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Parent Perspectives Report: COVID-19 and Summer Camp

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Executive Summary

The Parent Panel Survey study included both camp users (i.e., parents/caregivers whose children had participated in camp in summers 2018 and/or 2019) and non-camp users (i.e., those whose children did not participate in summer camp) recruited from across the United States through an online survey company. The aim of this project was to understand children's summertime activity participation specific to summer 2020, and how this changed from expected participation due to COVID-19. Findings indicated that a large proportion of camp users had intended to send their children to day and/or overnight camp but did not during summer 2020 as programs were canceled and/or parents did not feel comfortable given the pandemic. Generally, camp-user parents reported that not attending camp had a negative impact on their children. Findings indicated that the following practices are important for camp users to feel comfortable sending their children to camp during the pandemic: increased cleaning and sanitizing procedures, implementation of social-distancing practices, mandating personal protective equipment (PPE), and COVID-19 testing (especially for overnight camps). Both the camp-user sample and the non-camp-user sample were asked to report on activities their children participated in during summer 2020 and how that compared to their expectations. Overall, these data indicated that youth spent less time than expected on family vacations, playing sports, hanging out in person, and visiting museums, parks, and zoos, while they spent more time hanging out virtually, watching tv and shows, playing video games, and spending time with their families. A number of parents indicated that their children spent more time than expected attending virtual summer camp and most (70.5 percent) of these parents felt that virtual summer camp had a positive impact on their children.

Parent Panel Survey

Purpose

The Parent Panel Survey was developed with the intention of gaining parent perspectives about their children's camp attendance and other summertime activities in summer 2020, specifically related to COVID-19. Additional non-COVID-related questions were asked, but the data in this report is specific to COVID-related questions only. This study was funded by the American Camp Association.

Population

The panel survey was comprised of two different groups, the "camp-user panel" sample and the "non-camp-user panel" sample.

The "user" sample was parents of children ages 7–12. To be included in the study, parents must have had at least one child who attended two or more weeks of day or overnight camp in summer of 2018 and/or 2019. That is, all parents had children who attended camp prior to summer 2020.

The "non-user" sample was parents of children ages 9–12 who had not attended camp for two or more weeks.

Methods

Online Survey

Participants were recruited through a Qualtrics online panel survey. This method allowed for targeted recruitment of parents with children 7–14 years old. The survey was distributed via Qualtrics survey software during November and December 2020.

Response

Camp-User Sample

A total of 506 individuals responded to the camp-user panel survey, however, not all participants responded to every question. Due to the recruitment method, it is difficult to determine response rate. Responses took, on average, 19.86 minutes and ranged from 4.28 minutes to 1,042 minutes. In the case of longer response times, the window that contained the online survey may have been left open on an internet browser before submitting responses.

Non-Camp-User Sample

A total of 513 individuals responded to the non-camp-user survey. Again, not all participants responded to every question, and response rates may differ in the findings section. Response rate is difficult to determine as participant recruitment was conducted by a third party, Qualtrics. On average, responses took 19.85 minutes and ranged from 4.58 minutes to 348 minutes. Again, longer response times may indicate that an internet browser was left open for a period of time prior to submitting the response.

Detailed demographic information for both the camp-user and non-camp-user panels is included in Appendix C at the end of this report.

Reporting

Responses to relevant COVID-19 questions are presented below.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data and techniques were question dependent. Frequencies were used to identify various participant responses, and means provided average responses among groups.

Findings

Findings will be presented by question. As some different questions were asked of the camp-user panel and the non-camp-user panel, the description will indicate whose responses are included.

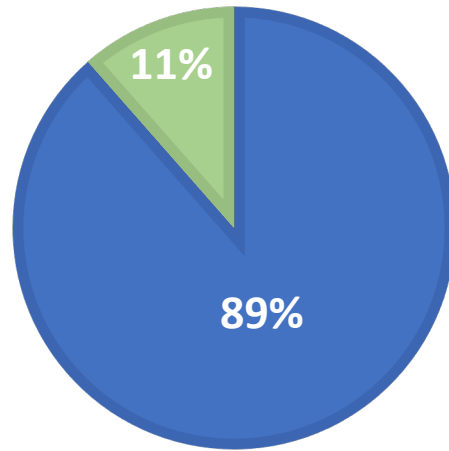
Expected Camp Attendance 2020 — Camp-User Panel

Of the camp-user panel sample, a total of 448 parents (88.5 percent) expected to send their children to camp, and 58 parents (11.5 percent) did not expect to send their children to camp prior to COVID-19. Of all parents in the sample, 249 (49.25 percent) expected to send their children to overnight camp, and 339 (67 percent) expected to send their children to day camp. Numbers do not total the sample size, as some parents expected to send their children to both day and overnight camp.

Figure 1. Parent Expectations of Summer Camp Attendance Summer 2020

DID YOU EXPECT TO SEND YOUR CHILD TO CAMP SUMMER 2020?

