



# Youth Day Trip Evaluation

Prepared for Wilderness Inquiry

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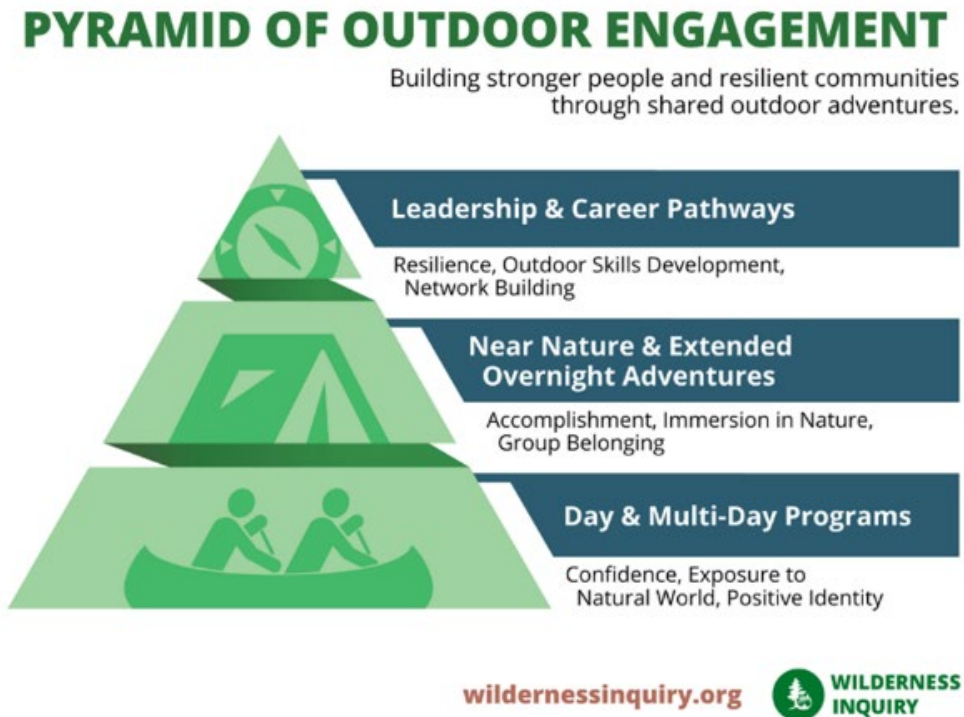
# Introduction

I like how we get to see the beauty of nature and [have] fun exploring [a] place where we can create a new hobby and interest. – Youth day trip participant

Wilderness Inquiry’s mission is to connect people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature. Their programs break down barriers to outdoor education, recreation, and careers by offering an individualized approach to support that meets participants where they are at. Their outdoor adventures range from single-day introductory activities to multi-day wilderness adventures that offer deepening levels of engagement and experience, with the ultimate goal that everyone feels like they belong in the outdoors. In 2025, Wilderness Inquiry provided a total of 558 trips, serving over 38,000 individuals. Of those, 388 events were single-day experiences serving 34,817 individuals.

Wilderness Inquiry uses a guiding framework, similar to a theory of change, called the Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement to better understand the impact of their programs based on the duration and type of activity (Figure 1). The pyramid demonstrates the range of programming Wilderness Inquiry provides and the expected outcomes for participation.

## 1. Wilderness Inquiry’s Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement



## YOUTH DAY TRIP EVALUATION

In 2025, Wilder Research (Wilder) and Wilderness Inquiry partnered to evaluate Wilderness Inquiry's youth day trips. These day trips are outdoor field trip opportunities for schools and other youth-serving organizations across the country. During a day trip, students typically have an opportunity to paddle in a 10-person North canoe, learn outdoor skills such as building a fire, measure water quality, go on nature hikes, and learn about the cultural or geological history of an area. The specific program, called Canoemobile, is tailored to the location and group interest or age. For example, at Fort Snelling in the Twin Cities, a typical program day includes a canoe trip on Lake Snelling, an interactive game on the fur trade in Minnesota, and a brief nature hike. In addition to Minnesota day trips, other locations include metropolitan areas in California, Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington, D.C., and Wisconsin.

The purpose of the evaluation is to measure the impact of day trips on youth across the country. Guided by the base level of the Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement (Figure 1), Wilder and Wilderness Inquiry designed a post-trip youth survey focused on:



**Broadening outdoor perspectives:** outdoor exposure, future outdoor exploration, belonging in nature, program satisfaction



**Environmental engagement:** environmental stewardship, exposure to environmental or outdoor careers



**Building relationships:** connections to peers, sense of community



**Building resilience**

Please see Appendix A for the survey instrument.

## METHODOLOGY

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**I learned that [Wilderness Inquiry is] not only a canoeing program, but that they respect and care about nature. – Youth day trip participant**

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Wilderness Inquiry serves thousands of youth participants each season. Surveying all youth who participated in day trips would not be feasible; therefore, Wilderness Inquiry and Wilder created a set of criteria to select groups that could be included in the sample. Criteria included:

- Groups had to be associated with a school
- Youth needed to be in grades 4-12
- The day trips had to be canoeing-centered
- Students had to be able to read and speak English, as the survey was not translated into other languages
- Trips took place May–November 2025

In addition, Wilderness Inquiry was looking to better understand the experiences of youth participating in trips in Minnesota vs. those participating out of state, as well as Twin Cities metro-based respondents vs. those from greater Minnesota. To do this, Wilderness Inquiry selected six national sites to be surveyed, which included:

- Boston, MA
- Dayton, OH
- Detroit/Flint, MI
- Milwaukee, WI
- Washington, DC
- Lancaster, PA

After schools had been screened for the above characteristics, Wilder randomly selected 21 schools from Minnesota and 26 schools from the six national sites to be surveyed. In total, 1,559 youth completed the survey.

For more detailed methodology and demographics of students who completed the survey, please see Appendix B.

# Findings

The following section summarizes the survey findings, organized by the outcomes of interest outlined on page 2. Differences by geography (Minnesota vs national, or greater Minnesota vs Twin Cities metro), student race or ethnicity (White vs BIPOC, or specific categories) and grade groups (elementary, junior high, or high school) are explored where relevant. Quotes included in the report may have been edited for anonymity, clarity, or spelling. Appendix C shows summary tables for all survey questions for all students, as well as for Minnesota and national.

