Boy Scouts of America Summer Camp Outcomes Study

A Study Conducted by Harris Interactive



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Boy Scout Summer Camp Important Points

As you read the information from this study, you should know some important facts about how the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) delivers its summer camp programs. The BSA believes these factors are the foundation that allow the organization to provide superior summer camp experiences and ***to deliver fun with a purpose!***

Camp Accreditation—Annual camp visits by trained volunteers and professionals ensure the following:

- Camps are checked to ensure that health and safety standards are met through an annual BSA accreditation process.
- Camps show that important program elements required for Scouts to have meaningful learning experiences are in place.

Camp Staff —Highly skilled youth and adult members are recruited and trained.

- Key camp staff members are required to be certified through national training events.
- BSA camps utilize highly qualified camp staff members. Because these individuals are not responsible for taking a troop leadership role, they can utilize their unique skills and teaching abilities for mentoring purposes.
- Youth camp staff members are young enough to connect with Scouts on a social level, but experienced and mature enough to serve as a role model.

Unit Attendance—The fact that troops attend camp as a unit is a benefit to the experience.

- Scouts attend with their own adult leaders. Boys do not have to adjust to adults they do not know while at camp. This provides an opportunity to further extend the mentoring role of adult leaders with their Scouts.
- The patrol method is used. Boys at camp learn leadership and teamwork by living out their week in the patrol method, which is based on youth leadership. In addition, this organizational method teaches independence and interdependence among Scouts.

Introduction

May 29, 2001

Ask any American what they think of when you say "Boy Scouts" and the vast majority will mention camping and the outdoors. It is as American as baseball, hotdogs, or apple pie. While the association of Boy Scouts and the fun of outdoor adventure is a natural one, it is perhaps more important to understand that camping experiences provide more than just fun.

We have been serving the youth of America for more than 90 years. While our organization recognizes the importance of providing enjoyable experiences for youth, our program is designed to accomplish much more. Specifically, the BSA is committed to providing a program that comprehensively addresses the important elements of healthy youth development. The long-term goal is to prepare young people to achieve their full potential for happy and productive lives.

We appreciate Harris Interactive for its ability to conduct a study that provides such a clear understanding of the positive outcomes of summer camp experiences among Scouts. I think you will find the information in this report to be both insightful and compelling as to why we must continue to provide camp adventure in the lives of our youth.

Thank you for your interest in the Boy Scouts of America.

Sincerely,

Roy L. Williams
Chief Scout Executive



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Background and Methodology

In 1995, Louis Harris & Associates released findings from a study titled *The Values of Men and Boys in America.* That study concluded that Scouting has a measurable positive impact on the attitudes and opinions of its members. Additionally, the study found that outcomes of a long-term Scouting experience (5+ years) can still be identified years and even decades later.

The initial values study resulted in two new questions:

1. Does Scouting benefit members who stay in the program as little as one year?
2. What specific elements in the program result in these positive outcomes?

The Harris researchers were asked to address these issues and responded with a 12-month study titled *A Year in the Life of a Cub Scout . . . Boy Scout . . . Venturer.* That study concluded that in a single year, the Scouting program delivers members experiences in six critical areas of healthy youth development*:

1. Strong Personal Values and Character
2. Positive Sense of Self-Worth and Usefulness
3. Caring and Nurturing Relationships
4. Productive and Creative Use of Time
5. A Desire to Learn
6. Social Adeptness

These critical areas of healthy youth development are at the core of what makes Scouting a change agent in the lives of its members.



*Derived from the Search Institute and Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development

The BSA contributes significant time and resources to summer camps around the country. Therefore, the organization believes it is important to gain an objective understanding of the outcomes of summer camp experiences in the lives of members.

Harris Interactive was challenged with developing and implementing a research design that would provide a thorough evaluation of Scout summer camps. More specifically, their goal was to measure the extent to which those camps deliver the elements of healthy youth development.

This document summarizes the findings of three survey groups used to meet the study objectives. From 106 Scout summer camps across the United States, the following groups were surveyed:

- **Boy Scouts.** A total of 10,034 on-site daily journals completed by Scouts.
- **Scout leaders.** A total of 4,491 post-camp surveys among randomly selected volunteer leaders who attended one of these summer camps.
- **Parents of Scouts.** A total of 5,299 post-camp surveys among parents of Boy Scouts who attended summer camp.

Overview

Scouts indicate that summer camp is more than just a place to have fun. It also offers Scouts the opportunity to participate in physically and intellectually challenging activities, introduces them to new and rewarding experiences, and provides them with supportive and caring relationships.

This study infers that positive outcomes of Scout summer camp occur because the environment and activities at camp incorporate all of the elements of healthy youth development.



Strong Personal Values and Character. Reflective and thought-provoking activities are one avenue through which summer camp helps build strong values and character.

Positive Sense of Self-Worth and Usefulness. Summer camp helps to instill a positive sense of self-worth and usefulness in young people by providing them with service opportunities, as well as positive peer-to-peer and intergenerational communications. In addition, summer camp helps to build young people's leadership skills, confidence, and self-esteem.

Caring and Nurturing Relationships With Parents, Other Adults, and Peers. Summer camp builds caring and nurturing relationships by engaging young people in group activities with both peers and adults. And for a majority of Scouts, strong bonds of friendship are developed at summer camp.

A Desire to Learn. Summer camp inspires young people to think about nature and consider the environment.

Productive and Creative Use of Time. Summer camp provides young people with productive and creative uses for their time by offering a valuable mix of both physical and intellectual activities.

Social Adeptness. Summer camp helps young people to become more socially adept by offering them opportunities to participate in and contribute to team-building activities.

Overall, parents speak highly of and appear very impressed with Scout summer camps. Nationally, 93 percent of parents say their son's summer camp experience met or exceeded their expectations. Almost all (96 percent) say they would recommend Scout summer camp to others.

