**America After 3PM**

**Draft**

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Methodology

The percentages and the projected numbers of children and families in *America After 3PM* are based on survey responses from parents. The Afterschool Alliance contracted with Shugoll Research to collect the data for *America After 3PM*. Nationally, 30,720 households were screened and 13,709 households completed in-depth interviews via an online survey using a blend of national consumer panels. The goal of at least 200 completed interviews was reached in every state and the District of Columbia. In states where this goal could not be reached using online panels, random digit dialing was used to complete supplementary telephone interviews. In order to participate, respondents had to live in the U.S and have a school age child in their household for whom they are the guardian. The online interview took approximately 15 minutes to complete. All interviews were completed between February 28 and April 17, 2014. Data are weighted on race and income within state, state population and the rate of afterschool program participation. Projections for child-level data represent the 57.9 million youth in the U.S. based on numbers from the 2012 Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

This is the first wave of *America After 3PM* to be conducted using an online survey and random digit telephone dialing. The 2004 and 2009 waves of *America After 3PM* collected data via U.S. mail surveys and random digit telephone dialing. As internet use and availability has increased over the years[[1]](#footnote-1) and researchers are now able to construct nationally representative samples through online survey panels, as well as a decrease in mail survey response rates, the decision was made to move from a mail survey to an online survey. Steps were taken to maintain comparability to previous data where possible. Additionally, data quality assurances were built into the online survey, such as removing respondents that answer the same option for each question (“straight-lining”) and examining the speed in which respondents complete the survey.

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Introduction

In Baltimore, MD, students in the Digital Harbor afterschool program take advantage of hands-on activities, working with technology and developing skills that include how to design a website, create mobile apps and make podcasts. On the opposite coast in Santa Ana, CA, students in The Wooden Floor afterschool program learn ballet and modern dance from instructors that include internationally recognized choreographers, artists and dancers, as well as receive one-on-one tutoring and homework help, and take part in life-skills and character-building workshops.

Afterschool programs across the country are keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn, and serving as a source of comfort to working parents who know that their child is in a safe and supportive environment when the school day ends. Which leads one to ask: how many children are actually in afterschool programs? How many families want to enroll their child in an afterschool program? And, what is the number of children unsupervised after school? *America After 3PM* grew from the absence of reliable data to answer these questions when in 2004, the Afterschool Alliance and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund partnered to fill the gap in information and conducted the most in-depth study to track how children spend their time after school.

The 2014 *America After 3PM* edition is the third study that chronicles how children spend the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.—the hours after school ends and before parents return home from work. It serves as resource for policymakers, educators, parents and advocates on the trends of afterschool program participation, demand for afterschool programs, and children who are alone and unsupervised during the after school hours.

Since 2004, *America After 3PM* has not only provided an exhaustive account of the condition of after school care at both a national and state level, but it has also detailed the level of parent satisfaction with afterschool programs; barriers to participating in an afterschool program; and disparities by income, race, ethnicity, and community type. The 2014 *America After 3PM* builds on previous versions of the study, describing activities and supports provided by afterschool programs—including additional questions on physical activity; snacks and meals; and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)—as well as outcomes and benefits associated with participation in afterschool programs.

The report is divided into two sections: the first section is a look at children participating in afterschool programs—examining the profile of who is in an afterschool program, the types of activities offered in programs, satisfaction with quality and what parents are saying about the benefits afterschool programs provide their children. The second section provides an overview of children not in an afterschool program—including those who are unsupervised after school, as well as children who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available to them. The second section also analyzes differences in the demand for afterschool programs by income, race and ethnicity, examining the opportunity gaps that exist.

Key Findings

**Participation in afterschool programs has consistently increased over the past 10 years. In 2014, nearly one-quarter of families and 10.2 million children rely on afterschool programs to provide a safe and supportive environment, inspire learning, and fill the gap between when the school day ends and when the workday ends.**

The percentage, as well as the number of children in the U.S. who are participating in an afterschool program is on the rise. In 2014, 10.2 million children (18 percent) participate in an afterschool program, an increase from 8.4 million children (15 percent) in 2009 and 6.5 million children (11 percent) in 2004.[[2]](#footnote-2) Close to 1 in 4 families (23 percent) had a child enrolled in an afterschool program.

**However, the number of children unsupervised in the hours after school remains high. One in five children—11.3 million children—spend time alone and unsupervised during the after school hours.**

In communities across the U.S., there are 11.3million children without supervision between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Down from 15.1 million in 2009 and 14.3 million in 2004, yet there are still 1 in 5 children who do not have someone to care for them after school.

* Three percent of children in elementary school, or X.X million students, and 19 percent of children in middle school, or X.X million students, are looking after him or herself in the hours after school.

**While participation in afterschool programs has increased, the demand for afterschool continues to rise. More than 2 in 5 children—19.8 million—would participate in afterschool if programs were available:**

A steady rise in demand for afterschool programs has occurred over the last 10 years. In 2014, 19.8 million children (41 percent) not currently in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if it were available to them. In 2009, parents of 18.5 million children (38 percent) said they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available, and in 2004, this number was 15.3 million (30 percent).

**There are distinct differences in afterschool participation and demand across income levels and ethnicity. Participation in and demand for afterschool programs are much higher among children from low-income households compared to higher-income households, as well as higher among African American and Hispanic/Latino children than Caucasian children.**

While children from low-income households are more likely than their higher income peers to participate in an afterschool program (20 percent versus 18 percent), the demand for afterschool programs is much higher among low-income families than families that do not qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program.

