




An Industry Update: 2024 Trends in the RV Market



The RV industry's future is promising, driven by innovations in comfort and convenience features and a growing interest from a broader demographic.

Reduced travel during the COVID-19 pandemic created revenue and profit fluctuations for the recreational vehicle industry. However, the economy's recovery, the continued rise of e-commerce, and renewed travel interest have boosted the RV industry. Results from the RVIA's February 2024 survey found total RV shipments increased by 17.8% compared with the same period in 2023, marking the fourth consecutive month of increases. ¹

While post-pandemic recovery has stabilized after a high-growth period, with RV sales dropping 16% due to inflation and gas prices in 2022 and early 2023, the RV industry's future is still promising, driven by market segmentation, an aging population's interest in outdoor recreation, and the younger generations that value experiences and ability to work anywhere. The RV Industry Association estimates 2024 shipments at an encouraging 329,900 to 359,100 units and shipments between 374,200 and 408,600 units in 2025. ²

Price competitiveness remains crucial for RV manufacturers as consumers seek affordable options that fit their lifestyles.

TRENDS UPDATE



EV, Green Logistics, and Sustainability
Compact RV Trailers
Aerodynamic Designs
Technology Integration

Demographic Shift in RV Ownership
Enhanced Convenience Features
Prioritizing Safety
Significance of Digital & E-Commerce

More Electric / Green Logistics / Sustainability

The development of electric and hybrid RVs is a significant advancement, aligning with global sustainability goals and promising a cleaner future for the industry.

An overall shift toward sustainable transportation is driving innovation in the RV industry, with a growing focus on all-electric and hybrid models. Consumers across all generations, especially those considered Gen X, are willing to pay more for sustainable products, prompting companies like Thor and Winnebago to introduce electric motorhomes. Government incentives are also helping drive interest in electric and solar on-board power generation.

Continuing with the theme of sustainability, the demand for energy-efficient appliances and solar-powered systems in RVs is also growing. Innovations by Ford, Mercedes, and other automakers are designed to improve towing capabilities and electric vehicle range. The new focus on sustainability also includes using renewable resources, better insulation, low-flow water systems, LED lighting, and adopting lighter, recyclable materials to reduce fuel consumption and environmental impact.

Compact RV Trailers Gaining Popularity

Compact RV trailers are increasingly popular due to their affordability, space efficiency, and versatility. These compact trailers cater to a broad market by offering a practical and economical solution for outdoor adventures. They provide significant savings for families compared to motorhomes and fit various budgets and camping needs.

Compact trailers currently represent 20% of all RVs in the U.S., compared to 14% for Class A motorhomes.

These lightweight trailers are ideal for camping enthusiasts who lack the space, budget, or appropriate vehicle for a full-sized RV. New compact trailers have been introduced to capture this market range in size between teardrop and pop-up trailers. They often lack bathrooms but may include optional outdoor shower stalls.

Pop-up campers are also making a comeback as a low-cost, lightweight option for minimalist campers.



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Aerodynamic Design is Key to Fuel Efficiency

The reduced range of electric vehicles to tow a trailer and the current cost of gas have fueled the need for lighter and more aerodynamic trailers. Some experts believe aerodynamics is more important than weight. Weight is easy to figure out, but understanding which designs are truly the most aerodynamic and will deliver greater fuel economy/EV range is a little more challenging.

RV Lifestyle conducted an A/B test to determine the true significance of aerodynamic design. The test surmised that the more aerodynamic trailer, despite being double the length of the non-aerodynamic trailer, nearly double the weight, 7 inches taller, and having twice the tires to turn, still got 12% greater fuel efficiency.

Technology Integration

The integration of smart technology is revolutionizing the RV camping experience by enhancing comfort, convenience, and safety. Modern RVs are equipped with Internet of Things devices for remote monitoring and temperature control, lighting, fuel, and water levels. Mobile apps interface with RV systems, providing updates and alerts to users' smart devices for real-time information and control. Sophisticated navigation systems tailored for larger vehicles account for road restrictions and recommend safe, RV-friendly routes. Wi-Fi Improvements and satellite internet options allow remote workers and travelers to stay connected, supporting the growing community of digital nomads using RVs as mobile offices. All these technological advancements allow RVers to stay connected and informed, making RVing a more appealing lifestyle and enjoyable experience.