■ Yes ■ No



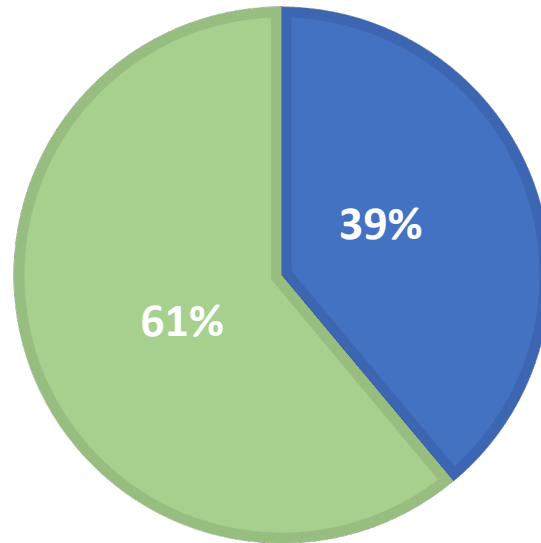
Actual Camp Attendance 2020 — Camp-User Panel

Of the camp-user panel sample survey respondents, 197 parents (38.9 percent) had a child who attended camp in summer 2020, and 309 parents (61.1 percent) did not have a child who attended camp in summer 2020.

Figure 2. Actual Camp Attendance Summer 2020

DID YOUR CHILD ATTEND CAMP SUMMER 2020?

■ Yes ■ No



Impact of Not Attending Camp 2020 — Camp-User Panel

Parents in the camp-user panel sample were asked what the impact of not attending camp was on their children.

Table 4. Impact of Not Attending Camp Summer 2020

Expected to attend overnight camp but did not		
Negative	76 responses	55.1%
Neutral	44 responses	31.9%
Positive	18 responses	13.0%
Total	138	
Expected to attend day camp but did not		
Negative	101 responses	50.2%
Neutral	73 responses	36.3%
Positive	27 responses	13.4%
Total	201	

For the most part, parents felt their children were negatively impacted by not attending camp in the summer of 2020.

Figure 3. Impact of Not Attending Day Camp Summer 2020

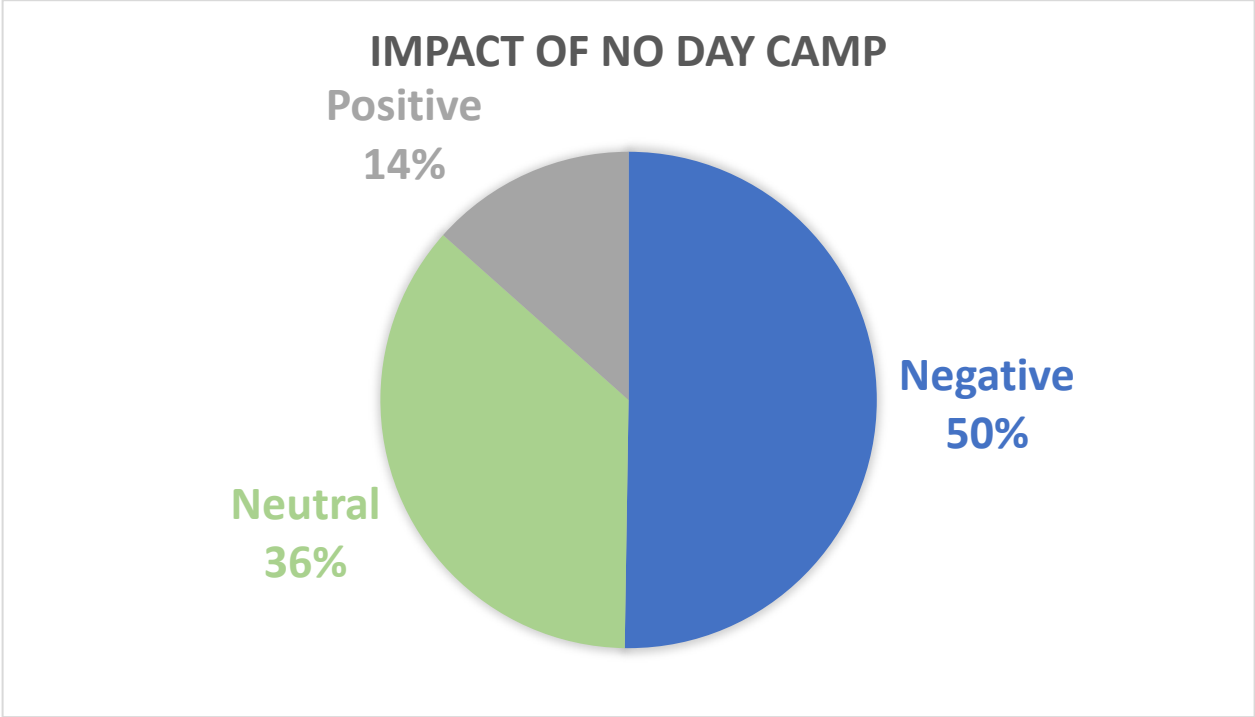
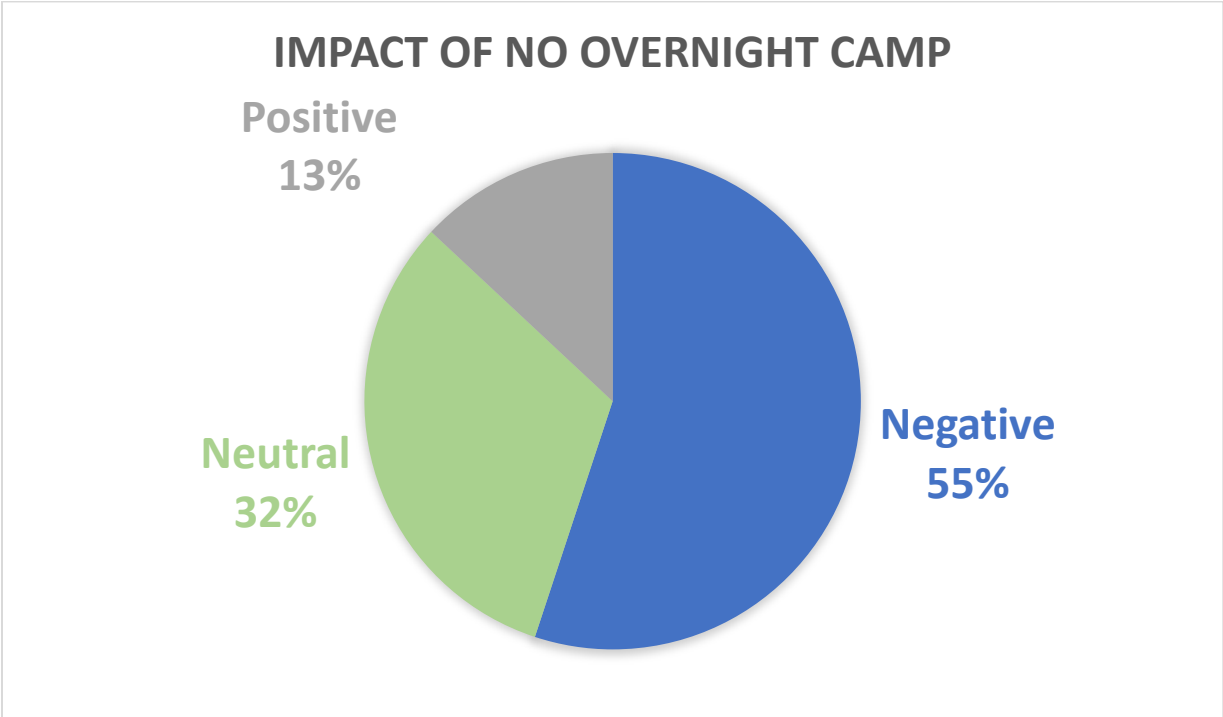


