

# **2016 North Carolina Visitor Profile**

**A publication of Visit North Carolina**  
**A Unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina**



## 2016 North Carolina Visitor Profile

Visit North Carolina, formerly the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, has contracted with the research company TNS for data on North Carolina visitors since 2006. TNS is the world's largest provider of custom research and analysis, serving all segments of the travel industry. The company has over 13,000 full-time employees worldwide and offices in more than 80 countries.

The research program, titled "TravelsAmerica" conducts over 10,000 Internet-based interviews among past 12-month travelers who have traveled more than 50 miles from their homes (excluding commuters). From this sample, data from 4,500 – 5,500 past month travelers is also collected for even greater insights. Information collected includes: purpose of trip, mode of travel, travel party characteristics, places visited, number of nights, accommodations, activities, spending, and demographics. Data collected are weighted to match US Census variables, market size, age of household head, household income, and household size. The research staff of Visit North Carolina created the following report based on this data from TravelsAmerica.

The purpose of this report is to profile the average North Carolina visitor, both overnight visitors and daytrippers. The report also includes comparisons between out-of-state and resident visitors where applicable. At the end of the report, an appendix offers definitions of key travel terms.

# 2016 North Carolina Visitor Profile

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## 2016 North Carolina Visitor Profile

### Total Visitor Summary

- ◆ In 2016, approximately 48.6 million person-trips were taken in North Carolina and ranked #6 in the US in terms of domestic visitation.
- ◆ Eighty-nine percent of all domestic visitors came to North Carolina for pleasure purposes, while eight percent of visitors came to conduct business (includes meeting/convention). The remaining three percent indicated “other” reason for visiting the state.
- ◆ The summer (June - August) was the most popular season for travel to North Carolina, with nearly thirty-six percent of all 2016 visitors. Fall (September - November) followed with twenty-four percent of the annual visitors. The spring (March - May) season welcomed twenty-two percent of visitors and winter (December-February) saw nearly nineteen percent of visitors in 2016. August was the single largest month for travel to the state with nearly thirteen (12.8%) percent, followed by July (11.4%) and June (11.3%).
- ◆ Forty-three percent of North Carolina overnight visitors lodged in a hotel/motel, while thirty-nine percent stayed in a private home. More than eight percent stayed in a rental home or condo, while more than four percent stayed in a personal second home or condo. Three percent stayed in an RV park or campground. Approximately two percent of overnight visitors indicated that they stayed in a shared economy property such as an AirBnB or VRBO.
- ◆ The average travel party size for all North Carolina visitor parties was 2.2. Twenty-nine percent of travel parties to the state included children in the party.
- ◆ Ninety-one percent of all travelers to the state drove (includes personal automobile, rental, motorcycle and RV), while seven percent traveled by air.
- ◆ In 2016, the average household trip expenditure by visitors to North Carolina was \$477. The average household trip expenditure for overnight visitors was \$616. Daytrip parties to the state spent approximately \$128 per visit.
- ◆ The top states of origin of *total* visitors to North Carolina were in-state residents (46.7%), Virginia (9.0%), South Carolina (8.5%), Georgia (5.9%), Florida (3.8%), Tennessee (3.2%), New York (2.8%), Maryland (2.4%), Pennsylvania (2.3%) and New Jersey (2.1%).
- ◆ Nearly thirty-five percent of the households that traveled to North Carolina in 2016 had a household income over \$100,000. The average household income for all visitors was \$84,220.
- ◆ In 2016, Raleigh/Durham/Fayetteville (13.1%) was the top advertising market of origin for *all* travelers to the state, followed by Charlotte (9.8%), Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (8.5%), Greensboro/High Point/Winston Salem (8.2%), Greenville-New Bern-Washington (6.6%), Atlanta (5.2%), Washington, DC (4.2%), New York (3.2%), Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News (2.8%) and Richmond-Petersburg (2.6%).

## 2016 North Carolina Overnight Visitor Profile

### Summary

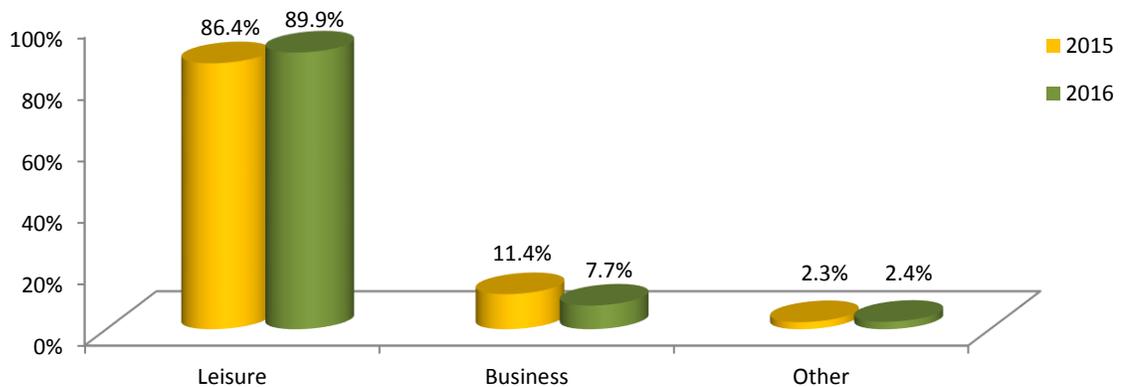
- ◆ In 2016, approximately 39 million overnight person-trips were taken in North Carolina. North Carolina ranked #6 in the US in terms of domestic overnight visitation.
- ◆ Ninety percent of all domestic overnight visitors came to North Carolina for leisure purposes, while eight percent of visitors came to conduct business (includes meeting/convention). The remaining two percent indicated “other” reason for visiting the state.
- ◆ The summer (June-August) was the most popular season for overnight travel to the state, with thirty-seven percent of all overnighters. Fall (September-November) followed with twenty-four percent of visitors. The spring (March-May) and winter (December-February) seasons saw twenty-two percent and seventeen percent of annual visitors respectively. August was the largest month for overnight travel to the state with fourteen percent, followed by July (12%), June (11%) and October (9%).
- ◆ Overnight visitors to North Carolina spent an average of 3.7 nights in the state in 2016. This was a thirteen percent increase from 2015.
- ◆ Forty-three percent of North Carolina overnight visitors lodged in a hotel/motel, while thirty-nine percent stayed in a private home. More than eight percent stayed in a rental home or condo, while more than four percent stayed in a personal second home or condo. Three percent stayed in an RV park or campground. Approximately two percent of overnight visitors indicated that they stayed in a shared economy property such as an AirBnB or VRBO.
- ◆ The average travel party size for all overnight North Carolina visitor parties was 2.2 people. Twenty-eight percent of overnight travel parties to the state included children in the party.
- ◆ Eighty-nine percent of overnight travelers to the state drove (includes personal automobile, rental, motorcycle and RV), while eight percent traveled by air.
- ◆ In 2016, the average household trip expenditure for overnight visitors was \$616. Resident overnight visitors spent an average of \$392 and out-of-state overnight visitors spent an average of \$748.
- ◆ The top states of origin of *overnight* visitors to North Carolina were in-state residents (37.0%), Virginia (10.3%), South Carolina (8.6%), Georgia (6.5%), Florida (5.0%), New York (3.8%), Pennsylvania (3.0%), Maryland (3.0%), New Jersey (2.8%) and Tennessee (2.8%).
- ◆ Half of the households that traveled overnight to North Carolina in 2016 had a household income over \$75,000, and more than a third (36.7%) of them had an income of over \$100,000. The average annual income of overnight visitors to the state was \$87,140.
- ◆ In 2016, Raleigh/Durham/Fayetteville (10.3%) was the top advertising market of origin for *overnight* travelers to the state, followed by Charlotte (7.5%), Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (6.5%), Greensboro/High Point/Winston Salem (6.2%), Greenville-New Bern-Washington (5.7%), Atlanta (5.6%), Washington, DC (5.6%), New York (4.3%) and Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News (3.4%).

## North Carolina Overnight Visitor Profile

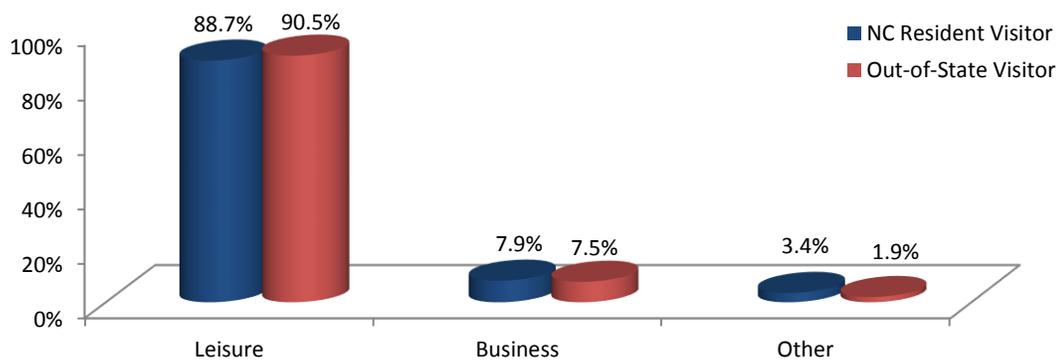
### Main Purpose of Visit

In 2016, nearly nine out of ten (89.9%) of domestic overnight visitors came to North Carolina for leisure purposes, which included visiting friends and relatives, outdoor recreation and entertainment/sightseeing. Nearly eight percent (7.7%) of overnight visitors came for general business, convention, seminar or other group meeting, while less than three percent traveled to the state for “other” reasons. While North Carolina has a strong history of being a leisure travel state, the proportion has increased from eighty-one percent in 2014 to nearly ninety percent in 2016.

**Primary Purpose of Overnight Trip to North Carolina**



**2016 Primary Purpose of Overnight Trip  
NC Resident Vs. Out-of-State Visitor**

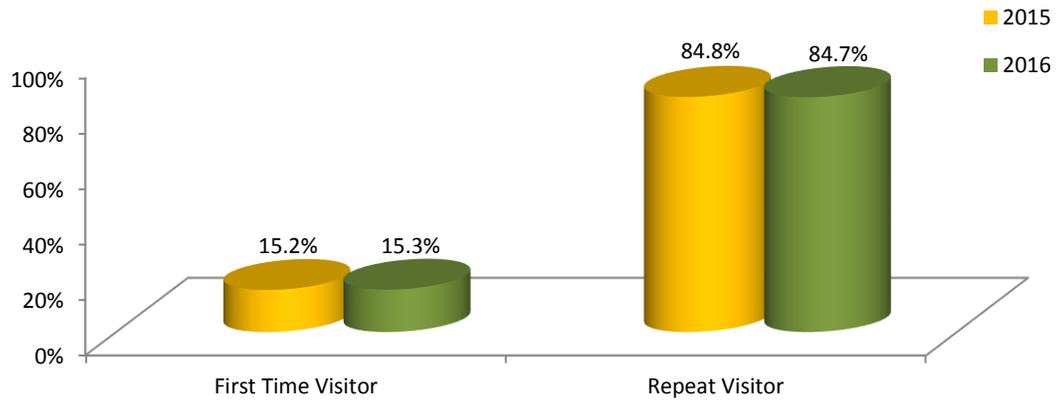


Out-of-state travelers to North Carolina are only slightly more likely to be leisure visitors than resident overnight visitors. More than ninety percent of out-of-state overnight travelers to North Carolina in 2016 were leisure visitors while nearly eighty-nine percent of resident visitors were leisure visitors. More than seven percent of out-of-state visitors in 2016 indicated that their primary purpose of visit was business.

### First Time Visitors

In 2016, more than fifteen percent of out-of-state overnight visitors were first time visitors to the state, similar to 2015. Nearly two-thirds (62.9%) have visited more than three times in the last 5 years.

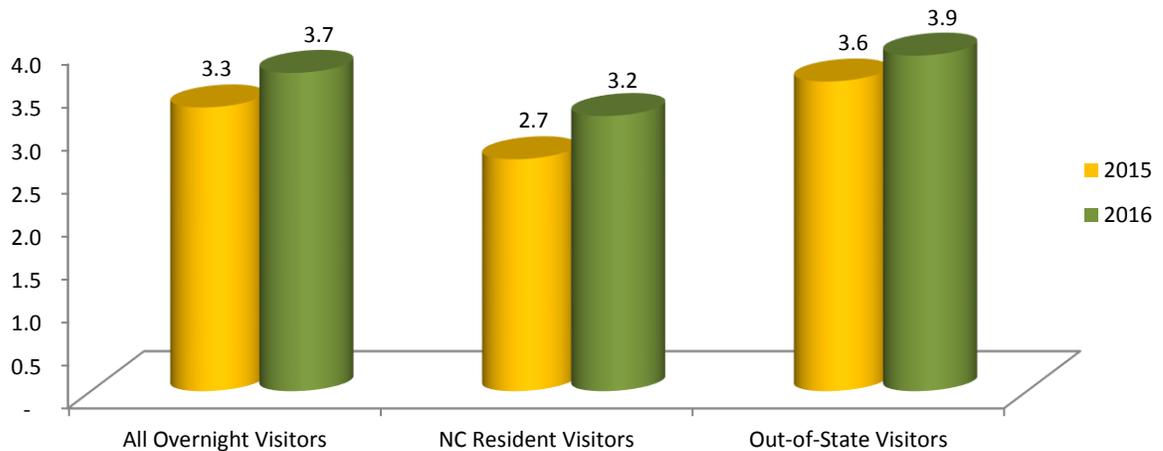
**2016 First Time Out-of-State Overnight Visitors to North Carolina**



### Average Length of Stay

The average length of stay for all North Carolina visitors increased thirteen percent from 2015 to 2016, with both resident and out-of-state visitors increasing their length of stay in North Carolina.

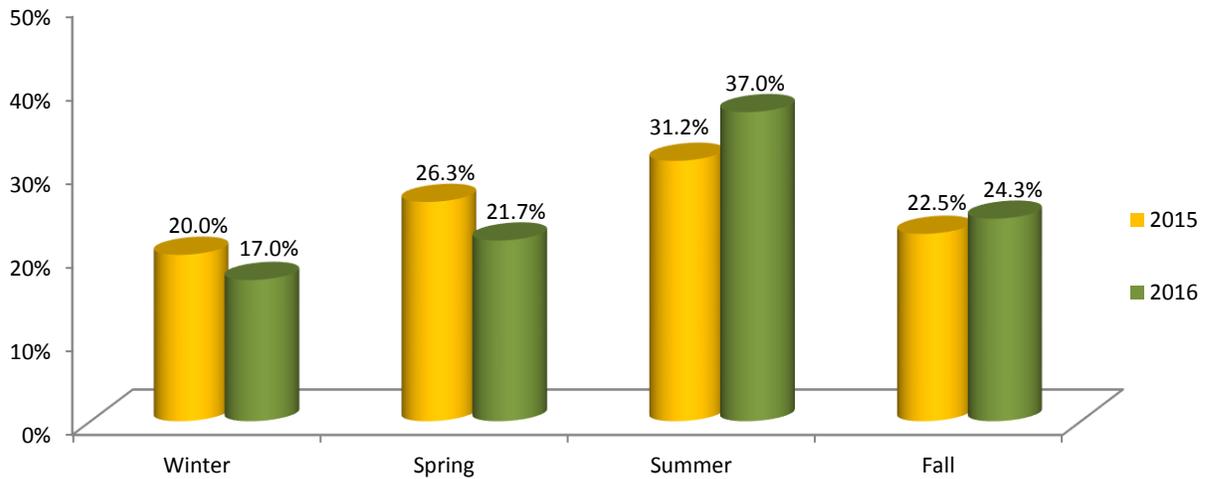
**Average Length of Stay for Overnight Visitors to North Carolina**



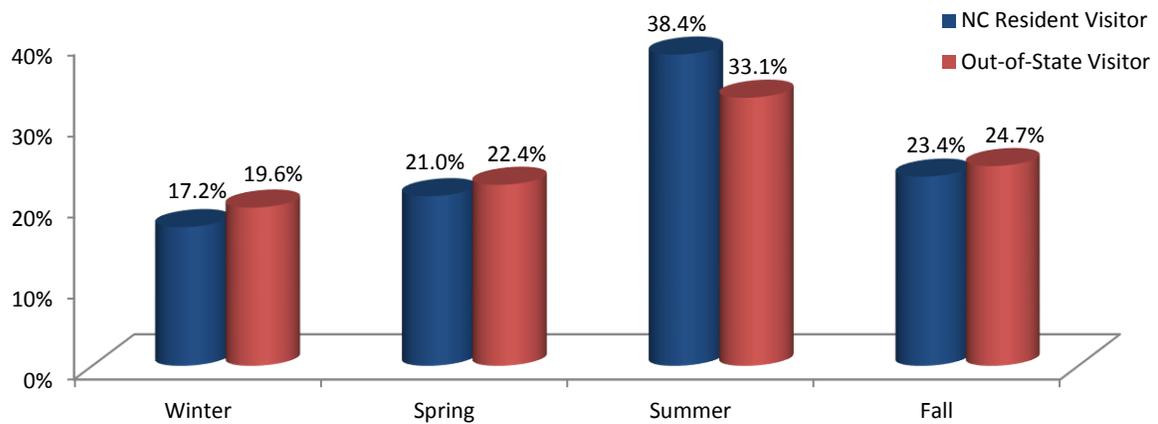
### Travel Volume by Season

When examining overnight visitation based on the typical seasonal schedule, the summer (June through August) with thirty-seven percent was the most popular season for overnight travel to North Carolina. Fall (September through November) was the next most popular travel season (24%) for overnighters, followed by spring (March through May) with nearly twenty-two percent and winter (December through February) with seventeen percent of overnight visitors.

