



The Effective Camp Project
2020 Parent Survey
Data Report

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Participants



*"Camp was positive, reaffirming, and a calm port in the COVID-19 storm."
– 2020 camper parent*

Prepared by Sacred Playgrounds LLC
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Introduction

These results are based on responses to an online survey of camper parents in summer 2020. Parents received the survey link via e-mail and responded within 1-4 weeks of their child's camp experience. Seven Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) camps participated in the survey in 2020. These included Badlands Ministries (ND), Camp of the Cross Ministries (ND), Christikon Lutheran Church Camp (MT), Ewalu Camp and Retreat Center (IA), Metigoshe Ministries (ND), Shetek Lutheran Ministries (MN), and Upper Missouri Ministries (ND).

In summer 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of many camps across the country. Some were prohibited from operating due to state or county ordinance, and others opted to either close or dramatically alter their programming in order to keep staff and guests safe. The camps represented in this survey were among the minority of camps that operated traditional overnight summer camp programs in 2020. These programs can be considered successful in that none of the camps experienced an outbreak of the virus or were forced to close mid-season because of viral spread.

Items of note in this report:

- Parents expressed a **tremendous amount of trust** in camp leadership and programming. While the majority of respondents did not express satisfaction with the local or national response to the pandemic, more than 90% were satisfied with the camp's response (Figure 3).
- Responses were **overwhelmingly positive**. The vast majority reported that their children had fun, made friends, tried new things, and were strengthened in their faith (Figure 7). Parents rated the overall experience very high (Figure 5) and also identified noticeable impacts of the camp experience (Figure 9).
- The **primary challenges** respondents faced were secondary challenges precipitated by the widespread shutdowns undertaken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A small number of households experienced the financial crunch of job loss or increased illness. The main concerns included loss of social interaction and positive activities for their children (Figure 4).
- Changes undertaken in response to the pandemic had **positive impacts on programs**. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the new camper registration and check-in systems, much higher than previous survey years. When returning families compared the experience to previous summers, most said the experience was just as good, and many said various aspects were better than previous years (Figure 8).
- Increasingly, **parents want better communication** and ability to know how their child is doing during the camp experience. One in 6 parents was not satisfied with the communication during the camp week (Figure 6). Very few parents (only 6%) agreed that children should be allowed to have cell phones at camp, a number that has remained consistent for several years of the parent survey.

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Respondent Summary: 474 total responses



84% of respondents were mothers
11% fathers, 4% grandparents/other

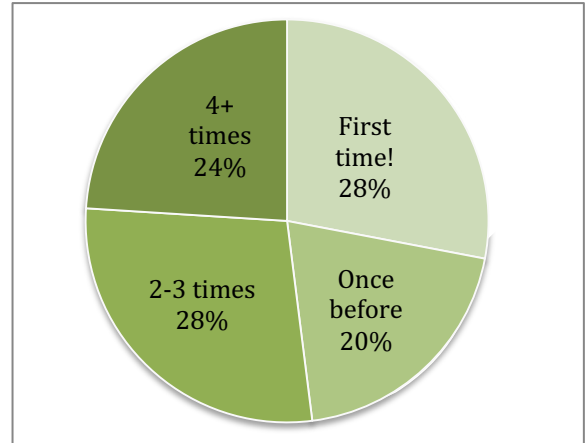
Camper Gender

Male	37%
Female	63%
Non-conforming	< 1%

Week Child Attended Camp

June 21 or 28	11%
July 5	13%
July 12	17%
July 19	19%
July 26	26%
August 2 or 9	14%

Figure 1: # Times Child had Attended Camp



76% of respondents had one child attending camp, while **24%** had multiple children attending

Distance from Camp



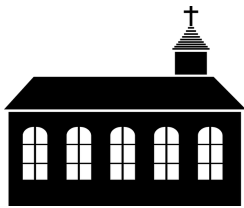
50 miles or less	36%
51-100 miles	32%
More than 100 miles	32%

