



Outdoor Ministries Connection
2018 Director Survey



LOM Data Report

Prepared by Jacob Sorenson, PhD
Summer 2019



About this Report:

The founders of Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC) committed themselves to research as one of several ministry priorities. The first director survey was conducted in 2014 as part of a grant-funded research initiative called The Confirmation Project. This initial survey focused almost exclusively on summer camp ministries. Four of the OMC member organizations (including LOM) were included in The Confirmation Project and took part in the research. Following the success of this initial survey and hoping to establish a benchmark survey of Mainline Christian camp and retreat ministries, OMC funded a follow-up survey in 2016, including all of its member organizations and expanding the survey to include items related to conferences and retreats. The 2018 survey, again funded by OMC, represents the third bi-annual survey of directors in Mainline camp and retreat ministries. With data from 3 surveys over a span of 5 years, we can begin observing trends in the data.

The 2018 survey included 100 survey items and typically took a director 25 minutes to complete. It had a completion rate of 90%, providing a high degree of reliability for the data set as a whole. Participating organizations comprise nearly 700 individual ministry centers, and 303 responded to the survey, for a response rate of approximately 43%.

This report presents data specific to ministry centers affiliated with LOM. These data are at times compared with the other OMC camps that responded and other time compared with past survey’s data from LOM respondents. The report is divided into 5 parts, corresponding to the sections delineated in the survey. All survey items are included in the report. Additionally, multiple survey items were combined to create indices that give a more concise picture of certain aspects of camp and retreat ministries. These indices and other survey items include written interpretation and comparison with previous years of the survey in order to observe trends.

How to use this Report:

Share survey findings with your organization’s camp directors...

Discuss key survey findings with your ministry center’s staff or board of directors...

Compare your site’s philosophy and statistical data with the larger camping network...

In This Report

- Report Highlights and Findings Summary 3
- Part 1: General Camp Statistics:..... 4
 - Camp Type:..... 7
- Part 2: Camp Directors 8
- Part 3: Summer Camp 9
 - Summer Camp Enrollment and Capacity.....13
 - Summer staff:.....14
- Part 4: Retreats and Conferences15
- Part 5: Camp Philosophy18

Report Highlights and Findings Summary

The below findings are not meant to be exhaustive but, rather, to highlight some of the survey findings related to LOM ministry centers that the researcher considered interesting or remarkable.

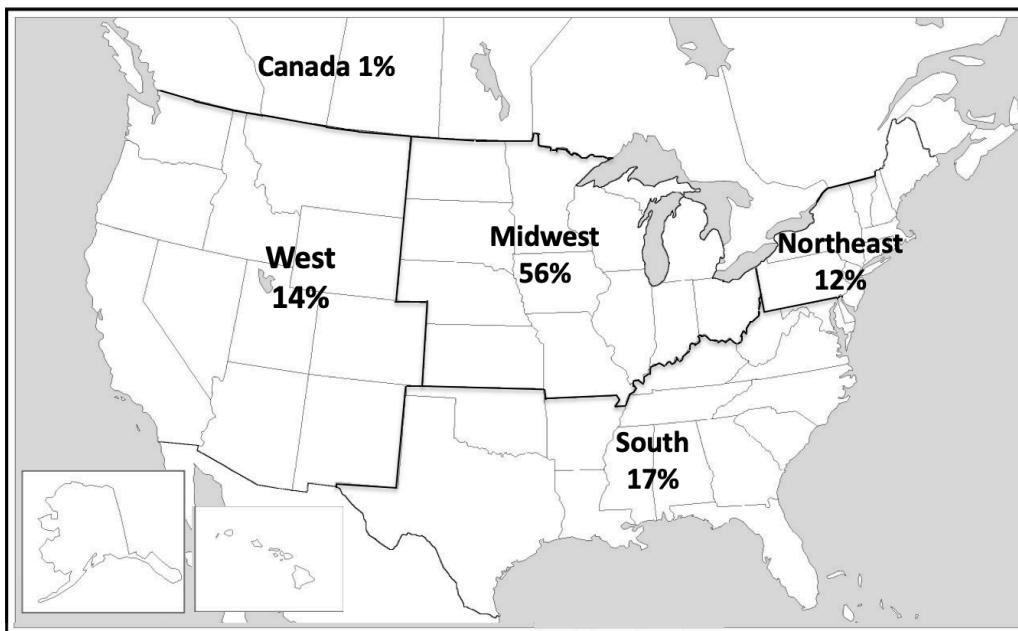
1. The 2018 survey had a high level of participation among LOM camps, rivaling the level of participation in the first survey in 2014 (87 LOM sites). The rate of LOM participation exceeded that of the other participating organizations.
2. **Diversity** remains a challenge in LOM camps, which remain predominantly white, even more so than other denominational camps. However, there are signs of improvement. Fewer directors are white males over the age of 40 than when the survey began in 2014, and 2018 was the first year that more than a quarter of LOM camps reported that more than 10% of their summer campers were people of color (page 11, figure 13).
3. There is **considerable turnover evident among LOM camp directors** in recent years, including a third who had been serving in their current position for fewer than 3 years as of 2018. The proportion of male LOM directors fell below three-quarters for the first time (74%), and the proportion of white male directors over the age of 40 fell from 69% in 2016 to 58% in 2018. While 2016 saw an uptick in the proportion of LOM directors who had no formal theological education (to almost a third), that proportion dropped again in 2018 to 22%, much lower than non-LOM camps (page 8)
4. **Summer camp** remains a dominant ministry priority among LOM ministry centers, much more so than other denominations. Summer camp programs are more robust than non-LOM camps, with higher enrollment (page 12), a greater diversity of programs offered (page 10), and a longer staff training period (page 13).
5. In terms of summer camper numbers, **2018 was a down year for most LOM camps**. More camps reported lower camper enrollment compared with 2017 than those that reported higher enrollment. This was the case in spite of other denominational camps showing an overall *increase* in camper numbers (page 13).
6. In contrast to summer camp, **retreat numbers** followed the trend among other OMC camps by showing evidence for overall increase (page 16).
7. LOM camps retained **their strong emphasis on faith formation** and even showed evidence for **strengthening their connection to denominational identity** and constituent congregations. LOM directors reported strong clergy involvement in their programs (figure 14), and they continued prioritizing such things as faith formation, Christian education, and strengthening congregations much more than other OMC camps (figure 22). LOM camps are much more likely to have programs designed to connect with congregational ministries, such as confirmation camp, traveling day camp (figure 10), and retreats for church youth groups (figure 19).
8. A higher proportion of LOM camps were categorized as **Type 4 camps** (high faith emphasis and strong connection to their congregations/denomination) than in 2016. It is notable that the turnover in camp directors identified in point 3 above resulted in more theologically trained directors. This may have contributed to the stronger affinity for congregational/denominational ministries evident in the 2018 survey.

Part 1: General Camp Statistics:

82 unique ministry centers responded in part or in full to the survey that claimed affiliation with Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM)

- 80 of these sites (97%) were affiliated with the ELCA
- Other Lutheran denominations represented included LCMS (4%), LCMC (4%), NALC (4%), and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.
- 13% of LOM sites indicated affiliation with multiple denominations
- Responding sites represented 28 US states and 1 Canadian province
- 90% of respondents were camp directors, 8% were program or associate directors, and the remainder were other camp staff members.

