

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Environmental Sustainability and the Camp Experience

Green Camps and Campfire, January 2020



HEADLINE FINDINGS

- While Camp Traditions remain of most interest to parents when considering a camp experience for their children, environmental education falls in the middle alongside parents' interest in wilderness/tripping, the arts, and sports.
- Parents agree that camps should minimize their environmental impact.
- Parents also agree that camps should have fun programs that encourage children to protect our natural environment.
- When it comes to 'green' certified camps, parents are not sure whether such a certification would make them think more highly of a camp.
- Most parents report putting in quite a bit of effort as a family to reduce their environmental impact.
- About half of parents say they talk to their children regularly about environmental responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, Green Camps and Campfire partnered on research to better understand what parents were looking for in a summer camp experience for their children. This paper summarizes findings from that research that relate to environmental sustainability and the camp experience. (Please refer to other papers published by Campfire for additional survey results.)

The population of interest was parents who have sent their children to summer camp or were considering sending their children to camp in the next few years. An online survey was conducted and distributed to contacts of Green Camps and Campfire as well as widely circulated on social media. There was no incentive offered for completion.

One hundred and one (101) responses were received between April 13, 2020 and May 8, 2020:

- 94% of respondents (95) were parents; the 6% (6) who were not were excluded from the survey
- 82% of respondents who were parents (78) stated they had sent their child(ren) to camp before; 18% (17) had not, but of these 94% (16) stated they were considering it sometime within the next seven years (the one respondent who was not was removed from the survey)
- The final sample size was 94

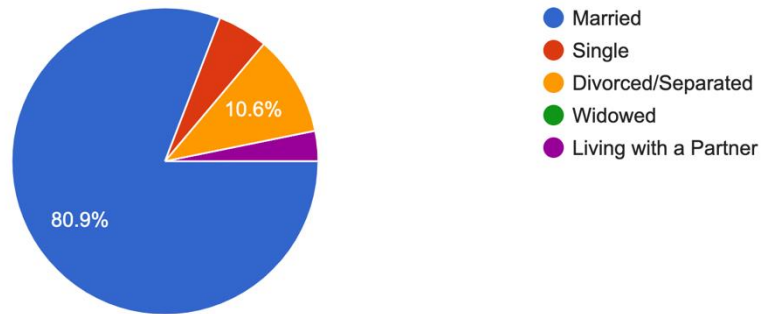
DEMOGRAPHICS

There was diversity among respondents:

- The majority (81%) of respondents were married:

Marital Status

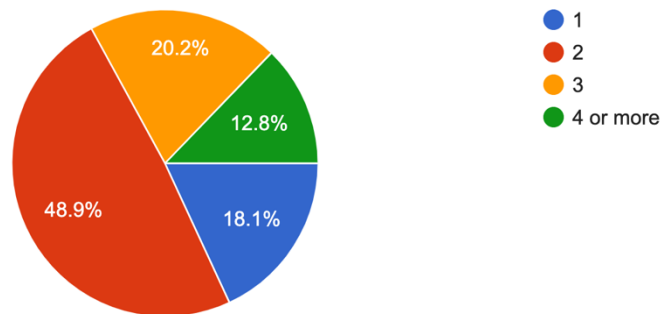
94 responses



- About half (49%) had two children, 20% had three children, 18% had one child, and the rest had four or more:

How many children do you have?

