

CAMP INSIGHTS

2021 EDITION



THE JCAMP 180® 2021 JEWISH CAMP TRENDS SURVEY

HIGHLIGHTS

JCamp 180® launched its third annual *Camp Insights: The JCamp 180 Jewish Camp Trends Survey* in November 2021 to support future planning in the field of Jewish camp. A total of 191 professionals and volunteers from Jewish overnight and day camps and other camping organizations participated.

TOP TRENDS

Affecting Nonprofit Jewish Summer Camps Identified

- *High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges among campers*
- *High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges among staff*
- *Pressures on young adults to earn income and build their resumes*

Other top trends include the *Continuing challenges stemming from COVID-19* (4), *Competitiveness of the summer and recreational marketplace* (5), *Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people* (6), and *Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities* (7).

The top-rated trends have been very similar over the past three years (including pre-COVID-19 in 2019) and across types of camps and professional and volunteer roles. (See Appendix 2)



HIGHLIGHTS *(continued)*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Take an Integrated Approach to Organization

Camps increasingly must wrestle with an emerging combination of trends impacting organizational design and management. Camps have put in place a variety of organizational initiatives while also exploring future strategies to: attract and retain more staff; increase compensation and incentives, especially to retain older summer staff; address the mental health needs of both campers and staff; incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in camp programming, facilities, and staff training; create internship opportunities to retain top staff; and ensure the senior professional and volunteer expertise to navigate this organizational journey. Because of the impact of organizational functions on each other and key camp functions such as camper experience and enrollment, camps will need to avoid treating these areas as silos and take an integrated approach to prioritizing, sequencing, and funding these initiatives.

Communicate an Integrated Value Proposition

Camps face a world in which the key spheres in which they operate — fundraising, summer recreational market, board/volunteer recruitment, and, more than ever, summer and year-round staffing — are hypercompetitive. In virtually all these areas, survey respondents highlighted the need for camps to better clarify and communicate their vision to the relevant constituencies. These include: current and prospective donors, parents, campers, volunteers, and staff. Camps face the challenge — and opportunity — to articulate and communicate a compelling and integrated value proposition to these diverse groups. This requires increased attention to and strengthened skills in brand positioning and communication.

JCamp 180 is planning to further synthesize and share the survey findings through our regular publications and special-purpose webinars during 2022. We also would like to encourage camps to share their perspectives and plans with each other; we would love to hear your views on the survey findings and implications for Jewish camp and any related actions you are undertaking or considering (jcamp180@hgf.org).



About This Report

JCamp 180®, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, launched its third annual *Camp Insights: The JCamp 180 Jewish Camp Trends Survey* in November 2021 to support future planning in the field of nonprofit Jewish camp.

JCamp 180 invests in the sustainability and organizational effectiveness of nonprofit Jewish camps to assure the continuity of Jewish identity and culture

through transformative camp experiences. This survey is aimed at understanding the implications for Jewish camp of a wide range of economic, social, parenting, technology, and Jewish life trends. While individual camps are affected by their own unique set of local trends, the focus of JCamp 180’s annual survey is on the impact of broad, far-reaching societal changes on Jewish camp.

Who Responded

An invitation to participate in the *Camp Insights: The JCamp 180 Jewish Camp Trends Survey* was sent in November 2021 to all board members and staff from camps affiliated with JCamp 180 and to registrants of the 2021 JCamp 180 conference. A total of 191 individuals from 116 camps and camping organizations participated. The respondent profile is shown in

Figure 1. Among respondents, 68% were professionals, and just over 30% were volunteers. Over 75% were from overnight camps, and 15% were affiliated with day camps.

The largest segment — professionals from overnight camps — accounted for half of the sample (50%).

Figure 1: Distribution of Participants

	Professionals	Volunteers	Total
Overnight Camps	96 (50%)	52 (27 %)	148 (77%)
Day Camps	24 (13%)	4 (2%)	28 (15%)
Movements and other supporting camp organizations	9 (5%)	6 (3%)	15 (8%)
Total	129 (68%)	62 (32%)	191



Trends Surveyed

The survey asked respondents to rate 24 societal trends on a five-point scale regarding “the extent to which [it] creates significant opportunities or challenges for your camp over the next 5 years.” (See Appendix I for full list and average ratings.) By and large, respondents from overnight and day camps, professionals, and lay leaders held similar views of the significance of the key trends.

Top Trends

As indicated in Figure 2, the top two trends were *High levels of anxiety and mental challenges amongst campers (1)* and *staff (2)*. The third-highest trend was *Pressures on young adults to earn income and build their resumes (3)*. **These three trends have been consistently rated higher than other trends for all three years of the survey, including pre-COVID-19.** The fourth highest rated trend was *Continuing implications stemming from COVID-19 (4)*— a new question this year.