Figure 1: Responding LOM Sites, by Region

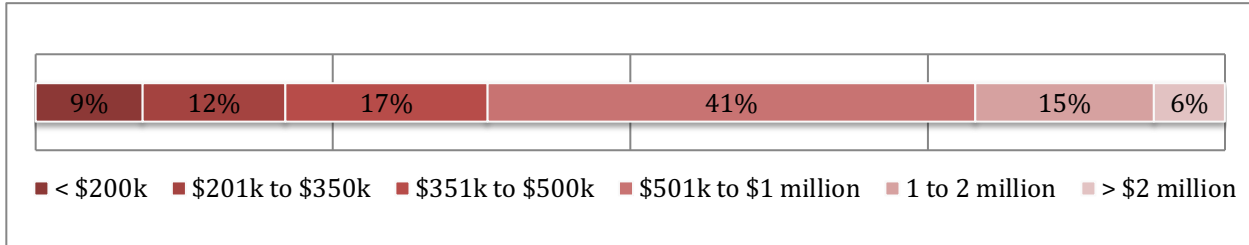


Property Size (Acreage):

- 13% owned or leased less than 50 acres of property (or had no property)
- 28% had 50-100 acres
- 25% had 101-250 acres
- 22% had 251-500 acres
- 12% had more than 500 acres

Budget:

Figure 2: Percentage of Camps, by Annual Operating Budget



- 9% had an annual budget of less than \$200k
- 12% \$201k – \$350k
- 17% \$351k – \$500k
- 41% \$501k – \$1 million
- 15% more than \$1 million – \$2 million
- 6% more than \$2 million

Full-time, year-round Employment:

- 6% had no full-time staff members
- 13% employed 1 full-time staff member
- 22% employed 2-3
- 22% employed 4-5
- 20% employed 6-10
- 17% employed 11 or more

Employment Summary (full-time and part-time year-round staff):

- About a third of these ministry sites operate with 5 or fewer paid staff members
- Another third of LOM sites operate with 6-11 paid staff members
- The final third operates with 12 or more paid staff members

Accreditation: 57% were accredited through the American Camp Association (ACA)

15% were members of Christian Camp and Conference Association (CCCA)

- The percentage of LOM camps accredited with ACA has held steady since 2014

General Ministry Site Overview:

- 4% Primarily adult conferences and retreats
- 22% Primarily youth/child camping
- 68% Combination of youth/child summer camping and year-round retreats/conferences
- 6% rental groups, primarily family camp programs, or other uses

LOM Sites larger operations, on average:

- LOM sites had higher average annual operating budgets and more year-round staff than non-LOM sites; 62% had budgets of more than \$500k, compared with only 47% of non-LOM sites. It appears that this is due mostly to larger average summer camp programs.

Evaluation Methods:

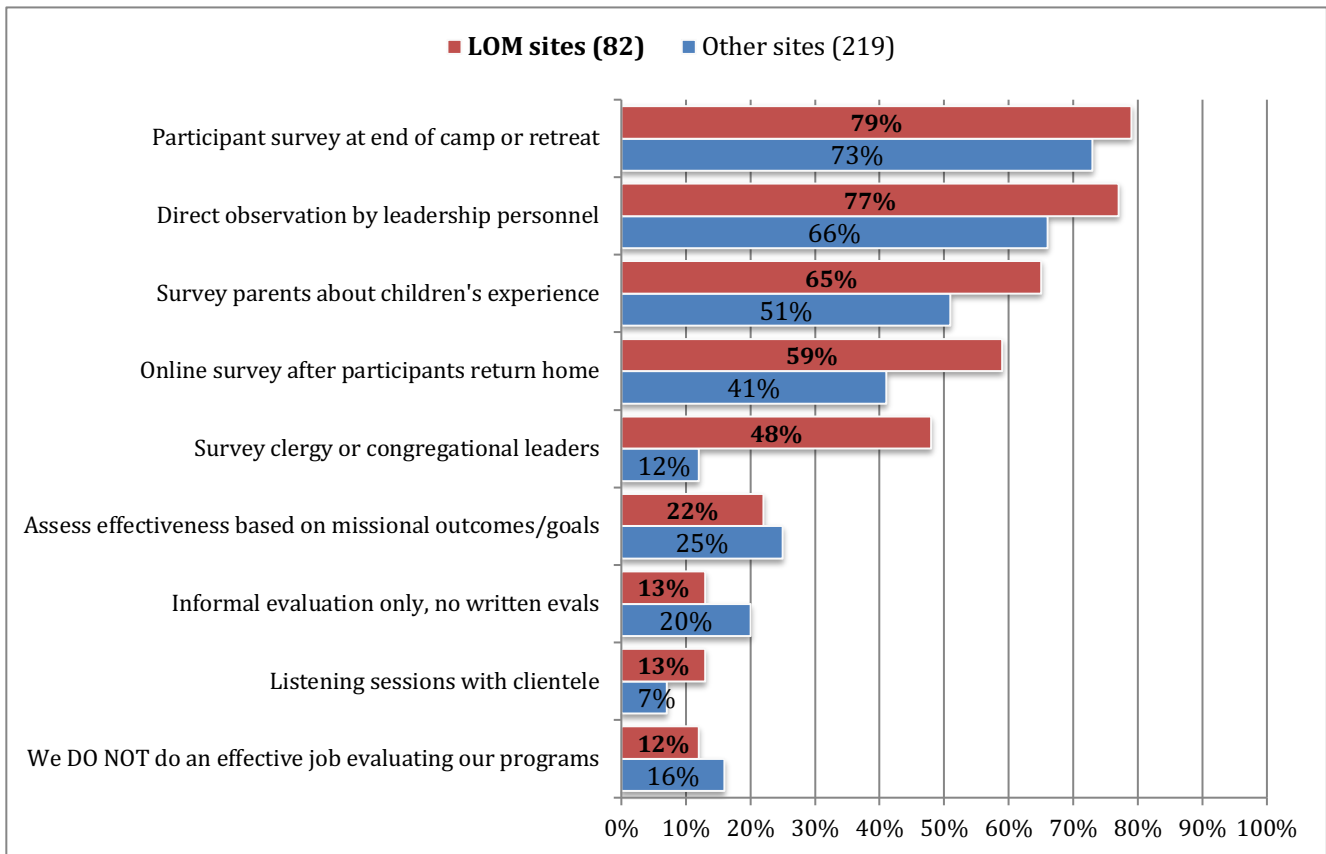


Figure 3: Evaluation Methods used by Responding Camps

- Since the OMC survey began in 2014, more LOM camps have begun using online survey methods, and more have begun surveying parents.

Camp Type:

Type 1: Low faith emphasis, weak connection to congregations/denom. ministries

Type 2: Moderate faith emphasis, moderate connection to congregations/denom.

Type 3: High faith emphasis, weak connection to congregations/denominations

Type 4: High faith emphasis, strong connection to congregations/denominations

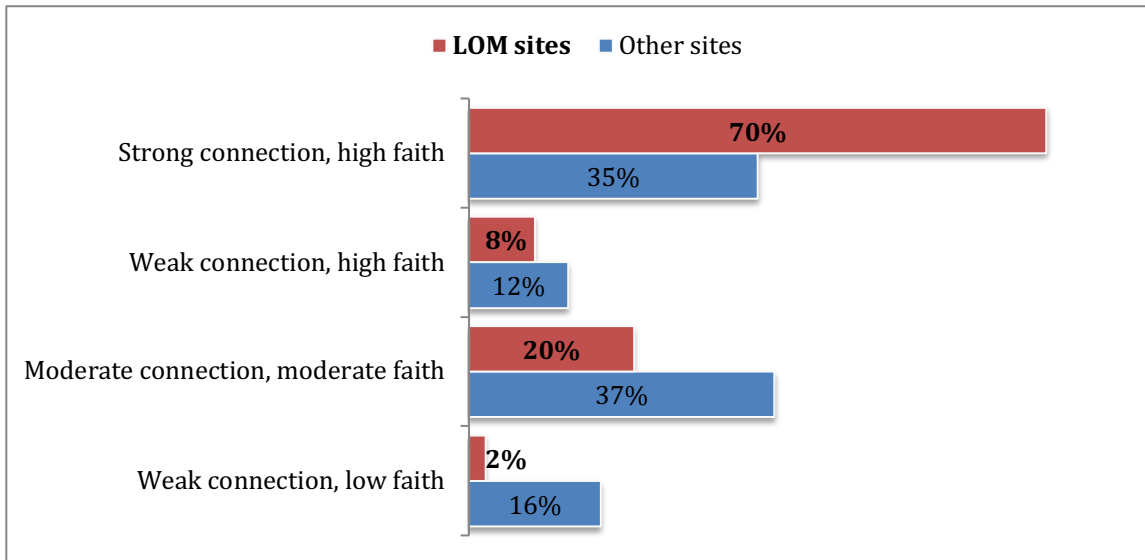


Figure 4: Prevalence of Camp Type

- LOM has a much higher prevalence of Type 4 camps than any other OMC organization, and this has been true since the survey began in 2014. The proportion was even higher among LOM camps in 2018 than previous surveys, indicating a stronger connection between LOM camps and congregational ministries, combined with a stronger emphasis on Christian faith in camp program philosophy.