Camper Age

9 & under	25%
10	17%
11	15%
12	14%
13	12%
14 and up	17%

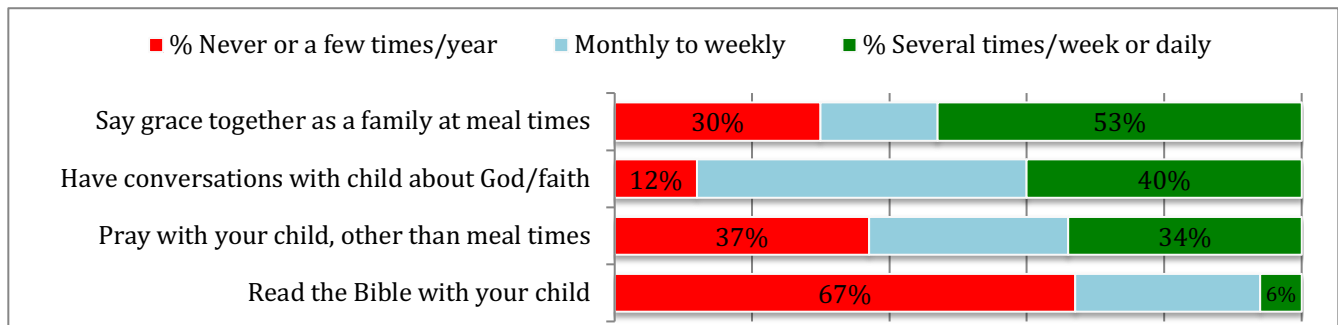
Median camper age: **11**

Family Faith Practices:



74% of respondents said that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they attended church with their children multiple times per month or weekly
9% indicated “about monthly,” and **17%** less than monthly

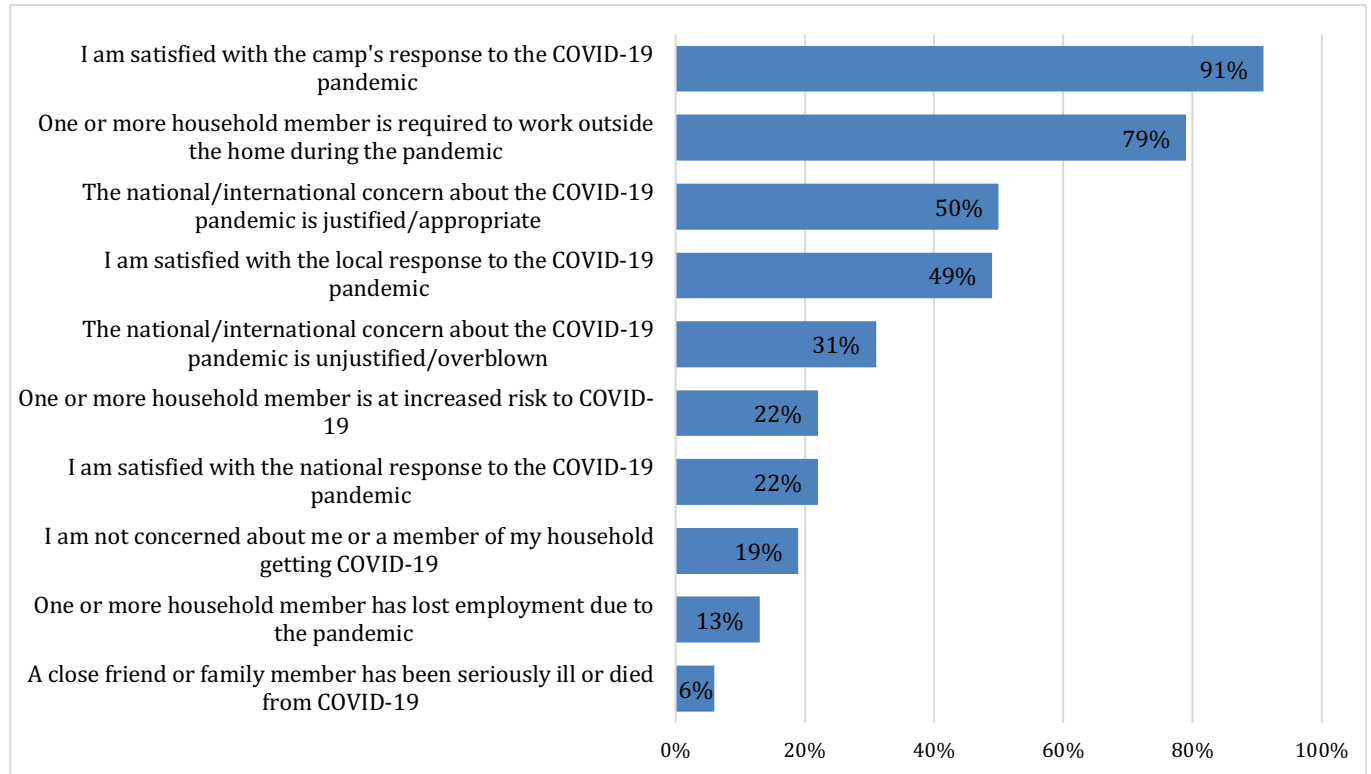
Figure 2: Frequency of Family Faith Practices in the Home Prior to Camp



