



2025 NATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING



LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Why Scouts and Families Leave Scouting

Patricia Wellen
Research Director
Scouting America

WHAT WE WILL COVER

- Why families leave or might leave Scouting
- Mindsets and Actions needed to improve retention

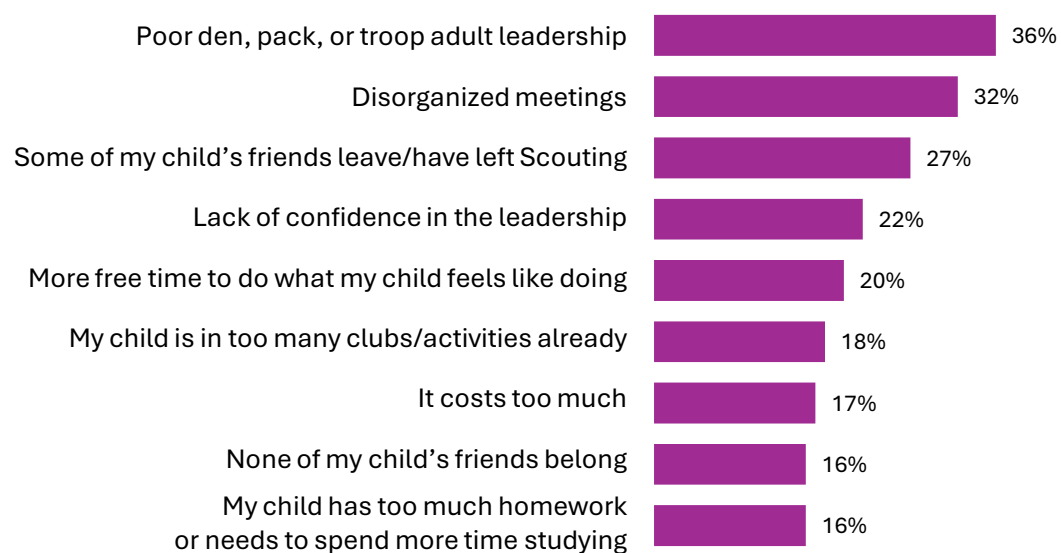
Why Families Leave or Might Leave Scouting



Reasons for Leaving

Parents mostly fear that poorly run troops and dens are going to drive them to leave, yet it's the juggling of kids' commitments that's ultimately a main driver of leaving the organization

A44. Which of the following reasons might cause your child to leave Scouting?



A45. Which, if any, of the following reasons may have caused your child to leave Scouting?



Importance of 'Disorganized meetings' as a Scouting risk factor

Rank out of 27
Surveyed

Specific Question

Might cause
your child to leave

2

Caused
your child to leave

3



Scouting Exit Survey

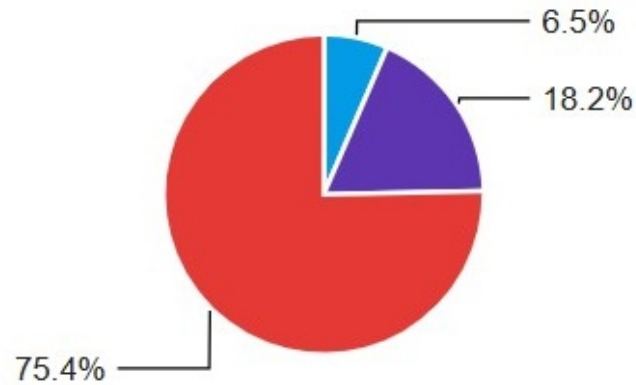
- Sample included youth with dropped Member ID that expired June 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024.
- Survey was sent on April 3, 2025 (after 90 day lapsed period ended)
- Survey was sent to 172,136 parents for whom we had valid emails or to youth who were over 14 if no valid parent email was present.
- 8,732 survey were completed for a response rate of 5.1%
- Less than a 1% margin of error at the 95% confidence level for parent responses.



Cub Scout Parents

At the time you received the notice to renew the membership, which of the following best describes where you were in the decision-making process?

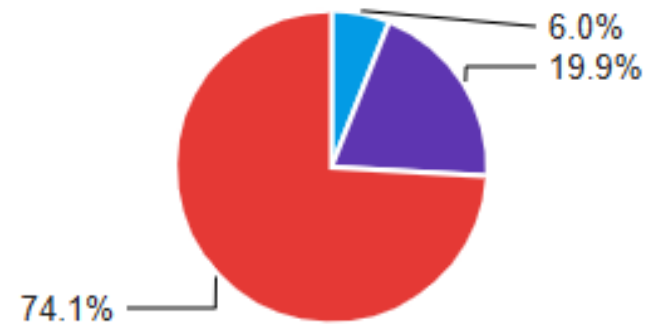
2925 Responses



More than 80%
had not
attended in 6
months or
longer

Scouts BSA Parents

1973 Responses



- The notification prompted us to make the decision to discontinue Scouting
- We already made the decision not to renew, but we were still attending
- We had already stopped attending

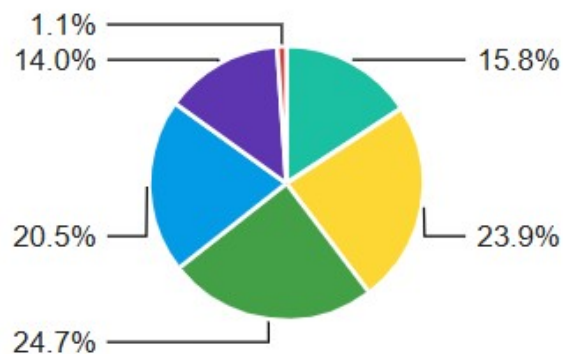






What grade is your child in?

