



2024

State of the Industry Report

From Boomers to Zoomers: Examining How
Different Generations Approach Camping

Navigating the Future with RMS

Some claimed the pandemic's camping craze would dwindle once the world opened up again, but four years later, the demand for the great outdoors remains strong. In fact, the most recent data from KOA found that 64% of campers are already making reservations for future trips compared to 29% of non-camping travelers.¹

Clearly, camping interests travelers, both young and old, but how we enjoy camping is another matter and differs a bit based on each generation cohort. In our 2023 report, we uncovered insights specific to Millennial and Gen Z campers—the digital native generations. This year, we've expanded our focus to encompass all adult age groups.

RMS North America conducted independent research in search of answers and insights into how camping and technology preferences vary across generations. This resulting report offers a glimpse into how each age group approaches camping differently so campground and RV park owners and managers can gain better insight into their target markets, see what matters most to them in 2024, and ultimately attract them to their property to enjoy the great outdoors.

“RMS North America has long had a vested interest in understanding generational differences and preferences when it comes to camping and outdoor recreation. Building on our research from 2023 and our work with OHI, our goal is to equip our outdoor property partners and the industry at large with the data to make informed decisions that deliver elevated experiences for all campers and RVers.”

—Frederic Dominioni, Chief Revenue Officer, RMS North America



From Boomers to Zoomers: Camping Preferences

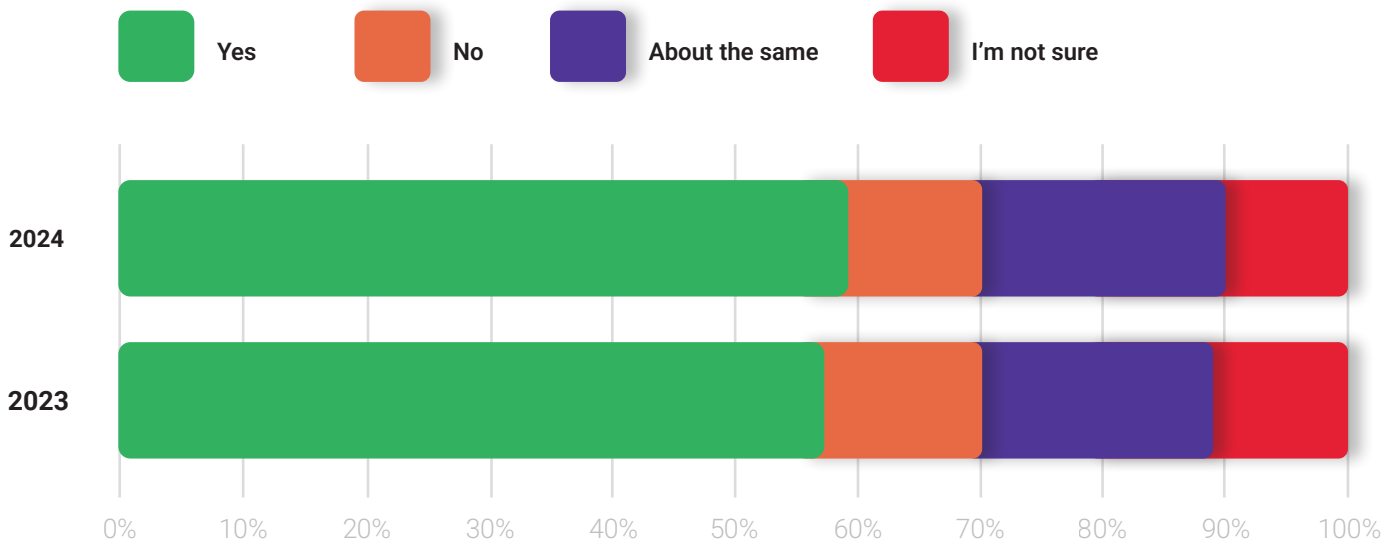
Camping Frequency

It's easy to group people by their differences, but recognizing similarities is just as important. Throughout our research, we discovered multiple trends that were universal across all age groups, including:

- Most people camp occasionally, 1-2 times a year (**56.4%**)
- Over half grew up camping and came back as adults (**53.4%**)
- Everyone wants to camp more in 2024 (**60.2%**)

People want to camp more than they did last year. In our previous State of the Industry report, **56%** of respondents said they wanted to camp more in 2023. When adjusting for generational data (2023 focused solely on Millennials and Gen Z campers), there is an even bigger increase: **56%** in 2023 and **62%** in 2024.

Do you plan to do more camping or RVing in the coming year?



Age Ranges

18-29 Gen Z 30-44 Millennials 45-60 Gen X 60+ Baby Boomers

Types of Camping

Back in the day, camping meant pitching a tent and curling up in a sleeping bag. Today, there are more ways to camp than ever, from glamping in yurts to parking an RV, but tent camping remains the tried-and-true preference at any age. (36%)

