



Smartphone Deprivation Study

With Camp Livingston 12-to-16-year-old Campers

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Presented By

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Our **objective** was to gain a better understanding of the following:

- **campers' reactions to the experience of being deprived their phone while at camp**
- **campers' consciousness of the negative impact of smartphones**
- **how the smartphone deprivation experience may have changed campers**

Method

Time	Research
Week 1	written reflection questions
Week 2	written reflection questions
Week 3	small group discussions
Month 4	survey

FINDINGS

Summary

- Campers are far more glad, than frustrated, to be disconnected from their phones and social media
- Campers believe that being disconnected allows them to get to know people at a far deeper level, to fully engage in new and fun activities, to escape “drama”, to connect with nature and their surroundings, and to sleep better
- Many campers discussed the experience of face-to-face communication as though it were a novel experience that they were encountering for the first time

Summary

- Campers said that they would have spent the entire day in their cabins using their phones if they had been permitted to bring them to camp
- The main frustrations at being deprived of their phones were feeling disconnected from family, close friends, and the world
 - a few lamented not being able to take and share pictures, not being able to listen to music, or access news

Behaviors & Attitudes Prior to Attending Camp

20% self-identified as addicted to their phones

Self-limiting Phone Use

42% had, in the past, **desired** to curb their phone use

42% had, in the past, **attempted** to curb their phones use

42% had, in the past, **succeeded** in curbing their phone use

How They Curbed Phone Use

“I limited myself (by) using an app that timed my usage.”

“By not being on my phone.”

“I turned it off and played basketball.”

“Parents encouraged me to do other things and I actively tried not to look at social media.”

“I used it less than usual.”

“I put my phone out of sight as much as I could.”

“I went outside more.”

“I would put it away while school was in session and would also not go on it after school while doing homework.”

“I limited myself so that I never used more than one hour a night.”

Benefits of Smartphones

“Has and stores lots of information, and it has things to help you for school.”

“...I can keep in touch with my family that lives all over the country.”

“A positive thing about smartphones is that you can stay connected to the world.”

“(A) Positive (is)...when I have my phone with me I stay calm.”

Phones Distract You From Priorities

“A negative thing is that I sometimes become unfocused by it while doing important work.”

“It is too addicting in my opinion.”

“...people are on their phones too long.”

“Some things that frustrate me are people messaging me, chainmail, and drama...some games...as well.”

“The downside is that they distract you from the ‘real world’. People are so focused on their phones that they don’t experience real world situations until forced to.”

“Kids are often on them for hours a day when they can be doing something more productive. You can also get distracted.”

Phones Cause Drama & Bullying

“Phones...cause lots of drama between people...it can be nice to leave some of the drama at home and live in the moment.”

“A thing that frustrates me is when drama is created on social media.”

“A negative thing is that people use smartphones to get on social media and people get cyber bullied.”



EXPERIENCE AT CAMP

Glad To Be Without Phones

Emotion Generated By Deprivation Experience	Degree of Emotion Experienced		
	Much	Some	None
Gladness	54%	38%	8%
Frustration	8%	33%	58%

“I love being away from staring at a screen all day.”

“I like...(not being) on my devices the whole time.”

“You get away from drama.”

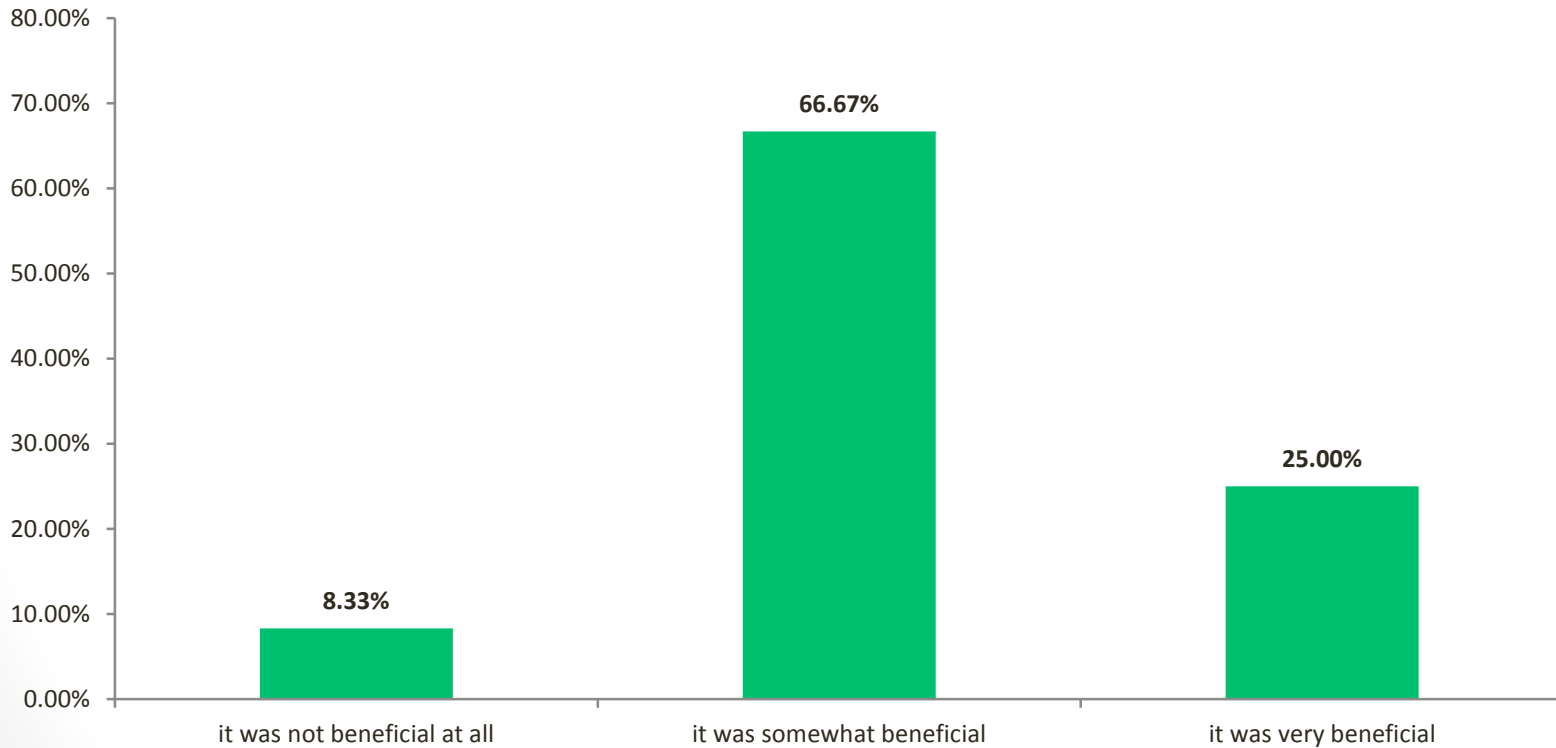
“I’m loving no phones.”