**Overnight Travel by Season to North Carolina**



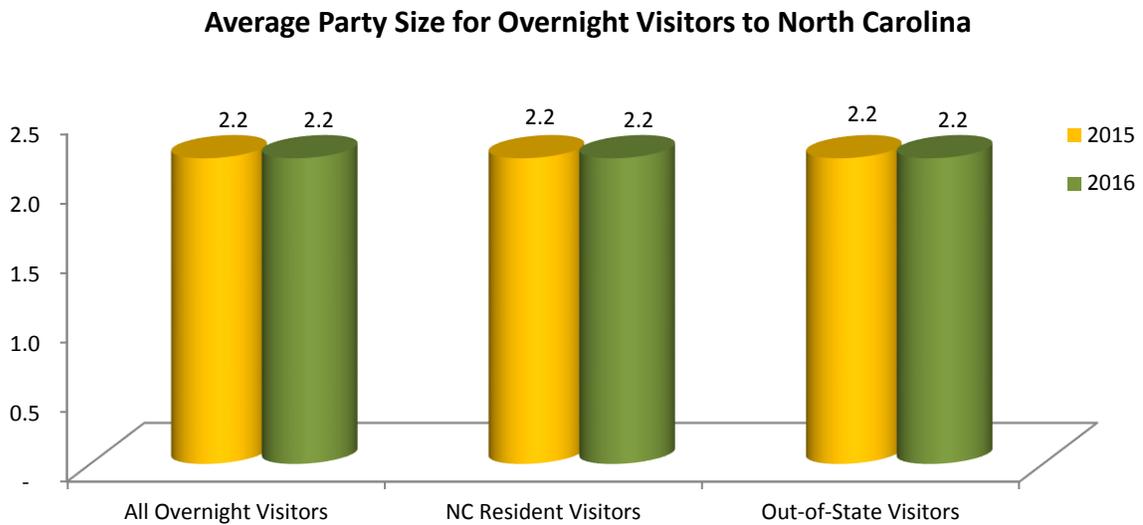
**2016 Overnight Travel by Season to North Carolina  
NC Resident Vs. Out-of-State Visitor**



Summer was the most popular season for both resident and out-of-state overnight visitors to the state, and the fall season was the second most popular season with twenty-five percent of out-of-state travelers and twenty-three percent of resident travelers. Out-of-state travelers are slightly more likely to travel during the winter season in North Carolina than resident travelers.

### Travel Party Size

The average travel party size for North Carolina overnight visitor parties stayed constant in 2016, with an average of 2.2 persons per travel party.

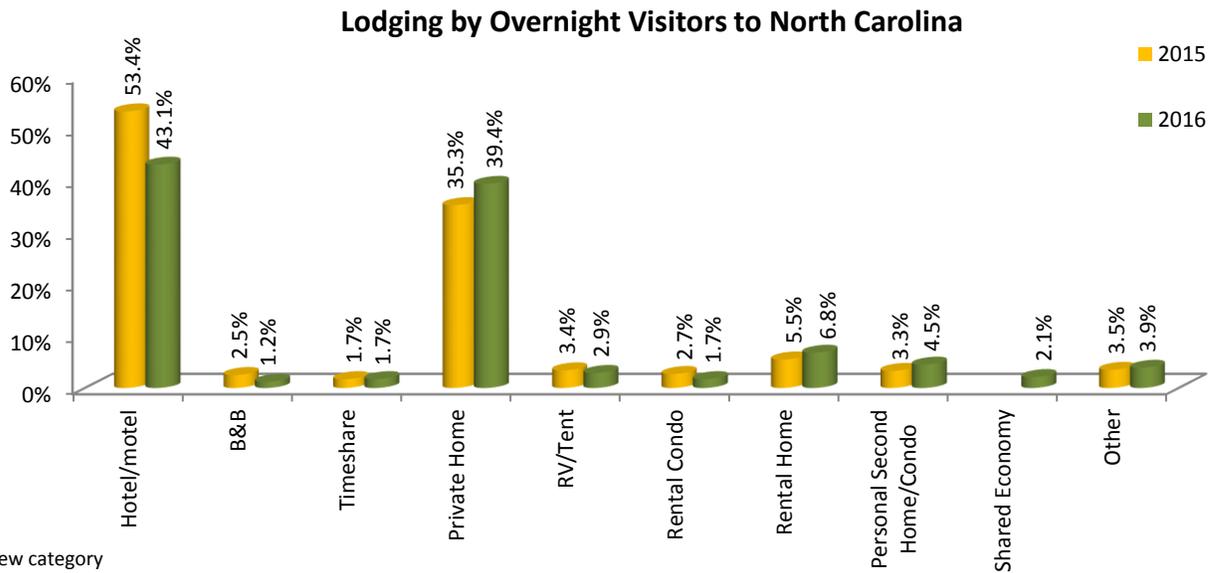


### Children on Trip

Twenty-eight percent of all overnight visitor parties to North Carolina included children. The average number of children on trips was 1.9. Resident visitor parties are only slightly more likely to include children than out-of-state visitor parties (29% vs. 28%).

### Lodging Used in North Carolina

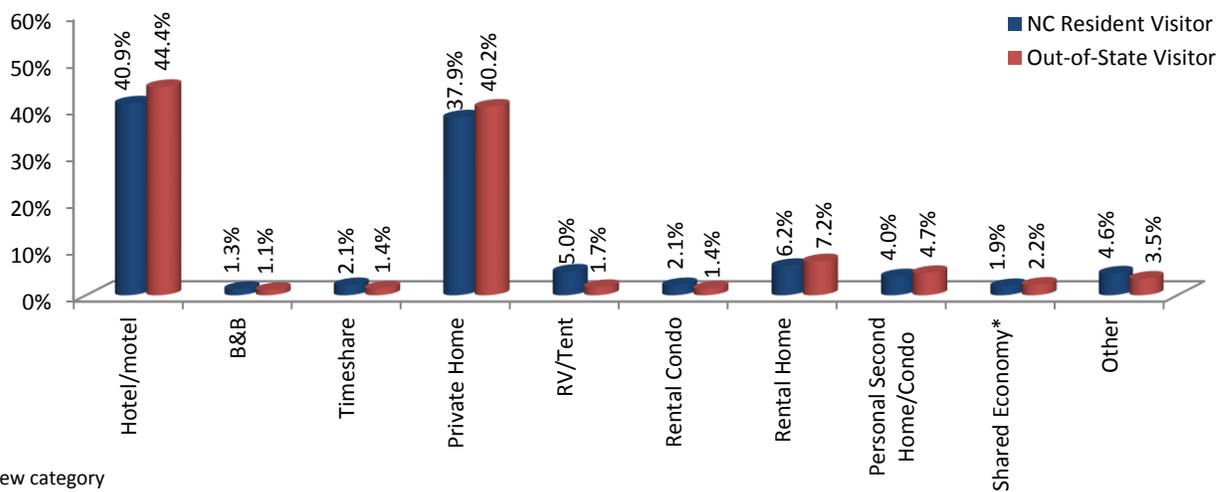
In 2016, forty-three percent of North Carolina visitors lodged in a hotel/motel, down from fifty-three percent in 2015. Thirty-nine percent stayed in a private home, up slightly from 2015. The other categories of accommodations showed little change from 2014. With the increase in shared economy lodging properties, a new category of lodging was included in the 2016 data. Two percent of North Carolina overnight visitors indicated that they used some type of shared economy lodging while in the state.



\*New category

\*\*percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

### 2016 Lodging by Overnight Visitors to North Carolina NC Resident Vs. Out-of-State Visitor



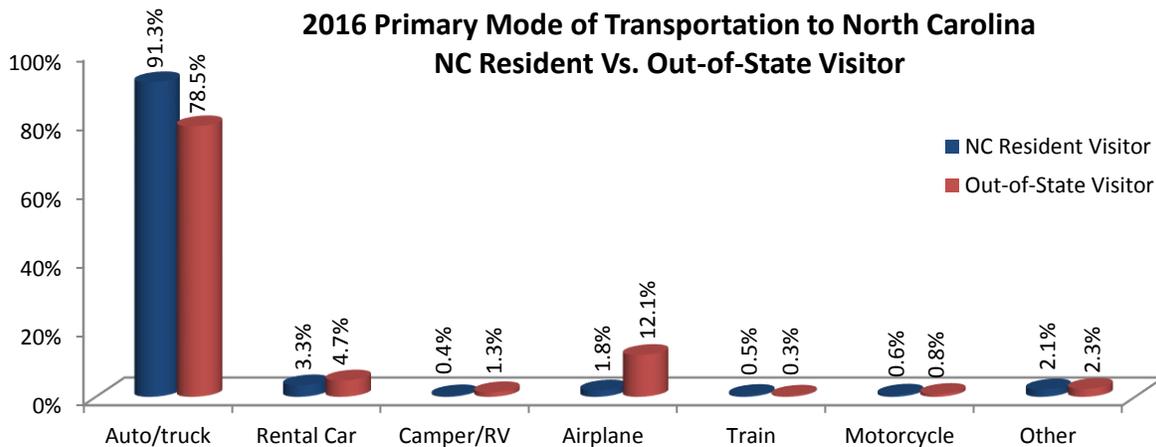
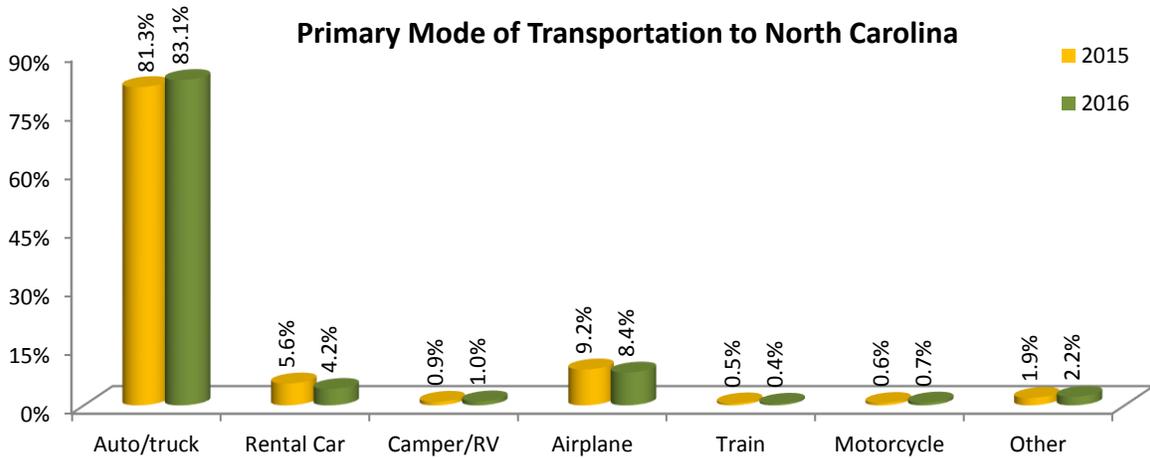
\*New category

\*\*percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

Out-of-state visitors are more likely to use a hotel/motel and rental homes as accommodations than resident visitors, but are also more likely to stay in a private home while visiting the state. Resident visitors are more likely to stay in a timeshare or an RV park/campground than out-of-state visitors.

### Mode of Transportation

The primary mode of transportation by overnight visitors to North Carolina has remained consistent with the personal auto being the dominant form of transportation (83.1%), while about eight percent travel by air.

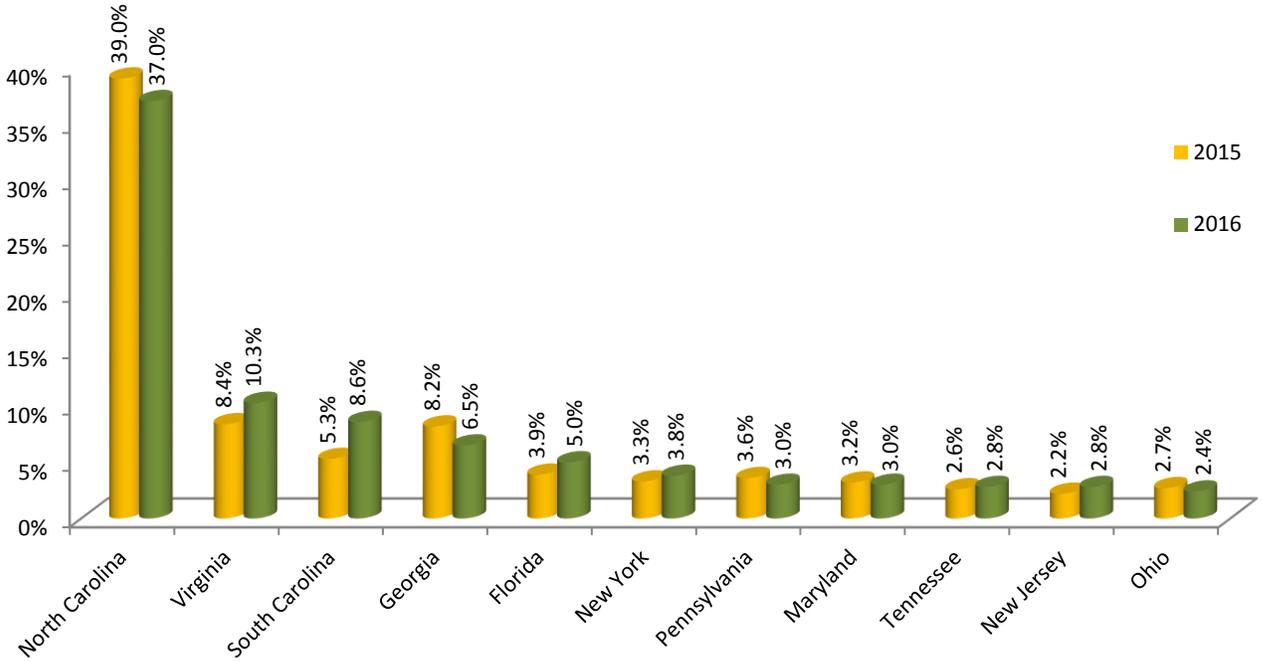


Not surprisingly, NC resident visitors are more likely to use their own automobile as primary transportation for overnight travel within the state than out-of-state visitors. While out-of-state visitors also primarily drive to North Carolina, they are more likely to fly than resident visitors.

## Origin of Visitors

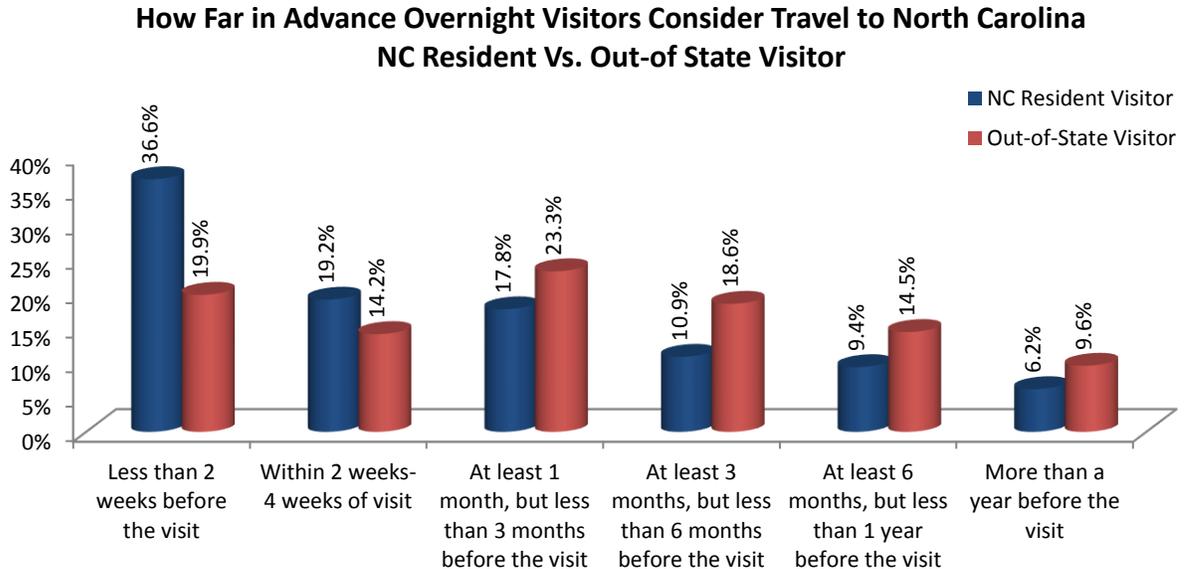
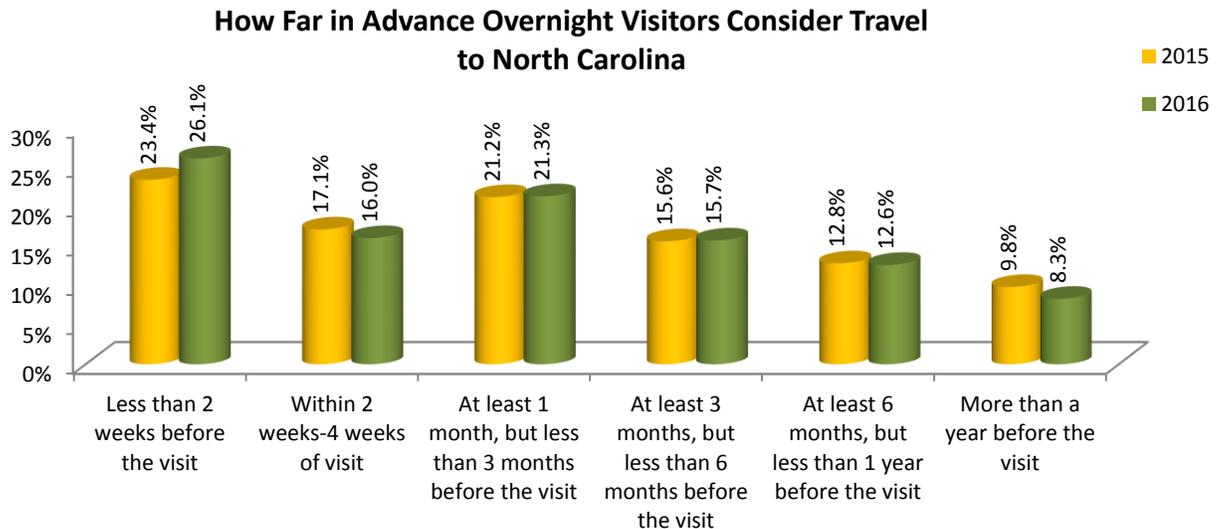
In 2016, the top states of origin for North Carolina overnight visitors included North Carolina (37.0%), Virginia (10.3%), South Carolina (8.6%), Georgia (6.5%), Florida (5.0%) and New York (3.8%). Visitation share from Georgia decreased from eight percent in 2015 to just over six percent in 2016. The top ten out-of-state markets represent forty-eight percent of North Carolina overnight visitors.