Figure 4. Impact of Not Attending Overnight Camp Summer 2020



Reasons for Not Attending Camp 2020 — Camp-User Panel

Parents in the camp-user panel sample who were able to send their children to camp but chose not to (i.e., camp programming was offered in some capacity) were asked additional questions. This is a relatively small sample size as many camps were canceled, and parents were not able to choose whether or not to send their child to camp. Parents who had the choice to send their children were asked to select the reasons why their children did not attend camp during summer 2020. Parents were able to select up to three factors. The list of factors was determined based on interviews with camp practitioners during early and mid-summer months (Camps and COVID-19 Project) as well as with guidance from the Association of Camp Nursing. The Camps and COVID-19 project is detailed in the previous section of this report.

The factors were separated by day and overnight camp and camp-based nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) related to COVID-19 and external factors (those occurring outside of camp). NPIs were listed as being insufficient, inadequate, lacking, or poor, indicating that the reasons why parents did not send their children to camp were because they believed these NPIs were not present at camp. The top three factors for both NPIs and external considerations are emphasized in green.

Table 5. Factors Impacting Decision Not to Send a Child to Overnight Camp Summer 2020

Overnight Camp	
Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (Lack of or inadequate)	Number of responses
Temperature screening	12
Communications from camp	7
Quarantine	13
COVID-19 testing of campers and staff	19
Small groupings	12
Sanitization and cleaning	14
Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)	16
Social distancing	21
External Factors	Number of responses
Health concerns	35
Other opportunities for child	6
Did not trust camp to manage COVID	25
Child's friends were not attending	8
Others not sending	6
Trusted officials said no	15
No vaccine available	20

Figure 5. Nonpharmaceutical Interventions Impacting Decision Not to Send a Child to Overnight Camp Summer 2020

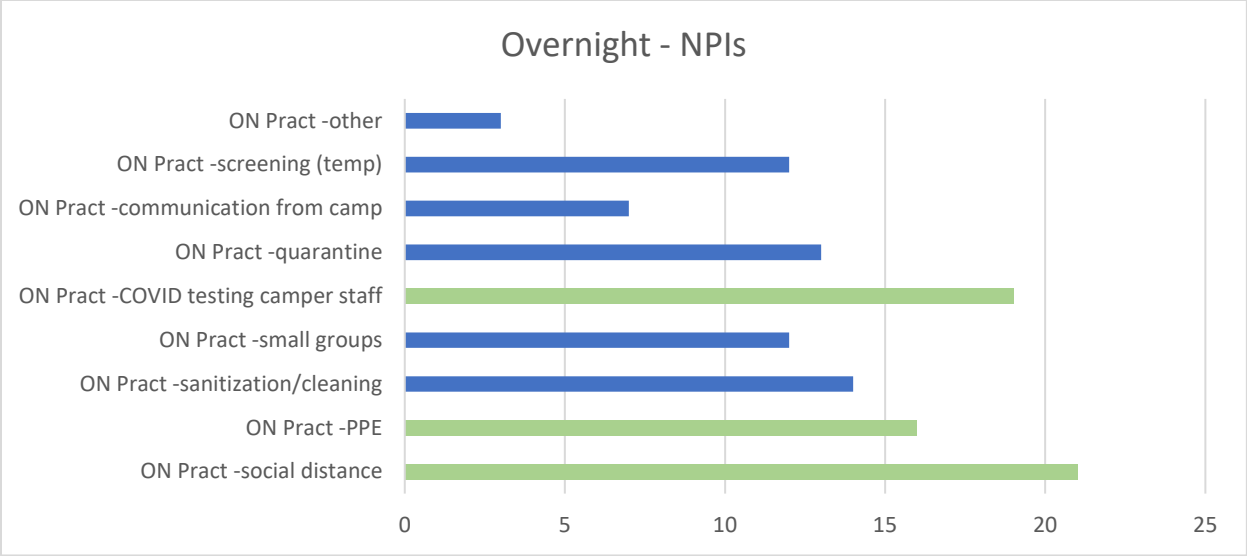


Figure 6. External Factors Impacting Decision Not to Send a Child to Overnight Camp Summer 2020