3722 Responses

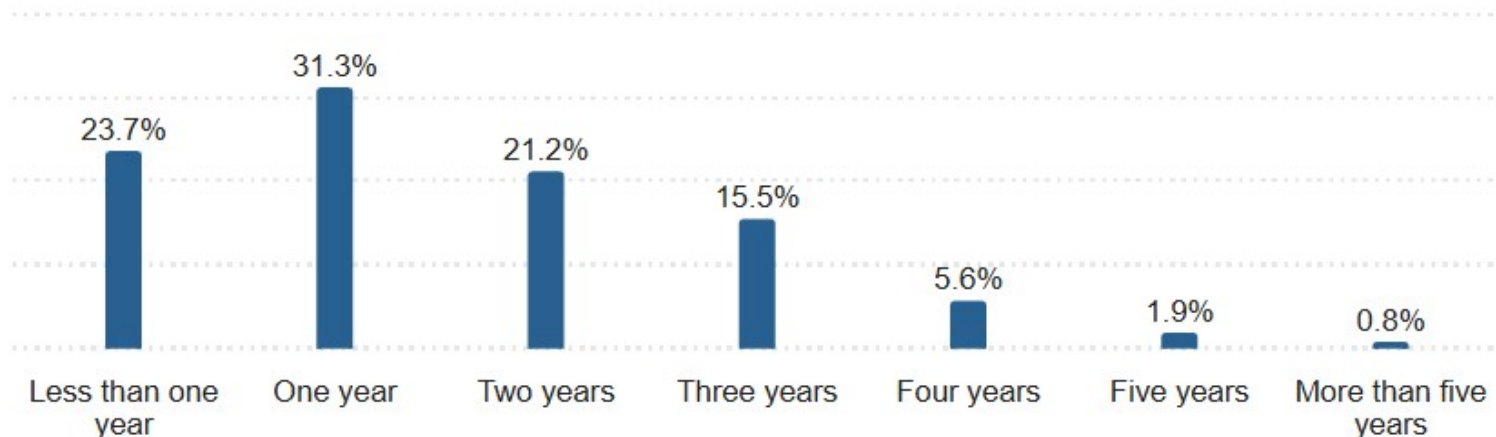


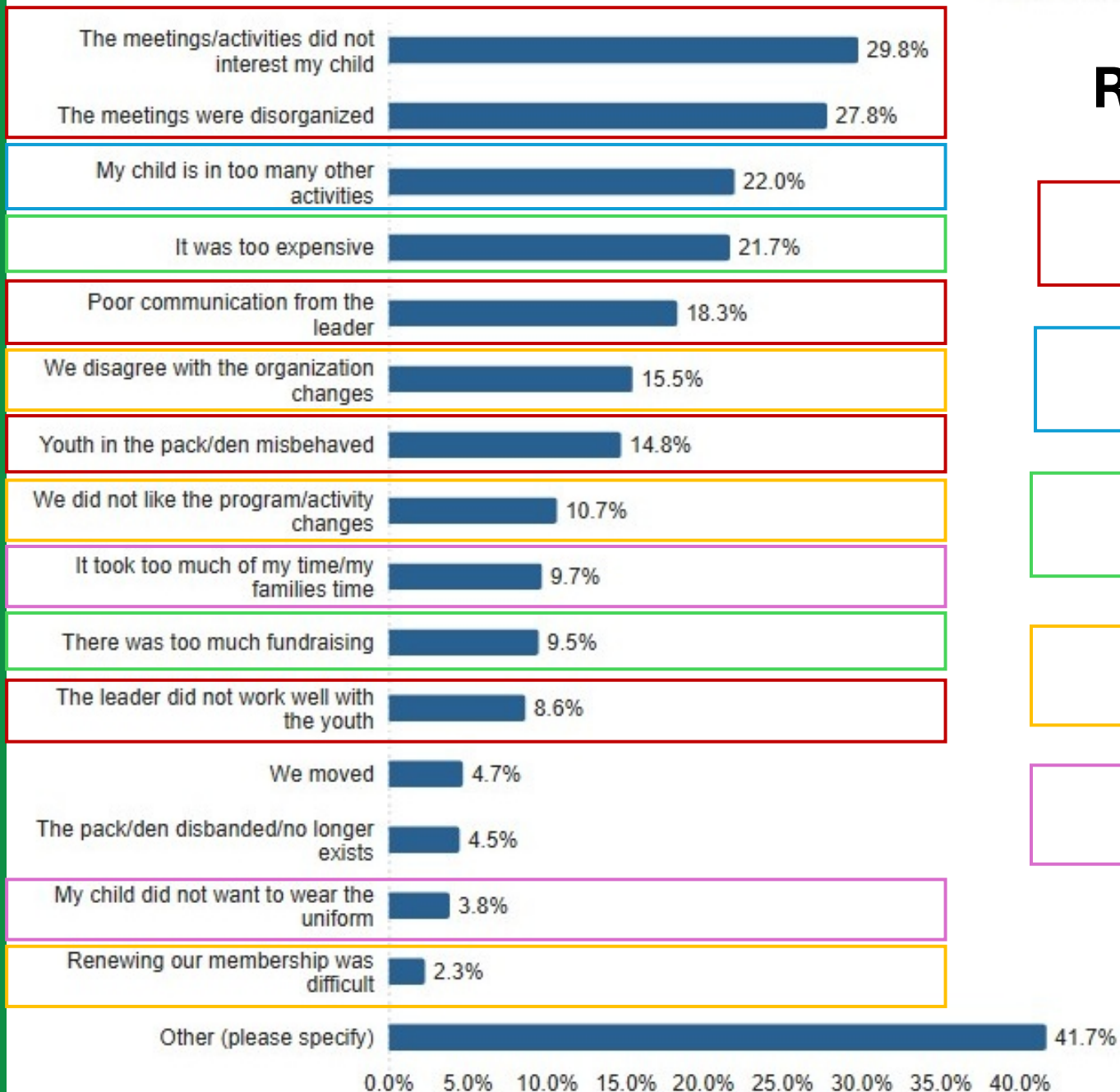
Fifth grade Fourth grade Third grade Second grade First grade Kindergarten