Life in the Pandemic

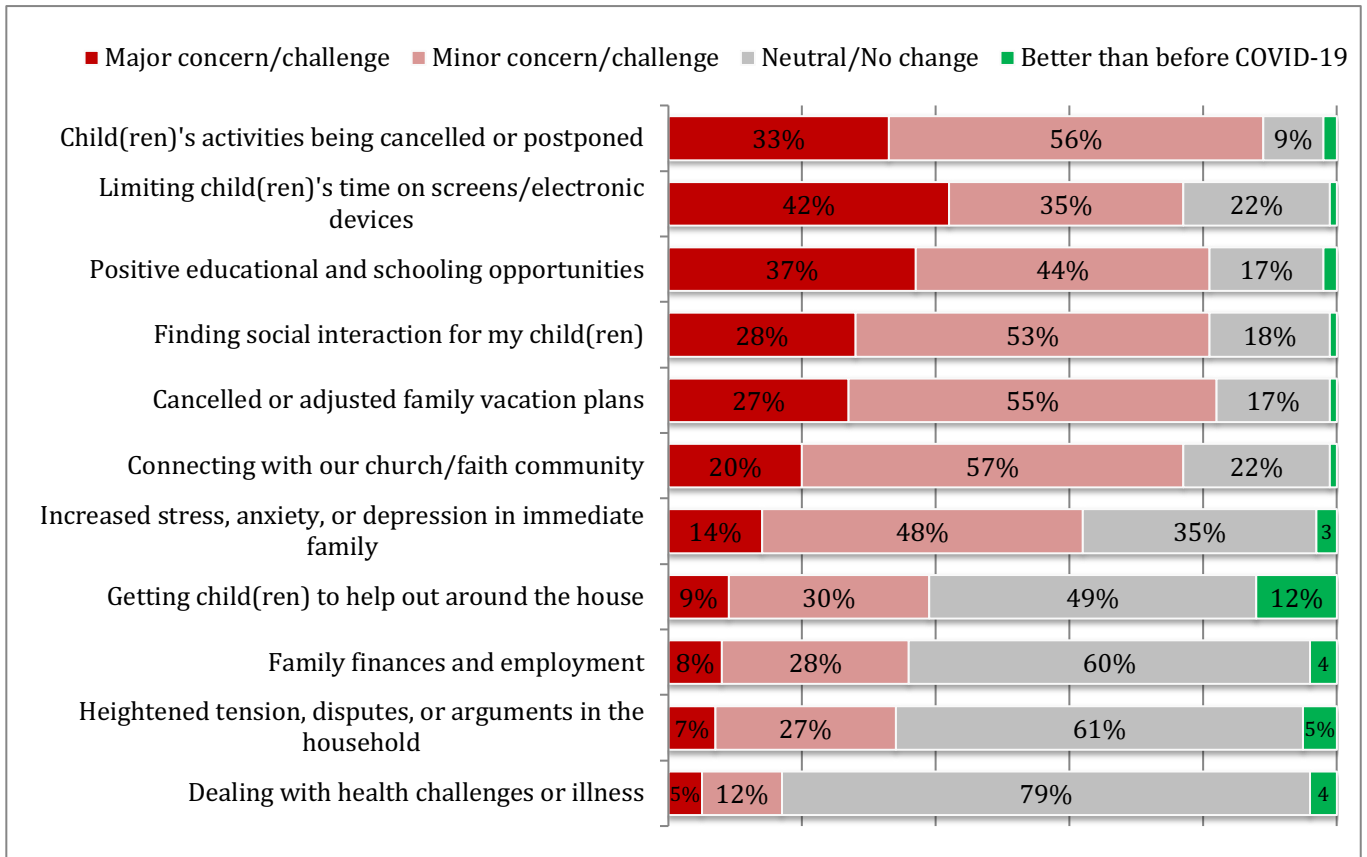
During the spring and summer of 2020, COVID-19 was spreading in many parts of the country and dominating the news. There was also a vigorous disinformation campaign seeking to downplay the effects of the virus. Most summer camps cancelled their overnight programs, and the ones that operated did so on a more limited basis, with restrictions and safeguards in place. In the survey, we sought to capture parents' impressions of life during the pandemic and the camp's response.

Figure 3: Perceptions about COVID-19 Pandemic



- It is remarkable to note the high level of trust/confidence in the camps, with 91% of respondents indicating that they are satisfied with their camp's response to the pandemic, compared with only 49% satisfied with the local response and only 22% satisfied with the national response.
- Most respondents took the threat of COVID-19 seriously, though almost a third (31%) thought concern about the pandemic was overblown. However, only 19% indicated that they were not concerned about getting the virus. When these two indicators are combined, 14% of respondents answered affirmatively to both. This group might be considered to downplay or deny the severity of the virus.
- While concern was real, few respondents had been directly impacted by the virus, with only 18% indicating either that a household member had lost employment or that a close friend or family member had fallen seriously ill from COVID-19.