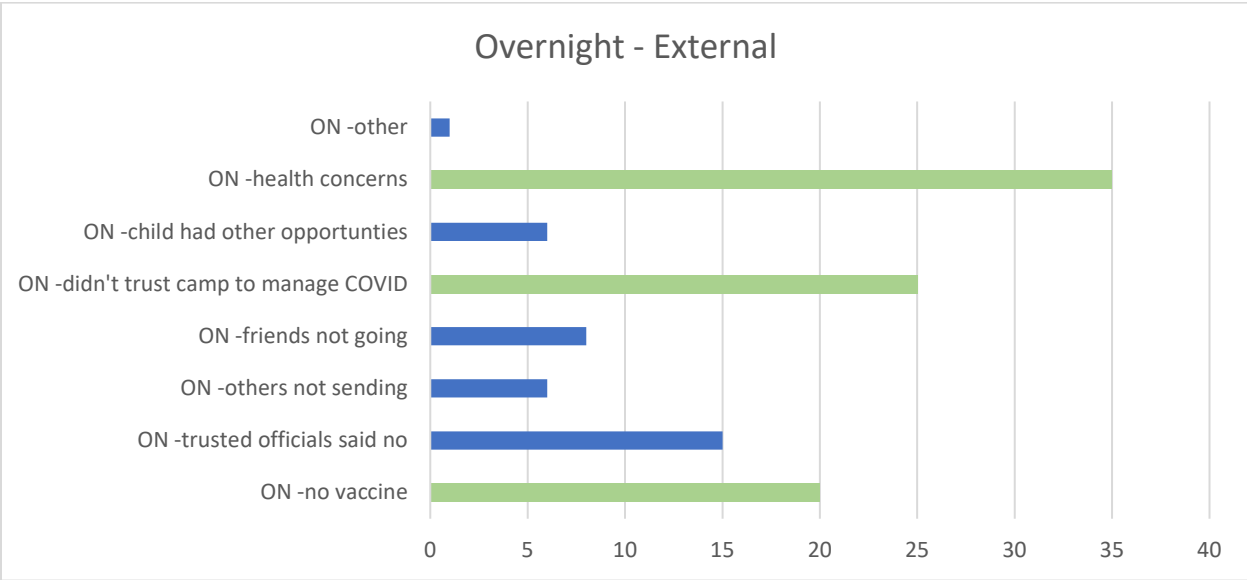


Table 6. Factors Impacting Decision Not to Send a Child to Day Camp Summer 2020

Day Camp	
Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (Lack of or inadequate)	Number of responses
Temperature screening	9
Communications from camp	5
COVID-19 testing of campers and staff	16
Small groupings	19
Sanitization and cleaning	17

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)	14
Social distancing	32
External Factors	Number of responses
Health concerns	48
Other opportunities for child	2
Did not trust camp to manage COVID	29
Child's friends were not attending	5
Others not sending	8
Trusted officials said no	17
No vaccine available	26

Figure 7. Nonpharmaceutical Interventions Impacting Decision Not to Send a Child to Day Camp Summer 2020