Leaders enjoy and appreciate their time spent at Scout summer camps. Nationally, 94 percent of leaders say they met all or some of their goals, and 53 percent say their experience was better than they thought it would be. Leaders who attend Boy Scout summer camp overwhelmingly agree that the camp offers them the following benefits:

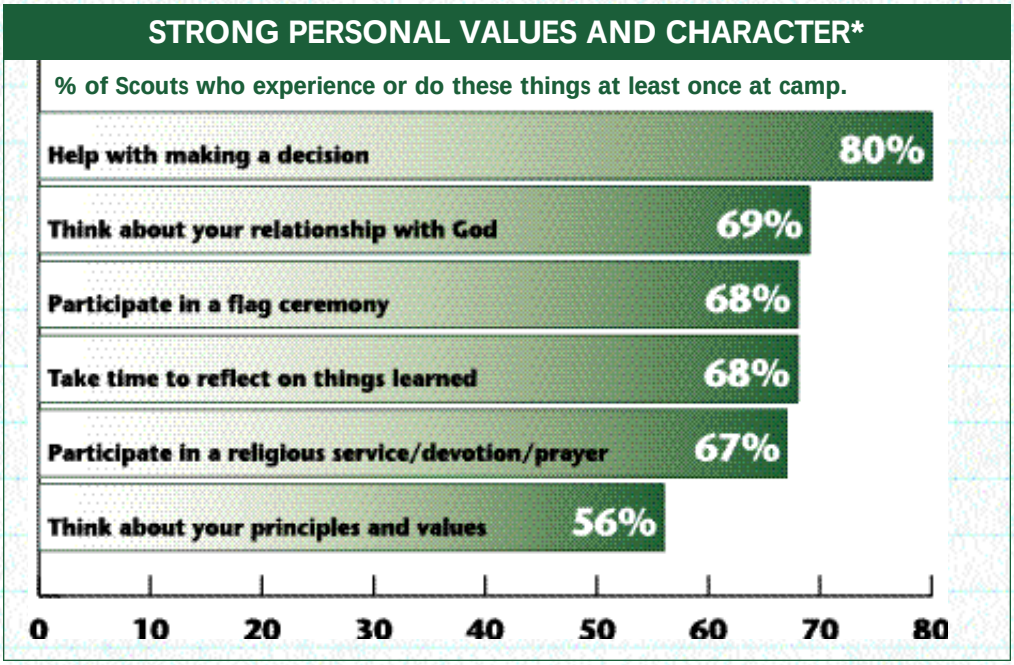
- Played a role in helping young people succeed/grow
- Helped youth realize their own abilities
- Was with people I respect
- Built friendships with youth



Findings From Scout Journals

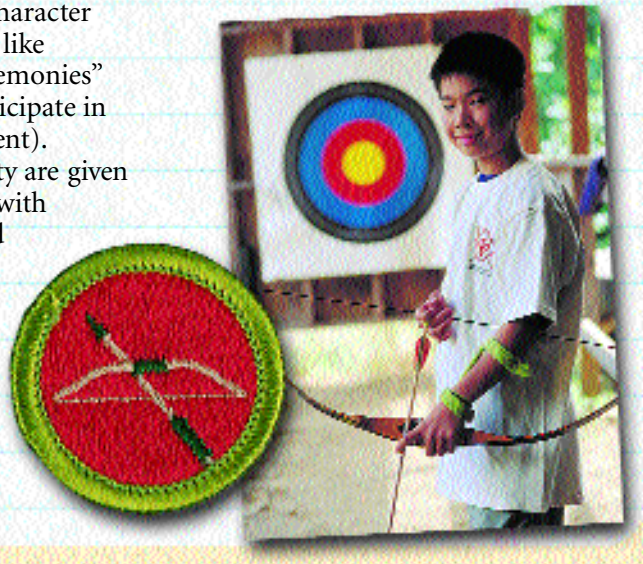
Strong Personal Values and Character

A strong sense of character is evident when a person chooses to do what is right, even when no one else is around. A person's character is built from the inside out. It starts and ends within the individual. To build this critical trait, young men need opportunities that challenge them personally to consider their beliefs and to reflect on the things that are important to their growth.



Summer camp supports the building of character and values by engaging young men in things like "decision making" (80 percent) and "flag ceremonies" (68 percent). Additionally, boys at camp participate in religious services/devotions/prayers (67 percent).

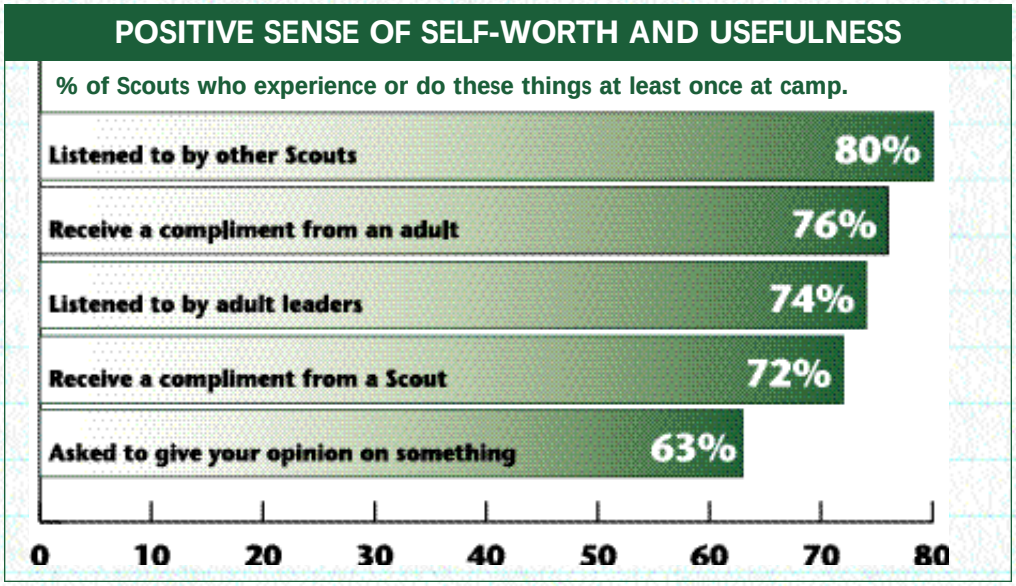
As important, Scouts in a fast-paced society are given time to reflect on their personal relationship with God (69 percent) and personal principles and values (56 percent) at camp.



*Percentages on all charts may not always add up to 100 percent because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents.