**Top States of Origin of Overnight Visitors to North Carolina**



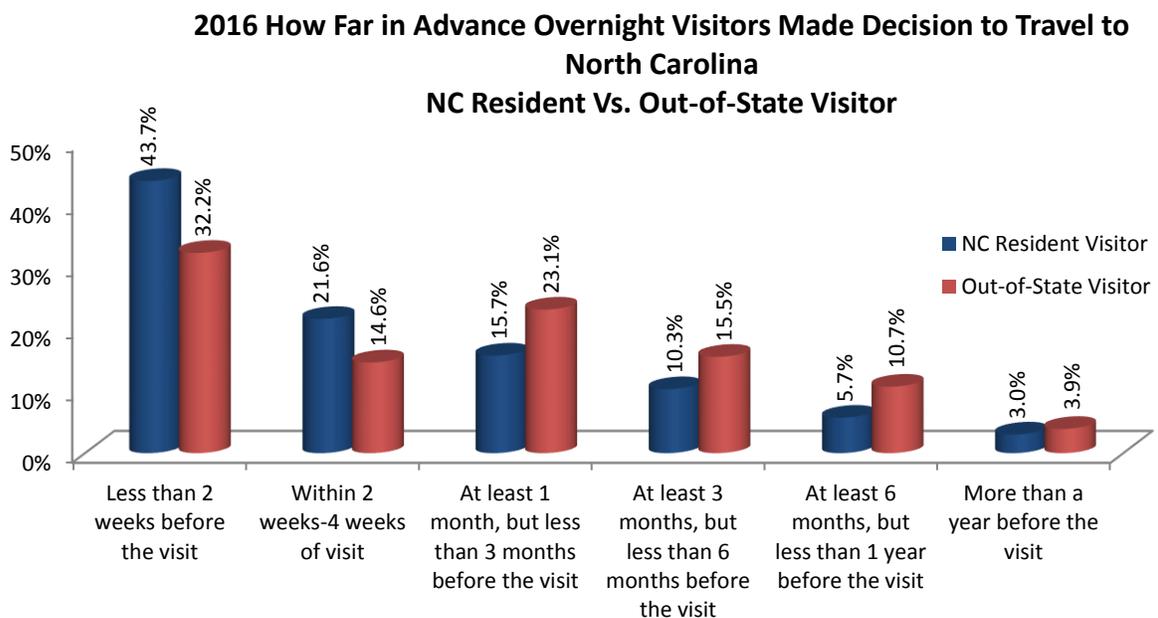
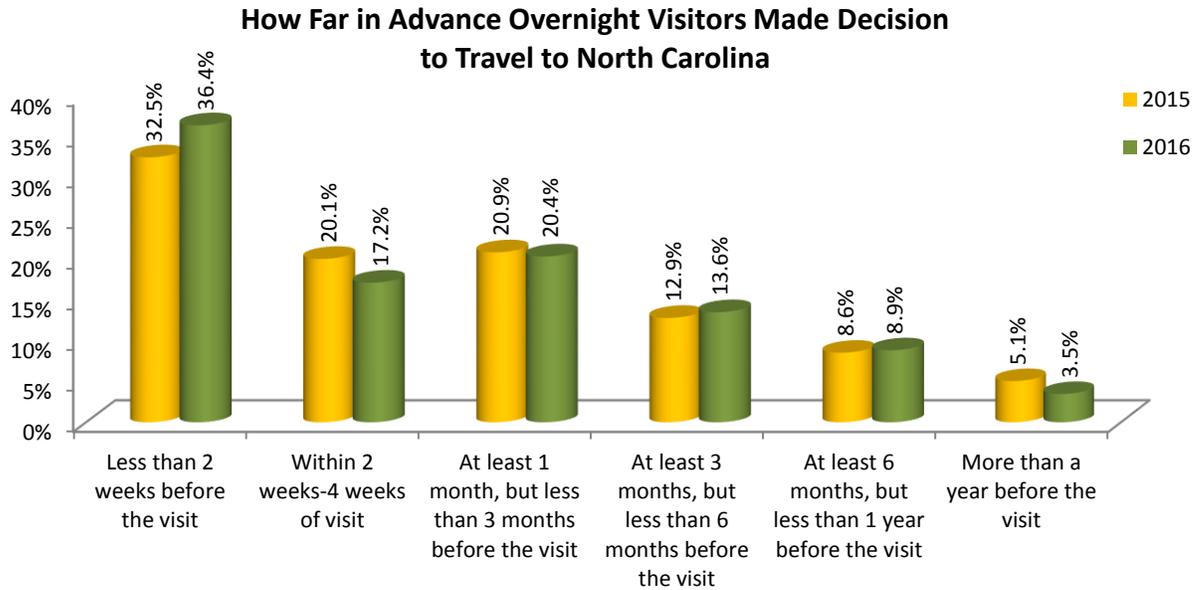
### Trip Planning

Nearly one-fifth of 2016 overnight visitors considered North Carolina for a visit at least six months before the visit and eight percent considered the state more than a year before visiting. Consideration time for travel to the state appears to have shortened only slightly in 2016. Ten percent of North Carolina overnight visitors considered the state more than a year prior to travel in 2015, while eight percent did so in 2016.



Resident visitors are nearly twice as likely to have North Carolina in the “consideration” set less than two weeks before visiting as out-of-state visitors. Out-of-state visitors are more likely to consider the state at least one month prior to travel and nearly twice as likely to consider North Carolina more than six months prior to travel.

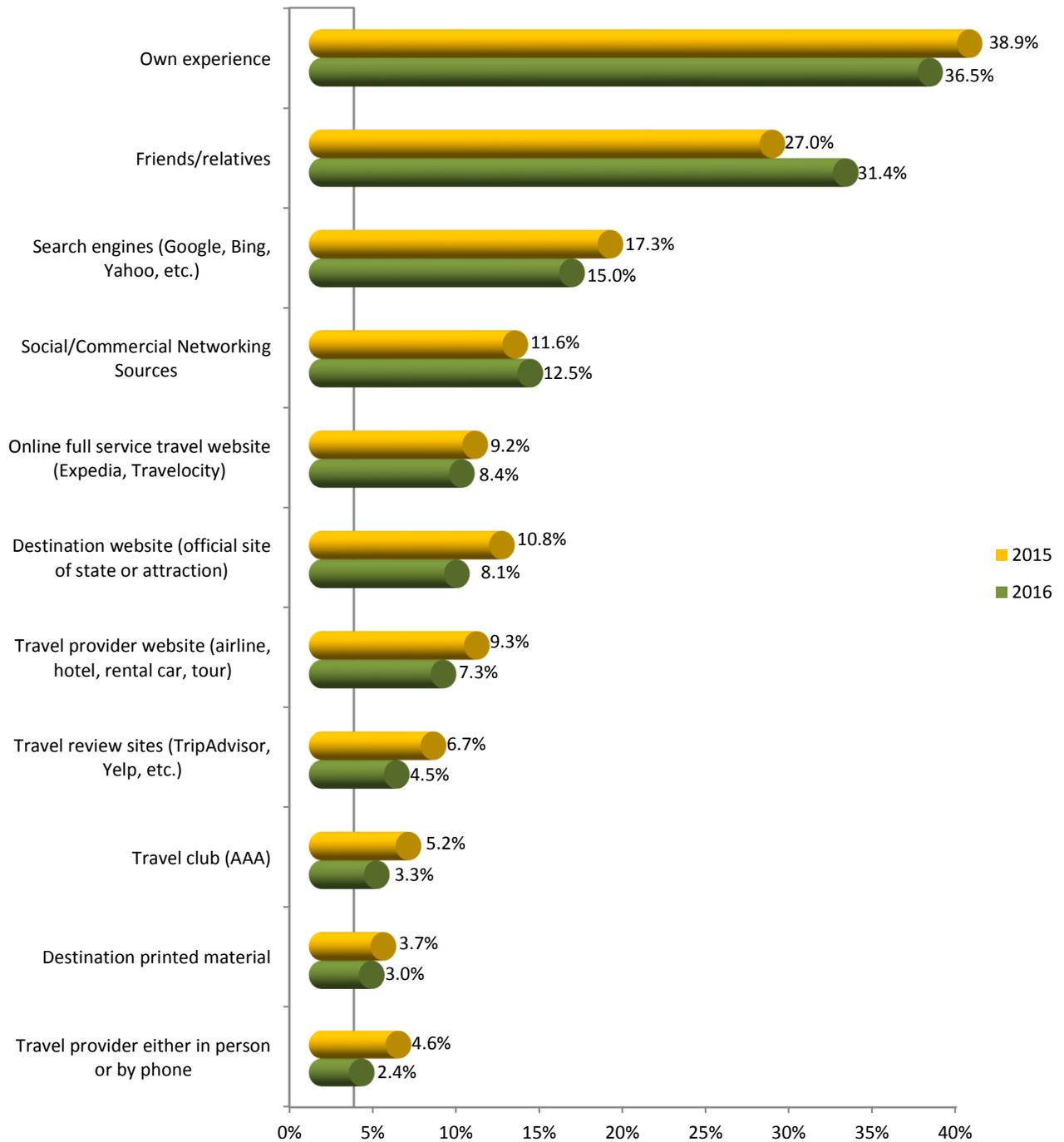
Just over twelve percent of overnight visitors made the decision to visit the state at least six months prior to the visit, while more than thirty-six percent of overnight visitors made the decision within two weeks of visiting.



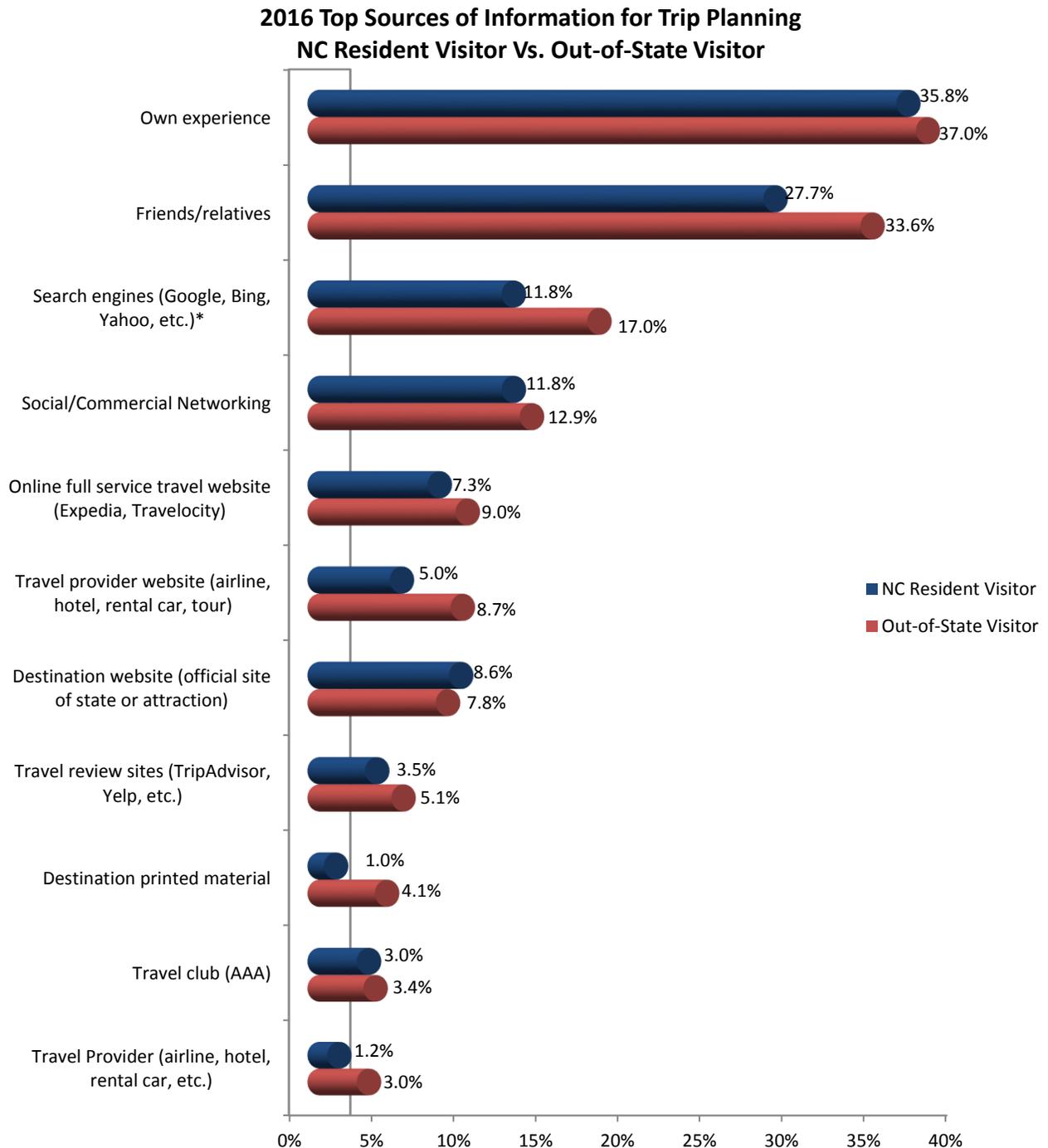
Resident visitors are much more likely to make the decision to visit North Carolina within two weeks of travel than out-of-state visitors. Thirty percent of out-of-state visitors decide to visit at least three months prior to visit, while nineteen percent of resident visitors decide to visit at least three months prior to travel.

A larger proportion of overnight visitors to North Carolina used friends/relatives and social/commercial networking to plan their trips in 2016 than in 2015. The top sources of information for trip planning are personal experience, friends/relatives, search engines and social/commercial networking sources.

### Top Sources of Information for Trip Planning

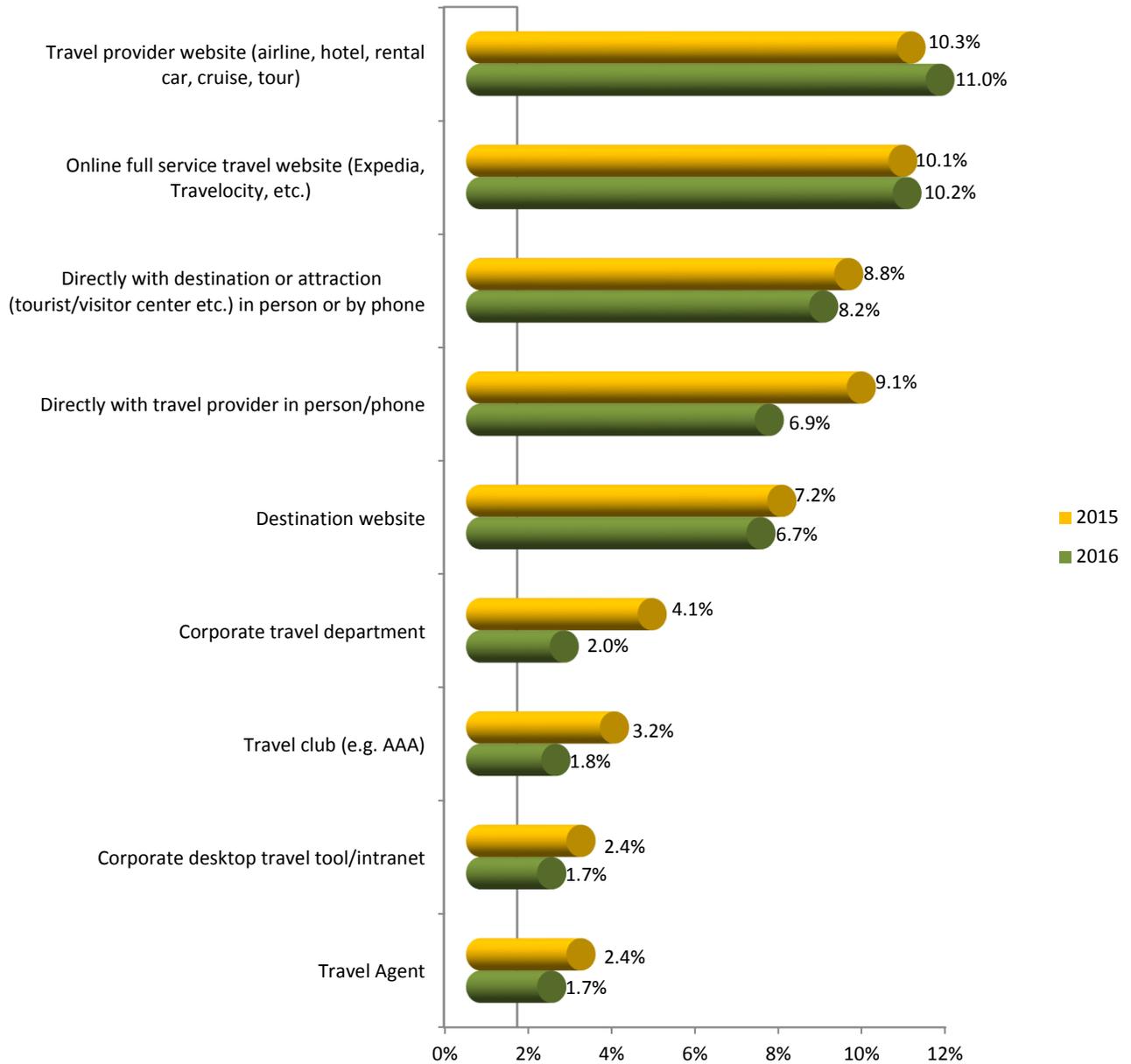


Out-of-state visitors tend to use more sources of information overall than resident visitors. In particular, they are more likely to rely on friends/relatives and search engines than resident visitors to North Carolina.