* Half of children from low-income households not participating in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if one were available to them, which is 15 points higher than children from higher-income households (35 percent).

Similarly, Hispanic/Latino and African American/black children are at least two times more likely to participate in an afterschool program than white children (Hispanic/Latino children- 29 percent, African American/black children- 24 percent, white children- 12 percent). At the same time, demand for afterschool programs is also higher among African American/black and Hispanic/Latino parents compared to white parents.

* Thirty-six percent of white children currently not in an afterschool program would be enrolled if a program were available, whereas 61 percent of African American and 57 percent of Hispanic/Latino children would be enrolled, a 25 point and 21 point difference, respectively.

African American/black and Hispanic/Latino parents are also more likely to agree that afterschool programs play a positive role in children’s lives. For instance:

* More than 3 in 4 African American/black and 73 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents agree that afterschool programs help children gain workforce skills, such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking, compared to two-thirds of white parents (67 percent).
* Seventy-four percent of African American/black and 73 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents agree that afterschool program can help excite children about learning, approximately 13 points higher than white parents (60 percent). And, 70 percent of African American/black parents and 67 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents agree that participating in an afterschool program can help improve children’s school day attendance, compared to just over half of white parents (54 percent).
* More than 7 in 10 African American/black (71 percent) and 70 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents agree that afterschool programs can help improve children’s behavior in school, approximately 13 points higher than white parents (57 percent).

**The percentage of boys and girls who participate in afterschool programs, as well as who are unsupervised, is similar. Additionally, demand for afterschool programs is roughly the same among parents of boys and parents of girls.**

For the first time, *America After 3PM* is able to report on how girls and how boys are spending the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., and assess any differences. Nationally, the ways in which girls and boys are spending their time after the school day ends are similar. Girls are slightly more likely to participate in afterschool programs with 1 in 5 girls (20 percent) and 17 percent of boys participating, and are slightly less likely to be unsupervised, with 15 percent of girls and 17 percent of boys without supervision when the school day ends.

Among parents of children not enrolled in an afterschool program, 2 in 5 parents of boys (42 percent) and of girls (41 percent) would enroll their child if an afterschool program were available to them.

**Parents’ overall satisfaction with their child’s afterschool program remains high; however, parents today are much more satisfied than in the past with specific aspects of afterschool programs and hold stronger positive feelings regarding the benefits of afterschool programs.**

The percentage of parents who are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program remains relatively unchanged. Nine in 10 parents (89 percent) are satisfied with their afterschool program, similar to parents’ responses in 2009 (89 percent) and in 2004 (91 percent).

While overall program satisfaction is stable, satisfaction with specific afterschool program qualities has significantly increased:

* Satisfaction with the quality of care increased nine points, from 79 percent in 2009 to 88 percent in 2014
* Satisfaction with homework assistance increased 16 points, from 64 percent in 2009 to 80 percent in 2014
* Satisfaction with workforce skill development, such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking increased 14 points, from 57 percent in 2009 to 71 percent in 2014

Parents with children in afterschool programs in 2014 were more likely to agree that afterschool programs help to keep children safe and provide high quality care. ,

* More than 4 in 5 parents (81 percent) of afterschool program participants agree that “afterschool programs in my area provide a high quality of care,” a 15 point increase from two-thirds of parents (66 percent) in 2009.
* Eighty-four percent of parents of children in afterschool agree that “afterschool programs in my area keep kids safe and out of trouble,” a seven point increase from 77 percent of parents in 2009 who agreed that “afterschool programs in my area keep kids safe.”

**Parents view afterschool programs as more than just a safe environment for children. They recognize that programs provide a wide range of supports for children.**

Parents of children in an afterschool program report that their program offers a wide range of activities and supports for kids, from opportunities to be physically active to literacy support to science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) learning opportunities. For instance, when asked about features of their child’s afterschool program:

* Four in 5 parents (80 percent) say that their afterschool program offers opportunities for physical activity, 72 percent of parents say their child has opportunities for reading or writing and close to 7 in 10 parents (69 percent) say that their afterschool program offers a STEM learning opportunity.

As a whole, parents also agree that children can benefit from afterschool programs in a variety of ways, ranging from helping them develop social skills to reducing the likelihood of participating in risky behaviors.

* Four in 5 parents (79 percent) agree that afterschool programs can help children develop social skills through interaction with their peers, close to 3 in 4 parents (73 percent) agree that afterschool programs can help reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors, such as commit a crime, use drugs or become a teen parent, and close to 2 in 3 parents (64 percent) agree that afterschool programs can excite children about learning.
* Confidence in the benefits of afterschool programs is even higher among parents with a child in an afterschool program. Close to 9 in 10 parents of children in an afterschool program agree that afterschool program can help kids develop social skills through interaction with their peers, more than 4 in 5 parents (83 percent) agree that afterschool programs can help reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors and 82 percent agree that children can become excited about learning when participating in an afterschool program.

**As the economy continues to recover, afterschool programs are viewed as an integral component to support working parents.**

Overall, 3 in 4 parents (75 percent) agree that afterschool programs help give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work, and among parents with children in afterschool, agreement jumps to 86 percent. More than 8 in 10 parents (84 percent) of children in afterschool programs also agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs.