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

How long was your child a member of Cub Scouts?





Reasons Cub Scouts Left

Poor unit experience

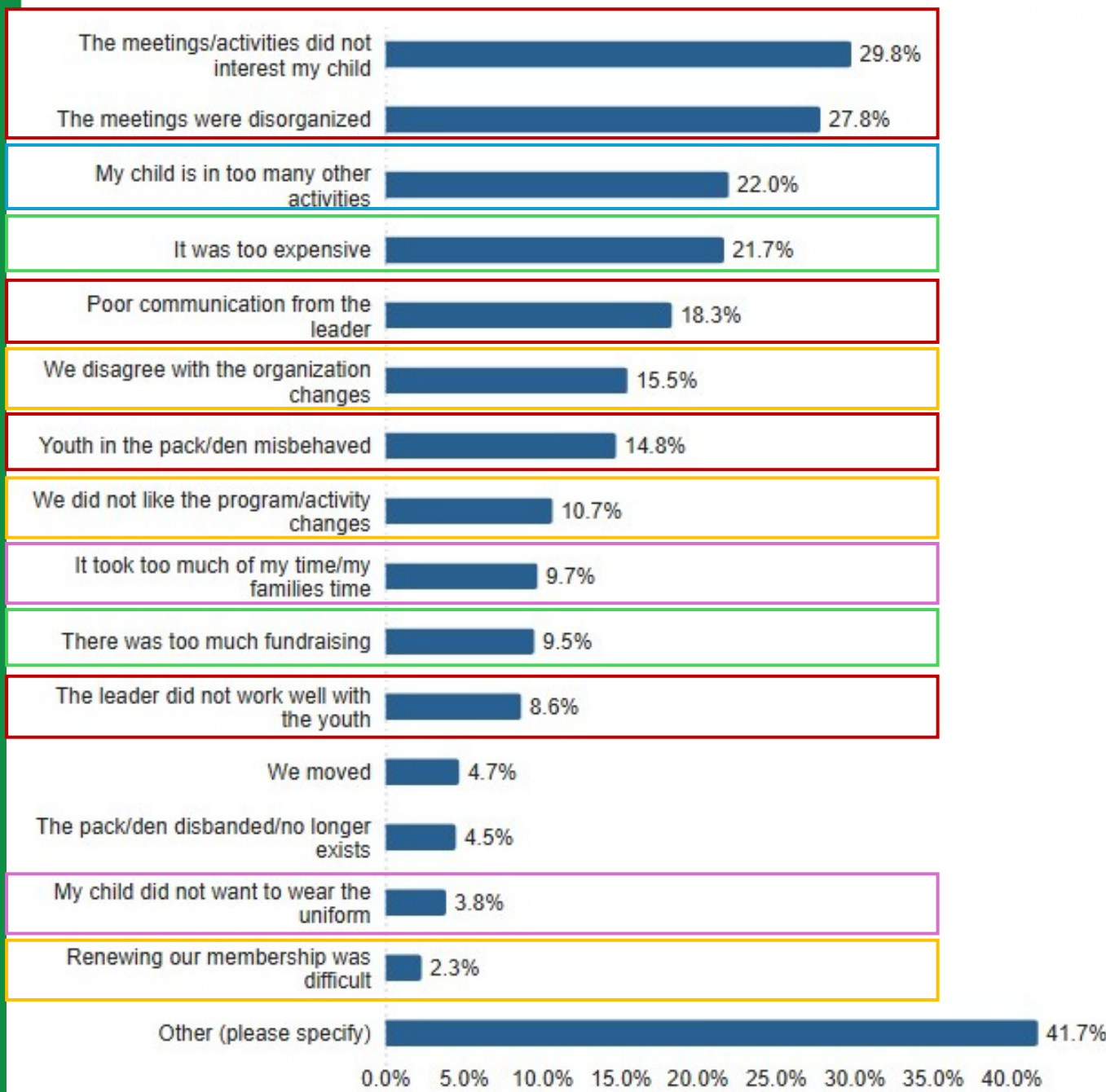
Other Activities

Cost/fundraising

Organizational Changes

Program Requirements

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



In Your Own Words, why did your child leave Cub Scouts?

