

7 Critical Issues Facing Today's Camps

Prepared by:
Cait Wilson, ACA Research Assistant
University of Utah



Background

Every 3 years, the American Camp Association® (ACA) collects emerging issues data from camp staff who respond voluntarily to an online survey. Because this survey was voluntary, it represents the experiences of those who responded to the survey. However, it does provide insight into enrollment trends that might affect the camp industry as a whole.

Additional resources can be found on the ACA website under the Research tab. The articles on emerging issues will appear September/October in Camping Magazine.

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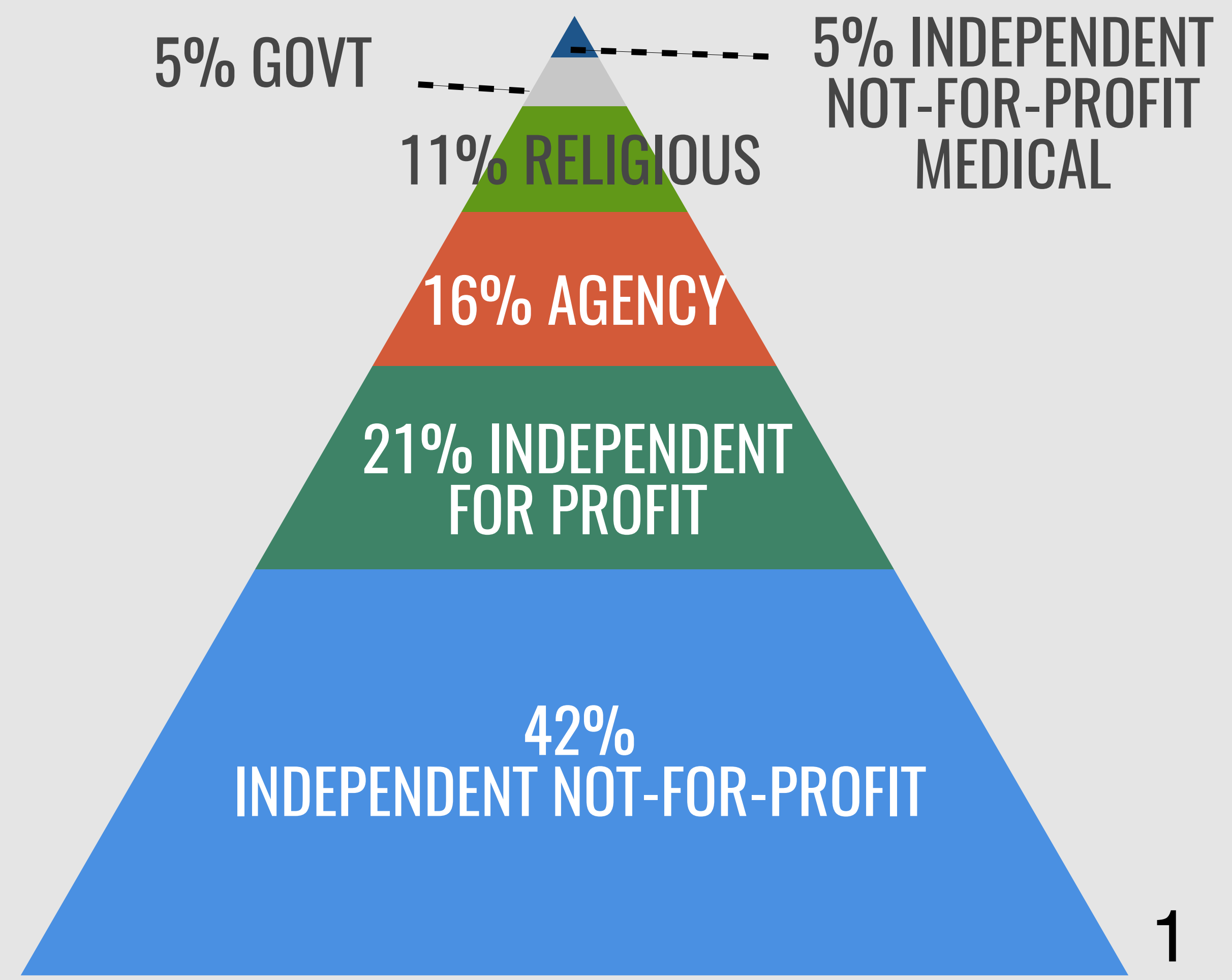
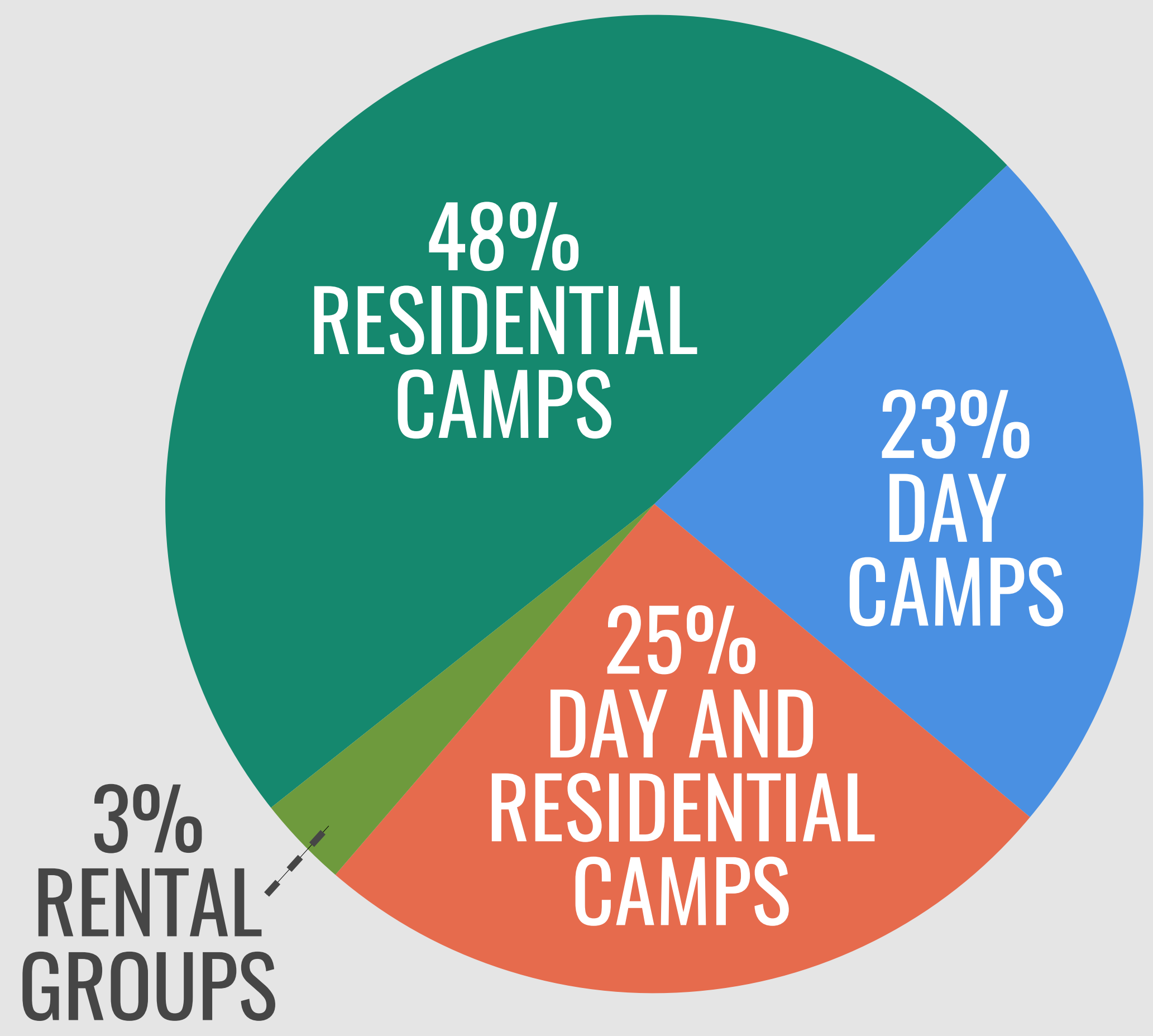
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334
Camp Professionals
Responded



