

Skiers look at their back yard, not slopes

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A study suggested that U.S. skiers are less likely to head to the slopes if their backyards are snow-free, despite how much snow is reported at ski areas.

University of New Hampshire Professors Cliff Brown and Lawrence Hamilton, along with Professor Barry Keim of Louisiana State University, discovered the New England ski industry is directly affected by the so-called backyard effect, which means that urban snow conditions significantly affect skier activity. Snow in urban backyards can be as important to ski businesses as snow in the mountains, the researchers said.

Since snow and weather follow deeper climate trends, the research also has implications for understanding the potential consequences of climate change and how it could impact the New England ski industry.

The researchers found attendance at some New England ski areas is more influenced by snowfall in Boston than at the resorts themselves. For example, a 1 centimeter increase in the previous day's snow-depth at a ski area near Cannon, N.H., increases predicted attendance by 11 skiers/snowboarders. But a 1 centimeter increase in Boston's snow-depth increases predicted attendance by 18 skiers.

The study appears in the *International Journal of Climatology*.

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