



# America After 3PM

Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks





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## Methodology

America After 3PM is a nationally representative survey of randomly selected adults who live in the United States and are the parent or guardian of a school-age child who lives in their household. The survey was conducted using a blend of national consumer panels, with the goal of completing at least 200 interviews in every state and Washington, D.C. In states where this goal could not be reached using online panels, supplementary telephone interviews were conducted. This is the second wave of America After 3PM to be carried out using an online survey and supplementary telephone interviews, after the 2004 and 2009 waves were conducted using paper surveys distributed through the U.S. mail and using random-digit telephone dialing. For the 2020 wave of America After 3PM, interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

America After 3PM data included in this report were collected between January 27 and March 17, 2020. A total of 31,055 households were surveyed and answered questions regarding ways in which their child or children are cared for

in the hours after school, participation in organized activities, participation in summer experiences, and demographics. A subset of households, 14,391 respondents, answered a series of follow up questions regarding afterschool experiences or barriers to participation in afterschool, and perceptions of afterschool programs. On average, the online survey took 13 minutes to complete, landline telephone surveys took 20 minutes, and mobile telephone surveys took 23 minutes. Data from interviews are weighted on race and income within state and by state population. The overall margin of error for child-level and household-level data is +/- < 1 percent.

Projections for child-level data represent the 57.4 million children and youth in the United States based on numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau's October 2018 Current Population Survey.

Also included in this report are findings from a nationally representative online survey fielded October 12-29, 2020, of 1,202 parents of school-aged children, conducted by Edge Research.



PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

# Introduction

Halie, the daughter of a single parent, first joined the Eldon Learning Enriched Afterschool Program (LEAP) when she was in middle school growing up in rural Missouri. During middle school and through high school, while her dad worked on a turkey farm, Halie learned how to play the recorder, took part in art activities and software coding lessons, received help with homework, played sports, and ate a healthy snack and meal every day after school. Now 18 years old, Halie's experience in her afterschool program inspired a career pathway toward teaching special education, after a mentor gave her the opportunity to volunteer in a LEAP classroom. Meanwhile, in Washington state, Mila learned how to write, direct, and edit videos in her afterschool program. One of her videos, on the dangers of drinking and driving, won an award, spurring her drive to pursue broadcast journalism in college. In the Minneapolis Beacons afterschool program, Javonna's experience of being surrounded by supportive mentors led her to founding the Black Student Union as a way to learn more about Black history and engage in meaningful conversations about race and anti-racism. Following graduation, Javonna has returned to Beacons as a staff member, having discovered her passion for working with kids and giving back to her community.

These stories provide a window into the kinds of opportunities afterschool programs provide to young people and the aspirations they fuel. During this turbulent year, which brought a devastating pandemic, a national awakening about systemic racism sparked by the murders of George Floyd and other



people of color, and a divisive, polarizing election, the supports afterschool programs provide are even more critical to helping children stay strong, resilient, and hopeful.

The Afterschool Alliance's fourth edition of America After 3PM provides a detailed accounting of the circumstances and conditions of U.S. children during the hours of 3 to 6 p.m. and compares afterschool program participation and unmet demand statistics for 2020 with results from 2004, 2009, and 2014. It identifies trends in afterschool program offerings, parent satisfaction with their child's afterschool program, and overall parent perceptions of afterschool programs. Additionally, this report looks at traditionally marginalized communities, including children in low-income families and children of color, to examine opportunity gaps. Through careful examination of the data we get a complete picture of afterschool programs, the experiences and opportunities they provide, and details about the children who are missing out on the benefits that programs offer.

Data for the 2020 edition of America After 3PM were collected prior to states and schools taking measures to curtail the spread of the coronavirus, providing a pre-pandemic snapshot of how children and youth spend their hours after school, between 3 and 6 p.m., when schools typically let out and before parents come home from work. The Afterschool Alliance commissioned a nationally representative follow-up survey of parents in October 2020, to accompany America After 3PM data and determine how the pandemic has and has not changed families' needs during the hours after school. The follow-up survey found that 70 percent of parents whose child is attending a hybrid school schedule are concerned about their ability to juggle working and monitoring their child's distance learning and more than half (54 percent) report stress regarding providing learning support while their child's school is operating virtually. Additionally, the majority of parents overall are concerned about their child's social and emotional wellbeing (84 percent) and the increase in unsupervised time for their child (55 percent), illustrating the continuing need for and value of afterschool programs. Three in four parents agree that the experience of coronavirus has made them appreciate teachers and afterschool program providers more than ever.

While the key findings that follow focus only on data from America After 3PM, interspersed throughout the main body of this report are data from the October 2020 nationally representative survey of parents, which provide a comparison point on what children are doing during the after school hours in the pandemic.



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# Key Findings

## I. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is at an all-time high

Over the years, the America After 3PM study has captured a continuously upward trend in the number of children who are not in an afterschool program but who would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them.

The 2020 America After 3PM report finds a particularly dramatic escalation in the unmet demand for afterschool programs since the last survey. Now, for every child in an afterschool program, there are three more children waiting to get in.

Since the first edition of America After 3PM, unmet demand for afterschool programs has grown from 15.3 million children (30 percent) in 2004, to 18.5 million children (38 percent) in 2009, to 19.4 million children (41 percent) in 2014, to 24.6 million children (50 percent) in 2020. That is an increase of more than 5 million children in the past six years.

### Unmet demand for afterschool programs at the state level

From 2014 to 2020, all but six states and Washington, D.C. saw an increase in unmet demand for afterschool programs, with nearly half of states experiencing a double-digit percentage point increase in unmet demand. New York is currently the state with the highest unmet demand for afterschool programs among children not currently enrolled in one (66 percent). While South Dakota is the state with the lowest unmet demand, still 1 in 3 South

Dakota children (34 percent) who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled if a program were available.

### Children alone and unsupervised after school

The number of children alone and unsupervised during the hours after school has continued to decline, reaching its lowest level of 7.7 million children (13 percent) in 2020, from the peak of 15.1 million children in 2009. However, while the number of middle and high school students on their own after school decreased from 2014, the number of elementary school students increased slightly from 2014 to 2020. More than 850,000 elementary schoolers are on their own during the after school hours, an increase of almost 38,000 since 2014.

### A closer look at traditionally underserved communities

Unmet demand is highest among traditionally underserved communities. More than half of Black (58 percent) and Latinx children (55 percent) are not in an afterschool program, but would be enrolled in a program if one were available. That compares to 46 percent of White children. Children living in low-income households who are not in an afterschool program are also more likely to enroll in an afterschool program if one were available to them than their higher income peers (51 percent vs. 49 percent).

## II. Demand surges as parents give programs high marks, recognize wide-ranging benefits

Combining the number of children already in an afterschool program with the number who would enroll in one if a program were available to them provides a measure of the overall demand for afterschool: 32.4 million children (56 percent of all children).

Based on parent responses, the growing demand may be a result of the positive experiences with afterschool programs and growing appreciation of the supports programs provide among parents with a child in an afterschool program as well as parents of nonparticipants.<sup>†</sup>

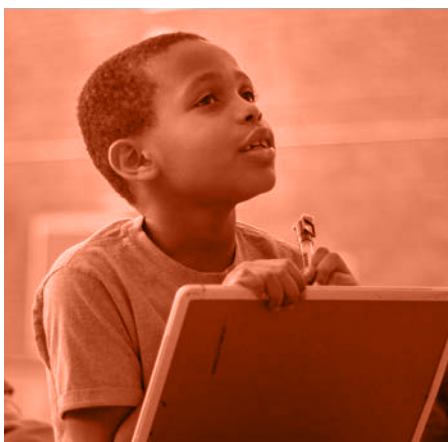
- **Growth in parent satisfaction:** One key indicator of the positive experience in afterschool programs is that satisfaction with programs is the highest it has ever been; 94 percent of parents report that they are satisfied with their child's afterschool program overall, an increase from 89 percent in 2014. The intensity of satisfaction has also increased over time, with the number of parents reporting being extremely satisfied seeing a 10 percentage point growth, from 50 percent in 2014 to 60 percent in 2020.
- **Growing recognition of benefits associated with afterschool programs:** In 2020, even more parents recognize the benefits afterschool programs afford. For example, agreement that afterschool programs

\* "Black" and "African American" and "Hispanic" and "Latinx" are used interchangeably throughout this report. Both "Black" and "White" are capitalized for the purposes of this report as referring to a racial and ethnic group of people.

† The America After 3PM survey is of parents or guardians of school-aged children. For the purposes of this report, "parents" is used to represent both parents and guardians.

help children gain interest and skills related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jumped 11 percentage points, from 65 percent in 2014 to 76 percent in 2020, and agreement that afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind grew 8 percentage points, from 75 percent to 83 percent.

- **Multitude of benefits associated with afterschool programs:** The majority of parents recognize a broad spectrum of positive benefits provided by programs, agreeing that afterschool programs provide time for kids to engage with their peers and reduce unproductive screen time (85 percent), create the space for them to acquire and hone life skills such as communicating and working in teams (82 percent), get kids more excited about learning and interested in school (74 percent), and reduce the likelihood that youth will use drugs or engage in other risky behaviors (75 percent). Parents also recognize afterschool programs' role in supporting working families. More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised (83 percent) and help working parents keep their jobs (81 percent).



### An increasingly positive view of afterschool programs among parents without a child in a program

A notable finding in the 2020 America After 3PM data is the positive change in perceptions of afterschool programs among parents who do not have a child enrolled in an afterschool program. Comparing 2014 to 2020, parents of non-participants are now more likely to agree that afterschool programs help children be physically active (73 percent vs. 83 percent), provide access to caring adults and mentors (67 percent vs. 74 percent), learn skills like the ability to work in teams (64 percent vs. 79 percent), and gain skills related to STEM (61 percent vs. 75 percent).

### High marks for programs in priority areas

Compared to the 2014 edition of America After 3PM, parents who have a child in an afterschool program in 2020 want more from their child's afterschool program and are now more likely to expect programs to provide comprehensive supports. Perhaps more importantly, in the areas that parents prioritize, their level of satisfaction with their afterschool program's offerings is high. For instance, 93 percent of parents report that safety was important in their selection of an afterschool program, and 92 percent of parents report that they are satisfied that their child's afterschool program provides a safe environment. Such alignment between the level of importance and satisfaction is also seen in areas including, but not limited to, afterschool programs employing knowledgeable and caring staff and providing opportunities to build life skills.

### Helping families and children in need

Afterschool programs also provide supports that go beyond meeting the academic and social and emotional needs of their students. Particularly for low-income families, programs are helping to address food insecurity, connecting families with community resources, and providing skill-building opportunities for parents and family members. Three-quarters of low-income families report that the availability of snacks and meals was important in their selection of their child's afterschool program, with close to half (48 percent) saying that it was extremely important. Regarding services for parents and families, 76 percent of low-income parents report that their child's afterschool program offers classes or workshops through which they are building skills and 64 percent report that their child's afterschool program connects them with community resources such as dental clinics and financial planning services.

## III. The opportunity gap is evident

Children in low-income families have more limited learning opportunities outside of school compared to their higher income peers, including access to afterschool programs. In 2020, America After 3PM found that families in the highest income bracket spend more than five times as much on out-of-school time activities annually than families in the lowest income bracket, spending roughly \$3,600 annually versus \$700.

Correspondingly, higher income families are much more likely than low-income families to report that their children are involved in afterschool programs, extracurricular activities, and summer





programs, with 9 in 10 parents in the highest income bracket (89 percent) reporting that their child participates in at least one out-of-school time experience, compared to 6 in 10 parents in the lowest income bracket. Involvement in afterschool activities correlates with families' household income, where the higher a family's income, the greater the percentage of parents reporting that their child is involved in an activity. One example is participation in special lessons such as art, music, or dance lessons, where 21 percent of parents in the lowest income bracket report their child is enrolled in special lessons, increasing to 36 percent of parents in the middle-income bracket, and 41 percent of parents in the highest income bracket.