Positive Sense of Self-Worth and Usefulness

Young men have a need to feel useful, capable, and valued. These are the components that build self-confidence. Among boys who are entering their teen-age years (the average Scout camper is 12.8 years old), perhaps no other time in their life is more important for building self-esteem.

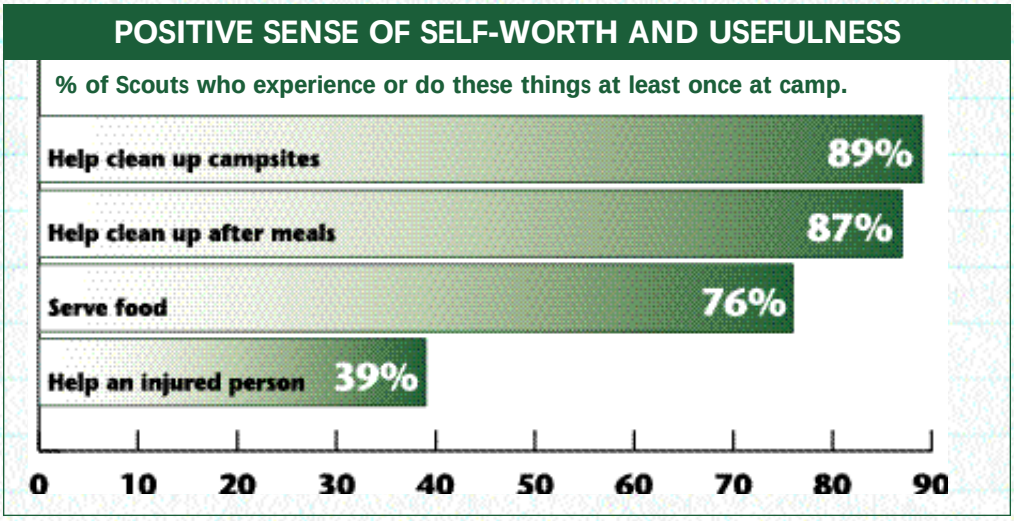


Positive communication between boys and their peers and between youth and adults leads to feelings of self-worth. At summer camp, the majority of Scouts are complimented by adults (76 percent) and peers (72 percent).

Additionally, Scouts feel that their opinions are valuable and heard. More than six of 10 Scouts (63 percent) are asked to give their opinion while at camp. This seemingly simple gesture results in feelings of personal value. Three-quarters or more indicate that they are listened to by other Scouts (80 percent) or adult leaders (74 percent).



POSITIVE SENSE OF SELF-WORTH AND USEFULNESS



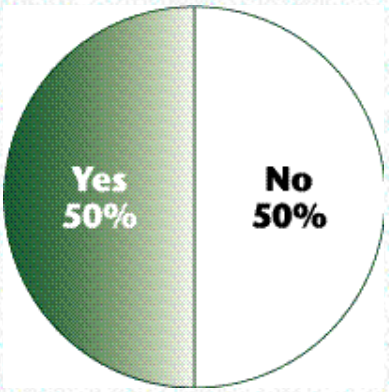
Boy Scouts at summer camp attain growth through serving others. Such activities result in a sense of being valuable and useful. Majorities of boys serve their peers at camp through helping clean up campsites (89 percent), helping clean up after meals (87 percent), and serving food (76 percent).

Service also comes through personally helping someone who may have received an injury (39 percent).



POSITIVE SENSE OF SELF-WORTH AND USEFULNESS

Did you lead others in an activity or service?



When boys take leadership responsibility they gain self-esteem. At summer camp, one-half (50 percent) of the boys are given an opportunity to lead others in an activity or service.

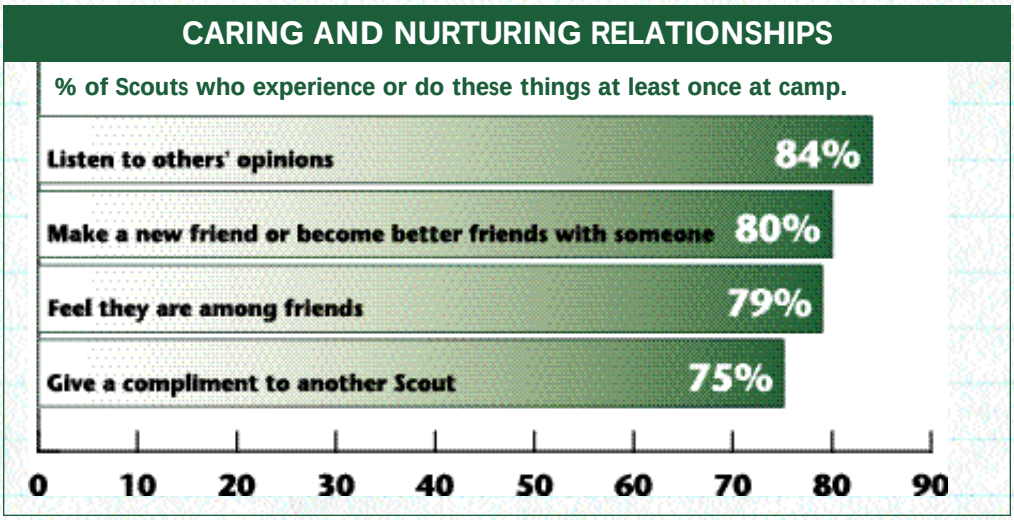


Caring and Nurturing Relationships With Parents, Other Adults, and Peers

Children crave strong relationships with people they can trust. Having someone to connect with is critical to positive, healthy development. These relationships allow for the sharing of interests, struggles, and successes. It is through these relationships with parents, role models, and friends that young people learn to effectively handle the difficulties and challenges of life.