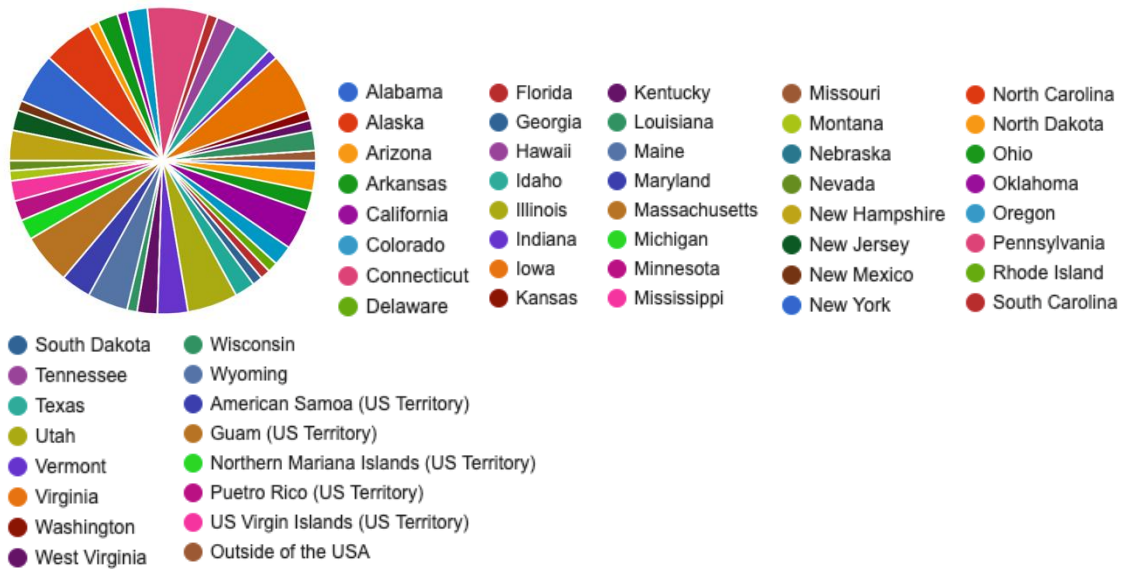
94 responses



- Respondents lived throughout the U.S. The greatest number of respondents were from PA (6) and Virginia (6) followed by NC (5), NY (5), MA (5), and IL (6). There was only one respondent from outside the U.S. Overall, 39 states were represented within the sample:

What state do you currently live in?

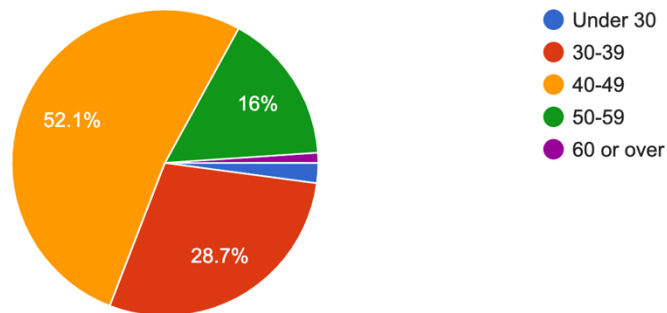
94 responses



- Just over half (52%) of respondents were between the ages of 40 and 49, and 29% between the ages of 30 and 39:

Which of the following describes your age group?

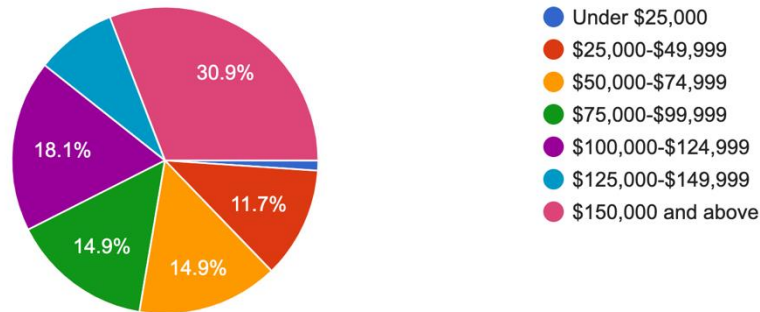
94 responses



- Household income was mixed – 31% of respondents stated a household income of \$150,000 or more, 18% stated \$100,000 to \$124,999, 15% stated \$75,000 to \$99,999, and another 15% said \$50,000 to \$74,999:

Which of the following describes your household income before taxes?

94 responses



Due to size, this sample cannot be considered representative of parents of campers nationwide. Findings from the survey may, however, be used qualitatively to provide a glimpse at the time of the survey into what parents were thinking when it came to their children’s summer camp experience.