* Agreement that afterschool programs help provide working parents peace of mind about their children while at work is also extremely high among working mothers (80 percent), African American/black parents (80 percent) and Hispanic/Latino parents (76 percent).

**In line with the positive perceptions of afterschool programs and the multitude of benefits they provide, parents indicate strong support public funding for afterschool.**

Support for public funding of afterschool programs remains strong, with more than 4 in 5 parents (84 percent) reporting that they favor public funding for afterschool opportunities in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. This is a slight increase from 83 percent in 2009. Support for public funding of afterschool programs is bipartisan, strong across all geographic regions, and particularly high among African American/black parents, Latino parents and working mothers.

* Support for public funding for afterschool programs spans party lines—91 percent of parents identifying as Democrat, 86 percent of parents who identified themselves as Independent and 80 percent of parents identifying as Republican report that they favor public funding for afterschool programs.
* Parents across all geographic regions support public funding for afterschool programs. Eighty six percent of parents living in the Southeastern region of the U.S., 85 percent of parents in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic region, 85 percent of parents in the West and 83 percent of parents in the Midwest favor public funding for afterschool programs.
* More than 9 in 10 African American/black parents (91 percent), 87 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents, and 87 percent of working moms support public funding for afterschool programs.

A Participant’s View of Afterschool Programs

Since 2004 when the first *America* *After 3PM* survey was conducted, participation in afterschool programs has been steadily on the rise, from 6.5 million to 8.4 million to 10.2 million children. This year’s *America* *After 3PM* provides a detailed snapshot of the children participating in afterschool programs, what activities they are taking part in, how satisfied families are with their afterschool programs, and what qualities and factors are important to them in afterschool programs.

[CREATE STATE CHART- HAVE NATIONAL AVERAGE AS Y-AXIS AND STATES, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER, WITH AFTERSCHOOL PARTICPATION PERCENTAGES ON EITHER SIDE OF NATIONAL AVERAGE REPRESENTED BY BARS. Percentage of kids in afterschool programs by state.]

**Who Participates in Afterschool?**

Similar to findings from the previous two *America After 3PM* surveys, afterschool program participants are comprised of primarily children in elementary school, although participation by middle school and high school students saw significant increases between 2009 and 2014. [CREATE TWO 100% BAR CHARTS COMPARING GRADE LEVEL BREAKDOWN FOR 2009 AND 2014. 2014: Elementary School- 61%, Middle School- 23%, High School- 16%. 2009: Elementary School- 70%, Middle School- 18%, High School- 12%] By grade level, more than 1 in 5 elementary school children, 19 percent of middle school children and 12 percent of high school youth are in an afterschool program. This equates to approximately X.X million elementary school students, X.X million middle school students and X.X million high schoolers that a in a supervised and enriching environment during the hours after school. [CREATE GRAPHIC. Elementary School Students- 23%, X.X million students; Middle School Students- 19%, X.X million students; High School Students – 12%, X.X million students]

Afterschool program participants are relatively evenly split between girls and boys, where girls make up 49 percent of afterschool participants and boys 51 percent. Regarding the composition of afterschool participants by ethnicity, Caucasian children continue to make up the majority of afterschool program participants, however, when looking at the differences by ethnicity, Hispanic/Latino and African American/black children are most likely to participate in an afterschool program. [CREATE PIE CHART FOR COMPOSITION OF CHILDREN IN AFTERSCHOOL BY ETHNICITY. Caucasian- 71%, African American/Black- 15%, Hispanic/Latino- 11%, Asian American- 8%, Native American- 2%] [CREATE BAR CHART FOR PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS BY ETHNICITY. Hispanic/Latino- 29%, African American/Black- 24%, Asian American- 20%, Caucasian- 12%]

A significant percentage of children in afterschool programs are from low-income households—45 percent, an increase of 4 points from 2009. Similarly, comparing participation in afterschool programs among low-income households, participation increased from 18 percent in 2009 to 20 percent in 2014.

**What’s Offered in Afterschool?**

Survey responses from parents of children in afterschool programs help provide a more in-depth picture of the types of supports afterschool programs are providing to children, who is providing afterschool program opportunities and where, how often children are taking advantage of afterschool programs and how affordable afterschool programs are.

Children in afterschool programs receive a wide-variety of integral supports and activities that encourage healthy behaviors, increase knowledge and skills, and provide learning opportunities. Eight in 10 parents of children in an afterschool program report that their program offered opportunities for physical activity, and more than 7 in 10 said their program offers homework assistance, snacks and/or meals, and opportunities for reading or writing. [CREATE BAR CHART. Features offered by afterschool programs: Opportunities for physical activity -80%, homework assistance – 77%, beverages, snacks and/or meals -72%, opportunities for reading or writing -72%, STEM learning opportunities -69%, academic programs/clubs- 65%, music or art- 63%, summer programs- 60%, workforce skills development, such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking- 46%, parent/family activities- 45%]

In 2014, children spent an average of 3.62 days per week in afterschool and an average of 7.4 hours per week in afterschool. Parents largely pay for afterschool, with only X in 10 reporting their program was offered for free. Among those who pay for afterschool (X percent), parents report spending an average of $113.50 per week on afterschool programs. One in 5 parents surveyed report receiving government assistance to pay for afterschool for their child, at an average of $113.20 per week. When asked about their level of satisfaction with the cost of afterschool, 3 out of 4 parents report that they are satisfied with the costs. [CREATE BREAKOUT BOX: $113.50 The average amount parents report spending per week on their child’s afterschool program } $110.30 children in grades K-5; $119.50 children in grades 6-8; $121.20children in grade 9-12]