RESPONDENTS WERE...
 66% Camp Director or Owner
 16% Organizational Executive
 13% Administrative Staff
 5% Other

Sample Represents ACA's Camp Population



Respondents Based on Region

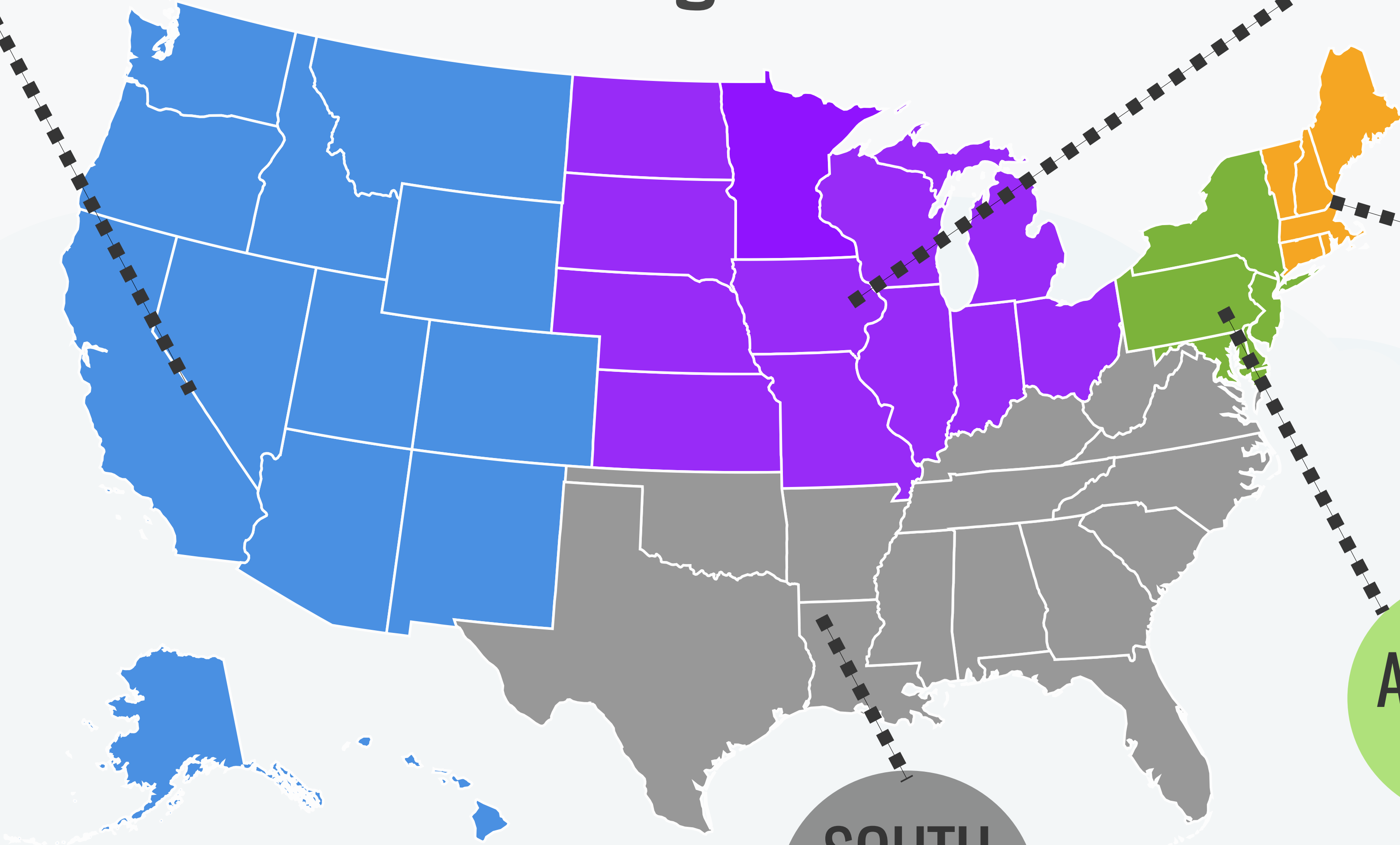
WEST
22%

MID-AMERICA
26%

NEW ENGLAND
12%

MID-ATLANTIC
25%

SOUTH
15%



TOP 7 EMERGING ISSUES for 2017

Respondents ranked these common concerns in the following order:

#1 HEALTH AND SAFETY



Mental, Emotional, and Social Health
Increased medical needs

#2 STAFF TRAINING & RECRUITMENT



Recruiting qualified staff

#3 PARENT COMMUNICATION



Registration, Health and Safety Messages, etc.

#4 DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Recruiting diverse campers and staff, catering to diverse needs, program design, etc.

#5 REVENUE GENERATION



Identifying new revenue sources and being fiscally responsible

#6 MARKETING



Competing with other youth programs, innovative marketing tactics, and promoting the value of camp



#7 EVALUATION OF CAMPER OUTCOMES

Measuring camper growth

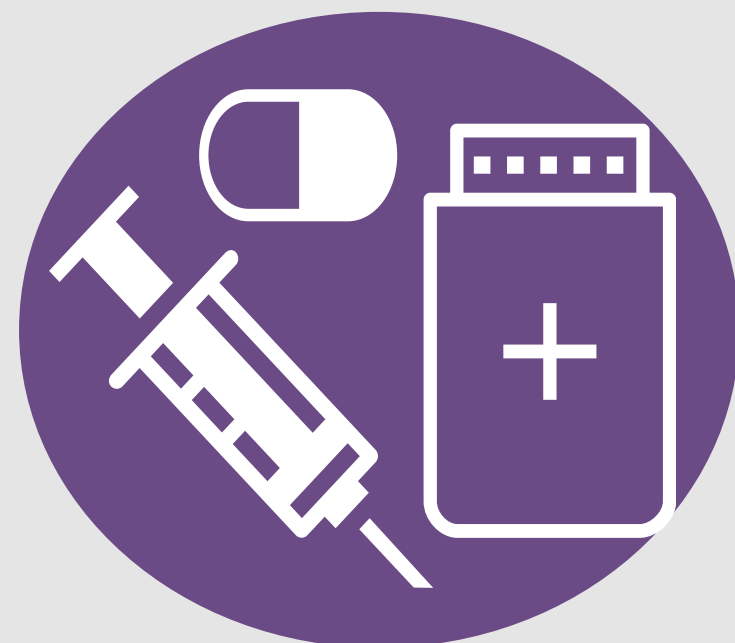
#1 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

HEALTH AND SAFETY



Mental, Emotional, and Social Health (MESH)

Staff and campers are dealing with MESH issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, and eating disorders). About 71% of camps say MESH is an issue.