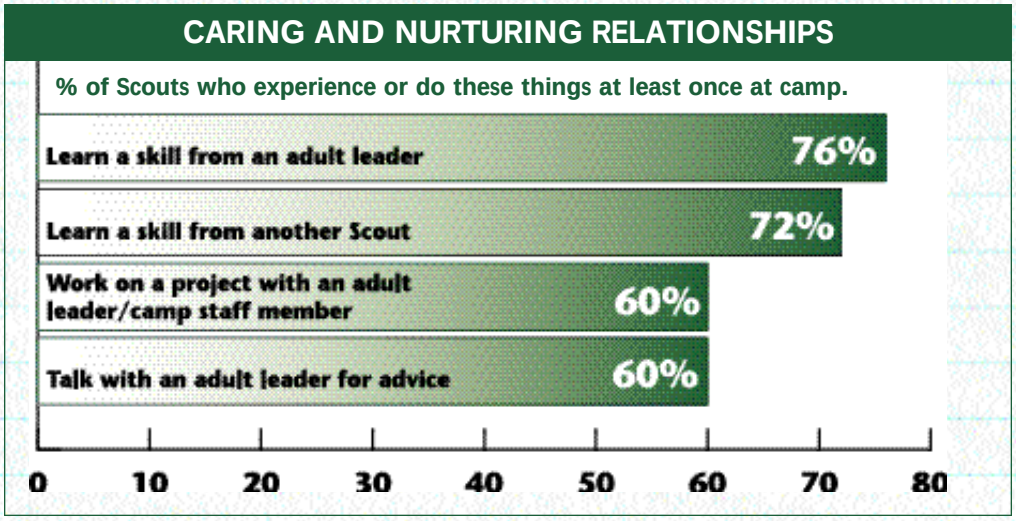
At Scout summer camp, boys commonly listen to (84 percent) and compliment (75 percent) other Scouts. Also, they make a new friend or become better friends with someone (80 percent). Friendships are an outcome of summer camp that can impact lives well beyond the camp experience.





Mentoring requires working together, and this happens at Scout summer camp in two key ways: adult leaders who teach boys (76 percent) and Scouts who learn new skills from other Scouts (72 percent).

The fact that many boys talk with an adult leader for advice (60 percent) while at camp suggests that a level of trust and respect is established in the relationship.





A Desire to Learn

Life is about learning and using what is learned to improve things for oneself and others. Youth who are not given opportunities to test and explore new things may never live up to their full potential.

Summer camp is, in effect, an outdoor classroom for learning experiences. The majority of boys "try something they have never tried before" (86 percent), "test a new skill"(81 percent), "see something they have not seen before" (75 percent), or "learn about the environment" (65 percent) while at camp.

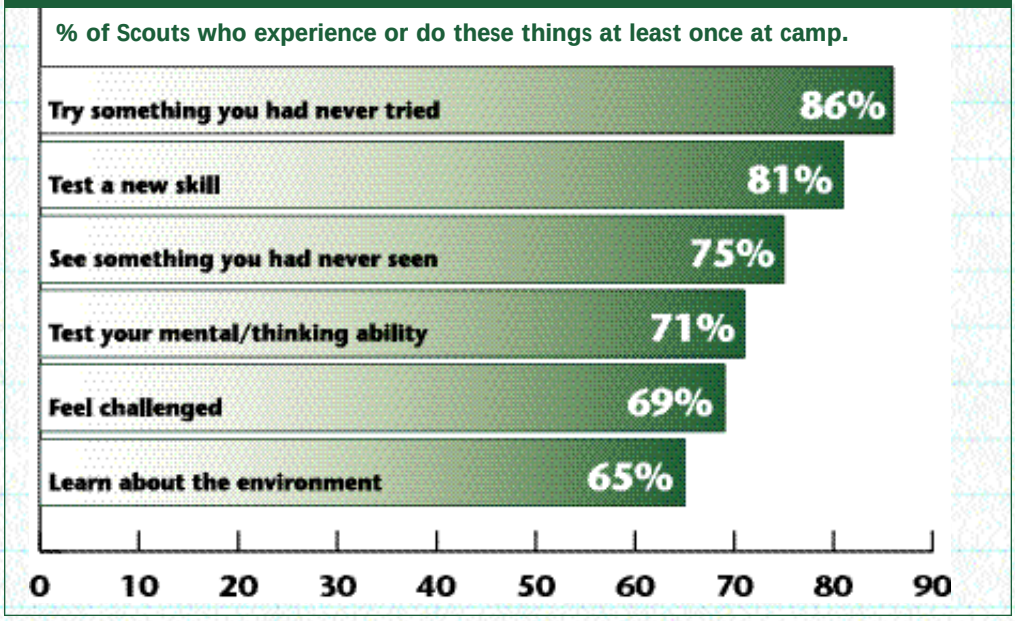
Other important learning-related factors found at camp are that Scouts feel challenged (69 percent) and test their mental/thinking abilities (71 percent).

A natural extension of the desire to learn, fostered at camp, is to put it into action through experiential learning. This type of learning is the best kind because it means a boy learns by doing!

The opportunity to earn more than 31 merit badges while at camp amply meets this need. Merit badges are discussed more specifically in the next section of this report.



DESIRE TO LEARN

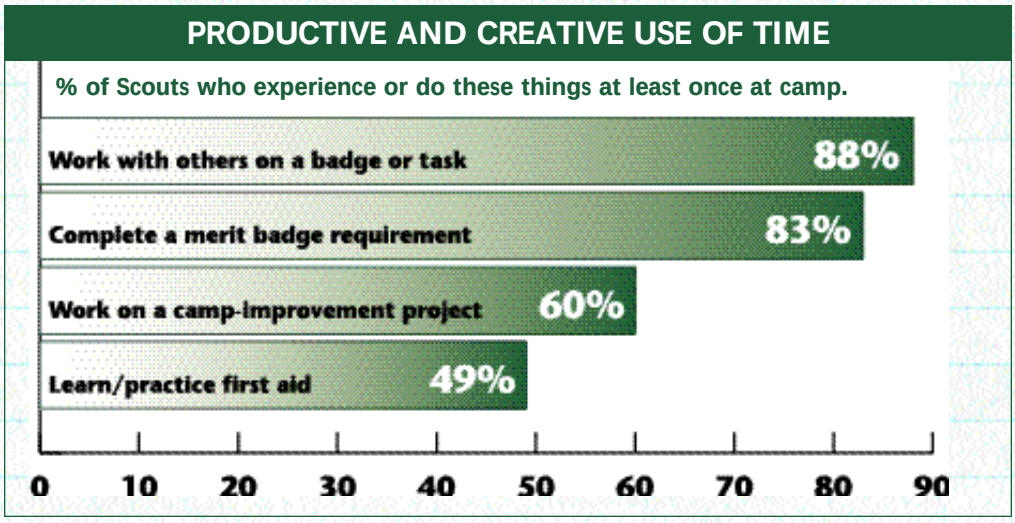




Productive and Creative Use of Time

Because so many lead full-scheduled lives, young people understand the value of time, and they consider it important to use their time efficiently and productively. While redundancy is important for reinforcing positive values, young people desire activities and opportunities that they perceive as new and relevant to their growth. For this reason, various merit badge options are an important aspect of camp.