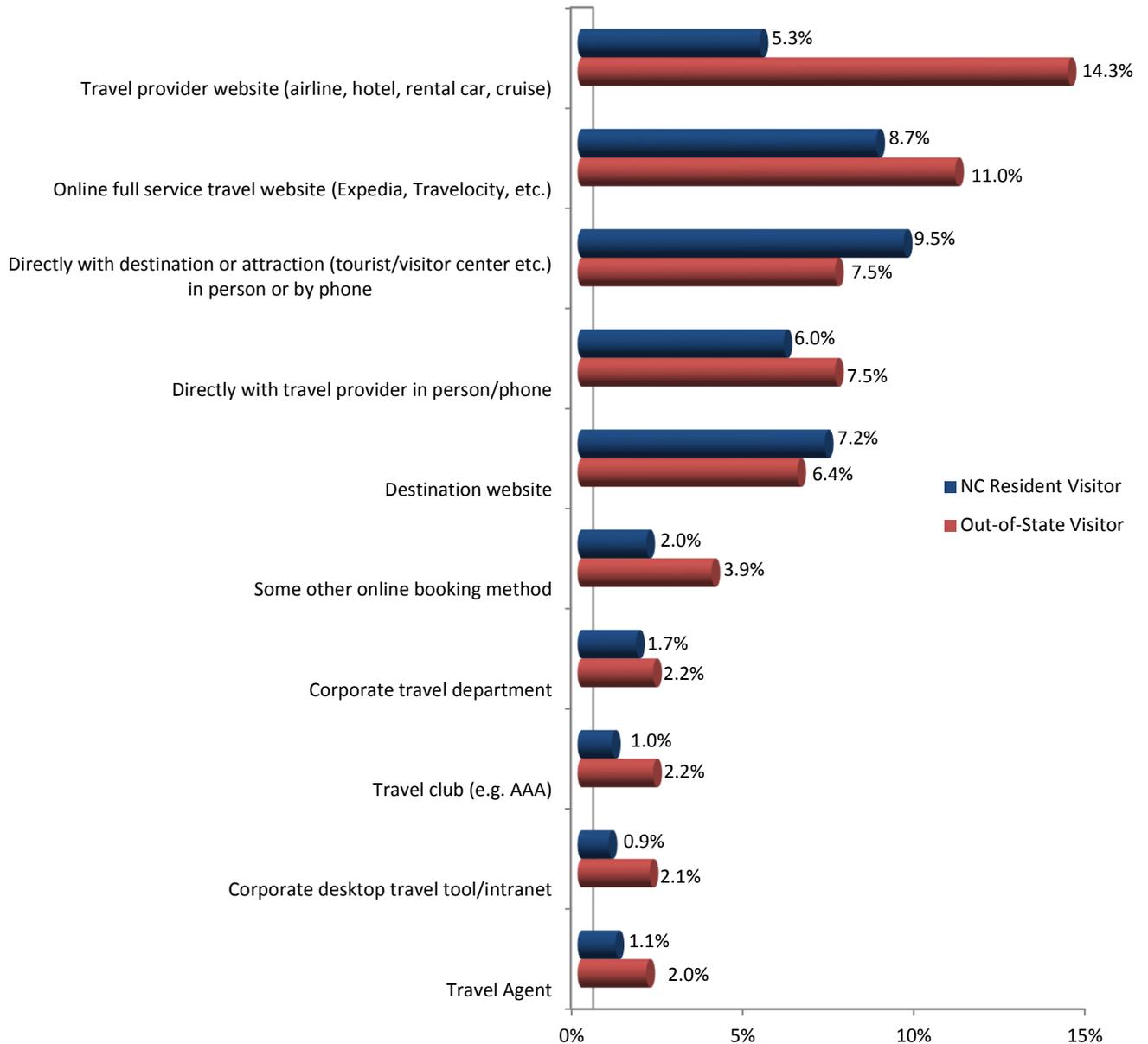
The proportion of overnight visitors booking travel through travel provider websites increased from 2015 to 2016. Other top methods of booking travel continue to be full service travel websites, directly with destination or travel provider and destination websites.

### Top Methods of Booking Travel



Out-of-state visitors are much more likely to use travel provider websites, full service online travel websites and by directly contacting travel providers than resident travelers. The most common method of booking travel by resident visitors in 2016 was by contacting the destination or attraction directly.

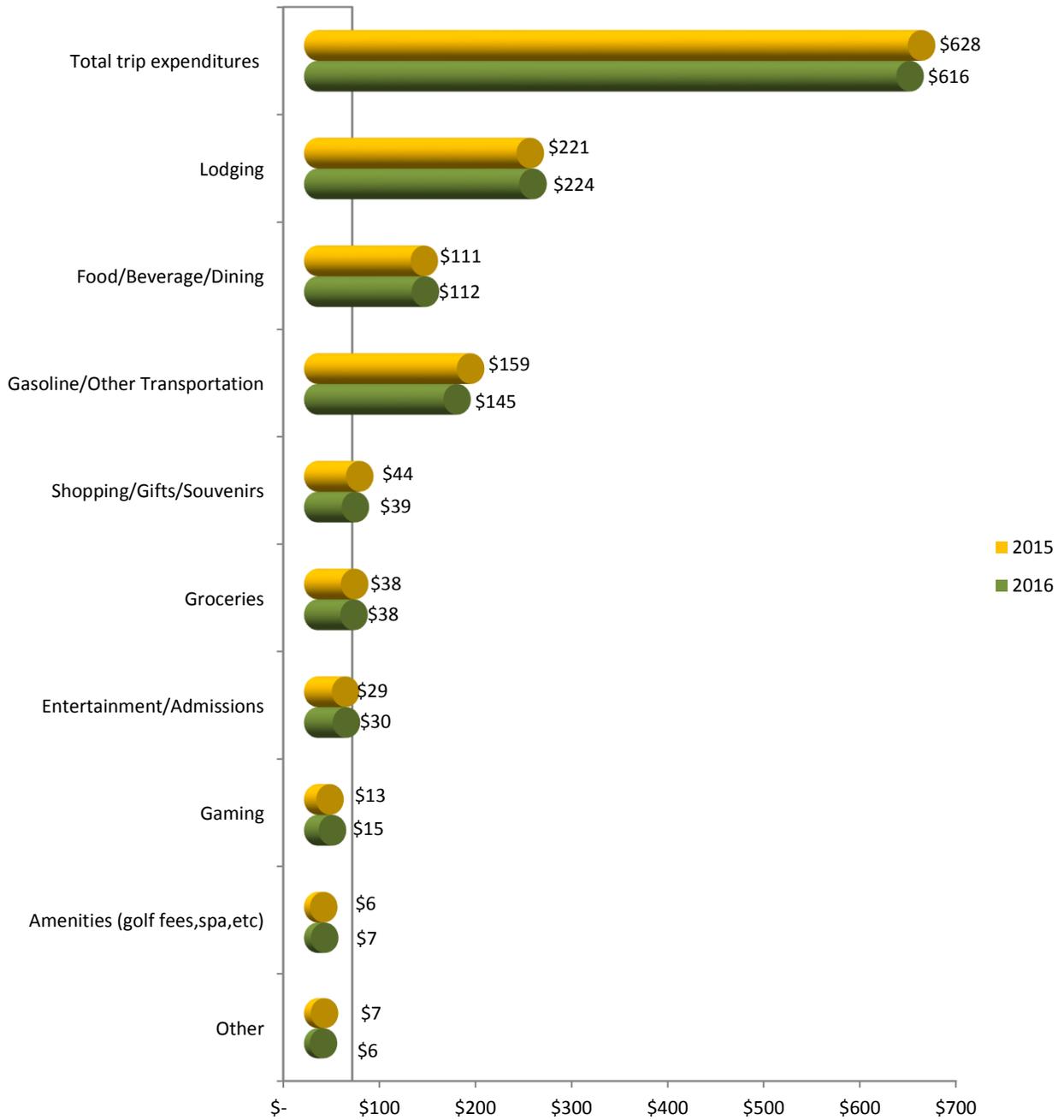
### 2016 Top Methods of Booking Travel NC Resident Visitor Vs. Out-of-State Visitor



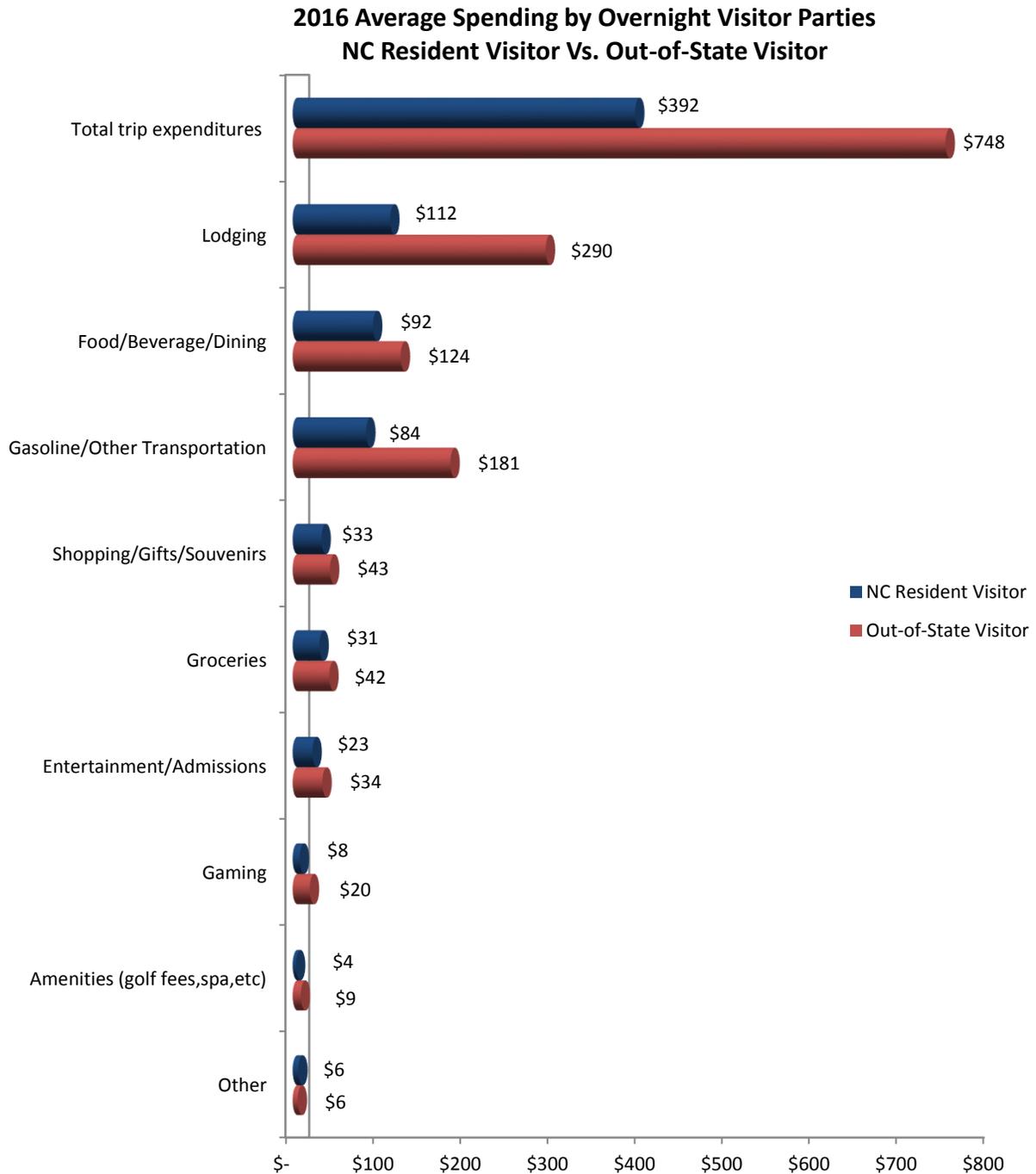
### Expenditures by North Carolina Visitors

The average overnight visitor party spending in the state was \$616, down slightly from 2015. Spending in most expenditure categories was flat. The decrease in transportation expenses was the main factor in the decreased average total spending.

**Average Spending by Overnight Visitor Parties**



Out-of-state visitors to North Carolina spend sixty-two percent more on average per trip than resident visitors, particularly in the categories of lodging, gasoline/transportation and food/beverage.



## Activities

Nearly one-third (31%) of 2016 overnight visitors to North Carolina spent time with relatives while in the state. More than one-fourth shopped (27%) and nearly one-fifth visited friends (17%) while traveling overnight in North Carolina. Activities that showed largest increases in the proportion of overnight visitors participating from 2015 to 2016 included visiting relatives (+2 percentage points), hiking/backpacking (+2 percentage points), theater/drama (+2 percentage points), and wine tasting/winery tour (+2 percentage points). *\*Note that responses to this question are not mutually exclusive and percentages do not equal 100%. Therefore, proportions should not be aggregated to combine categories of activities. Also note that these activities do not imply purpose of trip.*

### Activities Participated in by Overnight Visitors to North Carolina

Activity	2015	2016	Activity	2015	2016
Visiting Relatives	29%	31%	Sport Event- Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Spectator)	4%	2%
Shopping	26%	27%	Nature Travel/Eco-touring	3%	2%
Visiting Friends	18%	17%	Bird Watching	2%	2%
Beach	16%	14%	Theme Park/Amusement Park/Water Park	2%	2%
Fine Dining	16%	14%	Golf	2%	2%
Rural Sightseeing	15%	12%	Horseback riding	2%	2%
Historic Sites/Churches	11%	10%	Native American ruins/Rock art	2%	2%
Urban Sightseeing	11%	9%	Biking/Road Biking/Cycling	1%	2%
State Park/Monument/Recreation area	9%	8%	Farms/Ranches/Agri-tours	2%	2%
Museums	8%	7%	Spa/Health Club	2%	1%
Wildlife Viewing	7%	6%	Sport Event- Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Participant)	1%	1%
Craft Breweries	4%	6%	Rafting/Kayaking/Canoeing/Paddleboarding	1%	1%
Hiking/Backpacking	4%	6%	Area where a TV show or movie was filmed	1%	1%
Fishing	5%	6%	Motorboat/Jet ski	1%	1%
Old Homes/Mansions	7%	5%	Sailing	1%	1%
Wine Tasting/Winery Tour	3%	5%	Symphony/opera/concert	1%	1%
Casino/Gaming	5%	4%	Sports events – Major/Professional	2%	1%
National Park/Monument/Recreation area	5%	4%	Motor Sports	1%	1%
Local/folk arts/crafts	5%	4%	Rock/Mountain climbing	1%	1%
Other nature (photography, rockhounding, etc.)	5%	4%	Distilleries	1%	1%
Nightclubs/Dancing	4%	4%	Mountain Biking	1%	1%
Gardens	5%	3%	Musical Theater	2%	<1%
Theater/Drama	1%	3%	ATV/Four-wheeling	1%	<1%
Special Events/Festivals	3%	3%	Rodeo/State Fair	1%	<1%
Musical performance/show	3%	3%	Scuba diving/snorkeling	1%	<1%
Zoos/Aquariums/Aviaries	4%	3%	Skiing/snowboarding	1%	<1%
Art Galleries	4%	3%			

Resident and out-of-state visitors behave similarly with regards to activities participated in while traveling to and within North Carolina. A somewhat larger proportion of out-of-state visitors are likely to visit with relatives while traveling to the state, participate in fine dining, do rural sightseeing, visit historic sites/churches and visit national parks than resident visitors. A larger proportion of resident visitors are likely to visit with friends, visit the beach or visit a state park than out-of-state visitors.

### Activities Participated in by 2016 Overnight Visitors to North Carolina NC Resident Vs. Out-of-State Visitors

Activity	NC Resident	Out-of-State Visitor	Activity	NC Resident	Out-of-State Visitor
Visiting Relatives	29%	33%	Bird Watching	2%	2%
Shopping	27%	27%	Sport Event- Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Spectator)	2%	2%
Fine Dining	10%	17%	Spa/Health Club	1%	2%
Visiting Friends	18%	16%	Farms/Ranches/Agri-tours	1%	2%
Rural Sightseeing	10%	13%	Biking/Road Biking/Cycling	1%	2%
Beach	16%	13%	Horseback riding	2%	2%
Historic Sites/Churches	8%	11%	Rafting/Kayaking/Canoeing/Paddleboarding	2%	1%
Urban Sightseeing	7%	9%	Native American ruins/Rock art	2%	1%
State Park/Monument/Recreation area	11%	7%	Sport Event- Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Participant)	1%	1%
Museums	7%	6%	Motor Sports	1%	1%
Fishing	5%	6%	Area where a TV show or movie was filmed	1%	1%
Hiking/Backpacking	5%	6%	Sailing	1%	1%
Wildlife Viewing	6%	5%	Rock/Mountain climbing	1%	1%
Old Homes/Mansions	5%	5%			
National Park/Monument/Recreation area	3%	5%	Motorboat/Jet ski	1%	1%
Wine Tasting/Winery Tour	4%	5%	Sports events – Major/Professional	<1%	1%
Craft Breweries	6%	5%	Musical Theater	<1%	1%
Gardens	2%	4%	Symphony/opera/concert	<1%	1%
Casino/Gaming	3%	4%	Mountain biking	<1%	1%
Other nature (photography, rockhounding, etc.)	4%	4%	ATV/Four-wheeling	<1%	<1%
Art Galleries	3%	4%	Skiing/snowboarding	1%	<1%
Nightclubs/Dancing	5%	3%	Distilleries	1%	<1%
Musical performance/show	4%	3%	Hunting	1%	<1%
Golf	2%	3%	Caverns	1%	<1%
Theater/Drama	4%	3%	Horseracing	<1%	<1%
Zoos/Aquariums/Aviaries	3%	2%	Water skiing	<1%	<1%
Special Events/Festivals	3%	2%	Rodeo/State Fair	<1%	<1%
Theme Park/Amusement Park/Water Park	2%	2%	High School/College reunion	<1%	<1%
Nature Travel/Eco-touring	3%	2%	Scuba diving/snorkeling	<1%	<1%

## Demographic Profile of North Carolina Overnight Visitors

Nearly two-thirds (64.2%) of the overnight visitors to North Carolina are married and thirteen percent of the region's visitors are divorced, widowed or separated. A larger proportion of out-of-state visitors to the state are currently married (65%) than resident visitors (62%). Thirteen percent of out-of-state visitors are divorced, widowed or separated, while twelve percent of resident visitors are divorced, widowed or separated.

The largest proportion of North Carolina overnight visitors, both resident and out-of-state, classify themselves as white (84%). Ten percent classify themselves as black/African American, up slightly from nine percent in 2015. Three percent of overnight visitors self-report their ethnicity is Asian/Pacific Islander.

Nearly two-thirds (64.7%) of North Carolina overnight visitor parties have a household head with a college degree or higher. The average overnight visitor is 47 years old, up from 45 years old in 2015. Sixty-six percent of resident visitors have a household head with a college degree or higher, while sixty-four percent of out-of-state visitors have a college degree or higher. The NC resident overnight visitor is slightly younger (45 years old) than the out-of-state overnight visitor (48 years old). The average North Carolina overnight visitor has 11 vacation days each year.

The average household income of overnight visitors to North Carolina in 2016 was \$87,140, up from \$83,870 in 2015. Half of overnight visitors in 2016 reported a household income \$75,000 or more. Twenty-one percent had a household income of over \$125,000. The average household income of resident overnight visitors was \$77,770 in 2016, while the average household income of out-of-state overnight visitors was \$92,450.