“I like not worrying about if someone snapchatted or if you got likes on a pic. It surprised me how easy it was.”

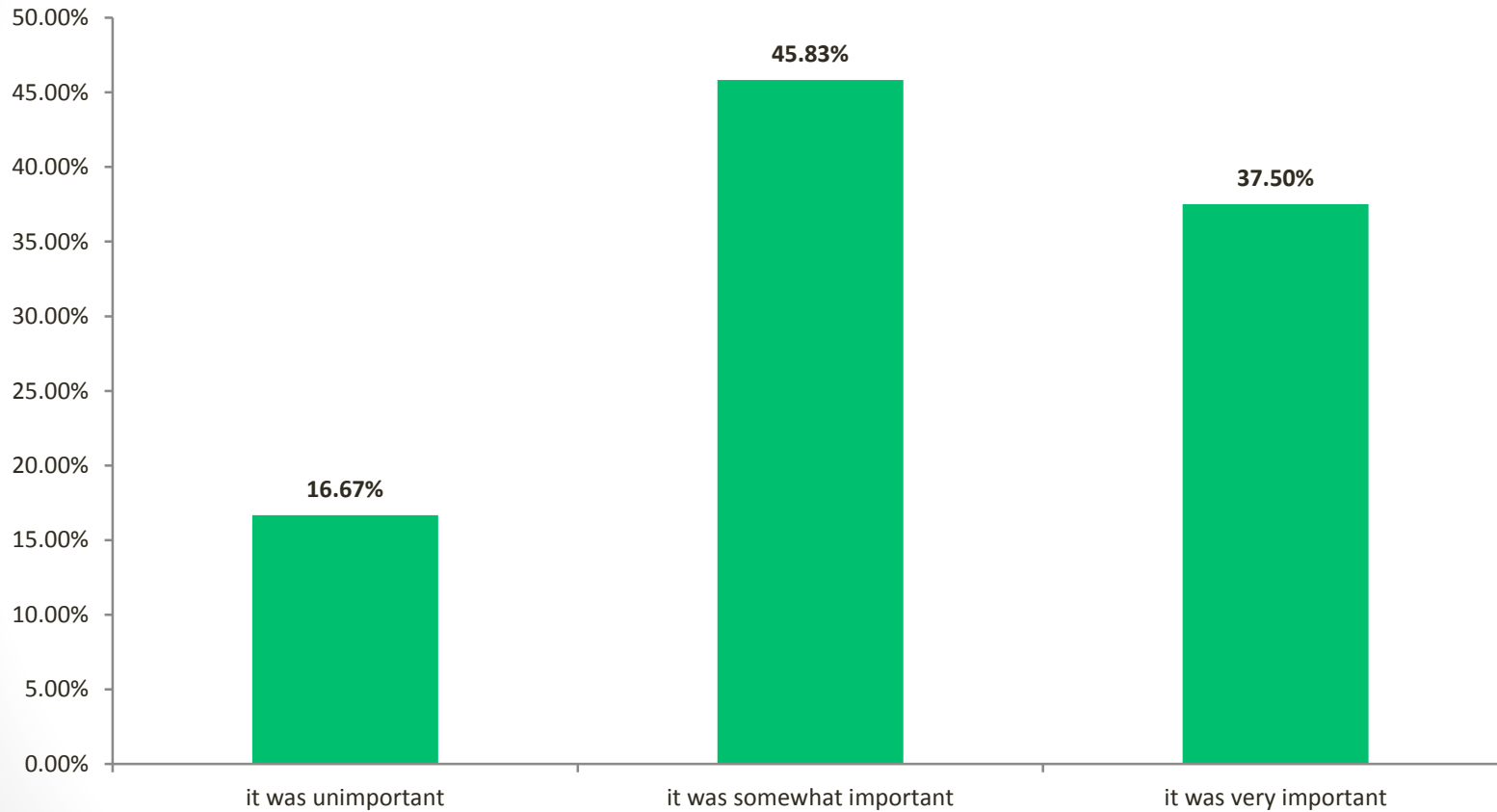
“I...(am)...stress-free.”