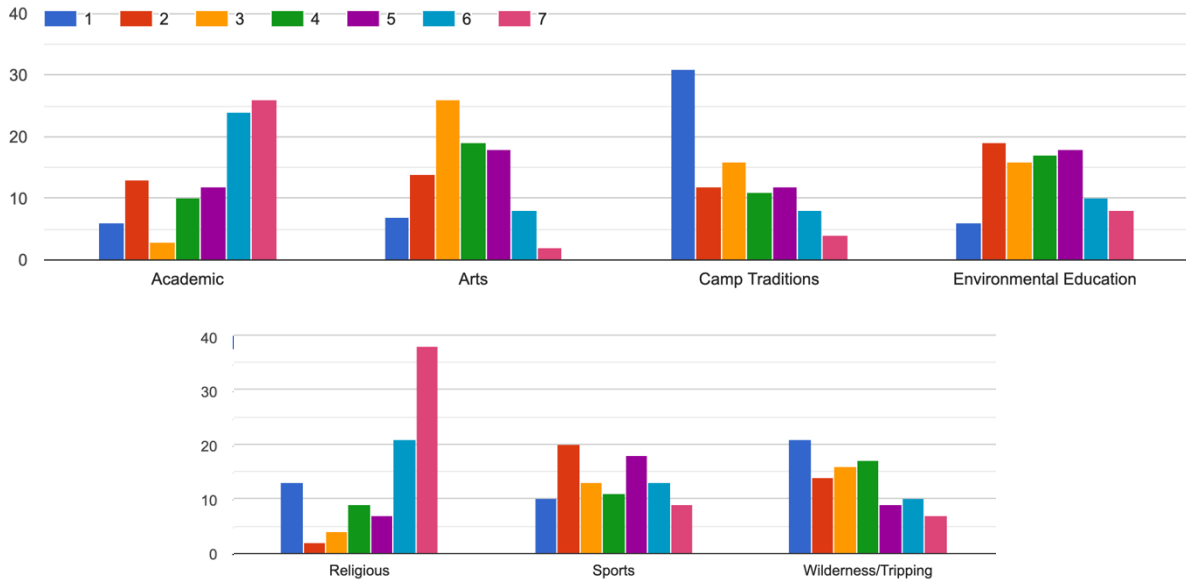
FINDINGS

1. Where does environmental education fall as an area of interest for parents considering what kind of camp experience they want for their children?

Overall, parents were mixed about which areas were of most interest to them when selecting a camp experience for their children. Camp Traditions ranked highest as part of the summer camp experience, though it wasn’t far ahead of other areas. Academic and Religious focuses clearly ranked as areas of least interest. Environmental Education ranked closely in the middle alongside Wilderness/Tripping, the Arts, and Sports.

Interest Area	Averaged Rank Closest to 1 is of most interest
Camp Traditions	3.01
Wilderness/Tripping	3.39
Arts	3.63
Sports	3.87
Environmental Education	3.89
Academic	4.97
Religious	5.23

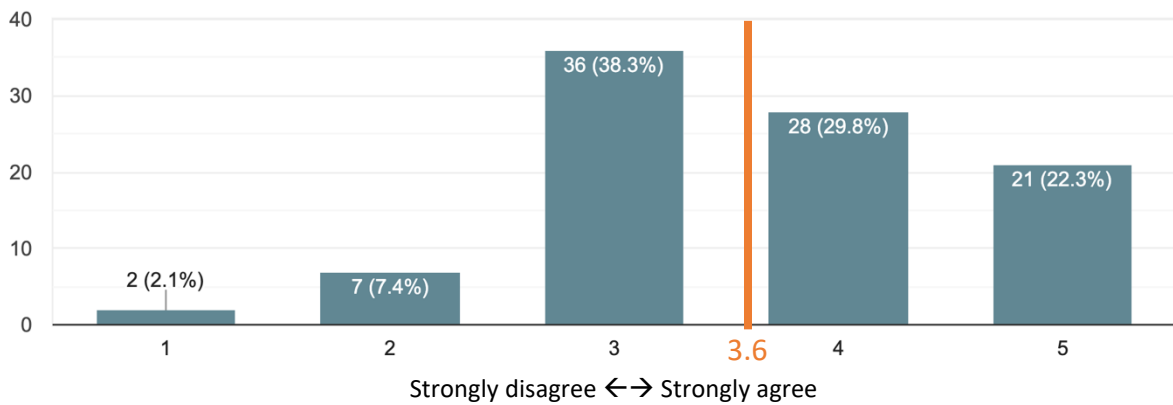
Rank the following summer camp focuses in order of interest-- 1 being the most important and 7 being the least important in picking a camp.