Fifty-nine percent of overnight visitor parties reported that the head of household is employed, while twenty-two percent are retired. The remainder reported "not employed" as work status. Out-of-state visitors (24%) are slightly more likely to be retired than resident visitors (17%).

The average household size of a North Carolina overnight visitor party in 2015 was 2.7, the same as in 2015. This was the case for both in-state and out-of-state visitors.

## 2016 Top Advertising Markets

In 2016, the top advertising markets sending overnight visitors to **North Carolina** were Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville (10.3%), Charlotte (7.5%), Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (6.5%), Greensboro-Winston-Salem-High Point (6.2%), Greenville-New Bern-Washington (5.7%), Atlanta (5.6%), Washington DC (5.6%) and New York (4.3%). Advertising markets correspond with Nielsen's Designated Market Areas (DMAs).

### Top Advertising Markets of Origin for North Carolina *Overnight* Visitors

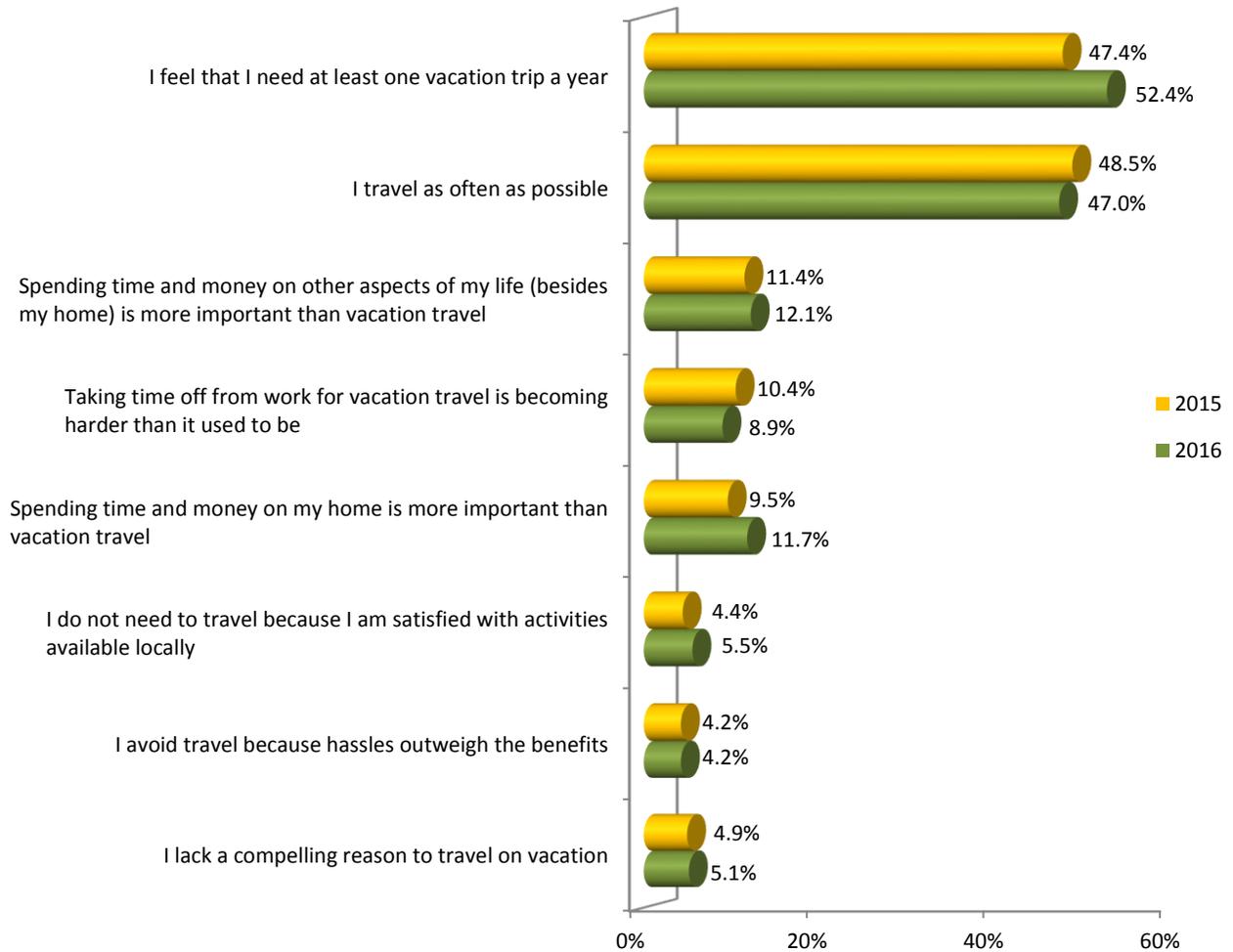
DMA of Origin	2015 Percentage of Total Overnight Visitors	2016 Percentage of Total Overnight Visitors
Raleigh-Durham (Fayetteville)	13.5%	10.3%
Charlotte	9.1%	7.5%
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	6.3%	6.5%
Greensboro-Winston Salem-High Point	4.3%	6.2%
Greenville-New Bern-Washington	4.0%	5.7%
Atlanta	5.9%	5.6%
Washington DC (Hagerstown, MD)	4.6%	5.6%
New York, NY	4.2%	4.3%
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	2.3%	3.4%
Philadelphia, PA	2.2%	2.7%
Richmond-Petersburg, VA	1.6%	2.5%
Columbia, SC	1.0%	2.1%
Chattanooga	1.0%	1.8%
Augusta, GA	1.3%	1.6%
Miami	0.4%	1.4%
Myrtle Beach-Florence	1.6%	1.3%
Wilmington	3.1%	1.2%
Tampa-St. Petersburg (Sarasota)	0.9%	1.2%
Baltimore	1.4%	1.1%
Roanoke/Lynchburg, VA	1.4%	1.0%
Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne	1.0%	1.0%
Cleveland	1.0%	1.0%
Pittsburgh	0.7%	0.9%
Boston (Manchester)	1.5%	0.9%
Knoxville	0.7%	0.8%
Nashville	1.1%	0.8%

Note: Advertising markets defined by Nielsen's Designated Market Area (DMA)

### Vacation Attitudes

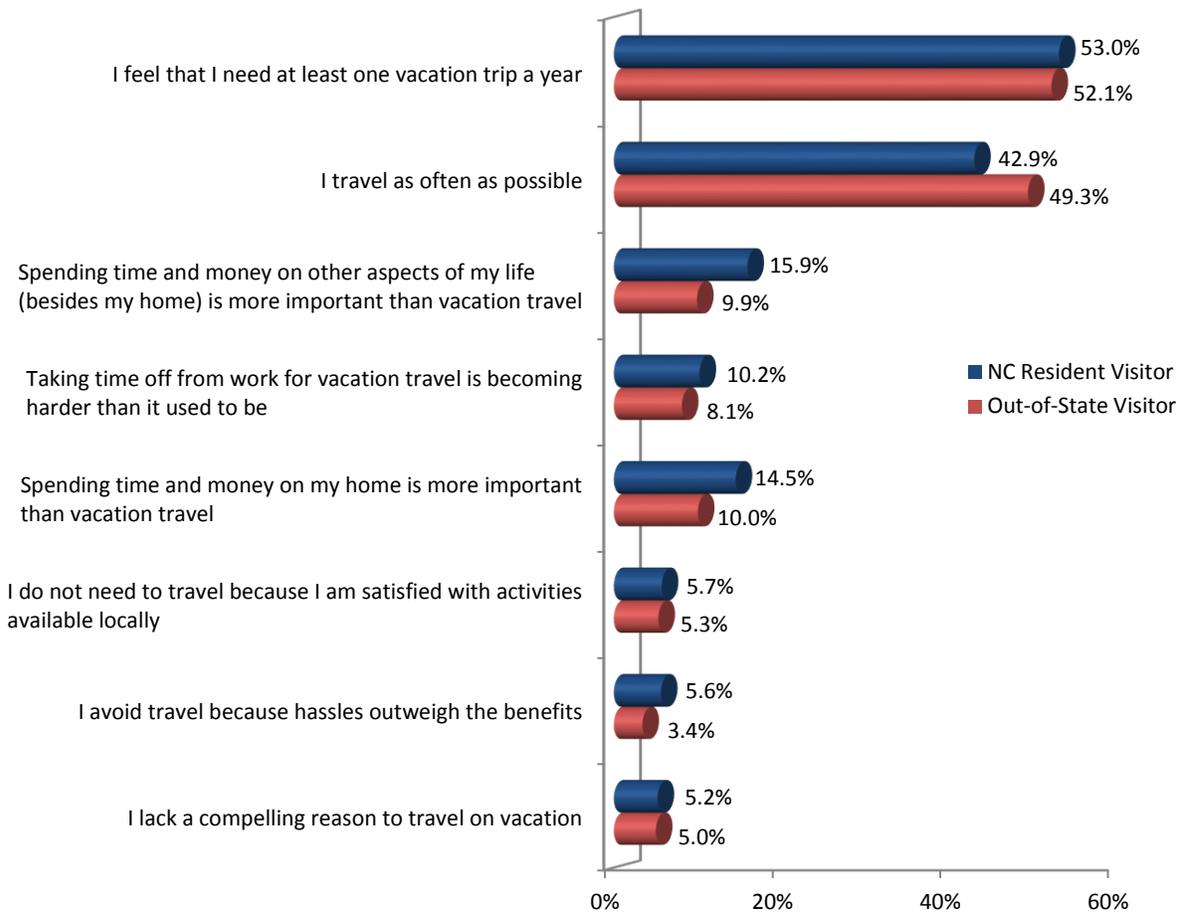
More than half of North Carolina overnight visitors feel they need at least one vacation a year, up slightly from 2015. Nearly half also indicate that they travel as often as possible.

#### Current Feelings Concerning Vacation Travel



North Carolina out-of-state visitors are more likely to report that they travel as often as possible. Resident visitors more often note that spending time and money on their home and other aspects of life is more important than vacation travel.

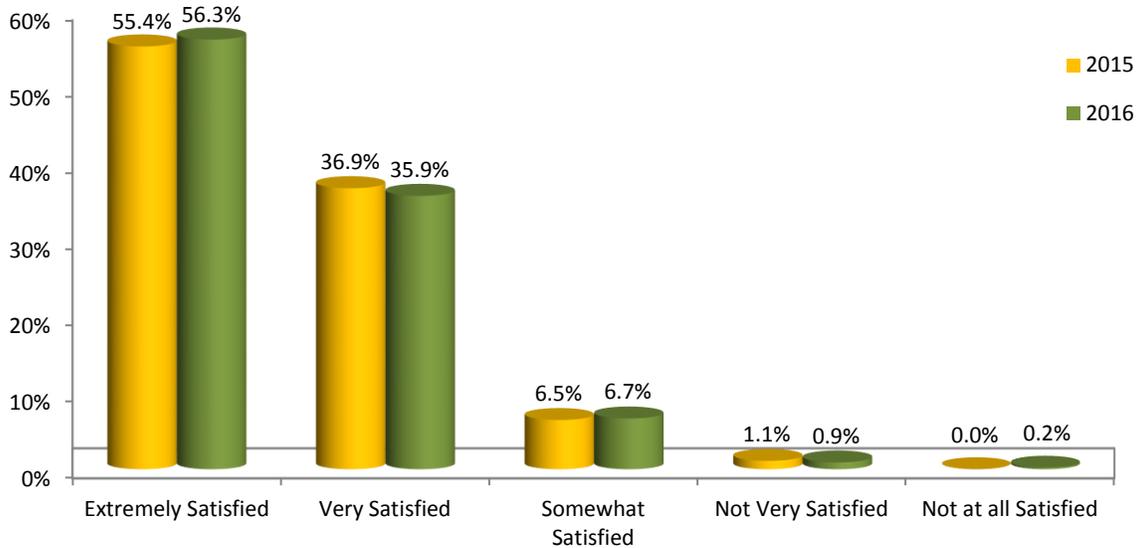
**2016 Current Feelings Concerning Vacation Travel  
NC Resident Visitor Vs. Out-of-State Visitor**



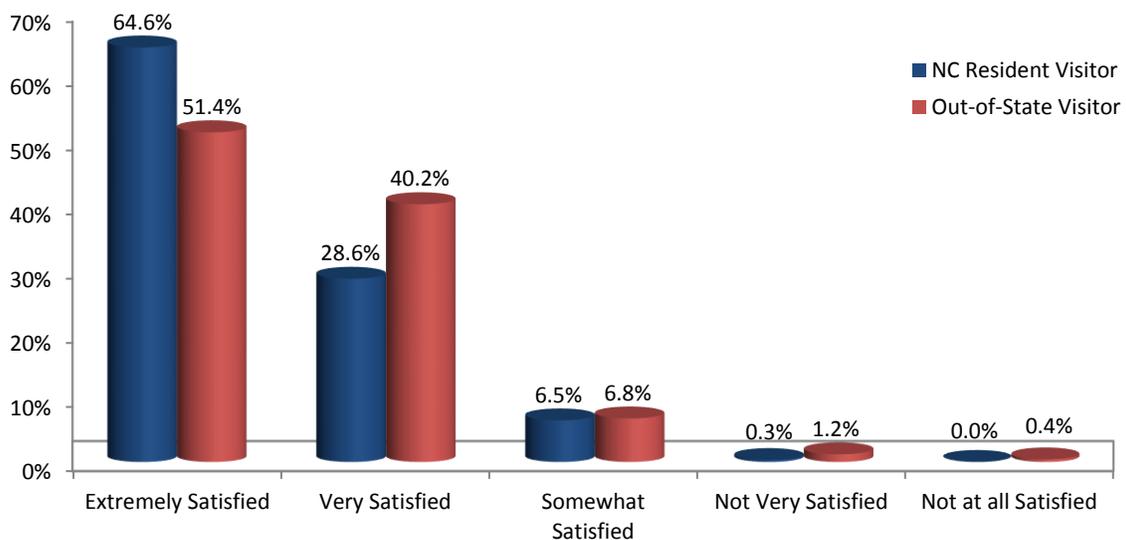
### Satisfaction with Overnight Visits to North Carolina

More than ninety-two percent of overnight visitors to North Carolina in 2016 were either very or extremely satisfied with their visit, and the proportion of those visitors who were extremely satisfied increased from fifty-five percent to fifty-six percent. Both resident and out-of-state visitors express high satisfaction with their visits to and within North Carolina.

**Satisfaction with Overnight Visit to North Carolina**



**2016 Satisfaction with Overnight Visit to North Carolina  
NC Resident Visitor Vs. Out-of-State Visitor**



## 2016 North Carolina Daytrip Visitor Profile

### Summary

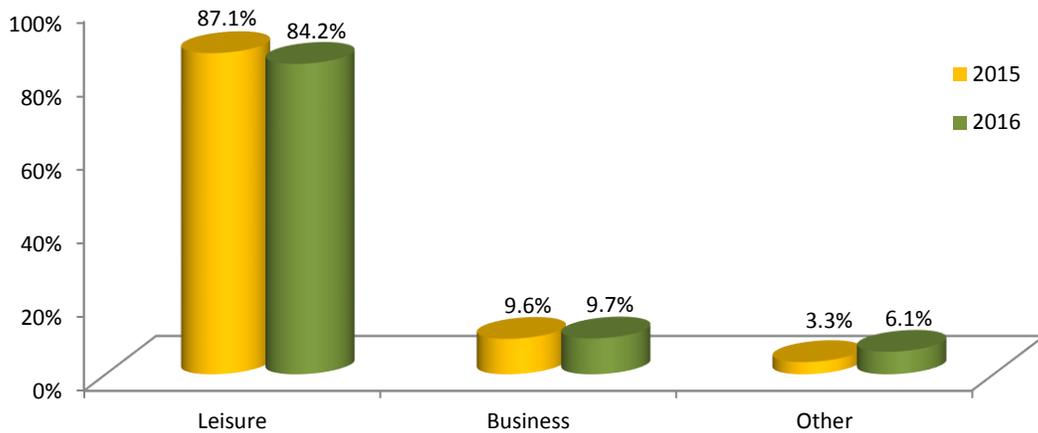
- ◆ In 2016, approximately 9.7 million daytrips were taken in North Carolina. North Carolina ranked #9 in the US in terms of daytrip visitation. A daytripper is defined as a visitor who did not spend any nights away from home, but traveled at least 50 miles one-way from home.
- ◆ Eighty-four percent of all daytrippers visited North Carolina for pleasure purposes, while nearly ten percent of visitors came to conduct business (includes meeting/convention). The remaining respondents indicated an “other” reason for visiting the state.
- ◆ The summer (June - August) was the most popular season for day travel to North Carolina, with nearly thirty percent of all 2016 daytrippers, followed by winter (December-February) with twenty-five percent, fall (September - November) with twenty-three percent and spring (March-May) with twenty-two percent. June was the single largest month for day travel to the state with more than twelve percent, followed by February with twelve percent.
- ◆ The average travel party size for daytrip visitor parties to North Carolina was 2.1 people. Thirty-two percent of travel parties to the state included children in the party.
- ◆ Nearly ninety-seven percent of daytrippers to the state drove (includes personal automobile, rental, motorcycle and RV).
- ◆ In 2016, the average household trip expenditure for daytrip parties to the state was approximately \$128 per visit, down slightly from \$131 in 2015.
- ◆ The top states of origin of *daytrippers* to North Carolina were in-state residents (71.0%), and the nearby states of South Carolina (8.3%), Virginia (5.7%), Georgia (4.5%), Tennessee (4.3%) and Florida (1.0%).
- ◆ More than half (57.8%) of the households that traveled to North Carolina on a daytrip in 2016 had a household income over \$50,000.
- ◆ In 2016, Raleigh/Durham/Fayetteville (20.1%) was the top advertising market of origin for *daytrippers* to the state, followed by Charlotte (15.5%), Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (13.6%), Greensboro/High Point/Winston Salem (13.3%), and Greenville-New Bern-Washington (8.7%).

## North Carolina Daytrip Visitor Profile

### Main Purpose of Visit

In 2016, eighty-four percent of daytrippers visited North Carolina for leisure purposes, which included visiting friends and relatives, outdoor recreation and entertainment/sightseeing. The proportion of daytrippers who visited for general business, convention, seminar or other group meeting was nearly ten percent in 2016.

