

Sustainability Survey Analysis – May 2026

Prepared for ROOST by PlaceMaking

Background/Methodology

The Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) has focused on the sustainability of its tourism assets across Essex and Hamilton counties and the villages of Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake Region in New York state. The agency has, for more than 20 years, commissioned a study to determine visitor information at the county levels and to gauge key regional marketing program statistics.

ROOST contracted with PlaceMaking, a regional community and economic development firm, to complete this research. ROOST sent a jointly developed survey tool to a sample of its 2025 leisure visitors to the region. Visitors completed an online survey (via email) with responses compiled from visitors who spent most of their time in this portion of the Adirondack region.

For the fourth consecutive year, ROOST administered an additional brief survey to ascertain opinions and perceptions about sustainability relative to their travel decisions. The survey asked these 2025 visitors to indicate the level of importance of sustainability concerns to their travel decisions. Those who responded that it was a “strong concern” or “somewhat of a concern” completed an additional set of questions.

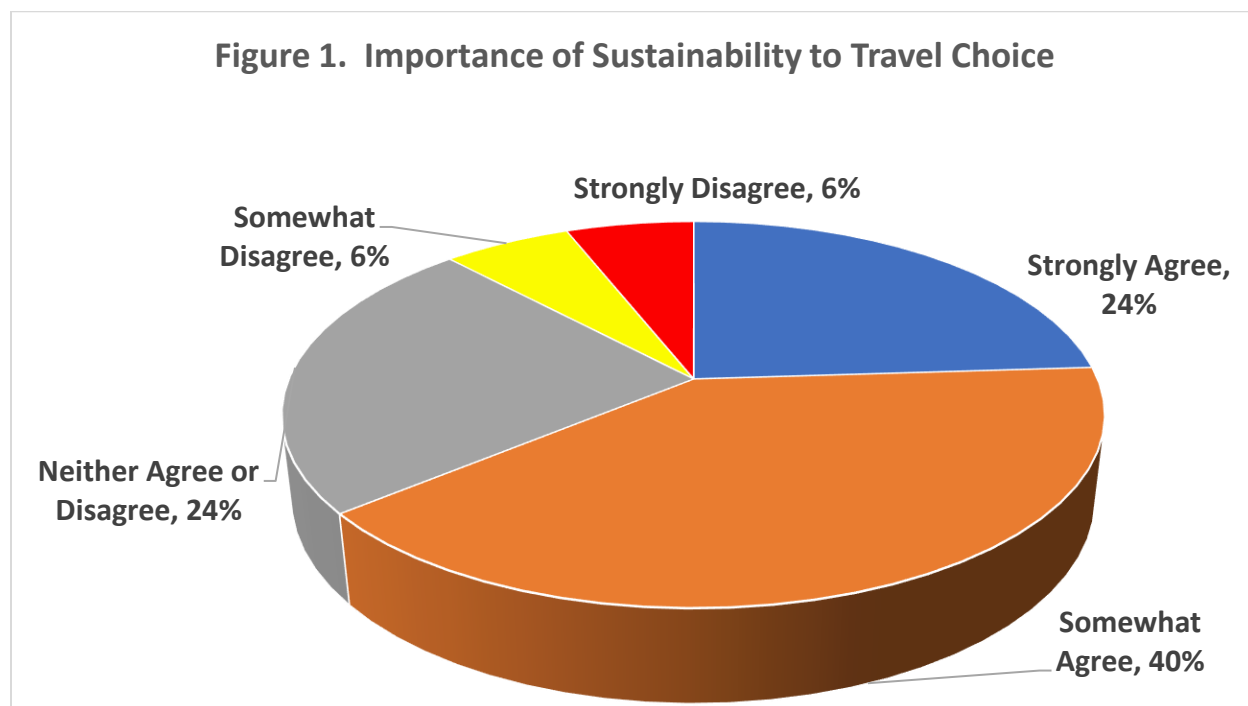
Over 1,000 (1,042) more “sustainability minded” respondents answered these questions which is an increase over the 989 responses received from 2024 visitors. The results of this accompanying survey are outlined below.

Importance of Sustainability in Planning a Trip

ROOST asked these survey respondents how important sustainability factors are when they plan a trip. Nearly one out of four visitors (24%) “strongly agree” that sustainability is an important consideration, with 40% noting that they “agree” that it is important.