Medical Needs

Staff and campers have unique medical needs (medications, allergies, etc) that need close monitoring. About 45% of camps have issues with managing these unique needs.



Security and Intruders

Camps (42%) are more concerned with trespassers, intruders, and strangers.



Emergency Protocols

Camps are increasingly concerned about protocols for emergencies (e.g., active shooter, wild fires, and wild animals). About 18% of camps have issues preparing for weather-related emergencies.

Resources to check out:

"MESH Proactive Camps: What are their secrets?"

"Medication Management"

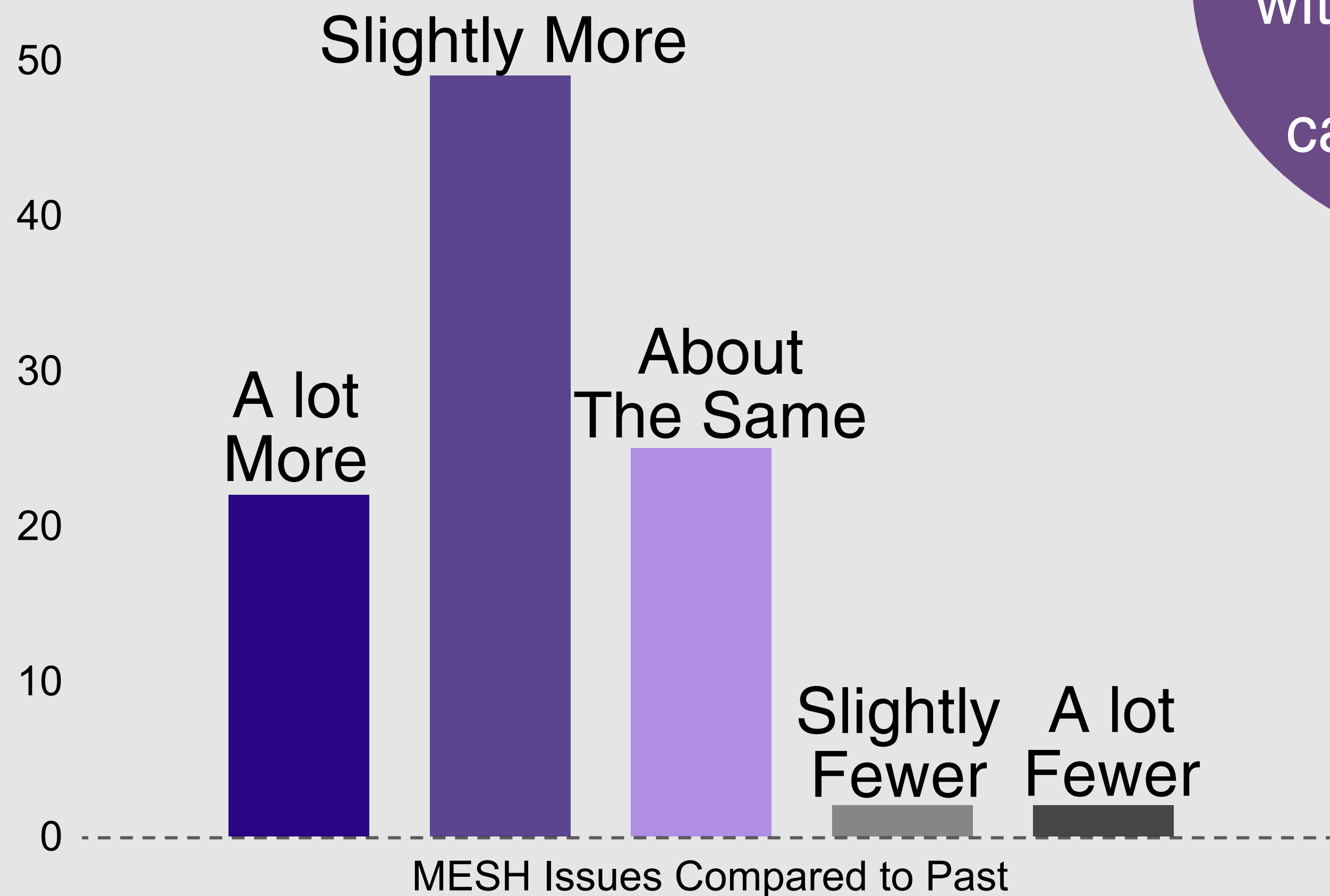
"Emergency Preparedness"

Check ACA's resource library!

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Emerging Issues

71% of camps reported a lot more or slightly more issues with mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) than the past



55% of camps struggle with training staff to address camper MESH needs

45% of camps have problems managing unique camper medical needs

50% of camps have difficulties providing diverse food options

42% of camps have issues with preparing for intruders

#2 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING



Finding Qualified Staff

Many camps (65%) have issues with recruiting quality and specialized staff (e.g., nurses). There is increased competition from college internships.