2. Should summer camps minimize the environmental impact of their buildings and operations?

Parents agreed (3.6) that camps should minimize their impact:

Summer Camps should minimize the environmental impact of their buildings and operations.
94 responses

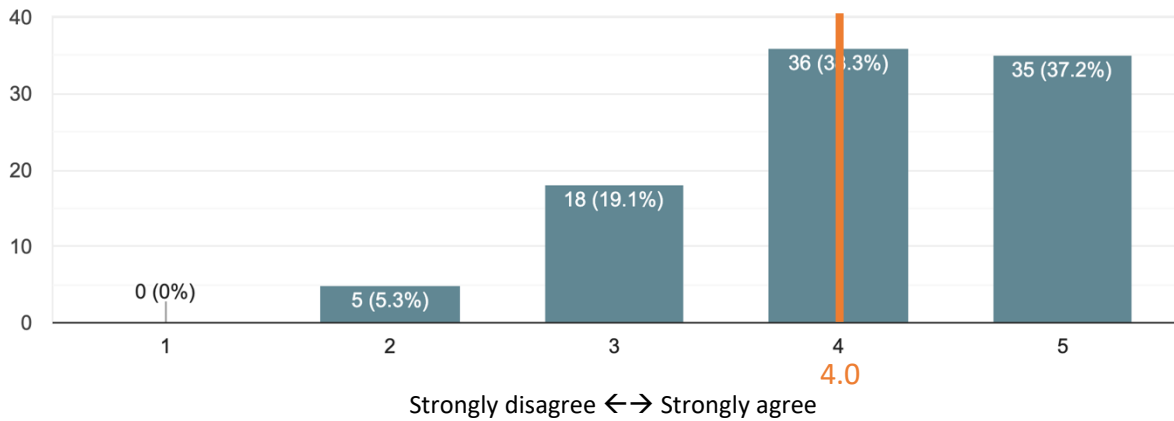


3. Should camps have fun programs to encourage children to protect our natural environment?

Parents agreed (4.0) that camps should have fun programs to encourage children to protect our natural environment:

Camps should have fun programs to encourage children to protect our natural environment by doing things like saving water, reducing energy use, and reducing food waste.