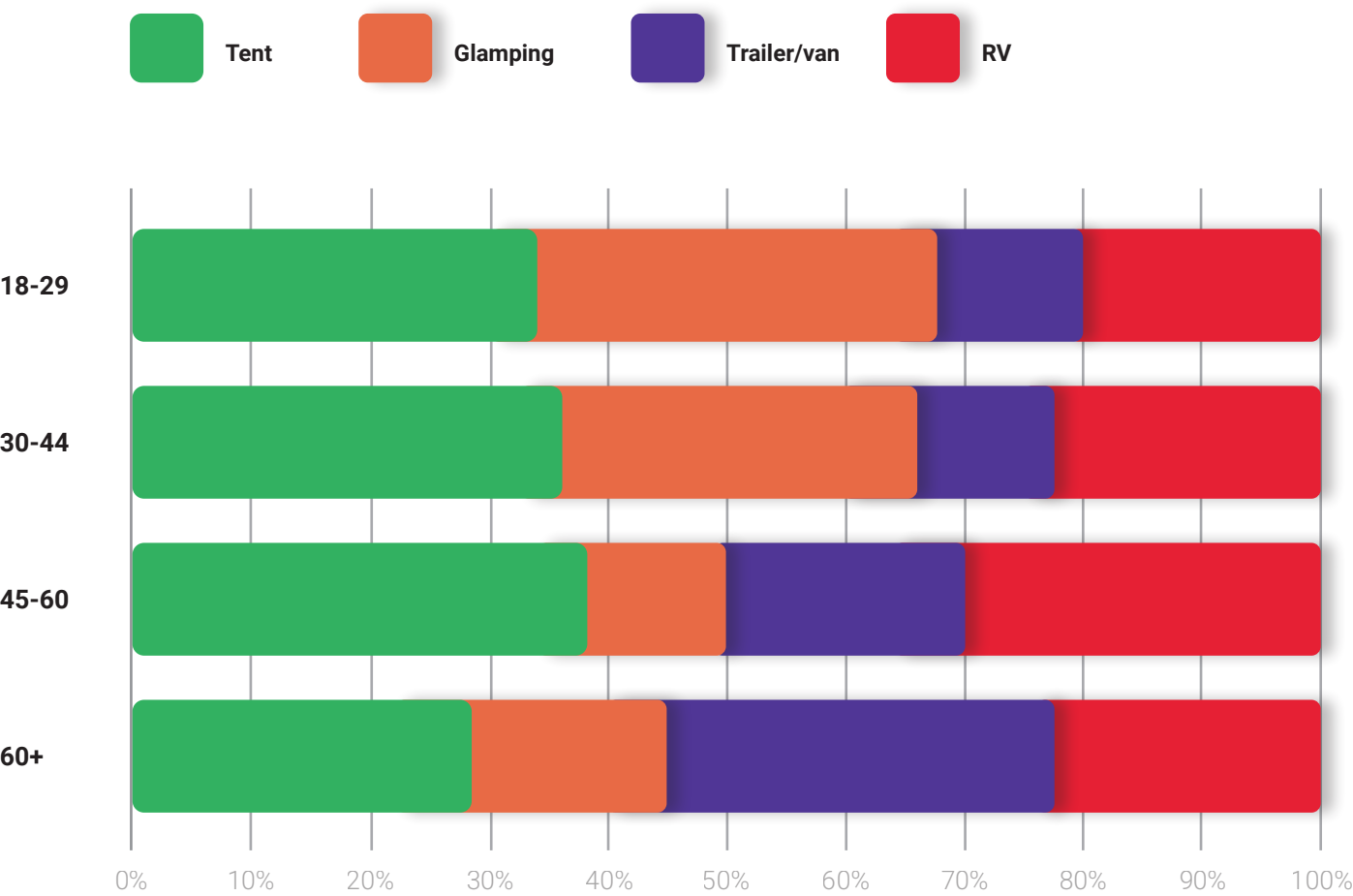
According to The Dyrt’s research, 38% of properties added campsites this past year.² What type of sites you add can impact what kinds of guests you attract.

- Tent sites are cheaper to add and remain a staple of the camping experience.
- Glamping provides a unique experience for the curious younger crowd.
- Adding sites for camper vans and RVs will hold more sway with Gen X and Boomers.

Gen Z had a bigger taste for glamping last year (38%) than this year (31%). At the same time, their preference for RV and vehicle camping has grown to 32% in 2024 compared to 28% in 2023.

Navigating the Future with RMS

How do you prefer to camp?



What this means for properties:

Including interactive maps and site selection capabilities in your reservation system is a great way to show the diversity of options at your property while also allowing guests to pick a site that best suits their preferences.

What We Look for in a Camping Destination

When it comes to why we camp, nature is a universal motivator. Being out in nature was the dominant influence on campers when selecting a destination, at 47% overall.

But how we spend our time camping also influences us, whether hiking at a national park, enjoying a nice cookout, or taking a dip in the pool.

