

2024 American Travel Survey: Generational Trends, Economic Concerns and Impact of AI

A new national survey from Washington State University shows Gen Z leads other generations in travel ambitions, nearly all Americans say rising costs will impact their plans and a majority fear AI will impact industry jobs.

PULLMAN, Wash. – Washington State University’s Carson College of Business released a [new report](#) with insights into Americans' upcoming travel plans, including motivations, budgeting habits and considerations surrounding sustainability and AI.

One of the top findings in the report reveals nearly all members of Gen Z (97%) expect current or potential rising costs to have “a great deal” or “a moderate influence” on the following aspects of their travel: choice of accommodation (86%), travel destination (83%), trip length (80%) or activities they book or plan (77%).

“The WSU School of Hospitality Business Management is [well-known for its leadership in hospitality, travel and tourism research,](#)” said Debbie Compeau, Carson College interim dean. “This report provides a fresh understanding of current traveler trends, equipping industry professionals with the knowledge they need to make informed, actionable decisions.”

The report, conducted in collaboration with KRC Research, examines broad travel plans and motivators, travel finance considerations, sustainability and wellness as aspect of travel decisions and the impact of artificial intelligence on travel. The report surveyed 1,020 American adults aged 18 years or older.

Key findings include:

Americans’ travel plans: More than three in four Americans (76%) say they will travel in the next 12 months. Of those who plan to travel, 95% will travel domestically, and 37% will travel internationally. Among all these likely travelers, 78% will travel for vacation, 68% will travel to visit family or friends and 23% will travel for work or business.

- Out of 16 possible motivators for choosing destinations and plans when traveling, Americans most often say experiencing beautiful surroundings (37%) and focusing on relaxation or well-being (33%) are among their top-three factors.
- Other common “top three” travel motivators include having family-friendly experiences (30%), enjoying different cuisines (22%), having an adventure (21%) and participating in leisure or recreational activities (17%).
- Eighty percent of Americans agree traveling is an important way to improve their overall well-being.

Travel planning and budgeting: Almost all Americans (93%) expect to spend at least some time budgeting, searching for deals and comparing costs the next time they travel.

- Nearly all (96%) Americans expect current or potential rising costs – either at home or at their travel destination – will have at least minor influence on their travel planning.
- More than four in 10 Americans say current or potential rising costs will likely have “a great deal of influence” on their choice of travel destination (47%) or their choice of accommodation (43%)

when they travel. Just under four in 10 say the same about planned trip length (39%) and activities booked and planned (37%).

- Should inflation cause Americans to scale back their travel plans, shopping costs (63%), food and drink costs (52%) and activity costs (57%) would be among the most common ways to reduce spending.

Considerations when traveling – sustainability and other values: When next given the choice to travel, 75% of Americans say sustainability will be at least a top, important or secondary priority in planning where to go, where to stay and dine, what to do or how to get around.

- Just one in four (25%) say sustainability is not a priority and has little or no influence on their plans for travel.
- Nearly three in four Americans (74%) say they feel a responsibility to plan and act sustainably when they travel.
- For some, sustainable travel may entail “getting off the grid” – 44% of Americans say it’s important to visit or stay in rustic locations free of technological or electronic distractions.
- Nearly three in four Americans (73%) agree “it’s important for me to find ways to do good for others in the places I travel,” with one in four (25%) strongly agreeing. In fact, eight percent of Americans say “doing good for others” is a top-three motivation that influences their choice of travel destination and activity, out of 16 options.

Travel and AI: More than half (51%) of Americans believe they’ve already used tools or services with artificial intelligence (AI) to help with travel, and a majority think it could help them with aspects of their trip.

- Some of the most common ways Americans believe they’ve used AI for travel include: to help recommend lodging or dining (31%), to help plan personalized itineraries based on stated criteria or based on what is known about their interests (28%), for searching and booking travel online (21%) and to help communicate and get around (19%).
- Sixty-three percent of Americans agree “the overall impact AI can have on my travel experience is probably more positive than negative,” and just over half (55%) agree “it seems likely tools with AI can help me make my travel more meaningful.”
- Seventy-five percent of Americans are worried “increased use of travel systems with AI can lead to more data breaches,” and 60% “don’t feel comfortable using travel systems with AI due to privacy concerns.”
- About two in three Americans (67%) are worried “ethical design and testing of travel systems with AI are inadequate for releasing to the market,” (67%) and “fear more AI in the travel system will negatively impact job opportunities for industry professionals” (71%).

Findings for specific demographics: An analysis of several other population subgroups reveals additional findings about the preferences of different generations.

- Over a third of Gen Z (38%) and Millennials (34%) expect to spend “a lot of time” comparing costs of travel destinations and activities the next time they travel, compared to just 25% of Gen X and 19% of Boomers.
- Eighty-four percent of American Gen Z adults say they will travel in the next 12 months. In

- contrast, 77% of Millennials, 74% of Gen X and 74% of Baby Boomers plan to travel.
- One in three women expect to spend “a lot of time” searching for travel deals and bargains (34%) and comparing costs to help choose between destinations (34%), compared to only one in five men (20%) who have the same expectation.
 - Fifty-nine percent of American parents say sustainability is a top or important priority when making travel plans, compared to 41% of Americans without children.

Read the full report [here](#).

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About the Survey

The survey was conducted online from April 10 to April 12, 2024, among 1,020 American adults aged 18 years or older. The survey sample is demographically representative of the U.S. population on age, gender, geographic region, race and ethnicity and education; U.S. Census data are used as targets for data weighting on these variables.

About the Carson College of Business

The WSU Carson College of Business is accredited across all business disciplines at the baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral levels by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Faculty across disciplines produce scholarly and applied research at the main campus in Pullman and at Vancouver, Everett and Tri-Cities locations and Global Campus. International activities include academic centers in China and Switzerland and thriving partnerships with several schools around the globe. Innovative online programs supplement face-to-face offerings.

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