“I love it.”

How beneficial was it for you to have gone without your smartphone?



To what extent was it an important life experience?



Benefit of Smartphone Deprivation

“I had to socialize more face-to-face and be involved in many different activities.”

“No drama.”

“I wasn't on my phone the whole time and I wasn't distracted by it.”

“My days became longer because I did not spend time staring at my screen.”

“It can be very easy to live without it.”

“I was a lot closer with my camp friends than my school friends because the time we spent together was quality bonding time.”

“I get more creative and alert.”

“Longer attention span.”

“Absence of social media is nice.”

Benefit of Deprivation

“I could step more out of my comfort zone and...be more active. I...realized I didn't need my smartphone...there are better things to do than sit on my phone.”

“More interaction.”

“You could enjoy your friends and the people around you.”

“Less headaches.”

“More communication.”

“I got to talk to people.”

“I could see people's facial expressions, and I was able to talk to someone not through a screen.”

“I was enjoying the outdoors.”

“I didn't need to worry about anything going on back at home.”

“I spent more time hanging with my friends face-to-face.”

They Were More Engaged

“Last night I finished a card game really early...I was...bored, so I read a book...for school. So I made a better decision. If I had my phone here I’d probably go on my phone.”

“I get more engaged – nothing has been negative...I like it.”

“The thing that has surprised me most are the other opportunities that are around you but you never notice.”

“What surprised me was how much more reading I got done. And I generally did more...talking, playing cards, etc.”

“I am able to try new things without having a screen in my face.”

They Connected With People

“This experience has been good because I am able to have a face-to-face conversation with people instead of over a screen...I can actually talk to people, I am able to experience more without a phone in my face. Nothing has been negative...I learned more about the people around me. I was able to talk to people more.”

“Some good things are that I met a lot of new friends inside and outside of my cabin.”

“The...experience is positive because I am talking face-to-face with my friends and I make new friends, read more. I was surprised how much more I found out about my friends...”

“A positive side to not having a phone is that you talk more to your peers and get to know them better.”

Phones Are A Burden

“It’s been calming.

“I’m afraid my friends heard a rumor or something and they can’t ask me if it’s true.”

“I was very happy and willing to give it up. It really takes a load off your shoulders when you’re not struggling to keep up with social media.”

“I thought the experience...would be good because I feel like I am always on it...I anticipated...giving myself a break from looking at it all day.”

More Benefits

“The positive thing is that I’m unplugged and outdoors...”

“It has been positive because I’m learning things about the outdoors”

“Here I’ve been sleeping better.”

Felt Disconnected From Friends & Family

“I miss texting and calling my family and friends.”

“It is difficult to communicate with your friends and family at home.”

“Sometimes I wish that I could...call my friends and family...I miss them.”

“Frustrated when can't talk to parents.”

“I don't know what's happening in the outside world and it's frustrating.”

“I miss knowing what's going on with my friends.”

“I miss talking to my best friend every day.”

Other Frustrations

“What frustrates me is every once in a while I think about all the notifications my phone has now.”

“I lost my streaks.”

“It definitely gives me anxiety since I’ve lost that connection, I’m afraid my friends heard a rumor or something and they can’t ask me if it’s true.”

“I miss being able to check the time.”

“If I want to show someone a pretty pic that I took I can’t.”

“It’s so hard to take pictures with my friends.”

“A letter takes 6 days.”

“I miss the easy communication – not social media and games.”

“I always want to play music but I can’t so that’s sad.”

“I miss having my own music.”

What would you tell friends?

“It was extremely enjoyable and as a family we should do it. It’s really cool to interact with your acquaintances and family. I would say it because my mom texts me when dinner is ready instead of talking to me and we’re on our phones during meals.”

“It’s fine...they don’t need devices.”

“I’ll tell them to stop watching memes all the time.”

“(It’s) great...to just take a break...you don’t have to have your phone to have fun.”

“It’s such a good experience. Lots of teens just sit around all day on their phones, which is unhealthy.”

“It’s a nice experience to be disconnected for a few days...it’s not that hard.”

What would you tell friends?

“We should do more community things because the online community is very different than being with somebody in your cabin. Because you don’t really know a lot about them on the Internet. You just see what’s on their profile page. But if you talk to them in person you find out personal details they don’t want to tell you if you’re not their friend.”

“I slept better.”

“It’s fun without it.”

“I’m more focused – this is something positive about something seemingly negative.”

“It was liberating to not worry about the vibration in my pocket.”

How would camp have been different with your phone?

“People would not talk to each other or try new things...they would just stay in the cabin all day.”

“I’d...be on my phone more. I would probably stay up late...on my phone.”

“(Nobody)...would talk or interact --- we would have our earbuds in and not want to leave the cabin.”

“Everyone would just be...zombies.”

“I would have wanted to put everything on social media.”

“Camp would s _ _ k. When I go home I honestly wish it would be like camp, like, no social media stuff.”

“No one would make new friends...(or) talk to other people.”

“You wouldn’t learn new things.”

How would camp have been different with your phone?

“You go to camp to...(avoid) the...(drama). If you bring your phone...(you’ll) see it all, and there’s no point in going to camp.”

