

CAMP INSIGHTS



THE JCAMP 180® JEWISH CAMP TRENDS SURVEY

Jewish camps, like other Jewish organizations, are affected by societal changes. Over the last decade, changes in demographics, the summer recreational marketplace, Jewish engagement, attitudes towards Israel, philanthropic approaches, racial and social justice, and climate change have all affected camps. The better the camp field can anticipate societal trends, the better we can prepare for them. To help our camps and ourselves plan for the future, JCamp 180®, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, launched the annual Camp Insights: The JCamp 180 Jewish Camp Trends Survey at our November 2019 conference. JCamp 180 invests in the sustainability and organizational

effectiveness of nonprofit Jewish camps to assure the continuity of Jewish identity, people, and culture through transformative camp experiences. Now in its second year, the 2020 survey, distributed just before our October conference, was aimed at understanding the implications for Jewish camp of a wide range of economic, social, parenting, technology, and Jewish life trends. While every individual camp is affected by their own unique set of local trends, the focus of this survey is on broad, far-reaching societal changes. This year, questions were added to understand how the field is thinking about the implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on summer 2021.

Who Responded

An invitation to participate in the JCamp 180 Jewish Camp Trends Survey was sent in October 2020 to all registrants of the JCamp 180 conference, which at the time numbered 826. 181 individuals completed surveys, a 22% response rate. The respondent profile is shown in Figure 1. 75% of the respondents were professionals and just under 20% were volunteers. Over 60% were

from overnight camps and 20% were from day camps. The remaining 20% was comprised of consultants, (non-board) donors, and respondents from supporting organizations. The largest segment – professionals from overnight camps – accounted for nearly half of the sample (46%).

Figure 1: Distribution of Participants

	Professionals	Volunteers	Total
Overnight Camps	84 (46%)	27 (15%)	111 (61%)
Day Camps	34 (19%)	2 (1%)	36 (20%)
Movements and other supporting camp organizations	18 (10%)	6 (3%)	24 (13%)
Consultants, donors, other	—	—	10 (6%)
Total	136 (75%)	35 (19%)	181



Trends Surveyed

The survey asked respondents to rate 23 societal trends on a five-point scale regarding “the extent to which [it] creates significant opportunities or challenges... over the next 5 years” (See Appendix for full list and average ratings)¹ . By and large overnight and day camps, professionals and lay leaders held remarkably similar views of the significance of the key trends.

