

NEW, MULTICULTURAL GENERATION OF CAMPERS BENEFITTING FROM TIME SPENT OUTDOORS

Press Release Date: April 30, 2016

Nearly Forty Percent of New Campers are African-American, Hispanic or Asian-American;

Millennials, Technology Driving a Shift Toward Greater Diversity in the Outdoors

BILLINGS, Mont. (April 21, 2016) – More than 1 million households in North America started camping last year. Of these new campers, 18 percent are African-American, 11 percent are Hispanic, and 44 percent are millennials, according to the [2016 North American Camping Report](#), an annual independent study supported by [Kampgrounds of America, Inc.](#) (KOA). The research findings suggest that not only is there an increase in African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American representation overall, but among new campers for 2015, representation closely matches overall population (i.e., census) figures, indicating that this new generation of campers is truly multicultural.

African-American and Hispanic campers are not only camping more than ever before, but they are enthusiastic about the benefits, stating it allows them to spend more time with friends and family, reduce stress and be more physically active. What's more, the research suggests that there is a "flattening" effect among millennials, where many of the differences observed between ethnic groups are much less pronounced among these younger campers.

Relaxation and stress relief are the top reasons people camp, according to nearly 3,000 survey respondents across the U.S. and Canada. Additionally, 1-in-5 campers say that camping allows them to spend more time vacationing each year, and access to technology may be promoting greater mobility among campers. While email usage while camping is down overall, campers who check their email while camping spend on average three additional days camping, reinforcing the notion that technology is allowing people to camp more without the anxiety of being disconnected.

"More people are camping across North America than in the past few years, and we're seeing how we define experiences in the outdoors evolve in a modern and meaningful way," said KOA COO Toby O'Rourke. "The uptick among millennial and multicultural campers could represent a shift in how camping is perceived and levels of participation. With interest and intent to camp more up across the board for 2016, the outlook for the upcoming season, as well as the long-term viability of camping, remains strong."

Additional highlights from the 2016 North American Camping Report include:

The New Generation of Campers: A Camper is a Camper

Diversity in the outdoors is slowly increasing, with more African-Americans, Hispanics and Asian-Americans starting to camp each year. Notably, the results of this year's North American Camping Report show that the distribution of new campers is much more aligned with overall population figures for ethnicity.

- All nonwhite campers were more likely to report a net increase in camping nights and/or trips for 2015, compared to Caucasian/white campers (nonwhite campers showed a net increase of 15 percent compared to 3 percent among white campers).
- One-in-5 new campers are African-American, which is being driven primarily by millennials.
- Hispanic campers are now 8 percent of the overall camper market (up 2 percentage points from 2014 to 2015) and represent 11 percent of all new campers. New Hispanic campers are also highly likely to be millennial (64 percent), representing one of the fastest growing segments among campers.
- Of millennials who started camping in the past year, 54 percent are nonwhite.
- Camping activity among campers of Asian descent now mirrors the overall population (5 percent of total U.S. population, 5 percent of campers), and they spend the highest percentage of their camper nights at public campgrounds (57 percent).
- Fully 1-in-10 African-American and Asian-American campers just started camping this past year.

Among all campers, camping is a form of escapism and a healthy way to connect with family and friends, with these opinions strengthening substantially year over year, and strongest among Hispanic campers and African-American campers.

- People camp because it's a way to spend more time with family and friends (69 percent of all North American campers, 71 percent of African-American campers, 72 percent of Hispanic campers), relax (46 percent strongly agree) and escape the stress of everyday life (44 percent strongly agree). Nonwhite campers are more likely to say camping allows them to spend more time vacationing each year (27 percent versus 18 percent among whites).
- A comparison of white, African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American millennials reveals very few differences in their behaviors and attitudes about camping, including how much and where they plan to camp in 2016 (43 percent of non-whites and 42 percent of whites plan to camp more often in 2016; 54 percent of non-whites and 52 percent of whites plan to camp in a national park in 2016), as well as their reasons for camping more (43 percent of both whites and non-whites "strongly agree" that camping is a way to reduce the stress of everyday life), and the benefits they associate with time spent outdoors (35 percent of non-whites and 33 percent of whites "strongly agree" that camping allows them to lead a healthier lifestyle).

Additionally, it appears that nonwhite groups are responding to efforts to get them into public campgrounds. Past research has indicated that many nonwhite groups, particularly African-Americans, do not feel welcome at public campgrounds. However, intent to visit public campgrounds is robust, with African-American, Hispanic and Asian-American campers expressing desire to visit these locations in larger numbers.

- The proportion of camper nights spent at state/national park campgrounds in 2015 increased 7 percentage points among African-Americans (from 26 percent in 2014 to 33 percent in 2015), 5 percentage points among Hispanics (from 40 percent in 2014 to 45 percent in 2015), and 10 percentage points among Asian-American campers (from 47 percent in 2014 to 57 percent in 2015).
- When asked what destinations they plan to visit in 2016, Hispanic campers were most likely to express interest in visiting public parks (64 percent percent), while African-American campers were as likely as any as any group to say they intend to visit these locations (50 percent percent).