“I probably would...stay in...bed all day...on my phone.”

“Not as active talk with friends at home.”

“I’d get 400 texts a minute.”

“Noone would talk to anyone...(or) be motivated to do anything. Everyone would...stay in their cabins all day.

“It would literally be like me hanging out with myself in the middle of nowhere.”

“...I would be on my phone all the time instead of...talking to my cabin mates.”

How would camp have been different with your phone?

“I wouldn’t pay as much attention.”

“I’d be centered on phone.”

“There would be more drama.”

“I’d be less connected with camp.”

“I’d not be participating in half the activities, and I’d get no sleep.”

“I wouldn’t enjoy nature.”

“We’d all be on our phones during rest hour.”

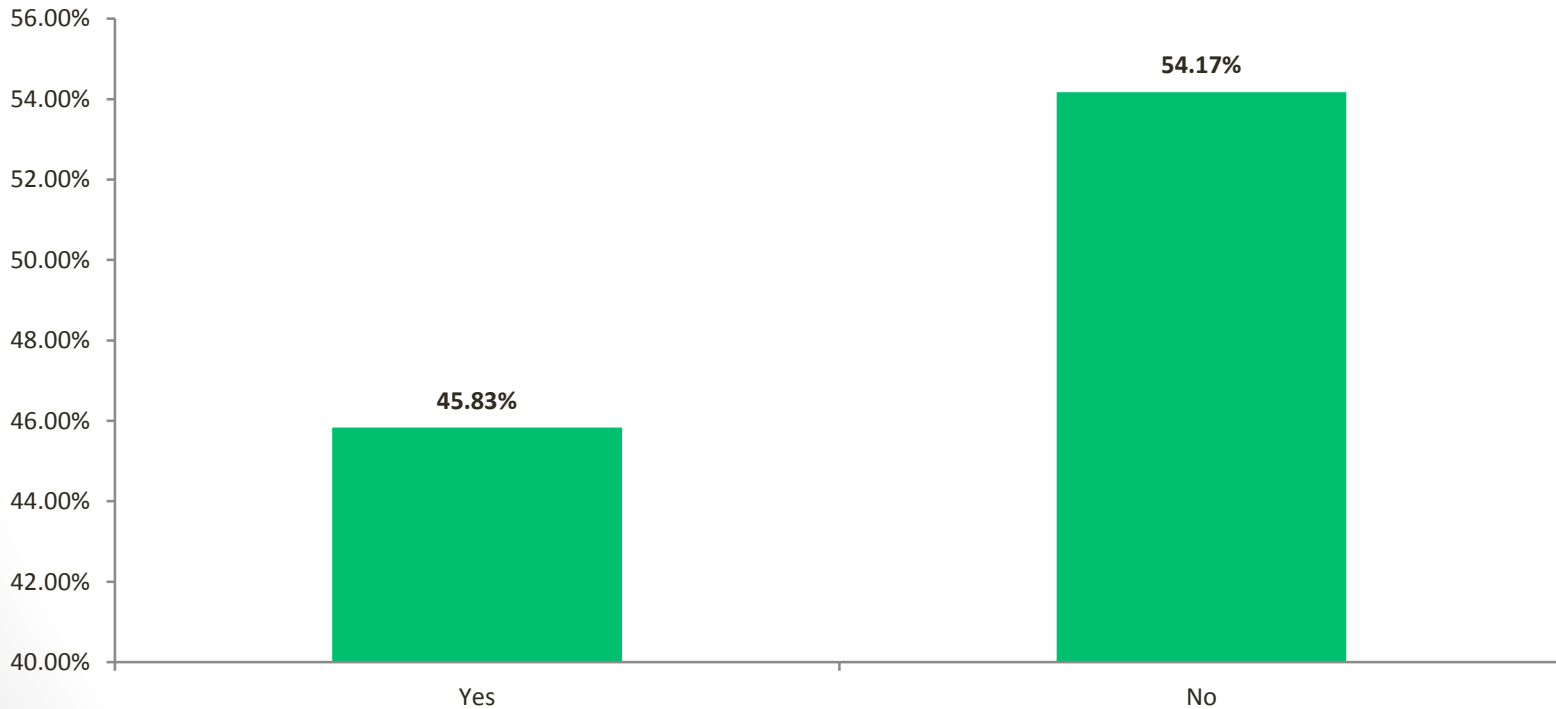
“I’d have less interest in people around me.”

“It would be less interactive.”