Close to 3 in 4 parents said that their child’s afterschool program is located in a public school building—a 16 point increase from 2009.[[3]](#footnote-3) [CREATE SCHOOL HOUSE GRAPHIC. Small house (2009)- 57% and Large house (2014)- 73%] Additionally, parents report that public schools are the largest provider of afterschool programs, followed by Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, private schools and religious organizations. [CREATE BAR CHART. Afterschool program providers: public schools - 43%, Boys and Girls Clubs -18%, YMCAs -15%, private schools -11%, religious organizations -10%]

**What do Parents Say about Quality?**

Parents’ assessment of their afterschool program—both overall as well as with specific program offerings—provides a picture of the level of afterschool program quality, areas of strengths of afterschool programs and areas in need of improvement. Nationally, satisfaction with afterschool programs continues to be very high among parents (89 percent) and reviewing overall satisfaction with afterschool programs at the state level, parents at least somewhat satisfied with their afterschool program ranges from close to 100 percent to 2 out 3 parents. [CREATE STATE CHART- HAVE NATIONAL AVERAGE AS Y-AXIS AND STATES, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER, WITH SATISFACTION LEVELS ON EITHER SIDE OF NATIONAL AVERAGE REPRESENTED BY BARS. Percentage of parents at least somewhat satisfied with their child’s afterschool program.] Parents of afterschool program participants also agree that afterschool programs as a whole are providing high quality care. More than 8 in 10 parents agree with the statement, “Afterschool programs in my area provide a high quality of care.”

When asked about specific aspects of their child’s afterschool program, an overwhelming percentage of parents at the national level were satisfied with features associated with quality afterschool programs, such as quality of care, staff quality, activity variation and child engagement. Close to 9 in 10 parents are satisfied with their program’s quality of care (88 percent), 84 percent are satisfied with the program’s staff being knowledgeable and well trained, 80 percent are satisfied with the variety of activities offered by the program, and close to 3 in 4 parents are satisfied that their afterschool program is helping to excite their child about learning (74 percent). [CREATE BAR GRAPH, WITHIN EACH BAR IS A BREAKDOWN OF EXTREMELY SATISFIED AND SOMEWHAT SATISFIED. Parents level of satisfaction with features of their child’s afterschool program: See PowerPoint]

Additionally, although overall satisfaction with afterschool programs has remained relatively unchanged from past surveys, parents’ level of satisfaction with specific features of their afterschool program—including the quality of care, homework assistance and help developing teamwork, leadership and critical thinking skills—saw significant increases. [CREATE BAR COMPARISON GRAPH TO SHOW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YEARS. Parent satisfaction with features of their child’s afterschool program by year: Quality of care- 2009-79%, 2014-88%; Homework assistance- 2009-64%, 2014-80%; Workforce skill development- 2009-57%, 2014-71%; Variety of activities- 2009-74%, 2014-80%; Knowledgeable and well-trained staff- 2009-77%, 2014-84%]

Overall, the aspects of afterschool programs parents report were very important in their selection of a program parallels the qualities of afterschool programs that parents are most satisfied with. For instance, a program’s safe environment, quality of care, and knowledgeable and well-trained staff were among the top responses for choosing an afterschool program, and these attributes were among the top responses when looking at parent satisfaction.

Examining the factors parents view as most valuable in their afterschool program, excluding programs’ operational features, responses show parents want their child’s out-of-school experience to be fun, varied and complement, but look different than the regular school day. More than 8 in 10 parents report their child’s enjoyment is very important in selecting their afterschool program, 7 in 10 parents view the variety of activities as very important in their choice, and 68 percent of parents say that opportunities for physical activity are very important. More than 3 out of 5 parents report that “program provides learning activities that aren’t provided during the regular school day” was very important in selecting an afterschool program. CREATE BREAKOUT TEXT. 81% of parents say that their child’s enjoyment is very important in selecting an afterschool program and 86% say that afterschool programs should provide a fun experience for children.

Of all parents surveyed, a strong majority also view afterschool programs as a space that can engage children in learning, support their overall growth and development, and provide enriching activities that are not offered during the school day. Eight in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs should provide a fun experience for children, 71 percent agree that afterschool programs should help children develop workforce skills, such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking skills, and 71 percent of parents also agree that afterschool programs should provide learning activities that are not provided during the regular school day. [CREATE BAR CHART. Parents agree that afterschool programs should offer (Top five answers): A fun experience for children -80%, help children be physically active -80%, help children develop workforce skills -71%, provide learning activities that aren’t provided during the regular school day -71%, healthy beverages, snacks and/or meals -71%]