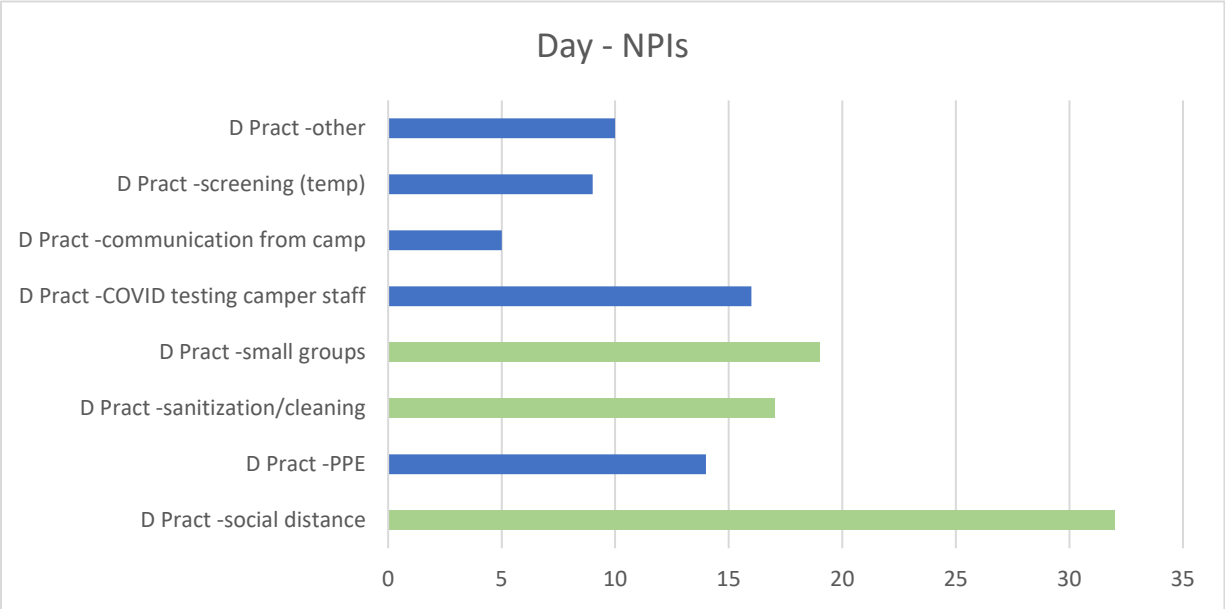
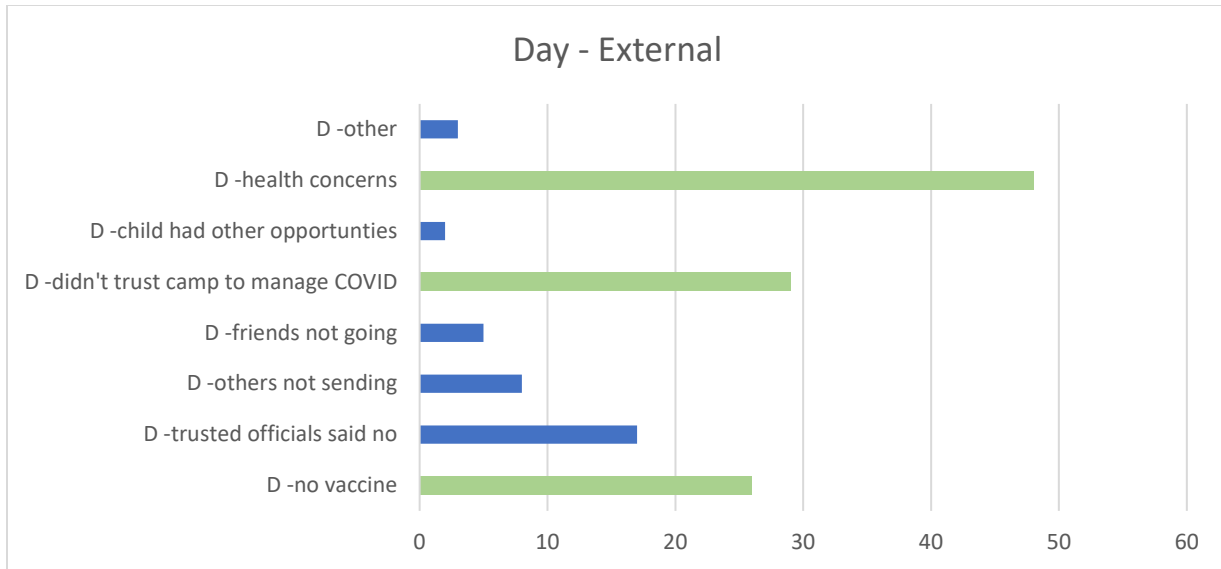


Figure 8. External Factors Impacting Decision Not to Send a Child to Day Camp Summer 2020



In terms of external factors, overall, campers' health concerns were a top priority and reason why parents did not send their children to camp. Parents also were hesitant to send their children because a vaccine was not available, and they did not trust camps to manage COVID-19.

In terms of internal factors, or camp practices, parents of both day and overnight campers prioritized social-distancing protocols, and parents of overnight campers felt testing was a viable option for safe camp practices.

Importance of Factors for Those Who Did Send a Child to Camp — Camp-User Panel

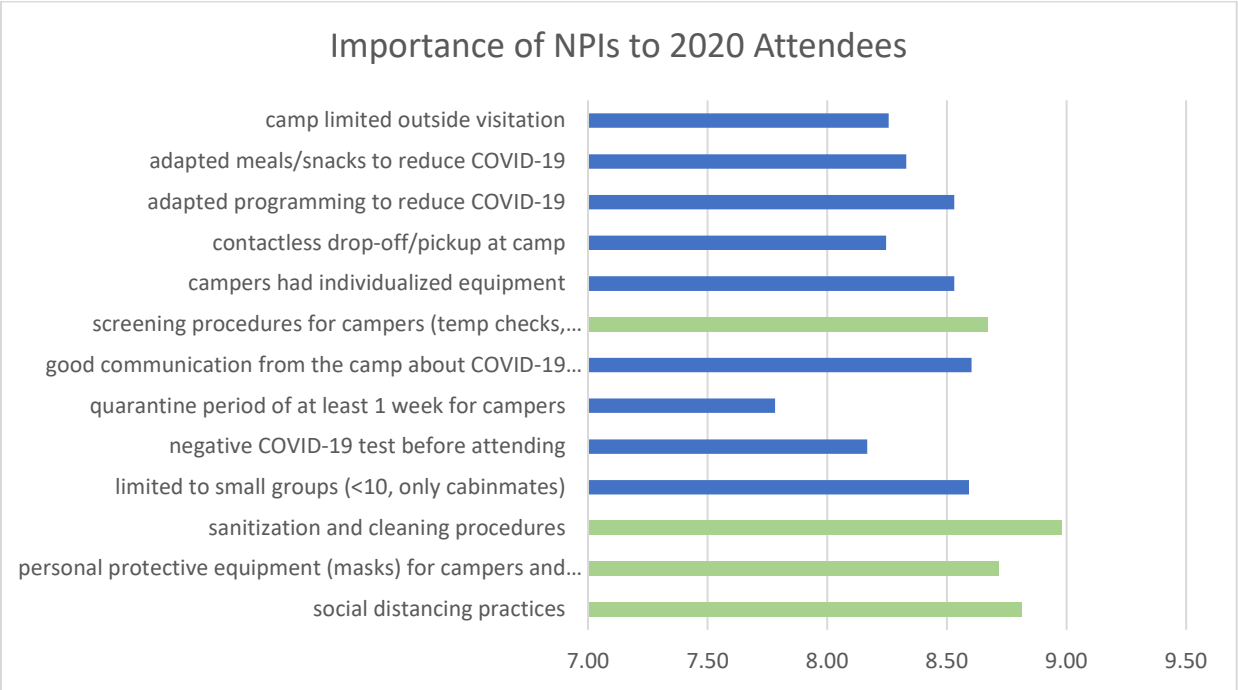
Parents in the camp-user panel sample who sent their children to camp in summer 2020 were asked about the importance of nonpharmaceutical interventions (i.e., COVID-19-related camp practices). This included 179 respondents. Responses were on a 10-point scale from least important to most important. The average of most responses is above 8 points, indicating that all NPIs are quite important. These factors were also determined from the early and mid-summer interviews during the Camps and COVID-19 study previously detailed, as well as with guidance from the Association of Camp Nursing.