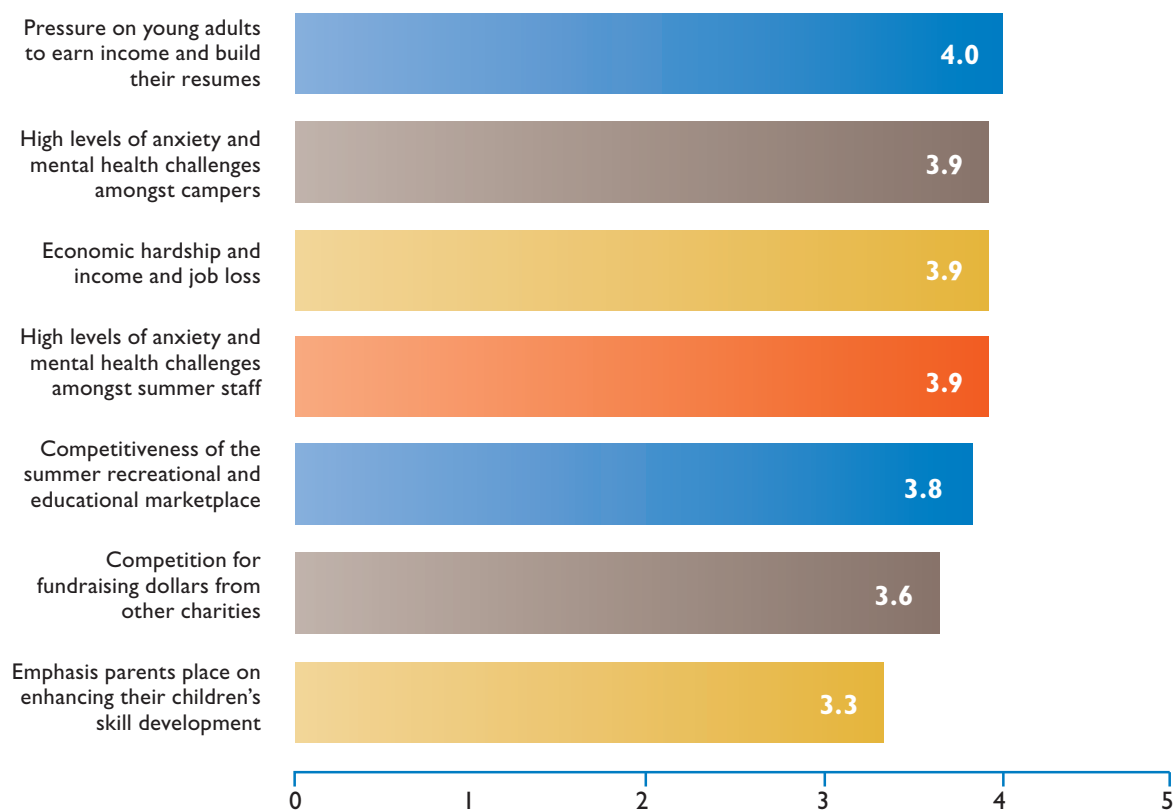
Overall, the top trends were similar to 2019, with **‘Pressure on young adults to earn income**

and build their resumes’ and **‘High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst campers’** remaining atop the list.

See figure below for the Top 7 responses. Undoubtedly reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, **‘Economic hardship and income and job loss.’** was the one new item at the top of the list. By comparison, **‘Possible recession in coming years’** did not even make the top ten in 2019.

AVERAGE RATING OF TOP SEVEN TRENDS

Average rating on a 5-point scale



¹Two changes were made from the 2019 survey. First, due to the economic crisis that the Covid-19 pandemic has created, the 2019 trend of ‘Possible recession in coming years’ was adjusted to ‘Economic hardship and income and job loss.’ Additionally, while last year’s survey asked about the relative importance of ‘High levels of youth and teen anxiety and mental health challenges,’ in 2020 this question was split into two, to differentiate between campers and summer staff.



Results – Covid-19

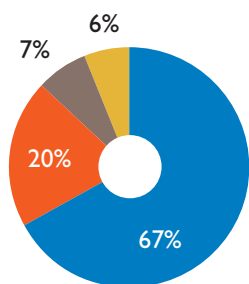
This year’s survey also included a section on how members of the field are thinking about the implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic on summer 2021.

As shown below, more than 2/3 of respondents projected a decrease in enrollment for Summer 2021. 75% of respondents also expect to see an increase in scholarship need. 68% projected increasing staffing costs for 2021.

Like many other sectors, camps have quickly adopted online tools and envisage intensified use in the coming year for most every camp function, including recruiting and retaining campers and staff, and communicating with parents and donors. See figure below for complete details.

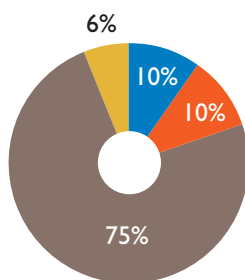
IMPLICATIONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUMMER 2021

Recognizing the many uncertainties, how do you think camp enrollment for Summer 2021 will compare to a typical camp year (e.g. Summer 2019)?



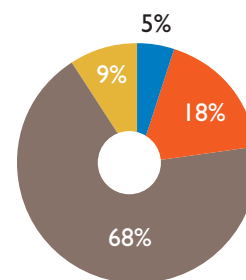
- Decrease
- Stay about the same
- Increase
- No idea

How do you think the dollar amount of scholarships/ subsidies for Summer 2021 will compare to a typical camp year (e.g. Summer 2019)?