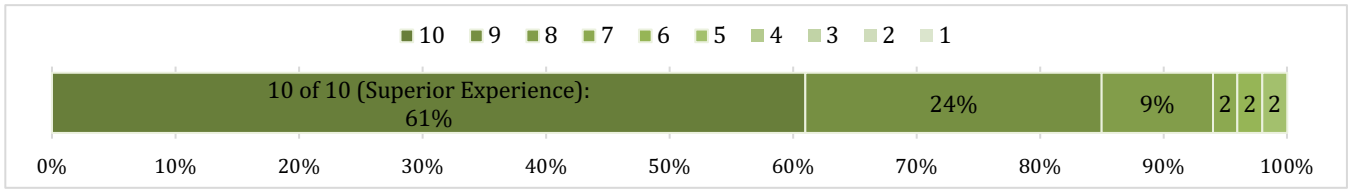
Figure 4: Concerns and Challenges During the COVID-19 Pandemic



- The above figure makes clear that the primary challenges respondents were facing during the pandemic were secondary challenges – those precipitated by the widespread shutdowns undertaken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Only a small number of households were experiencing the financial crunch of job loss or increased illness. The main concerns centered on loss of social interaction and positive activities for their children.
- Interestingly, the pandemic was showing minor positive impacts for some families, especially getting children to help out around the house. In this case, more families reported positive impacts than those reporting major concerns. In terms of heightened tension, disputes, or arguments in the household, almost equal numbers of families reported positive impacts as those that reported major concerns. The same was true for health challenges.

The Camp Experience

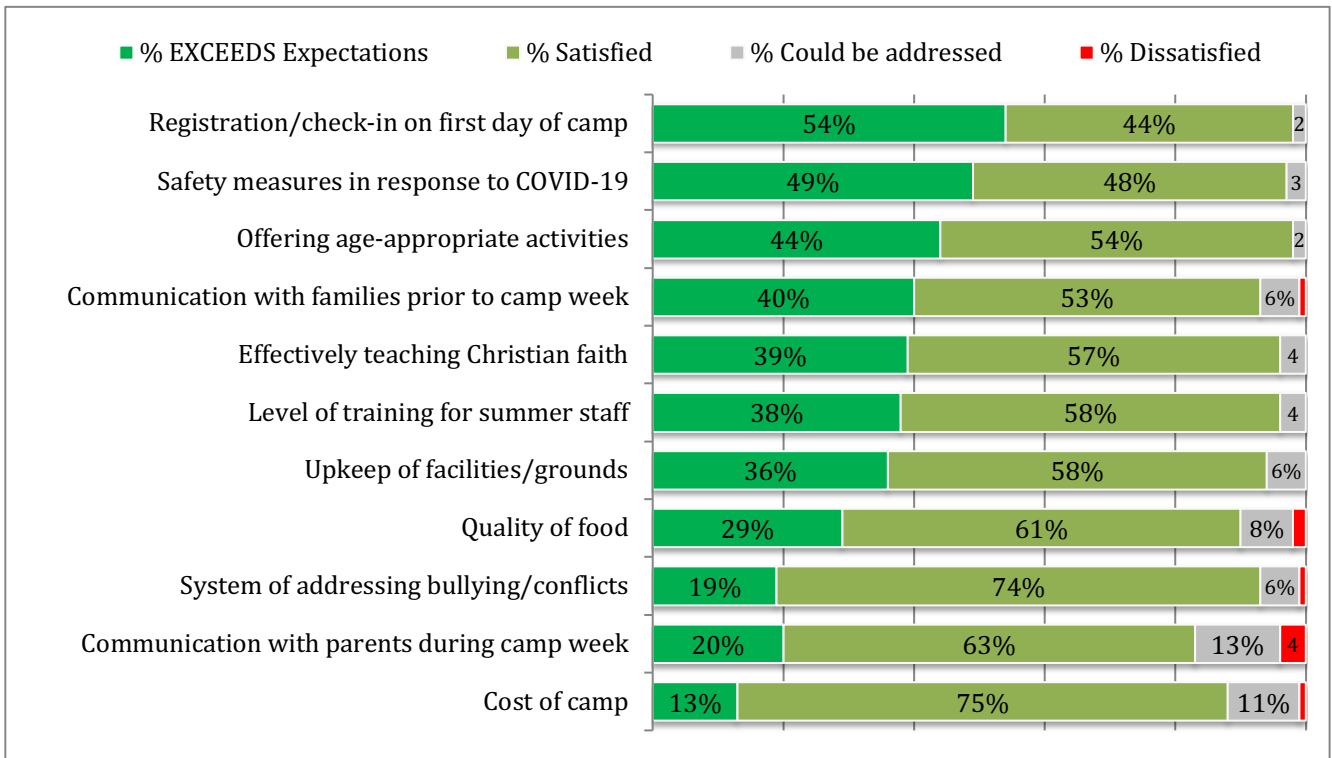
Figure 5: Rating the Camp Experience on Scale of 1-10



Parents were asked to rate their child’s experience on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being “superior experience.”