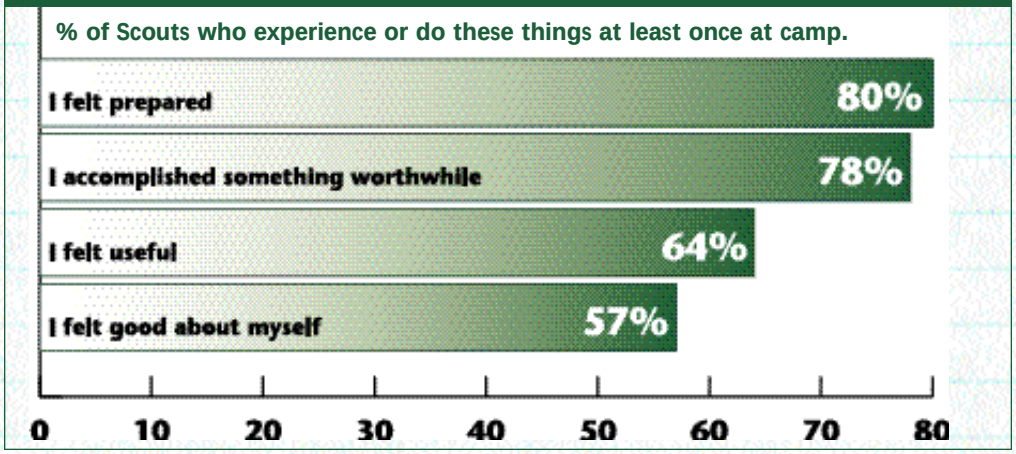
Time spent achieving goals is a common positive aspect of Scout summer camp. Almost all Scouts "complete a merit badge" (83 percent) or "work with others on a badge or task" (88 percent) while at camp. Also, significant percentages of Scouts "work on a camp-improvement project" (60 percent) or "learn/practice first aid" (49 percent).







PRODUCTIVE AND CREATIVE USE OF TIME



Majorities of Scouts felt prepared (80 percent), that they accomplished something worthwhile during camp (78 percent), and useful (64 percent). Productive use of time matches with good feelings of contribution (57 percent).



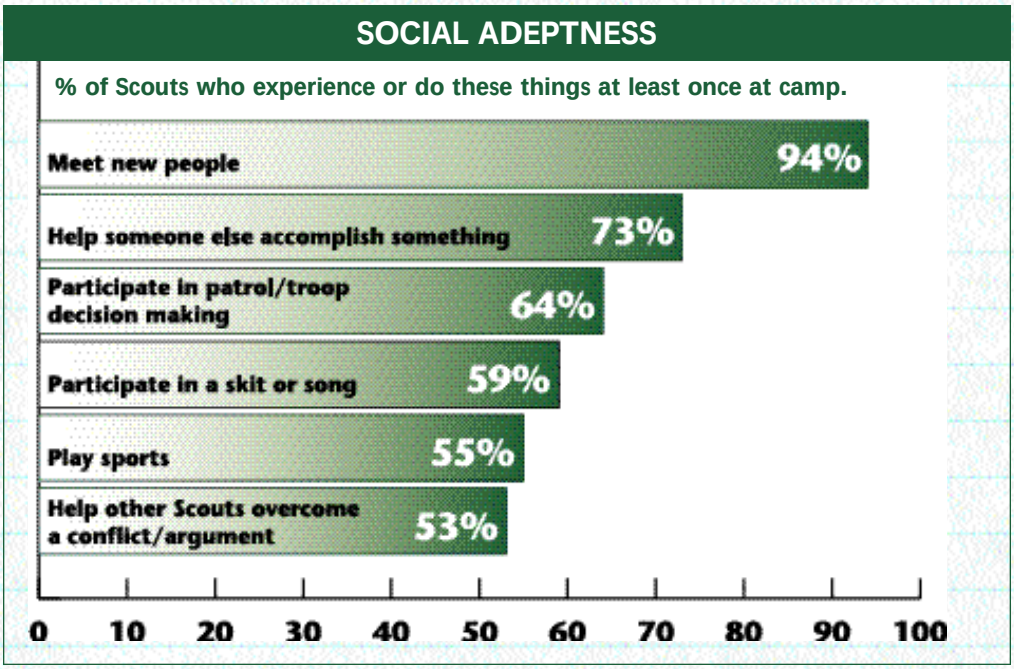
Social Adeptness



Positive and healthy relationships are essential for successful youth development. By being placed in social settings, young people learn such social skills as the art of conversation, how to contribute to team goals, and how to resolve interpersonal conflicts in a healthy way.

Camps are structured to encourage boys to spend time working and playing together in ways that seldom happen outside of the camp environment. In the outdoors, boys are removed from independent activities, such as playing video games and watching television, and are encouraged instead to socially interact with peers.

At summer camp, almost every boy meets new people (94 percent). Additionally, majorities of Scouts collaborate with other youth on accomplishments (73 percent), participate in group decision making and activities (64 percent), and even help resolve interpersonal conflicts (53 percent). These social growth experiences are outcomes of the design of summer camps.



Other Important Findings

Other important findings from the research include the high proportion of boys who participate in fitness-building activities and events. Perhaps not surprising, swimming (85 percent) and hiking (70 percent) are among the most common fitness activities experienced.



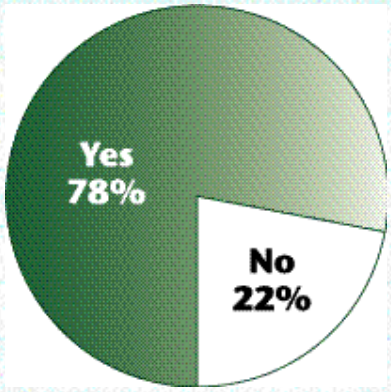
These experiences are frequently tied to goal achievement. Many boys set personal goals for things they want to accomplish while at camp. Among these, 70 percent indicate they met those goals during camp.