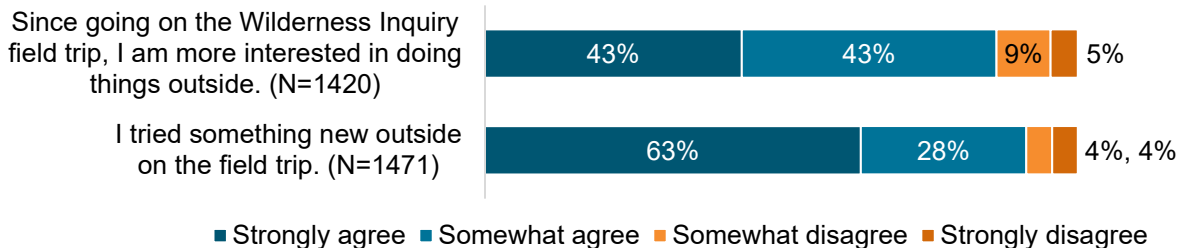
## BROADENING OUTDOOR PERSPECTIVES



### STUDENTS REPORT EXPOSURE TO NEW OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND INCREASED INTEREST

The focus of broadening perspectives is exposure to outdoor activities, leading to interest in future outdoor exploration and developing outdoor skills. Students who participated in day trips reported trying something new outside with Wilderness Inquiry and increased interest in future outdoor activities (Figure 2). Over 90% of students said they tried something new outside on their field trip. Seventy percent of students strongly agreed they are interested in doing another similar field trip, suggesting future interest and engagement in outdoor activities.

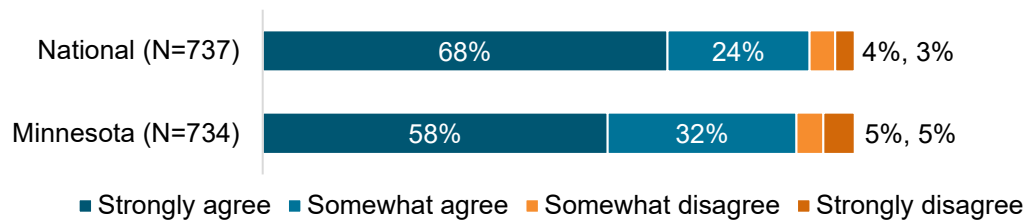
#### 2. Broadening outdoor perspectives, all students



#### A higher proportion of national students overall and national BIPOC students reported trying something new with Wilderness Inquiry and increased interest.

In terms of trying new outdoor activities, there are some notable differences between groups surveyed. Overall, a higher proportion of national students strongly agreed when asked about trying something new outside compared to Minnesota students (Figure 3), suggesting the outdoor activities were newer to the national students than the Minnesota students.

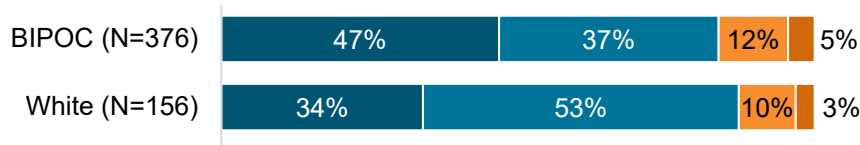
### 3. Student exposure to new outside activities, Minnesota and national



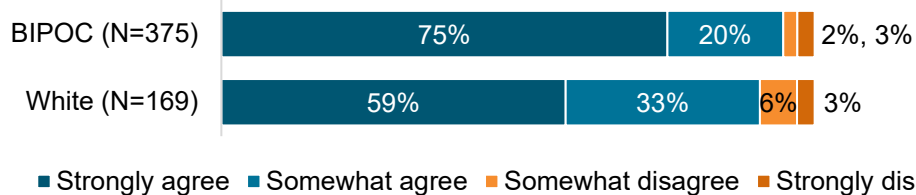
A higher proportion of BIPOC students strongly agreed they tried something new outside compared to White students (Figure 4). Three-quarters of BIPOC students said they tried something new outside, compared to 59% of White students, although overall levels of agreement are similar for the two groups. Similarly, about half of BIPOC students from the national sites strongly agreed they are more interested in doing things outside since their trip, compared to one-third of White students.

### 4. Broadening outdoor perspectives, national BIPOC and White students

**Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in doing things outside.**



**I tried something new outside on the field trip.**

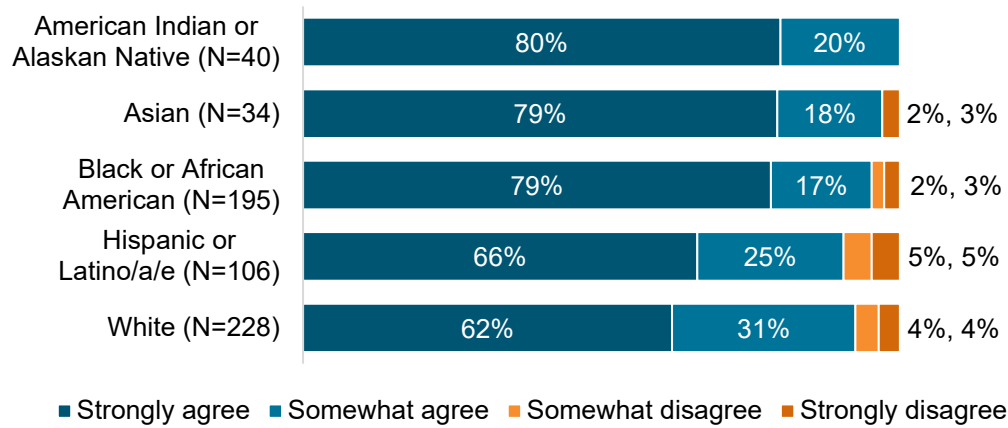


Note. Students could choose more than one response option to indicate their race or ethnicity. If a student chose “White” and another response option, they are included in the BIPOC category.

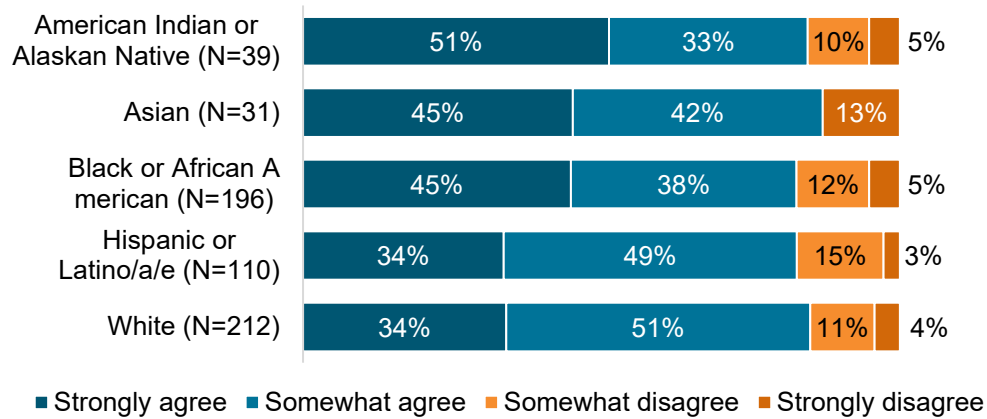
When reviewing these same questions by individual race or ethnicity categories, students who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, or Black or African American showed the highest levels of trying new outdoor activities and more interest in outdoor activities in the future (Figure 5). Overall levels of agreement are similar, but a higher proportion of these groups strongly agreed when compared to White and Hispanic or Latino/a/e students. However, fewer American Indian or Alaskan Native and Asian students responded to the survey compared with students of other races (<40 versus 100+), therefore results should be interpreted with caution.