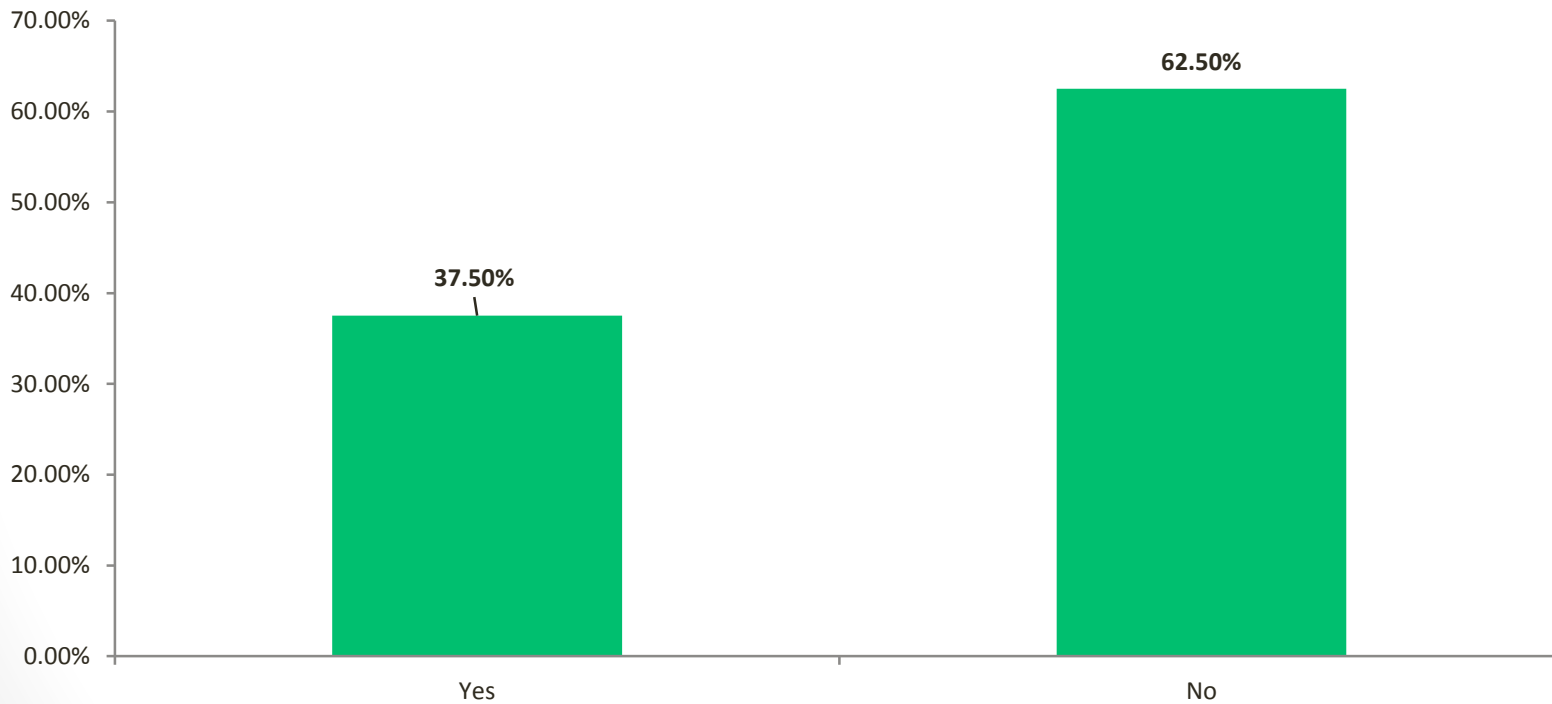
“We wouldn’t talk to each other, and there would be a lot more gossip because it spreads faster.”

Experience After Leaving Camp

Do you feel TODAY that your experience of having gone without your smartphone while at camp had any lasting effect on you?



Toward the end of your time at camp, did you feel that your experience at camp had changed your attitude about your smartphone?



“It made me realize I have a life without it.”

“To be on it less.”

“If you have good pals to be with you don’t need your phone.”

“It made me realize I don't need it as much.”

“It made me want it more.”

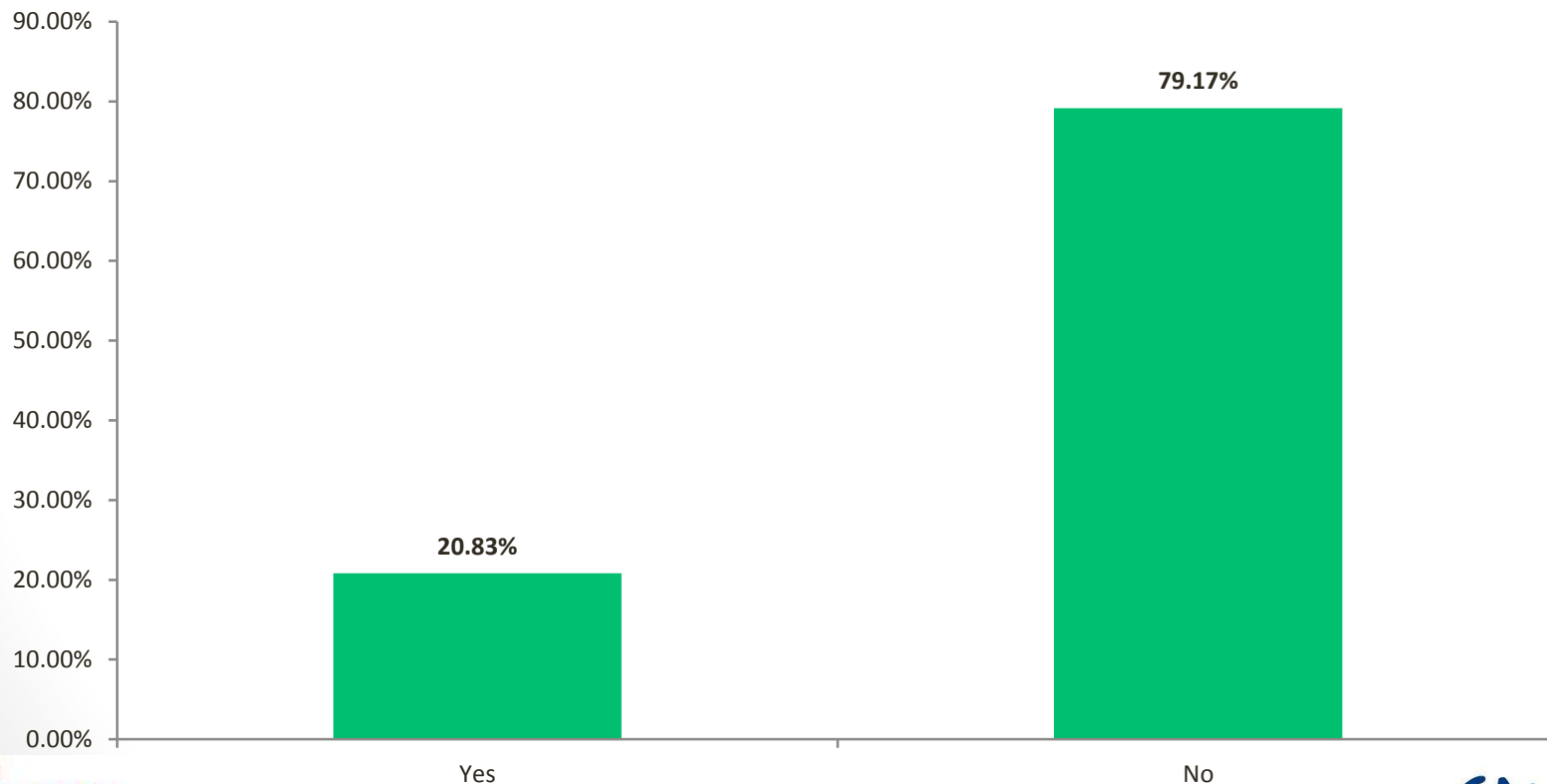
“I didn’t think about it.”