Cumulatively, a strong majority (64%) positively support the importance of sustainability considerations in planning travel. This percentage is very close to the proportion indicating this level of interest in sustainability over the past several years (65% from last year and 64% on average). A sizeable portion (24%) indicated neutrality in this regard, while only 12% indicated that they “strongly disagree” or “disagree” with this statement (6% each).

Figure 1 depicts the results of this distribution of responses from the large visitor survey pool.



The remainder of the survey is generated by the 1,000+ respondents who indicated at least some level interest in sustainability as part of their travel decision-making.

Importance by Sustainability Sub-categories: - Social/Economic/Environmental

The survey asked respondents how important the three core areas of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental considerations were to their travel decisions. Environmental sustainability was the strongest area of expressed importance, with 98% of respondents selecting that it is “very” (64%) or “moderately” (34%) important to their decision. This has ranged from 98-99% over the last three years of data collection.

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of respondents indicated economic sustainability as “very” or “moderately” important (49% each), increasing slightly from the 97% responding as such from the prior two years. Eighty-seven percent (87%) indicated that social sustainability was either “very” (29%) or “moderately” (58%) important, on the high side of the 85-87% range expressed over the last three years.

Perceived Sustainability of the Adirondacks as a Destination

The survey asked respondents about perceived levels of efforts made by the region in these sub-categories: social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Figures 2-4 depict these results.

Perceived efforts regarding environmental sustainability increased slightly among 2025 respondents compared to the prior two years (increasing from 62% to 64% noting 'significant' efforts). Respondents' perceptions of economic sustainability efforts remained consistent for the past two years.

Figure 2. Perceived Efforts Made for Environmental Sustainability

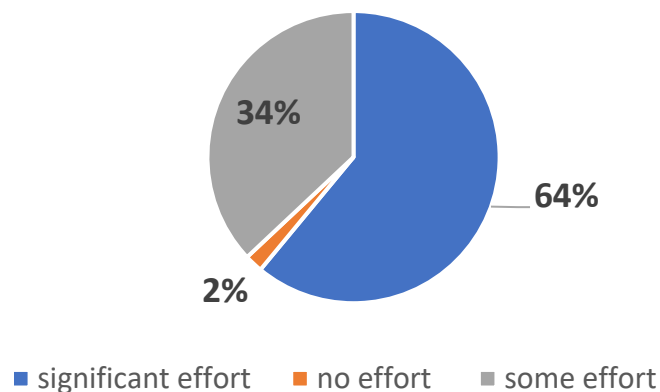
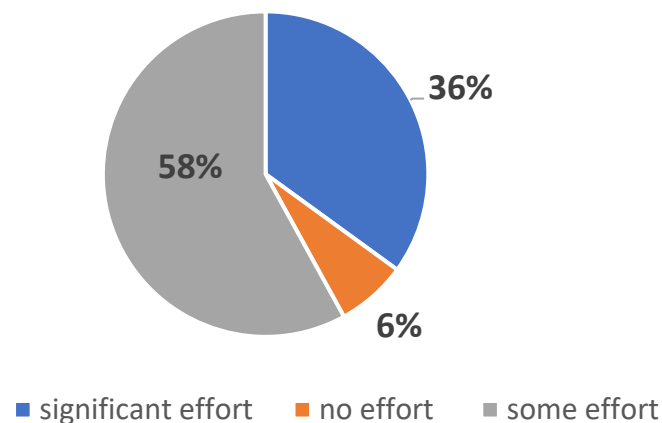
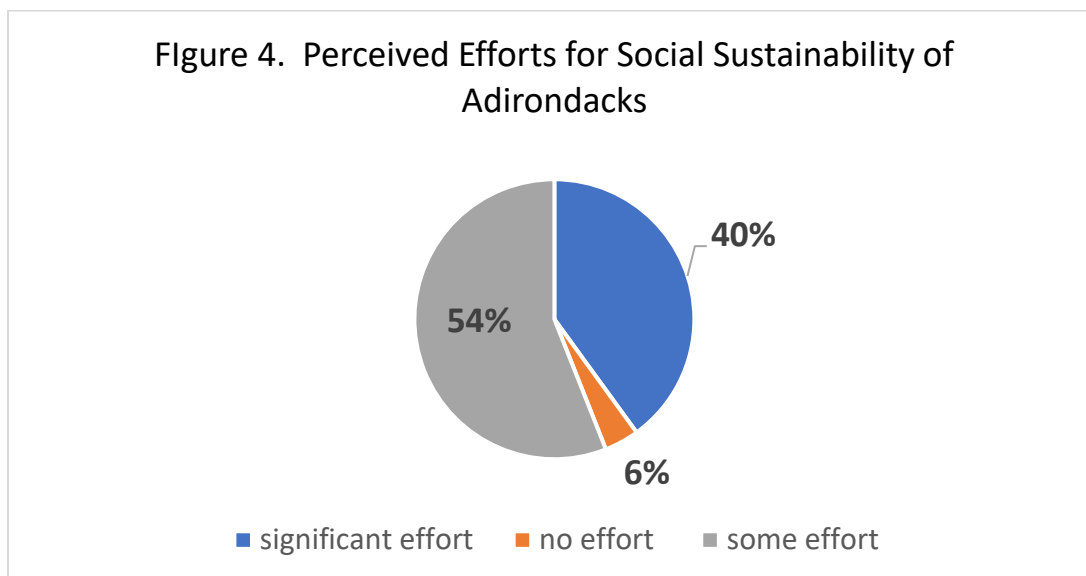


