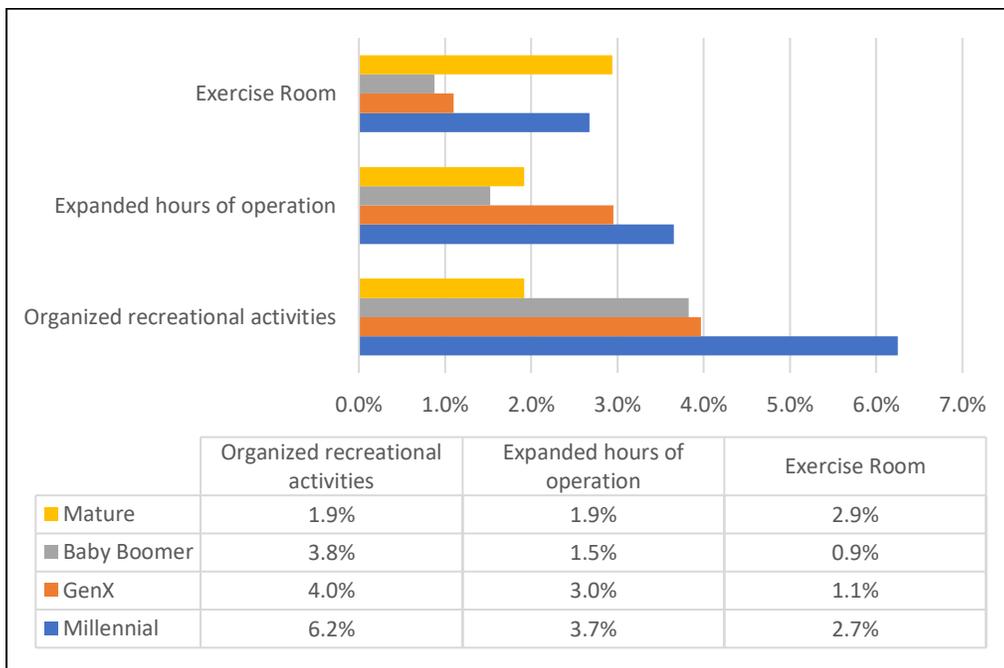
The results from the 2019 research show similar results as those of the past. The following exhibits depict camper preferences broken down by generation and by ethnicity for both NPS campers and non-NPS campers. Results are consistent with the historic preferences even when the data are broken down by generation and ethnicity. This finding indicates that camper preferences at both NPS and non-NPS campgrounds are consistent and in-line with the current amenity offerings at most NPS campgrounds.

**Exhibit 34 - NPS Campers' Most Important Amenities by Generation 2019**



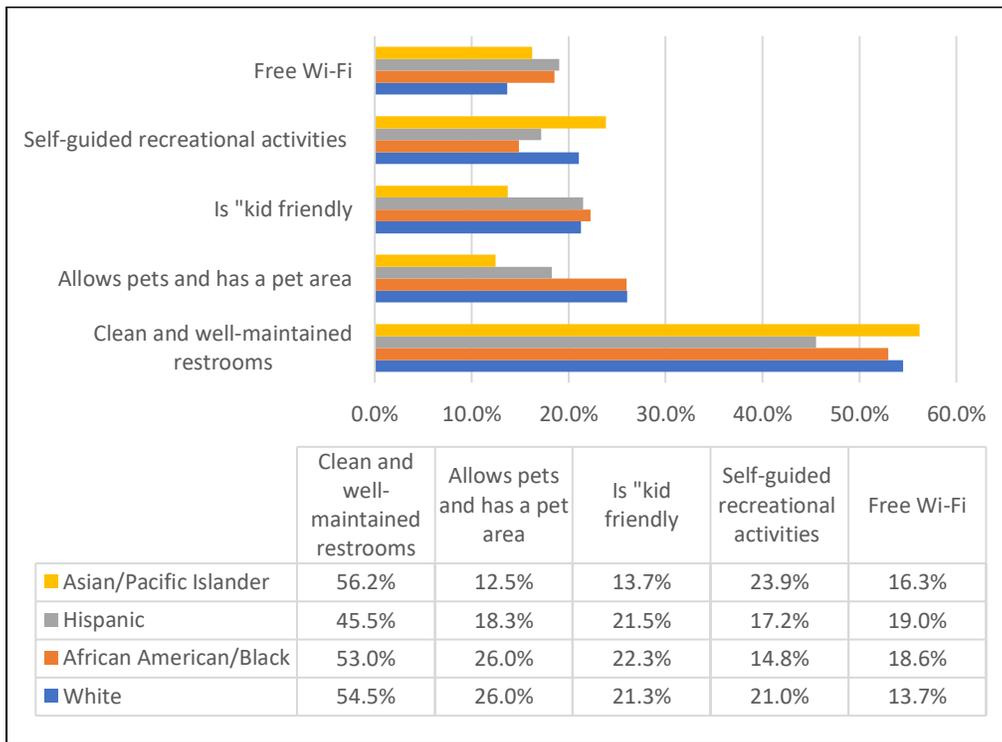
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 35 - NPS Campers' Least Important Amenities by Generation 2019**