**How Do Students and Families Benefit from Afterschool?**

Afterschool programs provide a variety of benefits and supports to students participating in the programs. A substantial and growing body of research points to the positive academic, social and emotional outcomes associated with participation in quality afterschool programs.[[4]](#endnote-1) The *America After 3PM* survey finds that parents, in particular parents with children currently in an afterschool program, believe that afterschool programs not only provide a safe space for children, but agree that among other things, afterschool programs help to excite kids about learning; be physically active; and gain interest and skills in science, technology, engineering and math learning. For instance, 84 percent of parents of afterschool program participants agree that afterschool programs in their area keep kids safe and out of trouble and 82 percent agree that afterschool programs can help excite kids about learning. [CREATE BAR CHART. Parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that afterschool programs provide the following benefits: A fun experience- 88%; Develop social skills through interaction with peers- 88%; Opportunities to be physically active – 85%; Access to caring adults and mentors- 85%; Reduced likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors, such as commit a crime, use drugs or become a teen parent- 83%; Excitement about learning- 82%; Help completing homework- 82%; Gain interest and skills related to STEM- 78%; Opportunities to learn about various cultures, countries, languages and global issues- 78%; Improvement in behavior in school – 78%; Gain workforce skills, such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking- 77%; Improvement in school day attendance- 76%; Receive healthy beverages, snacks and/or meals- 75%] Parents of kids in afterschool programs also strongly believe that afterschool programs positively influence children’s behavior—improving behavior in school and reducing the likelihood taking part in risky behaviors, such as committing a crime, using drugs or becoming a teen parent. [CREATE BREAKOUT BOX. 83% of parents of afterschool program participants agree that afterschool programs reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors, such as commit a crime, use drugs or become a teen parent. Just 3% of parents disagree with this statement.]

The benefits of students participating in afterschool programs extend beyond student outcomes. Eighty five percent of parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that afterschool programs help to give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work and just 4 percent of disagree with this statement. When asked if they agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs, 83 percent of parents agree. [CREATE BREAKOUT BOX. 85% of parents of afterschool program participants agree that afterschool programs help to give working parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work. Just 4% of parents disagree with this statement.]

*Physical activity, health and nutrition in afterschool*

Childhood obesity has been a growing national concern, doubling among children and quadrupling among adolescents over the past 30 years.[[5]](#endnote-2) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that in 2012, more than 1 in 3 children and adolescents in the U.S. were overweight or obese.[[6]](#endnote-3) Parents, both parents with children in an afterschool program and those with children not in a program, view afterschool as a space to help keep kids active and healthy—providing children with opportunities to be active, eat nutritious foods and drink healthy beverages. Eighty-four percent of parents of afterschool program participants agree that afterschool programs *should* help children be physically active and 85 percent agree that afterschool programs *do provide* children with opportunities to be physically active. Approximately 8 in 10 parents (79 percent) were satisfied with the amount of physical activity in their child’s afterschool program and 79 percent were satisfied with the variety of physical activity. [CREATE BREAKOUT BOX. 85% of parents with children in afterschool programs agree that afterschool program provide children with opportunities to be physically active.] [CREATE APPLE/HEALTHY FOOD GRAPHIC. 3 out of 4 parents of afterschool program participants agree that children receive healthy beverages, snacks and/or meals in afterschool programs.]

Additionally, more than 3 in 4 parents of participants (77 percent) agree that afterschool programs should provide healthy beverages, snacks and/or meals. Parents of children in afterschool were largely satisfied with their afterschool program’s snack and/or meal offering—74 percent report that they were satisfied with the afterschool program’s snacks and/or meals that included healthy foods.

The opportunity for physical activity and availability of healthy snacks and/or meals also were important factors in parents’ selection of their afterschool program. When asked to select factors that were very important in choosing their child’s afterschool program, close to 7 in 10 parents with children in afterschool (68 percent) shared that opportunities for physical activity was very important in their decision and more than 3 in 5 parents (62 percent) said that the program provides snacks/meals that include foods that are healthy was very important in selecting their child’s afterschool program.[[7]](#footnote-4)

Taking a closer look at the responses of parents who stated their afterschool program offers physical activity, more than 2 out of 3 report that during a typical day, it lasts at least 30 minutes and 88 percent report that at least some of that activity is moderate to vigorous activity. Less than 1 in 10 parents say that their child gets little to no moderate to vigorous physical activity in their afterschool program. [CREATE PIE CHART. Parents’ responses to “On a typical day in their afterschool program, how many minutes of physical activity does your child get?” 60 minutes or more- 27%, 30-59 minutes- 40%, 15-29 minutes- 25%, Less than 15 minutes- 4%, Not Sure- 5%] [CREATE PIE CHART. Parents’ responses to “How much of this physical activity would you say is moderate to vigorous physical activity?” All- 9%, Most- 34%, Some- 45%, Little- 8%, None- 1%, Not Sure- 3%] When asked about the types of foods and beverages served in their child’s afterschool program, 72 percent of parents said that their program only served healthy food or beverages.

*Science, Technology, Engineering and Math learning opportunities in afterschool*

As focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) continues to grow in the context of preparing students in the U.S. for the workforce and ensuring that the U.S. remains competitive globally, afterschool programs have become an important and growing part of the STEM education ecosystem. *America After 3PM* found that overall, parents recognize afterschool programs as a space where their children can and should engage in hands-on STEM learning experiences. Seven in 10 parents surveyed agree that afterschool programs should offer opportunities to explore and engage in hands-on STEM learning and 65 percent of parents agree that afterschool programs can help children gain interest and skills related to STEM.