#### IV. Cost and access top the list of roadblocks to afterschool participation

In this year's America After 3PM survey, which gathered data before the pandemic, a greater percentage of parents report challenges related to

affordability and availability of afterschool programs compared to parents in 2014. There were double-digit percentage point increases in parents reporting that cost (increasing from 43 percent to 57 percent), lack of available programs (increasing from 29 percent to 42 percent), and a lack of a safe way for their children to get to and come back from programs (increasing from 39 percent to 53 percent) prevented them from enrolling their child in afterschool.

##### More barriers for low-income families and families of color

The barriers to enrolling children in an afterschool program increased among low-income families and are more prevalent among low-income families than their higher income peers. Among low-income parents, the percentage of parents who report that cost was a barrier increased 11 percentage points, from 50 percent to 61 percent. Compared to higher income families, low-income families were more likely to report that cost (61 percent vs. 55 percent) and

issues related to access, such as the lack of a safe way for their children to get to and from the program (58 percent vs. 50 percent) and there was not an afterschool program in the area (44 percent vs. 40 percent), as reasons they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program.

While the majority of parents across groups report that cost was an important factor in their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program, African American and Hispanic parents are more likely than White parents to say that their children did not have a safe way to get to and from afterschool programs, programs' hours of operation and location presented challenges, and there were not spaces available in the program they prefer. African American and Hispanic parents are also more likely to report that afterschool programs did not address the special needs of their children.

Overall, accessibility was a greater barrier for low-income parents of color than low-income White parents. African American and Hispanic parents who are low-income

(62 percent, all) were much more likely than White parents who are low-income (54 percent) to say that an important reason they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program was that their child did not have a safe way to get to and come home from an afterschool program.

### Barriers are greatest for families who want to enroll in an afterschool program

Families who do not have a child in an afterschool program, but want their child to participate in an afterschool program, are also now more likely to report facing challenges to enrolling their child in a program. Among this group of families, not only have barriers increased since 2014, but they experience these barriers at higher rates than families without a child in an afterschool program overall.

Roughly two in three parents of likely afterschool program participants report that cost (67 percent) and lack of a safe way for their child to get to and from the program (66 percent) factored into their decision-making process, up from 52 percent for both in 2014.

## V. Afterschool participation falls; inequities prominent

For the first time in America After 3PM's 16-year history, afterschool program participation has decreased, dropping below 2009 participation rates in 2020.

In all, 7.8 million children (14 percent) are currently enrolled in programs and benefiting from the offerings and supports they provide, compared to 10.2 million children (18 percent) in 2014, 8.4

million children (15 percent) in 2009, and 6.5 million children (11 percent) in 2004.

While there is an overall drop in access to afterschool opportunities for all young people, the America After 3PM survey found that the young people most affected are those from low-income households. The number of children in low-income households in afterschool fell from 4.6 million in 2014 to 2.7 million in 2020. Meanwhile the number of higher-income children in afterschool decreased by a fraction of that amount: 446,000 over that same time period.

Cost is a major driver behind the decline in participation among low-income families, and points to a lack of available affordable programs nationwide. The decline comes as public investments in afterschool programs have largely





stalled and not kept up with growing demand. For instance, funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC), the only federal funding stream dedicated exclusively to afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs, has lagged behind the rate of inflation between 2014 and 2020, increasing less than 9 percent. As a result, in spite of the increases in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC investment since 2014, the current funding level is now \$10 million lower in inflation-adjusted terms.

Our nation's publicly funded programs provide a backbone of support for many low-income young people. But, these programs are not yet meeting the need. The opportunity to participate in programs is shrinking, as cost and lack of affordable afterschool opportunities are denying a significant number of low-income young people access to afterschool programs.

## VI. Benefits are significant for children and families fortunate enough to participate

America After 3PM finds that children in afterschool programs have access to activities that complement school day learning as well as keep them active, build life skills, and connect them to the community.

For example, the overwhelming majority of parents report that their child's afterschool program offers the chance to build social and emotional skills and competencies (96 percent), make time for physical activity (85 percent), receive homework help (73 percent), take advantage of STEM learning opportunities (73 percent), and practice reading or writing (69 percent).

Parents report high levels of satisfaction with the activities and supports offered by programs. Based on parent responses, afterschool programs are on the whole providing a safe environment for children, where they are surrounded by knowledgeable and caring staff and interact with peers and develop social skills, while taking part in physical activities and academically enriching activities. A majority of parents report satisfaction with each aspect of their child's afterschool program the survey asked about, from a high of 94 percent of parents reporting overall satisfaction with their child's experience in their primary afterschool program to 57 percent of parents reporting that they were satisfied with their afterschool program's ability to address the special needs of their child.

## VII. Support for increased investment in afterschool is greater than ever

Today, most parents (84 percent) agree that all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs. Support for public funding for afterschool programs has reached an all-time high of 87 percent of parents in favor of public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth, up from 84 percent in 2014 and 83 percent in 2009. Among working parents, support for public funding is even higher (89 percent).

There is a high level of support for public funding of afterschool programs in general across the country. More than 5 in 6 rural (86 percent), suburban (87 percent), and urban parents (90 percent) support public funding for afterschool programs, and at least 8 in 10 parents in every state favor federal funding, from a high of 92 percent in New Mexico and Nebraska to 80 percent in Wyoming.

In a time of political polarization, investment in afterschool programs for young people who are now without access to these programs bridges political divides. Support for public funding of afterschool programs is strong across political affiliations, with 91 percent of parents who identify as Democrat, 87 percent of parents who identify as Independent, and 85 percent of parents who identify as Republican, in favor of such support.



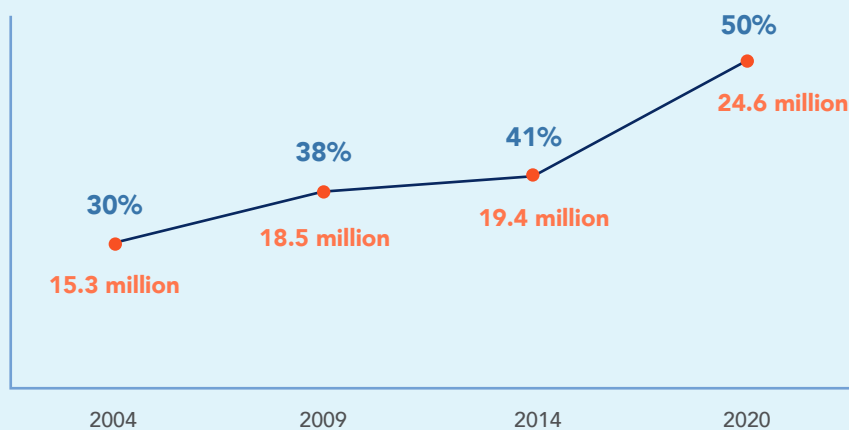
**Unmet demand for  
afterschool programs  
is at an all-time high**

# Unmet demand for afterschool programs is at an all-time high

The 2020 edition of America After 3PM marks a milestone; awareness and appreciation of afterschool programs have reached the point that half of children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them. For every child in an afterschool program, there are now **three more children waiting** to get in.

**Figure 1:** Unmet demand for afterschool has grown by 60% since 2004

Percentage of children not in an afterschool program, but would be enrolled if a program were available



In all, nearly 25 million children who are not in an afterschool program would like to be. After a steady increase in the unmet demand for afterschool programs since 2004, 2020 sees a particularly dramatic escalation, rising from 41 percent in 2014 to 50 percent of nonparticipating children in 2020 (*Figure 1*).

Reflecting this surge, the demographic makeup of the group of children not enrolled in afterschool whose parents would like them to be enrolled is

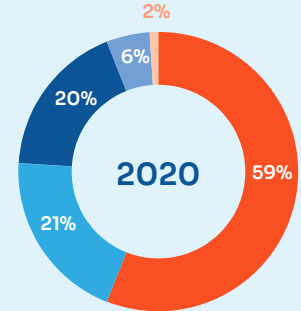
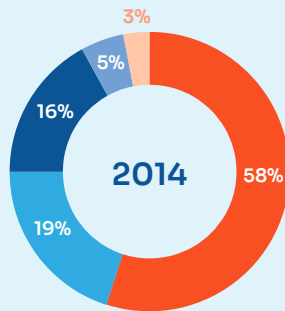
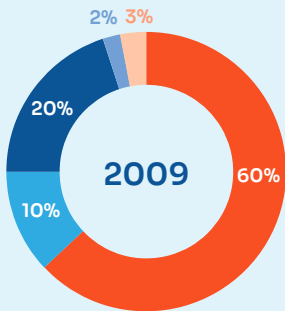
changing. Over the years of the America After 3PM study, the percentage of children of color in this group of “likely” afterschool participants has grown. The percentage of Latinx children has consistently risen, from 10 percent in 2009, to 19 percent in 2014, and to 21 percent in 2020. Similarly, the percentage of Black children who would take part in an afterschool program went from 16 percent in 2014 to 20 percent in 2020 (*Figure 2*).

Similarly, in past surveys, the unmet demand for afterschool programs by grade level, has consistently tilted toward elementary school students. This year, that trend has intensified. In 2020, 59 percent of students who are likely participants are elementary school students, followed by middle school students (22 percent) and high school students (20 percent), reflecting a seven percentage point increase in elementary students, and a six percentage point drop among high school students (*Figure 2*).

**Figure 2:** Composition of likely afterschool program participants by\*:

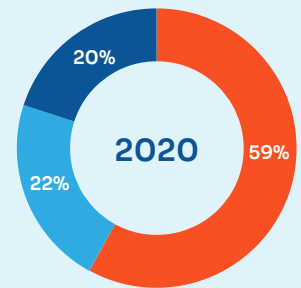
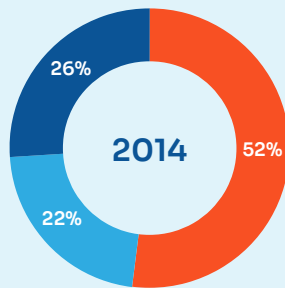
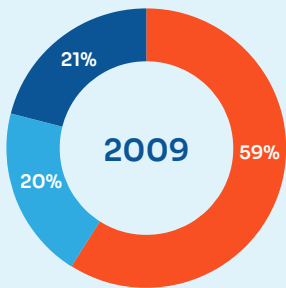
**RACE/ETHNICITY**

● White   
 ● Hispanic/Latinx   
 ● African American/Black   
 ● Asian American   
 ● Native American



**AGE**

● Elementary School   
 ● Middle School   
 ● High School



\*Totals may not add up to 100 percent as respondents were able to select all answers that apply



PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action



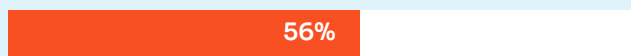
## AFTERSCHOOL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: Need for afterschool programs

**49 percent** of children not in an afterschool program this fall would participate in one in-person, virtually, or a hybrid of in-person and virtually, if it were available.