Competitiveness of the Summer and Recreational marketplace (5), *Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion*

for LGBTQ+ people (6) and *Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities (7)* rounded out the Top 7 trends. There is great consistency from last year. The seven highest-rated trends (except the new one on COVID-19) also ranked in the top eight last year. Modest changes occurred for *Economic hardship and income and job loss*, which went from the third to ninth, reflecting an improving economy. *Emphasis parents place on enhancing their children’s skill development* moved from seventh to eleventh.

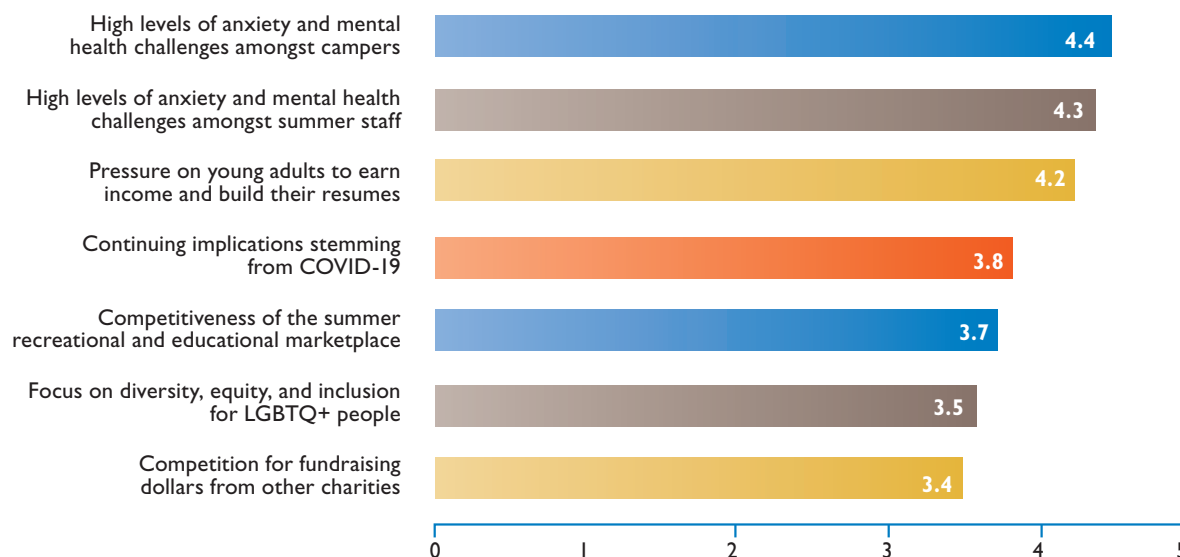
Other Trends — Staffing Challenges

Respondents also submitted a few other trends. The most frequently identified trends revolved around staffing, including: pressures to pay staff; challenges of recruiting both summer and professional staff; and staff burnout. A number of respondents also identified trends that are limiting camps’ ability to achieve their enrollment goals, including longer school terms, cost of camping, negative economic implications of COVID-19, and the need to better sell the value of camp.

Figure 2


AVERAGE RATING OF TOP SEVEN TRENDS

Average rating on a 5-point scale





Camp Responses to Trends

For the first time, we asked camps how they were responding to the various trends and what they saw as the most promising solutions. There were hundreds of responses. Key responses to the top trends are highlighted below.  Quotes shared in this report may be slightly edited or combined for clarity.

Mental Health of Campers

In response to high levels of anxiety and mental health challenges, exacerbated (though not necessarily caused) by COVID-19, **camps have recognized that they are an integral part of support for their campers with mental health challenges.** Camps have significantly increased their commitment to camper mental health, with most believing far more supports are still needed. Camps are looking to increase their complement of specialized human resources in this area, which may include social workers, mental health professionals, MESH experts, camp therapists, psychologists, wellness staff, camper care professionals, and camper support teams. Camps made sure that campers receiving outside support (e.g., therapists) during the summer had access to comfortable spaces for connecting to these third parties, and periodically liaised with them to provide coordinated support to the campers.

Most camps see increased training for senior staff as critical to the provision of mental health supports. In addition to hiring staff, a number of camps propose to strengthen pre-camp intake/screening of campers, even while recognizing that parents aren't consistently forthcoming. Many camps are planning to increase check-ins with campers during the summer and to take a more systematic approach to post-camp follow-up with campers and parents.

We added questions to our application that parents had to answer before moving on with the application and thus forcing parents to tell us better information about their camper. We were able to flag campers ahead of time that required safety plans. I met with each family and the camper ahead of time to set up a game plan. The game-changer was first having the info ahead of time and not learning about the campers or staff issues at camp. This set us up for success.

