

CAMP INSIGHTS

2024 EDITION



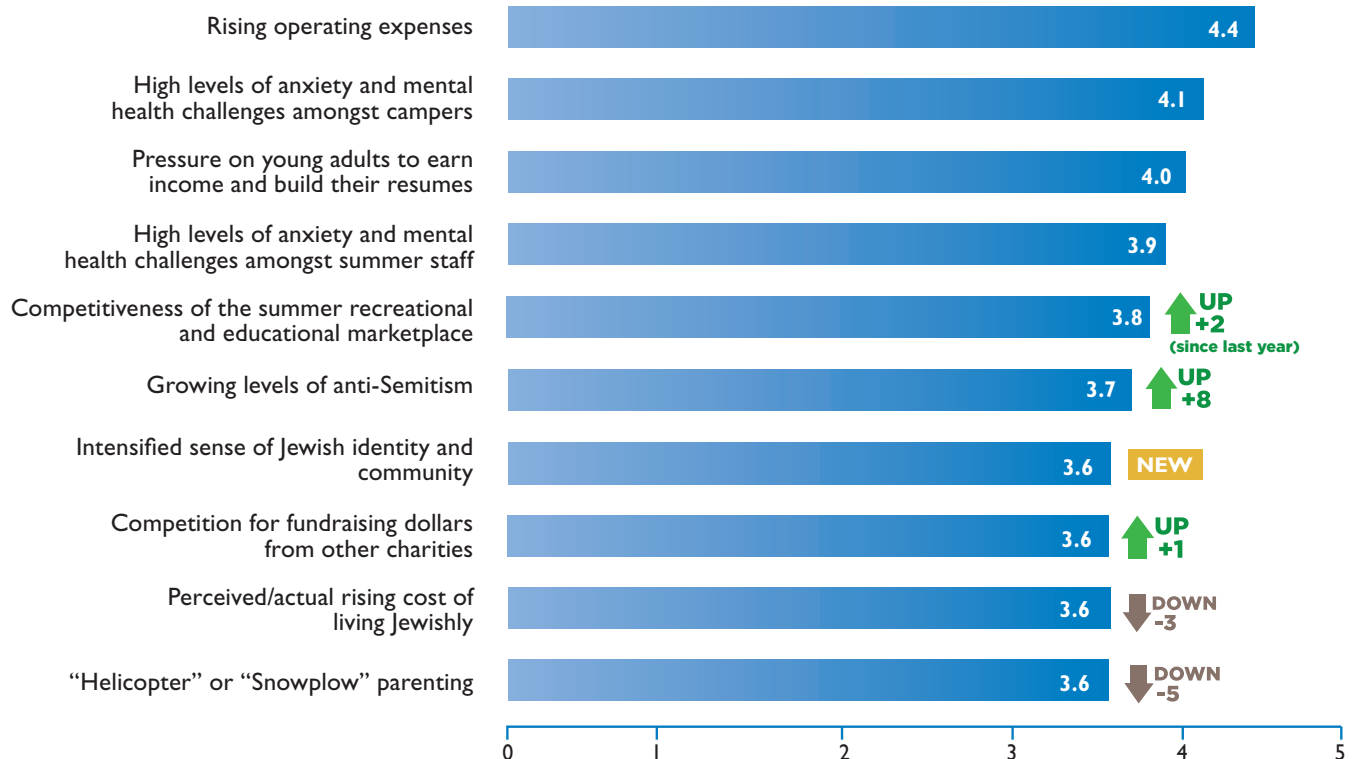
THE JCAMP 180® JEWISH CAMP SOCIETAL TRENDS SURVEY

How do societal trends impact Jewish summer camps and what can we learn from understanding these trends? Since 2019, JCamp 180 has conducted an annual survey of Jewish camp leaders to understand the implications of a wide range of economic, demographic, technological, cultural, and other societal trends on Jewish camps. The goal of this work is to support effective future planning by Jewish camp professionals and boards so that camps can navigate the myriad issues coming their way.

The Top 10 Trends for 2024

Staff and lay leaders from overnight and day camps across North America rated each of 28 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.”

Overall Averages



Based on the following scale: 1 | Not Significant 2 | Slightly Significant 3 | Somewhat Significant 4 | Significant 5 | Very Significant



For the second year in a row, **rising operating expenses** (1) was the top-rated trend. **Anxiety and mental health challenges among campers** (2) and **staff** (4) and **pressures on young adults to earn income and build their résumés** (3) occupied the other top-ranked positions. These four trends have been consistently rated more significant than other trends for each year of the survey, including the one conducted pre-COVID-19. **Competitiveness of the summer recreational marketplace** (5) returned to the top 5 this year after only one year outside this group.