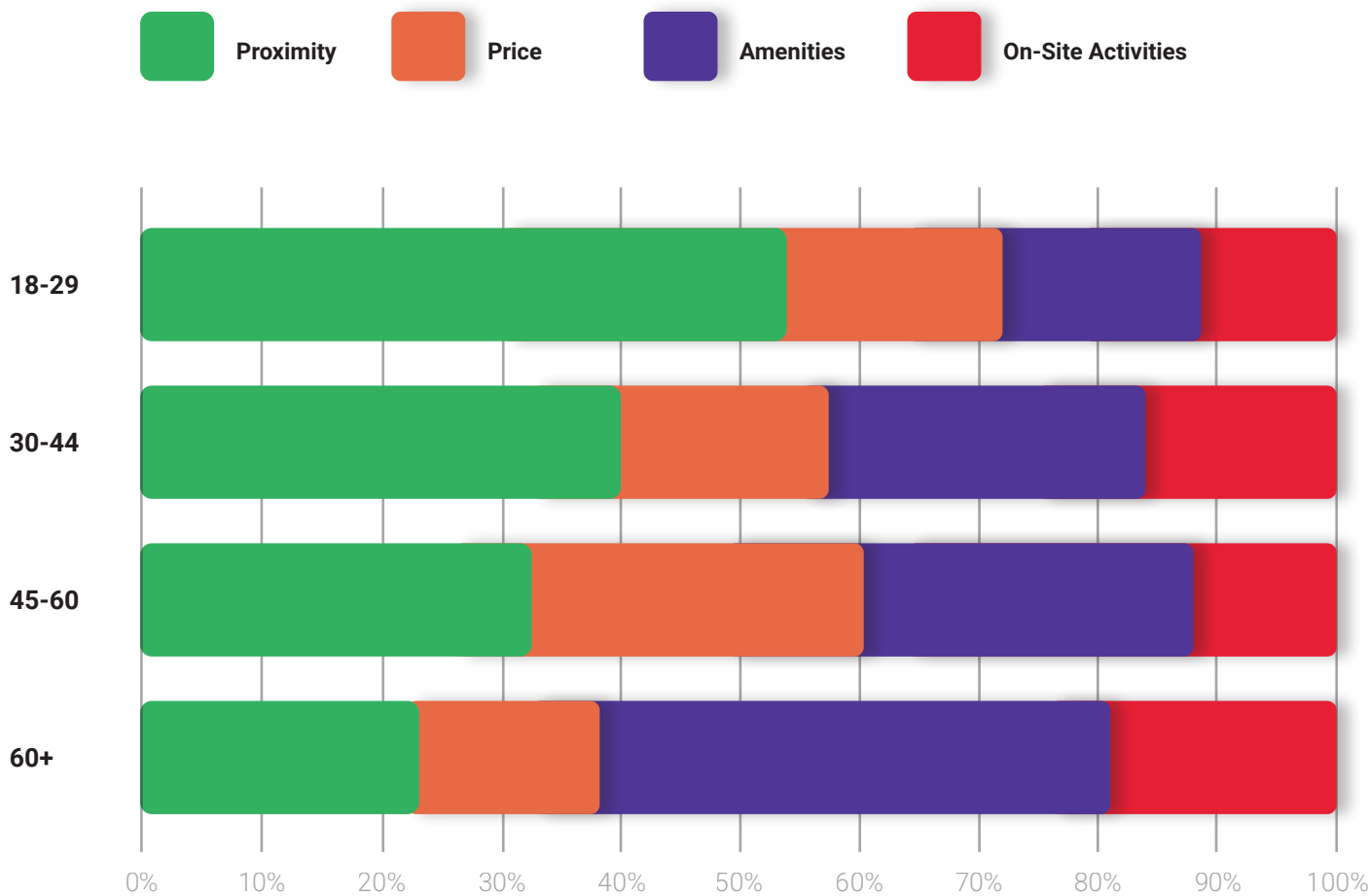
- Proximity, being near interesting sites like National Parks, was the second-highest influence when selecting a camping destination and holds the most influence over Gen Z.
- Prioritizing amenities went up with age. Gen X and Boomers are also more likely to camp in vehicles like trailers and RVs, which require hook-ups.
- On-site activities mattered most to Millennials and Boomers.

What This Means for Properties

Always keep intent in mind when adding to your property. Guests can use the same features and amenities very differently.

For example, Millennials interested in on-site activities are probably trying to entertain their kids. On the other hand, Boomers tend to camp for longer stretches and, therefore, want more variety in their destination.

What do you look for in a camping destination?



Proximity was rated as the second-highest influence. You can't move your property closer to a national park, but that doesn't mean there's nothing to do.

- Partner with local businesses to host on-site activities like cooking classes, food truck nights, or wine tastings. You can also use these partnerships to offer off-site activities like kayaking, fishing, or horseback riding.
- Advertise local events on your website and social media, giving potential guests ideas for what to do and where to stay.

Technology Preferences

Aside from age, there is no more significant generational divide than our technology preferences. But even here, there were some universal trends.

- Most campers (**61.4%**) make reservations directly through a campground's website.
- Word of mouth (**59.2%**) is the most common way to learn about new camping spots, followed closely by online search (**57.9%**).
- Email is the preferred method when communicating with a campground at **61.7%**.