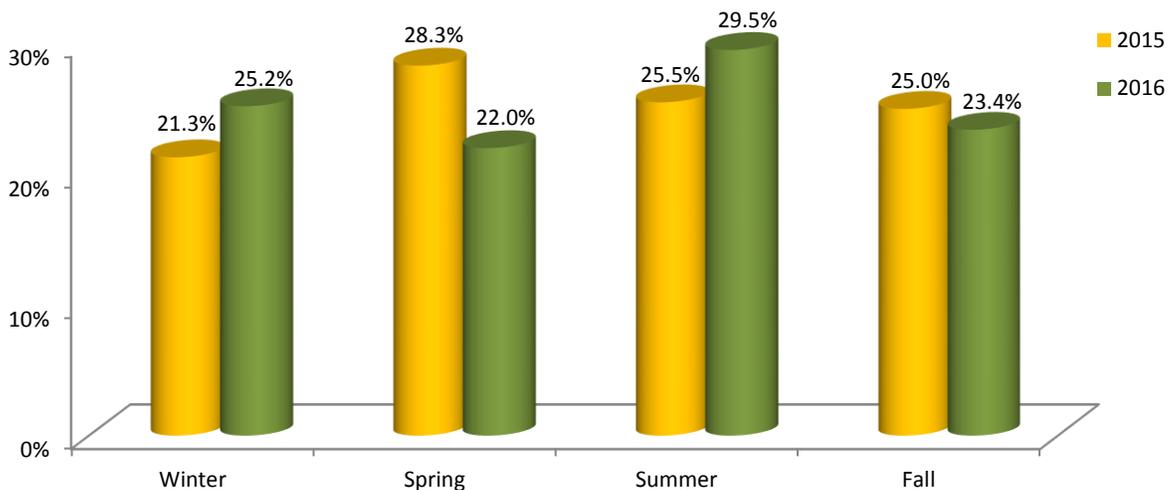
**Primary Purpose of Daytrip to North Carolina**



### Travel Volume by Season

The proportion of daytrippers who traveled to and within North Carolina during the summer and winter months increased in 2016, with more than twenty-nine percent of daytrippers visiting during summer and twenty-five percent visiting in the winter.

**Daytrip Travel by Season to North Carolina**



### Travel Party Size

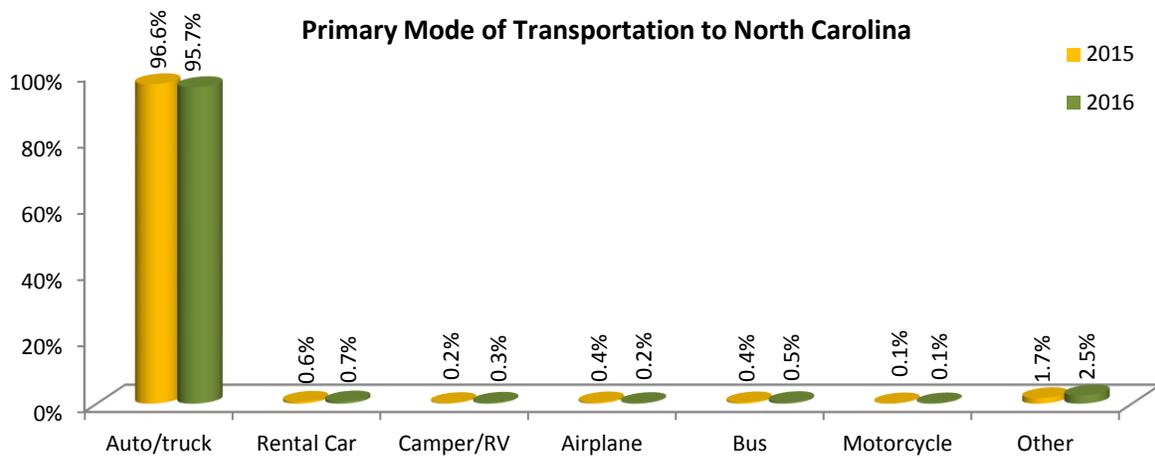
The average travel party size for North Carolina daytrippers in 2016 was 2.1 people.

### Children on Trip

Thirty-two percent of daytrip parties to North Carolina included children. Among those who traveled with children, the average number of children on trips was 1.9.

### Mode of Transportation

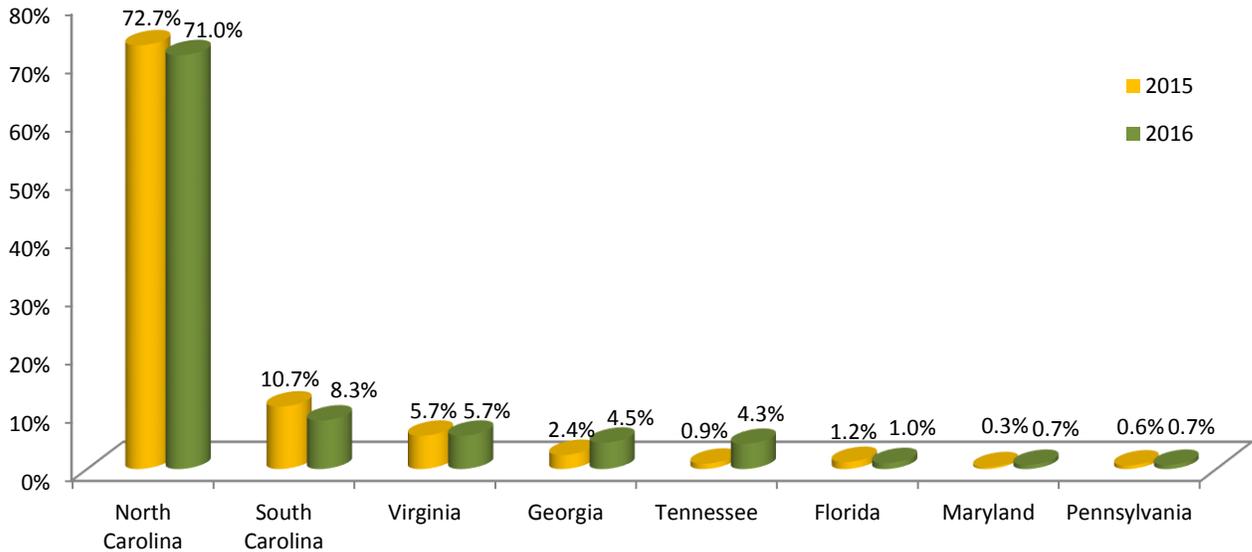
The primary mode of transportation by daytrippers to North Carolina is the personal auto (95.7%), while less than four percent of daytrippers choose an alternate form of transportation.



## Origin of Visitors

As expected, the top states of origin for North Carolina daytrippers in 2016 were residents and those from nearby states; North Carolina (71.0%), South Carolina (8.3%), Virginia (5.7%) and Georgia (4.5%).

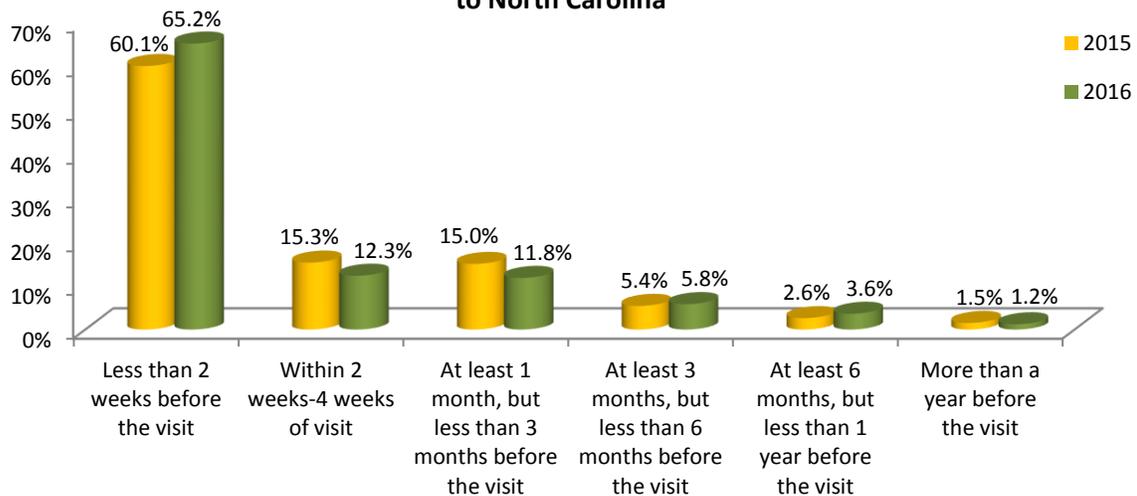
**Top States of Origin of Daytrippers to North Carolina**



## Trip Planning

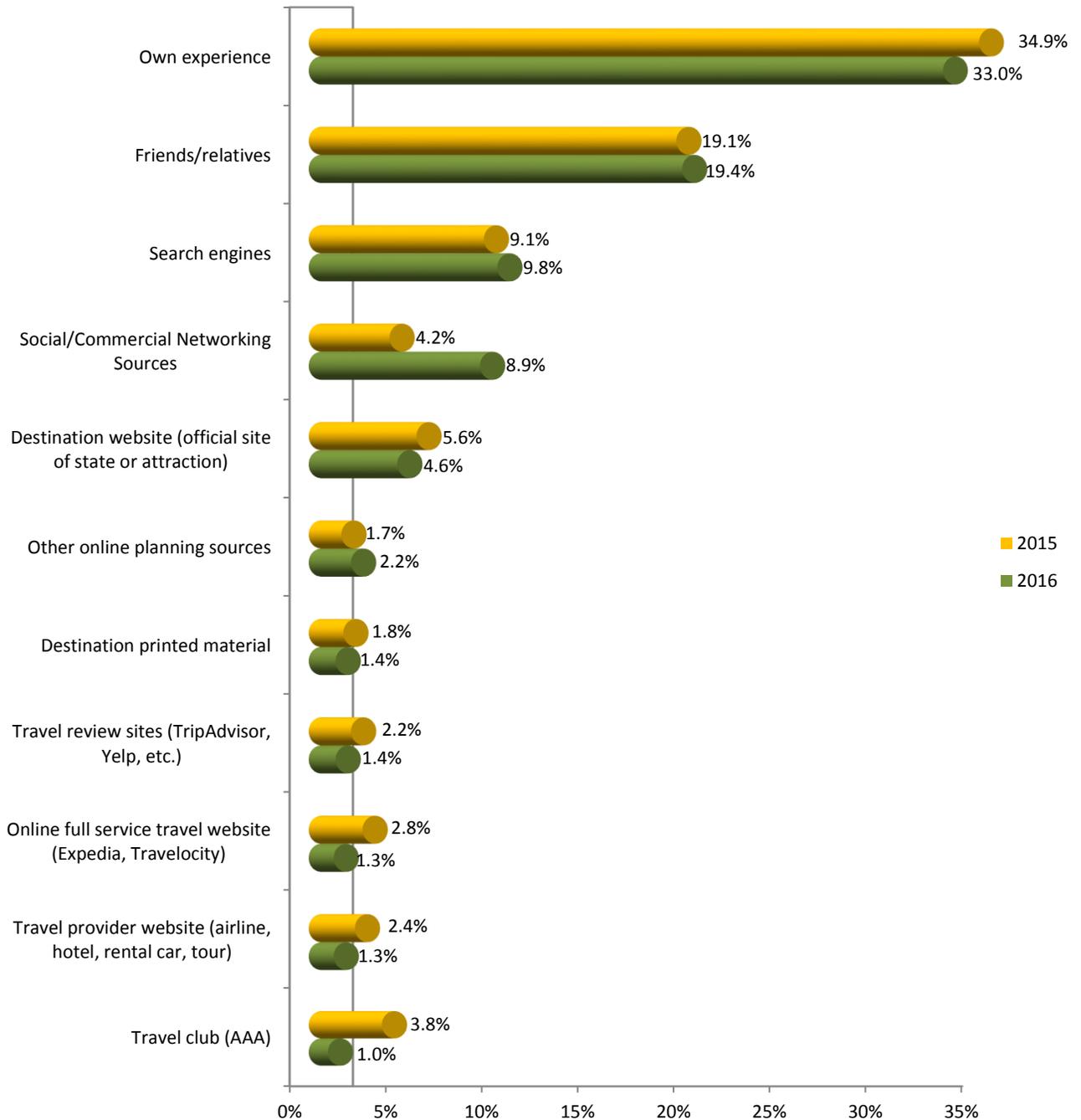
Not surprisingly, daytrippers to and within North Carolina planned their visits within a shorter timeframe than overnighters. Nearly two-thirds of 2016 daytrip visitors made the decision to visit North Carolina less than two weeks before the visit.

**How Far in Advance Daytrippers Visitors Made the Decision to Travel to North Carolina**



The top source of information for daytrip planning in North Carolina is personal experience, followed by friends/relatives, search engines, social networking and official destination websites.

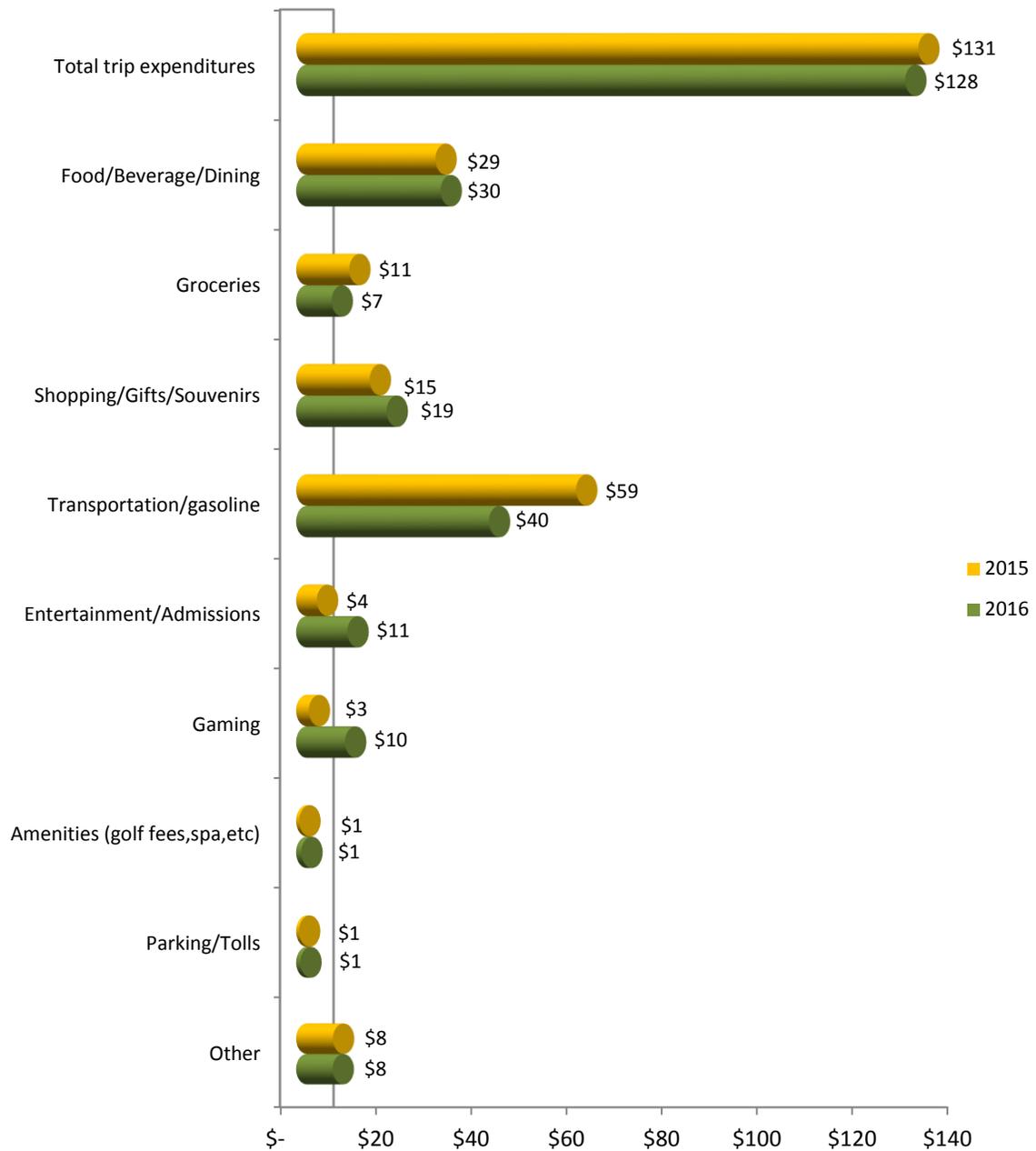
### Top Sources of Information for Daytrip Planning



### Expenditures by North Carolina Daytrippers

The average daytrip visitor party spending in the state was \$128 in 2016, down slightly from \$131 in 2015. The decrease appears to have been mainly a result of lower transportation costs.

**Average Spending by Daytrip Visitor Parties to North Carolina**



## Activities

Eighteen percent of the daytrippers to North Carolina in 2016 visited relatives while on a daytrip in the state and fifteen percent participated in shopping. Ten percent participated in rural sightseeing, eight percent visited friends and seven percent participated in fine dining on their daytrip. ***\*Note that responses to this question are not mutually exclusive and percentages do not equal 100%. Therefore, proportions should not be aggregated to combine categories of activities. Also note that these activities do not imply purpose of trip.***

Activities Participated in by Daytrippers to North Carolina					
Activity	2015	2016	Activity	2015	2016
Visiting Relatives	15%	18%	Musical performance/show	1%	2%
Shopping	15%	15%	Sport Event- Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Spectator)	1%	2%
Rural Sightseeing	8%	10%	Special Events/Festivals	1%	2%
Visiting Friends	6%	8%	Art Galleries	2%	1%
Fine Dining	6%	7%	Gardens	1%	1%
Historic Sites/Churches	3%	5%	Sport Event- Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Participant)	4%	1%
Beach	6%	4%	Zoos/Aquariums/Aviaries	2%	1%
State Park/Monument/Recreation area	4%	3%	Bird Watching	1%	1%
National Park/Monument/Recreation area	2%	3%	Native American ruins/Rock art	1%	1%
Casino/Gaming	2%	3%	Fishing	1%	1%
Urban Sightseeing	3%	3%	Theater/Drama	1%	1%
Wildlife Viewing	2%	3%	Craft Breweries	1%	1%
Local/folk arts/crafts	1%	3%	Nightclubs/Dancing	<1%	1%
Theme Park/Amusement Park/Water Park	1%	3%	Sports events – Major/Professional	1%	<1%
Museums	3%	2%	Horseback riding	1%	<1%
Other nature (photography, rockhounding, etc.)	2%	2%	Musical Theater	1%	<1%
Wine Tasting/Winery Tour	2%	2%	Area where a TV show or movie was filmed	1%	<1%
Nature Travel/Eco-touring	2%	2%	Hunting	1%	<1%
Hiking/Backpacking	2%	2%	Symphony/opera/concert	<1%	<1%
Old Homes/Mansions	1%	2%	Golf	<1%	<1%

## **Demographic Profile of North Carolina Daytrip Visitors**

Two-thirds of North Carolina daytrippers (66.4%) of the visitors are married and seventeen percent the region's visitors are divorced, widowed or separated.

