Keeping the Spark Alive: Retaining Youth in Scouting America

Listening to the Voice of the Scout

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Our Most Important Data Points

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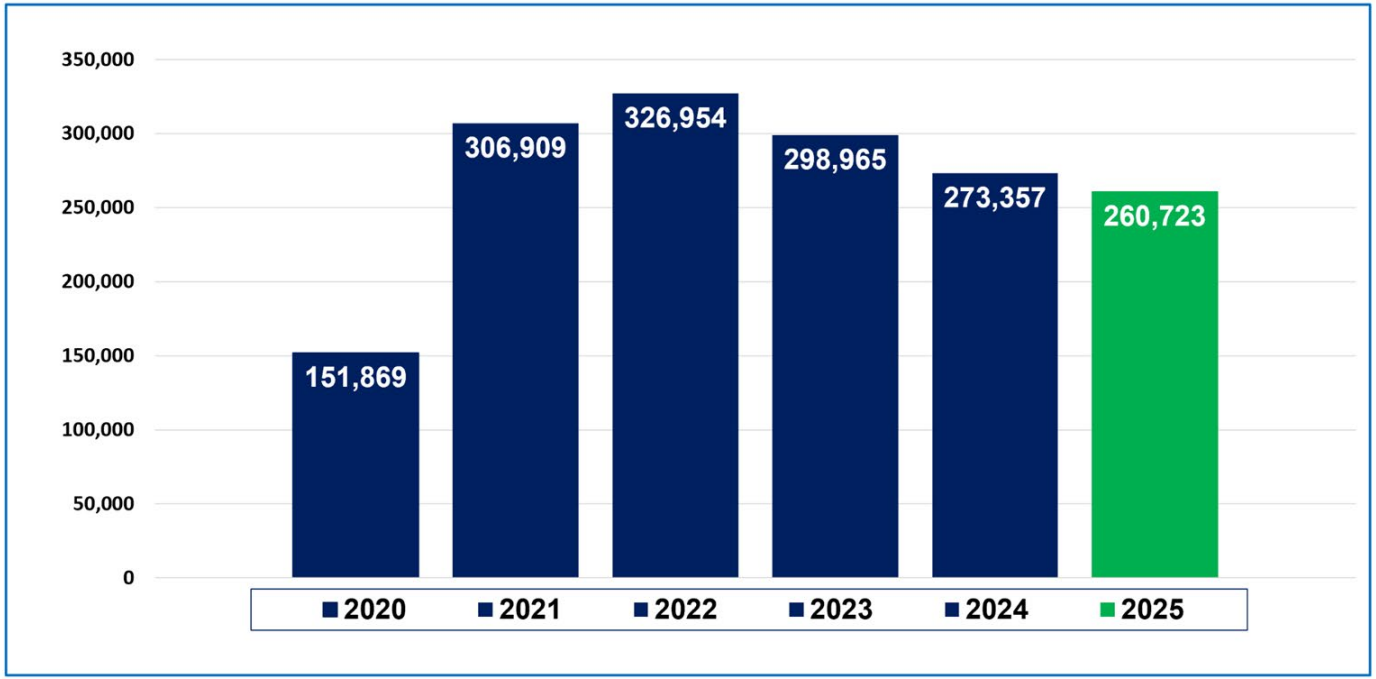
National New Youth Member Registration



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National End-of-Year Youth Membership

2025	877,402
2024	956,539
2023	1,014,979
2022	1,042,833
2021	1,010,071
2020	1,195,198
2019	2,110,160

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Youth Membership Retention

	Total	Packs	Troops
2025	56%	44%	76%
2024	62%	52%	77%
2023	70%	63%	80%
2022	71%	64%	80%
2021	59%	47%	78%
2020	52%	49%	57%

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End of Year Unit Counts

	Total	New Units	Lost Units
2025	39,288	2,290	3,732
2024	40,730	2,506	3,335
2023	41,559	2,677	3,962
2022	42,844	2,691	4,799
2021	44,952		
2020	51,319		
2019	79,634		

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End of Year Unit Counts

	Total	Cubs	Troops
2025	39,288	15,462	20,038
2024	40,730	16,072	20,704
2023	41,559	16,296	21,244
2022	42,844	16,786	21,952
2021	44,952	17,800	22,575
2020	51,319	21,497	23,730
2019	79,634	35,296	35,641