Part 2: Camp Directors

- 98% were white
- 74% were male (*under three-quarters for the first time in the OMC survey*)
- Education: 49% bachelor's degree, 43% master's degree or higher
- 22% had received **no formal theological education** (compared with 39% non-LOM)
- 21% had a masters of divinity degree (compared with 16% non-LOM)

Figure 5: Director Age

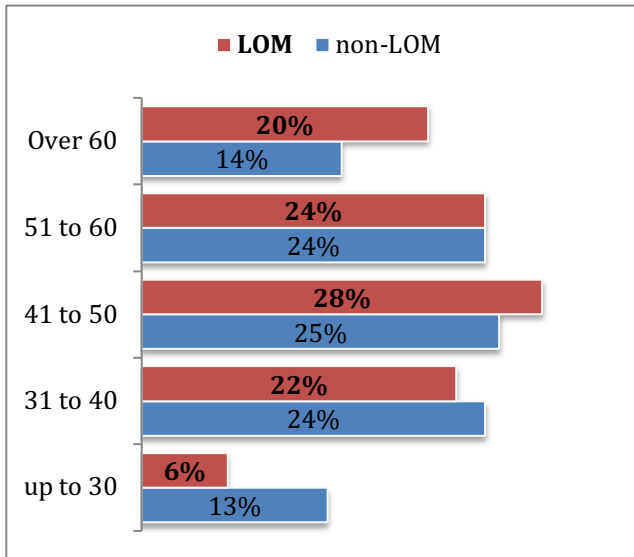
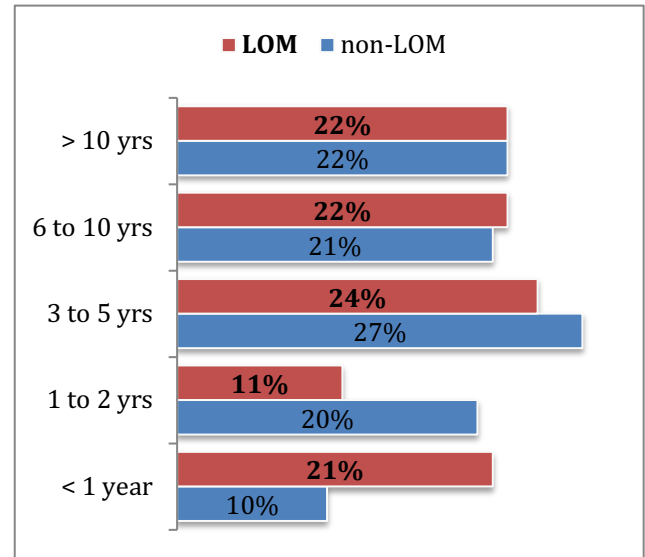


Figure 6: Director Tenure



- **58%** of all LOM directors were white males over the age of 40, down substantially from 69% in 2016
- LOM directors were slightly older and had more theological education, on average, than their counterparts in the other denominations studied.
- Average length of director tenure was very similar to other denominations, reflecting a **high amount of turnover** in LOM organizations at the director level. One-third of LOM directors had been serving in their current position for less than 3 years, compared with only 23% in 2016.
- LOM directors were more likely to be male than any other denominational director.

Part 3: Summer Camp

Overall summer program summary (of 65 camps):

- 55% had primarily co-ed residential summer camp for children/youth
- 40% ran a combination of traditional summer camp and retreats or other programs
- 5% were primarily family camp, with some additional programs

Session Lengths Offered:

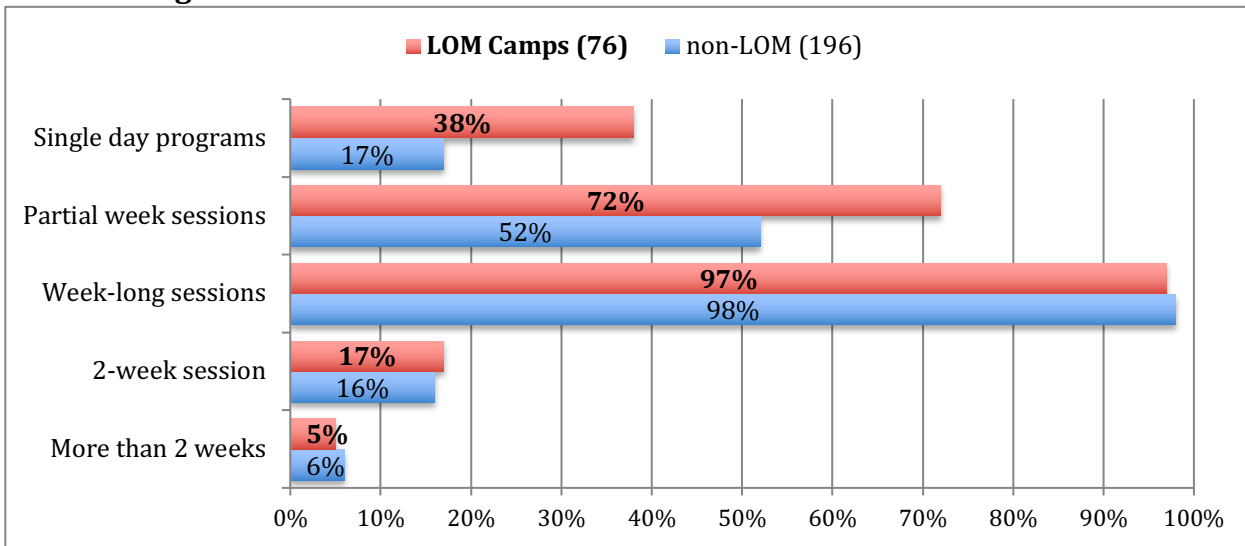


Figure 7: Summer Session Lengths Offered

Weeks of Summer Programming:

More than two-thirds (70%) of LOM sites offered 7-9 weeks of summer programming. 17% offered 6 or fewer weeks of programming, and 13% offered 10 weeks or more.

Summer camp programs:

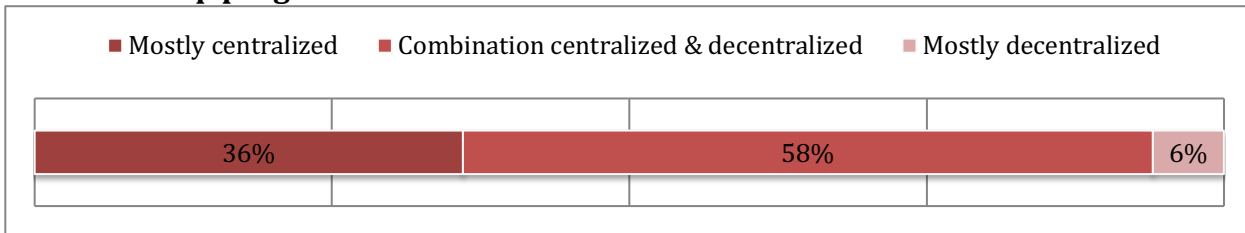


Figure 8: Centralized v. Decentralized Programming

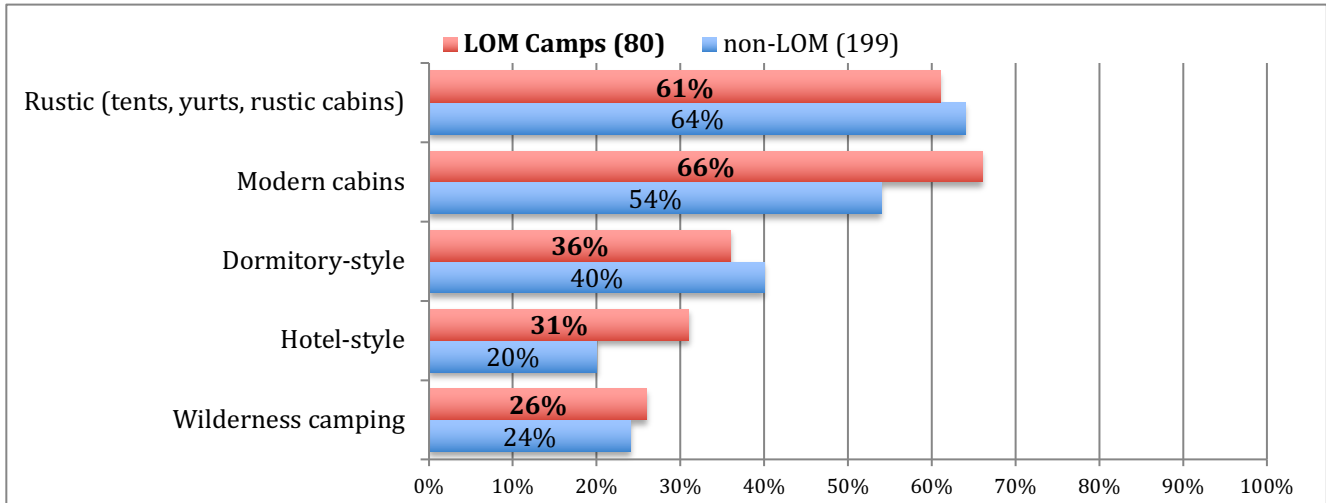
Average weekly camp fee: \$430 (up from \$417 in 2016 and \$384 in 2014)

- Half of camps reported weekly fees between \$390 and \$450, with one quarter lower and one quarter higher
- Non-LOM camps in the USA charged \$426, on average

Table 1: Average Weekly Camp Fee, by Region

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	All USA
LOM Camps	\$425	\$430	\$454	\$408	\$430
Non-LOM Camps	\$447	\$382	\$457	\$418	\$426

Figure 9: Summer Housing Accommodations Offered



Specialty Programs:

LOM camps offered a wider variety of specialty programs than other denominations. The increased prevalence was especially pronounced in confirmation camp and traveling day camp, neither of which are common in other denominations. More than two-thirds of LOM camps offered *traveling day camp* programs, with an average of 14 day camp sites each in 2018. *Family camp* was also much more common at LOM sites, with 80% offering these programs. Family camp numbers ranged from very small (30% served fewer than 50 campers) to quite large (15% served 300 or more), averaging approximately 100 family campers per site.