The largest proportion of North Carolina daytrippers classify themselves as white (87.0%), and nearly nine percent classify themselves as black/African American.

Over half (54.2%) of North Carolina daytrippers have a household head with a college degree or higher. The average daytripper is 48 years old.

The average North Carolina daytripper has 12 vacation days each year.

More than one-third (38.4%) of the daytrip visitor parties that traveled to North Carolina in 2016 had a household income \$75,000 or over. Nearly seventeen percent had a household income of over \$125,000. The average household income of a daytrip visitor party in 2016 was \$72,620.

More than half (53.1%) of daytrip visitor parties reported that the head of household is employed, while twenty-one percent are retired. The remainder reported "not employed" as work status.

The average household size of a North Carolina daytrip visitor party in 2016 was 2.8.

## 2016 Top Advertising Markets

In 2016, the top advertising markets sending daytrippers to **North Carolina** were Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville (20.1%), Charlotte (15.5%), Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (13.6%), Greensboro-Winston-Salem-High Point (13.3%), and Greenville-New Bern-Washington (8.7%). The top out-of-state daytrip markets were Greenville-Spartanburg, Atlanta, Richmond-Petersburg, Knoxville and Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News. Advertising markets correspond with Nielsen's Designated Market Areas (DMAs).

### Top Advertising Markets of Origin for North Carolina *Daytrippers*

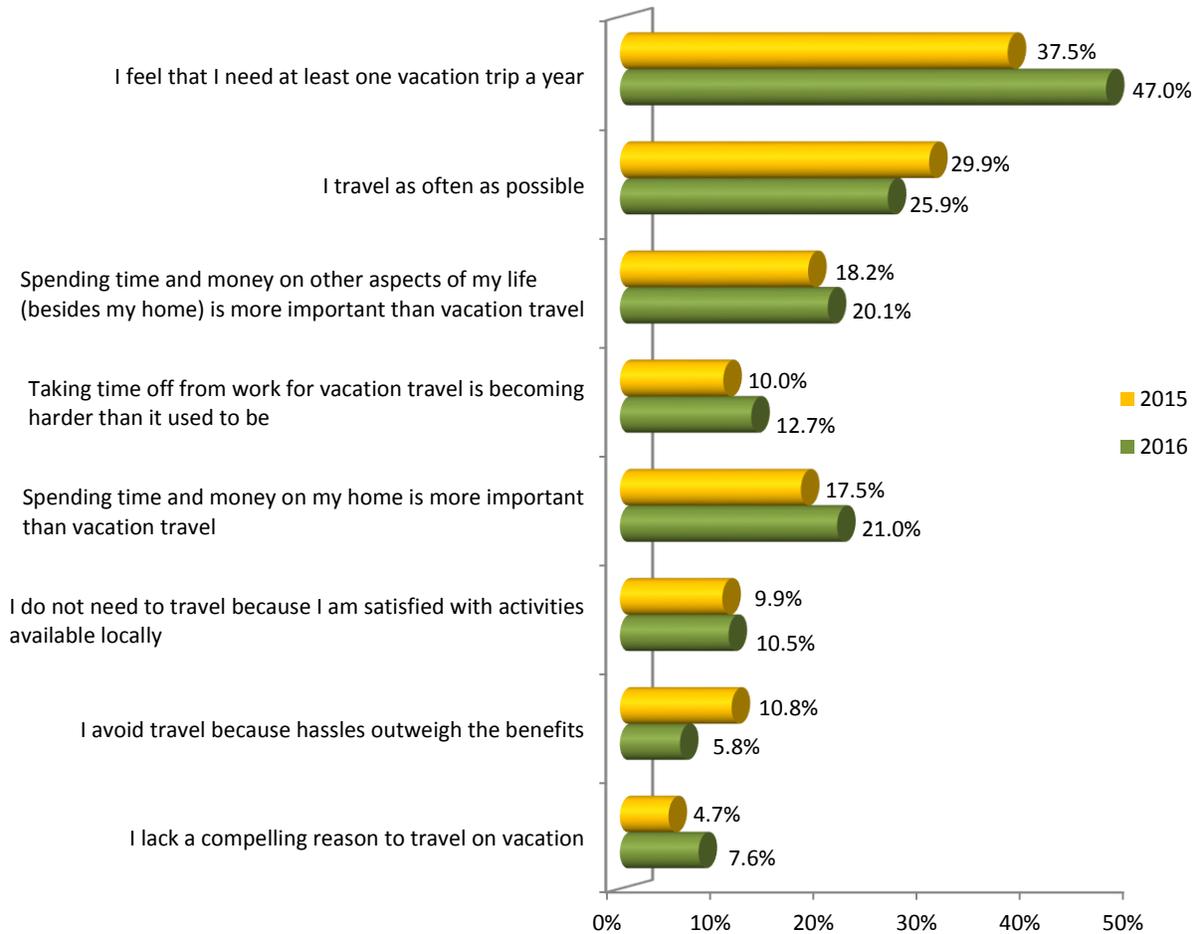
DMA of Origin	2015 Percentage of Total Daytrippers	2016 Percentage of Total Daytrippers
Raleigh-Durham (Fayetteville)	23.0%	20.1%
Charlotte	17.5%	15.5%
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	11.8%	13.6%
Greensboro-Winston Salem-High Point	11.0%	13.3%
Greenville-New Bern-Washington	11.0%	8.7%
Wilmington	3.6%	4.3%
Atlanta	2.1%	4.2%
Richmond-Petersburg, VA	0.5%	2.8%
Knoxville	0.2%	2.0%
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News	3.0%	1.5%
Myrtle Beach-Florence	2.2%	1.4%
Tri-Cities, TN-VA	0.5%	1.3%
Roanoke/Lynchburg, VA	2.4%	1.2%
Chattanooga	1.0%	1.1%
Nashville	0.2%	1.1%
Washington DC	0.4%	0.9%
Columbia, SC	1.7%	0.8%

Note: Advertising markets defined by Nielsen's Designated Market Area (DMA)

### Vacation Attitudes

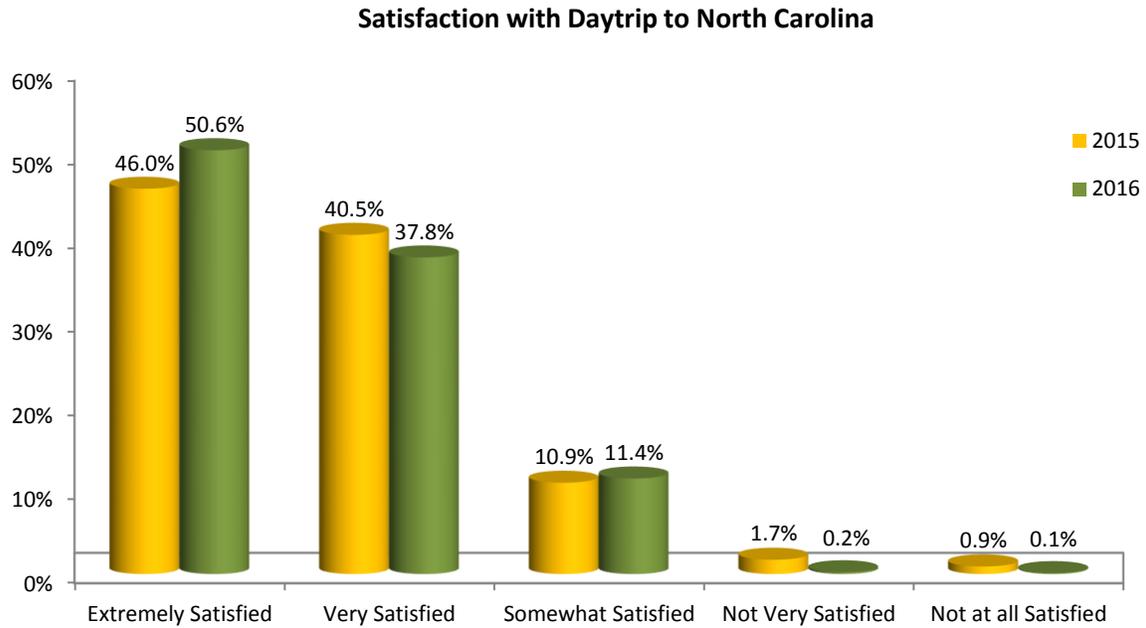
Nearly half of North Carolina daytrippers report that they need at least one vacation a year and more than one-quarter note that they travel as often as possible. Less than six percent indicate that they avoid travel due to the hassles involved with traveling.

**Current Feelings Concerning Vacation Travel**



### Satisfaction with Daytrips to North Carolina

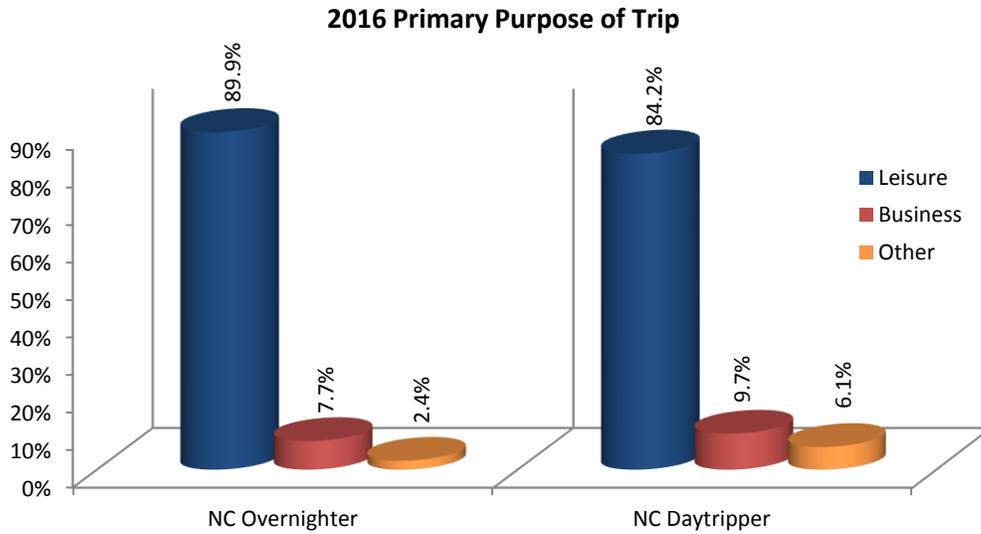
More than eighty-eight percent of daytrippers to North Carolina in 2016 were either very or extremely satisfied with their daytrip to or within the state, up from eighty-six percent in 2015. Less than one percent were not satisfied.



## 2016 Overnight vs. Daytrip Comparison

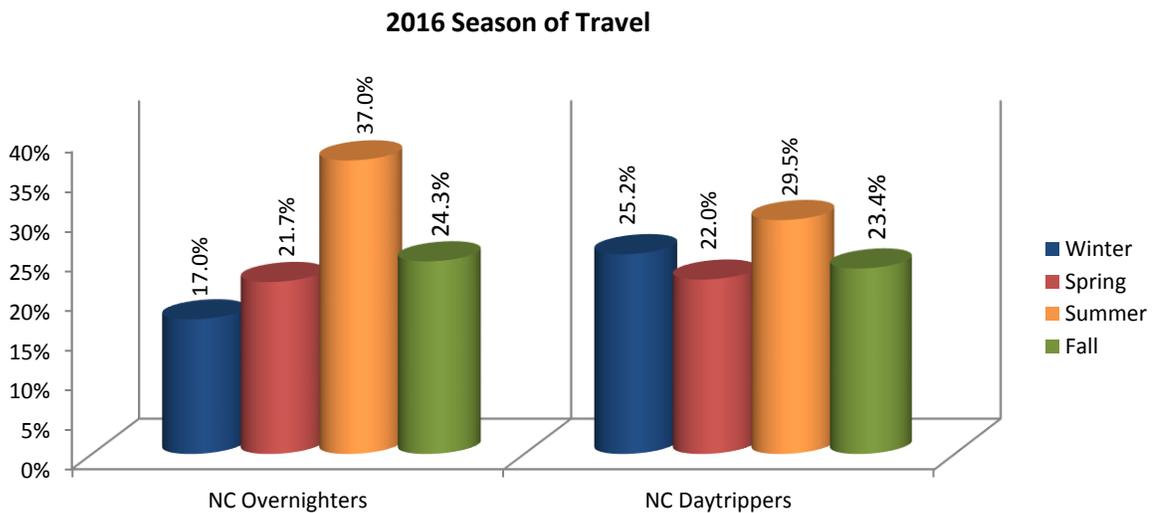
The following section provides comparisons and contrasts of North Carolina’s overnight and day visitors.

Leisure is the predominant reason for travel to North Carolina for both overnights and daytrippers, with little differences between the two sets of visitors.



## Travel Volume by Season

The seasonal distribution of visitors helps to understand the flow of travelers through the state. Overnighters were more likely to visit during the summer than daytrippers and daytrippers were more likely to visit in the winter than overnights.



## 2016 North Carolina Overnight Vs. Daytrip

The average party size for overnight visitors was slightly larger than that of daytrippers in 2016. Daytrip visitor parties were more likely to include children in the party.

### 2016 Travel Party Size

North Carolina Overnights	North Carolina Daytrippers
2.2 people	2.1 people

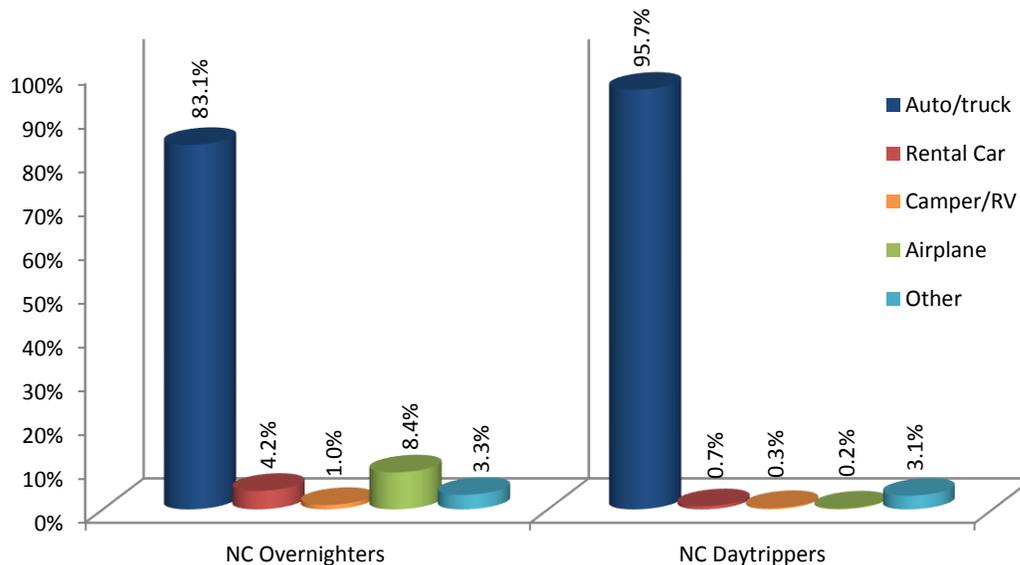
### 2016 Children on Trip

North Carolina Overnights	North Carolina Daytrippers
28.4%	32.0%

### Mode of Transportation

Not surprisingly, auto transportation was the primary use of travel by all North Carolina visitors, both overnights and daytrippers. Eight percent of overnights used air transportation, while less than one percent of daytrippers flew to the state for the day.

### 2016 Primary Transportation by Overnight Visitors



### Origin of Visitors

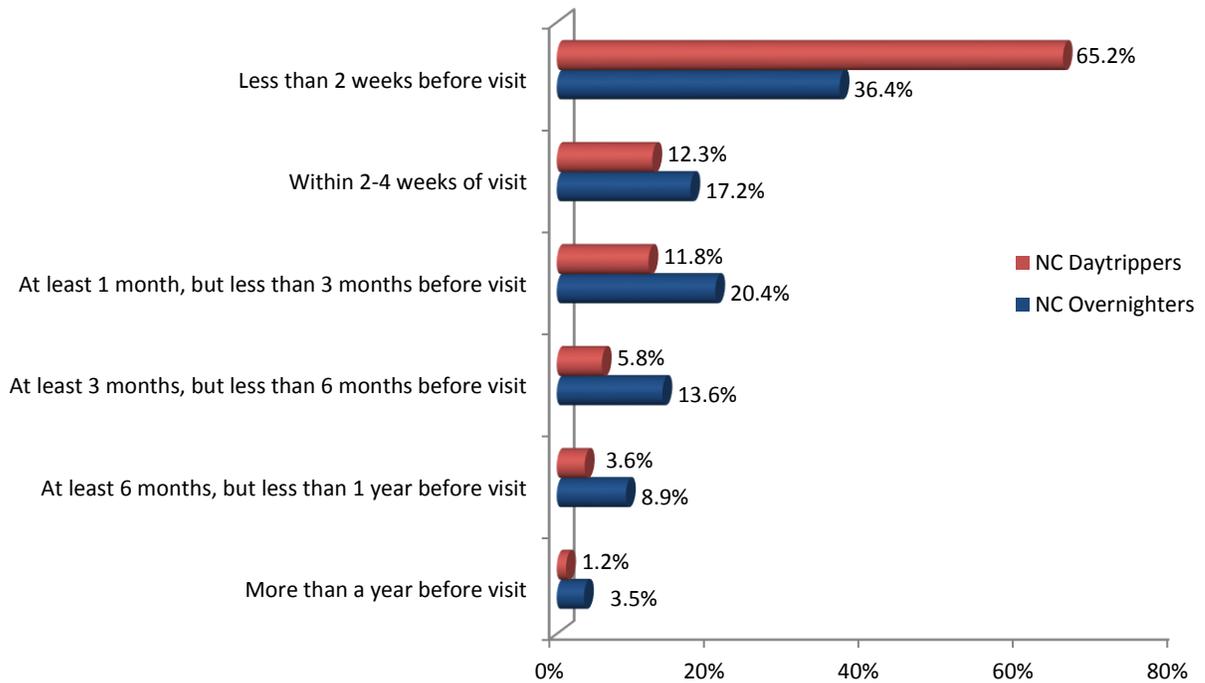
North Carolina is the top state of origin for both overnights and daytrippers to the state. In-state residents comprise thirty-seven percent of the state’s overnight visitors and nearly three-fourths of the state’s daytrippers.