The following were added to this list:

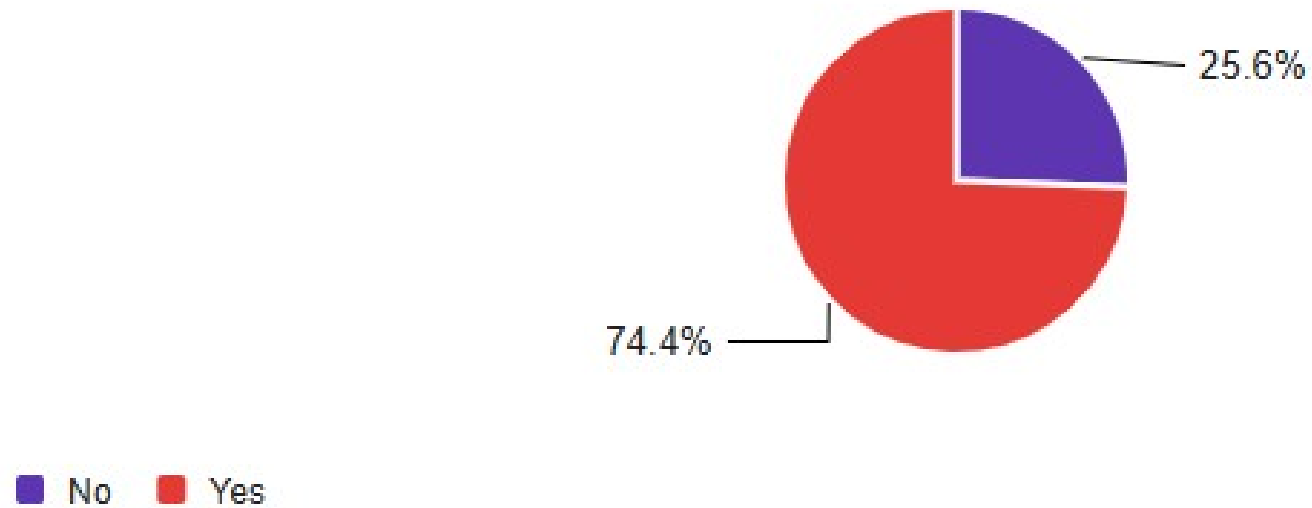
- Logistical issues with time or date of meetings (8.4%)
- Not a welcoming atmosphere (3.5%)
- Small den or pack/not enough youth (3.4%)
- Lack of leaders/volunteers (3.2%)
- Not welcoming to special needs (1.6%)
- No girls or too few girls (1.0%)

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

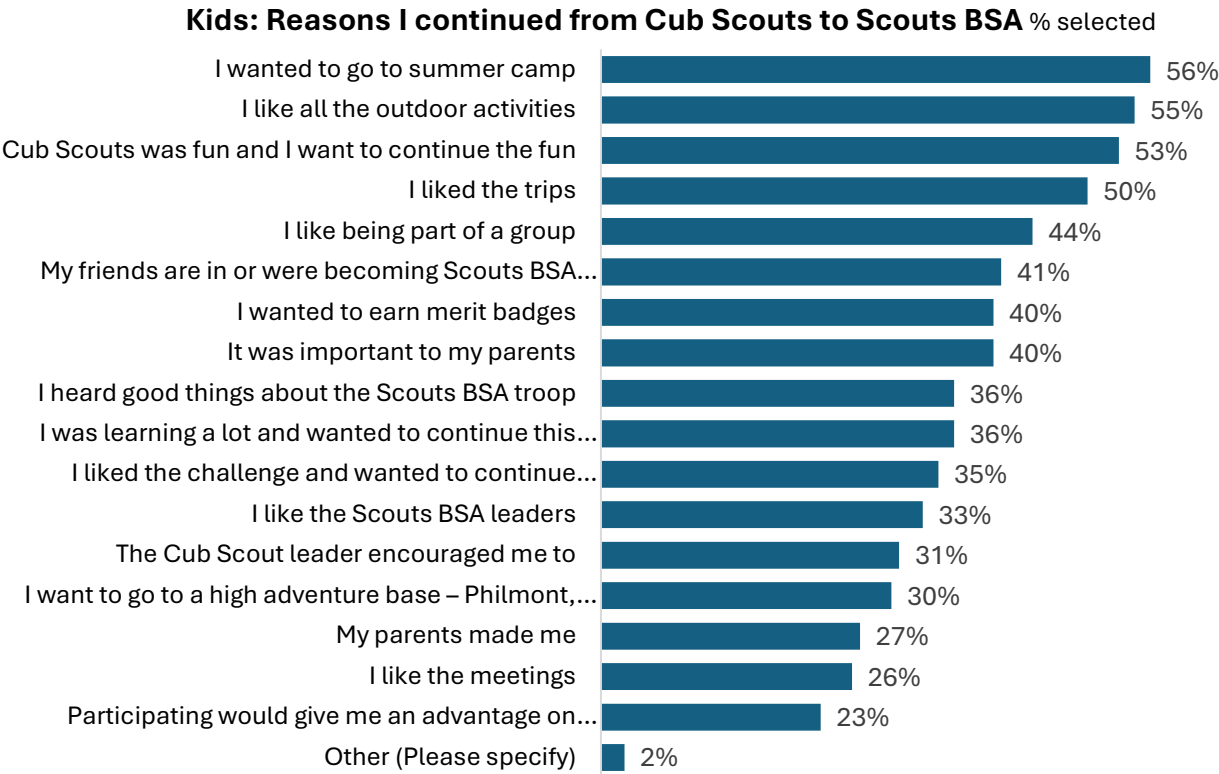


Before joining Scouts BSA was your child in Cub Scouts?