**Figure 3:** Percentage of non-participant children likely to participate in an afterschool program by:

### AGE

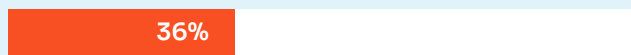
Elementary school



Middle school



High school



### INCOME LEVEL

Low-income families



Higher income families



### RACE/ETHNICITY

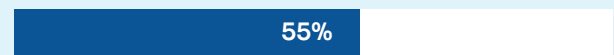
Asian American



African American/Black



Hispanic/Latinx



White



Native American



## Unmet demand for afterschool programs at the state level

Drilling down into 2020 state-level data, from 2014 to 2020, all but six states and Washington, D.C. experienced an increase in unmet demand for afterschool programs. Washington state saw the largest increase, with the percentage of children not in an afterschool program, but whose parents report that they would like to be enrolled in one, growing by 75

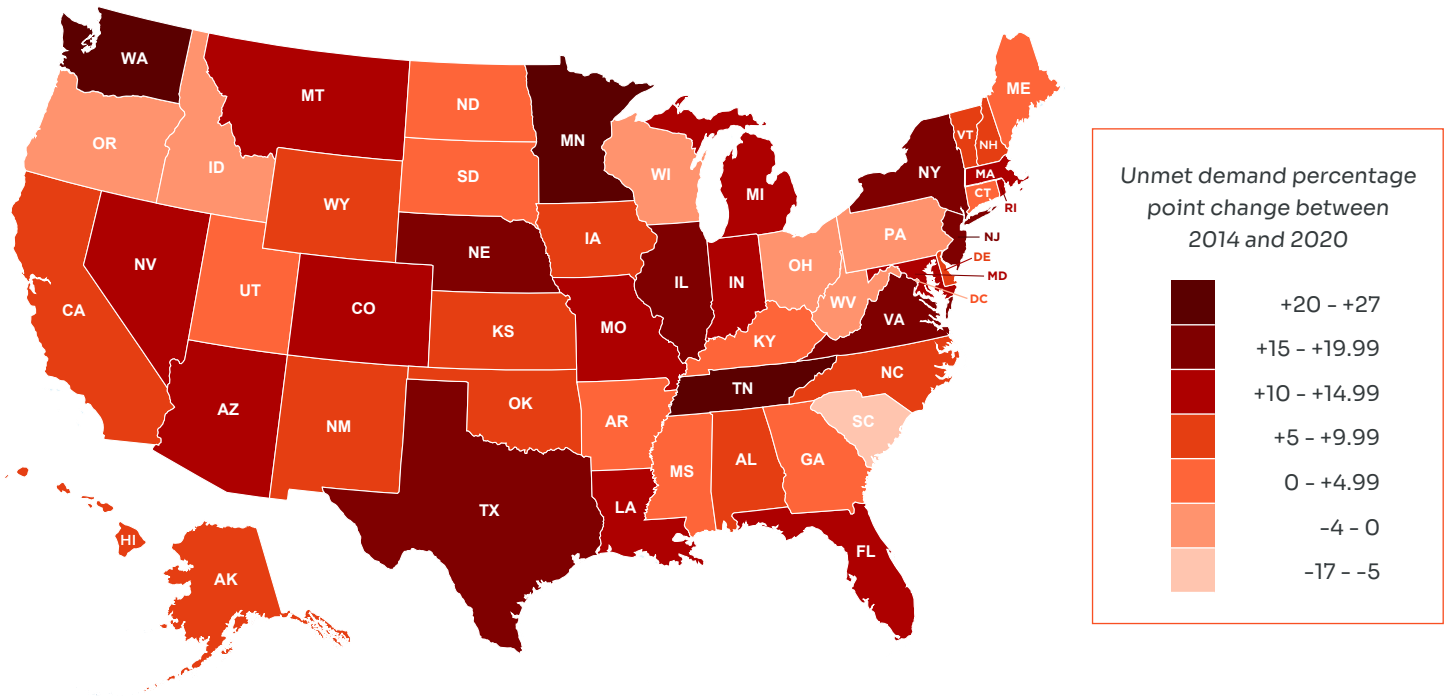
percent (from 36 percent in 2014 to 63 percent in 2020), and nearly half of states saw a double digit percentage point increase in unmet demand (Figure 4).

The percentage of states in which at least half of children are not in an afterschool program but would be enrolled in one if it were available to them more than tripled, increasing from four states and Washington, D.C. in 2014 to 18 states in 2020. New York is currently the state with

the highest unmet demand for afterschool programs (66 percent), increasing 16 percentage points from 2014. The state with the second highest percentage of unmet demand is Washington state (63 percent), followed by Illinois (60 percent). While South Dakota is the state with the lowest percentage of unmet demand, still 1 in 3 South Dakota children (34 percent) who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled if it were available.

**Figure 4: Change in unmet demand from 2014 to 2020**

Overall, unmet demand for afterschool programs in the United States has grown



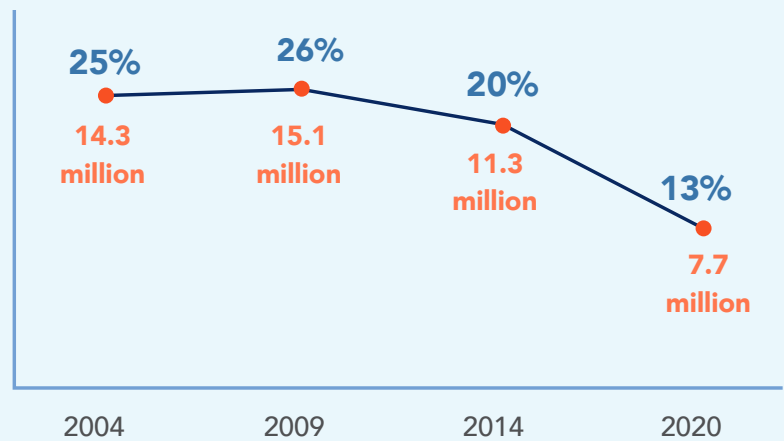


## Who's alone after school?

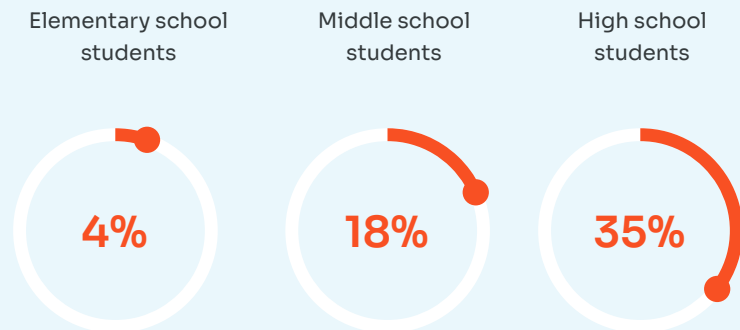
The number of children alone and unsupervised during the hours after school reached its lowest level at **7.7 million children in 2020**, down from the peak of 15.1 million children in 2009 (Figures 5 and 6). However, while the number of middle and high school students on their own after school decreased from 2014, the number of elementary school students in self-care increased slightly in 2020. More than 850,000 elementary schoolers are on their own during the hours after school, an increase of almost 38,000 since 2014.



**Figure 5: Children alone and unsupervised between 3 and 6 p.m.**  
Percentage of children who are in self-care after school



**Figure 6: Percentage of children in K-12 alone and unsupervised between 3 and 6 p.m.**



### A closer look at traditionally underserved communities

Unmet demand is highest among traditionally underserved communities. More than half of Black (58 percent) and Latinx children (55 percent) who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in a program if one were

available. That compares to 46 percent of White children. Children living in low-income households who are not in an afterschool program are also more likely to enroll in an afterschool program if one were available to them than their higher income peers (51 percent vs. 49 percent).

**More than half of Black and Latinx children who are not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in a program if one were available.**



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**Demand surges as parents give programs high marks, recognize wide-ranging benefits**

# Demand surges as parents give programs high marks, recognize wide-ranging benefits

Combining the number of children already in an afterschool program with the number who would enroll in one if a program were available to them provides a measure of the overall demand for afterschool: 32.4 million children (56 percent of all children). What is driving the growing need for afterschool programs?

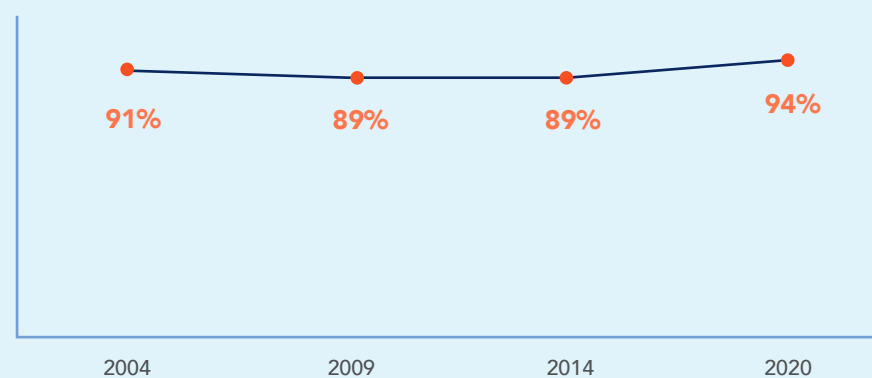
Questions in the America After 3PM survey are structured to explore the current experiences of children taking part in an afterschool program, as well as to examine parents' perceptions of programs—both parents with a child in an afterschool program and parents with children in other types of care after school. The picture that emerges reflects an overall positive experience in afterschool programs and growing appreciation by parents of the supports programs provide.

Satisfaction with programs is the highest it has ever been, with 94 percent of parents reporting that they are satisfied with their child's afterschool program overall, an increase from 89 percent in 2014 (**Figure 7**). The intensity of satisfaction has also increased over time, with the share of parents reporting being extremely satisfied growing from 50 percent in 2014 to 60 percent in 2020.

America After 3PM also finds an emerging trend: Parents, regardless of whether they have a child in an afterschool program, increasingly view afterschool programs as a critical source of support for children and families. At present, the overwhelming majority of parents recognize the benefits programs provide.

**Figure 7: Afterschool program satisfaction reaching an all-time high**

Percentage of parents reporting that they are satisfied with their child's afterschool program



The survey found that more than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide time for kids to engage with their peers and reduce unproductive screen time (85 percent), space to acquire and hone life skills like the ability to communicate and work in teams (82 percent), and opportunities to build confidence (81 percent). Three-fourths of parents agree that programs allow children to build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors (77 percent) and reduce the likelihood that youth will use drugs or engage in other risky behaviors (75 percent) (**Figure 8**).

Parents see afterschool programs providing academic supports and improving engagement in school. Most parents agree that afterschool programs help kids gain interest and skills related to science, technology, engineering, math, or computer science (76 percent); get kids more excited about learning and interested in school (74 percent); and help parents build connections to their child's school day education (64 percent).

The 2020 edition of America After 3PM found that more parents in 2020 than in 2014 were in agreement regarding the benefits afterschool programs afford. For example, agreement that afterschool

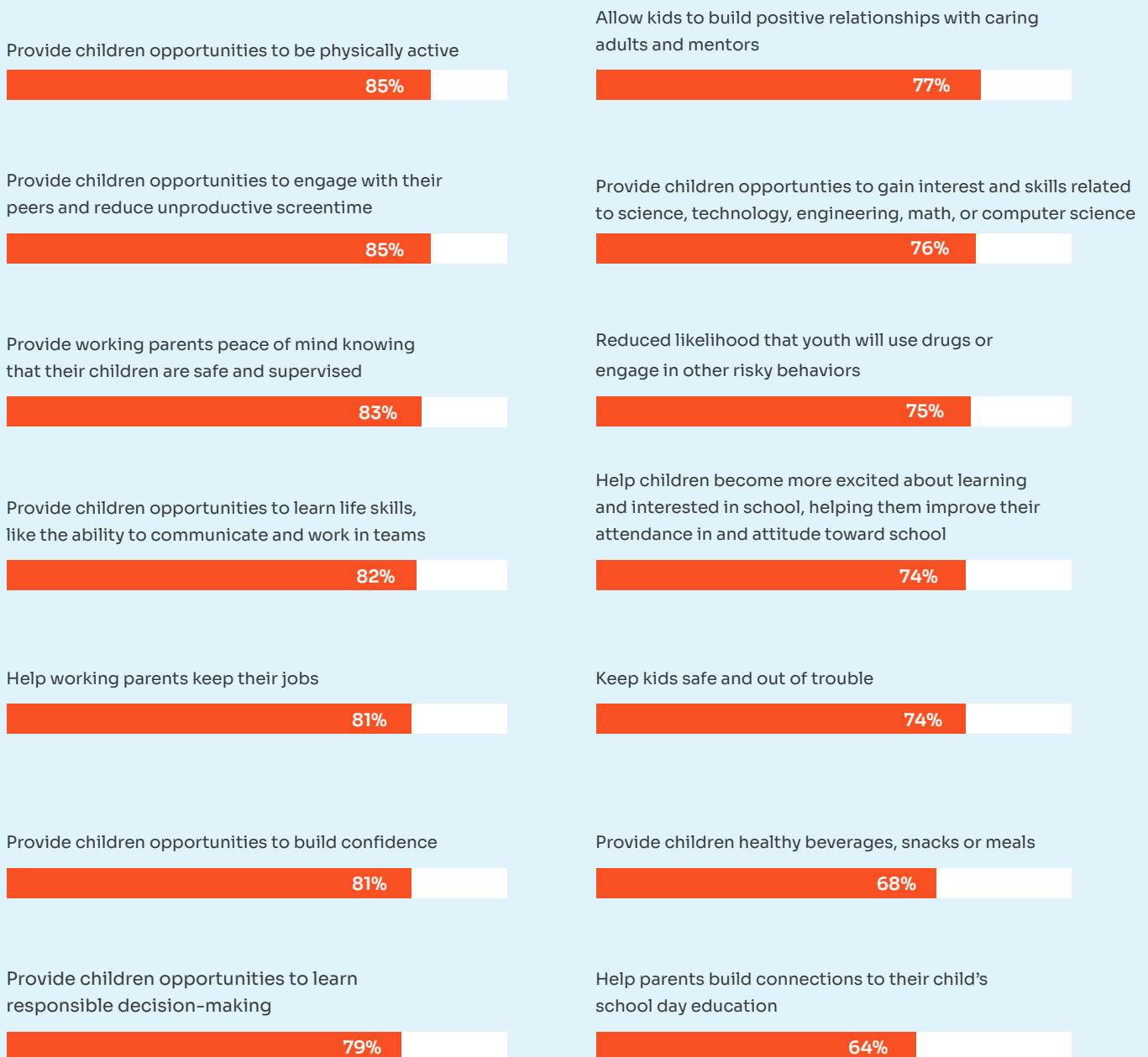
programs help children gain interest and skills related to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) jumped 11 percentage points, from 65 percent in 2014 to 76 percent in 2020, and agreement that afterschool programs provide opportunities to be physically active grew 10 percentage points, from 75 percent to 85 percent (Figure 9).