Close to 7 in 10 parents of afterschool program participants report that their program offers a STEM learning opportunity, with more than half answering that their child takes part in a STEM activity at least two times a week. [CREATE BAR GRAPH. Features offered by afterschool programs: STEM Net- 69%, 60% math learning opportunities, 46% science learning opportunities, 30% technology and engineering opportunities.] [CREATE PIE CHART. Parents’ responses to “About how often does your child participate in a science, technology and engineering or math activity as part of their afterschool program?” Daily- 14%, 2 – 3 times a week- 38%, Once a week- 24%, Once a month- 7%, Less than once a month- 6%, Not Sure- 11%]

While parents report that many factors were important to them when selecting their child's afterschool program, more than half (53 percent) said that STEM learning opportunities were very important in their decision.[[8]](#footnote-5) Of parents who shared that STEM learning opportunities were very important in selecting their child's afterschool program, 85 percent were satisfied with their afterschool program's STEM learning opportunity.

*Older Youth in Afterschool*

Quality afterschool programs can help older youth develop stronger connections to their peers and caring adults, improve their attitude toward school, and learn about college and career options.[[9]](#endnote-4) Overall satisfaction with their child’s afterschool program was just as high among parents of high school youth compared to the national number (89 percent all). Answers from parents of high schoolers illustrate the differences in concerns and priorities of parents of older youth versus those of younger children, as well as differences in types of activities offered by programs for older youth. Parents of students in high school were more likely to report that learning activities that aren’t provided during the regular school day and STEM learning opportunities were important in their decision for selecting an afterschool program than parents of afterschool program participants overall. [CREATE COMPARISON BAR GRAPH. Factors that were very important in selecting your child’s afterschool program: Learning activities that aren’t provided during the regular school day- 9-12-66%, overall-62%; STEM learning opportunities- 9-12-57%, overall-53%] Examining differences by grade level, parents of high school students were less likely to report that factors related to convenience, such as hours meeting their needs and a convenient location, were important in their selection of an afterschool program than parents of elementary and middle school students. [CREATE BREAKOUT TEXT. 69% of parents of high schoolers said “the hours meet my needs” was very important in their selection of an afterschool program versus 79% of parents of elementary school students] Six in 10 parents of kids in high school said college exploration or readiness opportunities were important to them and 58 percent said that opportunities for career exploration or readiness were important.

Parents of high school students are also much more likely than parents of elementary and middle school students to report that their teen’s afterschool program offered workforce skills development, such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking and digital media opportunities. [CREATE COMPARISON BAR GRAPH. Features offered by afterschool programs: Workforce skills development-K-5-45%, 6-8-40%, 9-12-56%; digital media- K-5-32%, 6-8-38%, 9-12-43%] More than half also shared that the afterschool program offered college exploration or readiness opportunities (52 percent) and 48 percent said that their program offered career exploration or readiness opportunities. And, more than 7 in 10 parents of high school youth report that they are satisfied with either their afterschool program’s career or college exploration or readiness opportunities (72 percent, 71 percent).

Interestingly, although a significant majority of parents of high school students agreed on many of the benefits of afterschool programs—such as helping kids develop social skills, keep physically active, and keep from taking part in risky behaviors—parents of elementary and middle school students were slightly more likely to agree than parents of high schoolers. [CREATE COMPARISON BAR GRAPH. Parents agree that children can benefit from afterschool programs in the following ways: Develop social skills through interaction with their peers-K-5-83%, 6-8-77%, 9-12-72%; Opportunities to be physically active- K-5-80%, 6-8-73%, 9-12-69%; Reduced likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors- K-5-75%, 6-8-72%, 9-12-69%]

A View from Those Not Participating in an Afterschool Program

Although participation in afterschool programs has continued to rise over the past 10 years, there remains a significant number of children who are alone and unsupervised in the hours after school, as well as a considerable number of children who are not currently in an afterschool program, but whose parents would enroll them if one were available. A review of data from *America After 3PM* finds that while the profile of children who are unsupervised and the children whose parents would enroll them in an afterschool program if one were available to them remains relatively unchanged, a significant opportunity gap continues to exist when looking at differences among income levels and ethnicity.

**Who are the Children in Self Care?**

Like the profile of afterschool, the profile of children who are unsupervised in the hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. on school days in 2014 is largely the same as 2009. Kids in high school make up a majority of unsupervised students, although when looking at the percentage of children in elementary school who are unsupervised in the afternoons, the number is still significant. [CREATE BREAK OUT BOX. X.X million children are alone and unsupervised after school] While 1 in 10 children in self care are in elementary school and 1 in 4 children are in middle school, 3 percent of children in elementary school and 19 percent of children in middle school are looking after him or herself in the hours after school. This equates to approximately X.X million elementary school students and X.X million middle school students on their own when the last school bell rings. [CREATE PIE CHART. Children in self care by grade level: Elementary School- 10%, Middle School- 25%, High School – 65%] [CREATE GRAPHIC. Elementary School Students- 3%, X.X million students; Middle School Students- 19%, X.X million students; High School Students – 37%, X.X million students] Boys and make up a larger portion of children in self care than girls, 56 percent of boys and 44 percent of girls.

[CREATE BREAK OUT BOX. Children are spending an average of 7.3 hours unsupervised after school]

[CREATE STATE CHART- HAVE NATIONAL AVERAGE AS Y-AXIS AND STATES, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER, WITH PERCENTAGE OF KIDS IN SELF CARE ON EITHER SIDE OF NATIONAL AVERAGE REPRESENTED BY BARS. Percentage of kids in self care by state.]

