2016 Camper Enrollment Data

With Strong Enrollment Comes New Challenges

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Background

Each Fall, the American Camp Association® (ACA) collects enrollment data and trends from camps 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. Articles on enrollment appear each March/April in Camping Magazine.

Some charts may not equal 100% due to estimation errors.
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311 Camp Professionals Responded

More Overnight Camps

Camps Varied in Affiliation

- Independent Not For Profit (31%)
- Religiously-Affiliated (22%)
- Independent For Profit (21%)
- Agency (19%)
- Governmental/Municipal (7%)
Overall Enrollment

55% of camps reported overall enrollment was higher than last year.

- **Higher**: 36% of camps with higher enrollment had a 4-10% increase.
- **Lower**: 30% of camps with lower enrollment had a 1-3% decrease.
- **The Same**: More overnight camps reported higher enrollment.
- **Mid-Atlantic camps** reported lower enrollment.
The economic downturn happened in 2009. Since 2014, enrollment reflects the trends established before the recession!
Session Lengths

1 Week Sessions

One week session enrollment is higher than last year

- Lower: 12%
- Same: 25%
- Higher: 43%
- N/A: 21%

Overall Session Popularity

Shorter session lengths are more popular for enrollment

- 56% for one week
- 14% for 2 weeks
- 5% for 3 weeks
- 8% for 4 weeks
- 4% for 5 to 6 weeks
- 6% for 7 to 8 weeks
Camper Demographics

Socio-Economic Status
- 34% High Income
- 46% Middle Income
- 18% Low Income
- 12% Poverty

Campers are mainly from middle- and high-income families

Race/Ethnicity
- 77% White, Caucasian
- 6% Hispanic
- 10% Black, African-American
- 4% Asian
- 4% Multi-Racial
- 4% Other

Campers are predominantly Caucasian

20% of camps reported enrollment was higher for minority campers
Gender

1% Gender Non-Conforming

49% Male

56% Female

Boys enrollment is about the same and higher

Girls enrollment is about the same and higher

IFP and Religiously-Affiliated camps had more report lower enrollment for boys

More overnight camps reported higher enrollment than day camps
85% of camps reported about the same or higher enrollment for campers with a disability.

Majority of campers have no known disabilities:
- Lower: 4%
- Same: 69%
- Higher: 16%
- We Don't Enroll: 10%

Type of disability:
- Physical/Motor: 2%
- Sensory: 3%
- Psychological: 7%
- Medical: 7%
- Cognitive: 11%

More for profit camps reported higher enrollment for campers with disabilities.
Day camps had more camps report higher enrollment.
Camper Breakdown by Age

- 32% 9 and younger
- 38% 10 to 12 years old
- 30% 13 to 17 years old
- 4% 18 and older
### Enrollment of 9 year olds and younger

83% of camps reported enrollment of 9 year olds and younger was about the same or higher.

#### Higher or lower, by how much?

- **Lower**: 13%
- **The Same**: 45%
- **Higher**: 38%
- **N/A**: 4%

- 33% of camps with higher enrollment had a 4-10% increase.
- 23% of camps with lower enrollment had a 1-3% decrease.

Day camps reported lower enrollment of 9 year olds and younger than overnight camps.
86% of camps reported enrollment for 10 to 12 year olds was about the same or higher.

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Same</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1%</td>
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26% of camps with higher enrollment had a 4-10% increase.
26% of camps with lower enrollment had a 1-3% decrease.

More day camps reported lower enrollment of 10 to 12 year olds than overnight camps.
79% of camps reported enrollment for teenagers was about the same or higher.

Higher or lower, by how much?

- 33% of camps with higher enrollment had a 1-3% increase.
- 23% of camps with lower enrollment had a 1-3% decrease.

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<th>Enrollment Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Same</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>8%</td>
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Religiously-Affiliated camps reported lower enrollment of teenagers compared to INFP.

Agency camps reported higher enrollment among teenagers compared to independent for-profit camps.
58% of camps serve campers who are LGBTQ+

26% of camps serve transgender campers

Yes 58%
No 42%

Yes 26%
No 74%

More overnight camps Agency, INFP, and IFP located in New England and the West reported yes to serving LGBTQ+ campers

More summer camps in the West reported serving transgender campers compared to Mid-Atlantic, Mid-American, and the South
Returning Campers

- Lower: 11%
- The Same: 64%
- Higher: 26%

Higher or lower, by how much?

54% of camps with higher enrollment had a 1-10% increase
20% of camps with lower enrollment had a 4-10% decrease
62% of camps reported enrollment for international campers was about the same or higher.

- **Same**: 46%
- **Higher**: 31%
- **Lower**: 16%
- **N/A**: 7%

**Higher or lower, by how much?**

- 20% of camps with higher enrollment had a 1-3% increase
- 18% of camps with lower enrollment had a 1-3% decrease

Mid-Atlantic, Mid-America, and the South reported more that enrollment for international campers was not applicable.
International Campers

Camps report serving campers from these primary countries:

- **Canada**: 21 camps
- **United Kingdom**: 37 camps
- **France**: 47 camps
- **Spain**: 46 camps
- **Mexico**: 43 camps
- **Japan**: 24 camps
- **China**: 74 camps
89% of camps reported enrollment for campers with scholarships was about the same or higher.

Scholarships

Higher or lower, by how much?

- 20% of camps with higher enrollment had a 1-3% increase
- 8% of camps with lower enrollment had a 4-10% increase

For profit camps reported an increase in campers enrolled on scholarships. Fewer day camps appear to enroll campers on scholarship than overnight camps.
Most camps use discounts for siblings, early registration, and financial need.

### Discounts

Other Discounts:
- Refer a friend
- Membership fees
- Military, fire, police, educators, alumni discount
- Volunteer tier pricing
- Staff discount
- All campers free due to scholarships
- Sponsorship or partnership
- New family discount
- Last minute sales
66% of camps have 20+ campers in CIT programs.
73% of camps felt that the economy did not negatively impact their camp.

89% of camps felt that weather or natural disasters did not negatively impact enrollment.

- 2016:
  - Strongly Disagree: 23%
  - Disagree: 23%
  - Agree: 5%

- 2016:
  - Strongly Disagree: 40%
  - Disagree: 49%
  - Agree: 1%
  - Strongly Agree: 3%
Camp Opinions on Enrollment

59% of camps felt that the school calendar did not negatively impact enrollment.

58% of camps felt that last minute registration did not negatively impact enrollment.

Graphs showing percentages of agreement or disagreement with statements related to enrollment for the years 2016 and 2017.
Camp Opinions on Enrollment

74% of camps did not feel parents enrolled their kids in shorter sessions.

Camps had varying opinions on whether they had more requests for scholarships.

Bar chart showing:
- In 2016, 55% agreed, 21% disagreed, 19% strongly disagreed.
- In 2016, 44% agreed, 41% disagreed, 7% strongly disagreed.
77% of camps did not feel they had reduced funds for scholarships.

83% of camps felt they were able to provide scholarships to campers who requested.

2016:
- Strongly Disagree: 21%
- Disagree: 18%
- Agree: 5%

2016:
- Strongly Disagree: 4%
- Disagree: 13%
- Agree: 22%
- Strongly Agree: 61%
56% of camps felt they had increased competition from other programs.

**Top Enrollment Issues**
1. Capacity
2. Competition
3. Registration
4. School calendars

**Top Staffing Issues**
1. Specialized staff
2. Male applicants
3. Staff availability
4. Competing jobs

**Top Resources Needed from ACA**
1. Marketing
2. Grant or funding resources
3. School calendar legislation
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