2695 Responses



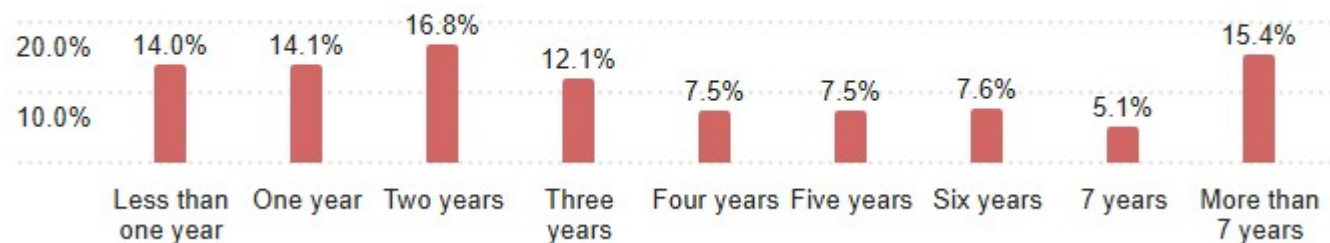
Kids’ decision to move to Scouts BSA mostly has to do with the **fun activities** and **social connection** they enjoyed in Cub Scouting



K40. Earlier you told us that you were Cub Scout before you were a Scouts BSA member. Using this list, please indicate all the reasons why you decided to continue on to Scouts BSA. (Select all that apply.)

How long was your child a Scouts BSA member? (Give your best estimate if you cannot remember exactly)

2693 Responses

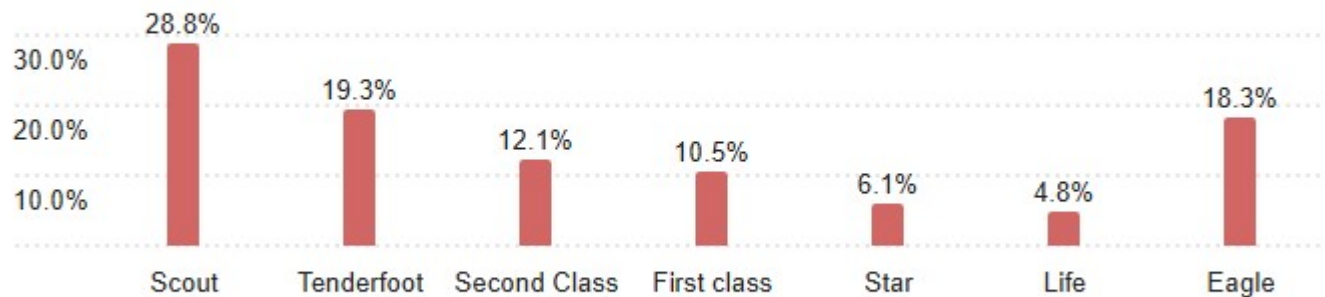


Among Scouts BSA who left, more than half leave within three years of joining.

Most leave before earning First Class.

What is the highest rank your child earned in Scouts BSA?