RV Ownership – Demographic Shift

The RV industry is experiencing a significant demographic shift. The ability to stay connected, which allows for changing work habits along with changing lifestyle preferences, is helping the RV market expand to include a younger and more diverse group of owners. The rise of remote work has spurred interest in RVs, allowing people to combine travel and work from anywhere.

While the typical RV owner is in their mid-40s, overall RV ownership is evenly split between those above and below age 55. However, ownership is starting to skew younger, with 18-to-34-year-olds now comprising 22% of current owners. Additionally, 84% of younger groups (Millennial and Gen Z) plan to buy another RV, mostly preferring to buy new models instead of used ones. Nearly 31% of current RV owners are first-timers, reflecting a recent surge in RV popularity. ³

The industry is experiencing a significant demographic shift with an increase in younger generations who strive to find a better work and life balance on the road.

Enhanced Convenience Features

The RV market's evolution reflects a commitment to meeting varied consumer preferences while enhancing comfort, functionality, and sustainability. More choices and customization options are now being offered to cater to diverse needs and lifestyles.

While retirees seek comfortable and easy-to-use RVs for winter travel, families look for units with bunk beds; rustic campers want off-grid capabilities, and digital nomads need built-in offices. Special-use RVs for tailgating and outdoor adventures are also on the rise.

Other enhanced features that are more in demand include expanded storage space for adventure gear, outdoor kitchens to bring the comforts of home to an outdoor setting, and improved water storage to support longer stays in remote locations.

Luxury amenities such as gourmet kitchens, smart bathrooms with spa-like features, and built-in entertainment systems are becoming more common as well, making RVing a luxurious yet practical travel option. Innovations in interior design create versatile, multi-functional living spaces with convertible furniture, larger windows, and open floor plans that offer a spacious feel and panoramic views.



Prioritizing Safety

The RV industry is prioritizing safety and health with several innovations and features. These advancements reflect its commitment to making RVing safer and healthier and enhancing the overall travel experience.

For example, companies like Jayco are introducing anti-lock braking systems (ABS) and improved anti-sway technology to enhance stability during towing. Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS) such as lane-keeping assist, adaptive cruise control, and automatic emergency braking are becoming standard to help reduce accident risks. New RVs often include fire suppression systems and carbon monoxide detectors to enhance living space safety.

Health and wellness improvements are being integrated into RV designs that focus on hygiene. This is, in part, a response to COVID-19 pandemic-related consumer concerns. These improvements include items like better ventilation systems, mold-resistant materials, and easier-to-clean surfaces. High-end models are now equipped with water filtration systems to ensure access to clean drinking water.

The Significance of Digital Marketing and E-Commerce

RV dealerships are leveraging digital tools to engage customers more effectively and measure their return on investment. Dealerships use Google AdWords, chat windows, and text alerts to attract and retain customers.

For their part, customers are well-informed about products, pricing, and dealerships, emphasizing the importance of managing online reputations and responding to reviews. The RV purchasing process increasingly starts and sometimes concludes online, with buyers influenced more by online information than in-dealership salespeople.

Austin Hardware and Supply is committed to helping you stay ahead of the curve. We stock thousands of items from leading manufacturers that meet the changing needs of the RV industry. In addition, our in-house engineers are here to help you reimagine and redesign products that will help you keep up with market trends. If there's a product you feel can be optimized for today's changing environment, please contact us, and our engineers will be happy to listen and help bring your vision to life.

¹ RV Industry Association, "February Shipment Report Shows 1% Increase", February 2024 Report.

² RV Business, "RV Shipments to Rise to Median of 391,400 by End of 2025", June 4, 2024.

³ RV Industry Association, "Millennial And Generation Z Interest In RVs Has Skyrocketed Throughout 2021", January 3, 2022.