Figure 10: % of Camps Offering Specialty Summer Camp Programs

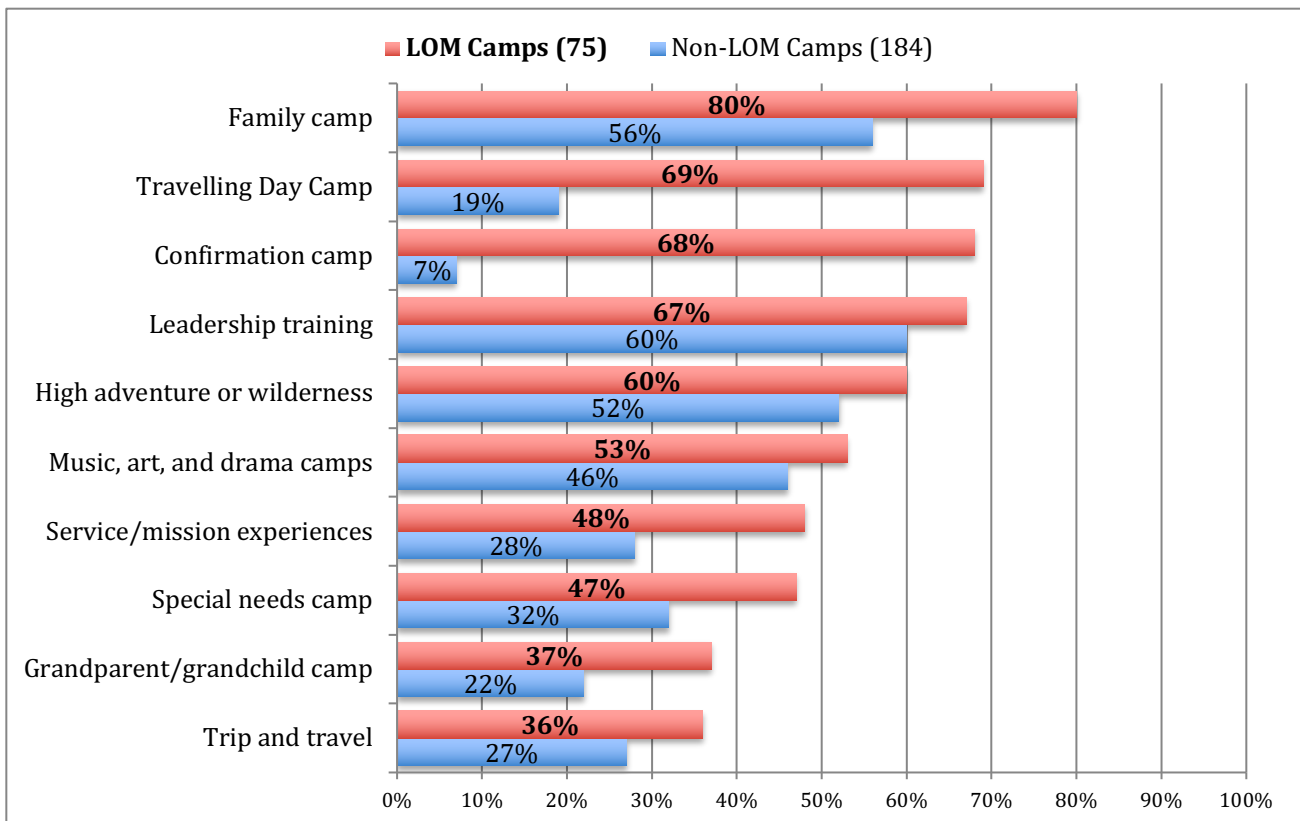
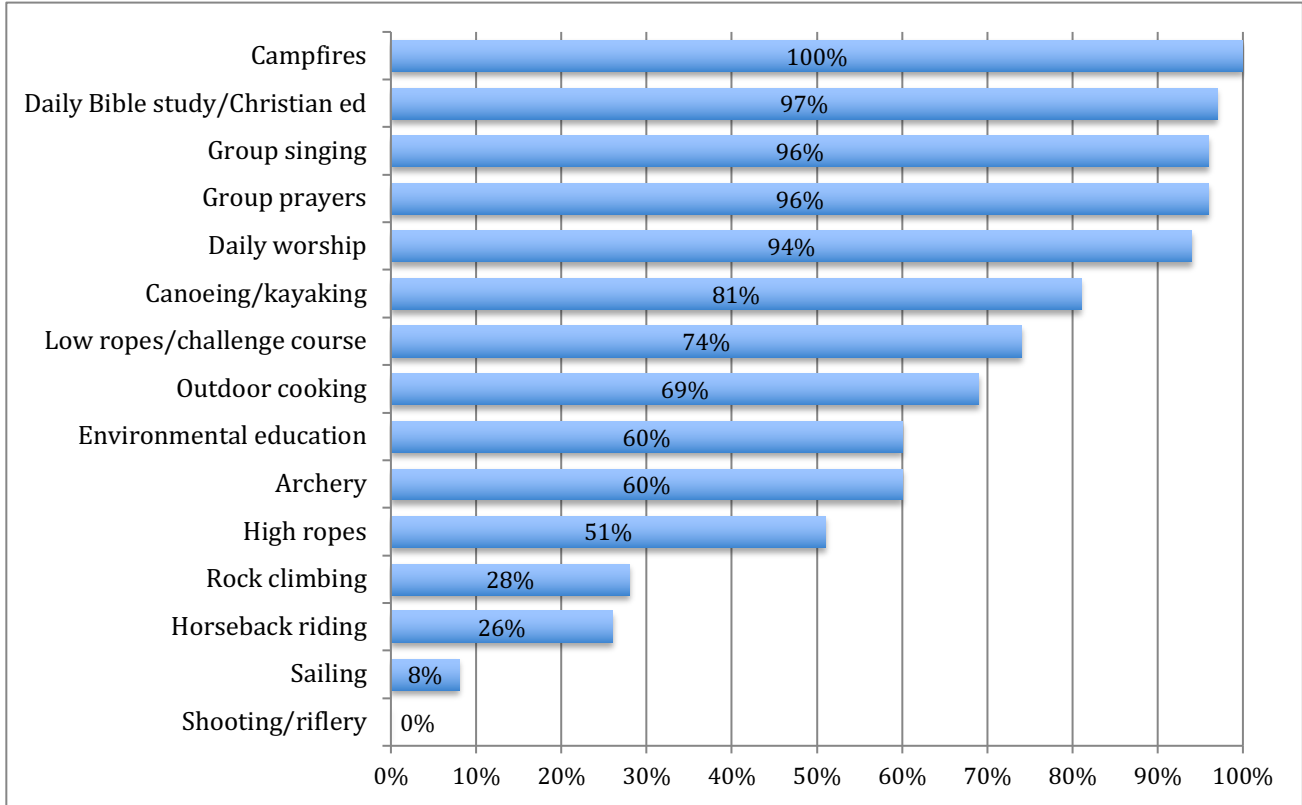


Figure 11: Percentage of Camp Offering Summer Program Specifics (78 LOM camps)



Financial Assistance (69 camps):