We need to hire a mental health expert to work specifically with our summer staff to ensure everyone is in the right mindset to manage their own mental health so they can be present for the needs of their campers. Our counselors are still growing and maturing; they need support to be successful in their short-term roles.

Mental Health of Staff

A similar approach is being taken with seasonal staff, but with more emphasis on pre-camp and summer training for all staff on self-care. Staff health is a priority, including through reducing staff "on" hours and creating well-being programming (e.g., late night snacks, supervised trips out of the camp). In response to COVID-19, camps ramped up counselor-care staffing and are planning to maintain and grow these resources.



We have been running a summer internship program that allows staff to work at camp and have a pre-camp internship in their professional field of interest. This will help us recruit new staff, retain existing staff, and address the concern of compensation.

Pressure on Young Adults to Earn Income and Build their Resumes

Many camps indicate they are facing serious challenges recruiting and retaining staff, in particular older staff members. They are deploying or considering a range of strategies. These include: creating camp internship opportunities, ideally paid, which operate prior to or after camp; increasing salaries, often significantly, and offering incentives for older staff; providing college recommendation letters; and engaging summer staff to help solve staffing issues. A central strategy is to educate potential staff and families that “camp is a real job that assists in building resumes,” including by hearing from trusted non-camp professionals how camp provides valuable job-related “skill sets.”

COVID-19

Camps are responding to the continuing implications stemming from COVID-19, which means balancing many compelling and competing demands. These include: maintaining close attention to safety without “letting one’s guard down”; being “flexible and adapting to the continuing uncertainties” while recognizing the post- (and continuing) traumatic stress of COVID-19; encouraging “the healing to begin”; returning to year-round in-person programming; continuing to transparently communicate with stakeholders; and managing costs. Camps are expecting to apply many of the 2021 COVID-19 policies and protocols to summer 2022.

COVID-19 will impact us all for years to come in ways that we have no idea yet, which will touch personnel, finances, services, campers, etc.

COVID-19 has caused our board members to become more engaged and we are trying to increase our recruitment efforts to avoid burnout

We have a large population of LGBTQ identifying campers and staff and they find our camp to be a warm, welcoming, and inclusive community, in part due to our support of pronouns, respect for all facets of a person’s identity, and our housing policies.

Inclusion

Steadily rated higher each year is the trend *Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for LGBTQ+ people*. Many camps indicate they are “proactive and affirming of LGBTQ+ campers” in order to ensure that “camp is a safe and welcoming home for all campers and staff regardless of sexuality and gender identity.” Responses from camps included investing in all-gender cabins and bathrooms, incorporating DEI into pre-camp training, and creating DEI working groups that include campers, staff, alumni, board members, and professional staff.



Competitiveness of the Summer Recreational Marketplace

Many camps highlighted the importance of better understanding their marketplace as a basis for differentiating and enhancing their offerings. Camps are planning to continually add variety, specialization, and new “bells and whistles.” Camps also are considering increased flexibility of scheduling for individual campers; different session-length models and start times; and offering more year-round and family programming. Various respondents also articulated the need to become more competitive on aspects of the camp experience beyond programming, e.g., transportation and aftercare. Many camps emphasized the importance of “learning how to tell our story” and “authentically” selling our unique value proposition to the communities “which match our brand.”

To help with camper and staff recruitment and even fundraising, we share the stories of our alumni who have made an impact on our communities and the world - explaining to parents that the skills and tools their teens get after spending even one summer with us will serve them for a lifetime.

COVID-19 proved that our children were the first to suffer from being isolated for so long from their friends and the fact that funds being raised went directly to ensure our kids were able to be free at camp was helpful when fundraising.

Fundraising

With respect to the trend *Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities*, key responses are to target communication and focus on relationship building and cultivation with parents, alumni, and other potential donors. A number of camps highlighted the importance of gaining donor attention/mind-share “including through donor stewardship and events” and sharpening the communication of camps’ unique contributions during COVID-19 and beyond.



Key Takeaways

COVID-19 has brought a unique, once-in-a-lifetime impact — much of it through intensifying trends which originated pre-COVID-19 (e.g., camper mental health challenges, pressures on staff to build their resumes, competitive summer recreational marketplace). Broader trends, related to diversity and equity and racial and social justice, also rooted in the past, have received more public prominence in recent years. The net result of the intersection of COVID-19 and longer-standing and more recently prominent trends has created new challenges and opportunities for camps. Although many of the individual survey results may seem familiar, what has changed is that camps are facing a tsunami of organizational and communication challenges that individually and collectively demand more attention than ever before. Two key takeaways stand out to us from the 2021 survey.

Take an Integrated Approach to Organization

Camps increasingly must wrestle with an emerging combination of trends impacting organizational design and management. Camps have put in place a variety of organizational initiatives while also exploring future strategies that address the following questions.