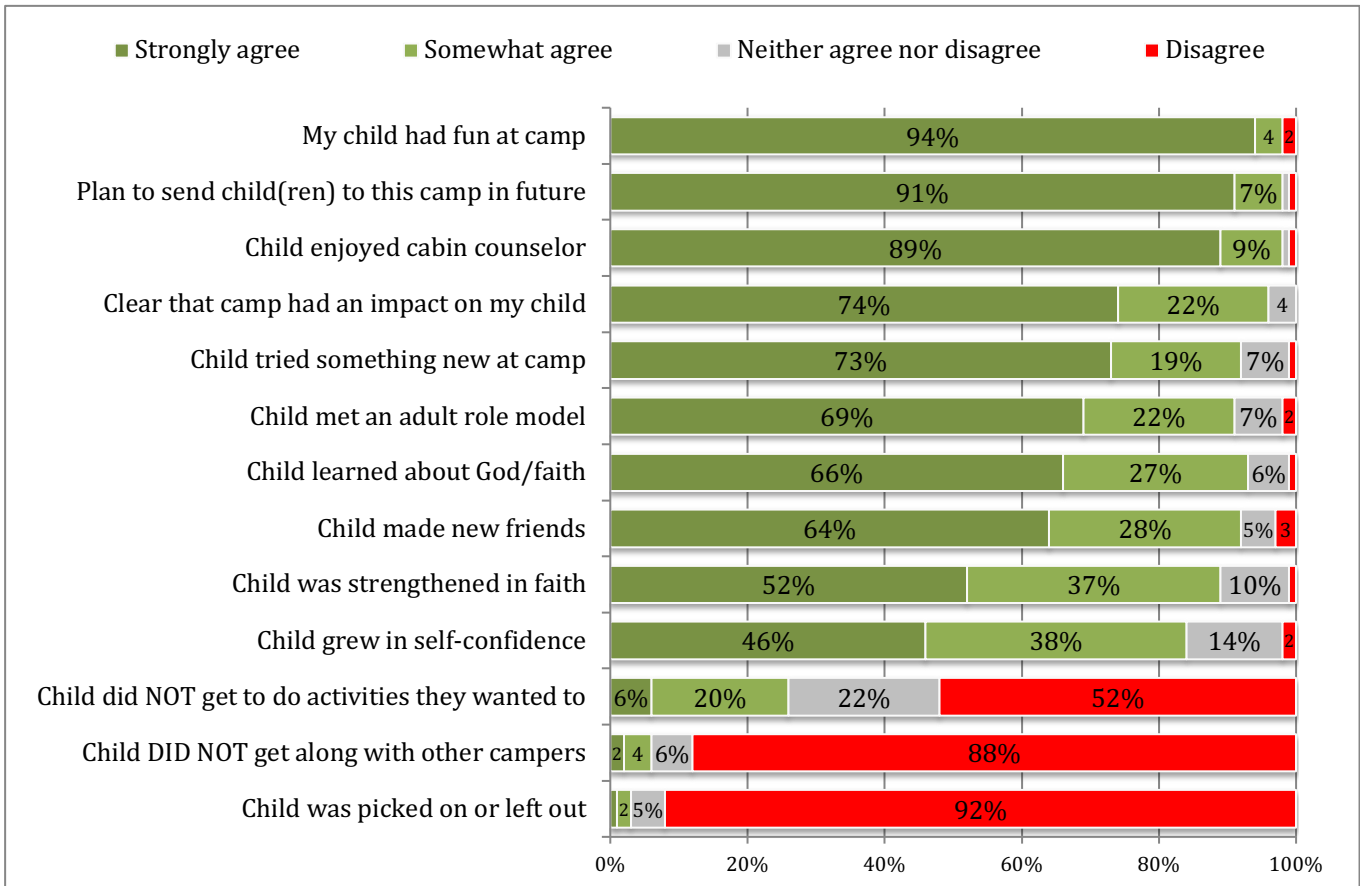
- 61% gave a perfect 10
- 24% gave 9
- 9% gave an 8
- 2% gave a 7
- 4% gave lower than a 7
- Average: **9.34**

Figure 6: Percent of parents reporting they were "SATISFIED" with listed aspects of camp



- In comparison to previous years of the survey, parents in 2020 expressed significantly higher satisfaction with camper registration and check-in process on the first day of camp. This was likely due to the strict protocols camps instituted in response to the pandemic.