94 responses

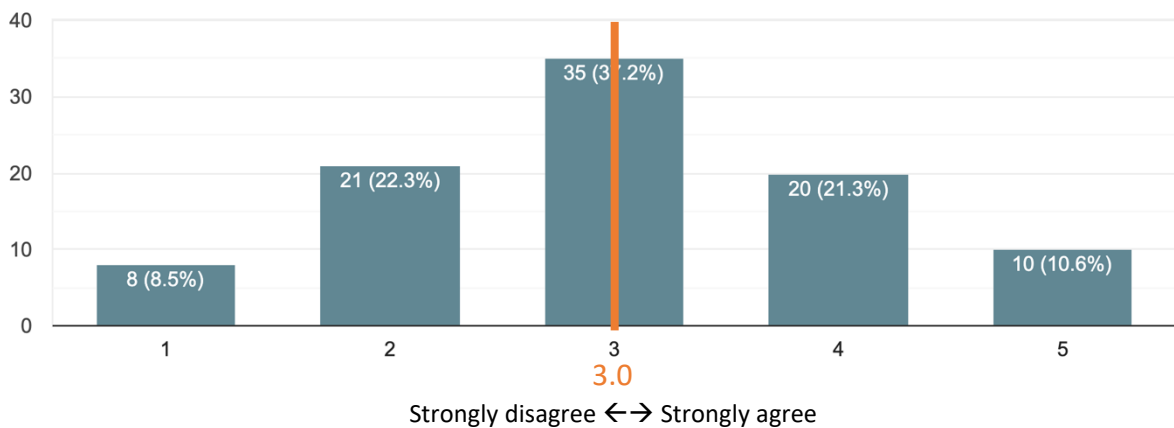


4. Do parents think more highly of camps certified 'green'?

Parents were not sure (3.0) whether a 'green' certification would make them think more highly of a camp.

I would think more highly of a summer camp that was certified as a 'green' camp by an independent, non-profit organization.

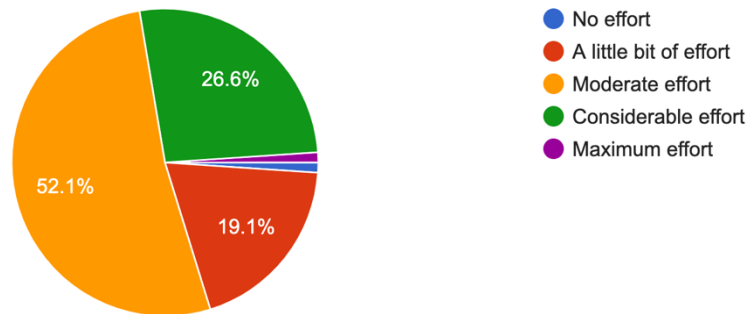
94 responses



5. How much effort did respondents' families put into reducing their own environmental impact?

Over three-quarters of respondents reported putting in quite a bit of effort into reducing their environmental impact. Over half (52%) stated that they put moderate effort in as a family while over a quarter (27%) said that put in considerable effort. Only one respondent stated that they put in no effort as a family, and only one respondent stated that they put in maximum effort as a family.

How much effort do you as a family put into reducing your impact on the natural environment?
94 responses

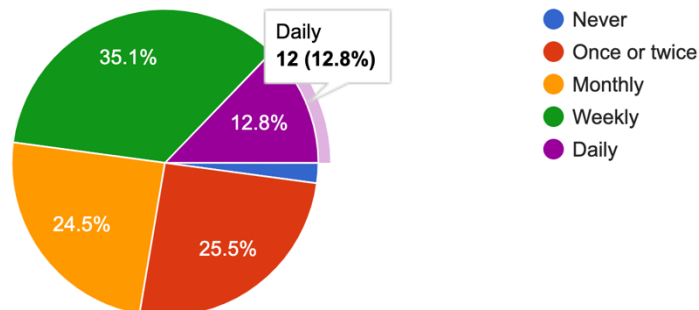


6. How often do families talk about environmental responsibility?

Nearly half of respondents (48%) said that they talk to their children regularly (daily or weekly) about environmental responsibility. Another quarter (24%) stated they do so on a monthly basis. For the rest, talking about environmental responsibility was as infrequent occurrence in their family.

In the past year, about how often have you talked to your child about environmental responsibility, such as saving energy, conserving water, recycling, and taking other actions to help reduce human impact on the natural environment?

94 responses



CONCLUSIONS

Although the sample size is too small to consider the results representative of parents of campers or potential campers nationwide, findings from the survey may be used qualitatively to understand what this specific sample of parents were thinking at the time of the survey. Any insight into the preferences and opinions of parents will help camps and organizations working with camps develop the best camp experiences for young people.

Overall, parents are supportive of integrating environmental sustainability into the camp experience and, in fact, appear to be doing quite a bit at home already. Environment-related programs rank alongside sports, the arts, and wilderness/tripping in parents' minds, a trend that has been increasing over the past years, according to industry experts.

Findings from this research do suggest that camps should be taking an active role as environmental stewards. It appears that parents do value environmental sustainability and are considering it as they select a camp experience for their children.