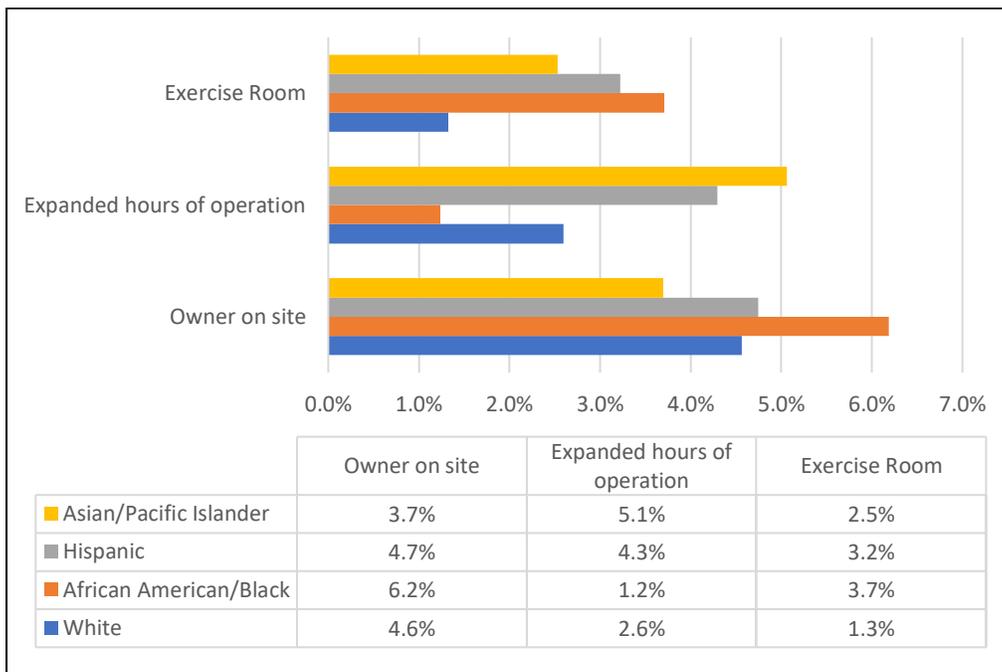
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 36 – NPS Campers’ Most Important Amenities by Ethnicity 2019**



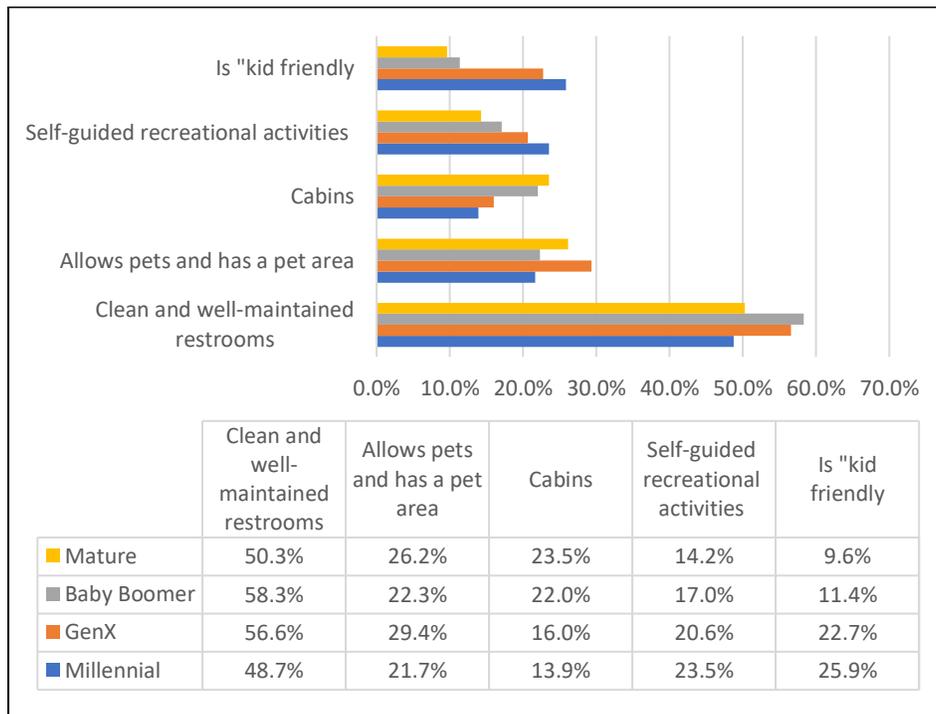
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 37 - NPS Campers’ Least Important Amenities by Ethnicity 2019**