Figure 3. Perceived Efforts for Economic Sustainability

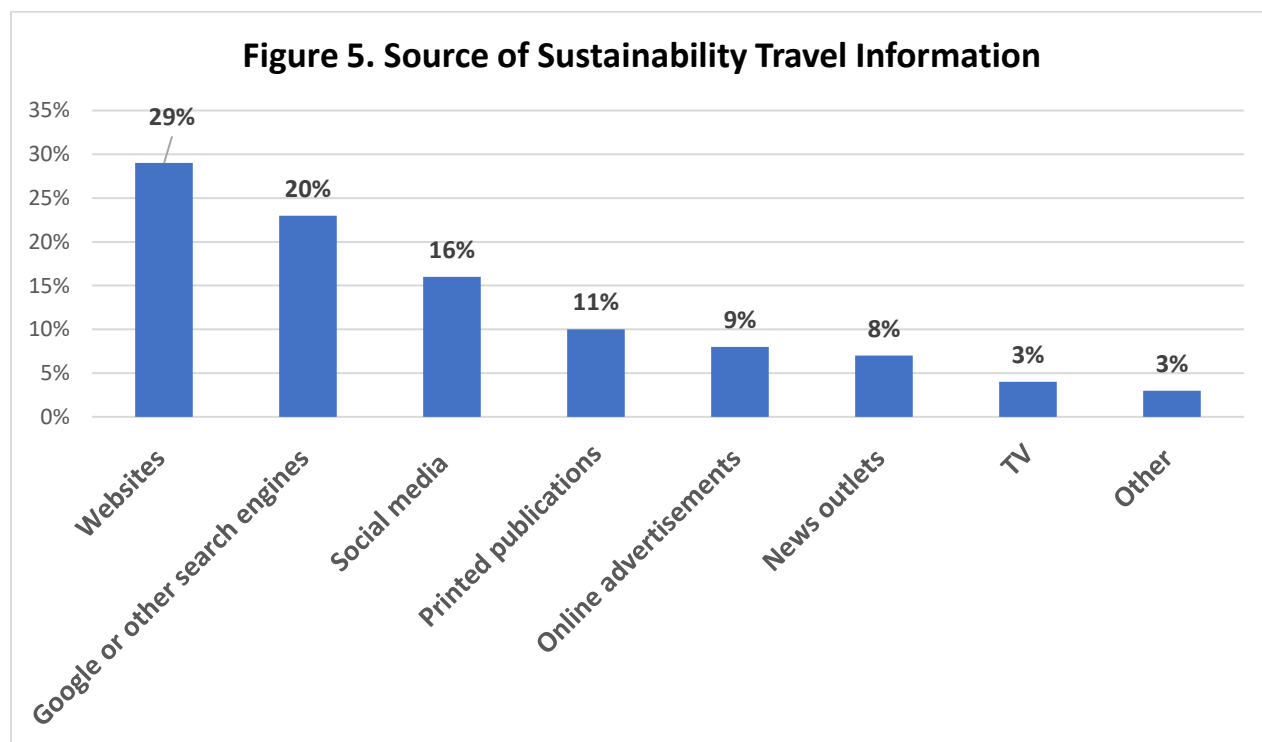


Perceived efforts toward economic sustainability remained consistent from the two prior years. Perceived efforts toward social sustainability demonstrated change from the prior two years, with an increase in those noting ‘significant’ efforts in this area (from 35% to 40%).