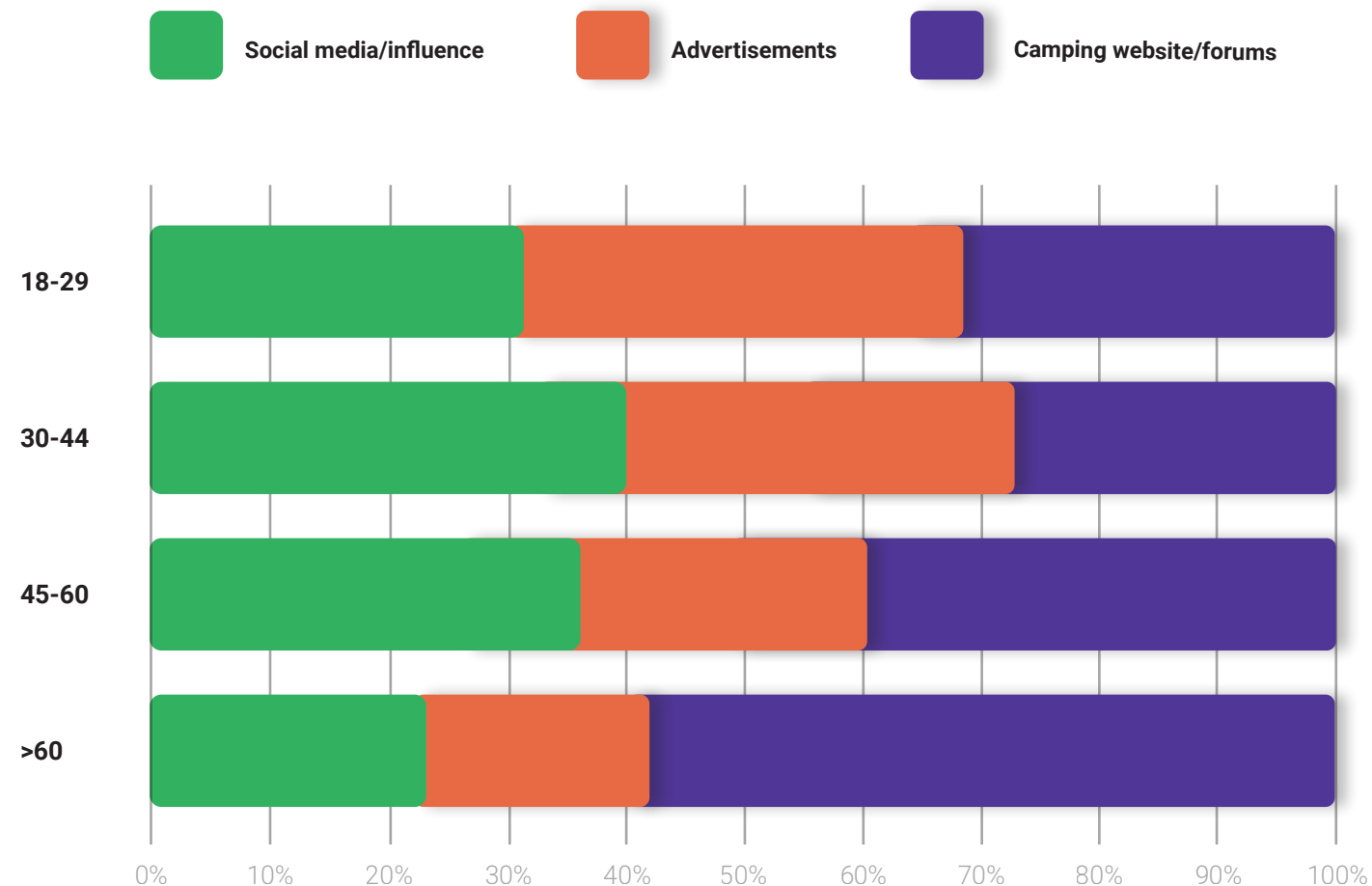
“While each generation approaches technology differently, the most important takeaway is that campgrounds and RV parks be equipped to meet these preferences. Even for less tech-savvy properties, there are some baseline investments that pay off, like a user-friendly website, the ability to take reservations online easily, and the ability to communicate quickly via email or SMS text.”

—Frederic Dominioni, Chief Revenue Officer, RMS North America



Type of Camping

When setting aside online search and word-of-mouth, age groups had distinct habits around how they found new places to explore.



- Boomers tend to look to community websites and forums to hear what their fellow campers have to say.
- Millennials are the most likely group to use social media—even more than Gen Z.
- Advertisements were the least cited source but were slightly higher for younger groups.

What This Means for Properties

- Use the power of word of mouth to set up a referral program. Not only does this get you in front of new customers, but it also entices old ones to return.
- Websites and forums can offer a wealth of user insight on what people seek in a campsite. Free market research!
- Ads rank low, but they still get a lot of eyes and often act as an introduction to a product or service. According to Statista, 44% of users report buying a product online after being introduced to it through an ad.³