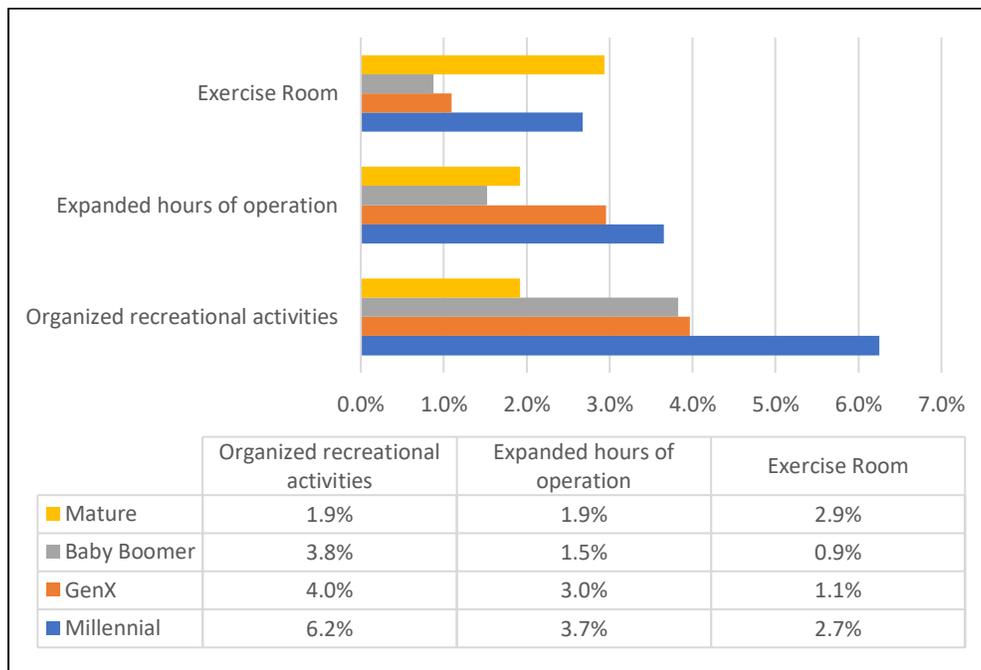
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 38 - Non-NPS Campers' Most Important Amenities by Generation 2019**



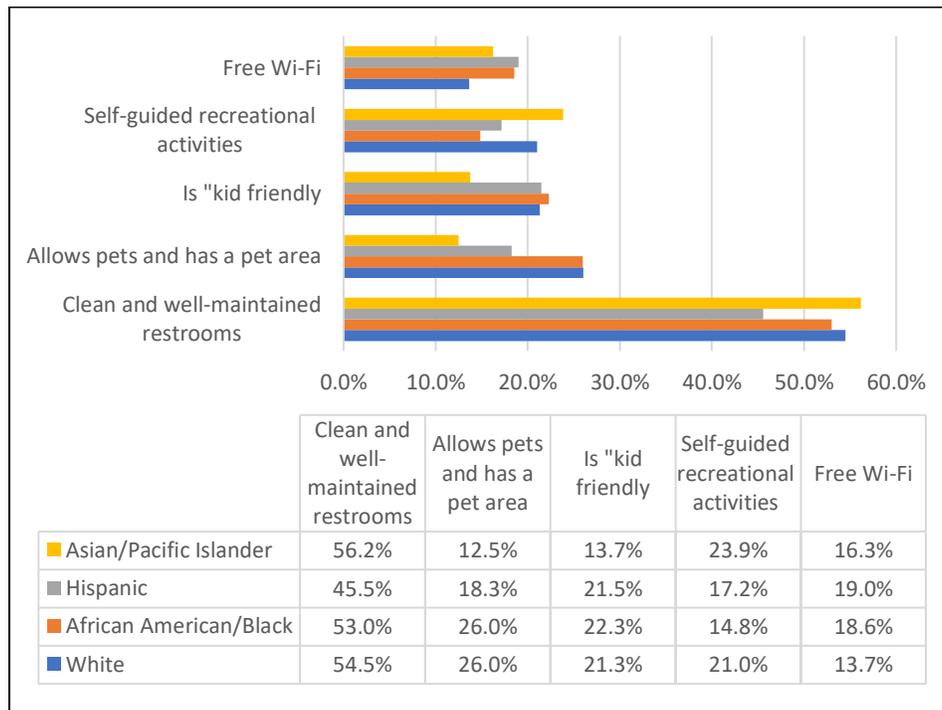
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 39 - Non-NPS Campers' Least Important Amenities by Generation 2019**