Table 7. Importance of NPIs in Sending a Child to Camp Summer 2020

Nonpharmaceutical Intervention	Average level of importance (10-point scale)
Social distancing	8.81
Personal protective equipment (masks) for campers and staff	8.72
Sanitization and cleaning procedures	8.98
Limited to small groupings (<10 only cabinmates)	8.59
Negative COVID-19 test before attending	8.17
Quarantine of 1 week for campers	7.78

Good communication from the camp re: COVID-19 issues	8.60
Screening procedures for campers (e.g., temperature and symptom checks)	8.67
Individualized equipment for campers	8.53
Contactless drop-off/pickup at camp	8.25
Adapted programming to reduce risk	8.53
Adapted meals/snacks to reduce risk	8.33
Limited outside visitation to camp	8.26

Figure 9. Importance of Nonpharmaceutical Interventions in Sending a Child to Camp Summer 2020

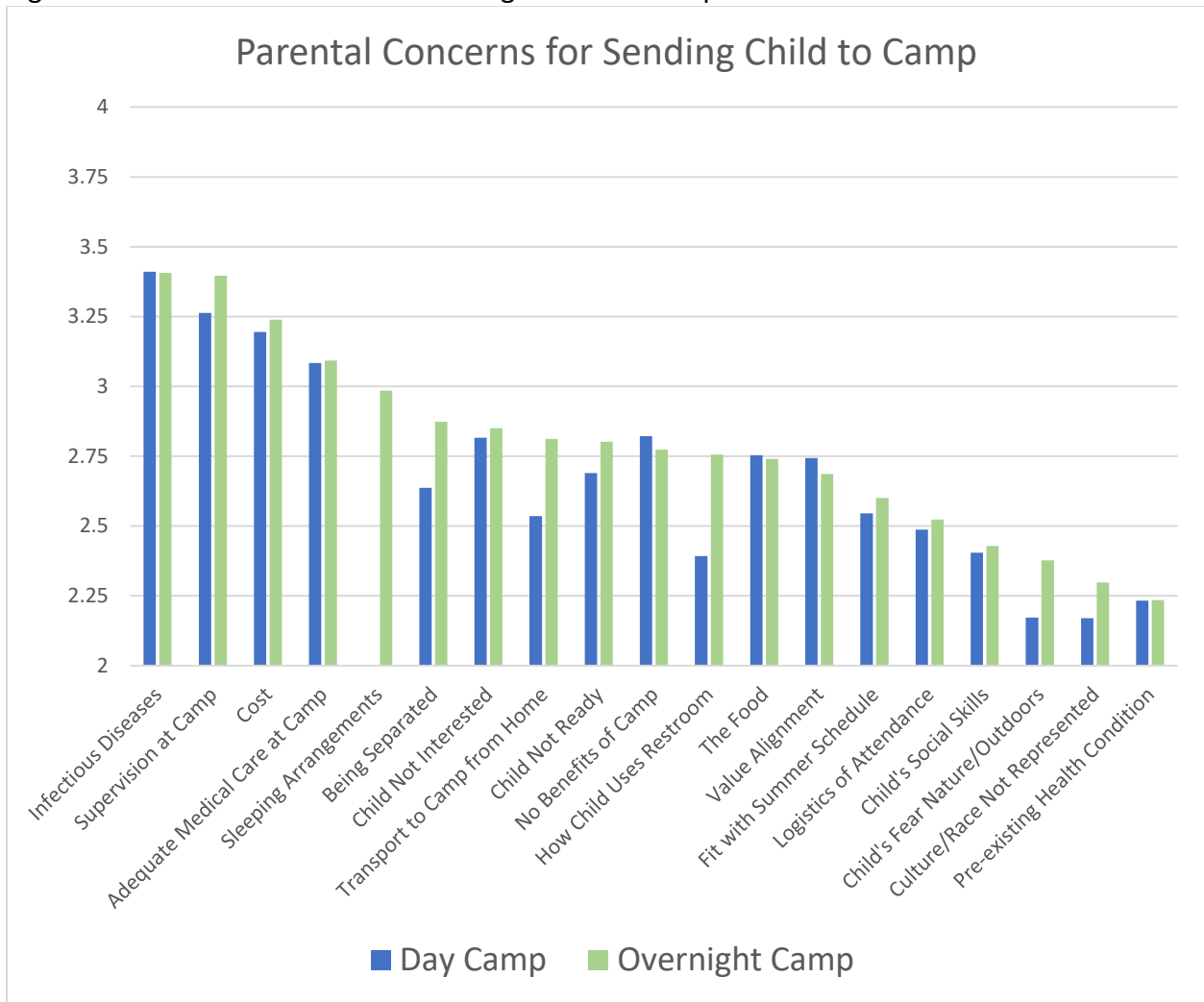


The top four important NPIs are sanitization and cleaning, social distancing, use of PPE (masks), and screening. These are highlighted in green on the preceding graph.