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The average sizes - Pack is 29 and Troop is 19

For Troops, members that come from a Pack - boys, >90% and girls, approx. 65%

Bridging from Pack is 75% for boys, 65% for girls

EOY 2020, the percentage of girls in a Pack was 11.5%

EOY 2025, the percentage of girls in a Pack was 21%

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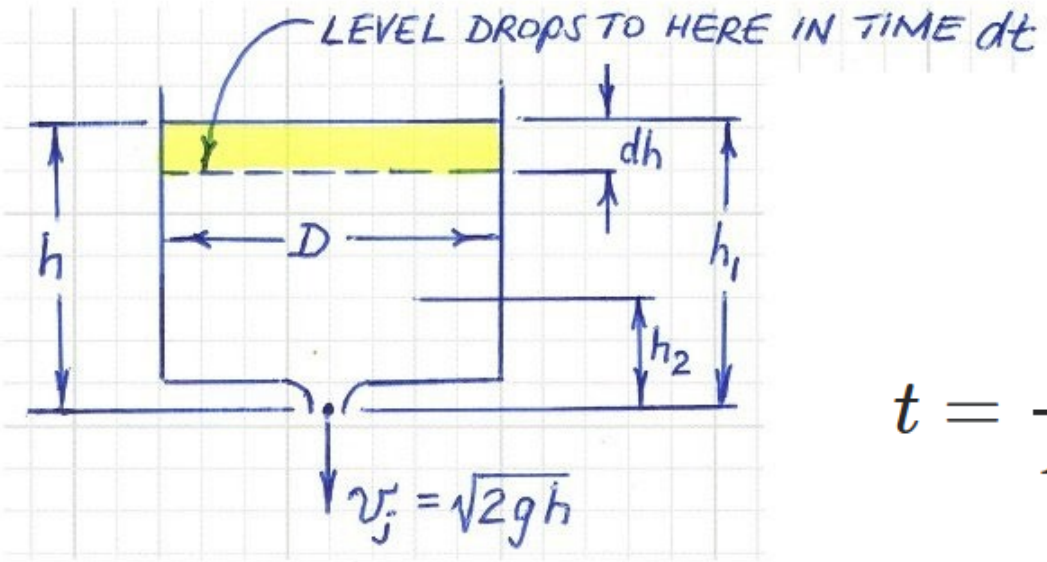
WHY ARE WE NOT GROWING?



$$t = \frac{2A_t}{A_j\sqrt{2g}}\left(\sqrt{h_1} - \sqrt{h_2}\right)$$

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In 2025, we focused on growth by hiring an executive vice president of membership and leveraging Lilly Endowment funds to hire unit growth executives for councils. We also expanded our marketing efforts, driving a record number of visitors to BeAScout.org. *I am pleased to report that by the close of 2025, we will have recruited almost 260,000 new members*. But membership is more than recruiting — it is also retention. In the coming year, we will intensify our focus on retention and on delivering a more meaningful experience for all members. - Roger Krone

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We don’t have a RECRUITMENT issue……

We have a RETENTION issue

WHY?

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WHAT IS MOST INFLUENTIAL IN DETERMINING IF A SCOUT WILL STAY OR LEAVE?

Scouting Exit Survey

- Sample included youth with dropped Member ID that expired June 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024.
- Survey was sent on April 3, 2025 (after 90 day lapsed period ended)
- Survey was sent to 172,136 parents for whom we had valid emails or to youth who were over 14 if no valid parent email was present.
- 8,732 survey were completed for a response rate of 5.1%