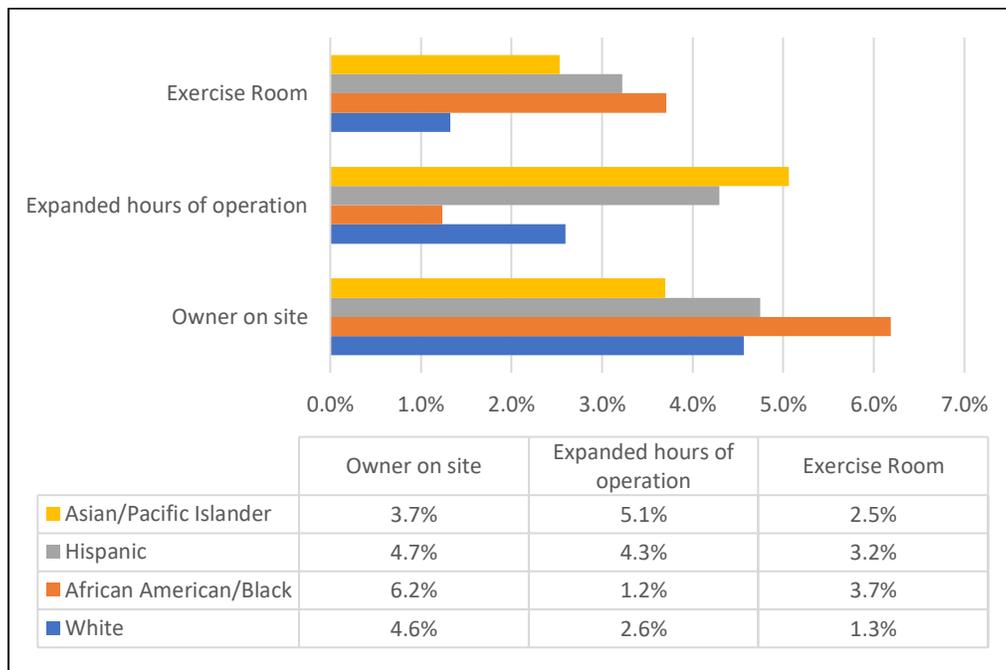
Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 40 - Non-NPS Campers' Top Five Amenities by Ethnicity 2019**



Source: Cairn Consulting

**Exhibit 41 - Non-NPS Campers' Bottom Three Amenities by Ethnicity 2019**



Source: Cairn Consulting

Alignment with campers' amenity preferences indicate that the NPS is offering campgrounds that are generally meeting the current needs of campers. Given the importance of clean and well-maintained restrooms as a vital amenity for camper satisfaction, it behooves the NPS to cure deferred maintenance in its comfort stations as well as follow operating and maintenance plans, as appropriate.

### **Relevant Construction Codes**

The National Park Service has to abide by many different and often conflicting rules and procedures, and the Service usually tries to comply with existing recognized construction codes. Three existing codes with a direct impact on NPS campgrounds are: Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS); Article 551 of the National Electrical Code (NEC); and, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). These three codes will be applied to the campgrounds visited by the CBRE Team during the pilot park site visit phase to Lake Mead National Recreation Area (LAKE); Blue Ridge Parkway (BLRI); and, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM). Of note:

- Accessibility requirements: there are two different codes specifying what RV parks or campgrounds must do to provide accessibility. The private sector must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), while federal properties must comply with the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards. The ADA code covers effects like buildings and sidewalks; the UFAS code specifically covers almost everything in a RV park or campground, including the number of accessible sites to be provided.
- NFPA 1192: originally written in the early 1960s as an American Standards Institute (ANSI) code. This code is updated approximately every four years and is a detailed construction code for the manufacture of RVs and has been adopted by every state in the US.
- NFPA 1194: originally developed in 1969 by the same ANSI committee that developed the 1192 code. The purpose of this code is to detail the construction of RV parks and campgrounds and has been updated on a regular basis by the same committee that writes the NFPA 1192 code. This committee is responsible for ensuring that modern campgrounds can accommodate all new RVs as well as earlier models. This code has a scope that reads, "This standard shall provide minimum construction requirements for safety and health for occupants using facilities supplied by recreational vehicle parks and campgrounds offering temporary living sites for use by recreational vehicles, recreational park trailers and other camping units."
  - This code also has sections for General Design Criteria, Fire Safety, Environmental Health and Sanitation. This code specifies many details including requiring a minimum of one toilet, one washbasin, and one shower per sex for every 25 dependent sites. It also requires restroom facilities within 500 feet of any dependent site and details such things as turning radius, site size, utility location, and road sizes.

- NFPA 70: informally called the National Electrical Code, it has been adopted by every state and details all construction of electrical systems. This code has a large number of specific sections including Article 551, which is a section of the NEC dedicated to the electrical requirements of any RV park or campground. This code does not require electrical service at all sites but does detail how to install electrical hookups when offered. One of the major requirements specifies what percentage of the sites have electricity.

## **Industry Standards - Reservation Systems and Campground Policies**

Available technology is more than adequate for a robust reservations system. There are a number of reservation systems used by private campgrounds while many federal campgrounds use Recreation.gov.

For private campgrounds, it is common for as much as 99 percent of their sites to be reserved, some of them can be reserved up to a year ahead of time. It is unusual for private campgrounds to set aside “walk-in sites” for fear that this perishable inventory will go unsold, and the customers understand this practice.