Parents also recognize the important role afterschool programs play in supporting working families. More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind, knowing that their children are safe and supervised (83 percent), and that programs help working parents keep their jobs (81 percent). Recognition of benefits

to parents also grew between 2014 and 2020, where 75 percent of parents agreed that programs help give working parents peace of mind in 2014, increasing to 83 percent in 2020.

### Figure 8: Parents agree that afterschool programs provide a multitude of supports

Percentage of parents who agree that afterschool programs provide the following benefits:





## AFTERSCHOOL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: Parents continue to see the benefits of afterschool programs

Parents overwhelmingly agree with the benefits afterschool programs provide children and families. Parents agree that afterschool programs:





	Keep kids safe and out of trouble	<b>77%</b>
	Help kids build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors	<b>77%</b>
	Help working parents keep their jobs	<b>79%</b>
	Provide support to parents who are trying to find jobs	<b>73%</b>

PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Visiting Agency for American Education, Images of Teachers and Students

**Figure 9: More parents today recognize the value of afterschool programs**

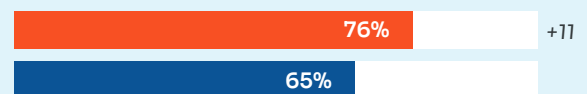
Percentage of parents who agree that afterschool programs provide the following benefits:

● 2020 ● 2014

Provide children opportunities to be physically active



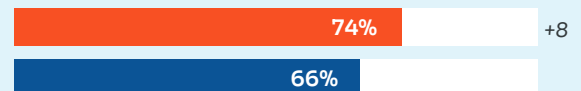
Provide children opportunities to gain interest and skills related to STEM



Provide working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised



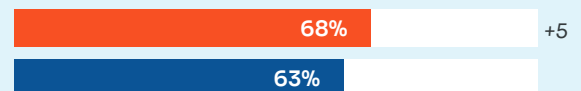
Keep kids safe and out of trouble



Help working parents keep their jobs



Provide healthy beverages, snacks or meals



## An increasingly positive view of afterschool programs among parents without a child in a program

A notable finding in the 2020 America After 3PM data is the positive change in perceptions of afterschool programs among parents who do not have a child enrolled in a program. For example, among this group of parents, agreement that afterschool programs keep kids safe<sup>†</sup> has seen a steady increase, from 51 percent in 2009 to 60 percent in 2014 and reaching 70 percent in 2020. Similarly, agreement that afterschool programs support students' academic and social and emotional growth has also increased. In 2009, less than half agreed that programs "help kids succeed in school" (47 percent), whereas in 2020, 71 percent agree that afterschool programs help kids "become more excited about learning and interested in school, helping them improve their attendance in and attitude toward school." Comparing 2014 to 2020, parents of non-participants are now more likely to agree that afterschool programs help children be physically active (73 percent vs. 83 percent), provide access to caring adults and mentors (67 percent vs. 74 percent), provide opportunities to learn skills like the ability to work in teams (64 percent vs. 79 percent), and gain skills related to STEM (61 percent vs. 75 percent).<sup>§</sup>



## Rising expectations of afterschool programs

Compared to the 2014 America After 3PM survey, parents who have a child in an afterschool program in 2020 now want more from their child's afterschool program and are more likely to expect programs to be more comprehensive in nature, ranging from a basic prerequisite that a program provides a safe environment to the expectation that programs meet highly specific needs, such as providing STEM learning opportunities. Perhaps more importantly, in the areas that parents prioritize, their level of satisfaction with their afterschool program's offerings is high.

Asked to identify specific factors that were important to their choice of a program for their children, parents responded in ways that suggest that they are more keenly

aware of the various opportunities and advantages afterschool programs offer, and factor them into their selection of a program. More parents in 2020 described a range of factors as important. For example, the share of parents reporting that STEM learning opportunities was important in their selection of their child's afterschool program jumped 19 percentage points from 53 to 72 percent, the largest increase among the various considerations offered. Factors such as providing time for physical activity, homework help, and learning activities not provided during the regular school day also saw double digit percentage point increases. Overall, there was an across-the-board increase in the importance of program-selection factors (Figure 10).

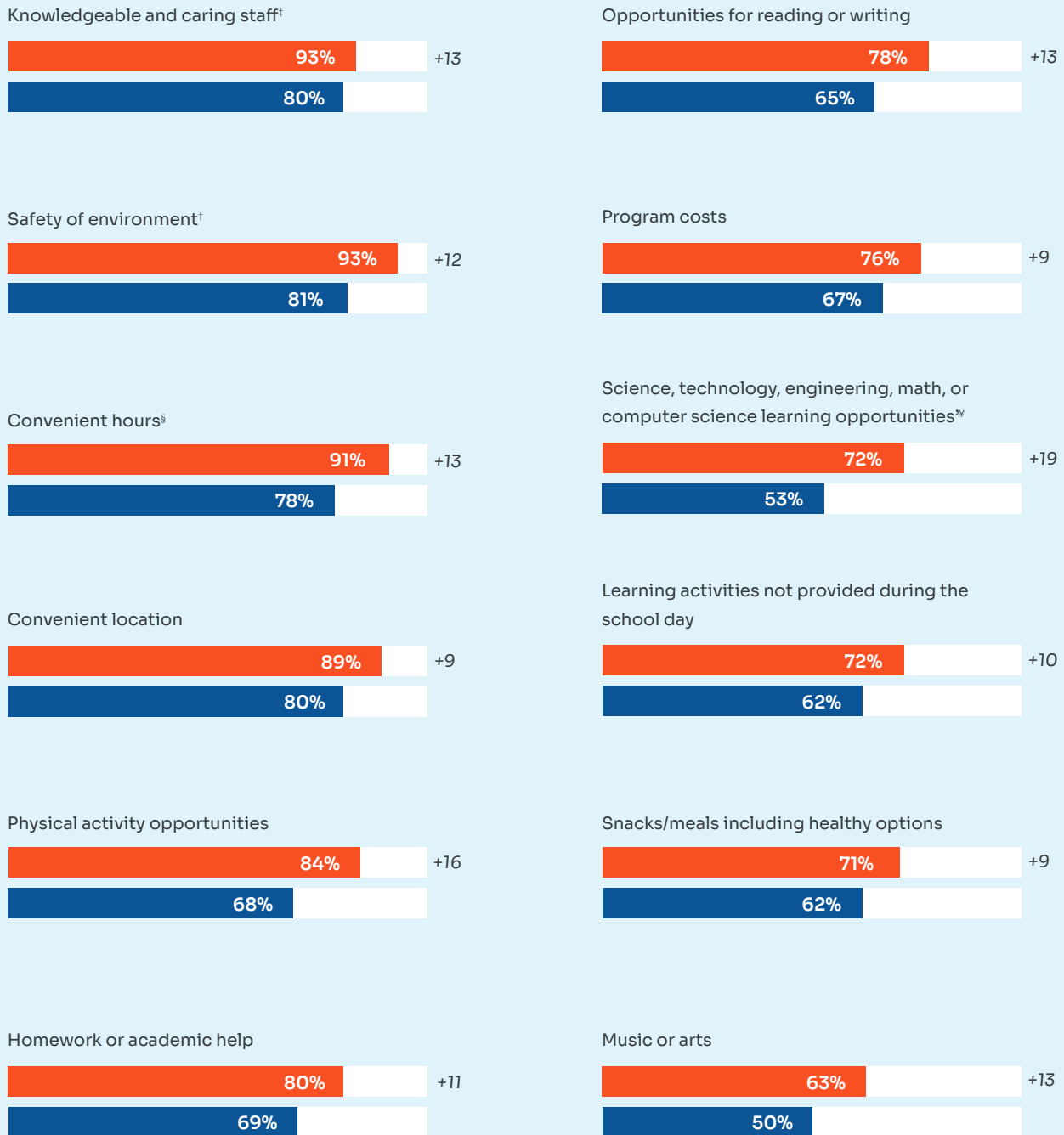
Factors that were at the top of parents' lists as to how they selected their child's afterschool program in 2014 remained at the top in 2020. In 2020, more than 9 in 10 parents say that the program's safe environment (93 percent), staff (93 percent), and hours of operation (91 percent) were very or somewhat important in their selection of a program, compared to approximately 8 in 10 parents in 2014 (81 percent, 80 percent, and 78 percent, respectively).

<sup>†</sup> In 2004 and 2009, the statement was phrased "Afterschool programs in my area keep kids safe" and in 2014 and 2019, the statement was "Afterschool programs in my area keep kids safe and out of trouble."

<sup>§</sup> In 2014, the language used was "access to caring adults and mentors," "gain workforce skills such as teamwork, leadership and critical thinking," and "gain skills related to science, technology, engineering or math." In 2020, the language used was "afterschool programs allow kids to build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors," "have opportunities to learn life skills, like the ability to communicate and work in teams," and "gain interest and skills related to science, technology, engineering, math, or computer science."

**Figure 10: Parents are looking for afterschool programs to provide a range of supports, with STEM and physical activity becoming more important factors in program selection**

Percentage of parents reporting the following were important in selecting their child’s afterschool program:



<sup>†</sup> In 2014, the framing of language was originally “Safe haven”

<sup>‡</sup> In 2014, the framing of language was originally “Knowledgeable and well trained staff”

<sup>§</sup> In 2014, the framing of language was originally “Hours meet my needs”

<sup>¶</sup> In 2014, the framing of language was originally “Science, technology, engineering, or math learning opportunities”

As noted earlier, in the areas that parents care most about when selecting their child's afterschool program, parents also report high levels of satisfaction. For instance, 93 percent of parents report that safety was important in their selection of an afterschool program, and 92 percent of parents report that they are satisfied that their child's afterschool program provides a safe environment. Such alignment between the level of importance and satisfaction is also evident in afterschool programs employing knowledgeable and caring staff, providing opportunities to build life skills, and offering physical activities. This

juxtaposition is a helpful illustration of the positive and full experience of children in afterschool programs (Figure 11).