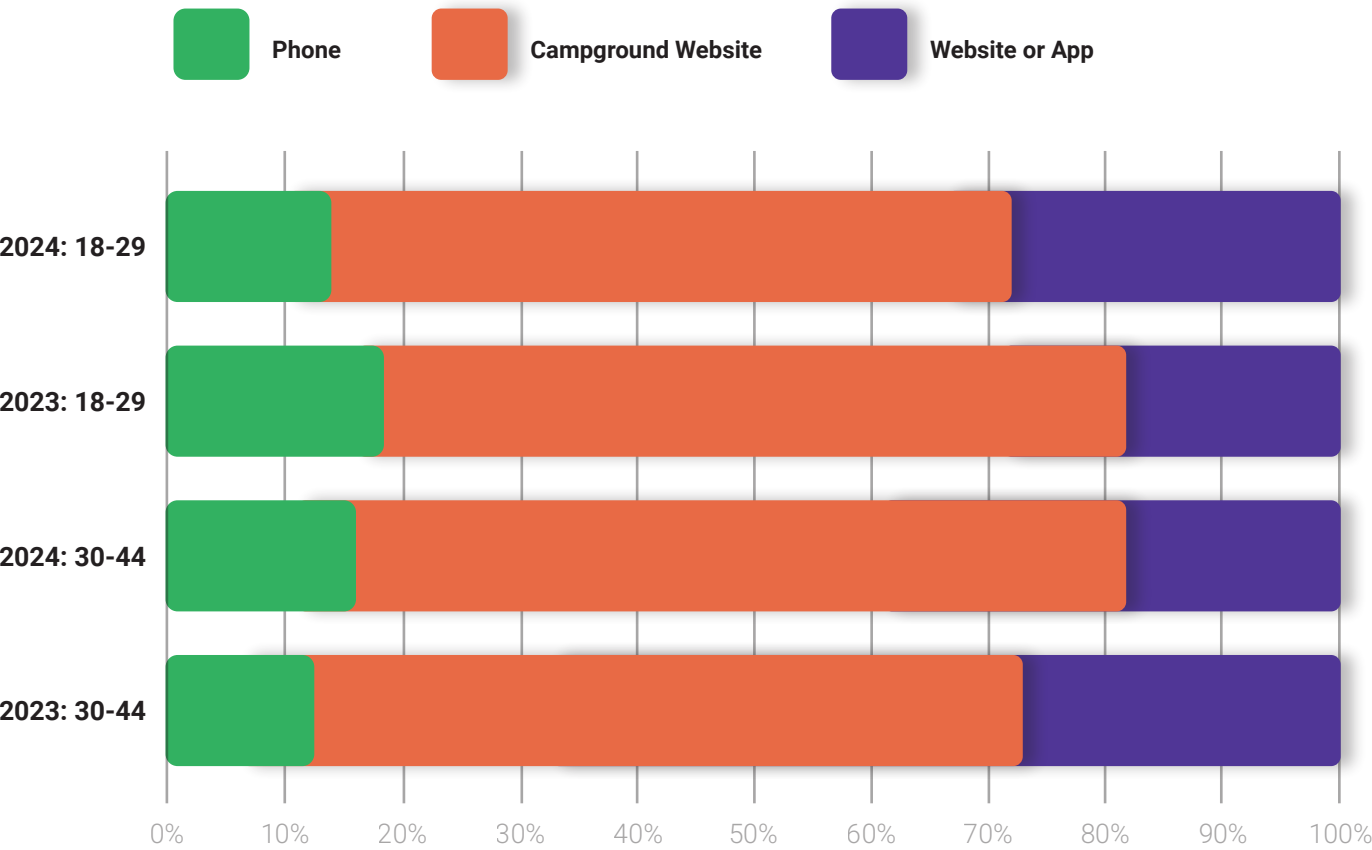
How We Like to Make Reservations

While booking directly online is the most preferred method for making reservations, there is still a desire for alternate channels.

- **26.2%** of Boomers prefer to make reservations over the phone
- **25.9%** of Gen Z would prefer to use a booking app or websites like The Dyrty and Hipcamp

Reservation preferences have flipped in Gen Z and Millennials. In 2023, Millennials were more likely to use a booking app or website, while Gen Z was more likely to call it in. This year, they've traded places.

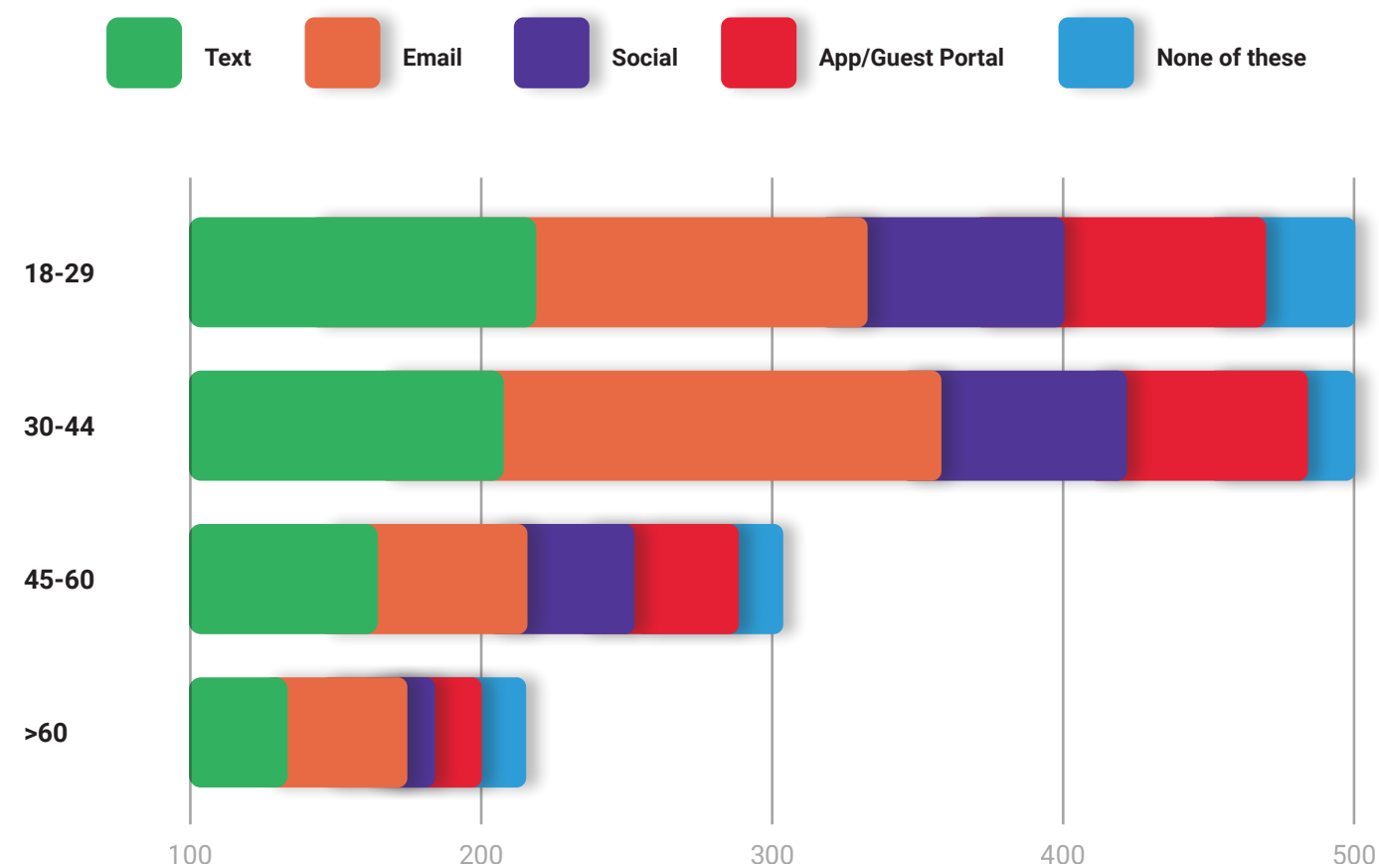
How do you book a camping destination?