## 5. Broadening outdoor perspectives, national students by race or ethnicity

### I tried something new outside on the field trip.



### Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in doing things outside.

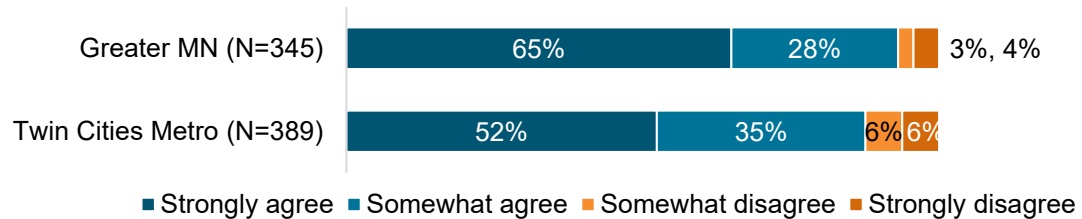


Note. Students could choose more than one response option to indicate their race or ethnicity. For this analysis, any student who chose a category is included. Therefore, if a student indicated “White” and another response option, they are counted in both. Additionally, “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” was a response option but not included here due to fewer than 20 responses.

**A higher proportion of greater Minnesota students reported trying something new with Wilderness Inquiry.**

Within Minnesota, a higher proportion of students from greater Minnesota strongly agreed they tried something new outside with Wilderness Inquiry compared to students from the Twin Cities metro (Figure 6).

**6. Student exposure to new outside activities, Twin Cities metro and greater Minnesota**



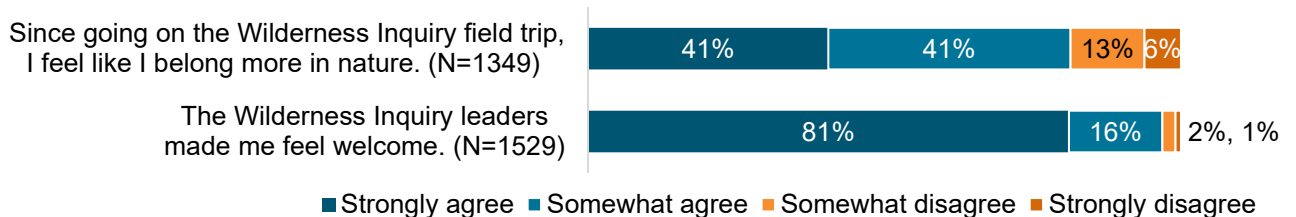
**STUDENTS REPORTED FEELING WELCOME ON THE TRIP AND A SENSE OF BELONGING IN NATURE**

I liked that the Wilderness Inquiry staff made me feel welcome. They were polite and funny. They were very kind and I would love to go again.  
 – Youth day trip participant

What I liked most was how kind and respectful the people working for the Wilderness Inquiry were. – Youth day trip participant

Related to outdoor exposure and interest in future outdoor activities is building a sense of belonging in nature. To help with this, Wilderness Inquiry leaders focus on building a welcoming and safe environment for students participating in day trips. Nearly all students agreed that Wilderness Inquiry leaders made them feel welcome, with over three-quarters reporting they strongly agree (Figure 7). A majority of students also agreed they feel that they belong more in nature since their Wilderness Inquiry field trip, though one in five disagreed (Figure 7).

**7. Belonging in nature, all students**

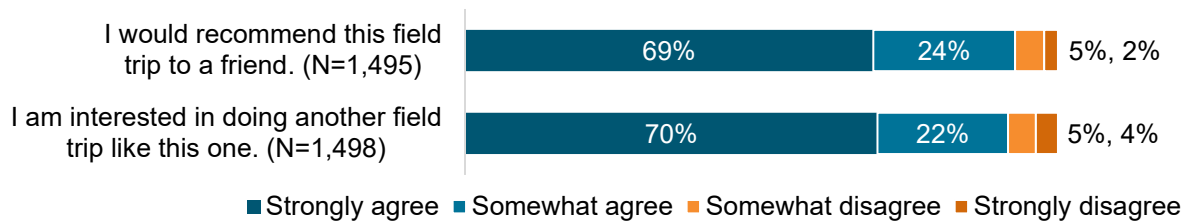




## STUDENTS ENJOYED THE TRIP AND ARE INTERESTED IN FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

While program satisfaction is important for evaluating most programs, it's particularly important for Wilderness Inquiry day trips since students who enjoy the program may be more likely to show interest in similar, future opportunities. Overall, students seem to enjoy their time with Wilderness Inquiry. Nearly all students agreed they are interested in doing another trip like the one with Wilderness Inquiry and that they would recommend the trip to a friend (Figure 8).

### 8. Program satisfaction, all students



### Water-based recreation is a highlight of the trip.

When asked in an open-ended question, "What did you like best about the field trip?" almost three-quarters (75%) of the students (N=1,471) indicated an activity that they participated in during the trip. Of those students (N=1,086), 87% specifically indicated they liked water-based recreation, such as canoeing, the best. While the trips surveyed were canoe-based, they also included many other activities, including land-based activities like games, outdoor skills, and hiking/walking. Students mentioned these activities as highlights as well.

**[I liked] canoeing and singing with my classmates in the same boat as me. – Youth day trip participant**

**I liked the canoes and I also enjoyed all the land stations. I hope we can do this again; this was really fun. – Youth day trip participant**

**I liked the canoeing part because I had never been canoeing before and it was so much fun! – Youth day trip participant**

**[I liked] singing, having lunch, and walking outside. – Youth day trip participant**

**The [thing] I liked best was building shelter and nature art, because we worked together and solved conflict, so it helps us survive in nature. – Youth day trip participant**

Almost a quarter (24%) of students mentioned liking some aspects of nature or the outdoors as the best thing about the trip. This included things like animals or wildlife, being on or in the water, building fires, and just being outdoors.