Perhaps the best indication of the "satisfaction" that boys have at camp is the finding that more than three-of-four boys (78 percent) who attend camp would recommend camp to others.

The typical Boy Scout camper has the following characteristics:

- **Is 12.8 years old**
- **Has attended camp 2.7 times**
- **Has been in Scouting an average of 6 years (including Cub Scouts)**
- **Has 18.4 Scouts and 4.2 leaders in his summer camp troop.**

WOULD RECOMMEND SUMMER CAMP TO OTHER SCOUTS



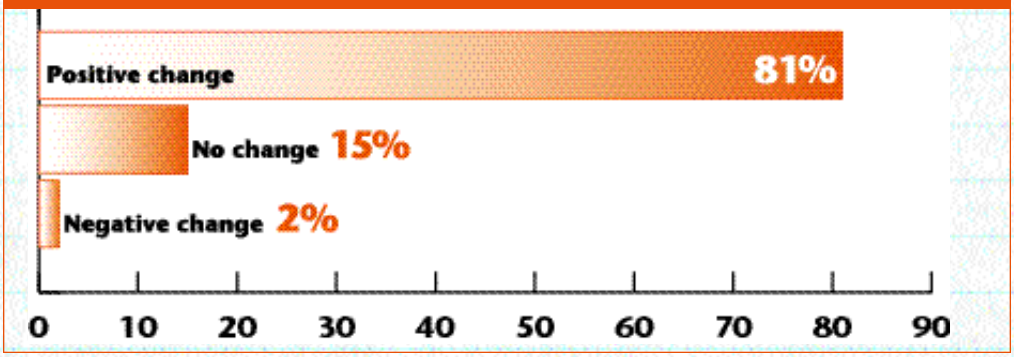
Findings from Parents of Scouts

To fully understand whether or not Scout summer camp is making a difference in the lives of boys, Harris Interactive included a survey among parents of boys who attended summer camp. This section of the report provides responses received from parents of boys who attended summer camp.

For decades, parents have given anecdotal evidence to BSA camp directors and staff members that the camp experience changed their sons. One commonly communicated sentiment has been "You took my boy and he came home more like a young man." More than 80 percent of parents (81 percent) indicate that summer camp resulted in a positive change in their sons.



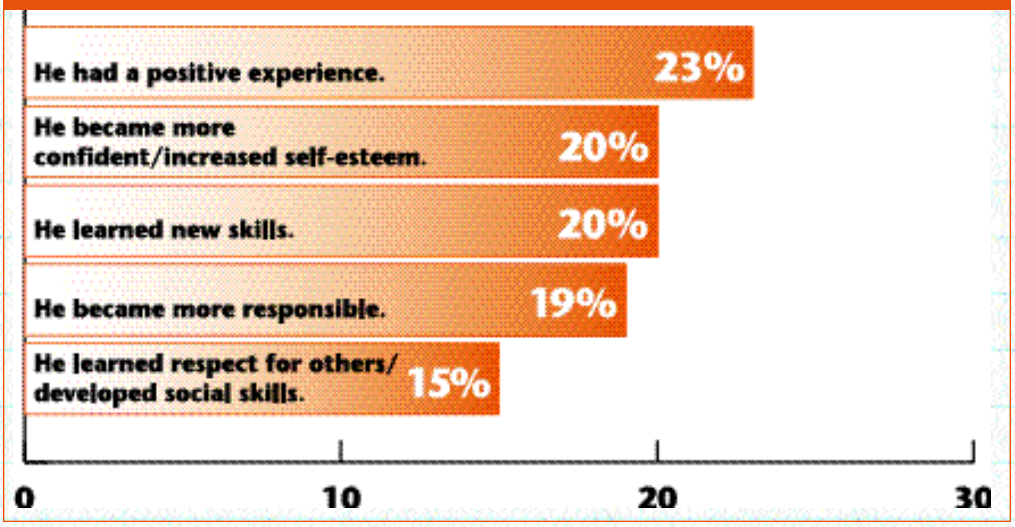
PERCENT OF PARENTS WHO NOTICED AN EFFECT OF SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE



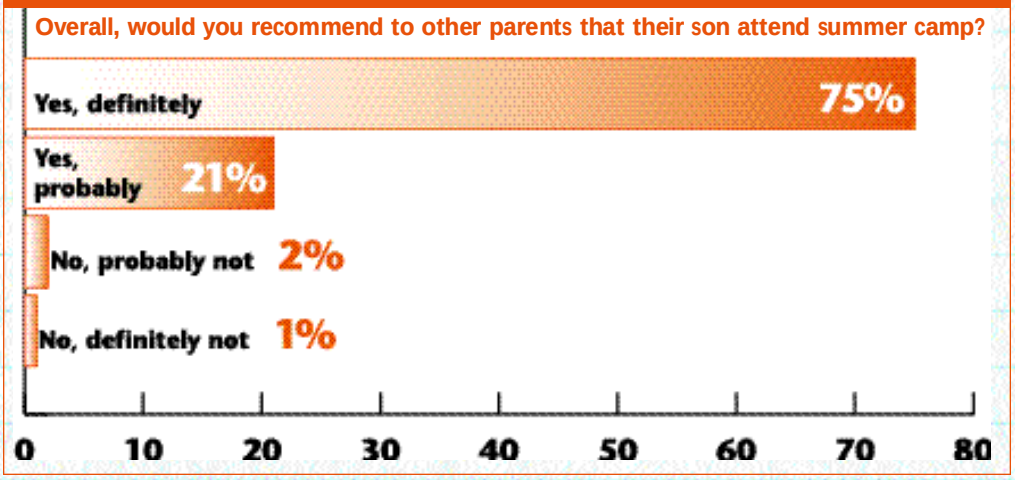
When asked to describe the reasons they believe a positive change took place, parents mention growth in self-esteem, new skills learned, and increased levels of personal responsibility.