How We Like to Communicate

When it comes to communicating with businesses, guests now have more options than ever, and they like it that way. One study found that 73% of customers want a choice between messaging and voice options because their preferences depend on the situation.⁴

When given multiple options, here’s how guests would choose to communicate with campgrounds today:



Despite the variety of communication options, one thread ties everyone’s preferences together: mobile. Over 96% of our survey responses were sent over a mobile device, and mobile was the leading device type in all age groups.

What This Means for Properties

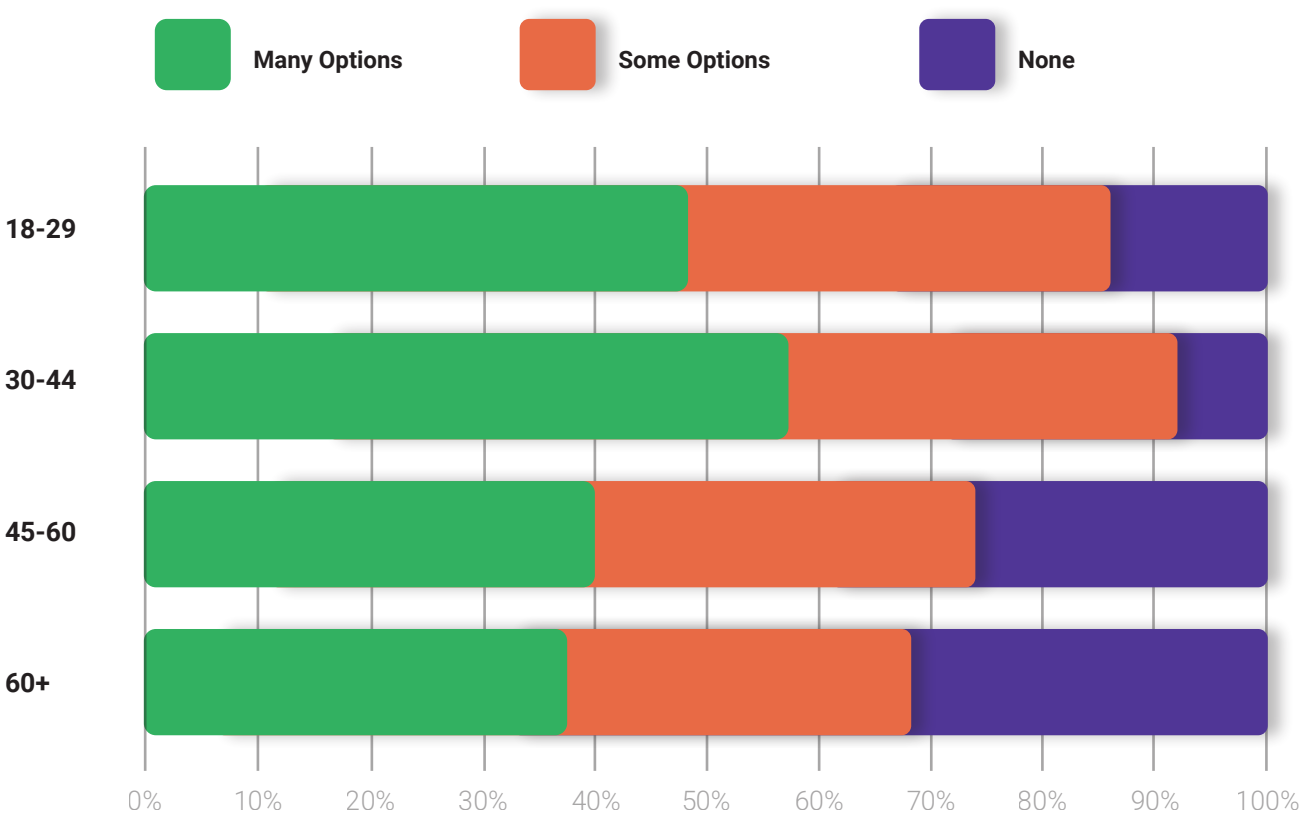
- Property owners need to maintain an up-to-date website that allows for direct booking.
- Optimizing your website for mobile is almost as important as having direct booking.
- For upsell potential, display amenities and add-ons throughout the booking process.
- Considering the high preference for texting and emailing, campground operators should include up-to-date contact information and ensure that these channels are checked regularly to answer any questions.

How We Feel About Tech in Camping

It’s not surprising that the desire for more technology in camping goes down with age. While campers want to see more technology in camping overall, how much and what that looks like is very broad.

Our survey asked participants if they would like to see more technology/technical amenities in camping. They had three answers to choose from: yes, there is so much opportunity; some, like more modern business services; and no, camping is about disconnecting.

What do you look for in a camping destination?