Travel Information: Sites for Sustainability Research

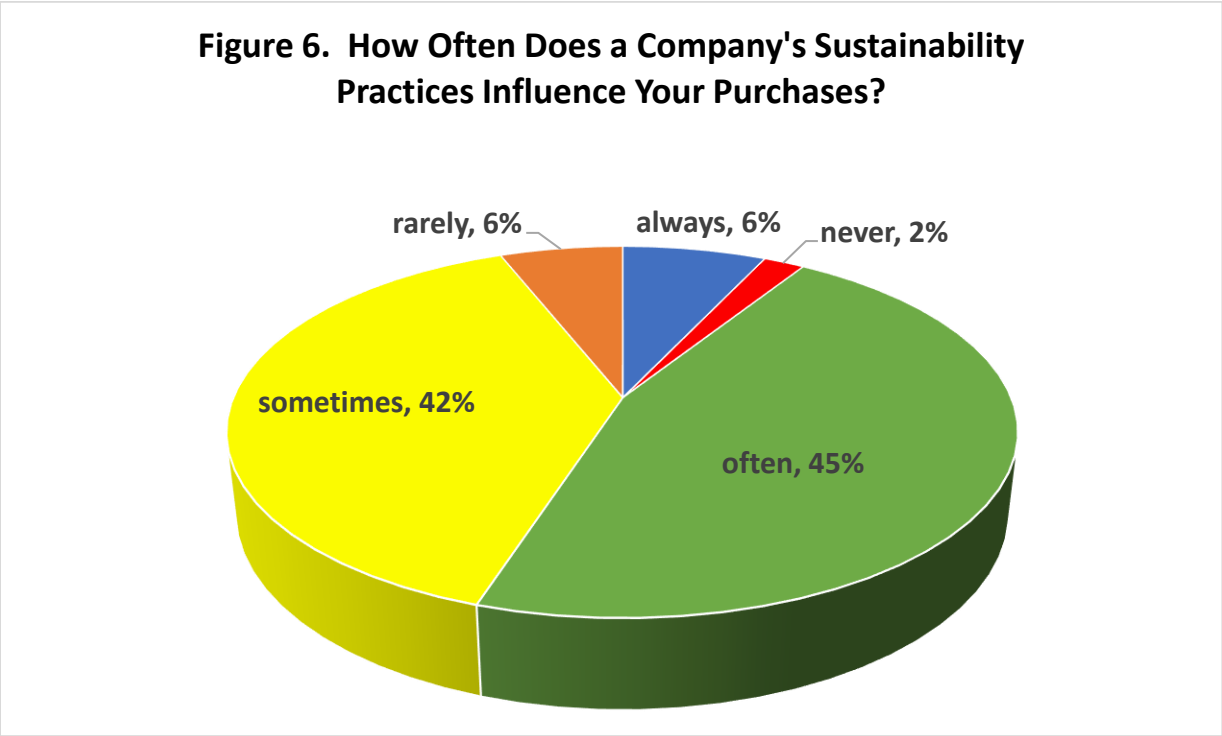
The survey asked visitors and potential visitors where they typically find their information about the sustainability of a destination, permitting multiple responses. Figure 5 depicts the distribution of responses by source.



The results above have been consistent throughout the three years of data collection of this analysis. Only responses to “Google or other search engines” were more than 1% different from other years’ data collection, falling by 3% from the prior year.

Influence of Sustainability Practices

The survey asked respondents how often a company’s sustainability practices influenced their purchasing decisions. Figure 6 depicts these responses.



More than ninety percent (93%) of respondents indicate that sustainability at least “sometimes” affects purchase decisions. The proportion of those responding that this is “often” a consideration increased from 42% to 45% of responses and “sometimes” dropped from 45% to 42%. Otherwise, these responses remained consistent from the prior two years.

Impacts on Traveling Decisions by Sustainability Practices

The survey asked respondents to select from a list of provided sustainability practices they “looked for” when planning a vacation destination. Respondents selected as many factors as applicable.

The following list presents results from the most common to least common selections of the top responses (which were selected by nearly half or more respondents to this

question). The number of responses received for each category are provided in parentheses.