NC Overnights	NC Daytrippers
North Carolina (37.0%)	North Carolina (71.0%)
Virginia (10.3%)	South Carolina (8.3%)
South Carolina (8.6%)	Virginia (5.7%)
Georgia (6.5%)	Georgia (4.5%)
Florida (5.0%)	Tennessee (4.3%)
New York (3.8%)	Florida (1.0%)
Maryland (3.0%)	Pennsylvania (0.7%)
Pennsylvania (3.0%)	Maryland (0.7%)
Tennessee (2.8%)	Ohio (0.6%)
New Jersey (2.8%)	Mississippi (0.4%)

### Trip Planning

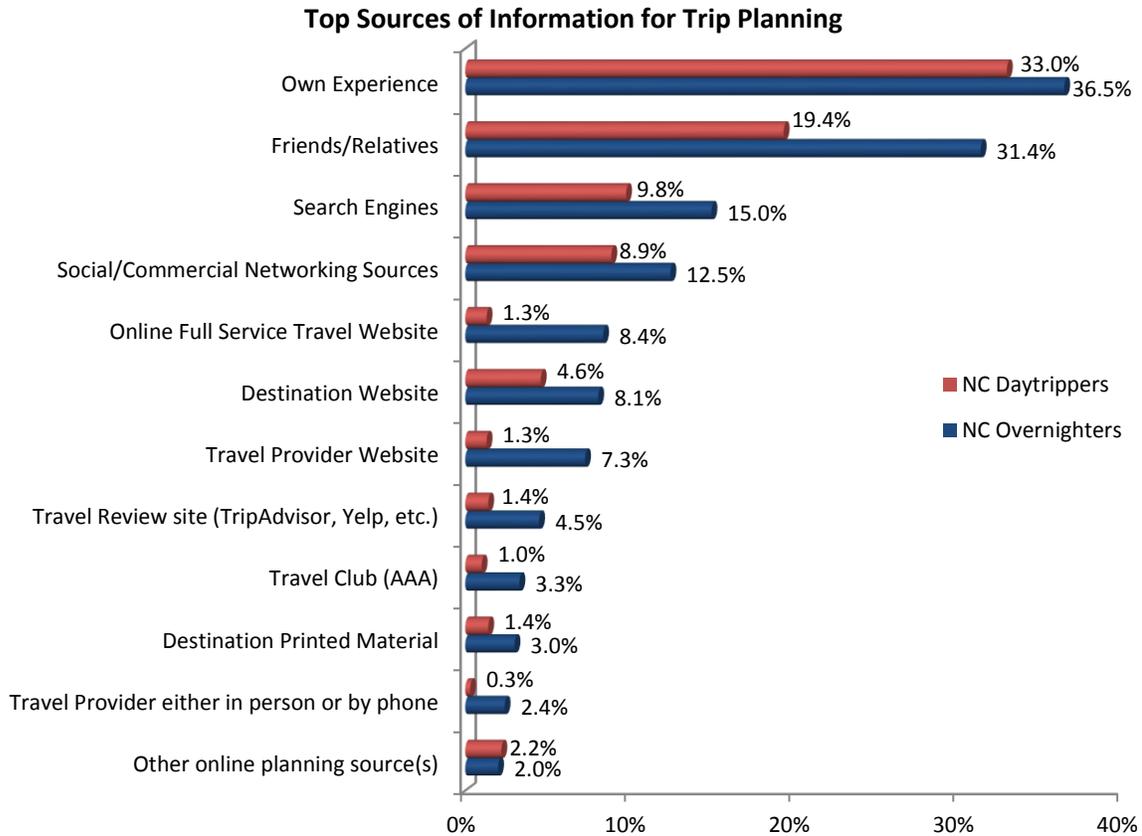
Daytrippers, not surprisingly, made the decision to visit North Carolina in a shorter time frame than overnights. Nearly two-thirds made the decision less than 2 weeks prior to the visit, while just over one-third of overnights made the decision to visit the state less than 2 weeks before travel.

How Far in Advance Decision Was Made to Visit North Carolina



## 2016 North Carolina Overnight Vs. Daytrip

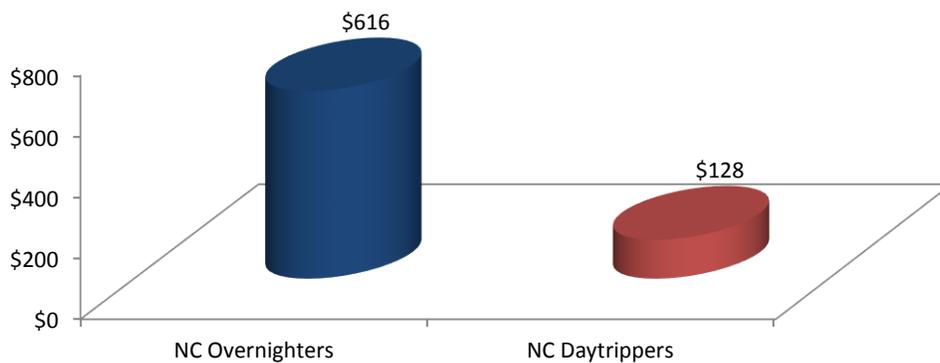
In trip planning, overnights to North Carolina relied on a larger variety of sources than daytrippers. In particular, they used personal experience, friends/relatives, search engines and websites more than daytrippers.



## Trip Expenditures

On average, 2016 overnight visitor parties to and within North Carolina spent nearly \$500 more per trip than daytrippers.

**Average Total Trip Spending by Overnight & Daytrip Visitor Parties**



## Activities

Activities participated in by North Carolina travelers vary by their length of stay, but common activities between regions include visiting relatives, shopping, dining, visiting friends and sightseeing.

NC Overnighers	NC Daytrippers
Visiting Relatives (31%)	Visiting Relatives (18%)
Shopping (27%)	Shopping (15%)
Visiting Friends (17%)	Rural Sightseeing (10%)
Beach (14%)	Visiting Friends (8%)
Fine Dining (14%)	Fine Dining (7%)
Rural Sightseeing (12%)	Historic Sites/Churches (5%)
Historic Sites/Churches (10%)	Beach (4%)
Urban Sightseeing (9%)	State Park/Monument/Recreation area (3%)
State Park/Monument/Recreation area (8%)	National Park/Monument/Recreation area (3%)
Museums (7%)	Casino/Gaming (3%)
Wildlife Viewing (6%)	Urban Sightseeing (3%)
Craft Breweries (6%)	Wildlife Viewing (3%)
Hiking/Backpacking (6%)	Local/folk arts/crafts (3%)
Fishing (6%)	Theme Park/Amusement Park/Water Park (3%)
Old Homes/Mansions (5%)	Museums (2%)
Wine Tasting/Winery Tour (5%)	Other nature (photography, rockhounding, etc.) (2%)
Casino/Gaming (4%)	Wine Tasting/Winery Tour (2%)
National Park/Monument/Recreation area (4%)	Nature Travel/Eco-touring (2%)
Local/folk arts/crafts (4%)	Hiking/Backpacking (2%)
Other nature (photography, rockhounding, etc.) (4%)	Old Homes/Mansions (2%)
Nightclubs/Dancing (4%)	Musical performance/show (2%)
Gardens (3%)	Sport Event-Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Spectator) (2%)
Theater/Drama (3%)	Special Events/Festivals (2%)
Special Events/Festivals (3%)	Art Galleries (1%)
Musical performance/show (3%)	Gardens (1%)
Zoos/Aquariums/Aviaries (3%)	Sport Event-Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Participant) (1%)
Art Galleries (3%)	Zoos/Aquariums/Aviaries (1%)
Sport Event-Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Spectator) (2%)	Bird Watching (1%)
Nature Travel/Eco-touring (2%)	Native American ruins/Rock art (1%)
Bird Watching (2%)	Fishing (1%)
Theme Park/Amusement Park/Water Park (2%)	Theater/Drama (1%)
Golf (2%)	Craft Breweries (1%)
Horseback riding (2%)	Nightclubs/Dancing (1%)
Native American ruins/Rock art (2%)	Sports events – Major/Professional (<1%)
Biking/Road Biking/Cycling (2%)	Horseback riding (<1%)
Farms/Ranches/Agri-tours (2%)	Musical Theater (<1%)
Spa/Health Club (1%)	Area where a TV show or movie was filmed (<1%)
Sport Event-Youth/Amateur/Collegiate/Other(Participant) (1%)	Hunting (<1%)
Rafting/Kayaking/Canoeing/Paddleboarding (1%)	Symphony/opera/concert (<1%)
Area where a TV show or movie was filmed (1%)	Golf (<1%)

**Demographic Profile for 2016 North Carolina Visitors**

	<b>North Carolina Overnighters</b>	<b>North Carolina Daytrippers</b>
<b>Average age of household head</b>	47.0 years of age	47.8 years of age
<b>Average household size</b>	2.7	2.8
<b>Education of Household Head</b>		
High school or less	14.8%	17.2%
Some college – no degree	20.4%	28.3%
Completed college	43.1%	42.3%
Post Graduate College	21.6%	11.9%
<b>Annual Household Income</b>		
Less than \$30,000	13.9%	18.9%
\$30,000-\$49,999	14.7%	23.2%
\$50,000-\$74,999	21.6%	19.4%
\$75,000 & over	49.7%	38.4%
<b>Average Annual Income</b>	\$87,140	\$72,620
<b>Employment</b>		
Employed	59.0%	53.1%
Retired	21.9%	21.4%
Not employed	19.1%	25.5%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	64.2%	66.4%
Never married	22.8%	16.3%
Divorced, widowed, separated	13.0%	17.3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	84.0%	87.0%
Black/African American	9.8%	8.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.5%	0.3%
Other	3.7%	4.1%

## 2016 Top Advertising Markets

The top advertising markets for the overnights and daytrippers very similar, but differences can be noted in the ranks. The top five primary markets are the same for both overnights and daytrippers. Atlanta ranks sixth in terms of overnights, while Wilmington ranks sixth for daytrippers to and within the state. It is worth noting the proportion of daytrip visitors from states such as New York and Florida who are likely visiting the state while traveling to other destinations along north/south highways.

### NC Overnights

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Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville (10.3%)  
Charlotte (7.5%)  
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (6.5%)  
Greensboro-Winston Salem-High Point- (6.2%)  
Greenville-New Bern-Washington (5.7%)  
Atlanta (5.6%)  
Washington, DC (Hagerstown, MD) (5.6%)  
New York (4.3%)  
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News (3.4%)  
Philadelphia (2.7%)  
Richmond-Petersburg (2.5%)  
Columbia (2.1%)  
Chattanooga (1.8%)  
Augusta (1.6%)  
Miami/Ft. Lauderdale (1.4%)  
Myrtle Beach-Florence (1.3%)  
Wilmington (1.2%)  
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Sarasota (1.2%)  
Baltimore (1.1%)  
Roanoke-Lynchburg (1.0%)  
Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne (1.0%)  
Cleveland-Akron (Canton) (1.0%)

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### NC Daytrippers

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Raleigh-Durham-Fayetteville (20.1%)  
Charlotte (15.5%)  
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville (13.6%)  
Greensboro-Winston Salem-High Point (13.3%)  
Greenville-New Bern-Washington (8.7%)  
Wilmington (4.3%)  
Atlanta (4.2%)  
Richmond-Petersburg (2.8%)  
Knoxville (2.0%)  
Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News (1.5%)  
Myrtle Beach-Florence (1.4%)  
Tri-Cities, TN-VA (1.3%)  
Roanoke-Lynchburg (1.2%)  
Chattanooga (1.1%)  
Nashville (1.1%)  
Washington DC (0.9%)  
Columbia (0.8%)  
Cincinnati (0.6%)  
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Sarasota (0.5%)  
Baltimore (0.4%)  
Philadelphia (0.4%)  
New York (0.4%)

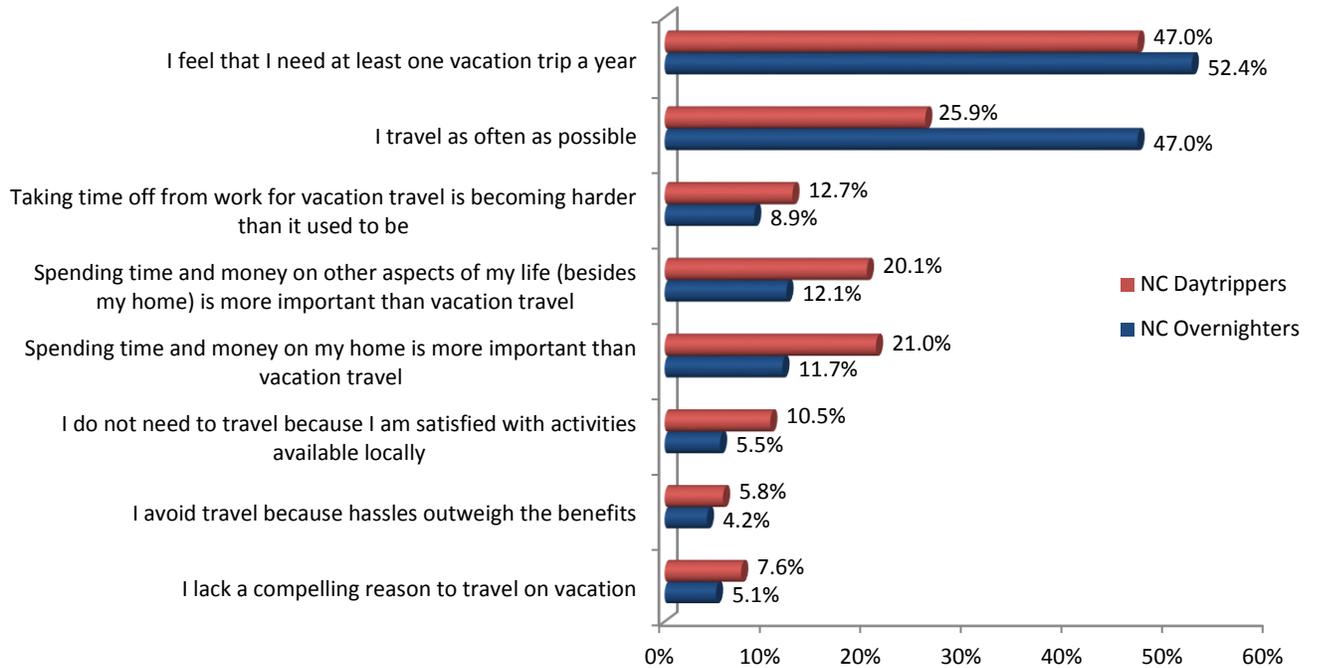
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Note: Advertising markets defined by Nielsen's Designated Market Area (DMA)

### Vacation Attitudes

Not surprisingly, both overnights and daytrippers feel the need for a vacation at least once a year. Nearly half of overnights and one-quarter of daytrippers report that they travel as often as possible.

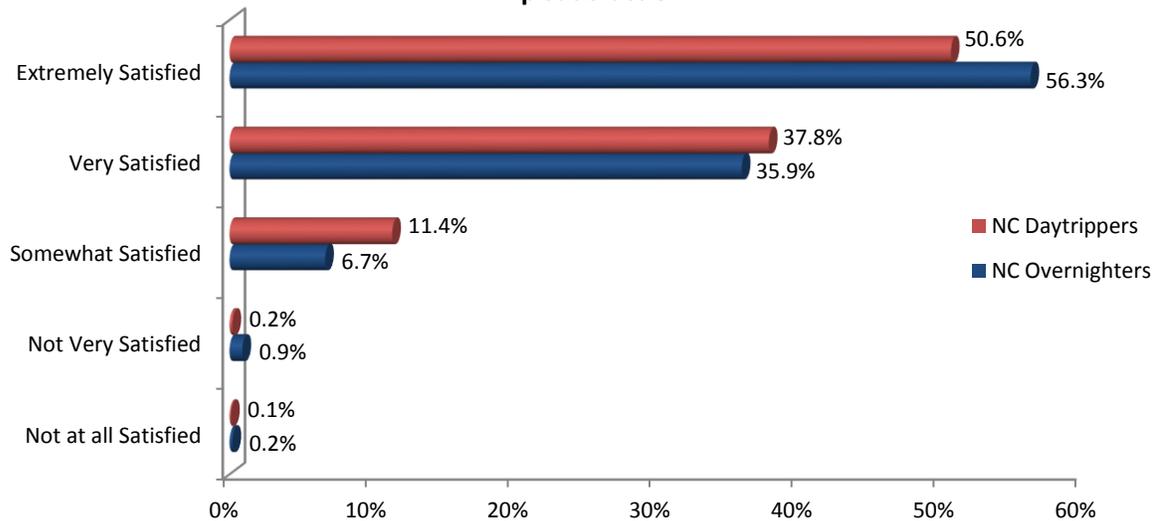
Current Feelings Concerning Vacation Travel



### Trip Satisfaction

Both overnight visitors and daytrippers in North Carolina reported high trip satisfaction in 2016. Ninety-two percent of overnights and eighty-eight percent of daytrippers expressed they were extremely or very satisfied with their trip.

Trip Satisfaction



## 2016 North Carolina Regional Travel Summary

### Glossary of Terms

Travel	A trip over 50 miles one-way from home <i>or</i> any night away from home
Overnight Visitor	A visitor who spent at least one night away from home during travel
Daytripper	A visitor who did not spend any nights away from home, but traveled at least 50 miles one-way from home
Designated Market Area	Also referred to as a DMA and is a term used by Nielsen Media Research to identify an exclusive geographic area of counties in which the home market television stations hold a dominance of total hours viewed. There are 210 DMA's in the U.S.