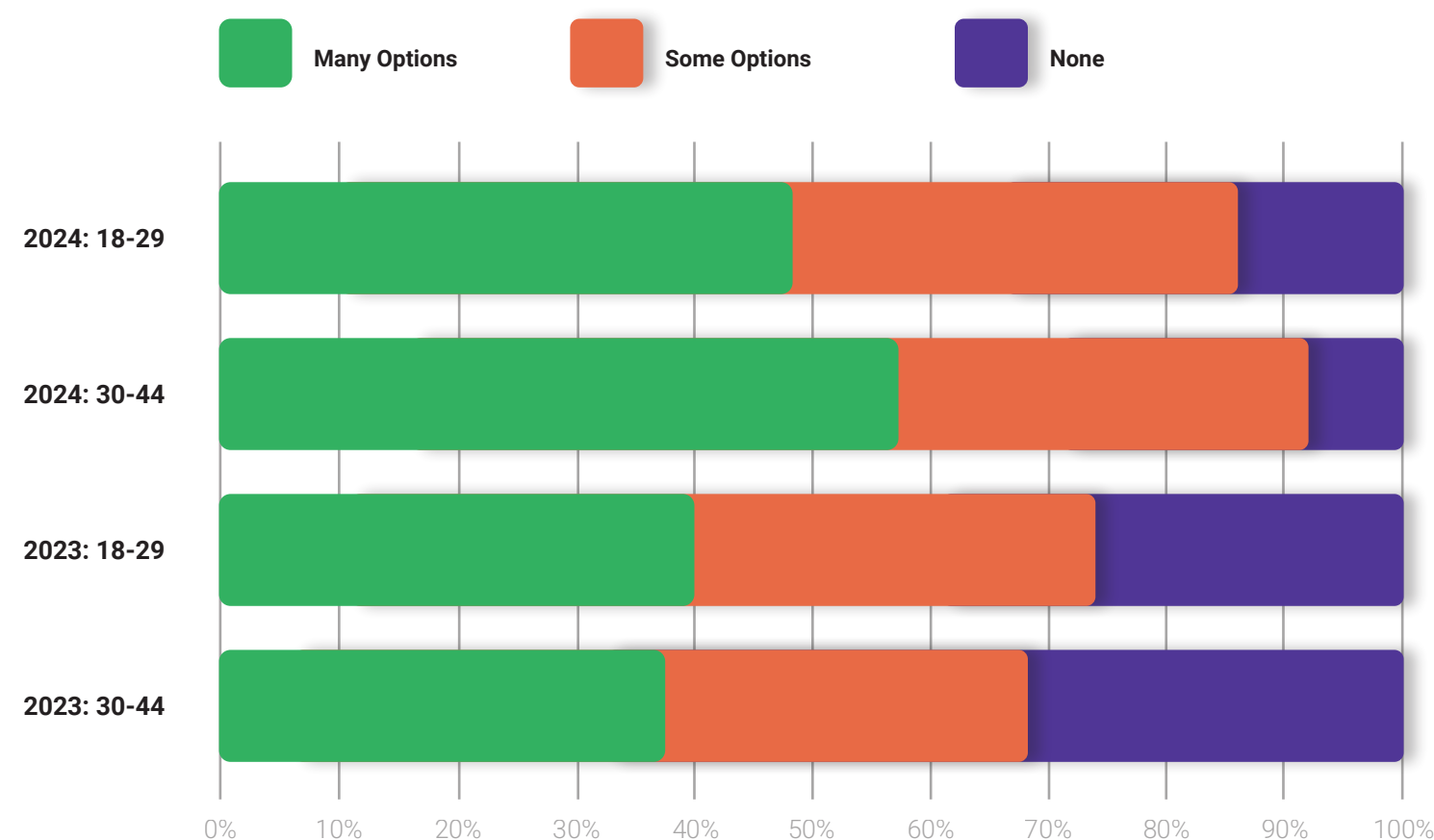


Across the board, there was strong sentiment for more tech, but only Millennials held the majority of “yes” votes at 56.6%. Gen Z had the most tempered outlook on tech, with 39.8% voting for some tech. Both Gen X and Boomers had twice the amount of negative tech sentiment compared to younger generations, but “yes” was still the highest vote in both groups.

How We Feel About Tech in Camping

In a surprising change, the technology sentiment we witnessed last year with Gen Z and Millennials has reversed. In 2023, Gen Z showed a higher enthusiasm at 50%, and Millennials had high-tech resistance at 19%. In 2024, Millennials have the highest enthusiasm for tech of any age group at 57%.

Meanwhile, Gen Z’s enthusiasm lessened somewhat to 48%. However, there was growth in their mild tech sentiment. This is supported by a growing amount of research showing that Gen Z wants to prioritize limiting their screen time.



What This Means for Properties

- Have a purpose in mind when adding technology to your property.
- Tech capabilities that cater to all campers, such as online reservations, site selection, contactless payment, and check-in, hold the most value.
- Tech should never be an obligation but an option. Calls, email and other channels still have a place and need to be manned.