Concerns for Sending a Child to Camp — Combined Camp-User and Non-Camp-User Panels

Both camp-user and non-camp-user panels were asked about concerns or constraints for sending their children to camp. Participants were asked to rate the constraints on a 1–5 scale (1 = not a concern, 5 = the main concern), indicating how much of a concern each item was in terms of sending their children to day camp and to overnight camp. The mid-point of the scale was 2.5, and some factors were quite a concern for parents. As to be expected and in light of COVID-19, the highest-rated constraint was infectious diseases, followed by supervision. Although not directly indicated, it may be that some parents indicated supervision was a concern in relation to adhering to COVID-19 protocols and safety practices.

Figure 10. Parental Concerns for Sending a Child to Camp Summer 2020



Negotiation Strategies — Combined Camp-User and Non-Camp-User Panel

After participants identified concerns or constraints for sending their children to camp, they were asked to select ways that would help them overcome these factors to send their children to camp. Some negotiation strategies are specific to concerns (e.g., constraint: the food at overnight camp; negotiation strategy: see a menu), whereas others are more general strategies camps can employ to build trust and help families feel more comfortable sending their children to camp (e.g., parental visit). COVID-19 communication (communication to parents and families of COVID-19-related protocols and practices such as sanitization and cleaning, social distancing, use of PPE) was the most commonly selected negotiation strategy. Similarly, other top-reported strategies of speaking with camp staff and offering a parent visit are strategies for building parent trust in camps’ ability to manage the pandemic. Offering financial aid was also a commonly reported negotiation strategy and may be reflective of the current economic climate due to COVID-19.

Figure 11. Most Commonly Reported Strategies to Negotiate Constraints to Attending Camp



Summer 2020 Activity Reports — Combined Camp-User and Non-Camp-User Panels

The following data is combined across both the camp-user and non-camp-user panel groups and includes data from 1,019 participants. These individuals were asked to report whether their children engaged in more, about the same, or less of a specific activity during the summer. If participants noted more or less time in an activity, they were also asked if this participation was positive, neutral, or negative for their children. Our reporting cutoff is 10 percent, so activities are only listed if more than 10 percent of respondents indicated that time spent in this activity differed from their expectations for their children during the summer (i.e., more or fewer activities).

Figure 12. Commonly Reported Activities Children Spent Less Time in Summer 2020

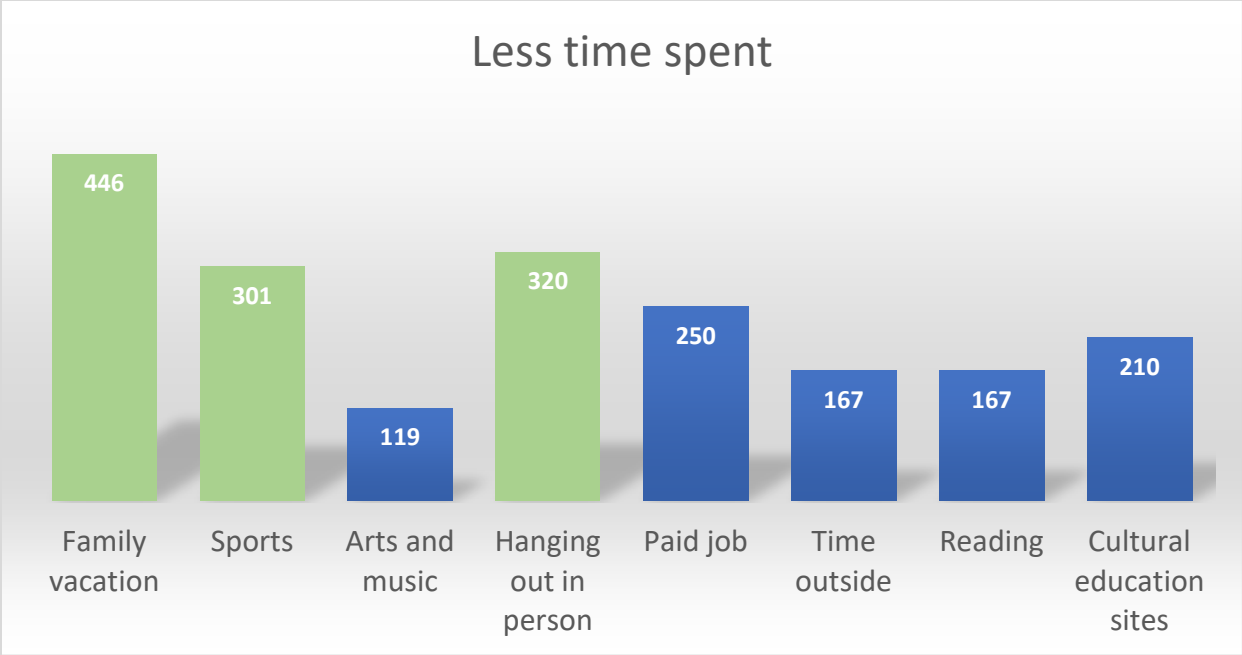


Table 7. Impact of Less Participation in Activities During Summer 2020

Activity	Participants	Percent of participants impacted		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
Family vacation	446	6.5	35.9	57.6
Sports	301	8.3	25.9	65.8
Arts and music	119	14.3	31.9	53.8
Hanging out in person	320	6.9	31.6	61.6
Paid job	250	7.2	28.8	64.0
Time outside	167	11.4	29.3	59.3
Reading	167	11.4	28.7	59.9
Cultural education sites	210	4.8	31.4	63.8

The top three activities that parents reported their children spending less time in were family vacation, hanging out with others in person, and sports. These are represented in green in Figure 12. Parents largely reported negative impacts from spending less time in these activities.