To implement an effective reservation system, communication equipment at check-in is essential so that reservations can be found easily. Most reservation systems are accessible through the Internet and combine bookkeeping functions for the operator, which makes access to these systems via the Internet crucial.

With the increase in sophistication of campground reservation systems, hotel online travel agencies have become interested in the space. Companies such as Orbitz, Booking.com, and others are looking to break into the popular campground industry.

As for pricing, the emerging best practice in the private campground industry is yield management. This practice allows for dynamic pricing and maximizing the sale of campsites. Prices may be set seasonally with considerations like holidays, other high demand periods, site type, and site location factors affecting pricing. In contrast, pricing at campgrounds on federal lands tends to be static.

In economics, pricing is used as a rationing tool where goods, in this case campground site-nights, should be priced higher when demand increases. For example, a camper may choose to camp the week before or after a holiday to take advantage of less expensive rates. Charging higher rates for campsites that are in high demand drives the top line, and businesses that do not engage in this practice are under-performing.

Exhibit 42 is an example of a rate table template commonly used in the private campground sector. The best practice is to create a rate table for each type of campsite. Each site type would start with the setting of a “base rate” that is adjusted up or down to create the other rates. In the following example, the in-season rate is the base rate and adjusted up for holidays and down for shoulder and off-season. The ranges are typical. Important to note is that any rate can be used as the base rate providing the other rates are adjusted appropriately.

In order to utilize dynamic pricing, it is important to first develop the base prices. The private sector usually starts with determining how much they want to make from an investment at a

minimum. This is called the investment yield which is the income needed to justify the investment. This yield is divided by the number of expected camper nights to calculate the component of the base rate for campsites that will generate the required income for the investment. This component covers debt service and operating profit.

It is then necessary to calculate the operating cost per site. Start with the total operating cost for the campground and divide it by the expected number of camper nights to determine the average cost per camper night. This is the component of the rate that covers the operations of the campground or its breakeven rate.

These two components added together are the base rate for any site at the campground. However, it is necessary to adjust the operating cost component depending on the site type. Sites that have more utilities should have their operating cost base adjusted appropriately up or down to ensure all costs generated each night at the site are being covered by the rate charged.

As an example, the published rate for electricity in Las Vegas is \$0.1215 per kwh which makes the electricity used by a 50-amp site as high as \$28.80 per day. ( $45A \times 220V = 9.9 \text{ kw per hour} \times 24 \text{ hours} = 237 \text{ kwh} @ \$0.1215 = \$28.80 \text{ per day.}$ ) On the other hand, a small trailer with only a 30-amp 110 volt service will only use about 66 kwh per day at a cost of \$8.02 per day. In addition to the utilities, each site type might have different costs (e.g., cleaning). All of these costs need to be taken into consideration to determine the actual base rate for each site type that makes up the total projected income.

Once the base price is established for each site type, the campground operator then needs to compare this base to the rates actually charge by their competitors to determine if they should adjust either their rate or the services provided in order to be competitive. Once they have the necessary base rate, then yield management can be used to manage total income as well as to control the total demand during different periods. During slow periods, demand can be increased by lowering rates, conversely, during high season by increasing rates.

**Exhibit 42 – Typical Private Sector Pricing Model**

<b>Site Type</b>	<b>Holiday</b>	<b>In-Season</b>	<b>Shoulder</b>	<b>Off-Season</b>
<b>Daily Rate (Typically includes 2 people)</b>	+15 to 25%	Base	-5-10%	-15-25%
<b>Additional Adult</b>	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
<b>Additional Child</b>	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00
<b>Pet Fee</b>	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00	\$5.00
<b>Other</b>	\$X.XX	\$X.XX	\$X.XX	\$X.XX

**Pricing and Rate Strategies for Services and Amenities**

Pricing strategies for services and amenities are highly situational. Not only do the services and amenities at each campground differ but also the typical clientele may differ as well. There are two main strategies when it comes to pricing services and amenities in the private campground sector: a-la-carte and all-inclusive.

A-la-carte pricing has traditionally been the strategy most campgrounds used whereby campers would pay for what they wanted to use. This practice led to private campgrounds earning a reputation for “nickel and diming” their guests.

All-inclusive is the private campground sector’s response to this negative perception. Instead of having campers pay only for what they used, operators began to charge higher daily rates in lieu of charging for each and every amenity and service.

Neither strategy is clearly better, rather the effectiveness of these strategies depends on the campers served. Anecdotally, Baby Boomers and Mature campers are more price conscious as many are living on fixed incomes. These campers may respond more favorably to a-la-carte pricing.

Younger campers, especially families, tend to be more value-focused. They may respond more favorably to all-inclusive rates where they are able to use the amenities as frequently as needed without worrying about incremental costs.