- Decrease
- Stay about the same
- Increase
- No idea

How do you expect summer staffing costs for 2021 to compare to a typical camp year (e.g. Summer 2019)?

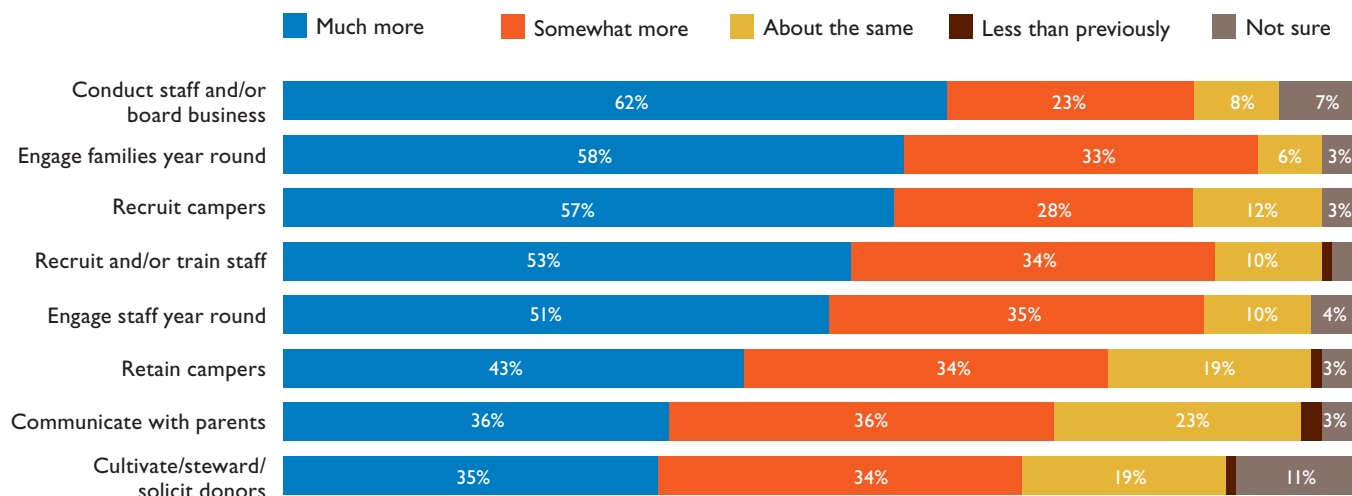


- Decrease
- Stay about the same
- Increase
- No idea



USE OF ONLINE TOOLS

One opportunity illuminated by Covid-19 is the use of online tools. Compared to a typical year (i.e., 2019), to what extent do you see using online tools to conduct the following camp functions?



Key Take-Aways

We draw a number of take-aways from the survey results.

First, while staff may be especially motivated to return to overnight camp this summer after a largely canceled season, over the long run, innovative strategies to make camp attractive to young adults will be critical. These may include year-round engagement, internships, partnerships with colleges for college credit, mentoring programs, or other interventions to help young people network and grow the professional skills they seek.

Mental health already was a significant issue pre-Covid-19, and will undoubtedly pose a serious

challenge this summer (exacerbated by additional constraints including restrictions on staff leaving the camp) and for several years to come. Many camps, movements, the Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC), and others, are taking steps to address this issue. The understandably high level of camp leaders' concern with mental health calls for even further investigation and investment in MESH² activities, professional expertise, and parent communication (and education) to address camper mental health. Camps should be and are looking to the many ways for addressing this issue with staff as well including staff selection, orientation and training, and in-camp options for time-off, specialized staff support, and more.