Supporting Staff With MESH

Half of camps have seen increases in mental, emotional, and social health issues such as anxiety and depression among staff. More residential camps said MESH was a major issue.



Encouraging High Quality Work

About 48% of camps have issues encouraging high quality work amongst staff.



Managing Negative Staff Behaviors

Camps (35%) have had issues managing negative staff behaviors (e.g., entitled attitudes, lack of work ethic, lack of respect for authority, misrepresent the camp around town, and instances with alcohol use).

Resources to check out:

"3 Reasons to Choose a Job at Camp Instead of a Summer Internship"

"Camp Belongs on Your Resume: Highlighting the Professional Development Value of Working at Camp"

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Issues for Camps

38%

of camps have an issue training staff to prevent and address bullying

29%

of camps need help with training staff about diversity and inclusion

20%

of camps have issues with training staff to prevent and address issues with sexual violence

Topics ACA suggests addressing in staff trainings:

BULLYING

**MENTAL,
EMOTIONAL, AND
SOCIAL HEALTH**

**SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**

**DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION**

#3 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

PARENT COMMUNICATION



Messaging Parents

Camps have difficulties effectively communicating with parents (e.g., registration, regarding camper health, and during emergencies).



Overprotective Parents

Parent's are overbearing when it comes to their children (e.g., programming, contacting their children, and unique medical needs).



Registration

Camps struggle communicating with parents for registration (e.g., filling out documents correctly and giving medical records).

Resources to check out:

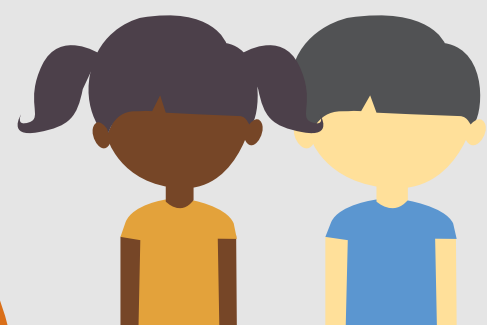
"Camp Staff: Getting Health and Safety Messages to Stick"

"Talking with Parents about Protecting Their Children at Camp This Summer"

#4 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Only 27% of camps have strategic goals related to diversity that are a high priority



Finding Diverse Staff and Campers

32% of camps indicated they face challenges recruiting diverse campers and 52% face challenges recruiting diverse staff



Providing Financial Support to Campers

About 40% of camps struggle providing financial support to campers.



Staff Training

Camps (29%) have issues with providing adequate training opportunities for staff to promote equity and inclusiveness



Evaluation of Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Half of camps evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts towards diversity and inclusion

Resources to check out:

"Attracting Diverse Staff & Campers"

"20/20 Toolbox: Scholarship, Fundraising, and Outreach Strategies"

"The Inclusion Audit: Evaluating Your Camps Efforts to Include Diverse Populations"

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

58% of camps said yes they have strategic goals that focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity



Issues for Camps

53% of camps struggle to find staff to meet their diversity and inclusion goals

40% of camps have an issue providing financial support for campers

30% of camps have a problem enrolling campers to meet their diversity and inclusion goals

29% of camps need help with training staff about diversity and inclusion

#5 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

REVENUE GENERATION



Increases in Operating Fees

Camps had increases in operating fees (e.g., wages, maintenance, and rent). About 52% of camps indicated it was a priority to decrease expenses.



Finding Innovative Ways to Generate Revenue

Camps struggle to find new ways to generate revenue. Some camps have started to place more of a priority on renting to outside groups (38%), adding capacity through capital projects (34%), and extending the season (23%).



Reduction in Enrollment

The majority of camps (75%) think increasing enrollment is a priority. An issue for camps occurs when enrollment decreases.



Pricing

Camps (45%) are not sure how to price their registrations to generate revenue while not being too expensive for parents.

Resources to check out:

"The Dollar\$ and Cents of Operating a Camp"