### **Campground Industry Policy Best Practices**

There is no single consensus when it comes to campground rules. There are two main approaches to informing guests as to what they can and cannot do at a given campground. The first approach is to have a “Respect Everyone” policy where campers are permitted to do whatever they want as long as they are not disturbing other campers, the campgrounds, or anything else. The second approach is to list out everything that campers can and cannot do. These lists are not consistent from campground to campground as the services and amenities offered and the nature of the campground may vary widely.

At a minimum, both of these approaches usually include basic rules such as the check-in and check-out times, quiet hours, and any rules mandated by liability insurance requirements.

In Appendix A there is an example of campground policies and rules that list the campground’s specific “dos” and “don’ts”.

## **Other Public Agency Best Practices for Contracting with the Private Sector**

The primary source for this section's findings were derived from interviews with multiple representatives and officers from public land management agencies and trade associations in addition to concessionaires who have hundreds of contracts with decades of service for varied public land management agencies.

Basically, there are two primary vehicles whereby public land management agencies partner with private sector operators. The first type of agreement is a profit and loss agreement whereby the operator pays the public land management agency a percentage of the gross revenue as a lease payment (e.g., USFS). The second type of agreement is a management contract whereby the operator is paid a fee by the public land management agency to operate the campground (e.g., United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)). The former contract tends to be longer (e.g., up to 10 years with possible option periods) while the latter contract tends to be shorter (e.g., an operating season with possible optional operating seasons).

Many private organizations are eager to partner with public agencies but are not always successful. Many smaller independent operators may not have (i) the resources to navigate the bureaucratic process; (ii) the required start-up capital; or, (iii) the ability to acquire debt to leverage opportunities. Other private operators decide not to partner with public agencies because the agreements may not be perceived as mutually beneficial.

The typical agreement varies from agency to agency as each has a different directive for the land they manage. A standard NPS concessioner contract is for a 10-year term where the concessioner pays the NPS a franchise fee and is sometimes required to make capital investments in the operation over the course of the contract, known as Leasehold Surrender Interest (LSI). A typical USFS contract is for a term of five years with a five-year extension to provide both parties an option to terminate the contract. (A 10-year term plus a five-year extension is available too.) The USFS typically does not require its partners to make any capital investments as this is not in line with the USFS stated mission. A common USACE contract may be for a single operating season with option periods. (Contract examples may be found in Appendix B.)

The general consensus from the operators interviewed was they would welcome the opportunity to partner with public land management agencies and invest capital given sufficient length-of-contract and/or lower lease payments to make these opportunities financially viable. Also desired is their ability to use borrowed capital for (an investment like modular cabins) these opportunities. As it relates to very expensive investments like the cost of infrastructure, these operators believed that since most owners (i.e., public land management agencies) have robust maintenance divisions, the owners should shoulder these investments.

As for bundling, those interviewed:

- Prefer bundling campgrounds in a single park.
- Should campgrounds span two or more parks, districts, etc., the same operating criteria are necessary for a successful partnership.
- Longer contract terms to support capital investments.
- Bundling should be financially viable for the ‘protection’ of concessionaires.

Other interesting points from these interviews:

- Public parks should upgrade their campgrounds to better accommodate larger RVs but not sacrifice the area’s natural beauty through overdevelopment. Instead, private parks should be more developed with extensive overnight options (e.g., deluxe cabins with full baths and linens) and elaborate guest amenities (e.g., resort-style pools).
- Public parks should continue to be the “magnet” for introducing new campers to the natural beauty of the outdoors.
- In the absence of campgrounds’ electrical hookups, the reliance on campers use of generators creates both exhaust and noise pollution to the detriment of the enjoyment of the great outdoors.

## **Recommendations and Conclusions**

As stated in the introduction, CBRE was engaged by the Service to research the camping industry, to analyze data and findings, and to proffer a campground modernization and rehabilitation strategy to support the Service's Second Century of Campgrounds. This four-phased project entails:

- Phase One consists of this industry analysis report with the goal of identifying and conveying the state of the industry along with current trends in order to assist the Service in anticipating developing and future expectations for camping services.
- Phase Two involves planning for and conducting site visits to three pilot parks' campgrounds.
- Phase Three requires:
  - Developing an analysis framework that aligns with the Service's Facility Investment Strategy. This framework, which will include creating new tools and templates, will be utilized at the park-level to develop business cases to assist in decision-making of whether a campground should be modernized, otherwise rehabbed, or remain status quo.
  - Piloting this framework and completing business case analyses for the campgrounds in the pilot parks.
- Phase Four includes:
  - Building a generic campground financial model for the Service to analyze campground operations under both NPS- and concessioner-operated scenarios.
  - Performing financial analyses for the campgrounds in the pilot parks.

Overall, the camping industry is strong, and long-term demand appears robust.

Now looking to the future... What will the state of the campground industry be in 20 years?

If history is a guide, there exist factors that we do not know about now that can greatly affect the camping industry.