“I realized that life is better enjoyed off your phone and rather socializing.”

“After I got home from camp, I thought more consciously about my usage of time and how at camp I didn’t need it. I felt better at camp and when I got home I didn’t use my electronic devices as much. When I was at camp, very few days passed when I thought about my phone. I was happier without my phone.”

“It changed my attitude because I liked it better when I was able to have a conversation with someone face to face, not through a screen.”

Toward the end of your time at camp, did you make any resolution or plan to reduce the time you spend on your smartphone once you returned home?



“In the summer I’m always just sitting on my bed doing nothing. So I think I would try to just set it down more.”

“Minimize my time on it.”

“Less time on my phone.”

“I have an app that tells...how long I’m on my phone...(I) plan to check my usage and try to tone it down. The average American spends 5-6 hours/day on their phone, I spend 3. I want to bring that number down to 1 or 2 at least.”

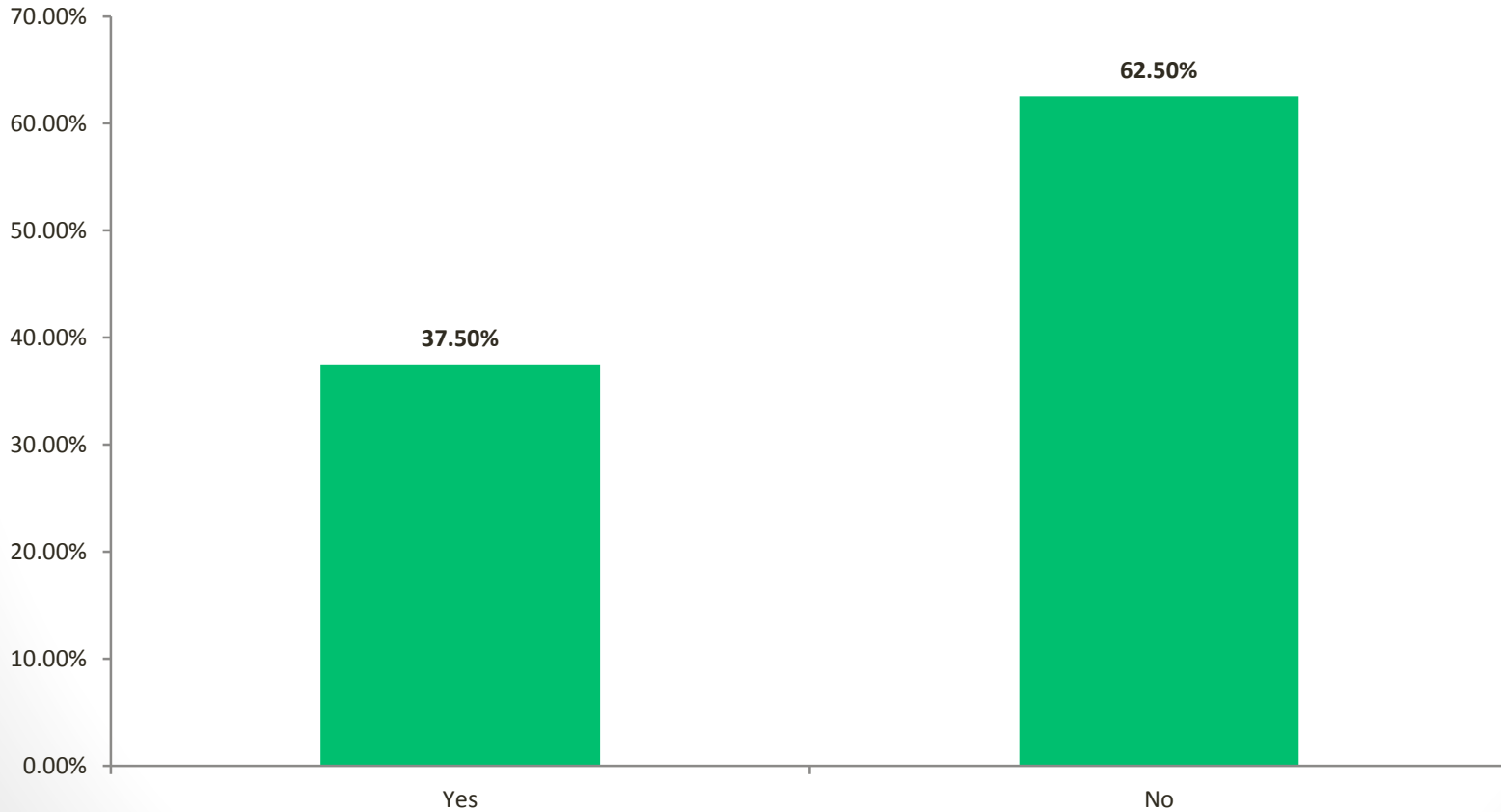
“I might see what my friends are up to because I don’t need to be staring at a screen all day. I want to hang out with my friends more now.”