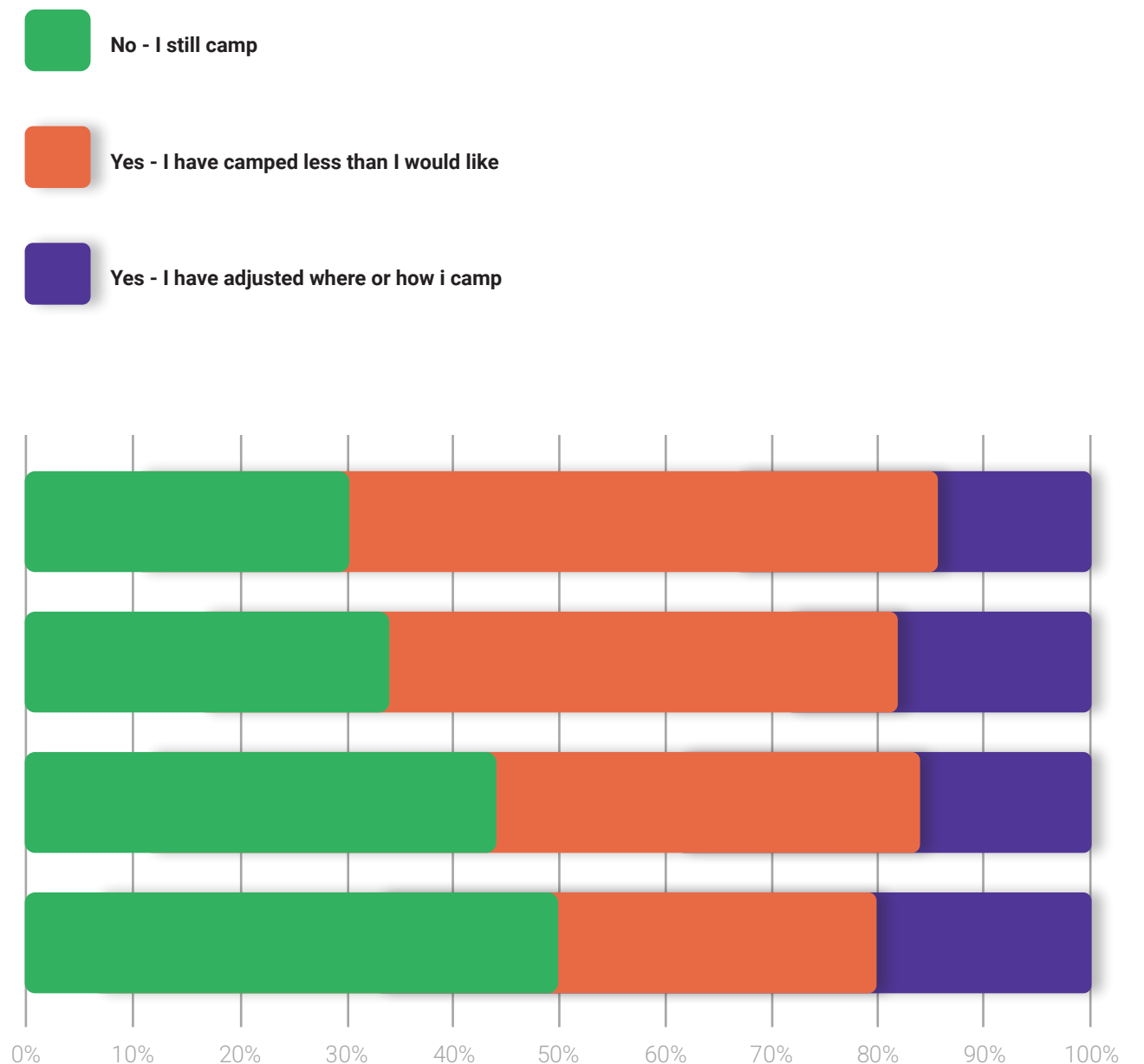
Special Section: Inflation & Economic Factors

The U.S. saw some of the highest inflation rates in decades in 2021-2022. While inflation has come down somewhat in the past two years, the effects still hit consumers and businesses alike.

According to The Dyr, 45.3% of campgrounds reported raising their rates in 2022. In our survey, at least 50% of people in every age bracket reported making camping changes because of inflation. How campers responded to inflation's impact on their camping plans varied by age, with younger campers opting to camp less, while older campers changed how they camped to adjust for cost.

What This Means for Properties

- **Consider pricing strategy carefully.** Extras and add-ons are usually the first items to go when consumers are price-conscious. Bundling services can be an effective way to entice purchases and reservations because it feels like you're getting more money for your value. Use a dynamic pricing function in your reservation management system to automatically adjust pricing by prioritizing by occupancy or price per site.
- **Stretch your season if you can.** More people are willing to camp in the off-season to escape crowds; this could mean you don't need to lower prices as much or lower them further to attract more customers. According to The Dyr, over 25% of properties extended their 2023 camping season, with most properties adding dates in the fall.
- **Never forget the value of a good experience.** Customers are paying more, and they expect more quality in return.



Flexibility is Key for the Great Outdoors

Camping is a well-loved activity at any age. Even though our approaches and attitudes towards inflation may differ, we still love to get out in the great outdoors. For campgrounds and RV parks, the biggest takeaway is to be nimble. To cater to such a wide array of consumers – in age, tech preferences, and budget sensitivities – the ability to communicate efficiently, monitor property performance, and quickly adapt marketing & operational strategies will set you up for long-term success.

Key Takeaways

01

Camping sentiment is up across the board despite ongoing concerns about inflation.

02

While there is interest in other types of camping, tent camping remains a solid choice and a manageable price point for properties looking to expand.

03

Campers pick their destinations based on the natural surroundings, but how they spend their time there also factors in. Advertising local events and diversifying on-site activities and amenities is a good strategy for appealing to more guests.

04

Word-of-mouth and online search remain campers’ primary methods to learn about new destinations.

05

When it comes to communication and making reservations, including mobile functionality is a must.

06

Most campers want to see more tech included in the camping experience, but it’s important to go with tech that offers a clear purpose.

07

Inflation has impacted most people’s camping plans, but there is still a solid sentiment to continue to get out into the great outdoors.

2024 State of the Industry Report

To see how RMS North America can set your property up for success in 2024, **request a demo today.**