² Mental, Emotional, and Social Health



There are further implications related to the Covid-19 findings:

- While camper retention is doing relatively well at most camps, recruitment of new campers has been slower. This is due in part to the loss of a year of word of mouth, uncertainties about the summer felt by prospective camper parents, and the deferral of summer decisions. As the virus is tamed (e.g., vaccinations, better testing, treatment) before camp, we expect that new camper enrollment will see an uptick as parents look for activities for their children. In the meantime, this is a critical area for sharing tips and strategies, particularly, to function in the zoom-dominated world over the next few months. Opportunities for regional marketing around the value proposition (and now safety) of Jewish summer camp could prove valuable.
- As the economic consequences of Covid-19 ripple through society, increased financial aid and incentives are likely to be required for a few more years. Continued creative thinking will be important to address the amplified economic hardships that families are facing including advocating for Federation, donor, and community-wide approaches to making camp more affordable to families who need it most.
- Camps were forced to jump into the deep end of the digital pool this Spring and did an amazing job of using these tools for communicating with stakeholders and conducting summer programming. As we continue down the hybrid (digital and in person) path, the camp field will need to invest more in learning about and acquiring new tools and sharing insights and best practices about how to use this new medium for everything from recruitment and parlor meetings to donor engagement and staff training to communication with parents and remote working.

How to Use this Report

JCamp 180 encourages you to share this Trends report with your camp communities, including your lay leaders, community stakeholders, and camp funders to help ground your camp in the overall field and to provide context for the unique issues confronting your camp. We see this report as reinforcing many pre-Covid-19 challenges faced by Jewish camp while bringing new Covid-19-influenced challenges and opportunities.

JCamp 180 is committed to carrying out an annual survey and looks forward to hearing from you about emerging trends and about the creative interventions that you and others are developing in response. As ever, we look forward to partnering with the camp field as it prepares for what promises to be a critical, powerful, meaningful, complex, and fun 2021 summer.

We would love to hear your views on the key trends, how the camping field, funders, and others might best respond, and the type of support JCamp 180 can provide. Submit your ideas, comments, and questions to jcamp180@hgf.org.

Authored by JCamp 180

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Appendix – Full list of trends surveyed in 2020 and their average scores

Trend.....	Average Score
Pressure on young adults to earn income and build their resumes	4.0
High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst campers.....	3.9
Economic hardship and income and job loss.....	3.9
High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst summer staff.....	3.9
Competitiveness of the summer recreational and educational marketplace.....	3.8
Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities.....	3.6
Emphasis parents place on enhancing their children’s skill development.....	3.3
Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people	3.3
Growing prominence of social and racial justice issues.....	3.2
Pervasiveness of digital technology, internet, and social media.....	3.2
Growing demands on professionals and boards.....	3.2
‘Helicopter’ or ‘Snowplow’ parenting.....	3.2
Perceived/ actual rising cost of living Jewishly.....	3.1
Declining participation in synagogues and Jewish day schools.....	3.0
Fewer volunteers with the time and skills to be Lay Leaders.....	2.9
Funders’ expectation of proof of impact.....	2.9
Growing levels of anti-Semitism	2.9
Growing polarization of political beliefs among Americans	2.7
The “Me Too” movement.....	2.7
Increased ambivalence towards Israel among younger American Jews.....	2.5
Growing risks to data security and privacy.....	2.5
Climate change impact on sites and facilities	2.4
Transfer of significant wealth from dying parents to adult “baby boomers”.....	2.3



The **Harold Grinspoon Foundation** (HGF), animated by Founder Harold Grinspoon’s entrepreneurial spirit, strives to build Jewish identity and strengthen Jewish life with its PJ Library®, JCamp 180®, and Life & Legacy® programs. Through partnerships and leveraged giving, the HGF encourages other funders to support the Jewish community. The Foundation and its partners are nurturing new generations, cultivating legacy giving and investing in experiences that enhance continuity and assure the Jewish future. To date, the HGF has disbursed more than \$250 million through its programs, inspiring over \$1.5 billion in gifts from others.