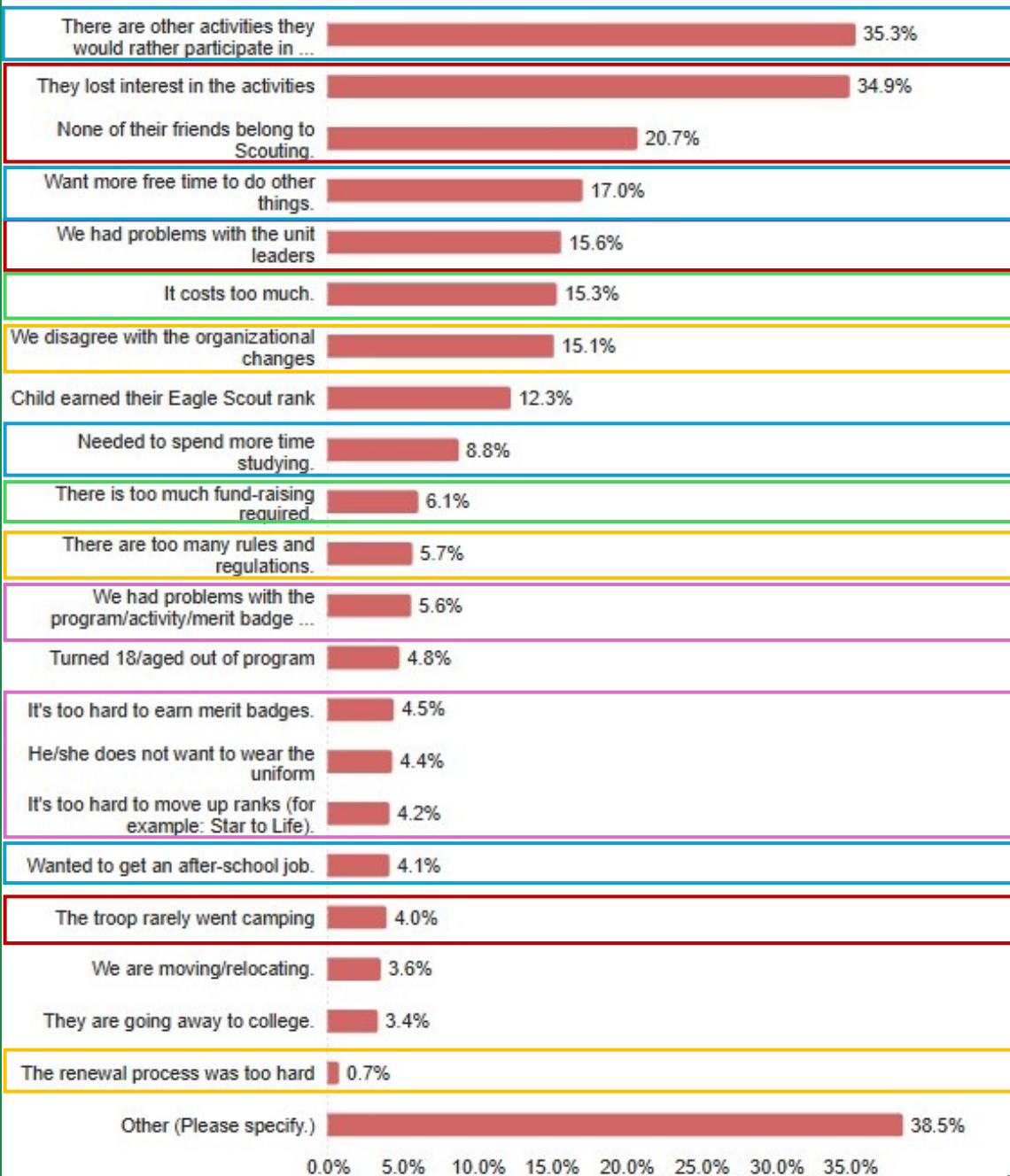
2247 Responses





**The Transition from Middle
School to High School is a
pivotal time for leaving Scouting
to exploring other interests**

2698 Responses



Reasons Scouts BSA Left

Poor unit experience

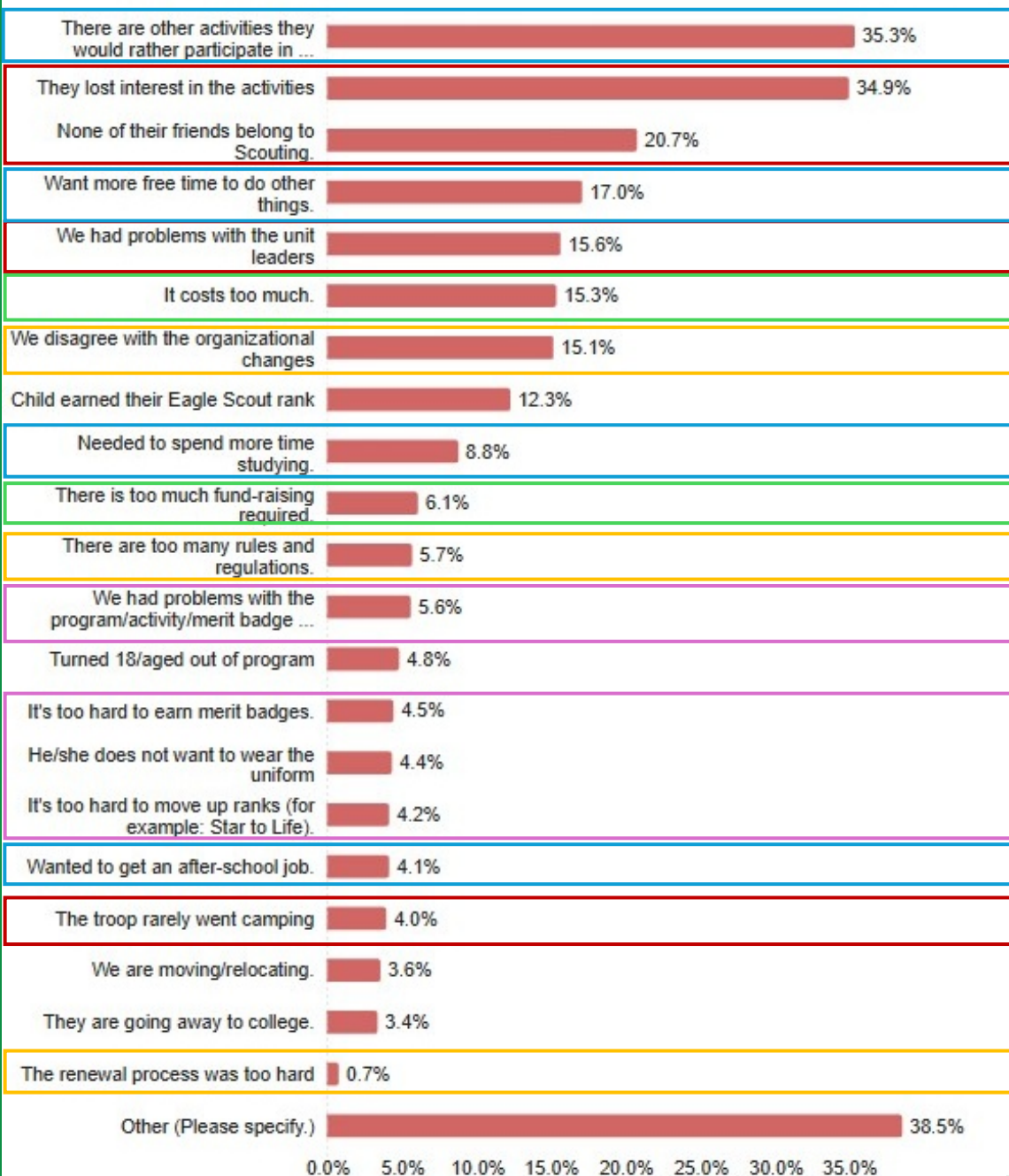
Other Activities/Free Time

Cost/fundraising

Organizational Changes

Program Requirements

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



In your own words, why did your child leave Scouts BSA?