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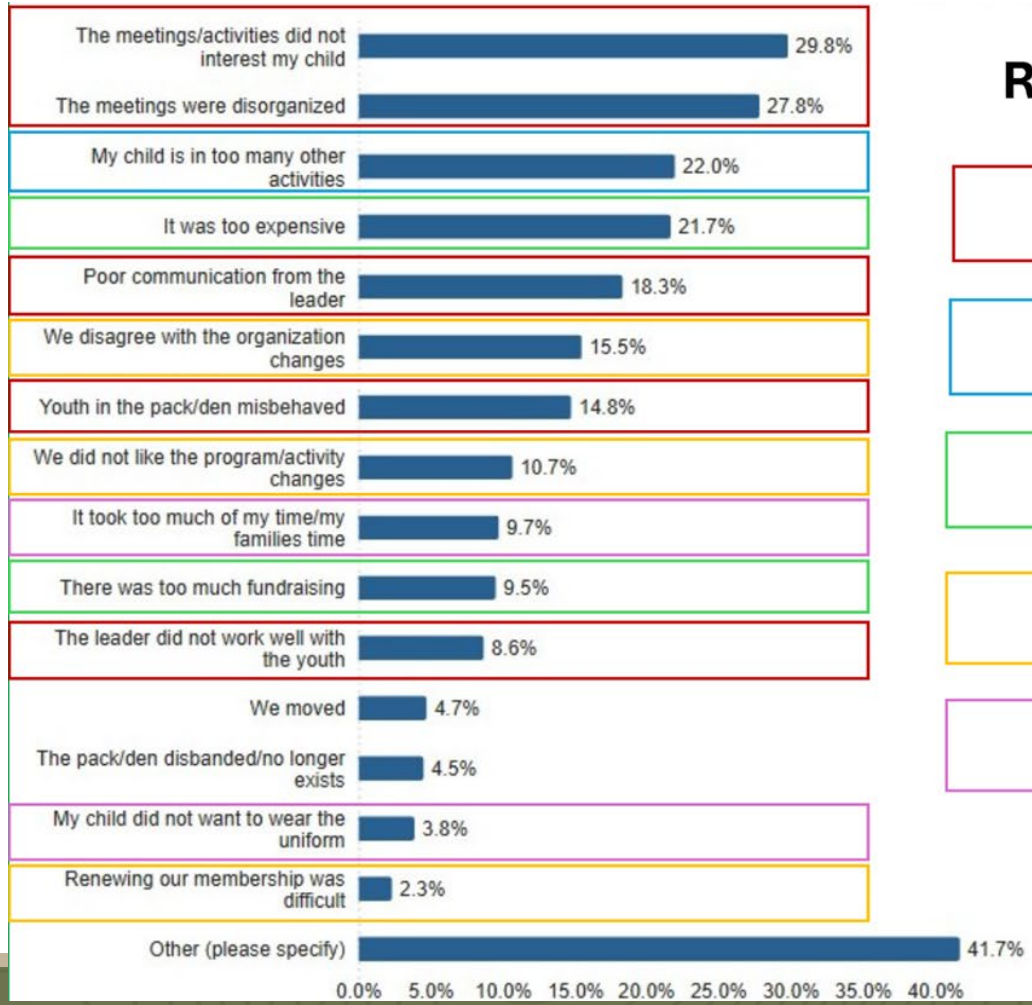