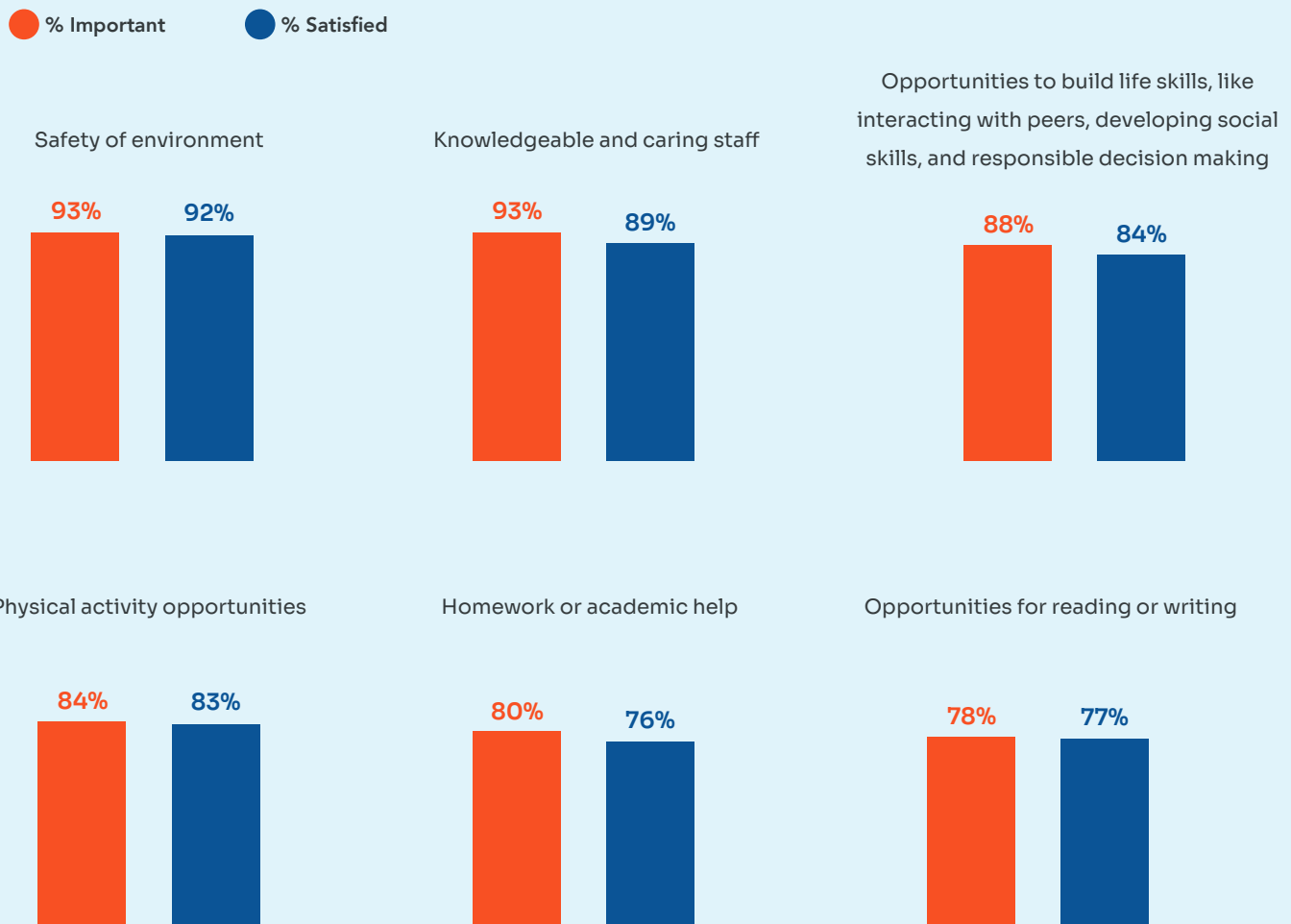
### Programs helping families and children in need

Afterschool programs are providing services that go beyond the scope of the academic and social and emotional needs of their students. In particular, for low-income families, programs are helping address food insecurity, connecting families with community resources, and providing skill-building opportunities

for parents and family members. Three-quarters of low-income families report that the availability of snacks and meals was important in their selection of their child's afterschool program, with close to half (48 percent) saying that it was extremely important. Regarding services for parents and families, 76 percent of low-income parents report that their child's afterschool programs offers classes or workshops through which parents are building skills, and 64 percent report that their child's afterschool program connects them with community resources, such as dental clinics and financial planning services.

**Figure 11: Parents are highly satisfied with aspects of programming that are important to them**

Percent of parents reporting that an aspect was important in selecting their child's afterschool program and percent reporting that they are satisfied with the offering







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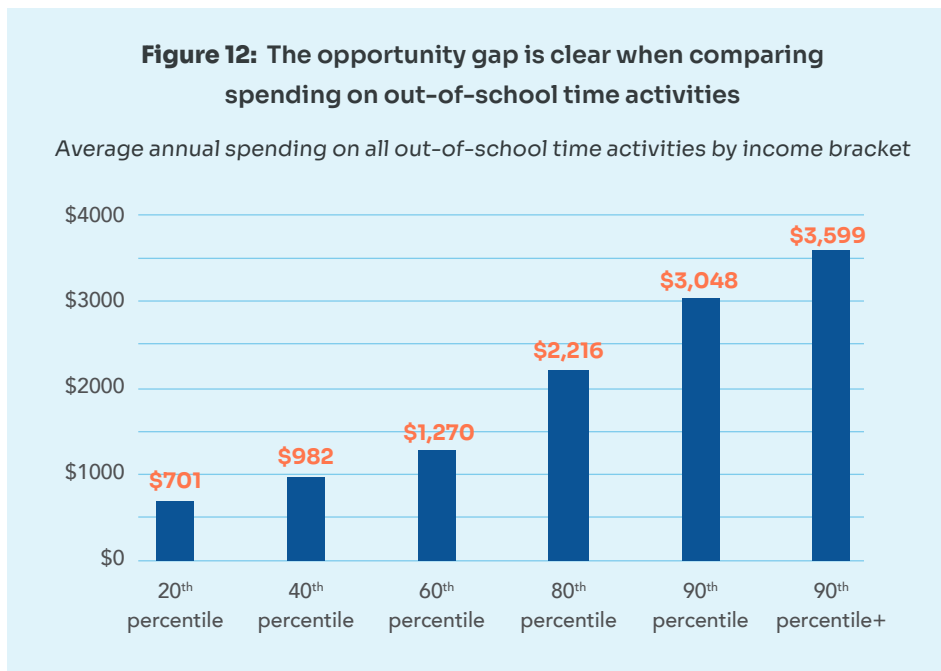
**The opportunity  
gap is evident**

# The opportunity gap is evident

For the first time in 2020, the America After 3PM data were used to better understand the full set of opportunities available to children in low-income families and compare them to opportunities available to children in higher income families during the out-of-school time hours.

Children in low-income families have more limited opportunities compared to their higher income peers. That includes participation in afterschool programs, but also activities such as sports, special lessons, and volunteering. The analysis reveals that in 2020, opportunities are far from equal, with children in low-income families having fewer opportunities than their higher income peers, including, but not limited to participation in afterschool programs. Families in the highest income bracket spend more than five times as much on out-of-school time activities for one child annually, compared to families in the lowest income bracket, spending roughly \$3,600 annually versus \$700\*\* (Figure 12).

Correspondingly, higher income families are much more likely than low-income families to report that their children are involved in afterschool programs, extracurricular activities, and summer programs, with 9 in 10 parents in the highest income bracket (89 percent) reporting that their child participates in at least one out-of-school time experience, compared to 6 in 10 parents in the lowest income bracket. Parents in the highest income bracket, for example, are approximately twice as likely as



families in the lowest income bracket to report that their child participates in organized team sports (59 percent vs. 24 percent), special lessons (41 percent vs. 21 percent), club activities (24 percent vs. 11 percent), and volunteering (13 percent vs. 6 percent) (Figure 13).

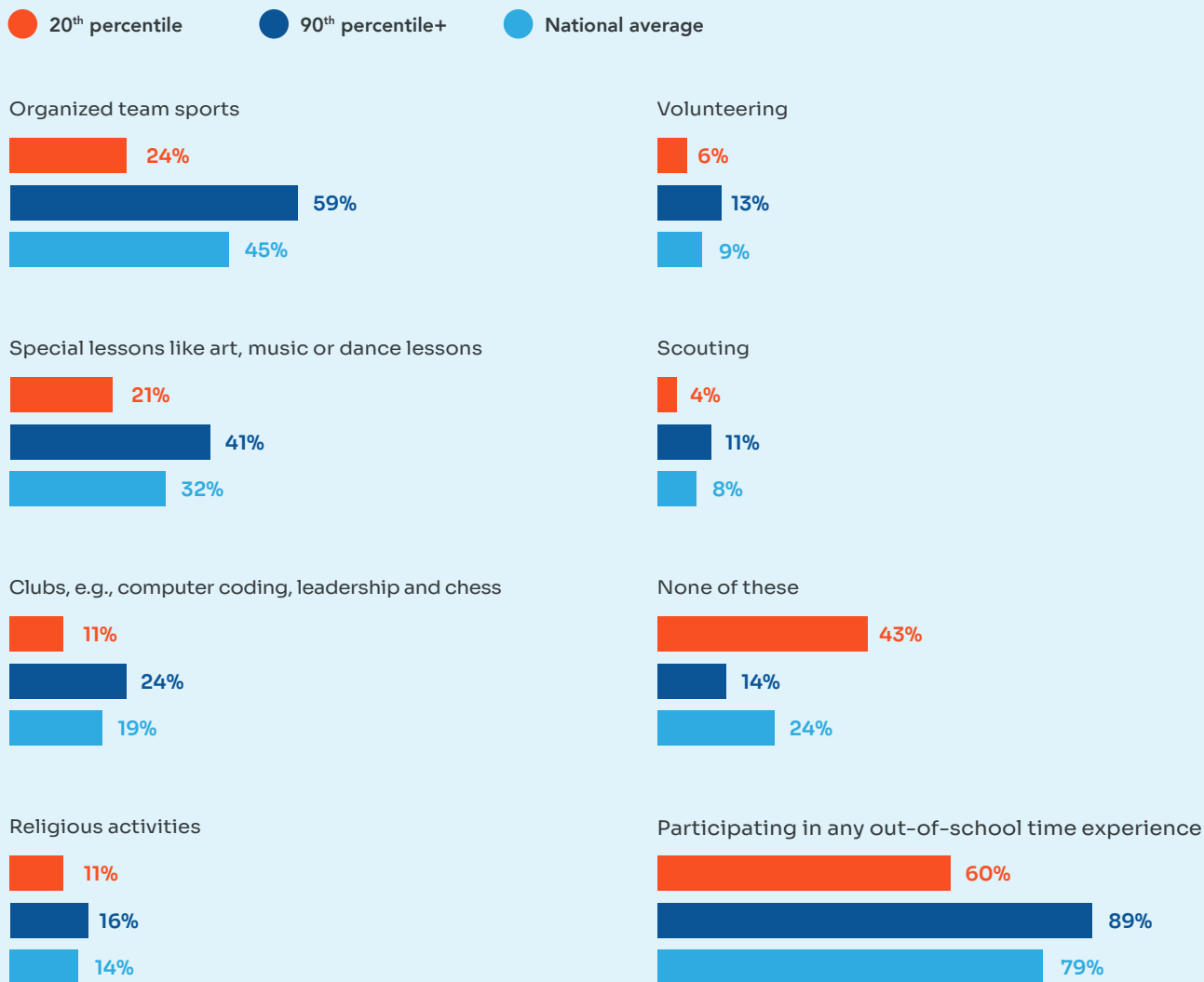
Involvement in afterschool activities correlates with families' household incomes, where the higher a family's income, the greater the percentage of parents reporting that their child is

involved in an activity. One example is participation in special lessons, like art, music, or dance, where 21 percent of parents in the 20<sup>th</sup> income percentile report their child is enrolled in special lessons, increasing to 24 percent of parents in the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, 28 percent of parents in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile, 36 percent of parents in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile, and 41 percent of parents in the highest income bracket.

\*\* The analysis reviewed America After 3PM respondents by household income percentiles/quintiles: 20<sup>th</sup> percentile (under \$25,000), 40<sup>th</sup> percentile (\$25,000 to just under \$50,000), 60<sup>th</sup> percentile (\$50,000 to just under \$75,000), 80<sup>th</sup> percentile (\$75,000 to just under \$100,000), 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (\$100,000 to just under \$200,000), 90<sup>th</sup>+ percentile (\$200,000 or more).