In the wake of October 7th, **growing levels of anti-Semitism** (6) is up from its mid-teen ranking of the past few years and a newly added trend, **intensified sense of Jewish identity and community** (7), joins it in the top 10. (Another newly added trend, **deepening connection with Israel among many younger North American Jews**, ranked 11th.)

The rest of the top 10 includes three trends that continue to be highly ranked in the annual survey: **competition for fundraising dollars from other charities** (8), **perceived/actual rising cost of living Jewishly** (9), and **helicopter or snowplow parenting** (10), which dropped from the 5th spot last year. Parenting was a big topic in last year's survey, in which camp staff and board members cited parents as the top factor in taking the joy out of their role. We hope that the change in rank this year reflects improvements camps have made to respond to this trend.

Pervasiveness of digital technology, internet, and social media (12) was the only trend dropping out of the top 10, which it did for the first time. Further analysis is needed to understand this drop in rankings. Has it simply been replaced by more urgent trends (such as those related to Oct. 7 and its aftermath)? Or has technology become so ingrained in our day-to-day lives that it has receded more to the background?

Looking further down the rankings, a few trends had notable changes. Over the past two years, **focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion for LGBTQ+ people** dropped from 6 to 17, and **growing prominence of social and racial justice issues** dropped from 12 to 22. These changes may reflect both the urgency of other trends as well as the many initiatives which camps have taken in recent years to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Of note, **climate change impact on facilities and operations** rose to 16 (from 20) last year, its highest ranking yet. And **implications of COVID-19** dropped all the way to 27th reflecting the pandemic's receding impact. Finally, **impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, a societal trend newly added to the survey this year, was ranked last out of 28. We imagine that the growing role of AI in society will take on more prominence for camps in the coming years.

The full list and average ratings of all 28 societal trends can be found in Appendix 1.

Who Responded

In November 2024, Board members and staff from camps affiliated with JCamp 180 were invited to participate in this fifth annual JCamp 180 Camp Insights Survey. A total of 230 individuals from 119 camps and camping organizations participated. 67% of respondents were professionals and 33% were volunteers. 82% were from overnight camps, and 17% were affiliated with day camps with 1% from national and other camping organizations. The largest segment, professionals from overnight camps, accounted for nearly half of the sample (48%). By and large, respondents held

similar views of the significance of the key trends across camp type (day/overnight), role (staff/lay leaders), gender, and age.

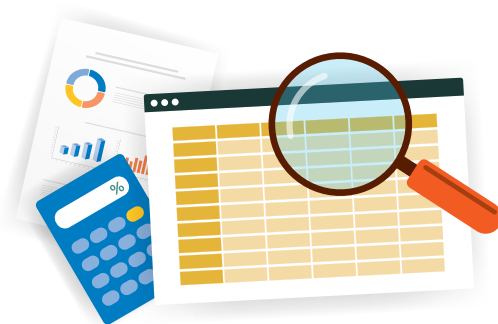
Trends Surveyed

The survey asked respondents to rate each of 28 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 1 for full list and average ratings.)



JCamp 180 Research and Consulting – Making Meaning

In response to the leading trend on rising operating expenses, JCamp 180 launched a Financial Sustainability research project to further understand the economic challenges and opportunities this poses to camps. Based on this research, we are now piloting a new consulting service to help individual camps develop financial sustainability plans, including multi-year budgets.



Camp Response

We also encourage camps to take time to reflect on how these societal trends manifest at your camp. JCamp 180 has developed the set of questions below to facilitate the sharing of perspectives and development of a camp strategic point of view on the key trends (and associated challenges and opportunities) facing your camp and potential strategic responses. We recommend boards, senior staff, and/or seasonal staff discuss them together. JCamp 180 is available to support these efforts.

1. Which societal trends are most relevant to our camp today? How are these trends showing up as opportunities and/or challenges?
2. What additional local or camp-specific trend(s) should our camp be addressing?
3. What have been our responses to the top trends? What's working, what's not working in the approaches we have taken?
4. What are the most promising approaches our camp should pursue or at least explore in 2025 and beyond?
5. What would help us to better understand or implement these approaches?
6. What might be the obstacles and how can we overcome them?
7. What are our next steps?

Share Your Learnings

JCamp 180 looks forward to working with our camp partners to explore potential solutions to the challenges and opportunities our Jewish camping field is facing. We are committed to harvesting and disseminating promising solutions and innovations to help the field address the complexities of the times we are in. We would love to hear your views on these trends, their implications for Jewish camp, and any related actions you are undertaking or considering. Contact us at jcamp180@hgf.org.

JCamp 180, a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, invests in the sustainability and organizational effectiveness of nonprofit Jewish camps to ensure our community's future and connection to Judaism.



Appendix I – Ranking of Trends for 2024

Based on the following scale: 1 | Not Significant 2 | Slightly Significant 3 | Somewhat Significant 4 | Significant 5 | Very Significant

Trends Ranked by Overall Average Score