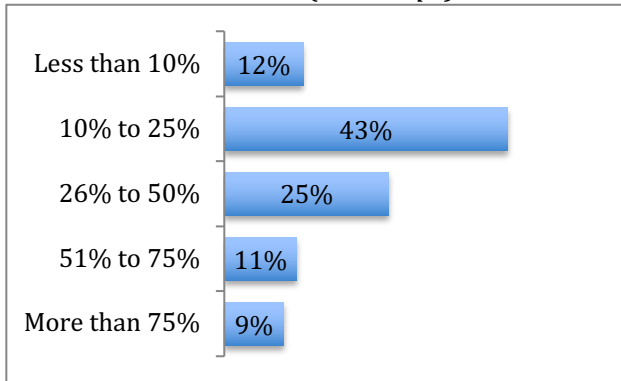


Figure 12: % of Campers Receiving Financial Assistance

Camper Diversity (73 camps):

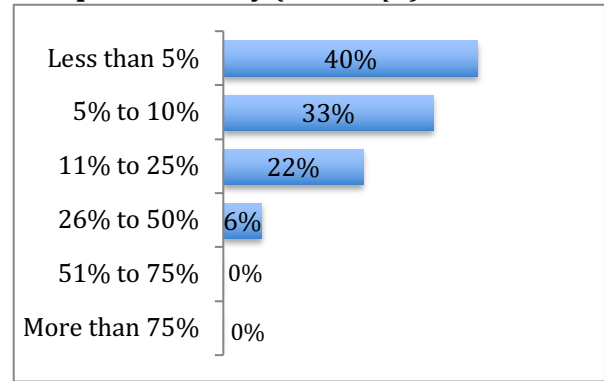


Figure 13: % of Campers that were Racial Minorities

Table 2: Percentage of Camps using Bible Study Curricula

	Inside Out (C.P.)	LOM Curriculum	Wrote our own	Non-traditional
LOM	4%	65%	27%	4%
Non-LOM	40%	6%	36%	19%

Bible Study Leaders:

At LOM sites, the cabin counselor leads the Bible study at 82% of camps. This is the case at only 43% of non-LOM camps, many of which use visiting clergy or specialty staff to lead Bible study.

Level of Involvement of Congregational Leaders/Clergy

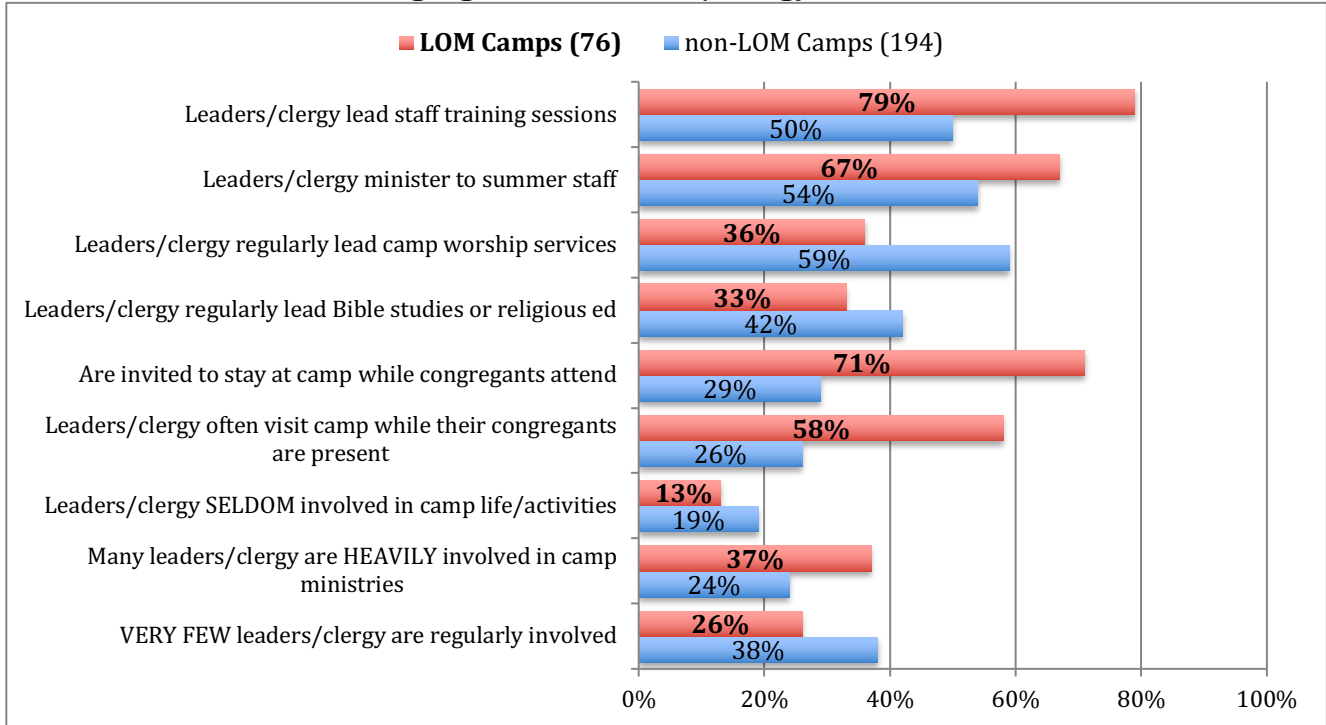


Figure 14: % of Camps Indicating Various Ways Clergy Members were Involved

- Combining the above survey items reveals a comparatively high level of clergy involvement at most LOM camps. Most camps had a high (28%) or very high (41%) level of clergy involvement, while slightly less than a third had moderate (17%) or low (14%) clergy involvement. This reflects the make-up of LOM, which consists mainly of Type 4 camps.

Percentage of Campers Affiliated with Constituent Congregations/Denomination

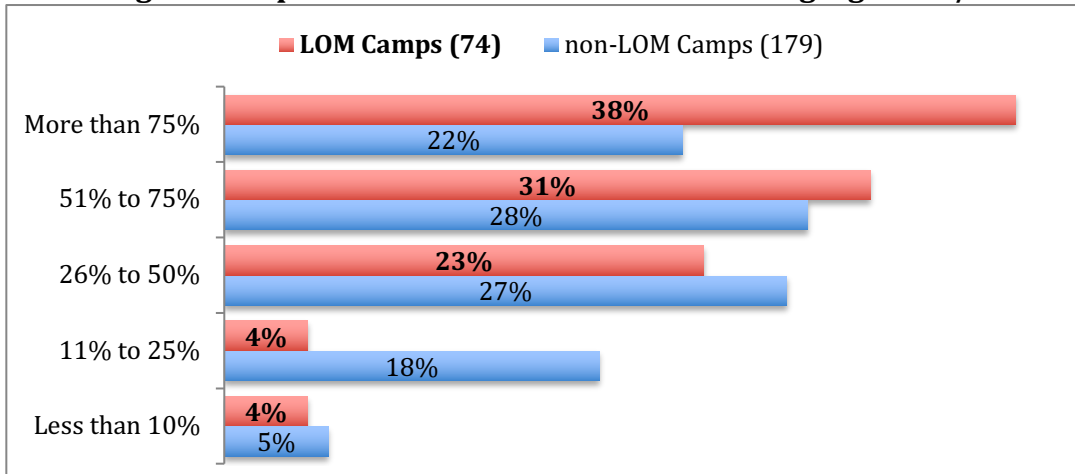


Figure 15: % of Campers Affiliated with Constituent Denomination/Congregations

Summer Camp Enrollment and Capacity

Summer Camp Capacity:

A quarter of LOM camps had a capacity of 100 or fewer campers. Another quarter had a capacity of 101-149, another quarter 150-199, and the remaining quarter 200 or more campers at once. Average capacity for LOM camps (160) was roughly equivalent to non-LOM camps (164).

Table 3: Summer Camp Enrollment:

	LOM 2014	LOM 2016	LOM 2018	non-LOM 2018
90% capacity or higher	14%	16%	8%	18%
75% to 89% capacity	42%	33%	31%	31%
Less than 75% capacity	44%	51%	61%	51%
Enrollment higher than previous summer	41%	49%	26%	51%
Enrollment about the same as previous	28%	40%	38%	33%
Enrollment lower than previous summer	32%	11%	36%	16%
Highest of past 5 summers	-	22%	13%	32%
Higher than most of past 5 summers	-	22%	24%	20%
About the same as past 5 summers	-	34%	32%	30%
Lower than most of past 5 summers	-	20%	23%	14%
Lowest of past 5 summers	-	3%	8%	4%

Overnight Camp Attendance:

Summer camp attendance numbers were collected from 76 camps, and they reported in total serving 47,649 summer campers. A quarter of camps had 270 or fewer total summer campers. Another quarter had 280 to 490. Another quarter had 500 to 850, and the last quarter had more than 850 overnight campers in summer 2018. The average number of overnight campers was **627** (*down from 796 in the 2016 survey and 754 in 2014*).