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I liked the fire building the best on the field trip. – Youth day trip participant

[I liked] dipping my hand in the water and finding seaweed and seashells.  
– Youth day trip participant

[I liked] being able to see the environments of fish and what species of fish live there. – Youth day trip participant

Being on the Mississippi River was really cool. It was fun to be outside and paddling instead of being in a classroom.  
– Youth day trip participant

I liked getting the chance to learn more outside compared to any other activity where we would've been inside. It was very engaging.  
– Youth day trip participant

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In addition, eight percent of students mentioned something about working, connecting with, or being with other people.

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[I liked] seeing classmates who have never been in a canoe before enjoy themselves. – Youth day trip participant

[What] I liked best about this field trip was having fun with my friends.  
– Youth day trip participant

[What] I liked best [was] when we all worked together to find a solution.  
– Youth day trip participant

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## ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT



### STUDENTS LEARNED ABOUT WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES AND NATURE ON THE TRIP

When asked through an open-ended question, "What did you learn during the field trip?" over a quarter (27%) of the students (N=1,421) noted **water-related activities** like learning how to use a watercraft like a canoe, as well as learning how to fish.

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I learned how to canoe properly (I'm way better at it after being taught appropriately). – Youth day trip participant

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[I learned] how to canoe, because I have never canoed in my life.  
– Youth day trip participant

[I learned] different ways to cast a fishing rod. – Youth day trip participant

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Nineteen percent of students said the trips helped them deepen their understanding of **animals and wildlife**, most notably characteristics and behaviors such as what animals eat, whether they are nocturnal, how animals can help the environment, etc.

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[I learned] that male birds are bright colored and female birds are dark colored. – Youth day trip participant

[I learned] that beavers eat cat tails, but not real cat's tails  
– Youth day trip participant

I learned how whales use bubbles to catch fish. I had no clue!  
– Youth day trip participant

[I learned] owls sleep during daytime. – Youth day trip participant

We learned that hawks actually migrate...I didn't think they did.  
– Youth day trip participant

[I learned] about how mussels can be an indicator for clean water.  
– Youth day trip participant

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Eighteen percent of students said they learned about **nature or the environment in general**. Students specifically noted aspects and characteristics about water, like age of the body of water, pollution in specific bodies of water, or water quality. Students also commented on the scientific aspects of nature like soil composition, microscopic organisms, and ways to prevent flooding, etc.

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I learned that the river is 300 million years old. – Youth day trip participant

[I learned] it does not mean water is dirty if it's not clear  
– Youth day trip participant

That when two rivers collide it's called a confluence.  
– Youth day trip participant

I learned that the Mississippi River was cleaner than I thought, and that it becomes more dirty when the Minnesota river meets it due to agricultural runoff. – Youth day trip participant

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[I learned] oxygen pills work better with dirtier water.  
– Youth day trip participant

I learned that people make ponds to help with flooding.  
– Youth day trip participant

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Beyond these highlights, students also learned:

- **Camping or outdoor survival skills** (12%), like building a fire, making shelter, and staying safe outdoors.

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You can start a fire with cotton balls, Vaseline, flint, and steel.  
– Youth day trip participant

What I learned during the field trip was [how] to build a tent with ropes, stakes and tarps to make an “A” shape tent. – Youth day trip participant

[I learned that] water is not always drinkable. – Youth day trip participant

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- Importance of **protecting the environment** (8%), like picking up litter.

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I learned about protecting wildlife and something [like] throwing your trash in the right garbage could help our ecosystem.  
– Youth day trip participant

I learned that helping the environment can affect the future.  
– Youth day trip participant

[I learned] to respect nature and love nature – Youth day trip participant

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- **General history** (7%), specifically Indigenous history or history about a specific event, site, or topic.

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I learned about the history of the Mississippi River and the relationship it had [with] the Dakota people. – Youth day trip participant

The old bridge was burnt down in the Civil War. – Youth day trip participant

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## STUDENTS REPORTED THEY ARE MORE INTERESTED IN HELPING THE ENVIRONMENT

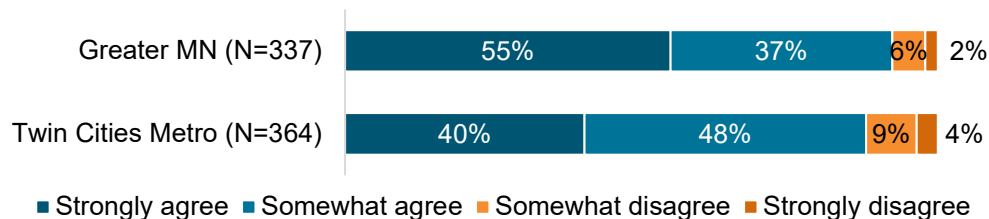
Nearly all students (91%) agreed that they are more interested in helping the environment since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip (Figure 9), demonstrating environmental stewardship.

### 9. Environmental stewardship, all students (N=1,395)



When looking at differences by groups, a higher proportion of students in greater Minnesota compared to students from the Twin Cities metro strongly agreed that they were more interested in helping the environment since their trip (Figure 10). Over half of greater Minnesota students strongly agreed, compared to just 40% of Twin Cities metro students, though overall levels of agreement are similar for the two groups.

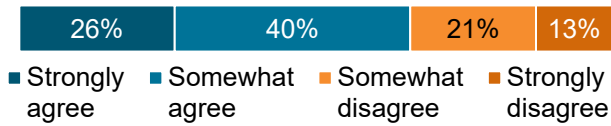
### 10. Environmental stewardship, Twin Cities metro and greater Minnesota



### Two-thirds of students reported an increased interest in jobs where they would work outside.

Beyond environmental learning and stewardship, Wilderness Inquiry is also interested in how exposure to outdoor careers may impact students' career interests. During day trip programming, students are often exposed to multiple outdoor careers. The Wilderness Inquiry trip leaders talk about their jobs as outdoor leaders and often mention other types of outdoor career options. For the national sites, there are partner organizations present to share more about their organizations (e.g., DNR, environmental organizations). While increasing interest in outdoor careers may be a lofty goal for a day program, there is value in exploring this as a potential impact since it is part of Wilderness Inquiry's Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement (Figure 1 above). Students were asked their level of agreement with the statement "Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in jobs where I would work outside," with results shown in Figure 11. Approximately two-thirds of students agreed and one-third disagreed.