Reasons Cub Scouts Left

Poor unit experience

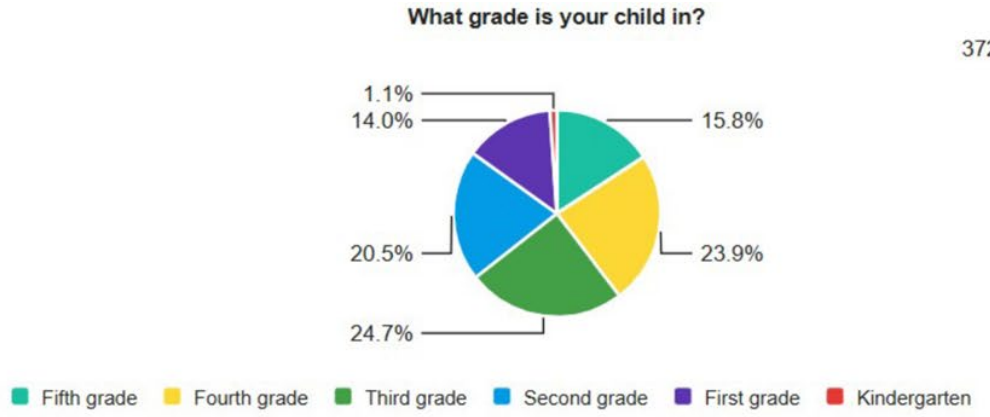
Other Activities

Cost/fundraising

Organizational Changes

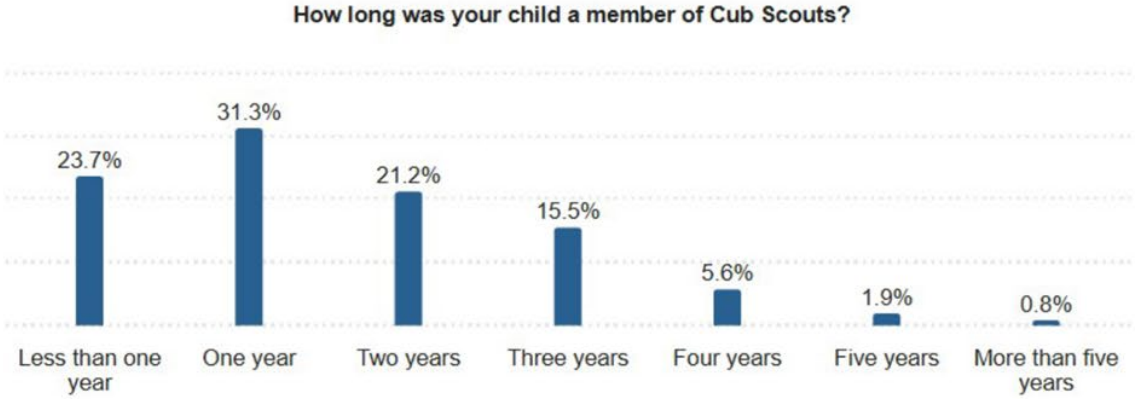
Program Requirements

Note: %'s may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.



Among Cub Scouts who left, more than half leave within a year of joining.

Most left during or after the Wolf, Bear, or Tiger year



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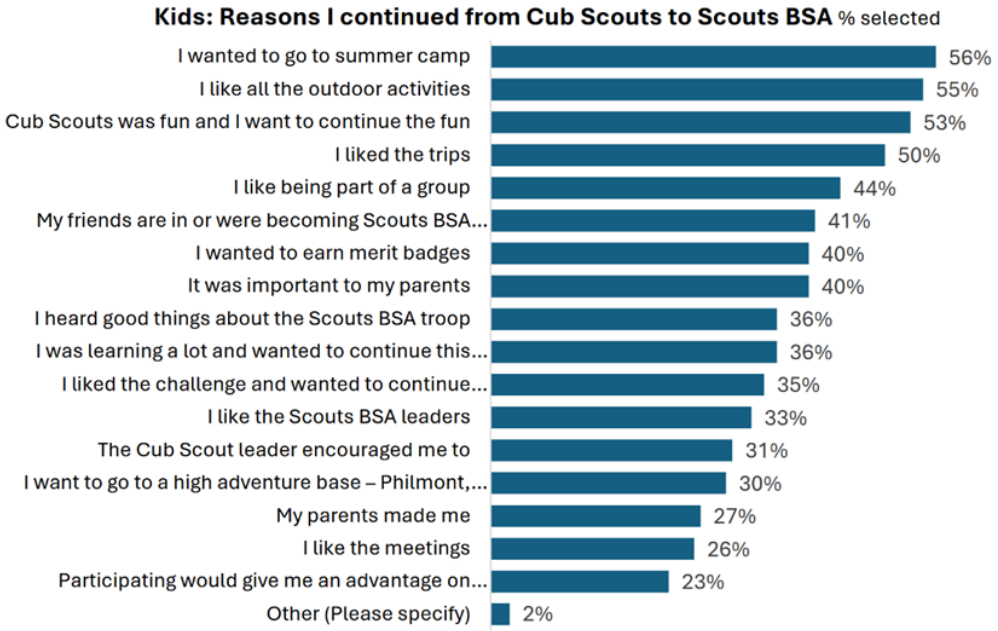
Kids' decision to move to Scouts BSA mostly has to do with the fun activities and social connection they enjoyed in Cub Scouting