Day Camp Attendance:

On-site Day Camp attendance numbers were collected from 42 camps, totaling 11,486 campers. A quarter had fewer than 50 day campers. Another quarter had 51 to 100. Another quarter had 101 to 250, and the final quarter had more than 250 day campers. A large majority of day camp participants were under the age of 12 (elementary age). The median number of day campers served was 108, down from 155 in 2018.

Camper Days:

Camper days is an industry standard for summer camp enrollment typically defined as an overnight and 3 meals. A large majority (77%) of responding LOM camps said that they do not keep track of this number. The small number of camps providing this number (only 18) make the data unreliable, so they are not reported.

2018 Attendance Summary:

LOM sites saw a substantial drop in summer camp attendance numbers in 2018. This went against the trend of Mainline camping, in general, which saw overall numbers increase. It is notable that 2018 was the year of the triennial national youth gathering for the ELCA. In spite of the sizeable drop in attendance, LOM camp enrollment remained higher, on average, than other Mainline camps, reflecting the high priority placed on summer camp in the Lutheran church.

Summer staff:

Most of the responding camps employed seasonal staff members for the summer months. Most had paid summer staff members, with only a few relying predominantly on volunteer staff. Reliance on volunteer staff is much more common in camps of other denominations. The 79 responding camps employed a total of 2,545 *paid summer staff* in 2018, with a median of 25 staff per camp. A third of camps employed 20 or fewer staff, another third had 21-34, and the remaining third had 35 or more. 10% had 65 or more paid summer staff members.

LOM camps employed far fewer staff in 2018 than in 2016, when only 66 responding camps employed more total staff (2,705) and had a median of 32 staff per camp.

Staff training:

Paid staff members generally received extensive training at these camps. The average length of staff training in 2018 was 12 days (equivalent with 2016), with 82% of all camps having between 10 and 14 days. Few camps (6%) offered fewer than 10 days, while 12% had more than 14 days.

Average weekly summer staff salary: \$237 (UP from \$223 in 2016 and \$230 in 2014)

- Three-quarters of camps reported weekly staff salaries between \$200 and \$250
- Non-LOM camps in the USA paid summer staff \$242, on average

Table 4: Average Staff Salary, by Region

	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	All USA
LOM Camps	\$208	\$246	\$208	\$240	\$237
Non-LOM camps	\$232	\$240	\$217	\$290	\$242

Returning Summer Staff (75 camps):

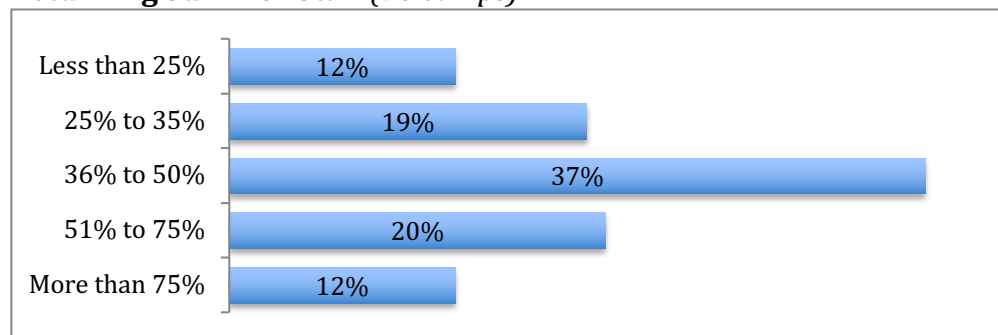


Figure 16: % of Camps Reporting Various Levels of Staff Returning from Previous Summers

Part 4: Retreats and Conferences

Primary clientele for retreats/conferences (77 ministry sites):

- 26% Primarily **adults**
- 1% Primarily **youth/children**
- 73% Mix of children, youth, adults, and families

Retreat Accommodations Offered:

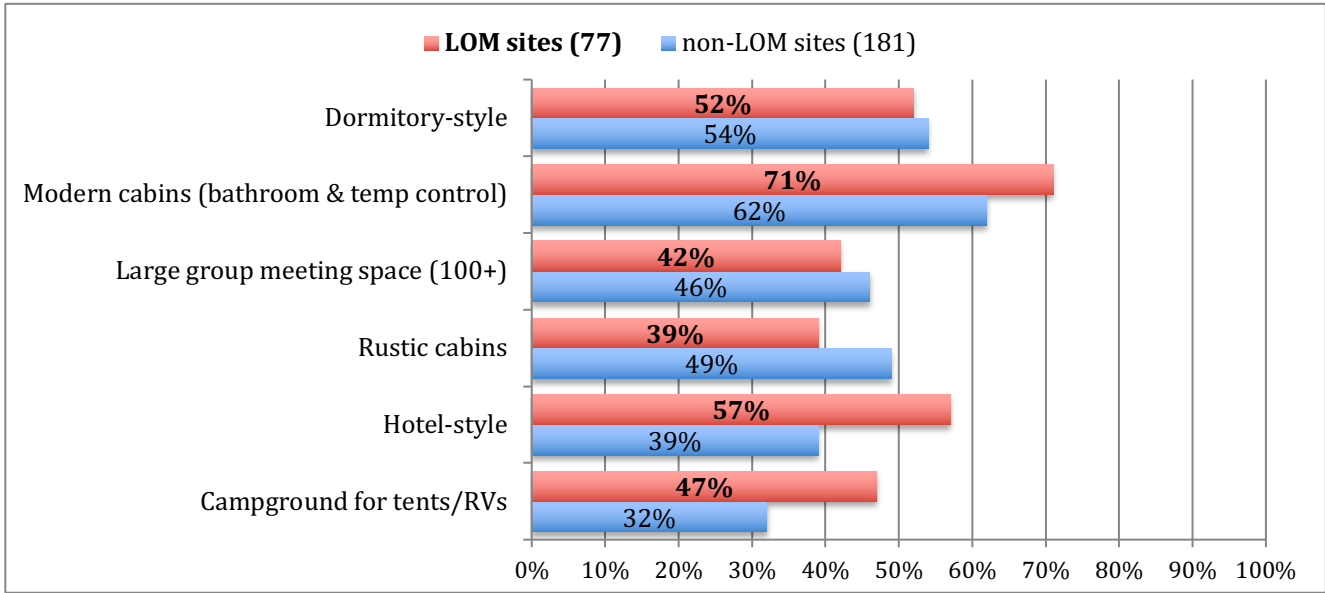


Figure 17: % of Camps Offering Selected Housing Accommodations for Retreat Participants

Seasonal Retreat Staff:

Ministry centers varied in their reliance on seasonal staff to help during the retreat season. Over a third (38%) did not employ any seasonal retreat staff. Another third employed 1-3, and the remainder employed 4 or more, with 10% employing at least 10.

Retreat Guest Affiliation

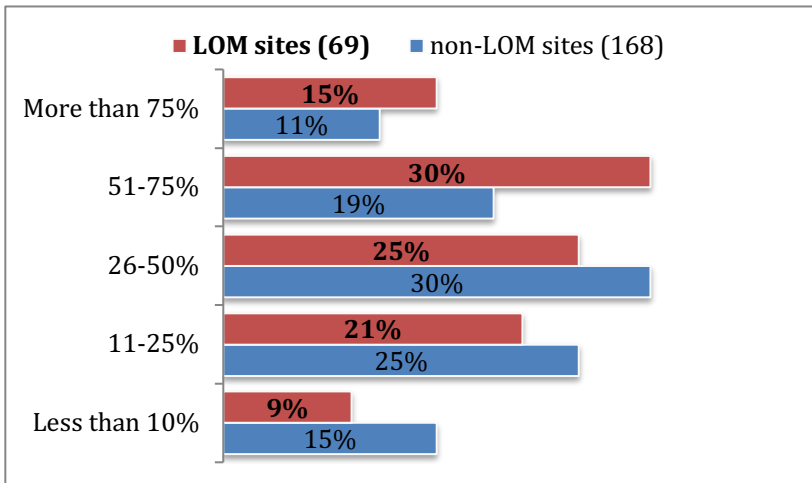


Figure 18: % of Camps Indicating Retreat Participants Affiliated with Constituent Denomination/Congregations

Overnight capacity for retreats/conferences (*out of 71 ministry sites*):

A quarter of ministry centers reported that their overnight retreat capacity was 75 or fewer guests. Another quarter had a capacity of 76 to 120, another quarter 121 to 179, and the remaining quarter had a capacity of 180 or more guests. This breakdown is comparable to the reported capacity of LOM ministry centers in 2016.