“I would not want to use...(technology) so much and spend more time with my family and pets.”

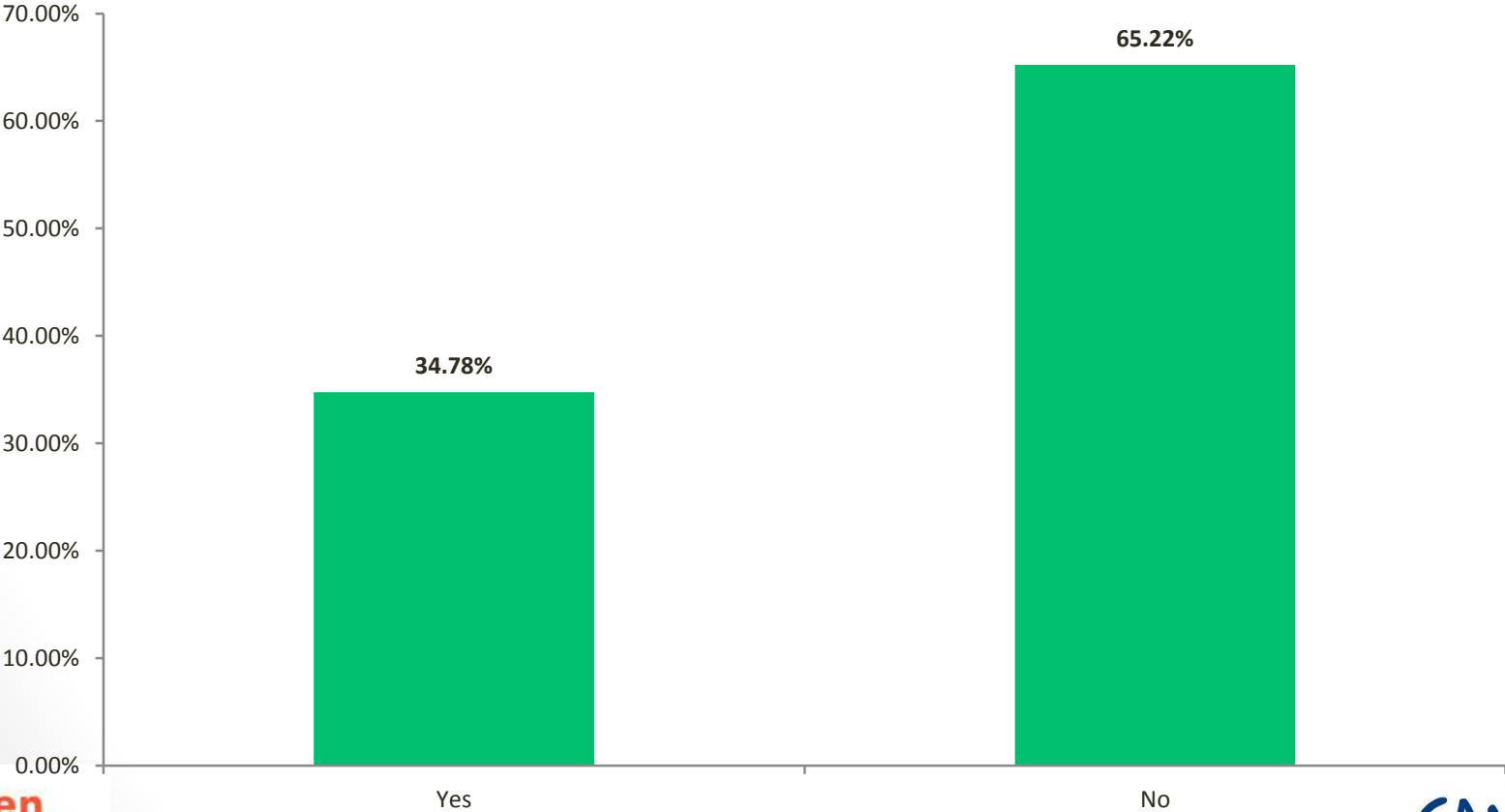
“I am going to spend less time on my phone.”

“I want to try to tone it down but I don’t know how difficult or easy that would be.”

Since leaving camp, have you had the desire to reduce your smartphone use?