Figure 7: Parent Perceptions of Child's Camp Experience



In Comparison

Almost three-quarters of parents (72%) indicated that their child had been to camp in a previous summer. These parents were asked to compare the experience with previous years. A total of 303 LOM parents responded to these questions.

Figure 8: Camp Experience Compared with Previous Years

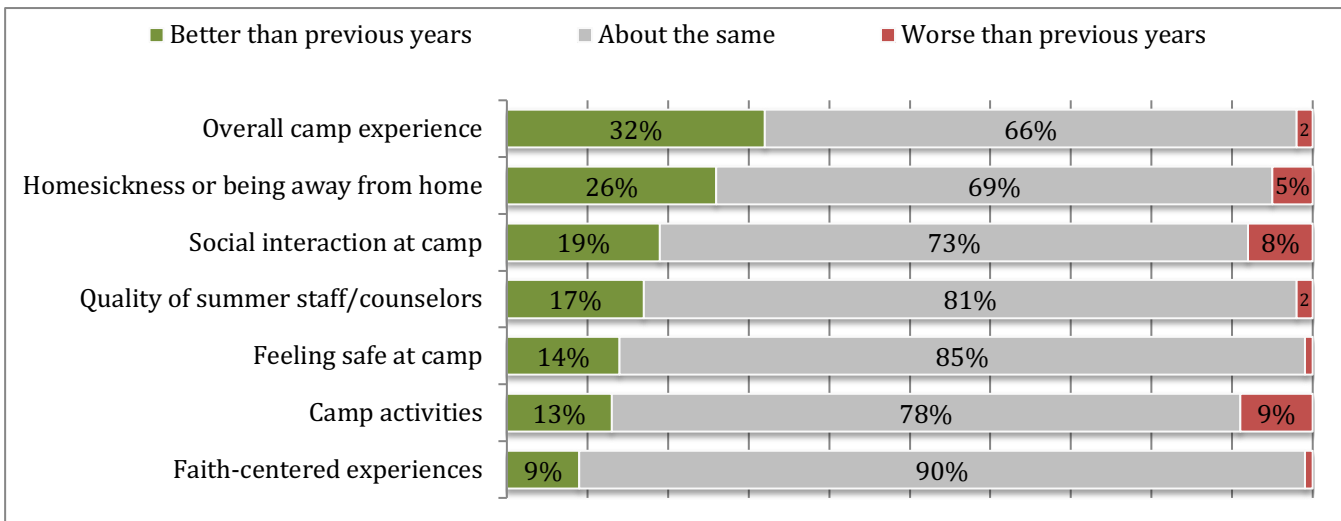
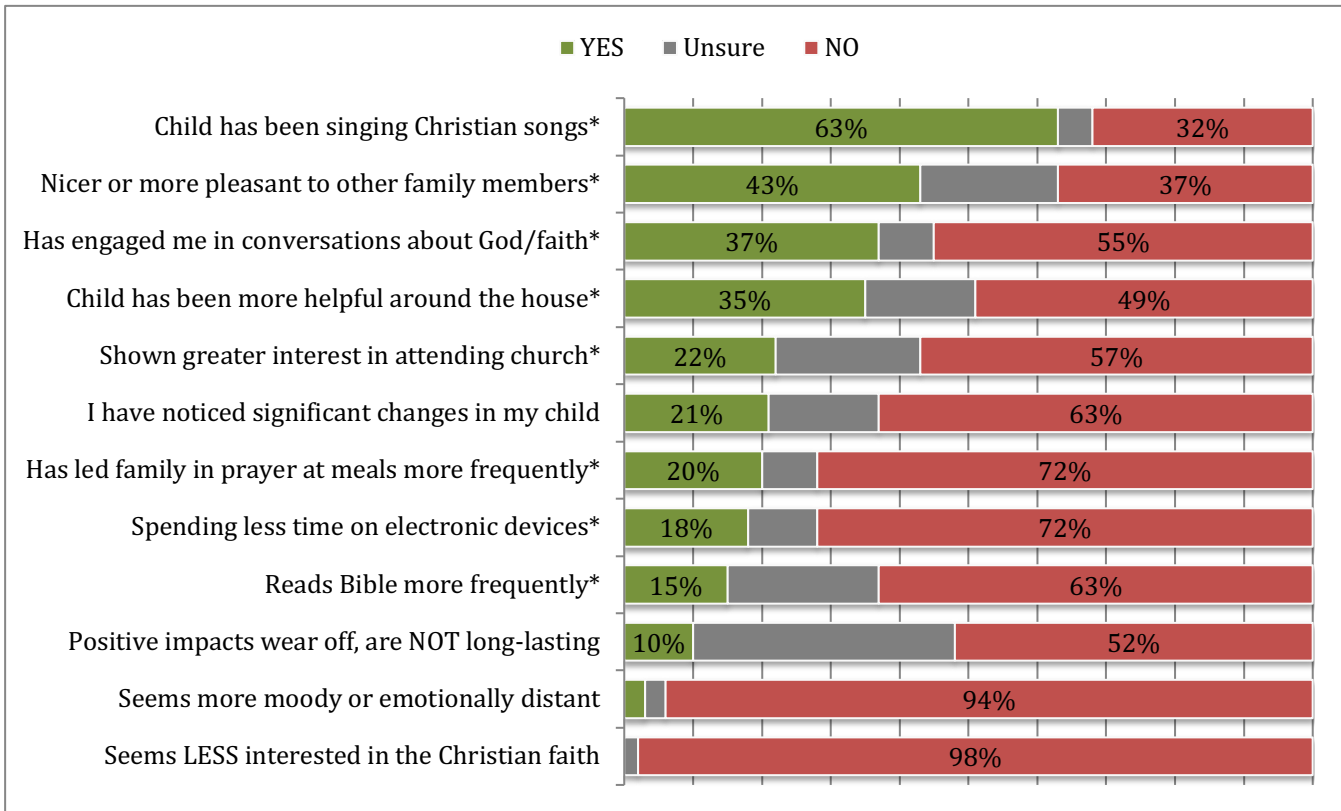
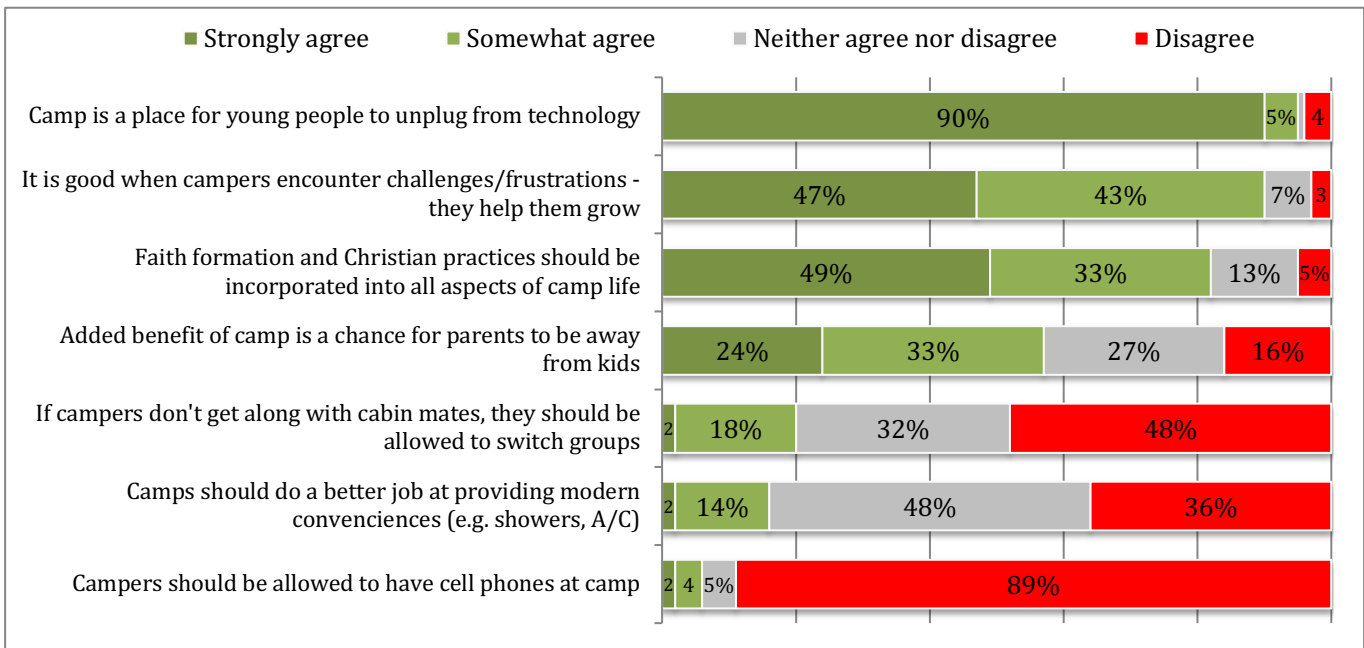