**Who’s Missing Out on Afterschool?**

Nationally, the demand[[10]](#footnote-6) for afterschool programs has steadily climbed since *America After 3PM* was first conducted in 2004. Currently, XX.X million children not participating in an afterschool program would be enrolled if a program were available. [CREATE LINE CHART. Percent of nonparticipant children likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available: 2004-30% (15,300,000), 2009-38% (18,500,000), 2014-41% (xx,xxx,xxx)] As in 2009, white children and elementary school students make up the majority of likely participants in afterschool. However, a slightly larger percentage of high school and middle school students comprise likely participants in 2014 compared to 2009. [CREATE 100% BAR CHART FOR COMPOSITION OF LIKELY PARTICIPANTS BY ETHNICITY. Caucasian- 58%, African American/Black- 16%, Hispanic/Latino- 19%, Asian American- 5%, Native American- 3%] [CREATE TWO 100% BAR CHART FOR COMPOSITION OF LIKELY PARTICIPANTS BY GRADE LEVEL. 2014- Elementary School- 52%, Middle School- 22%, High School – 26%; 2009- Elementary School- 59%, Middle School- 20%, High School – 21%;] Just over half of likely participants are boys (55 percent) and 45 percent are girls. Of the XX.X million children who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available, X.X million are elementary school students, X.X million are middle school students and X.X million are high school students. [CREATE GRAPHIC. Elementary School Students- 46%, X.X million students; Middle School Students- 41%, X.X million students; High School Students – 34%, X.X million students]

[CREATE STATE CHART- HAVE NATIONAL AVERAGE AS Y-AXIS AND STATES, IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER, WITH PERCENTAGE OF KIDS IN WHO WOULD PARTICIPATE IN AN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM IF ONE WERE AVAILABLE ON EITHER SIDE OF NATIONAL AVERAGE REPRESENTED BY BARS. Percentage of kids who would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them by state.]

**What Opportunity Gaps Exist?**

The hours after school ends and before parents get home from work are a time when children have the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning, interact with their peers, work under the care and supervision of supportive mentors, build on lessons learned during the school day and more. However, *America After 3PM* finds that a gap exists between low-income households and higher-income households, as well as minority households and white households, in regards to the opportunity to participate in an afterschool program that provides a supervised enriching environment. Demand for afterschool programs is higher among low-income households compared to higher-income households and higher among minority households, compared to white households. However, low-income and minority households are also more likely to share that there is a lack of available afterschool programs in their community, and are also more likely to cite barriers related to location and safe travel to and from an afterschool program.

Only looking at the population of parents of children not in an afterschool program who would enroll their child if a program was available, white parents make up the majority. However, as in previous survey findings, demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among minority families compared to white families. Demand for afterschool programs is highest among African American/black parents, and the differences in the likelihood of enrolling their child in an afterschool program if one were available to them between minority and white parents range from 10 percentage points up to 25 percentage points. [CREATE BAR CHART. Percent of nonparticipant children likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available: White- 36%, African American/black -61%, Hispanic/Latino- 57%, Asian American -56%, Native American- 46%. ADD SPACE. Low-income families-50%, higher income families- 35%] White children also comprise the majority of children in self care, but a large percentage of both African American/black and white children are spending their after school hours unsupervised. [CREATE BAR CHART FOR PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BY ETHNICITY IN SELF CARE. Hispanic/Latino- 11%, African American/Black- 18%, Asian American- 8%, Caucasian- 18%]

Demand for afterschool programs among low-income households is also higher when compared to their higher-income counterparts. Half of low-income families report that they want to enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available to them, compared to 35 percent of families not eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program. Additionally, although 31 percent of the self care population is comprised of children from low-income households, children in low-income households are more likely than their higher-income counterparts to be alone and unsupervised in the hours after school—19 percent versus 12 percent.

*Barriers to participation[[11]](#footnote-7)*

Overall, the most common reason behind not taking part in an afterschool program among parents whose child was not enrolled, but would be if one were available, was that a parent or guardian was home during the hours after school. Top barriers[[12]](#footnote-8) to participating in an afterschool program that were cited by parents include cost, lack of a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs and convenience of location and hours. Additionally, just over 4 in 10 parents said that afterschool programs were not available in their community. [CREATE BAR GRAPH. Factors that were important in parents’ decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program: Afterschool programs are too expensive- 52%, My child does not have a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs- 52%, Afterschool programs’ locations are not convenient- 47%, Afterschool programs’ hours of operation do not meet my needs- 44%, Afterschool programs are not available in my community- 42%]

Looking at differences between income level and ethnicity, parents in low-income households were more likely to cite cost and children not having a safe way to get to and come from afterschool programs. [CREATE 2 COMPARISON BAR GRAPHS. Factors that were important in parents’ decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program: Afterschool programs are too expensive- Low-income households-56%, All households- 52%; My child does not have a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs- Low-income households- 54%, All households- 52%] More than 2 in 3 parents in a low-income household agree that the current economic conditions have made it difficult for them to afford placing their children in an afterschool program.