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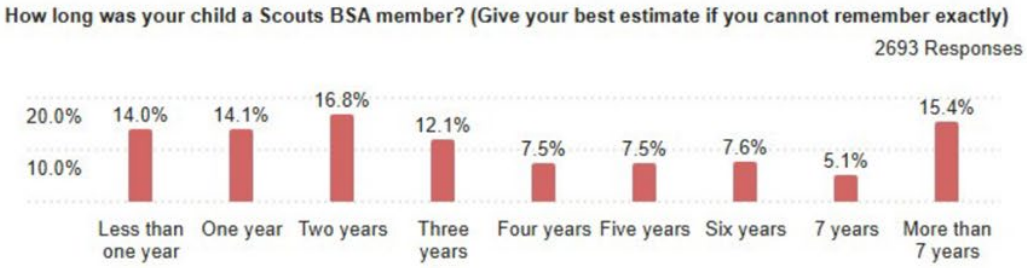
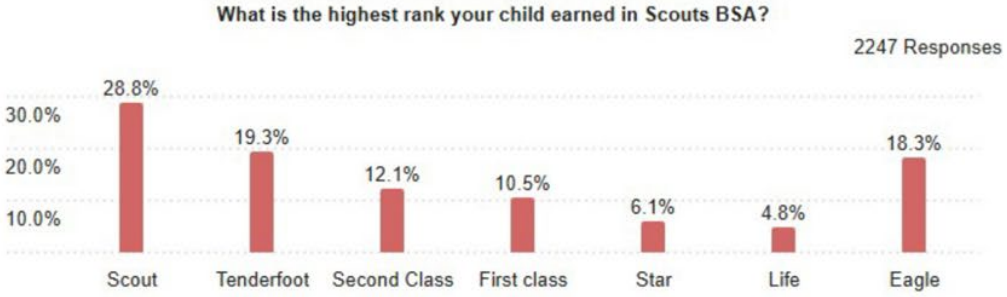


Among Scouts BSA who left, more than half leave within three years of joining.

Most leave before earning First Class.



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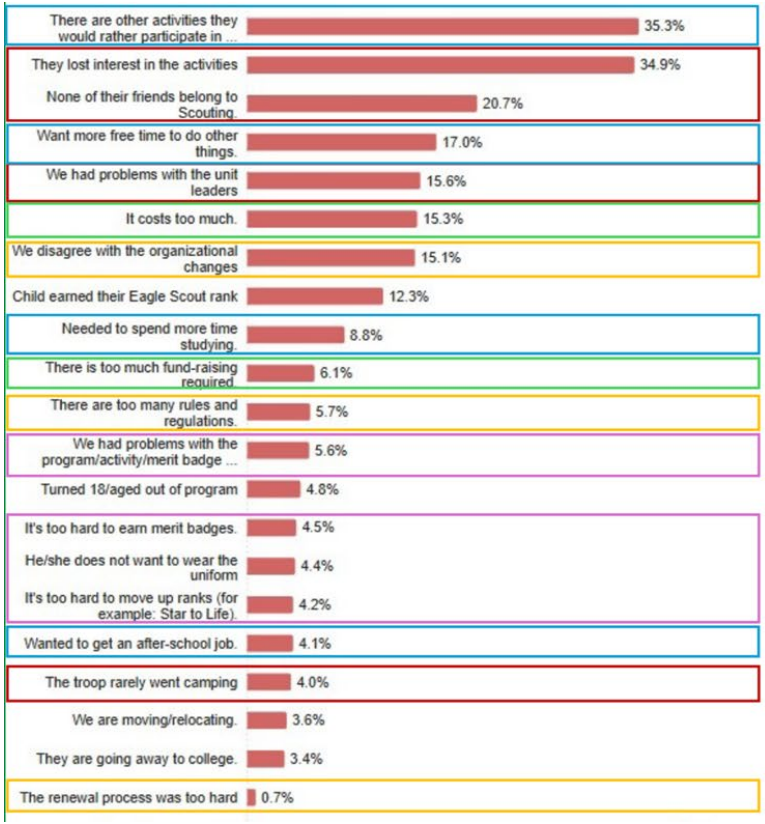

Reasons Scouts BSA Left

- Poor unit experience
- Other Activities/Free Time
- Cost/fundraising
- Organizational Changes
- Program Requirements

Note: %'s may add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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WHAT IS MOST INFLUENTIAL IN DETERMINING IF A SCOUT WILL STAY OR LEAVE?