- The oil shortage of 1973 caused many campgrounds to become economically unviable due to the scarcity of gasoline.
- In the 1960s, the Orlando Florida area was more rural but once the Walt Disney Company announced the construction of Disney World, Orlando became a tourist Mecca, thus demonstrating location desirability affecting camper nights.
- In the early 1970s, Biloxi Louisiana was a popular tourist destination until a hurricane caused massive destruction – many businesses failed. Eventually, this area was rebuilt and tourism returned. Natural disasters can have long-term negative consequences, so what may be the impact of climate change in the next 20 to 50 years?

National Parks tend to be located in highly desirable areas and act as demand generators for campers who stay either in the park or somewhere nearby. It is imperative that the Service protect these demand generators by preserving what draws people there, like unspoiled wilderness. However, equally important is providing visitors with enjoyable experiences. The Service can achieve both of these goals by strategically investing in those projects that require the least impact thereby preserving the nature of the parks and providing visitors with great experiences.

Leveraging the research, tools, templates, and models developed by the CBRE Team, NPS superintendents and commercial services staff will be able to develop business case analyses for their respective campgrounds. These detailed analyses should be customized to each specific campground with recommendations that align with the FIS.

As a starting point for planning the Second Century of Campgrounds, the CBRE Team recommends curing deferred maintenance and improving infrastructure. It is our understanding that planned and ongoing investments include funds from: franchise fees; line item construction and maintenance program; recreation fee program; repair rehab; and, cyclic maintenance program, which is a tremendous start.

The CBRE Team also recommends the NPS adopt the three relevant [construction codes](#) identified.

- UFAS – Essentially ADA requirements for government campgrounds.
- NFPA 1194 Standard for Recreational Vehicle Parks and Campgrounds:
  - Provides minimum standards for development of an RV park or campground, including potable water distribution.
  - Of special note, comfort stations and their condition tend to be the number one amenity for campers, so these facilities' development, maintenance, and operation should not be minimized.

- NEC
  - Article 551, Suggested RV electrical site distribution (dependent on business case analysis):
    - 20-amp, 125-volt receptacle – All;
    - 30-amp, 125-volt receptacle – 70 percent minimum;
    - 50-amp, 125/250-volt – 20 percent minimum for existing and 40 percent for new RV sites; and,
    - Non RV sites may be excluded.
  - Multiple Articles Related to Buildings.
  - Multiple Articles Related to Other Electrical Uses.

Our findings support the desire for electrical hook-ups. In fact, many RV campers are now looking for electricity before sewage connections. Power management systems in RVs have become quite sophisticated thus allowing large rigs to run off 50- or 30-amp hook ups. Campers are bringing more technology on their camping trips, so the need to charge devices becomes increasingly important; consequently, private campgrounds are beginning to install 20-amp hook-ups at rustic campsites or offer communal charging stations. Having electrical hook-ups eliminates the need for generators.

Moreover, campers value a wide variety of site types including full-service RV sites. Initiatives such as reinforcing existing roads, redesigning campgrounds allowing for wider roads and pull-throughs, longer pads, and buried electrical cables, water and/or sewer lines should support a variety of RVs while keeping the existing feel and aesthetics of NPS campgrounds.

Given the campsite or RV pad rental will be the revenue driver not retail or equipment rental sales, we recommend that park-level professionals evaluate the net benefits of these incremental offerings in their business case analyses.

As more, primarily younger campers are introduced to camping, the industry is poised to see some real changes. Glamping combined with Millennial campers seeking new experiences as well as attracting new campers to the industry suggest the current distribution of overnight accommodations to shift with an increase in “cabin” and “other” and decrease in “tent” in the foreseeable future. Given the cost and operational needs for successful Glamping, we recommend that this product only be considered for concession-operated campgrounds.

Along with changes being driven by younger campers, social factors and technology are also driving changes in the importance of some amenities at campgrounds. For instance, Wi-Fi is an important consideration but may be impractical given the remote nature and aesthetics of some parks. Project due diligence will aid in business case analyses recommendations. Other amenities,

such as electrical hook-ups, camper cabins, and new emerging trends, should be considered on a campground by campground basis after a proper business case analysis.

The trend that is consistent with all campers is a growing desire to have an experience that is “close to nature,” which can vary greatly from camper to camper. This will make it important for campgrounds to carefully implement changes in the future. Providing the level of amenities that campers want while making sure to keep campgrounds in a state as close to natural as possible. The degree of difficulty to implement these changes will range from fairly simple things like created designated parking areas to provide a campground free of vehicles to more complex implementations like installing electrical hook-ups at all RV sites.

Another means to improving campers’ satisfaction is implementing an effective reservation system with communication equipment at check-in, which is essential, so that reservations can be found easily. A more consistent reservation policy across the Service, regardless of whether NPS- or concession-operated campground, may be warranted as well.

Possible solutions to successfully support park-level recommendations may be concession contracts with longer terms (e.g., 20 or 30 years) and/or Public Private Partnerships with similar or longer contract terms to recoup capital investments. Furthermore, pricing should move away from static pricing to dynamic pricing.