African American/black parents and Hispanic/Latino parents were much more likely to cite lack of a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs and lack of available afterschool programs as a barrier to participation when compared to white parents. [CREATE 3 COMPARISON BAR GRAPHS. Factors that were important in parents’ decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program: My child does not have a safe way to get to and come home from afterschool programs- White parents- 50%, African American/Black parents- 55%, Hispanic/Latino parents- 53%; Afterschool programs are not available in my community- White parents- 38%, African American/Black parents- 46%, Hispanic/Latino parents- 48%] African American/black and Hispanic/Latino parents were also much more likely to agree with the statement “finding an enriching environment for my child in the hours after school is a challenge,” compared to white parents. Close to 7 in 10 Hispanic/Latino parents and more than 2 out of 3 African American/black parents agree with the statement, compared to 58 percent of white parents. Even among African American/black and Hispanic/Latino parents with a child enrolled in an afterschool program, finding an enriching environment for their child during the hours after school was more challenging than white parents. Among parents with a child enrolled in an afterschool program, 63 percent of African American/black parents and 70 percent of Hispanic/Latino parents agree that it was challenging to find an enriching environment for their child after school, compared to 60 percent of white parents.

Conclusion

The past decade has seen much progress in the number of children who are able to take advantage of the opportunities and activities afterschool programs have to offer–transforming the hours between 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. from a time of concern for working parents to a time of learning and advancement for students. Participation in afterschool programs has seen close to a 60 percent increase from 2004 to 2014, with 3.7 million more children in afterschool programs. In addition to more children participating in afterschool programs, parents’ satisfaction with specific aspects of afterschool programs—such as the quality of care, staff and program activities—has significantly increased over the past few years.

Although sizeable gains have been made in afterschool program participation and quality, the demand for afterschool programs continues to rise, growing from parents of 15.3 million children to 19.8 million children who would participate in an afterschool program. And, while the number of children alone and unsupervised has decreased over the course of the last 10 years, 11.3 million children who leave school after the last school bell rings to an unsupervised environment remains far too high a number.

Increased federal, state, local and private investments are essential to ensure that quality afterschool programs are available, accessible and affordable to all children, regardless of income-level or geographic area. Public support for federal funding of afterschool programs is strong, with a high-level of support across political party identification and geographic region. Yet federal investment in the primary funding stream for afterschool programs has remained relatively flat over the past five years—growing less than 2 percent from $1.13 billion in 2009 to $1.15 billion in 2014—despite the growing popularity of afterschool programs, with $4 billion in local grant requests being denied due to insufficient funds and competitiveness among requests over the course of 10 years.[[13]](#endnote-5)

The three editions of *America After 3PM* show how much progress has been made in the after school hours, but at the same time, makes clear that as a nation, we have much more work ahead of us to ensure that all children are afforded the same supports and opportunities afterschool programs have to offer. Working together in a concentrated effort, the public and private sectors, as well as educators, families and communities, can begin to tackle the challenge of the demand for afterschool programs and help families across the U.S. and the 19.8 million children who would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them. It will take a united effort to increase the availability of quality afterschool programs that help children reach their full potential and succeed in school, college, career and beyond.

1. Based on a Pew Research Center survey, internet use has increased from 74 percent in December 2008 to 87 percent in January 2014. Pew Research Center. (2014). Internet Use Over Time. Pew Research Internet Project. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/internet-use/internet-use-over-time/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Due to the change in survey collection, the projected numbers and percentages reported on this year for participation in afterschool programs, children in self care, and children not in an afterschool program but whose parent would enroll them if one were available is based on child level data rather than household level data that was reported on in previous years. The household level percentages are included in the topline questionnaire. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 57% of parents said that their child’s afterschool program was located in a public school. The wording and choices for this question were changed:

   2014: “During the 2013-2014 school year, are any of your child in grade \_\_’s afterschool programs physically located in a public school building?” Yes, No, I don’t know

   2009: “During the 2008-2009 school year, where were each of your children’s afterschool programs located?” Public school, YMCA, Private school, Religious center, Recreation/Community center, Boys & Girls Club, Library, Private home, YWCA, Other [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Afterschool Alliance. (2014). “Taking a Deeper Dive into Afterschool: Positive Outcomes and Promising Practices.” Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper_Dive_into_Afterschool.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
5. Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Kit. B.K., Flegal, K.M. (2014). “Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012.”  *Journal of the American Medical Association*. National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2011: With Special Features on Socioeconomic Status and Health. Hyattsville, MD; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2012. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
6. Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Kit. B.K., Flegal, K.M. (2014). “Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012.”  *Journal of the American Medical Association*. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
7. These choices were 9th and 12th out of a list of 23 items. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
8. This choice was 16th out of a list of 23 choices. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
9. Harris, E., Deschenes, S. and Wallace, A. (2011). Helping Older Youth Succeed Through Expanded Learning Opportuntiies. Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/ncsl-harvard-family-research-project-brief-series-elo-research-policy-practice/helping-older-youth-succeed-through-expanded-learning-opportunities>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
10. The demand for afterschool is based on nonparticipant households who responded “extremely likely” or “somewhat likely” to the question, “If a program…were available in your community, please indicate how likely you would be to have each of your children participate in such an afterschool program.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
11. All figures in this section refer to the subset of parents whose child is not enrolled in an afterschool program, but would enroll them if one were available, except where explicitly stated otherwise. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
12. This includes answer choices that relate directly to challenges in enrolling a child in afterschool and excludes answer choices that pertain to reasons for not needing an afterschool program, such as “my child is old enough to care for her or himself.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
13. O’Donnell, P., & Ford, J. (2013). *The Continuing Demand for 21st Century Community Learning Centers across America: More than four billion dollars of unmet need*; Peterson, T., Fowler, S. and Dunham, T.F. (2013). “Creating the Recent Force Field: A Growing Infrastructure for Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Opportunities.” *Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success*. Washington, DC: Collaborative Communications Group. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)