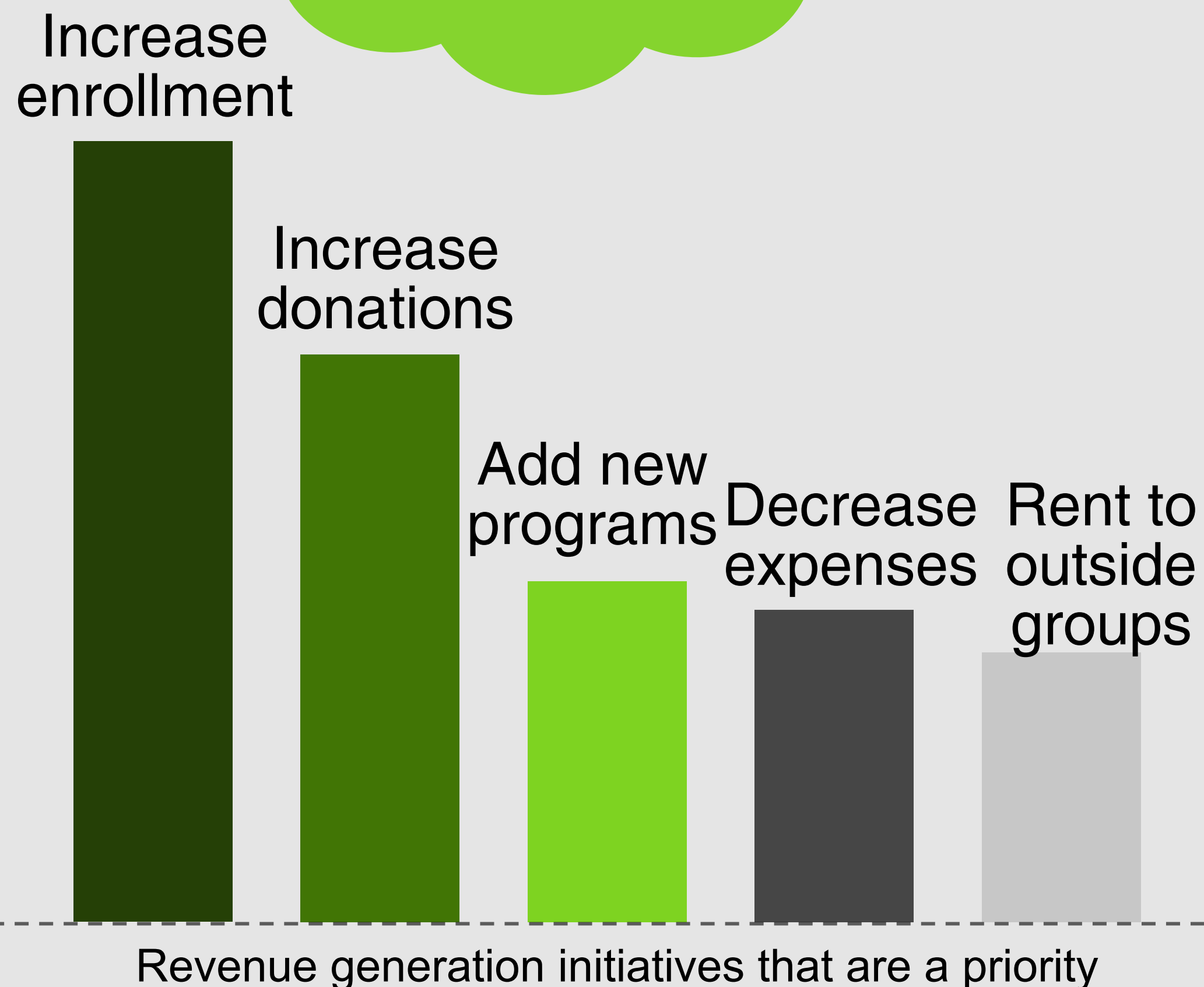
"Show Us The Money!"

"Fundraising Strategies"
Continuing Education Credits

REVENUE GENERATION

Issues for Camps

Camps are looking for ways to generate additional revenue



75%
of camps think it's a priority to increase enrollment

61%
of camps think it's a priority to increase donations

52%
of camps think it's a priority to decrease expenses

52%
of camps think it's a priority to add new programs

#6 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

MARKETING

About 71% of camps said it's more of a priority to improve marketing efforts

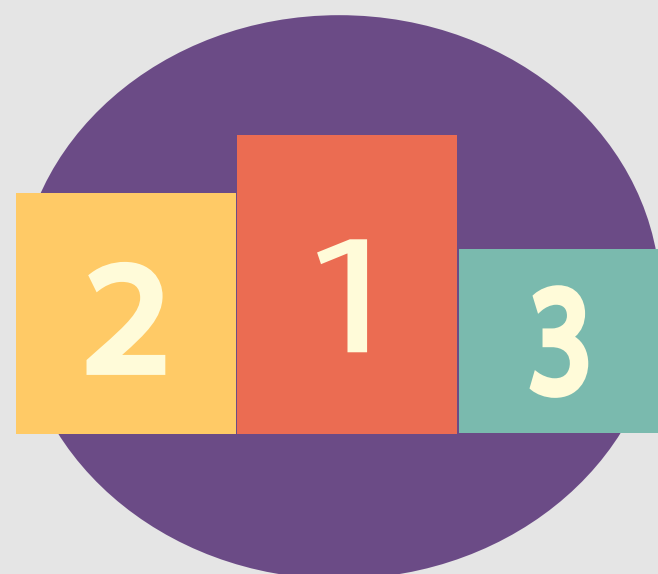
Innovative Marketing

Many camps have an issue with developing and using innovative marketing tools to reach new target markets.



Market the Value of Camp

Camps have difficulties marketing the value of camp to parents (e.g., camp as an opportunity for growth and development).