Overall, parents are very satisfied with their son's experience at Scout camp. More than nine of 10 parents (93 percent) indicate their son's summer camp experience met or exceeded their expectations. In addition, almost all parents (96 percent) say they would recommend to other parents that their sons attend Scout summer camp.

TOP 5 POSITIVE CHANGES IN SON



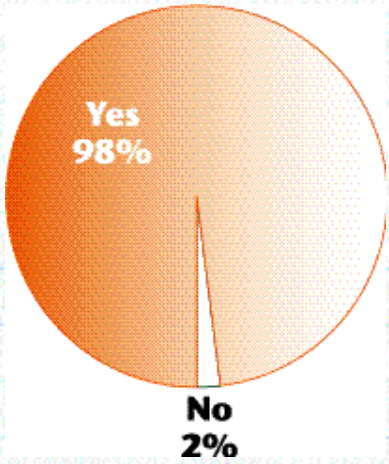
RECOMMEND CAMP TO OTHER PARENTS

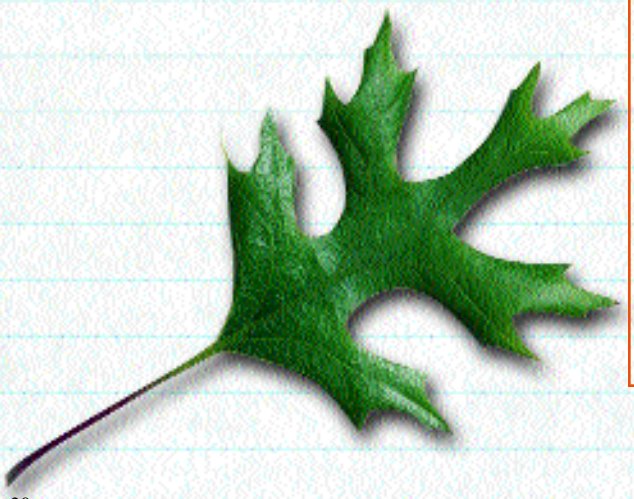




Since its inception, the Scouting program has been designed to encourage interaction between parents and their children. Scout summer camp follows this design, and the fact that almost every parent (98 percent) discusses the summer camp experience with their son validates that the design works.

DID YOU DISCUSS THE SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE WITH YOUR SON?

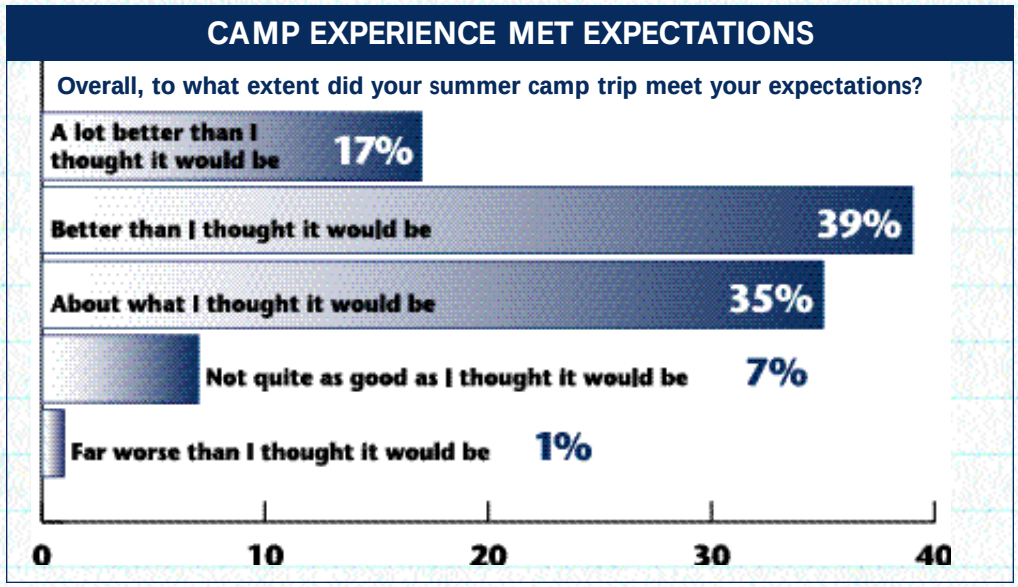




Findings from Scout Leaders

The outcomes of Boy Scout summer camp are not exclusively beneficial to Scouts. By surveying adult leaders who attended summer camp, it was determined that Scoutmasters and other adult leaders also grow and learn while at camp.

Summer camp meets (35 percent) or exceeds (56 percent) the expectations of adult leaders. This is a significant finding since a majority have been to summer camp three or more times as an adult.





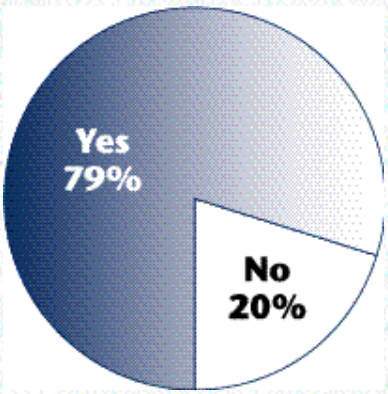


Most leaders set personal goals for camp (79 percent), and almost all achieve at least some of those goals (94 percent).

Adult leaders understand the focus of summer camp is on supporting the growth of youth. Notably, more than nine of 10 adults (96 percent) agree that they "played a role in helping young people succeed/grow" during the camp experience. A similar percentage agree that they "helped youth realize their own abilities" (92 percent). At a time when many youth experts are concerned that boys are becoming socially independent at younger ages, Scout camp helps bring people of all ages together. Adult leaders who attend camp clearly agree that they "built friendships with youth in the unit" (92 percent). This finding is coupled with the fact that 82 percent of adult leaders agree that they increased their understanding of today's youth while at camp.

SET PERSONAL GOALS

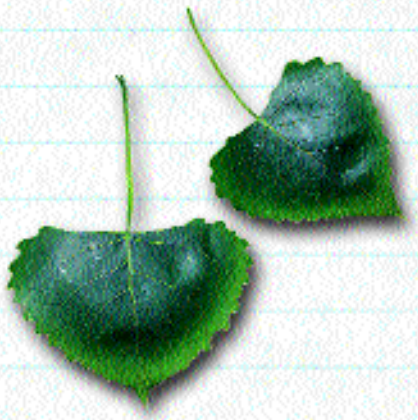
Did you set goals for what you personally wanted to accomplish during summer camp?