### Figure 13: Children in higher-income families are much more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities than children in low-income families

Percentage of parents who report that their child participates in an organized after school activity by income bracket



Comparing African American and Hispanic parents who do not qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program to African American and Hispanic parents who do qualify, parents who do not qualify were much more likely to report that their child participates in at least one organized activity after school. Approximately 4 in 5 higher income

African American parents (78 percent) and higher income Hispanic parents (81 percent) report that their child participates in at least one organized activity after school, compared to 66 percent of African American parents with low income and 64 percent of Hispanic parents with low income. There are also significant differences in spending

on activities, such as sports, hobbies, or clubs. Not including the cost of any afterschool programs, African American and Hispanic parents with low income spend approximately half of what their higher income counterparts spend annually, \$922 vs. \$1,697 and \$844 vs. \$1,743.



# IV

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**Cost and access top  
the list of roadblocks to  
afterschool participation**

# Cost and access top the list of roadblocks to afterschool participation

To help understand the factors that influence parents' decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program, the America After 3PM household survey asks parents why they chose not to enroll their child in an afterschool program, and how much weight they would place on each reason.

This year, a greater percentage of parents report challenges related to access to and availability of afterschool programs compared to 2014. There are double-digit percentage point increases in parents reporting that cost, lack of available programs, and lack of a safe way for their children to get to and come home from programs prevented them from enrolling their child in an afterschool program. In 2020, a majority of parents report that cost and access are barriers to participation. After parents' preference for their child to stay with them or another adult after school (59 percent), program cost was the second most common reason selected for their decision not to enroll their child in a program (57 percent) (*Figure 14*).

## More barriers for low-income families and families of color

The barriers to enrolling children in an afterschool program increased among low-income families and are higher among low-income families than their higher income peers. The percentage of low-income parents reporting that cost and access were barriers to enrolling their child in an afterschool program increased from 2014 to 2020. Among low-income parents, the share of parents who report that cost was a barrier increased 11

percentage points, from 50 percent to 61 percent; parents reporting that the lack of a safe way for their child to get to and from the afterschool program is a barrier increased 10 percentage points, from 48 percent to 58 percent; and parents identifying the absence of available afterschool programs as a barrier increased 9 percentage points, from 35 percent to 44 percent. Low-income parents are also more likely in 2020 to report that programs' hours (36 percent vs. 48 percent) and location (40 percent vs. 51 percent) are inconvenient.

Low-income families are more likely than higher income families to report that cost (61 percent vs. 55 percent) and issues related to access, such as a lack of a safe way for their children to get to and from the program (58 percent vs. 50 percent) or the lack of an available afterschool program in the area (44 percent vs. 40 percent), were reasons they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program. Low-income families are also less likely to report that information on afterschool programs was readily available in their community (57 percent) than higher income families (62 percent).

The majority of parents across groups report that cost was an important factor in their decision not to enroll their child

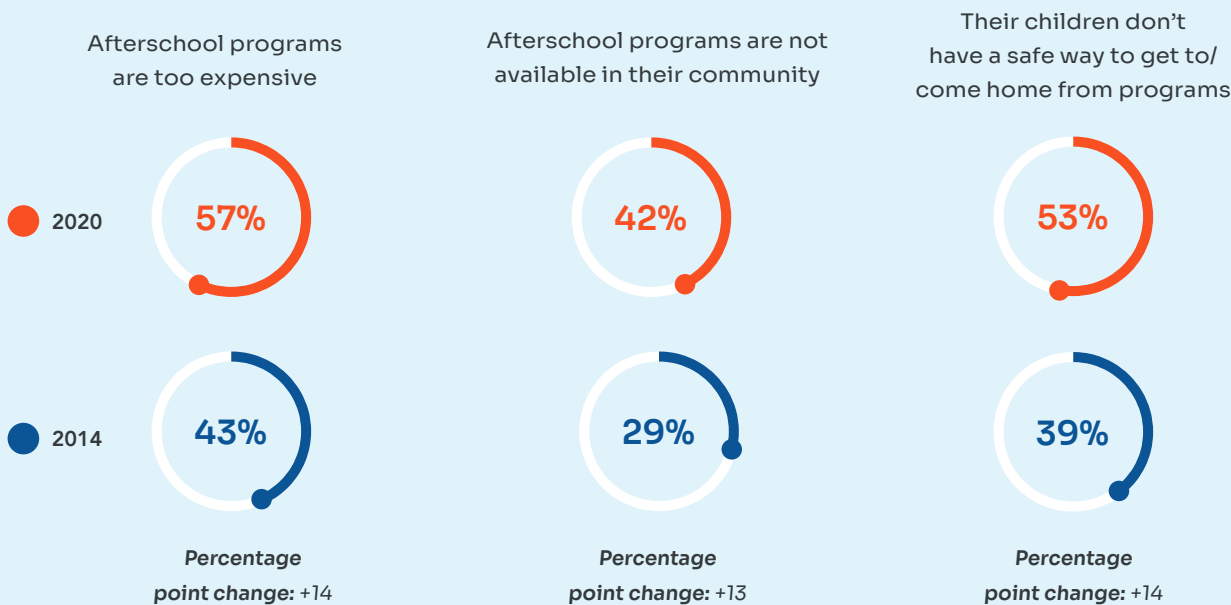


in an afterschool program, but African American and Hispanic parents are more likely than White parents to say that their children did not have a safe way to get to and from afterschool programs, that programs' hours of operation and locations presented challenges, and that there were not spaces available in the program they prefer. African American and Hispanic parents are also more likely to report that afterschool programs did not address the special needs of their children (*Figure 15*).

Significantly, low-income African American parents are the only group of parents among whom the lack of a safe way for their child to get to and come home from an afterschool program is the most common reason they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program. Overall, accessibility is a greater barrier for low-income parents of color than low-income White parents. Low-

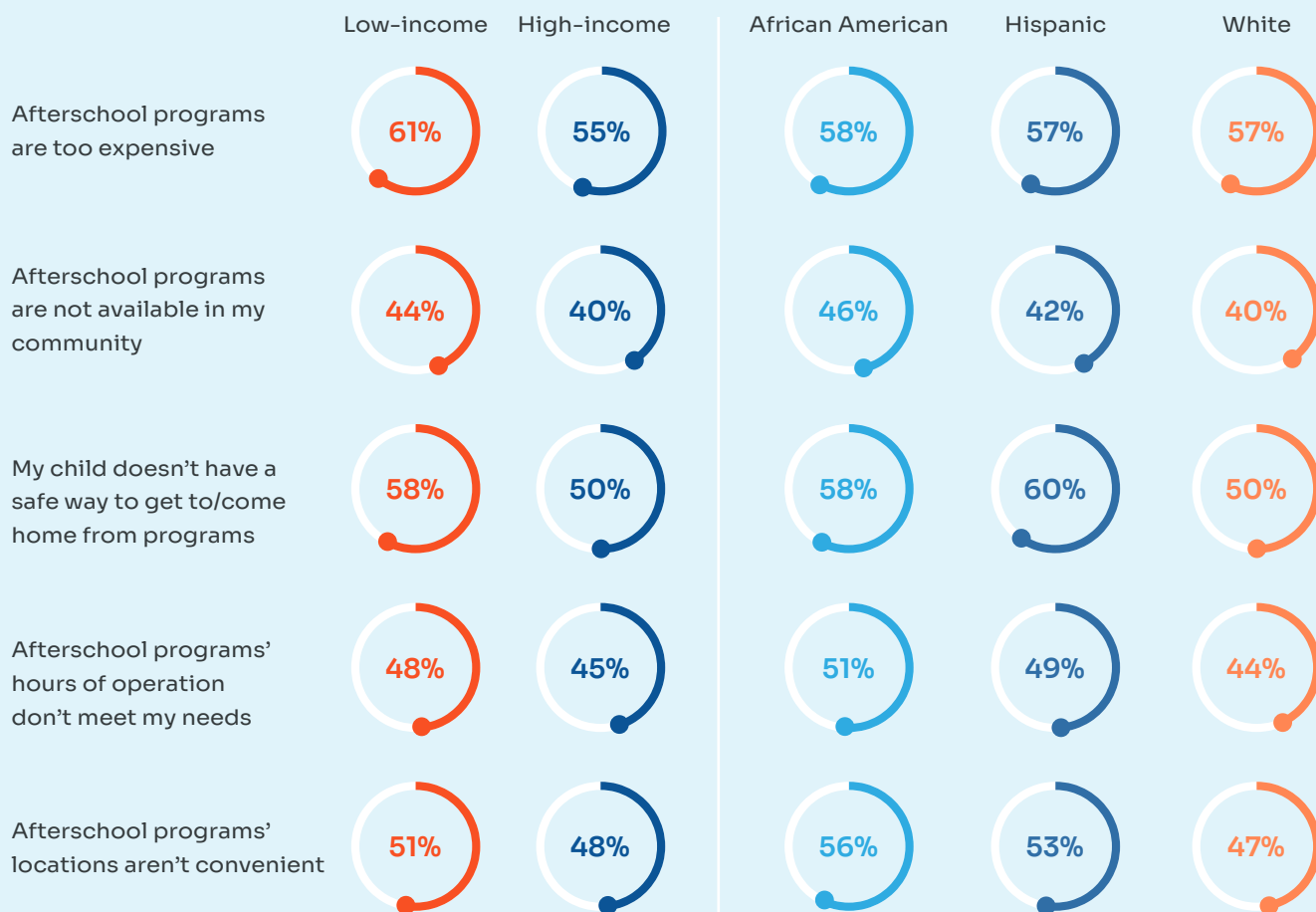
**Figure 14: Barriers to afterschool program participation are increasing**

Percentage of parents reporting that:



**Figure 15: Low-income families and families of color face greater challenges accessing afterschool programs**

Percentage of parents reporting that the following were an important reason for their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program





## AFTERSCHOOL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: Barriers to participation

When asked what factors influenced their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program during fall 2020, concerns about the coronavirus rose to the top. But, many of the top concerns from early in 2020 remained consistent, including issues related to cost, lack of a safe way to get to and come home from the program, inconvenient location and hours, and programs not available.

income African American (62 percent) and Hispanic parents (62 percent) are much more likely than low-income White parents (54 percent) to say that an important reason they did not enroll their child in an afterschool program was that their child did not have a safe way to get to and come home from an afterschool program. Programs' location, hours of operations, and availability are also greater obstacles for low-income families of color than low-income White parents and families of color overall (*Figure 16*).

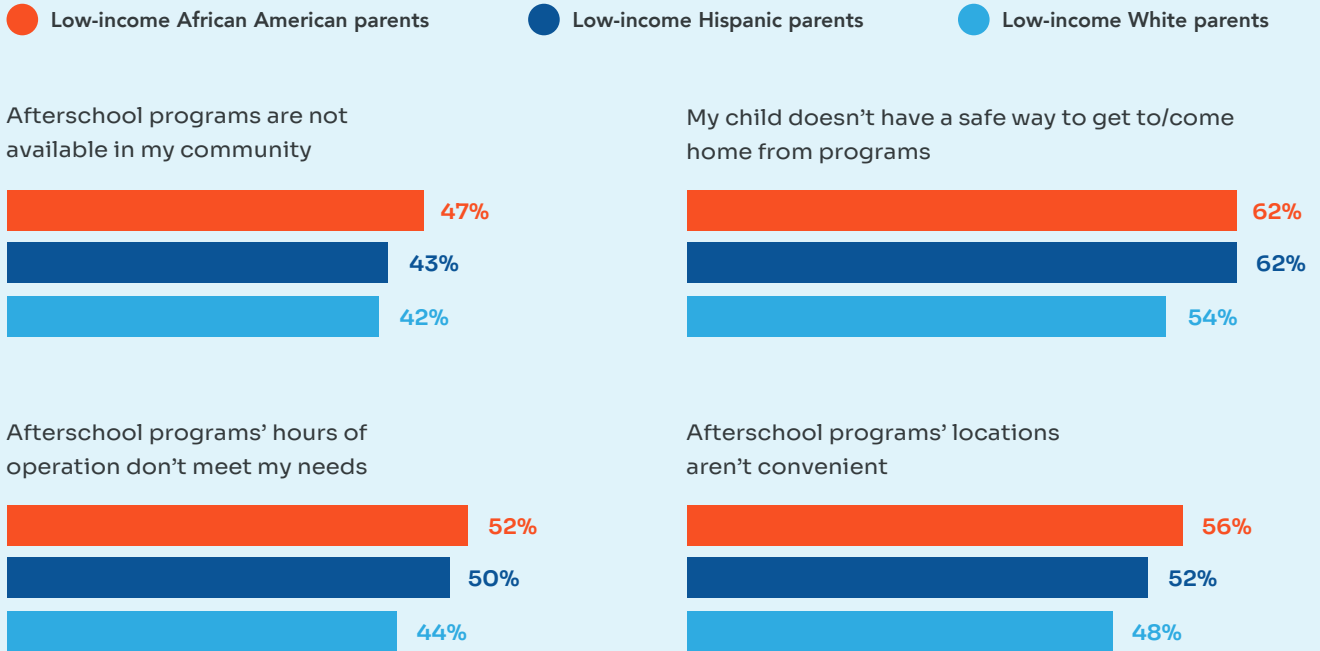
### Barriers are greatest for families who want to enroll in an afterschool program

Families who do not have a child in an afterschool program, but want their child to participate in a program, are also now more likely to report facing challenges to enrolling their child in an afterschool program. Among this group of families, not only have barriers increased since 2014, but they experience these barriers at higher rates than families without a child in an afterschool program overall. Roughly two in three parents of likely afterschool program participants report that cost (67 percent) and lack of a safe way for their child to get to and from the program (66 percent) factor into their decision-making process, up from 52 percent for both in 2014 (*Figure 17*).