Since leaving camp, have you been successful at reducing your smartphone use?



How They Curbed Phone Use

“My parents don't allow me to use it whenever I want. They closely monitor what I am doing and help me avoid mean people on social media.”

“I wasn't on it as much and realized that my life didn't depend on my iPhone.”

“Set time limits for myself.”

“I used it less.”

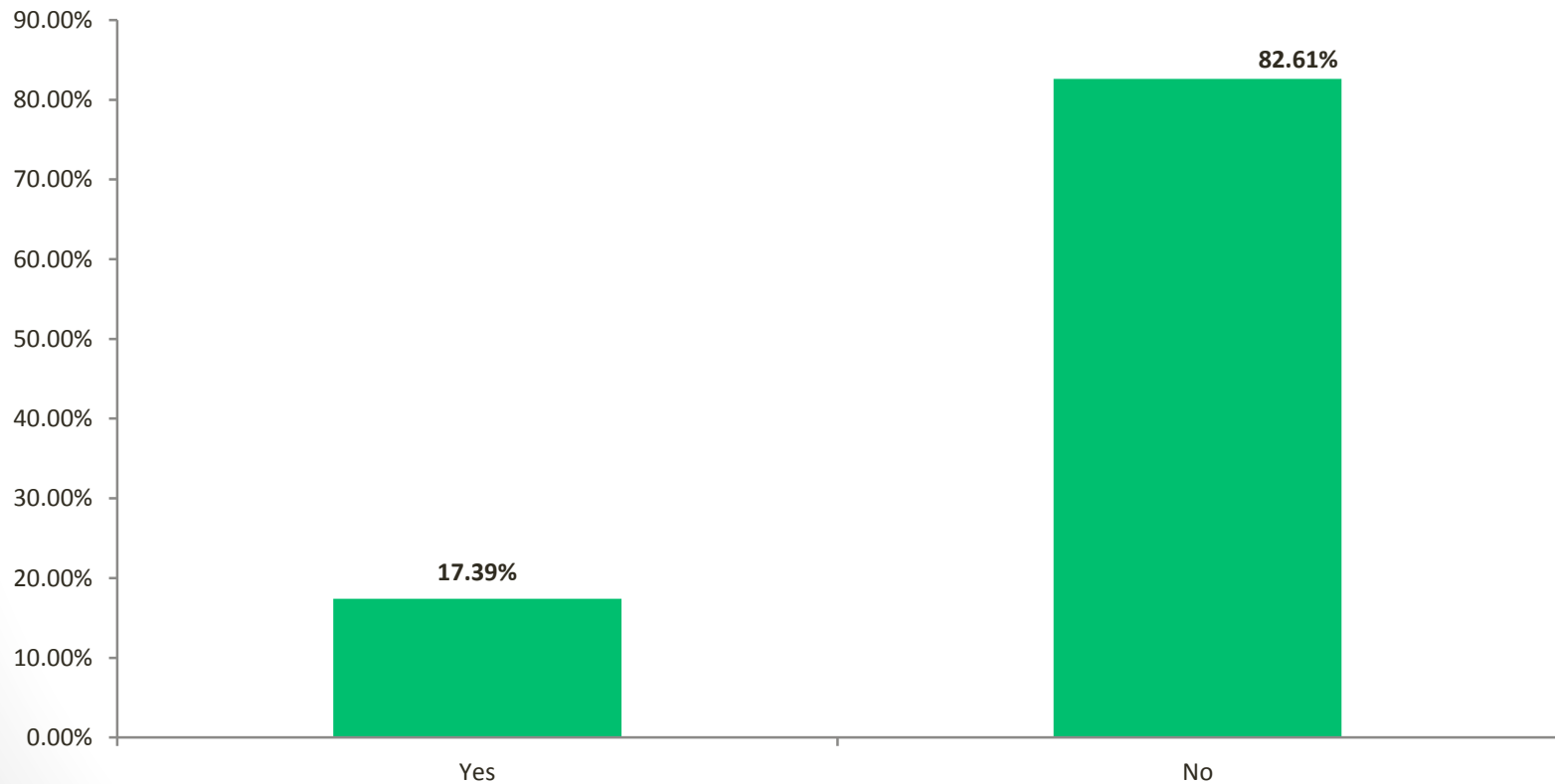
“I...told myself I can have lots of fun without it and trained myself...not (to) use it as much.”

“My parents limit the use of my phone after school hours.”

“I just put it away when I'm not in need of it.”

“I turned it off.”

Since leaving camp, have you ever attempted to influence another person to reduce their smartphone use?



Helping Others Curb Phone Use

“I took their phone from them for 3 periods to show them that they can't go an hour without their phone.”

“I just told them they shouldn't be looking down at their phone as much as they do.”

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“I talk about how great going to camp is and how beneficial it is for my physical and emotional health.”

“I told them it is unhealthy and life can be fun without it.”

Conclusions

- Campers are very conscious of the negative consequences of smartphone use, and are relieved to escape their phones while at camp.
- They realize that they spend far too much time on their phones, and they know that it deepens their engagement with the world when they go without their phones.

Conclusions

- Summer camps that disallow phones are doing a tremendous service to kids by helping them to become even more conscious of the benefits of going without their phones.
- Camps have an opportunity to aid kids in becoming fully aware of the benefits of decreasing screen time, and helping them envision how they can apply this awareness to their lives when they return home.