

OUTDOOR MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ELCA Camp Report: General Camp Statistics:

87 ELCA camps responded in part or in full to the survey (**Response Rate: 74.4%**)

28 states represented

55,819 summer campers (75 camps provided camper #)

2,864 summer staff (79 camps provided staff #)

3,169 families at Family Camps (54 camps)

11.8% located in Northeast census region

61.2% in Midwest census region (*29.4% in WI and MN alone*)

12.9% in South census region

14.1% in West census region

31.2% have less than 100 acres of property (or no property)

33.8% have 101-250 acres

20.0% have 251-500 acres

15.0% have more than 500 acres

10.3% have an annual budget of less than \$250k

32.1% \$251-500k

35.9% \$501k-\$1 million

21.8% more than \$1 million

20% employ 1 full-time staff member

31.3% employ 2-3

15% employ 4-5

31.3% employ 6 or more

58.2% are ACA accredited

66.7% of received surveys were filled out by director/executive director

10.7% by program director

22.6% by other staff

69.9% of respondents were male, 30.1% female

10.6% had 250 or fewer residential summer campers in 2014

34.7% had 251-500

32.0% had 501-1000

22.6% had more than 1000 campers

Average summer campers in 2014: 754 (median = 600)

Average cost of a week of summer camp in 2014: \$384

Average weekly summer staff salary in 2014: \$230

Camp Directors/Executive Directors:

- 87.3% are male
- 55.3% have been in current position for 6 or more years
- 91.7% have a 4-year degree or masters degree
- 32.1% have a masters degree or higher in a religious field (15.3% have M.Div)
- 19.6% have no formal theological training (*significantly lower* than non-ELCA)

Observations:

- ELCA camps have a poor nationwide distribution. More than 60% are in the Midwest region, with nearly 30% in WI and MN alone. They are the most poorly distributed of the 4 denominations studied.
- ELCA camp directors are overwhelmingly male: 87.3% of responding directors/executive directors. This is significantly higher than other denominations.
- ELCA camp directors have, on average, the longest tenure of the 4 denominations.
- ELCA directors have, on average, more formal theological education than other denominations, though only 15.3% have a Masters of Divinity.
- ELCA camps have, on average, significantly higher annual budgets, employ more summer staff, and have more summer campers than camps of other denominations.
- 43% of ELCA camps reported that summer camp was at less than 75% capacity in 2014, and 31.6% reported having fewer campers than the previous summer.
- ELCA camps provide significantly fewer camperships than other denominations. Only 20% report that more than 25% of campers receive financial assistance. (The other 3 all have greater than 40% of camps in this category.)
- Summer staff salaries and summer camp fees are quite standardized in ELCA camps, suggesting a high level of communication and cooperation among camps.
- ELCA summer campers are the least diverse of the 4 denominations. 78.5% of ELCA camps report that no more than 10% of their campers are from minority groups, and 40.5% report less than 5%.
- In terms of camp health (determined by a combination of reported camper capacity, trend from the previous summer, variety of retreats offered, and level of clergy involvement), 36.3% are categorized as “struggling” or “borderline struggling,” 10% as “maintaining,” and 53.8% as “borderline healthy” or “robustly healthy.”
- Camps stereotypically do a poor job evaluating their programs, with too much emphasis on the end-of-the week camper survey. Only 13.8% of ELCA camps report doing a camper survey only, and 15% do not even do that much. However, 60.1% of ELCA camps report multiple evaluation methods in addition to camper surveys. Fully 53.8% report surveying camper parents. Survey methods are evidently much more robust than stereotypes suggest.

ELCA Camp Report: Program Statistics:**Offering specialty programs:**

	ELCA Camps	Non-ELCA Camps
Travelling Day Camp	73.4%	13.4%
Special Needs Camp	39.7%	32.0%
Leadership Training Camps	73.1%	69.0%
Service/mission Camp	62.8%	39.4%
Confirmation Camp	69.2%	18.7%
Adventure Trips/Camps	58.8%	50.7%
Family Camp	78.2%	58.4%

79.7% of camps have the cabin counselor lead the regular Bible study time

59% of camps use the LOM Bible Study Curriculum

35.9% report that they write their own curriculum

91.9% agree or strongly agree that “camp is a place to unplug from technology”

83.8% agree or strongly agree that “the most important part of our camp day is the small group experience”

61.3% agree or strongly agree that “our camp has a strong focus on nature/creation learning and stewardship”

77.3% agree or strongly agree that “summer camp is the most important aspect of our ministries”

Frequency of Selected Camp Practices/Activities: (n/a = insufficient data)

	Rarely/never or less than weekly	Weekly or a few times per week	Daily or many times per day
Large group games	n/a	19.5%	76.6%
Group building/challenge course	7.8%	61.0%	31.2%
Group Bible study	n/a	n/a	98.7%
Worship	n/a	7.8%	90.9%
Group singing	n/a	n/a	96.1%
Campfire	n/a	24.7%	74.0%
Group prayer	n/a	n/a	98.7%
Personal prayer/meditation	7.9%	25.0%	67.1%
Outdoor Cooking	19.7%	68.4%	11.8%
Free choice time	13.7%	20.5%	65.8%
Hear inspirational speakers (not staff)	60.3%	21.9%	17.8%
Use/see multi-media/technology	50.0%	32.4%	17.6%
Environmental education	18.4%	51.3%	30.3%
Outdoor Adventure activities	8.0%	58.7%	33.3%
Chance to publicly profess faith	16.2%	48.6%	35.1%