Low-income African American parents are the only group of parents among whom the lack of a safe way for their child to get to from afterschool is the most common reason they did not enroll their child in a program.

**Figure 16: Among low-income families, low-income families of color face greater challenges accessing afterschool programs**

Percentage of parents reporting that the following were an important reason for their decision not to enroll their child in an afterschool program



**Figure 17: Barriers to afterschool program participation among likely participants**

Percentage of parents reporting the following barriers to participation among those who would have enrolled their child in an afterschool program if one were available to them:







**V**

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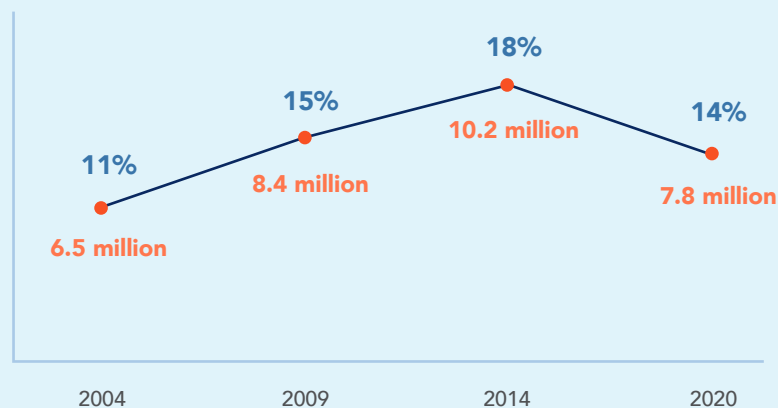
**Afterschool  
participation falls;  
inequities prominent**

# Afterschool participation falls; inequities prominent

For the first time in America After 3PM's 16-year history, afterschool program participation has decreased, dropping below 2009 participation rates in 2020. As a result, for every child in an afterschool program, three more children who want to participate in a program are unable to do so.

**Figure 18: Afterschool participation has declined for the first time**

Percentage of children participating in an afterschool program



In all, 7.8 million children (14 percent of all school-aged children) are currently enrolled in programs and benefiting from the offerings and supports they provide (*Figure 18*). Elementary school students continue to comprise the largest age group in afterschool programs (60 percent), followed by middle school students (21 percent), and high school students (19 percent). Although high school students are the smallest slice of afterschool program participants, they are still a significant number: More than 1.8 million high schoolers take part in programs (*Figure 20*).

As in previous editions of America After 3PM, White children make up the overwhelming majority of afterschool program participants (60 percent). However, 2020 saw change in the overall composition of afterschool program participants, as the percentage of White children in programs decreased and the percentage of Black and Latinx children increased. From 2014 to 2020, the percentage of White children in afterschool programs decreased from 71 percent to 60 percent, and the percentage of Black children grew from 15 percent to 19 percent. More

Of note, in this edition of America After 3PM, all forms of care in the hours between 3 and 6 p.m. are down. In addition to the decrease in children alone and unsupervised, the percentage of children in the care of a parent or guardian, in an afterschool program, in child care, or in the care of another adult saw a decrease between 2020 and 2014.

The decreases across all forms of care reflect that parents, who could select multiple forms of care in their responses, did not select as many options in their responses this year. For instance, the percentage of parents reporting that a parent or guardian is the only form of care they use increased from 37 percent in 2014 to 45 percent in 2020 and the percentage of parents reporting using three or more forms of care after school decreased from 26 percent in 2014 to just 9 percent in 2020.

Additionally, differences may be due to changes in the survey administration since 2014. The 2020 America After 3PM survey was conducted by a different research firm than in 2014 and new protocols for monitoring data were implemented.

strikingly, the number of Latinx children in afterschool programs almost doubled, growing from 11 percent to 21 percent. As a result of these demographic shifts, children of color now make up 40 percent of afterschool program participants (Figures 19 and 20).

### Drop in afterschool program participation largely seen among children living in low-income households

While there is an overall drop in access to afterschool opportunities for all young people, the America After 3PM survey found that the young people most affected are those from low-income households. The number of children in low-income households in afterschool fell from 4.6 million in 2014 to 2.7 million in 2020. Meanwhile the number of higher-income children in afterschool decreased

by a fraction of that amount; 446,000 over that same time period.

Children in higher income families once again comprise the majority of afterschool program participants (66 percent), compared to 34 percent of children living in low-income households. After the 2014 edition of America After 3PM saw an increase in the percentage of children from low-income households compared to 2009, growing from 41 percent to 45 percent, the share of children in low-income families in afterschool programs has declined since 2014.

Based on responses from families with low income who do not have a child in an afterschool program, cost is a major driver behind the decline in participation among low-income families, and points to a lack of available affordable programs nationwide. These data also suggest

that, for many families, public funding for programs makes their afterschool programs affordable. However, public investments in afterschool programs have not kept up with growing demand since 2014. For instance, funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC), the only federal funding stream dedicated exclusively to afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs, has lagged behind the rate of inflation between 2014 and 2020, increasing less than 9 percent. As a result, in spite of the increases in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC investment since 2014, the current funding level is now \$10 million lower in inflation-adjusted terms.

Data from the U.S Department of Education show only a small decrease (38,710) in the number of young people accessing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funded afterschool programs between the 2014-15 and 2018-



19 school years.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a number of states have experienced increases in the number of young people accessing state funded programs. These participation data suggest that our nation's publicly funded programs have been a backbone of support for many low-income young people and that without access to these programs, a significant number of low-income young people are being denied the opportunity to participate in afterschool programs.

### Afterschool program participation at the state level

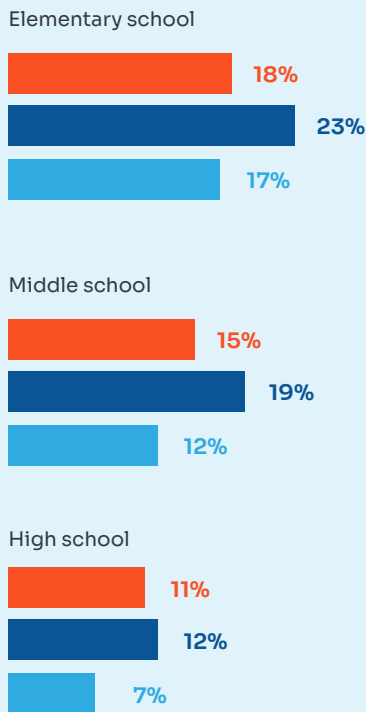
Reflecting the national trend, all but four states saw a decline in afterschool program participation between 2014 and 2020, with an average of a 3.6 percentage point decrease. Washington, D.C. saw the largest drop in afterschool program participation, at 10.7 percentage points, followed by Rhode Island (9.6 percentage point decrease),

Maine (8.3 percentage point decrease), and Nevada (8.1 percentage points). Despite the decrease in participation, Washington, D.C. still has the highest afterschool program participation rate in the nation with 24 percent of school-aged children enrolled. Next on the list are Vermont (22 percent) and Georgia and Hawaii (18 percent). On the other end of the spectrum, Utah has the lowest afterschool program participation rate at 6 percent (*Figure 21*).

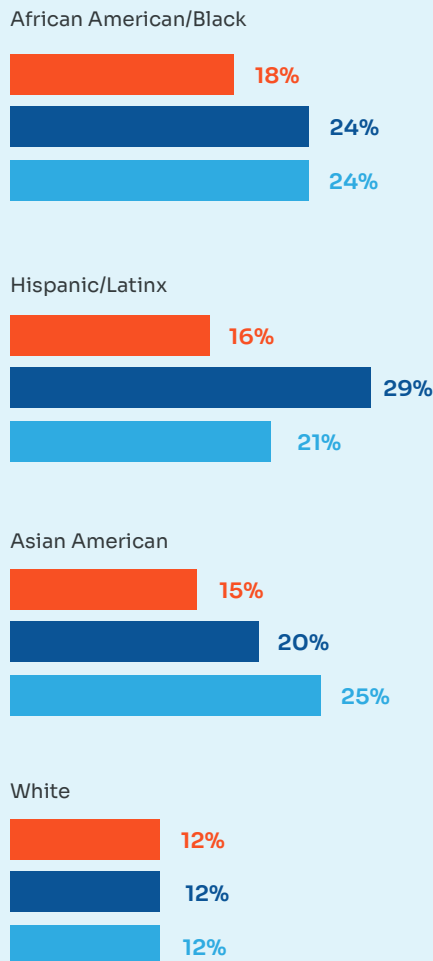
**Figure 19:** Percentage of children participating in an afterschool program by:

● 2020 ● 2014 ● 2009

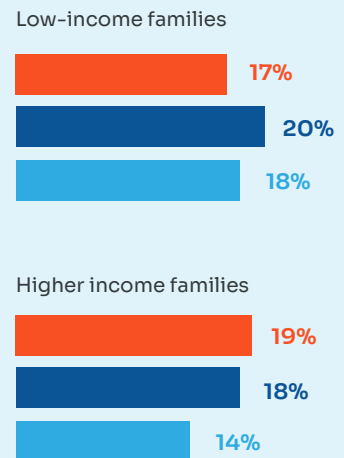
#### AGE



#### RACE/ETHNICITY



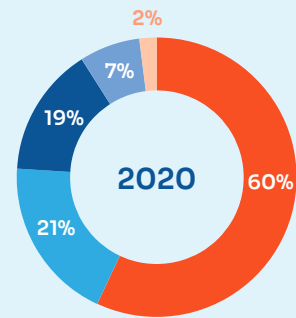
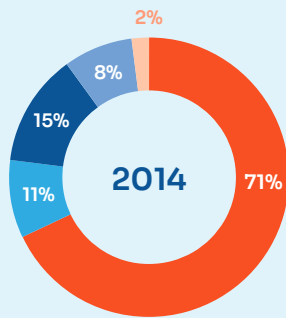
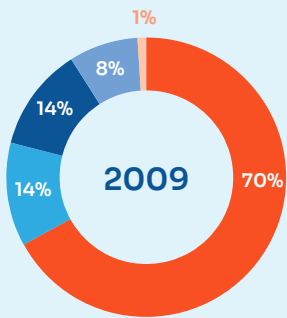
#### INCOME LEVEL



**Figure 20:** Composition of afterschool program participants by:

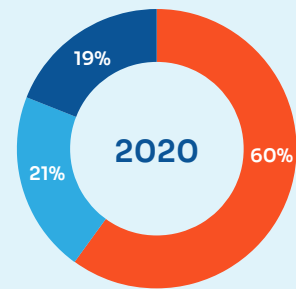
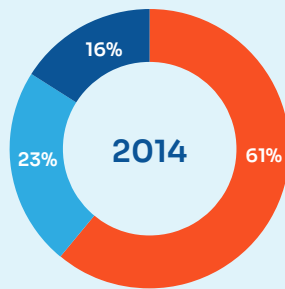
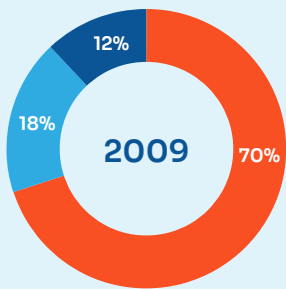
**RACE/ETHNICITY**