Figure 9: Impacts Observed Since Child Returned from Camp



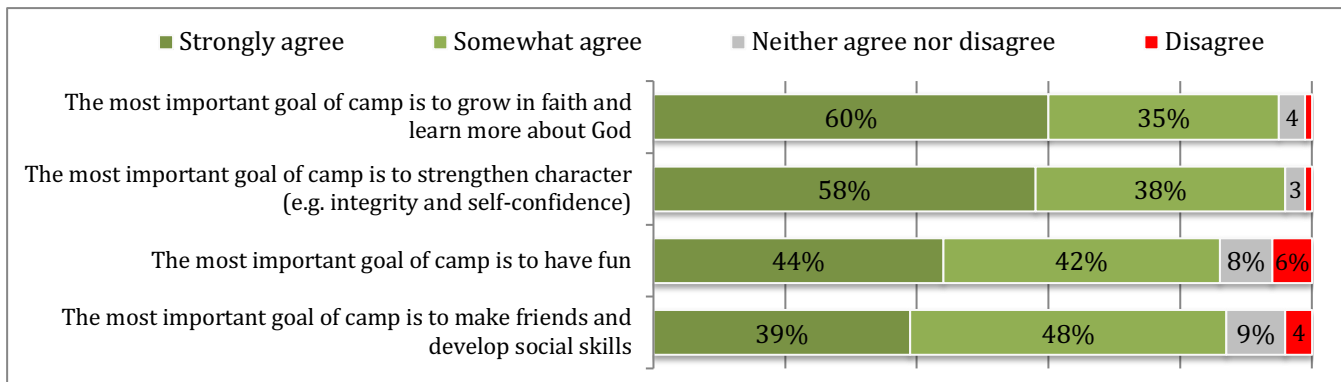
- **83%** of parents identified at least one of the eight positive changes listed above (*marked with asterisk), and **44%** identified three or more.

Figure 10: Camp Philosophy



Primary Reasons for Attending:

Figure 11: Parent Philosophy on Most Important Goal of Camp



Parents were asked an open-ended question about the primary reason they were sending their child to camp. 458 LOM parents responded to this question. Their responses can be categorized as follows, starting with the most referenced factors.

- 1. Prior Experiences (28%):** Over a quarter of parents indicated that the primary reason for sending their child was that the child (or the parent) had been to camp in the past and had positive experiences or, in the words of many, “loved it.”

“She loved it last year, and as long as the camp was up and running during COVID, I wanted her to have something positive to do this summer. She was so looking forward to this week!”
- 2. Friends and Social Interaction (26%):** 19% said that they were sending their child in hopes that they would meet friends and have positive social interactions, while an additional 7% said they were going because a friend or family member invited them to go.

“We feel the social interaction with both friends and staff is so important now more than ever.”
- 3. Faith reasons (25%):** Next in terms of frequency were parents indicating they wanted their children to have positive faith experiences, learn more about God, or grow in their faith.

“To have a positive faith-based experience learning more about God.”
- 4. New Experiences, Away from Home (13%):** These parents indicated wanting their children to have positive experiences and get out of the house or simply be away from home. They also indicated a desire to give their children a little adventure or excitement.

“Change of scenery. No screen time. And mom needed a break!”
- 5. Normalcy (7%):** These parents expressed hope that their child would experience some semblance of normalcy by attending camp. Several indicated that they had lost much because of the pandemic and did not want to lose out on camp, too.

“To keep some normalcy in her life.”
- 6. Fun (7%):** These parents specifically expressed their hopes that their child would have fun.
- 7. Safe Space (4%):** These parents expressed their confidence that camp was a safe space for their children, with many saying specifically that they trusted the camp leadership’s judgment for holding camp and the precautions taken.

“I knew you would do everything possible to keep my children safe.”

List 2 or 3 words that might summarize or describe your child’s camp experience.

The below image is a word cloud representing the parent responses to this question. The larger the word, the more frequently parents used it to describe the camp experience. The top 10 words used in 2020 are compared with the most frequent words in 2018, showing the similarity.



Top 10 most used words 2020:

- 1. Fun
- 2. Exciting
- 3. Friends/Friendship
- 4. Amazing
- 5. Faith
- 6. Awesome
- 7. Great
- 8. Enjoyable
- 9. Experience
- 10. New

19 Study Camps from 2018

- 1. Fun
- 2. Exciting
- 3. Faith
- 4. Amazing
- 5. Friends/Friendship
- 6. Loved
- 7. Awesome
- 8. Great
- 9. Experience
- 10. Building