## 11. Interest in outdoor jobs, all students



Results for this question were reviewed by grade level, since it's reasonable to suspect students in older grades may answer this question differently than students in younger grades. However, results were stable across all grade groups.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

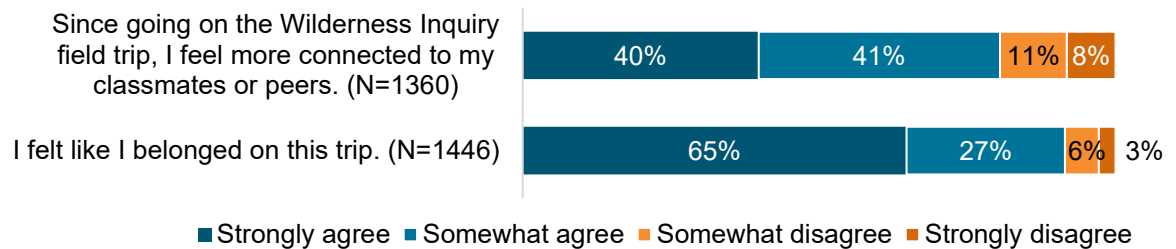


### STUDENTS REPORTED FEELING THAT THEY BELONG ON THE TRIP AND MORE CONNECTED TO THEIR CLASSMATES OR PEERS

Building relationships focuses on creating and strengthening connections among students to build a sense of community. This has been a particular focus of Wilderness Inquiry program staff and leadership in recent years.

Nearly all students said they felt like they belonged on this trip, with about two-thirds strongly agreeing (Figure 12). Similarly, a majority of students said they feel more connected to their classmates or peers since going on the Wilderness Inquiry trip.

## 12. Building relationships, all students

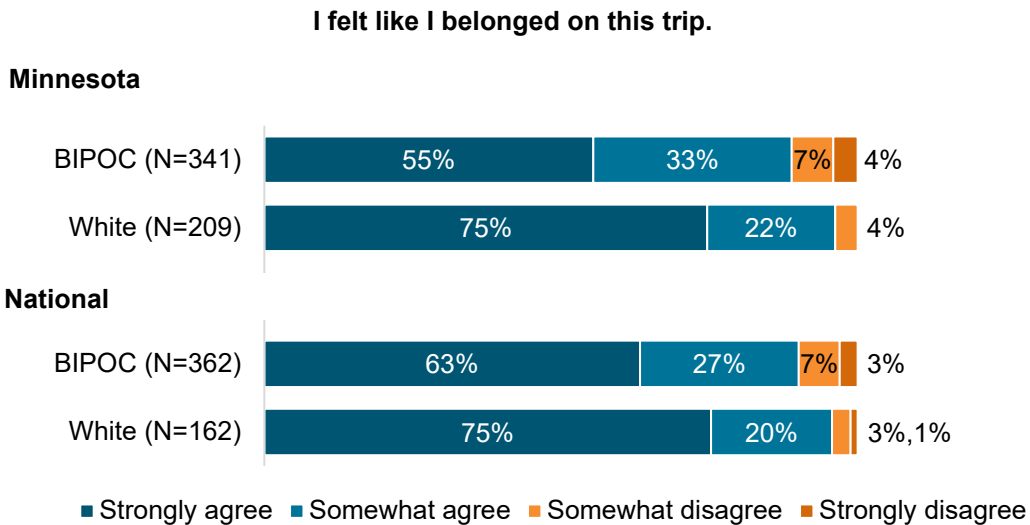


While this category primarily focuses on building relationships among students, it's also worth remembering the high proportion of students who reported Wilderness Inquiry leaders made them feel welcome (Figure 7 above).

**While nearly all students reported feelings of belonging on the trip, BIPOC students agreed less than White students.**

For both the Minnesota and national sites, a higher proportion of White students agreed they felt that they belonged on the trip compared to BIPOC students (Figure 13). While nearly 90%+ of students in each group agreed overall, three-quarters of White students in both Minnesota and national sites strongly agreed, compared to 55% and 63% of BIPOC students respectively.

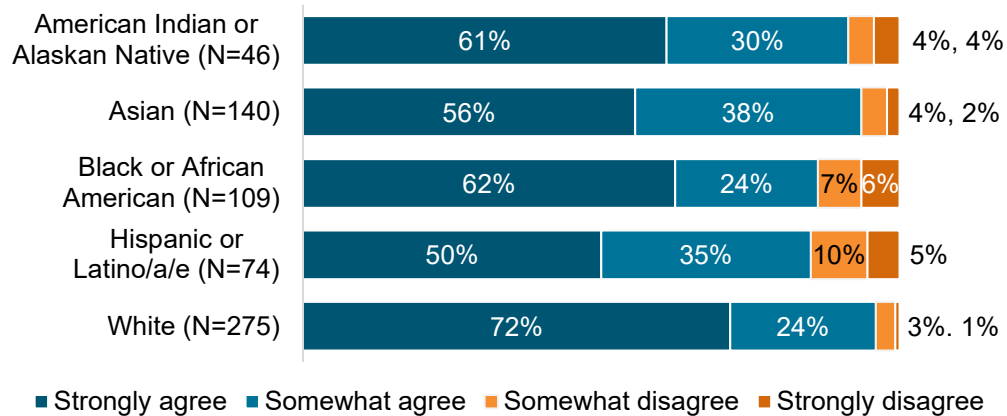
**13. Trip belonging, BIPOC and White students from Minnesota and national sites**



Note. Students could choose more than one response option to indicate their race or ethnicity. If a student chose “White” and another response option, they are included in the BIPOC category.

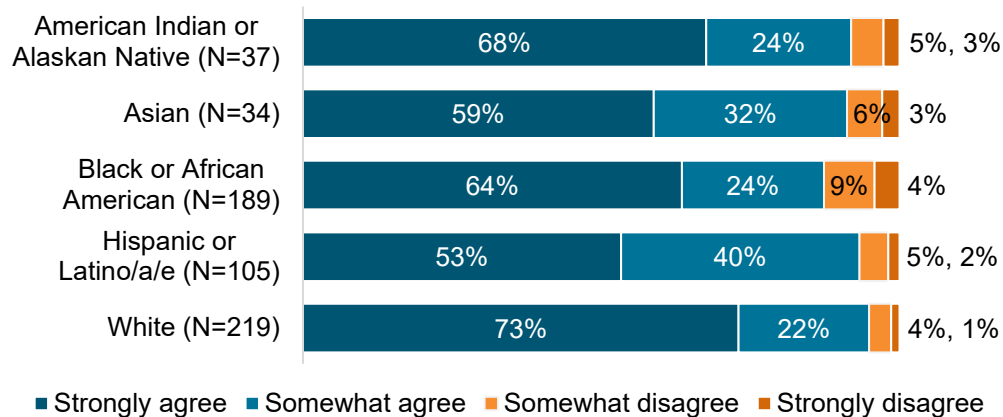
To explore this further, Figures 14 and 15 show the same survey question data with individual race or ethnicity categories for both Minnesota and national sites. In Minnesota, students that identify as Hispanic or Latino/a/e, or as Black or African American show the highest level of overall disagreement (15% and 13%, respectively) compared to 4%-8% of students of other races. Half of Minnesota Hispanic or Latino/a/e students strongly agree they felt that they belonged, compared to almost three-quarters of White students. Similarly, 13% of Black or African American students from national sites disagreed they felt that they belonged on this trip compared to 5%-9% of students of other races. Similar to Minnesota, about half of Hispanic or Latino/a/e students strongly agreed compared to three-quarters of White students.