Retreat Guests in most recent retreat season:

About a third of ministry centers were unsure how many overnight retreat guests they hosted in the most recent retreat season. Of the 43 sites that provided numbers, half hosted fewer than 2,000 total overnight guests, with the other half 2,000 or more, including a quarter that hosted 4,000 or more guests.

Guest days is an industry standard for retreat enrollment typically defined as an overnight and 3 meals. Over three-quarters (77%) of LOM camp directors indicated that they do not keep track of this number. With only 15 camps providing the number of guest days, no meaningful data can be offered for LOM as a whole.

Table 2: Retreat/Conference Usage (*out of 77 LOM, 179 non-LOM sites*)

	2014	2016 LOM Sites	2018 LOM Sites	2018 non-LOM sites
90% capacity or higher (<i>weekends</i>)	-	4%	6%	13%
75% to 89% capacity (<i>weekends</i>)	-	16%	30%	20%
50% to 74% capacity (<i>weekends</i>)	-	37%	30%	35%
Less than 50% capacity (<i>weekends</i>)		43%	33%	32%
90% capacity or higher (<i>week days</i>)	-	-	0%	2%
75% to 89% capacity (<i>week days</i>)	-	-	7%	7%
50% to 74% capacity (<i>week days</i>)	-	-	8%	12%
Less than 50% capacity (<i>week days</i>)		-	85%	79%
Usage higher than previous year	-	46%	47%	46%
Usage about the same as previous	-	37%	35%	39%
Usage lower than previous year	-	17%	18%	15%
Highest of past 5 years	-	17%	13%	22%
Higher than most of past 5 years	-	28%	36%	29%
About the same as past 5 years	-	40%	38%	36%
Lower than most of past 5 years	-	15%	12%	11%
Lowest of past 5 years	-	0%	1%	2%

- While summer camp numbers were down substantially in 2018 among LOM camps, the problem did not extend to retreat ministries, which followed the trend of other Mainline camps by increasing. About half of LOM ministry centers reported an increase in retreat attendance in 2018, both compared with the previous year and when considering 5-year trends. Fewer than 20% reported decreasing attendance.

Figure 19: Percentage of Sites Serving Selected Retreat Clientele (of 77 sites)

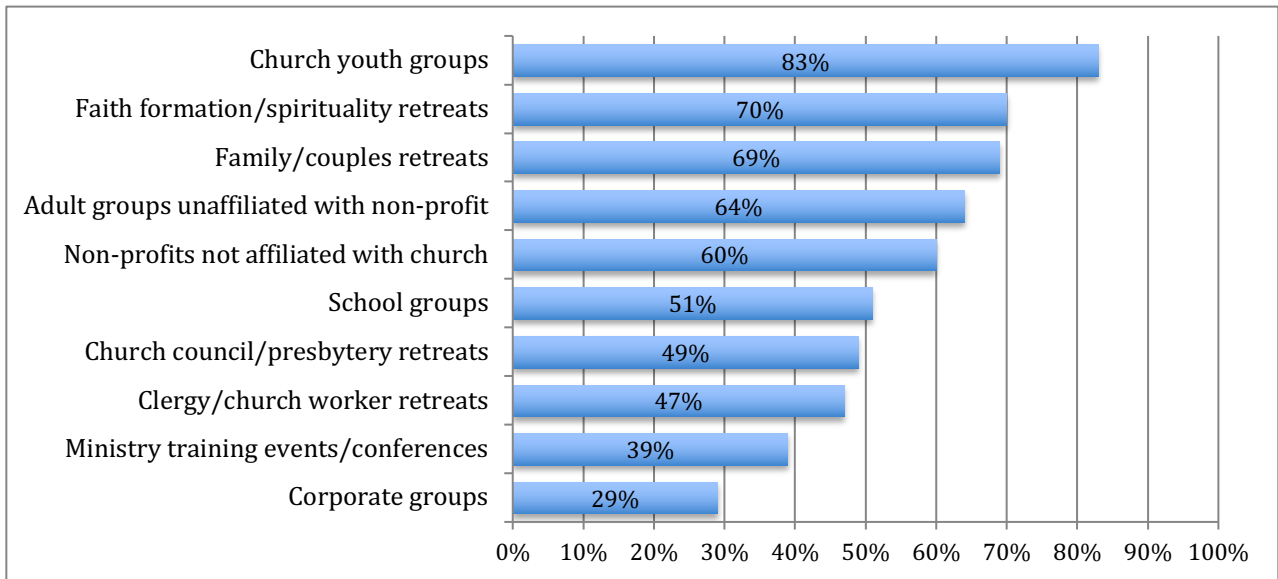
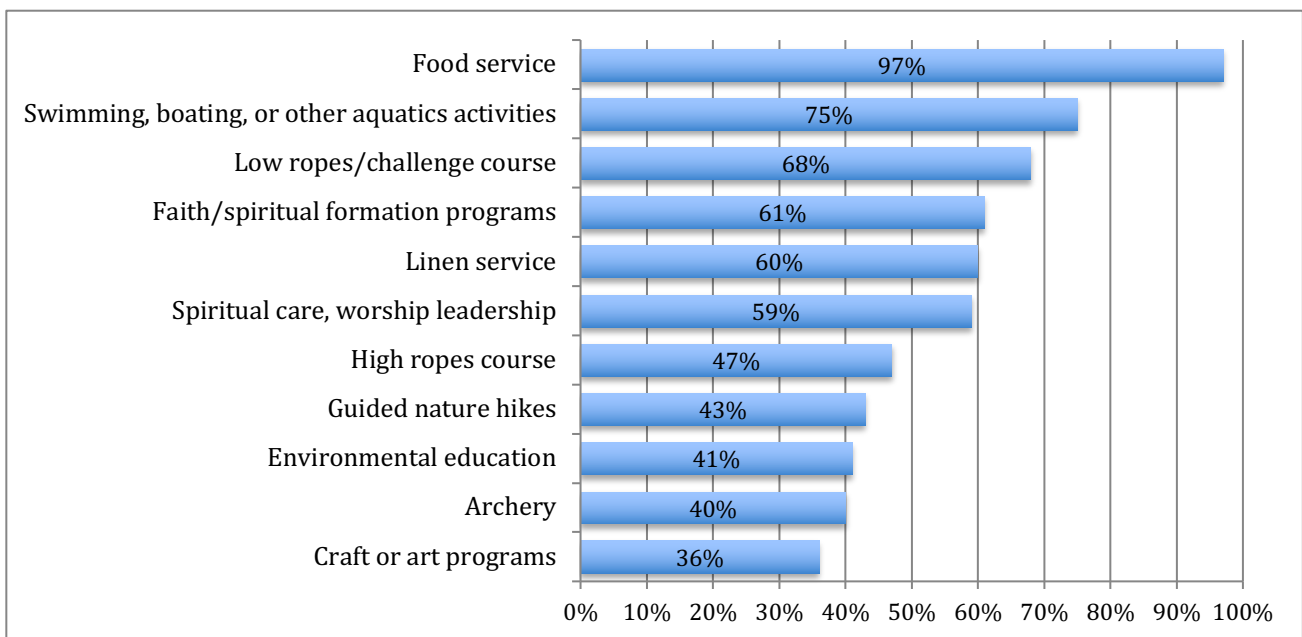


Figure 20: Percentage of Ministry Sites Offering Selected Retreat Programs (of 75 sites)



- In comparison with other denominations, LOM ministry centers were much more likely to offer faith/spiritual formation programs to retreat guests, along with worship leadership.

Part 5: Camp Philosophy

Level of Agreement with Philosophy Statements about Ministry Site (out of 78 LOM ministry centers) – Right-hand column indicates whether LOM centers, on average, agreed significantly more than (↑), less than (↓), or were no different from (≈) non-LOM centers.