UNIT LEADERSHIP

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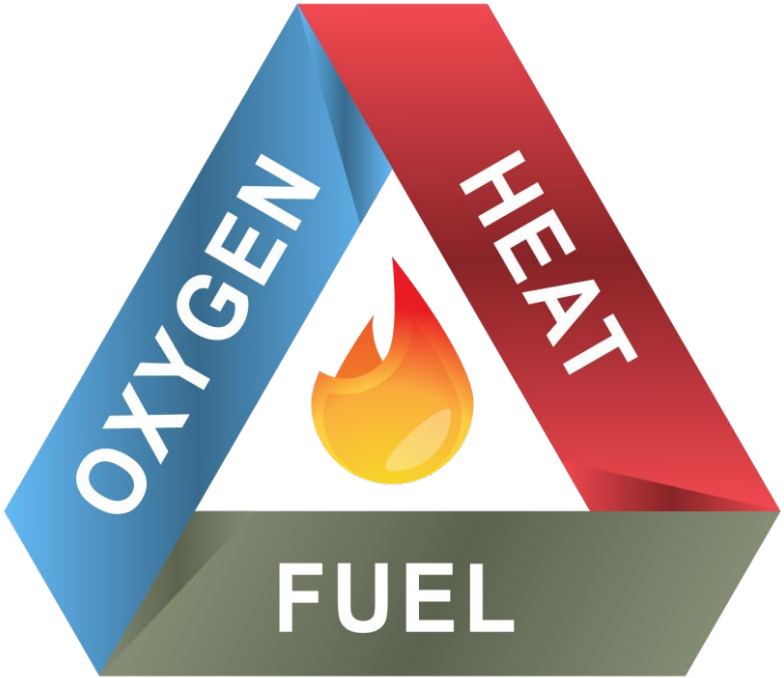

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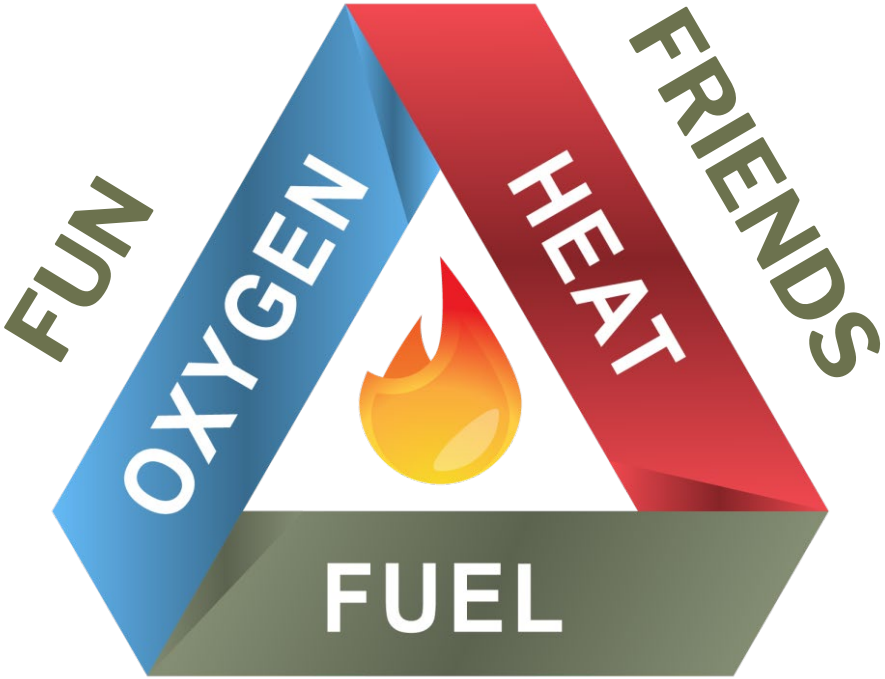

NOW

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Kiley Holds Hearing on the Crisis in American Youth Sports

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 16, 2025

Today, Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee Chairman Kevin Kiley (R-CA) delivered the following statement, as prepared for delivery, at a hearing titled **"Benched: The Crisis in American Youth Sports and Its Cost to Our Future"**:

"For generations, sports have served an important role in building the character of America's youth, keeping kids active, and teaching important lessons in perseverance, discipline, and teamwork.

"Today, fewer kids are getting those foundational skills from youth sports. Seventy percent of children now quit organized sports by age 13. This decline will have a negative effect on children's long-term development and broader economic and societal consequences for the nation.