Differentiating Camp From Competitors

Camps struggle to market against competitors (e.g. youth sports and other camps).



Affordability of Marketing

Camps indicated they have tight budgets and do not have enough funds to market camp effectively.

Resources to check out:

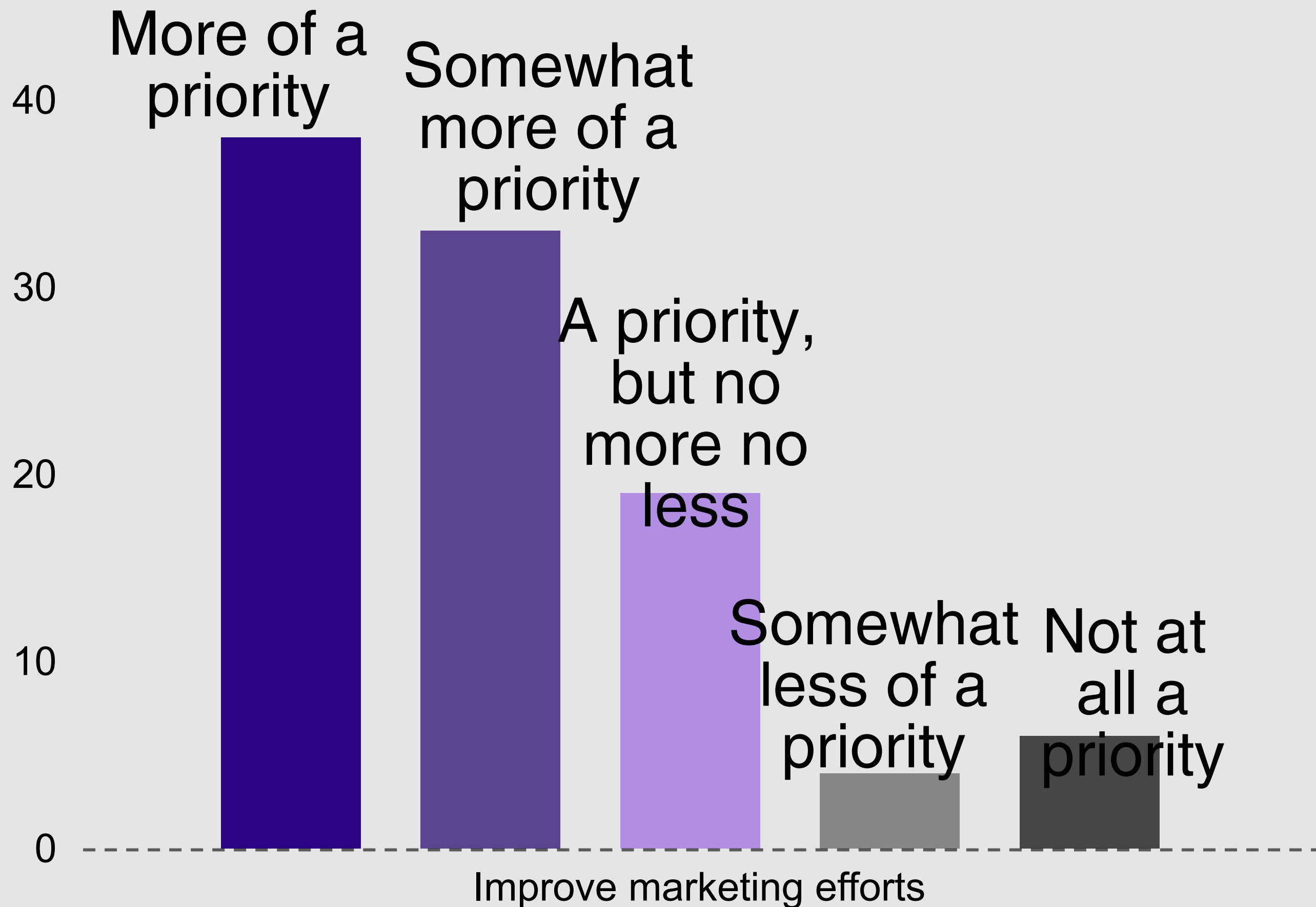
"Social Marketing: Where Should You Start?"

"Marketing the Value of the Camp Experience"

"Search Marketing on the Web — Drive New Camper Enrollment and Alternative Businesses"

MARKETING

Camps want to improve their marketing efforts



Promotional Materials

90%

of camps purchase promotional materials

Video Production

42%

of camps purchase video production services

#7 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

EVALUATION OF CAMPER OUTCOMES

About 87% of camps said evaluation is very important or critical to their camp

Finding Time to Do Evaluations

Many camps (65%) said a major challenge they face when conducting evaluations is finding the time to collect, analyze, and disseminate data.



How to Use Evaluation Results

About 40% of camps indicated they weren't sure how to use evaluation results for positive change.



Dealing with Negative Results

What if we find out something bad about our camp? Camps (28%) were worried how to deal with negative results from evaluations.