#### 14. Trip belonging, Minnesota students by race or ethnicity



Note. Students could choose more than one response option to indicate their race or ethnicity. For this analysis, any student who chose a category is included. Therefore, if a student indicated “White” and another response option, they are counted in both. Additionally, “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” was a response option but not included here due to fewer than 20 respondents.

#### 15. Trip belonging, national students by race or ethnicity



Note. Students could choose more than one response option to indicate their race or ethnicity. For this analysis, any student who chose a category is included. Therefore, if a student indicated “White” and another response option, they are counted in both. Additionally, “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” was a response option but not included here due to fewer than 20 respondents.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE



### STUDENTS SAID THEY PUSHED THEMSELVES TO TRY ON THE TRIP, EVEN WHEN SOMETHING WAS HARD

Building resilience and persistence is an important part of Wilderness Inquiry's programming overall. During the day trip, nearly all students reported they pushed themselves to try even when something was hard (Figure 16), which can be an important first step towards building resilience.

#### 16. Building resilience, all students (N=1,446)



# Conclusion

Overall, survey data suggest youth day trips are an integral component of Wilderness Inquiry's programming to achieve their outdoor engagement goals. Over 90% of students surveyed reported they tried something new outside on their trip with Wilderness Inquiry, which is a critical first step to outdoor exposure and engagement. Similarly, a majority of students reported increased interest in future outdoor opportunities. For national students, a higher proportion of BIPOC students than White students reported trying something new and increased interest, which aligns with Wilderness Inquiry's goal of outdoor inclusion. However, BIPOC students from both Minnesota and national sites agreed less that they felt they belonged on the trip, particularly Hispanic or Latino/a/e and Black or African American students. Beyond this difference, a majority of students reported they felt they belonged on the trip and feel more connected to their peers or classmates, which aligns with Wilderness Inquiry's goals of building relationships.

Student open-end responses to "What did you learn on the field trip?" demonstrate the environmental engagement and learning that happens on the Wilderness Inquiry day trips. A quarter of students reported learning about water-based recreation, like paddling, which makes sense since that is a focus of the day trips. Other learning highlights included learning about animals, wildlife, and nature. Some students also mentioned learning outdoor skills like building a fire, the importance of taking care of the environment, and the history of the locations. Additionally, in close-ended questions, students reported they are more interested in helping the environment. A majority of students indicated an increased interest in outdoor jobs or careers, though this agreement was slightly less compared to other survey questions. This was not surprising since this outcome is likely better suited for longer-term or more in-depth programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the results of this evaluation and conversations between Wilder Research and Wilderness Inquiry:

- Continue efforts to recruit and retain day trip leaders that represent students served, such as staff of color or other marginalized identities. BIPOC students agreed less overall that they felt they belonged on this trip. It's reasonable to suspect that having more leaders that look like these students will help them feel like they belong more. Wilderness Inquiry has taken steps in recent years to diversify their trip leaders, such as changes to the recruitment and hiring process and offering cultural competence trainings. Wilderness Inquiry has noted that they have seen some increase in obtaining staff of color through these efforts. Additional ways to support this work could be:

- Partner with additional community groups or clubs with an outdoor focus for recruitment of day trip leaders.
  - Invite potential applicants or hires to an optional mock day trip or info session to understand what the position entails.
  - Strengthen recruitment of diverse candidates by increasing Wilderness Inquiry’s visibility through participation in community events, cultural festivals, career fairs, and local celebrations.
  - Partner with organizations or individuals who are deeply connected to various cultural communities to co-design recruitment materials, identify potential candidates, and help promote the positions through their communities. Offering stipends or other forms of payment to partner organizations for this work will likely increase willingness to help and appropriately compensate partners for their time and expertise.
- Being more interested in jobs where people work outside received agreement from a majority of students but was the least agreed with statement overall. This is likely a longer-term outcome that comes from deeper engagement with Wilderness Inquiry or other similar organizations over time. We recommend continuing programming components that provide exposure to outdoor careers as this contributes to a long-term pipeline, but consider adjusting how this piece is evaluated in the future for day trips. Rather than focusing on increased *interest* in outdoor jobs, perhaps a more reasonable outcome is increased *awareness* of outdoor jobs. Other Wilderness Inquiry programming components can (and do) focus on more robust approaches to building outdoor job interest.
  - Suggestions for future evaluation or research questions:
    - What helps students feel like they belong, or makes students feel like they don’t belong, on outdoor trips? Since this question is essential to ongoing outdoor engagement, it is worth more exploration. This may be best explored qualitatively and/or through a review of existing literature.
    - How do different program dosages impact outcomes? Wilderness Inquiry provides multiple programming levels, ranging from the day trips evaluated here to multi-day trips to long-term partnered programming. Comparing similar evaluation results across programming could shed some light on what program components influence outcomes or the depth of those outcomes. A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods could further explore this.

# Limitations

While this evaluation provides valuable insight into Wilderness Inquiry programming, there are a few limitations that should be considered when reflecting on key findings.

The first limitation is the sample size and geographic distribution of the national sites. While the total number of completed surveys across all national sites combined was similar to the total from Minnesota sites alone, participation at individual national sites varied considerably, ranging from 40-245 completed surveys per site. Additionally, while Wilderness Inquiry hosts trips throughout the United States, the national sites included in this study consisted of trips only in the Midwest and Northeast regions. Trips on the West Coast were primarily not included due to their timing, as they tend to open in the spring, which did not align with this particular evaluation effort's timeline. This limited geographic scope may not fully represent the diversity of field trip experiences across all regions where the organization operates.

Data collection occurred from May through October; however, most completed surveys were filled out while school was in session, with fewer responses during the peak summer months. This pattern is not surprising, as most schools are not in session during summer. Trips in the summer are more likely to be through out-of-school-time summer programs or community partners that tend to operate on different schedules and make it more difficult to remind students to complete surveys or to allocate time for survey completion. In contrast, during the regular school year, students are in classrooms on a more consistent basis, providing more opportunities for survey administration.