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In 2024, the outdoor recreation participant base grew 3% to a record 181.1 million participants, or 58.6% of all Americans aged 6 and older. There were significant increases in the number of youth and seniors, participants with more than $100K in annual income, participants in the South, participants with a high school diploma and no college education, and Black and Hispanic participants. Additionally, the number of “core”—or most frequent—participants increased by 5.7% (five million participants). Participants are most attracted to walking, hiking, fishing, camping, bicycling, and running outdoors and each of those major activities gained an average of 2.1 million participants. Nearly every signal in the 2024 participation data is positive for prolonged growth. Despite weakening economic conditions, the prospect of growth in the number of Americans who participate in outdoor recreation is very strong. - 2025 Outdoor Industry Association

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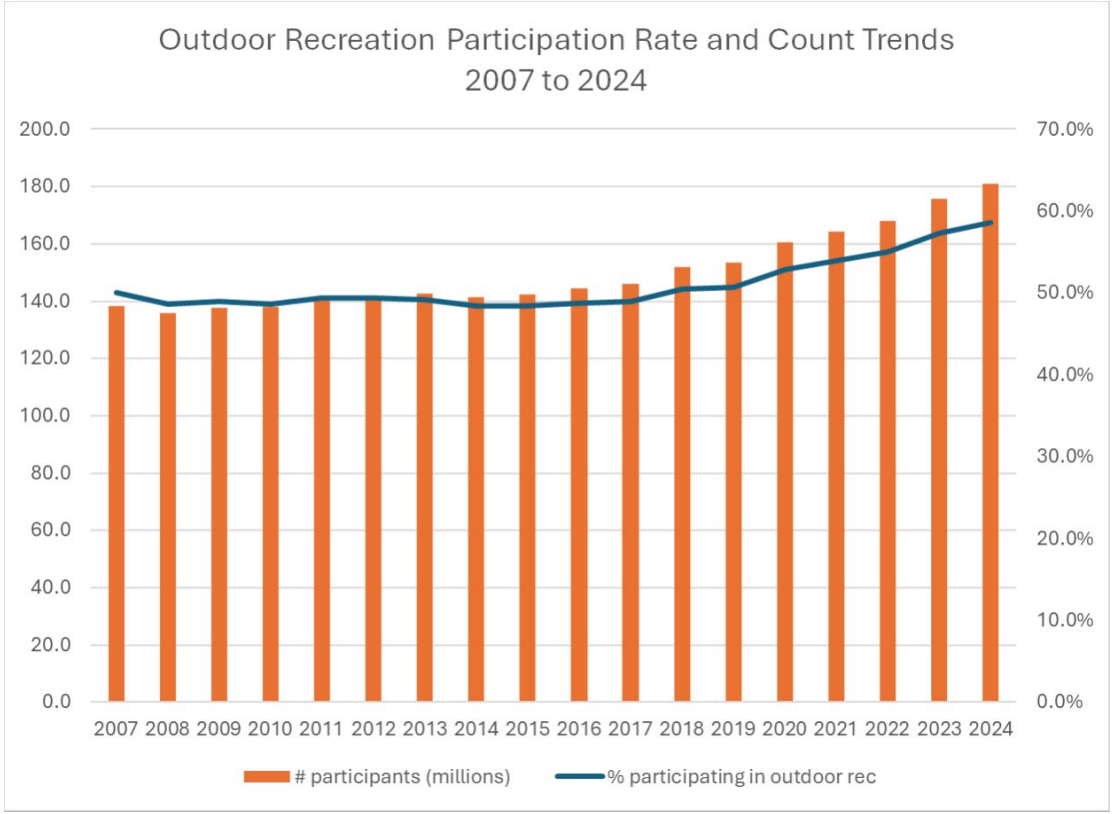

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A recent survey of children 9 - 13 found a majority would choose outdoor play over screen-based activities when asked how they would rather spend their free time. In this poll, 58% of kids said they preferred playing outside with friends, while only about 13% chose digital activities like watching videos or gaming. Research suggests children are not inherently drawn to screens as much as they are seeking freedom, social interaction, and real-world play, but screens often become the default because independent outdoor experiences are limited in many environments. The findings challenge the common belief that children overwhelmingly want to stay on devices, pointing instead to a desire for more unstructured, in-person, outdoor time when given the option. - Let Grow

www.webpronews.com/kids-prefer-outdoor-play-over-screens-let-grow-poll-reveals/

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Unit Leadership Matters

What can you do differently in your council to support unit leaders?