Buy-In From Front-Line Staff

One in four camps struggle with getting front-line staff to help facilitate evaluations.

Resources to check out:

"Why Evaluations Are Awesome: Cool Tips for Using Camp Evaluations to Make the Good Better and the Better Best"

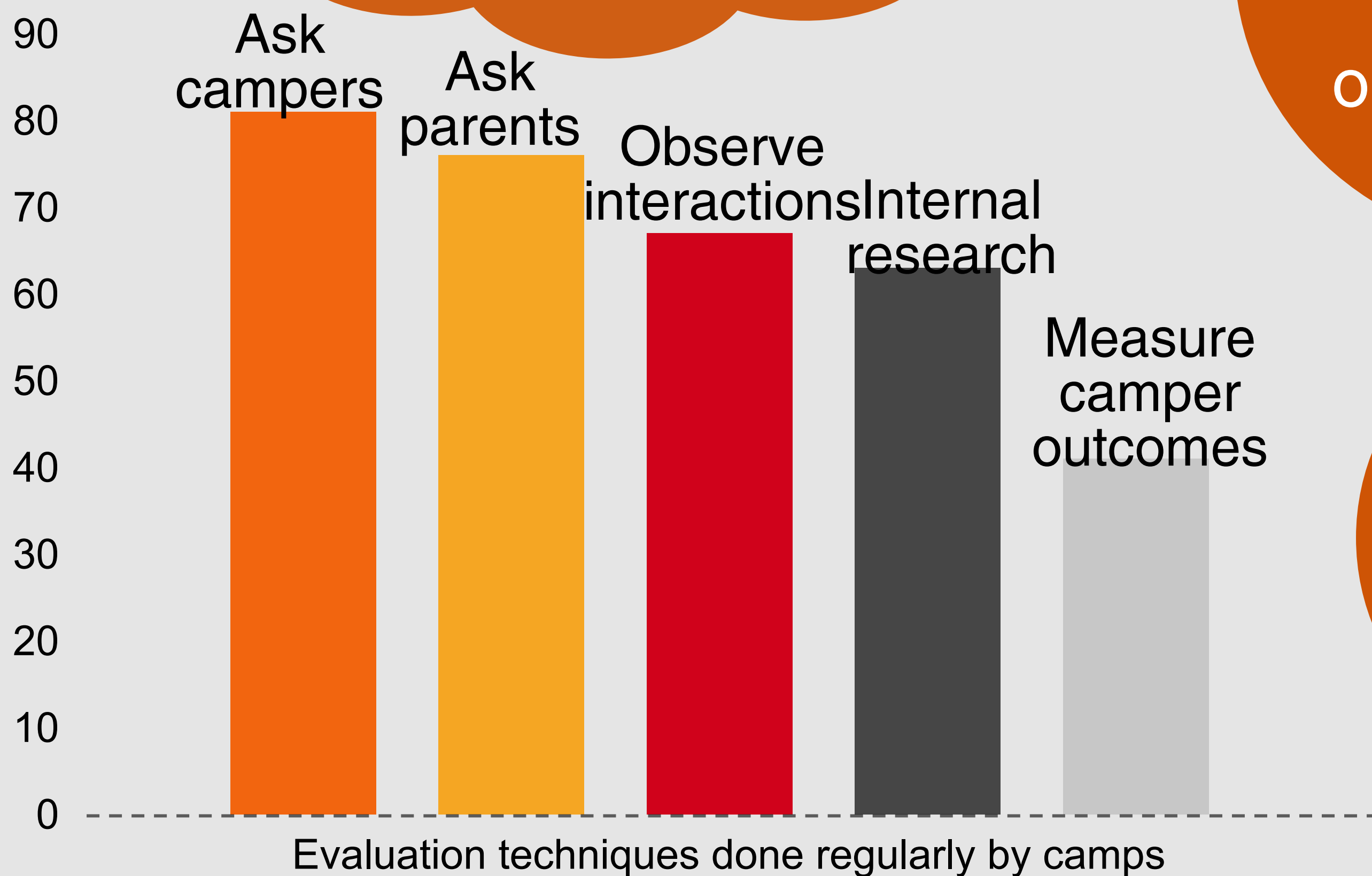
"ACA Youth Outcomes Battery"

"Research 360"

EVALUATION OF CAMPER OUTCOMES

What helps support your camp's evaluation efforts?

Camps mostly use online surveys (72%), observation (70%), and paper surveys (67%) when evaluating their programs



56%

Supportive organizational culture

43%

Knowing how to use the results

40%

Knowing how to conduct evaluations

36%

Finding time to collect data

FOR MORE
INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:

AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION

Research Team



Laurie Browne, Ph.D.
Director of Research
lbrowne@acacamps.org



Deb Bialeschki, Ph.D.
Senior Researcher
dbialeschki@acacamps.org



Cait Wilson, M.S.
Research Assistant
cait.wilson@utah.edu