97.4% of ELCA camps say SAFETY is “very” or “extremely important”

93.4% say SELF ESTEEM/CHARACTER BUILDING is “very” or “extremely important”

98.7% say FELLOWSHIP/COMMUNITY BUILDING is “very or extremely important”

84.2% say FUN is “very” or “extremely important”

69.7% say knowledge of /fellowship with CREATION is “very/extremely important”

57.9% say PEACE AND JUSTICE AWARENESS is “very” or “extremely important”

34.2% say taking a stand on ETHICAL ISSUES is “very” or “extremely important”

Observations:

- ELCA camps are much more likely than the other denominations to offer Travelling Day Camp, confirmation camp, mission/service experiences, and family camp. In the cases of Travelling Day Camp and confirmation camp, the differences are so great that these programs are almost distinctly Lutheran.
- ELCA camps offer, on the whole, significantly more retreat programs and opportunities than camps in the other denominations. 70% of ELCA camps offer a moderate or high level of retreat program variety for youth, adults, and congregations.
- ELCA camps tend to have much more programmatic emphasis on the outdoors than the other denominations. This trend shows up clearly in the frequency of campfire and outdoor cooking. 74% of ELCA camps have campfire at least daily, and 80.3% have outdoor cooking at least weekly. In non-ELCA camps, only 42.5% have campfire at least daily, and 60.2% have outdoor cooking at least weekly. ELCA camps also report using multi-media/technology less frequently than other camps.
- ELCA camps see themselves as partners with families. They have significantly higher rates of offering family camp, and they are more likely than other camps to place importance on “strengthen/support families.” 90.8% say this is “very” or “extremely important.”
- In terms of average frequency among all ELCA camps, the top five activities indicated are: 1) group prayer, 2) group singing, 3) worship, 4) Bible study, and 5) large group games. These top 5 are identical to UMC and PC-USA camps.
- In terms of average *importance* given to certain selections, the top 5 for ELCA camps are: 1) participant safety, 2) fellowship/community building, 3) facilitating encounters with God, 4) individual faith formation, and 5) self esteem/character building. “Fun for all participants” ranks 9th (the lowest of all the denominations). Also ranked ahead of fun are: “strengthen/support families,” “developing Christian leaders,” and “participating in Christian practices.”

ELCACamp Report: Faith Connection:

57.5% of ELCA camps indicate a high or very high level of clergy involvement (compared with 52.8% of non-ELCA camps)

Percentage that “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement:

- 44.6% - “At camp, specific theology is not as important as general spirituality/belief” (43.2% disagree); agreement level is *significantly lower* than non-ELCA camps
- 94.7% - “Faith formation/practices should be incorporated into all aspects of camp life”
- 80.8% - “Camp worship/programs are designed to get campers more excited about and engaged in their home congregation”
- 81.3% - “It is important for our staff and campers to understand the theology and practices of our faith tradition (or denomination)”; *significantly higher* than non-ELCA camps
- 72.0% - “Our camp exists to lead young people to Christ”

Percentage that indicate that the following is “very” or “extremely important”:

- 90.8% - “Developing Christian leaders”
- 77.6% - “Strengthen/support congregations”; *significantly higher* than non-ELCA camps
- 52.6% - “Theological instruction”; *significantly higher* than non-ELCA camps
- 59.2% - “Familiarity with the Bible” (32.9% say “somewhat important”)
- 85.5% - “Participating in Christian practices”
- 93.4% - “Individual faith formation”
- 75.0% - “Christian education or confirmation”; *significantly higher* than non-ELCA camps
- 68.4% - “Learning faith language and practices”; *significantly higher* than non-ELCA camps
- 34.2% - “Taking a stand on moral/ethical issues” (22.4% say “not important”)
- 92.1% - “Facilitating participants’ experiences of or encounters with God”

Observations:

- ELCA camps, on the whole, have very strong connections to congregations, and they generally see themselves as specifically Lutheran partners in ministry. This holds true across multiple questions. They are significantly more likely than non-ELCA camps to hold church council retreats, send staff to lead in local congregations, have clergy lead summer staff training, and place importance on theological specifics.
- Several questions were combined to determine the camps’ degree of connection to congregations and denominational traditions. 37.5% of ELCA camps have a “strong” connection and 32.5% “moderately strong” (or 70% combined). This is much higher than non-ELCA camps, of which only 13.3% have a “strong” connection and 32.6% “moderately strong” (or 45.9% combined). 8.8% of ELCA camps were categorized as having the weakest degree of connection, compared with 24.5% of non-ELCA camps.
- ELCA camps, on the whole, see themselves as Christian educators. Significantly more so than camps in other denominations, they emphasize “learning faith language and practices,” “Christian education or confirmation,” and *specific* theological teachings. They also offer confirmation camp and programmed confirmation retreats at a much higher rate than other camps. ELCA camps also produce their own curriculum, which is used by 59% of ELCA camps.
- In ELCA camps, it is the overwhelming trend that counselors (or unit group leaders) who stay with the campers overnight lead the daily Bible study. This is true in 79.7% of ELCA camps, but only in 42.2% of non-ELCA camps.