The trips were limited in duration, with students typically participating for one day, often comprising approximately 3-4 hours of activities. Students who experience multi-day or longer-duration trips may have deeper, more varied experiences and, consequently, be able to provide more nuanced insights about their learning and engagement.

Surveys, no matter the topic, distribution, etc. have some self-selection bias, meaning youth who had high levels of positive or negative responses/feelings about the trip may be more likely to fill out the survey.

Wilderness Inquiry operates in a unique way, and what works well for canoe programs may not translate to other day trip programs. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to generalize these findings to other Wilderness Inquiry programming.

# Wilderness Inquiry Day Trip Survey



Wilderness Inquiry Leaders!

## Hi there!



Do you remember that outdoor adventure where you went canoeing?



We want to know what you thought about this outdoor adventure so we can make things even better.



**Questions?** Ask your teacher or the adult who gave you this survey.



This is NOT a test—there are no right or wrong answers!



Just be honest and tell us what you think.



You don't have to answer every question if you don't want to.



Your answers are private—no one from your school or Wilderness Inquiry will know what you wrote.



**Please don't write your name on this paper**

What state is your school in?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the name of your school?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each sentence about your experience with the Wilderness Inquiry field trip.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know
1. I tried something new outside on the trip.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. On the field trip, I pushed myself to try even when something was hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I felt like I belonged on this trip.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The Wilderness Inquiry leaders made me feel welcome.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I am interested in doing another field trip like this one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I would recommend this field trip to a friend.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with each sentence about your experience on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip.

Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip...	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	I don't know
7. I am <b>more</b> interested in doing things outside.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I am <b>more</b> interested in helping the environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I am <b>more</b> interested in jobs where I would work outside.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I feel like I belong <b>more</b> in nature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I feel <b>more</b> connected to my classmates or peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. What did you **like best** about the field trip?

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13. What did you **learn** during the field trip?

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14. Which of these best describes you?  
You can choose more than one.

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/a/e
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Prefer to self-describe:

---

I don't want to answer

15. What **grade** are you in?

- 4th
- 5th
- 6th
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th
- Other
- I don't want to answer

Thank you for helping us make outdoor adventures more awesome!

## B. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned previously, Wilderness Inquiry serves thousands of youth participants each season. Surveying all youth who participated in day trips would not be feasible; therefore, Wilderness Inquiry and Wilder created a set of criteria to select groups that could be included in the sample. Criteria included:

- Groups had to be associated with a school
- Youth needed to be in grades 4-12
- The day trips had to be canoeing-centered
- Students had to be able to read and speak English, as the survey was not translated into other languages
- Trips took place May–October 2025

In addition, Wilderness Inquiry was looking to better understand the experiences of youth participating in trips in Minnesota vs. those participating out of state, as well as Twin Cities metro-based respondents vs. those from greater Minnesota. To do this, Wilderness Inquiry selected six national sites to be surveyed, which included:

- Boston, MA
- Dayton, OH
- Detroit/Flint, MI
- Milwaukee, WI
- Washington, DC
- Lancaster, PA

After schools had been screened for the above characteristics, Wilder randomly selected 21 schools from Minnesota and 26 schools from the six national sites to be surveyed. Each school was sent a pre-trip survey notification email from Wilderness Inquiry letting them know they would receive a post-trip survey. The email provided information about the survey, including how to complete it online via a QR code (given to them after their trip) or via a packet of paper surveys if students did not have the ability to access the survey online. In addition, schools had the choice to opt out of the survey. None of the schools chose the paper option, nor did they opt out.<sup>1</sup>

After the trip, trip guides gave the teachers/chaperones from the selected schools a postcard with a QR code and a bag of small incentives (stickers) for the youth as a thank you for completing

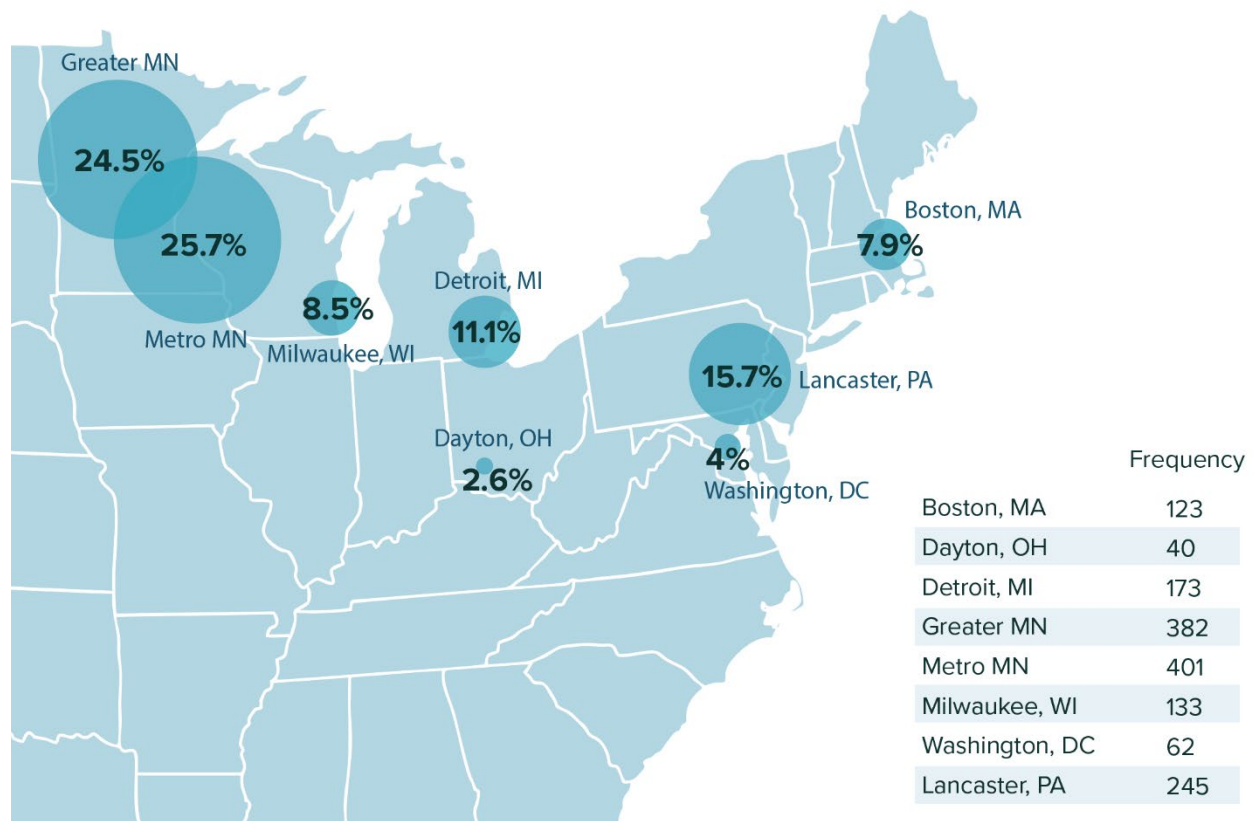
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<sup>1</sup> While teachers were encouraged to have their students fill out the surveys, it was completely voluntary, meaning not all students who were on the trips filled out a survey. However, at least one student for each of the 47 selected schools filled out a survey.