The following were added to the list: (Parent/Youth)

- Boring/non-existent activities (21.2%/23.0%)
- Scoutmasters/youth leadership problems (6.1%/11.0%)
- Not a welcoming atmosphere (3.9%/6.0%)
- Misconduct by youth that goes uncorrected (3.8%/5.0%)
- Issues with time or day of meetings (3.8%/5.0%)
- Safeguarding concerns (3.4%/4.0%)
- Small troop (2.8%/1.0%)
- Not welcoming to special needs (2.1%/0.0%)
- Troop was not a good fit (1.3%/0.0%)
- Younger Scouts (0.0%/1.0%)

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

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

UNIT LEADERSHIP

What Drives Unit Satisfaction – 2024

(Number denotes order of importance)



	Cub Scout Parents	Scouts BSA Parents	Scouts BSA Youth 14+	Unit Volunteers
I have support from leaders to be an effective contributor/better Scout	1	1	2	
Our family feels like we belong in our Scout unit	2	4	1	3
We have great outdoor activities in our unit.	3	3	3	2
Scout meetings are a good use of our family's time.	4	2	4	4
My efforts are valued by our unit.				1
I feel my child is safe in their Scout unit.		5		
People are friendly in my troop.			5	
I feel safe when I am with my troop			6	
Being in Scouting makes me feel like I am part of something bigger than myself.			7	9
Scouting is really fun.			8	5
Scouting is constantly reinforcing worthwhile values.				6
I feel the district/council is very responsive to my needs				7
I receive clear and timely communications that apply to me.				8
My council is doing everything it can to deliver quality programs to Scouts.				10



Closer Look at Unit Volunteer Satisfaction

Council/District Satisfaction Scores 2024 – Current Members/Volunteers

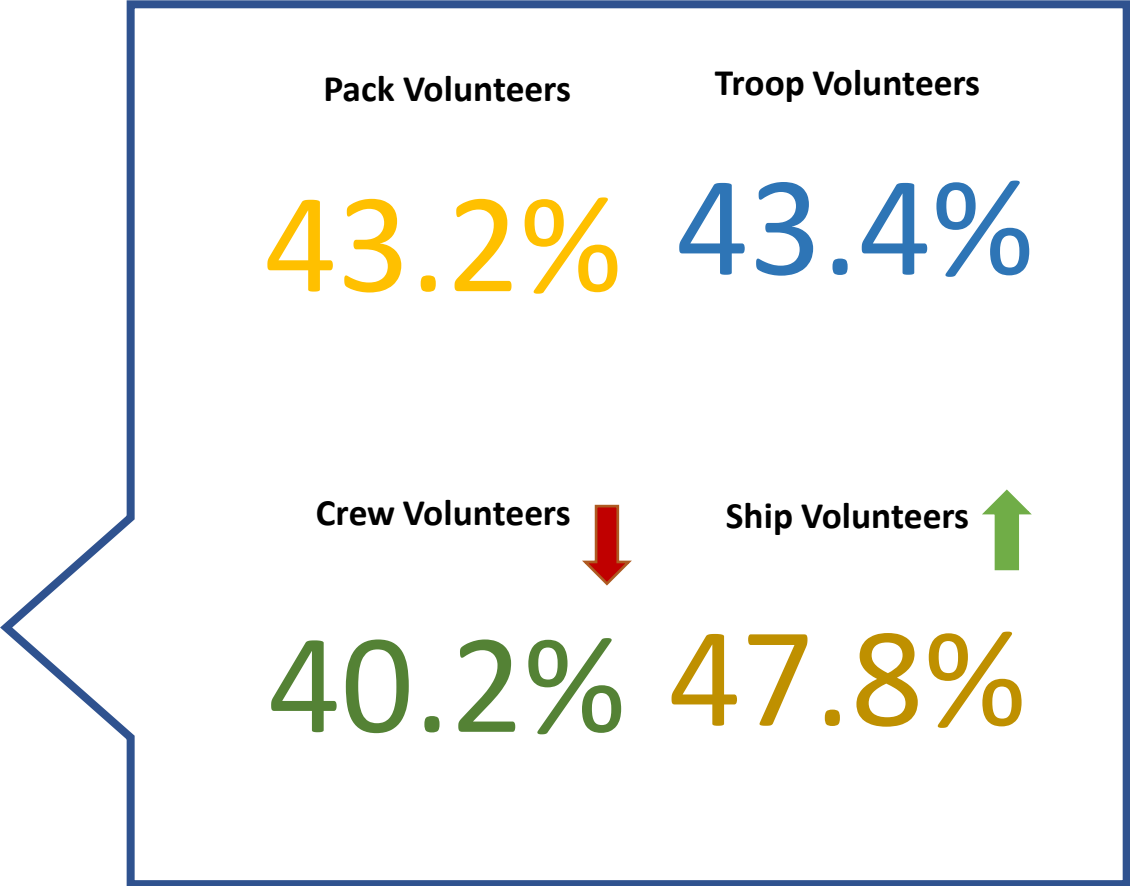
(% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)