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What Drives Council/District Satisfaction – 2025

(Number denotes order of importance)

	Unit Volunteers
I feel the council/district is very responsive to my needs.	1
My council is doing everything it can to deliver quality programs to Scouts.	2
I receive clear and timely communications that apply to me.	3
Scouting is a great value for the money.	4
Scouting is really fun for me.	5

Council/District Satisfaction Scores 2025 – Current Members/Volunteers

(% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)

VOICE
VOICE OF THE SCOUT

Unit Volunteers ↑

46.1%

Pack Volunteers ↑

45.5%

Troop Volunteers ↑

46.2%

Crew Volunteers ↑

45.1%

Ship Volunteers ↑

57.5%

↓

Base = 13,661 who did not select not applicable

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It’s me. It’s I. I’m the problem. It’s me. - T. Swift

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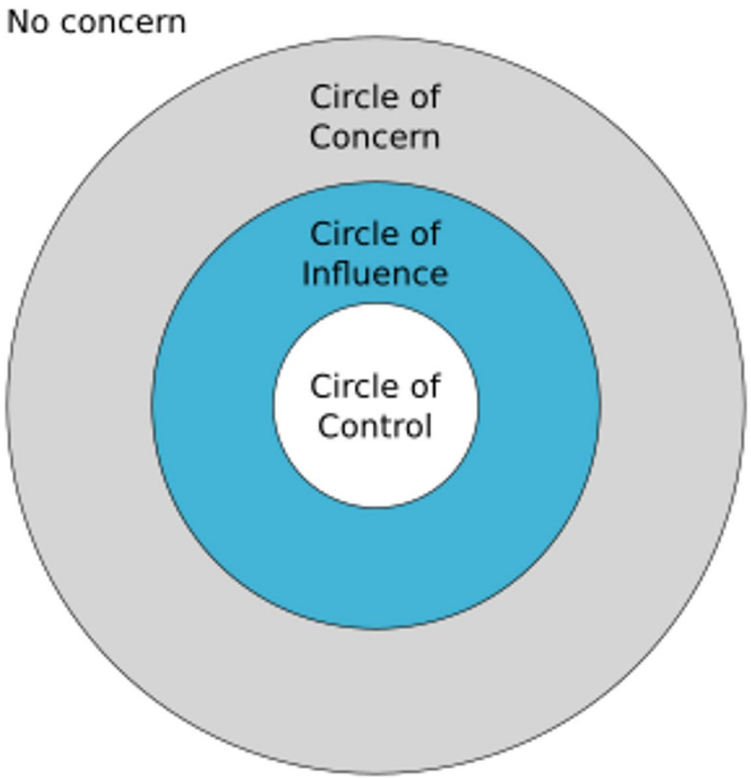

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"We put ourselves in our fans shoes... How could we eliminate the boring parts of the game and add new rules to keep fans excited? For us the greatest innovation comes from looking at the friction points from the fans point of view and trying to do the opposite."

Jesse Cole, Savannah Bananas

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Listening to Our CST-15 Unit Leaders

- Identified all Troops for boys with a registered youth membership of 50 or larger = 65
- Identified all Troops for girls with a registered youth membership of 35 or larger = 15
- Emailed survey to all units, 10 Troops of girls and 20 Troops of boys responded
- Held focus groups with each cohort

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What Your Leaders Said That You Could Do

- Thank us
- Listen to us
- Communicate with us
- Focus on growing membership
- Stop competing with us
- Focus on starting packs
- Don’t start units off to fail
- Be dependable
- Leave things alone
- Keep us from being admins/IT pros

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A Deeper Dive Coming During Breakout Sessions

After the break -

"From Joining to Belonging:
Strengthening Youth Retention in Scouting"

Tomorrow -

"Delivering Scouting to All Youth"

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National Membership Mixer

Held each Month via Zoom and are open to everyone

January 18 - Mati Mayfield Carson, "New Member Coordinator"

February 15 - Mike Matzinger, "Retention"

January Mixer

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In-Person Presentations

March 7	Carolina Commissioner College
April 11	CST - 12 Conference
April 25	Triad Commissioner College
May 14	National Annual Meeting
May 25	Piedmont Appalachian Commissioner College

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