- How do we recruit staff and retain older staff?
- How do we strengthen our mental health and well-being supports for campers and staff?
- How much do we need to increase our compensation and incentives in order to attract and retain top staff, especially older ones?
- How do we integrate digital technology into our work processes — including more remote work and year-round stakeholder communication — while maintaining a screen-free camp?
- How do we become more sensitive and effective at addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion for our campers and staff?

- What are the competencies and required changes in the role of our camp director; our summer and year-round organizational structure; training; and human-resource policies to accomplish all this in an integrated and financially viable way?
- What type of governance competencies, processes, and structures will provide effective oversight and guidance as we navigate these new demands for organizational sophistication?
- How do we fund all the needed investments?

Because of the impact of these organizational elements on each other and key camp functions such as programming and enrollment - camps will ideally avoid treating these areas as silos and take an integrated approach to prioritizing, sequencing, and funding these changes. These are fruitful areas for camps to share their experiences and plans while also looking to the rich experience and expertise of other nonprofit sectors.

Communicate an Integrated Value Proposition

Camps face a world in which the key spheres in which they operate — fundraising, summer recreational market, board/volunteer recruitment, and, more than ever, summer and year-round staffing — are hypercompetitive. In virtually all these areas, survey respondents highlighted the need for camps to better clarify and communicate their vision to the relevant constituencies. These include: current and prospective donors, parents, campers, volunteers, and staff. Camps face the challenge — and opportunity — to articulate and communicate a compelling and integrated value proposition to these diverse groups. This requires increased attention to and strengthened skills in brand positioning and communication.



How to Use this Report

JCamp 180 encourages you to share this report with your camp constituencies, including professional staff, lay leaders, camp funders, and community leaders, to gain their perspectives on what trends are most relevant to your camp and potential implications and responses.

As ever, we look forward to partnering with you and the camp field as it prepares for what promises to be a critical, powerful, meaningful, complex, and fun summer 2022.

In the meantime, we would love to hear your views on the key trends, how the Jewish camp field, funders, and others might best respond, and the type of support JCamp 180 can provide. Please share your ideas, comments, and questions to jcamp180@hgf.org.

Authored by JCamp 180

Michael Miloff and Herschel Singer, Sarah Eisinger, Kevin Martone





Appendix I – Average Rating of Trends 2021

Based on following scale: 5 | Very Significant 3 | Somewhat significant 1 | Not Significant

Trend	Average Score
High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst campers.....	4.4
High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst summer staff.....	4.3
Pressure on young adults to earn income and build their resumes.....	4.2
Continuing implications stemming from COVID-19.....	3.8
Competitiveness of the summer recreational and educational marketplace.....	3.7
Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people.....	3.5
Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities.....	3.4
Pervasiveness of digital technology, internet, and social media.....	3.4
Economic hardship and income and job loss.....	3.4
‘Helicopter’ or ‘Snowplow’ parenting.....	3.4
Emphasis parents place on enhancing their children’s skill development.....	3.3
Growing prominence of social and racial justice issues.....	3.3
Perceived/ actual rising cost of living Jewishly.....	3.2
Growing demands on professionals and boards to deal with financial, regulatory, personnel and other business issues.....	3.2
Fewer volunteers with the time and skills to be Lay Leaders.....	3.1
Declining participation in synagogues and Jewish day schools.....	3.0
Growing levels of anti-Semitism.....	2.9
Climate change impact on sites and facilities.....	2.9
Growing polarization of political beliefs among Americans.....	2.9
Funders’ expectation of proof of impact.....	2.8
The “Me Too” movement.....	2.8
Increased ambivalence towards Israel among younger American Jews.....	2.7
Growing risks to data security and privacy.....	2.5
Transfer of significant wealth from dying parents to adult “baby boomers”.....	2.4



Appendix 2 – Trends Over Time

	2019	2020	2021
1	High levels of youth and teen anxiety and mental health challenges	Pressure on young adults to earn income and build their resumes	High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst campers
2	Pressure on young adults to earn income and build their resumes	High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst campers	High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst summer staff
3	Competitiveness of the summer recreational and educational marketplace	Economic hardship and income and job loss	Pressure on young adults to earn income and build their resumes
4	Perceived/actual rising cost of living Jewishly	High levels of anxiety and mental health challenges amongst summer staff	(*NEW in 2021) Continuing implications stemming from COVID-19
5	Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities	Competitiveness of the summer recreational and educational marketplace	Competitiveness of the summer recreational and educational marketplace
6	Emphasis parents place on enhancing their children’s skill development	Competition for fundraising dollars from other charities	Focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people



The **Harold Grinspoon Foundation** (HGF), fueled 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 \$320 million through its programs, inspiring over \$1.5 billion in gifts from others.