Figure 13. Commonly Reported Activities Children Spent More Time in Summer 2020

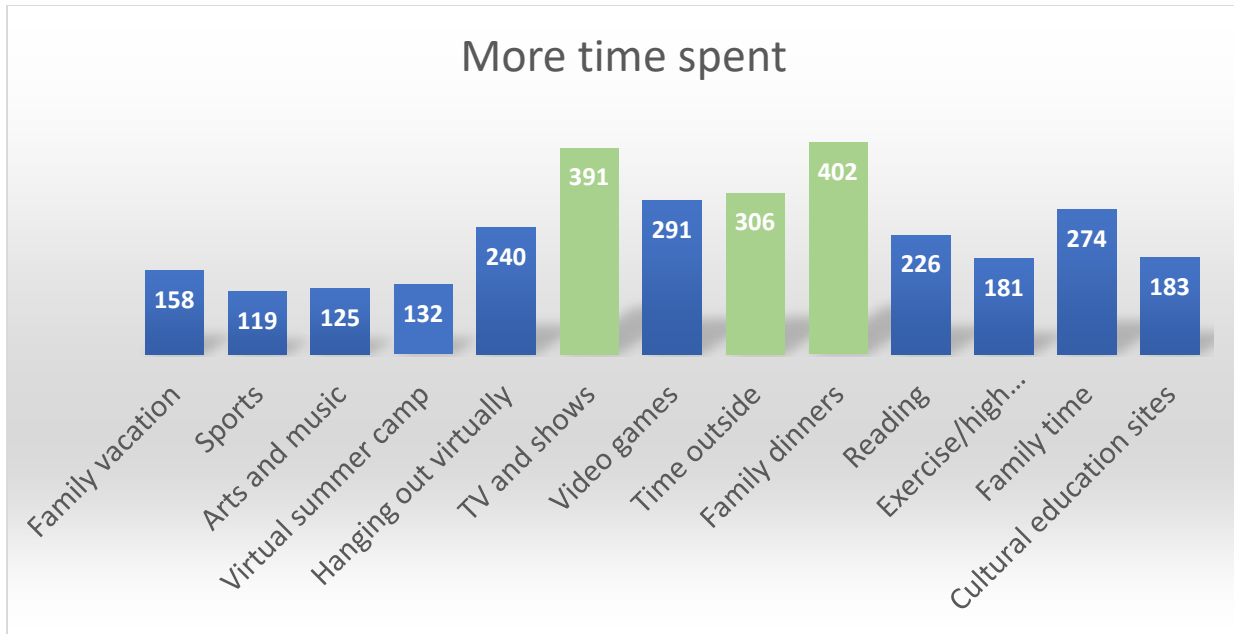


Table 8. Impact of More Participation in Activities During Summer 2020

Activity	Participants	Percent of participants impacted		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
Family vacation	158	83.5	11.4	5.1
Sports	119	79.8	16.8	3.4
Arts and music	125	73.6	23.2	3.4
Virtual summer camp	132	70.5	26.5	3.0
Hanging out virtually	240	50.4	42.1	7.5
TV and shows	391	32.0	44.8	23.3
Video games	291	33.3	35.1	31.6
Time outside	306	35.0	38.2	26.8
Family dinners	402	51.0	22.9	26.1
Reading	226	81.9	17.3	0.9
Exercise/high exertion play	181	85.1	13.3	1.7
Family time	274	81.4	16.4	2.2
Cultural education sites	183	83.1	15.3	1.6

The top three activities that parents reported their children spending more time doing were family dinners, watching TV and shows, and spending time outside. These are represented in green in Figure 13. Parents generally felt that more time having family dinners was positive for their children, while they felt that time spent watching TV and shows did not impact their children positively or negatively. Parents had fairly mixed opinions about how time spent outside impacted their children, with 38.2 percent reporting a neutral impact, 35.0 percent a positive impact, and 26.8 percent a negative impact.

Important to note is that 132 respondents also indicated their children spent more time in virtual summer camp than they originally expected. For the most part, parents reported this as positively impacting their children (70.5 percent). Virtual summer camp was better than no summer camp.

Summary

Findings from the camp-user and non-camp-user panel surveys indicate that summer 2020 was different for all families, and many people changed how they spent summer 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a lot less family vacation, sports, hanging out in person, and visits to museums, parks, zoos, etc. There was a lot more hanging out virtually, watching TV and shows, playing video games, and family time. Looking to summer 2021, a widely available and accessible vaccine will allow camps to operate in safe ways and closer to full capacity. Otherwise, parent responses indicate that camps should prioritize cleaning and sanitizing procedures, implementing social-distancing practices, mandating PPE, and COVID-19 testing (especially for overnight camps). These practices must be communicated to parents in order to build parents' trust in camps' abilities to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and keep children safe.