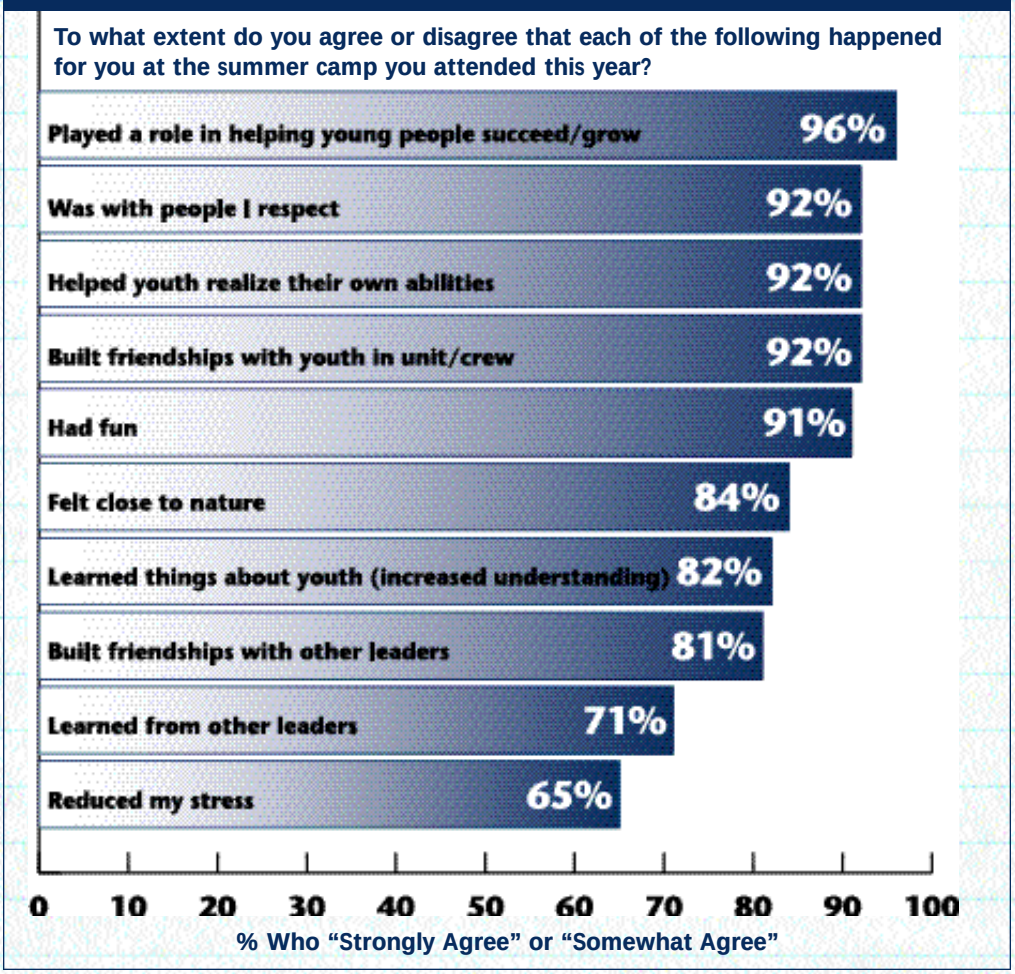
ACCOMPLISHED GOALS



Personal growth benefits for leaders are another outcome of Scout summer camp. The majority of adult leaders agree that they were with people they respect (92 percent), they had fun (91 percent), they felt close to nature (84 percent), they built friendships with other leaders (81 percent), they learned from other leaders (71 percent), and they reduced their stress (65 percent).



PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF CAMP EXPERIENCE



Thanks to each of the following councils for their participation in this summer camp study.

Northeast Region

Boston Minuteman Council
Chester County Council
Connecticut Rivers Council
Connecticut Yankee Council
Del-Mar-Va Council
Greater New York Council
Greater Niagara Frontier Council
Greater Pittsburgh Council
Jersey Shore Council
Knox Trail Council
Moby Dick Council
Moraine Trails Council
Narragansett Council
National Capital Area Council
Otschodela Council
Patriots' Path Council
Westmoreland-Fayette Council
Yankee Clipper Council
York-Adams Area Council

Southern Region

Alamo Area Council
Blue Ridge Council
Caddo Area Council
Central North Carolina Council
Chickasaw Council
Colonial Virginia Council
Daniel Boone Council
Flint River Council
Greater Alabama Council
Gulf Stream Council
Middle Tennessee Council
North Florida Council
Occoneechee Council
Old Hickory Council
Old North State Council
Ouachita Valley Council
Piedmont Council
South Florida Council
Tukabatchee Area Council
West Central Florida Council
West Tennessee Area Council

Central Region

Anthony Wayne Area Council
Bay Lakes Council
Black Swamp Area Council
Buckeye Council
Chicago Area Council
Crossroads of America Council
Detroit Area Council
Four Lakes Council
Gerald R. Ford Council
Greater St. Louis Area Council
Greater Western Reserve Council
Hawkeye Area Council
Heart of America Council
Indianhead Council
Jayhawk Area Council
Mid-Iowa Council
Northeast Illinois Council
Northeast Iowa Council
Northern Lights Council
Northwest Suburban Council
Overland Trails Council
Ozark Trails Council
Rainbow Council
Simon Kenton Council
Sioux Council
Tall Pine Council
Tecumseh Council
Three Fires Council
Twin Valley Council
Viking Council
Winnebago Council

Western Region

Black Hills Area Council
Boulder Dam Area Council
Cascade Pacific Council
Chief Seattle Council
Denver Area Council
Desert Pacific Council
Golden Empire Council
Great Southwest Council
Long Beach Area Council
Marin County Council
Monterey Bay Area Council
Pikes Peak Council
Rocky Mountain Council
San Gabriel Valley Council
Sequoia Council
Utah National Parks Council
Ventura County Council
Western Los Angeles Council





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