the survey. Three days after their trip, Wilderness Inquiry sent a follow-up thank you email to selected schools, which included a reminder to complete the survey.

In total, 1,559 youth completed the survey, with half the youth coming from Minnesota. Of those from Minnesota, a little over a quarter (26%) were from the Twin Cities metro region. See Figure X.

**B1. Completed surveys by geography (N=1,559)**



**CROSS TABULATIONS**

To better understand potential differences in youth served during these trips, we examined differences in responses between geographic location, race, and grade (i.e., cross-tabulations). As a rule, we used a 10-percentage point difference to indicate meaningful differences, though we highlight some differences that do not quite meet this threshold if the item is of interest. We do not highlight all data points that had a 10-percentage point difference, only the differences that are most relevant to Wilderness Inquiry’s mission and programming.

**Geographic location.** Geographic location was determined by where the school was located. Two sets of geographic cross-tabs were run. The first compared responses between youth from

Minnesota (“Minnesota”) vs. youth from all other geographic sites (“national”). The second comparison examined solely Minnesota youth: those from organizations in the seven-county Twin Cities metro region (“metro”) vs. those from outside this region (“greater Minnesota”).

**Race/ethnicity.** Youth were categorized as either “White” or “BIPOC” based on their self-identified race/ethnicity. If a student indicated “White” and another response option, that student was categorized as BIPOC. In some cases, cross tabs were calculated based on specific race/ethnicity category (e.g., Asian or Black or African American). Figure B1 shows the breakdown of students by race/ethnicity.

**Grade.** Youth selected their grade level (4th-12th grade).<sup>2</sup> Wilder then grouped youth into elementary (K-5), middle/junior (6-8), and high school (9-12) based on standard grade-level groupings. Cross-tabs for grades are reported using these three categories. Figure B2 shows the breakdown of students by grade.

### B2. Completed surveys by student race/ethnicity

	Minnesota N=584	National N=565	All N=1,149
American Indian or Alaskan Native	8%	7%	8%
Asian	26%	6%	16%
Black or African American	20%	36%	28%
Hispanic or Latino/a/e	14%	20%	12%
Middle eastern/Arab American	<1%	5%	3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3%	2%	3%
White	49%	41%	45%
Other/prefer to self-describe	2%	2%	2%

### B3. Completed surveys by student grade

	Minnesota N=755	National N=729	All N=1,484
Elementary (4th-5th)	55%	58%	57%
Junior High/Middle (6th-8 <sup>th</sup> )	26%	29%	28%
High School (9th-12 <sup>th</sup> )	18%	9%	14%
Other	<1%	3%	2%

<sup>2</sup> Youth had the option to choose “other” as a response on the survey. Those who selected “other” were not included in the grade-level cross tab analysis.

## C. SUMMARY DATA TABLES

### C1. Overall student responses to close-ended survey questions in survey order

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I tried something new outside on the field trip. (N=1,471)	63%	28%	4%	4%
On the field trip, I pushed myself to try even when something was hard. (N=1,446)	46%	38%	10%	6%
I felt like I belonged on this trip. (N=1,446)	65%	27%	6%	3%
The Wilderness Inquiry leaders made me feel welcome. (N=1,529)	81%	16%	2%	1%
I am interested in doing another field trip like this one. (N=1,498)	70%	22%	5%	4%
I would recommend this field trip to a friend. (N=1,495)	69%	24%	5%	2%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in doing things outside. (N=1,420)	43%	43%	9%	5%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in helping the environment. (N=1,395)	50%	41%	7%	3%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in jobs where I would work outside. (N=1,289)	26%	40%	21%	13%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I feel like I belong more in nature. (N=1,349)	41%	41%	13%	6%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I feel more connected to my classmates or peers. (N=1,360)	40%	41%	11%	8%

Note. Students could choose “Don’t know.” These responses were excluded from analysis.

## C2. Student responses to close-ended survey questions in survey order, by Minnesota and national

	Geography	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I tried something new outside on the field trip.	Minnesota (N=734)	58%	32%	5%	5%
	National (N=737)	68%	24%	4%	3%
On the field trip, I pushed myself to try even when something was hard.	Minnesota (N=730)	43%	41%	10%	7%
	National (N=716)	50%	35%	10%	5%
I felt like I belonged on this trip.	Minnesota (N=732)	63%	28%	6%	3%
	National (N=714)	67%	25%	6%	3%
The Wilderness Inquiry leaders made me feel welcome.	Minnesota (N=772)	79%	18%	3%	1%
	National (N=757)	84%	14%	2%	1%
I am interested in doing another field trip like this one.	Minnesota (N=754)	68%	24%	5%	3%
	National (N=744)	71%	20%	4%	4%
I would recommend this field trip to a friend.	Minnesota (N=752)	68%	25%	5%	2%
	National (N=743)	70%	23%	5%	3%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in doing things outside.	Minnesota (N=712)	43%	44%	8%	5%
	National (N=708)	44%	42%	11%	4%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in helping the environment.	Minnesota (N=701)	47%	43%	7%	3%
	National (N=694)	52%	39%	6%	3%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I am more interested in jobs where I would work outside.	Minnesota (N=669)	25%	41%	22%	12%
	National (N=620)	27%	38%	20%	14%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I feel like I belong more in nature.	Minnesota (N=686)	39%	45%	11%	6%
	National (N=663)	43%	37%	14%	6%
Since going on the Wilderness Inquiry field trip, I feel more connected to my classmates or peers.	Minnesota (N=684)	40%	41%	11%	8%
	National (N=676)	40%	41%	11%	8%

Note. Students could choose “Don’t know.” These responses were excluded from analysis.

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## Wilder Research®

Information. Insight. Impact.

Wilderness Inquiry's mission is to connect people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.