Access to Technology is Generating Mobility, Expanding Resources and Information about the Outdoors

The adage that people should use camping as an opportunity to disconnect from technology is not holding true. Use of technology while camping, including mobile phones and internet, in fact, is allowing people to spend more time camping and enjoying the outdoors each year.

- A majority of campers (88 percent) bring their mobile phones with them while camping.
- Wi-Fi continues to rank as a top campground amenity and expectations for free Wi-Fi are dramatically impacting campground selection: campers who expect free Wi-Fi are three times more likely to be influenced by its presence.
- 76 percent percent of campers go online while camping and those who do so to check/send emails (41 percent), spend on average three additional days per year camping when compared to those who do not.

The use of technology while camping is most common among millennials and nonwhite campers. And for nonwhite North Americans who are new to camping, technology may be expanding resources and access to information about the outdoors.

- Campers are increasingly using the internet to look up information on local attractions and research destinations or trails. This is even more pronounced with African-American (50 percent), Hispanic (45 percent) and Asian-American campers (45 percent), among which technology usage and demand for Wi-Fi at campground outpaces white campers (39 percent).
- Hispanic campers (71 percent versus 64 percent among African-American campers, 54 percent of Asian-Americans and 44 percent of whites) are most likely to use some type of mobile app or online resource in their trip planning.
- African Americans are most likely to bring along a variety of electronics while camping including smart phones (80 percent), and they are most likely to demand Wi-Fi availability at a campground, which they use to look up information about the local area, trails and campgrounds.
- African-American campers are also the highest users of social networking sites such as Facebook to research camping trips (25 percent versus 17 percent among white campers).

2016 Camping Season Forecast

Looking at the year ahead, there is a net 25 percentage point increase of campers who intend to take more camping trips in 2016, compared to a net 9 percentage point increase in those who intended to increase their trips in 2015. Among campers who intend to increase their camping trips, spending time with family and friends (67 percent), and exploring new areas (64 percent) are the most impactful reasons for getting outdoors. Other key findings related to campers' plans for the 2016 season include:

- Campers plan to camp more in 2016, with nearly half (46 percent) stating they intend to increase the number of nights they spend camping and 3-in-10 campers intending to increase the number of trips they take in 2016.

- Millennial campers are far and away the most likely to say they plan to camp more in 2016 (58 percent of millennials, compared to 46 percent of GenXers, 35 percent of Baby Boomers and 30 percent of Mature campers). According to these younger campers, spending time with friends and family (26 percent), the desire to explore new areas (22 percent), an increase in free time (21 percent), and decreased gas prices (18 percent) have the most impact on their decision to camp more this year.
- Among U.S. campers, the top three 2016 camping destinations include U.S. national parks (52 percent), state parks (49 percent) and beaches/coastal areas (42 percent).
- For Canadian campers, an overwhelming amount are likely to visit provincial parks (73 percent) at a rate similar to 2015 season forecasts (72 percent).

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by Cairn Consulting Group, an independent market research firm with extensive experience in the hospitality and services industries. The survey was conducted in January 2016. The sampling methodology targeted a randomly selected sample of U.S. and Canadian households. Sampling was designed to obtain n=2,418 completed survey among representative U.S. households and n=505 completed surveys among representative Canadian households. A sample of n=2,418 U.S. households is associated with a margin of error of +/- 1.99%. Among Canadian households, a sample of n=500 is associated with a margin of error of +/- 4.37%.

All surveys were completed online via an outbound solicitation sent by Survey Sampling International to a randomly selected cross-section of U.S. and Canadian households. The sample of households from which the surveys were completed was statistically balanced to ensure that the results are in line with overall population figures for age, gender and ethnicity.

ABOUT KAMPGROUNDS OF AMERICA

For more than 50 years, Kampgrounds of America (KOA), the world's largest system of open-to-the-public family campgrounds, has provided millions of campers with fun, memorable adventures. KOA was born in 1962 when founder Dave Drum constructed a campground on the banks of the Yellowstone River in Billings, Mont. Since then, KOA has grown to more than 480 locations in the U.S. and Canada. KOA's family of properties offers diverse camping experiences, while maintaining the excellent standards and family-friendly atmosphere the company is known for.

ABOUT CAIRN CONSULTING GROUP

Cairn Consulting Group is a market research firm with extensive experience in the hospitality and services industries. For the past several years, Cairn Consulting Group has worked with organizations in the gaming/casino areas, food services/restaurant space, accommodations, travel/tourism and outdoor hospitality, working with clients such as Caesars Entertainment, Pizza Hut, Hollywood Casinos, Chili's, Route 66 RV and Rivers Casinos as well as ongoing collaboration with KOA.

###