The CBRE Team believes that NPS campgrounds remain as close to a natural state as is reasonably possible by considering our recommendations above, shaped by resultant park-level business case analyses.

Again, the campground industry is robust and thriving; the future looks bright. Anticipating where the industry may be in 20 years is an impossibility because “we don’t know, what we don’t know.” A quote generally attributed to Henry Ford is particularly relevant: “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” Although, this does not mean anticipating the future is impossible, it does require a constant monitoring of trends not only in the camping industry but also in the larger sense as well to understand what and how things are changing.

In closing, the NPS mission as stated in the original authorizing legislation is to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” Our national parks have long been a place for people to escape the real world and get lost in the majesty of nature. These natural resources are the demand generators that attract campers.

## Appendix A

# RESORT RULES AND GUIDELINES

*Thank you for choosing to stay at Rio Guadalupe Resort! In order to provide a great camping experience, the following Rules and Regulations have been implemented for the enjoyment and safety of all guests. Any guests failing to comply with the following Resort Rules and Guidelines may be asked to leave without refund. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Management and Rio Guadalupe Resort is not responsible for loss or damage to any guest's property due to theft, vandalism, fire, accidents, or any casualty act of God. Guests of Rio Guadalupe Resort expressly assume all risk of such loss or damage and is responsible for carrying his/her own insurance. In addition, damages of any kind caused by guests of visitors of the park shall be billed to the guest.*

### CHECK OUT TIME:

**Cottages and Cabins** 11:00 AM

**RV Sites** 12:00 PM

**QUITE TIME** 10:00 PM to 8:00 AM

### PERSONS:

- All guests must register with the office.
- RV site rates include two (2) persons per site.
- Additional guests 18 years of age and older, staying more than 5 days are subject to an additional fee of \$100 per person per month.
- We allow a maximum of 8 people per site.
- Please do not leave children under the age of 18 unattended on resort property.

### PETS: (OCTOBER TO MARCH ONLY)

- We welcome up to two (2) nonaggressive pets per site. Nuisance and noisy animals are not permitted.
- Pets must be on a 6' or shorter leash and pet owners are responsible for cleaning up after pets.
- Do not leave pets outside unattended.
- Pet kennels, pens, or corrals are not permitted.

### SWIMMING POOL:

- Pool rules are posted in the pool area. Hours for use of these facilities are posted in the office area. Failure to comply with the pool regulations will result in removal from the pool area.
- All children under 14 must always have an adult with them in the pool area. Only swimsuits are allowed in the Pool. (No street clothes.) No one wearing diapers is allowed in the Pool.
- There is NO LIFEGUARD ON DUTY at the pool. Swim at your own risk.

### RIVER:

- Access river at your own risk. Access river only on Rio Guadalupe property.
- No grills are allowed on the river front.
- Please remove canopies and other equipment from the river front by dusk.

### VEHICLES:

- RV site rates include no more than 1 vehicles per site.
- Vehicles must be registered at the office and

visibly display the appropriate permit.

- Please do not park on grass, roadways, or in other RV sites.
- No mechanical maintenance or washing of RV's or vehicles is permitted within the park.

### RVS AND SITES:

- RV sites are assigned by the office. Please do not change sites without office approval.
- Be respectful of other guest. Do not walk through another guest site.
- All sewer connections must have an air-tight seal.
- Protect our precious water. Make sure water hoses are leak free.
- Do not put nails or any permanent attachment in or on the trees.
- Please take all household trash to the dumpsters.
- Leave your site clean upon departure.
- Please do not set up any plants, items, or objects that interferes with or disturbs landscaping.
- Please keep outdoor items to a minimum in a neat and tidy manner.

### SAFETY:

- Our speed limit of 5 MPH is strictly enforced.
- Small personal BBQ grills and fire pits on legs up off the ground are allowed. Please do not put grills on picnic tables.
- Firearms, fireworks, water balloons, confetti and other explosives are not permitted in the park.
- Bicycles may be ridden during daylight hours only. Motorized devices such as golf carts and ATVs are not permitted.

### GENERAL:

- For life-threatening emergencies, call 911.
- Smoking is not permitted inside any of the resort facilities. Smoking in cabins and cottages will result in a minimum \$200 cleaning fee.
- Rio Guadalupe strives to maintain a family atmosphere. Loud or profane music, loud noise or vulgar language will not be tolerated.
- No refunds for early departures or evictions.
- If you have guests make sure they are aware of the rules. You are responsible for them.
- Rio Guadalupe Resort is a service-oriented business and therefore does not have a tenant-landlord relationship with any guest.



## **Appendix B**

### United States Forest Service, Special Use Permit for Campground and Related Granger-The Concessions



USFS SUP  
Campground Templ.

### United States Army Corps of Engineers, Request for Quote & Standard Form 1449



USACE Solicitation  
RFQ.pdf



USACE Solicitation  
SF 1449.pdf