Unit Volunteers

43.3%

Base = 15,258 who did not select not applicable





What Drives Council/District Satisfaction for Volunteers – 2024

(Number denotes order of importance)



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



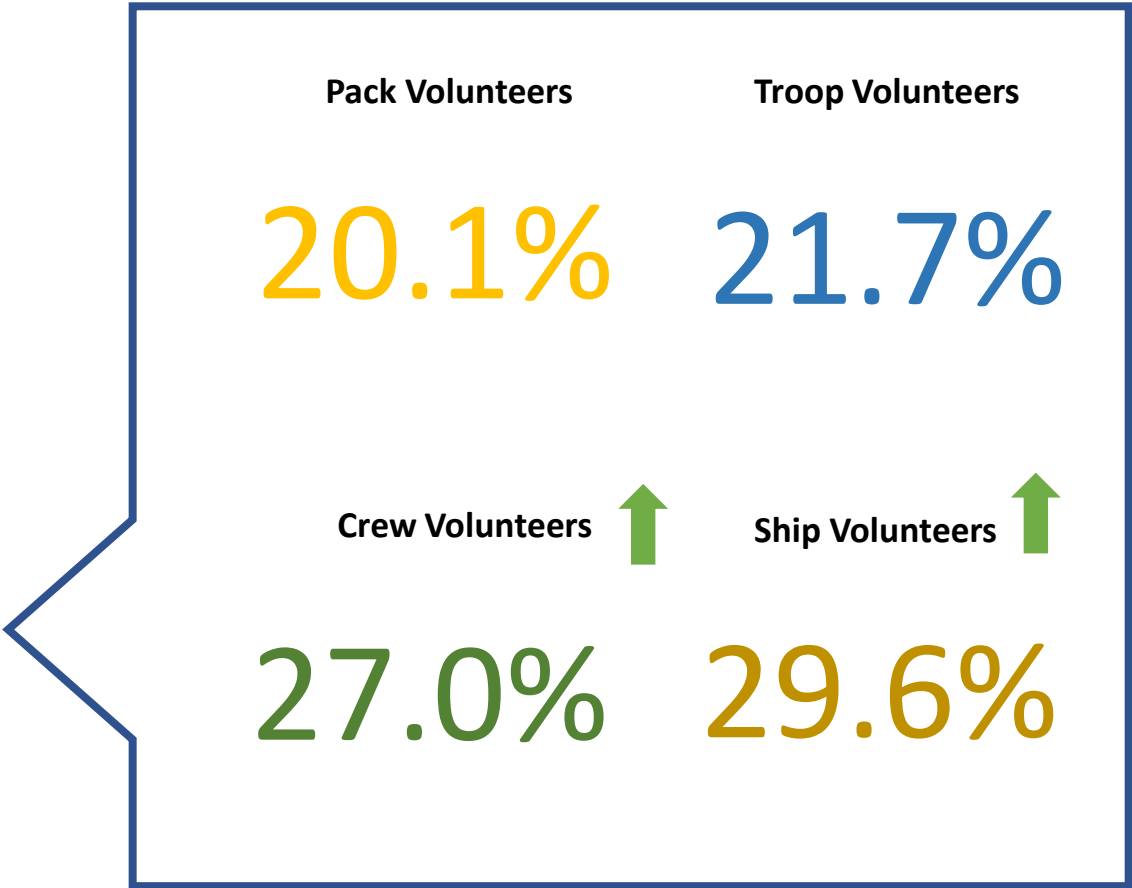
National Service Center Satisfaction Scores 2024— Current Volunteers

(% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)



Unit Volunteers

21.4%

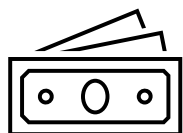


Base = 10,303 who did not select “not applicable”

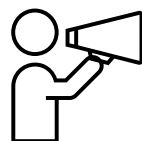


Themes Around National Service Center Volunteer Satisfaction

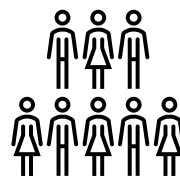
(Note: Many think national and council are the same)



Rising Costs



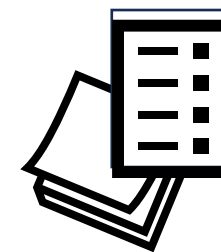
Slow, Unclear, &
Confusing
Communication



Mixed Feelings
About Diversity
& Inclusion



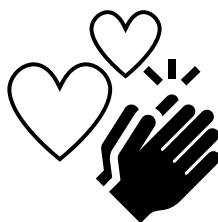
Lack of Support
& Resources



Too Much
Bureaucracy



Safety
Compliance
& Liability



Lack of
Volunteer
Appreciation



Lack of Real
Outreach
Efforts



Concerns About
High Executive
Salaries

Mindsets and Actions needed to improve retention



UNIT LEADERSHIP MATTERS!

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



2025

NATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING



Thank you!

Pat.Wellen@Scouting.org