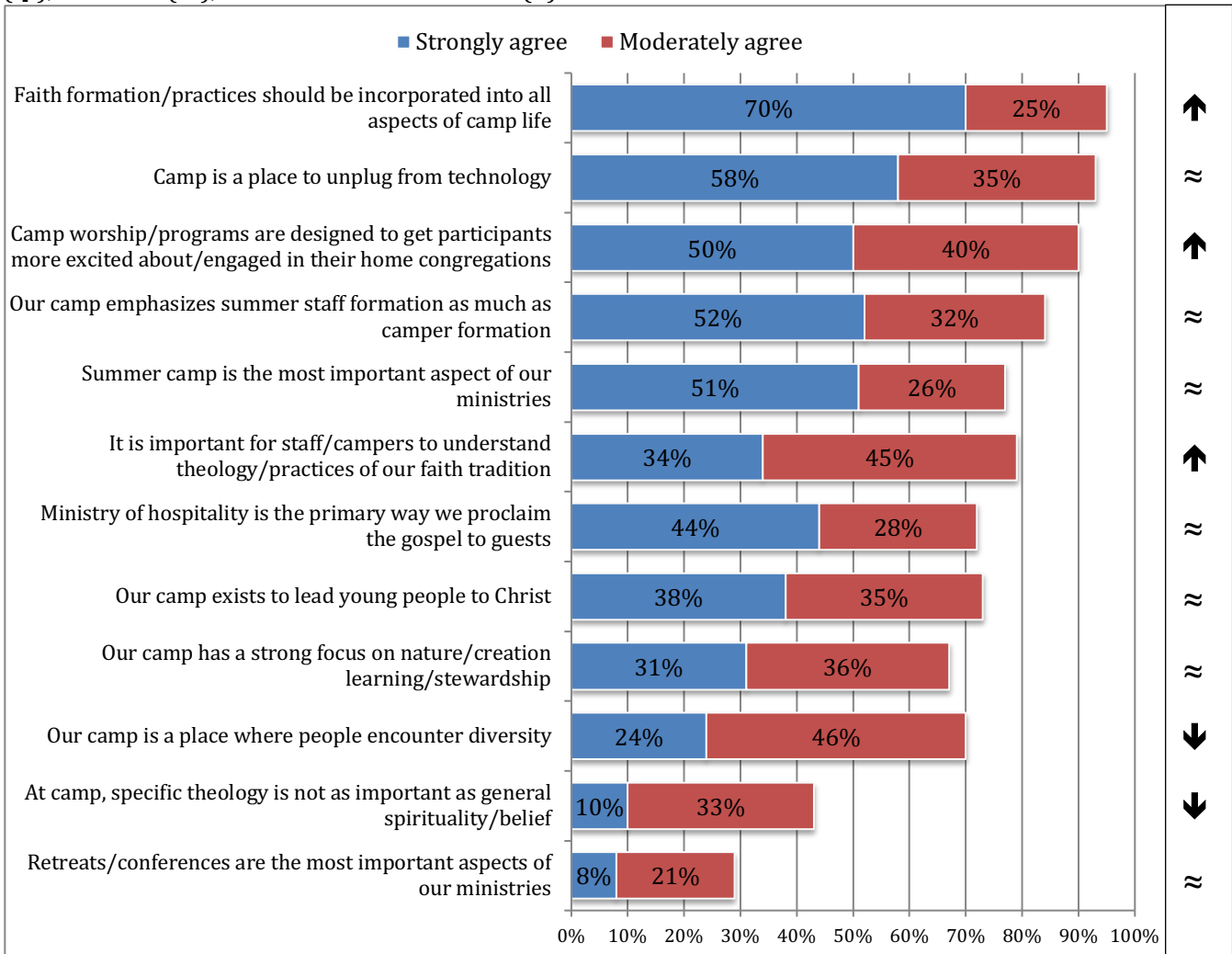


Figure 21: Level of Agreement with Philosophy Statements about Ministry Site

- The above responses reflect the makeup of LOM as predominantly Type 4 camps. LOM directors were much more likely than directors from other camps to agree that it is important for staff and campers to understand the theology and practices of their faith tradition, and they were much more likely to agree that their worship and programs are designed to get campers more excited about their home congregations. They were also more likely to agree that faith formation/practices should be incorporated into all aspects of camp life. In short, they tend to place a higher emphasis on faith formation and connection to partner ministries (the two signs of Type 4 camps).
- Average agreement levels with the above statements have remained largely consistent among LOM camp directors since 2014. Only two items have shown modest trends for increasing agreement: “Our camp has a strong focus on nature/creation learning/stewardship” and “Camp worship/programs are designed to get campers more excited about and engaged in their home congregations.”

Level of Importance Assigned to Selected Program Priorities (of 78 LOM ministry centers) – Right-hand column indicates whether LOM centers, on average, said specific statements were significantly more important (↑), less important (↓), or no different from (≈) non-LOM centers.

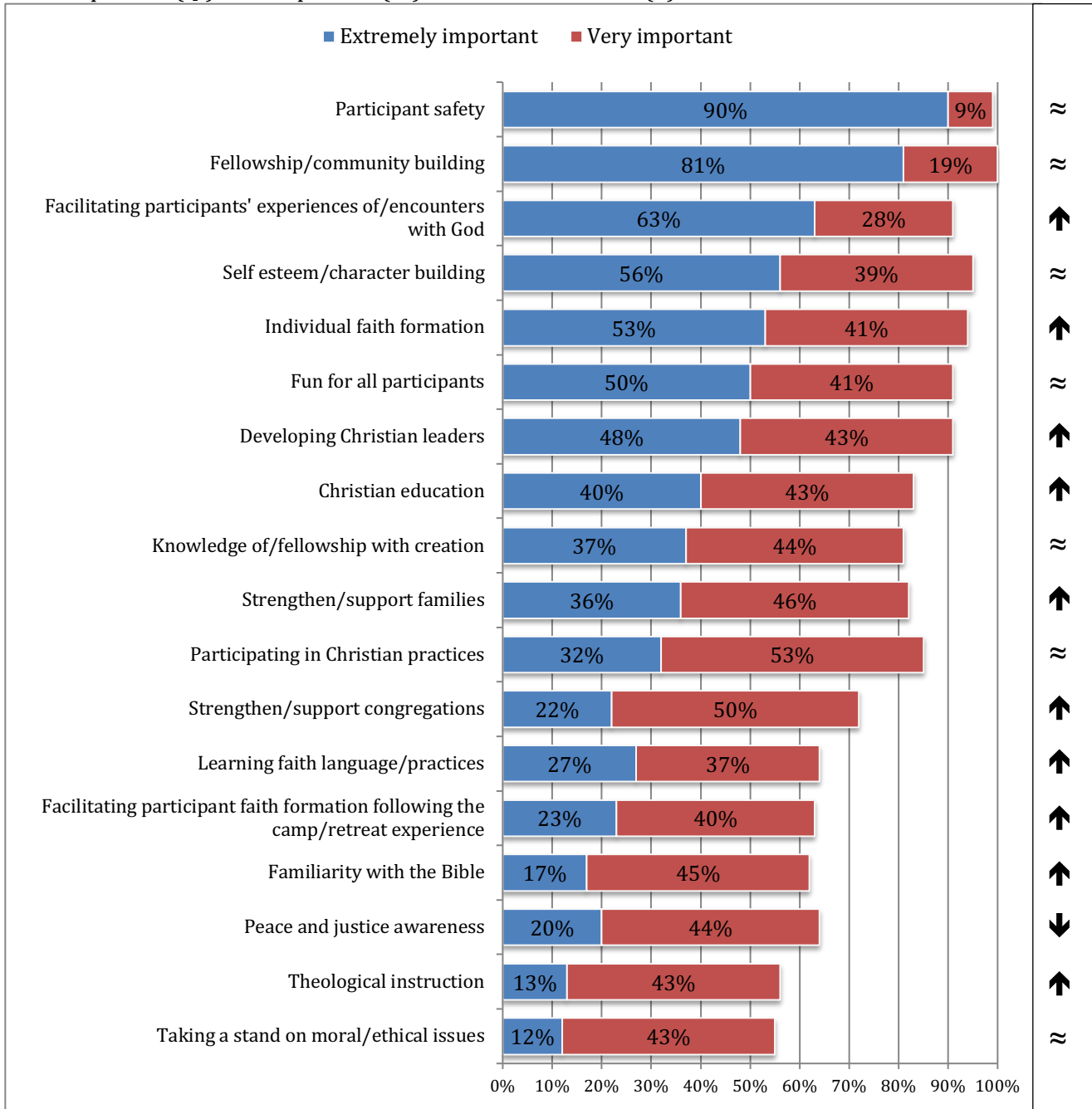


Figure 22: Level of Importance Assigned to Selected Program Priorities

- LOM camp directors assigned higher levels of importance to 10 of the above 18 items in comparison to non-LOM camps. A closer look at these items reveals that they are associated with faith emphasis, Christian education, and connection to other ministries (congregation and home).
- Six of the 7 items that were equivalent with other camps are secular goals (safety, fun, community building, etc.). Since 2014, LOM directors have shown a modest trend of placing *more* importance on two of these secular goals: “knowledge of/fellowship with creation” and “taking a stand on moral/ethical issues.” Importance of other items has remained roughly equivalent over time.