1. Restaurants in the region buy from local suppliers	795
2. Businesses in the region support the local economy	785
3. Businesses sell local artisan products and services	736
4. Funds generated by tourism are used for the improvement of the local community	696
5. Businesses in the area founded by residents (new)	624
6. An effort to reduce single use plastics	599
7. Businesses in the region give back to the community through work with charities	579
8. Plans to manage hiking traffic and limit impacts on trails	552
9. Restaurants focusing on reducing food waste	535
10. Choosing road trips over airlines and cruises	535
11. Public transportation to popular attractions	501
12. Businesses using renewable sources of energy	493
13. Filtered refill stations for reusable water bottles	487
14. Businesses donate to local nonprofits	462
15. Lodging and restaurants partnering with local compost producers	393
16. Use of environmentally safe snow removal practices	360
17. Bicycles rentals available as a means of transportation	325
18. The ability to donate money to support environmental efforts in the region	320
19. Availability of electric vehicle charging stations	136
20. Zoning restrictions to prohibit short term rentals	125
21. The option to pay extra to offset carbon emissions	82
22. Access to electric scooters	80
23. Other	32

Of these, only “businesses founded by local residents” was new to the top ten responses to this question in comparison to the prior year.

Ease of Finding Information on Sustainability

The survey asked respondents about the ease of finding information about the sustainability of a travel destination. A slight majority of respondents (56%) stated that it is “difficult” to find information, with the balance (44%) finding it “easy”. The proportion noting it is “easily found” increased slightly over that expressed in the prior year.

Websites Used for Travel Information

The survey respondents asked what types of websites they most used to gather travel information. The following depicts the responses by percentage:

Destination websites (e.g., LakePlacid.com, AdirondacksUSA.com)	33%
Travel websites	21%
Local Government websites	11%
Online booking sites (Expedia, Airbnb)	11%
Travel blogs	9%
Sustainable travel websites	7%
Business websites	6%
Other	1%

Conclusion

Sustainability has been a cornerstone of ROOST for many years. This data collection and analysis mark the fourth year that a survey gauged visitor perceptions regarding sustainability. It is important to note that this data is not a random representation of visitors but reflects responses by those who indicated that they were at least “somewhat” concerned about sustainability matters when traveling. The data continues to provide useful insights into sustainability priorities among these visitors.

Travel experts emphasize that sustainability is an increasingly important consideration among visitors. A National Geographic survey² found nearly half (42%) of U.S. travelers express an interest in “sustainable” travel. Only 15% of these interested respondents, however, responded that they had sufficient understanding of what this term means. This provides a great opportunity for the region to leverage this demand and to define and educate visitors about “Adirondack sustainability.” The data collected here provides continued insights into the perceptions and priorities of these visitors.

High-ranking interests such as supporting small and local businesses in travel and noting recycling and responsible use of food waste position local connections and experiences. Green hotels, resorts, and experiences capture the growing interest in wellness tourism, which is a strengthening niche across the industry. The Adirondack region is well-positioned to utilize sustainable practices as a marketing tool for individual and group markets.

National travel research documents a growing concern about affordability among budget and moderate spending travelers³. This growing concern about costs and economic uncertainties may dampen what this segment will pay for sustainable practices. Luxury travel, where spending grew steadily across 2025, will certainly be a focus for sustainability concerns among those such-minded travelers.

Booking.com⁴ conducted a study of over 31,000 travelers to ascertain sustainability preferences. They found that among this random sample of all travelers, 83% responded that sustainability concerns were important, but almost half (44%) did not identify that sustainability was a “primary concern”.

More than half of that survey's respondents indicated that they desired to use more sustainable modes of transportation in travel (57%) and that they wished to reduce energy consumption in travel (54%). Almost three in four of the respondents (71%) indicated that they "wished to leave their travel destination in better shape than it was before their visit". This is an impressive figure for the aspiration of tapping into visitors improving communities.

The continued multi-generational trend of culturally authentic travel resonates with social sustainability interests. A Hilton Hotel study⁵ explored travel preferences across multiple generations (from Baby Boomers to Millennials) and noted that authentic place-based travel preferences continue to be important. ROOST has sponsored socially minded celebrations and welcoming environments for visitors from all cultures. These activities are important to meet the goal for social sustainability.

There are strong opportunities among sustainability minded visitors to leave the communities they visit in better condition than prior to their visit. Maximizing these impacts and potential will be worth considering in the future. Overall, this data provides valuable insights into visitor preferences regarding sustainability and specific areas of agency interests.

Sources Cited:

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