● White   
 ● Hispanic/Latinx   
 ● African American/Black   
 ● Asian American   
 ● Native American



**AGE**

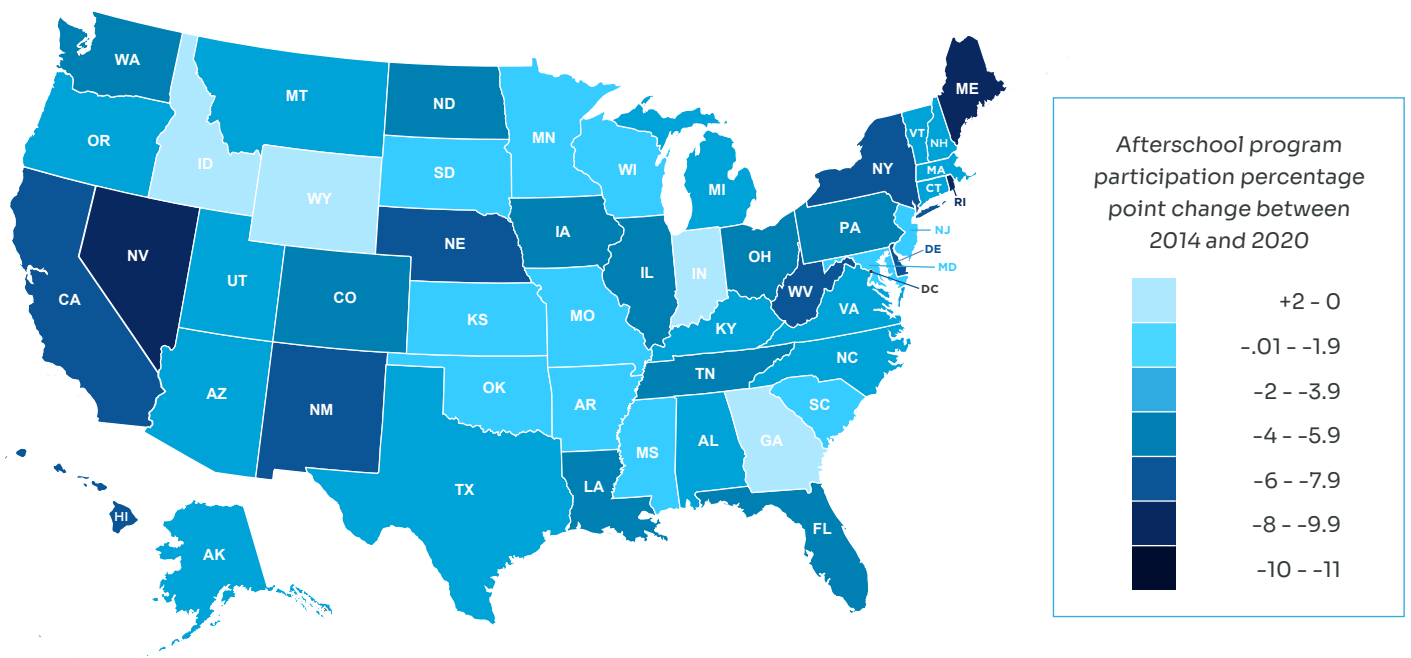
● Elementary School   
 ● Middle School   
 ● High School



*\*Totals may not add up to 100 percent as respondents were able to select all answers that apply*

**Figure 21: Change in afterschool program participation from 2014 to 2020**

Overall, afterschool program participation in the United States has declined





# VI

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**Benefits are significant for children fortunate enough to participate and their parents**

# Benefits are significant for children fortunate enough to participate and their parents

America After 3PM finds that children in afterschool programs have access to activities that complement school day learning, keep them active, build life skills, and connect them to the community.

For example, the overwhelming majority of parents report that their child's afterschool program offers the chance to build social and emotional skills and competencies (96 percent), time for physical activity (85 percent), homework help (73 percent), STEM learning opportunities (73 percent), and the ability to practice reading or writing (69 percent).

Although not as prevalent, roughly 1 in 3 parents report that their child's afterschool program offers service learning or community service opportunities (36 percent); programming to reduce risky behaviors, including substance use, teen pregnancy, and violence (34 percent); and cultural programming (32 percent) (Figure 22).

## Afterschool by the numbers

A look at the afterschool program experience in 2020:

<p><b>3.7</b></p> <p>Average days per week</p>	<p><b>5.6</b></p> <p>Average hours per week</p>	<p><b>\$99.40*</b></p> <p>Average cost per week</p>
<p><b>15%</b></p> <p>Parents who receive governmental assistance with the cost of afterschool programs</p>	<p><b>\$97.40</b></p> <p>Average amount of weekly assistance</p>	<p><b>76%</b></p> <p>Parents reporting that their child's afterschool program is located in a public school building</p>

## Afterschool program providers:

Public schools	<b>50%</b>
Boys & Girls Clubs	<b>14%</b>
Private schools	<b>14%</b>
City or towns (including Parks and Recreation Departments)	<b>13%</b>
YMCAs	<b>10%</b>

**More than 9 in 10 parents are satisfied with their child's experience in their primary afterschool program (94%)**



\*Among parents who report paying for their child's afterschool program



**Figure 22: Programs are providing a wide range of supports**

Percent of parents reporting that their child's afterschool program offers the following:

	% offered		% offered
Opportunities to interact with peers and build social skills	<b>90%</b>	Experience the outdoors	<b>68%</b>
Physical activity	<b>85%</b>	Music or arts	<b>58%</b>
STEM learning opportunities	<b>73%</b>	Parent/family activities	<b>43%</b>
Homework or academic help	<b>73%</b>	College or career exploration	<b>40%</b>
Ability to learn responsible decision-making	<b>73%</b>	Service learning or community service	<b>36%</b>
Snacks/meals including healthy options	<b>70%</b>	Programming to reduce risky behaviors	<b>34%</b>
Reading or writing time	<b>69%</b>	Cultural programming	<b>32%</b>
Time to build life skills	<b>68%</b>		



**Figure 23: Parents are happy with the activities and supports provided by afterschool programs**

Percent of parents reporting that they are satisfied with the following in their child’s afterschool program:

	% satisfied		% satisfied
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>94%</b>	Snacks/meals including healthy options	<b>73%</b>
Safety of environment	<b>92%</b>	Opportunities to experience the outdoors	<b>72%</b>
Knowledgeable and caring staff	<b>89%</b>	STEM learning opportunities	<b>67%</b>
Opportunities to build life skills	<b>84%</b>	Music or arts	<b>63%</b>
Physical activity opportunities	<b>83%</b>	College or career exploration or readiness	<b>63%</b>
Opportunities for reading or writing	<b>77%</b>	Programming to reduce risky behaviors	<b>61%</b>
Homework or academic help	<b>76%</b>	Addresses their child’s special needs	<b>57%</b>

Parents report high levels of satisfaction with the activities and supports offered by programs. Based on parent responses, afterschool programs are on the whole providing children a safe environment where they are surrounded by knowledgeable and caring staff and have the ability to interact with peers and develop social skills, while taking part in physical activities and academically enriching activities. A majority of parents report satisfaction with each of the aspects of their child’s afterschool program the America After 3PM survey asked about, including 94 percent of parents reporting overall satisfaction with their child’s experience in their primary afterschool program. Other high-scoring areas are parents satisfied with program staff (89 percent), the program offering opportunities to build life skills (84 percent), and the program

providing physical activities (83 percent). While approximately three in five parents report that they were satisfied with their afterschool program’s music or arts offerings (63 percent), programming to reduce risky behaviors (61 percent), and addressing the special needs of their child (57 percent), these are areas where there is room for improvement (*Figure 23*).

When asked about supports they receive from programs, 78 percent of parents with a child enrolled in afterschool report that programs help them keep their jobs, and 71 percent say that programs allow them to build their skills through classes or workshops offered. Close to 3 in 5 parents (57 percent) agree that programs connect them with community resources, such as financial planning services and dental clinics.




There are differences in responses based on the age of the child in the afterschool program. For example, while an overwhelming majority of parents with a child in an afterschool program agreed that programs help them keep their job, parents of elementary school students in an afterschool program are more likely to hold this sentiment (81 percent) than parents of middle schoolers (78 percent) and high school students (76 percent). Furthermore, parents of high school students are more likely than parents of elementary and middle school students to say their afterschool program offers classes and/or workshops for parents to build skills and connect them with community resources (*Figure 24*).



## AFTERSCHOOL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: Participation in afterschool programs during the pandemic

The October survey found that **11 percent** of parents reported that their child is attending an afterschool program this fall.

Parents report that their child is attending afterschool programs:

	In-person only	<b>39%</b>
	Virtually	<b>31%</b>
	A mix of in-person and virtually	<b>27%</b>

**Figure 24: Afterschool programs are also serving as a resource to parents**

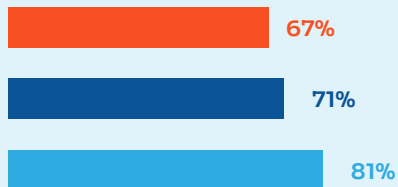
Percentage of parents who agree that their child's afterschool program provides the following supports, by grade level of their child in afterschool

● K-5<sup>th</sup> grader   
 ● 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grader   
 ● 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grader

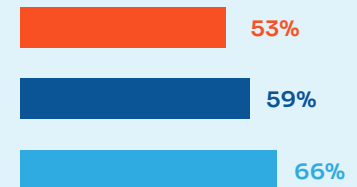
Keep their job or work  
more hours

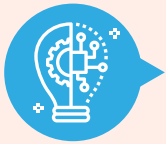


Build skills through classes and/  
or workshops



Connect with  
community resources





## STEM in afterschool

This year's America After 3PM survey found that science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) or computer science learning opportunities is a greater priority for parents than in 2014, with a higher percentage of parents wanting these opportunities in their child's afterschool program.\*

More than 7 in 10 parents (72 percent) report that STEM learning opportunities were important in their selection of an afterschool program, up 19 percentage points from 2014 (53 percent). Correspondingly, parents who report that their child's afterschool program offer STEM opportunities increased from 69 percent in 2014, the first year that the survey asked a question about STEM programming, to 73 percent in 2020.

Examining the individual components that comprise STEM learning opportunities, from 2014 to 2020, parents are more likely to report that their child's program offers technology and engineering activities (30 percent vs. 39 percent); science learning opportunities (46 percent vs. 49 percent); and math learning opportunities (60 percent vs. 62 percent). Additionally, the 2020 survey added in a new question asking parents about computer science in their child's afterschool program; 41 percent of parents report that computer science activities, such as coding or video game development, are offered. The current survey also finds the frequency of STEM offerings intensifying, with the share of parents reporting that their child takes part in a STEM activity at least two times a week moving from 52 percent in 2014 to 59 percent in 2020. A strong majority of parents report that they are satisfied with the STEM learning opportunities in their child's afterschool program (67 percent), including 41 percent of parents who report that they are extremely satisfied.



Techbridge Girls (TBG), a national nonprofit organization that brings STEM education to 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade girls across the United States is one of the many examples of exemplary STEM afterschool programming currently available to young people. Over the past 20 years, TBG has worked to excite, educate, and equip girls from marginalized communities to leverage their STEM education as a path toward economic mobility. TBG takes a holistic approach and engages girls emotionally and intellectually, as well as engages families to support their youths' persistence. Through hands-on STEM activities that connect to real-world experiences, with projects ranging from reverse engineering hair dryers to designing computer games and connecting girls with role models, TBG inspires and encourages their STEM aspirations. TBG's national evaluation found that the program increased girls' knowledge in STEM and interest in pursuing STEM careers, with 83 percent of high schoolers and 100 percent of African American girls in their program reporting that they plan to pursue STEM in college.

A special report on America After 3PM's STEM findings will be released in summer 2021.

*\*The definition of STEM learning opportunities in the 2014 America After 3PM survey was "science, technology, engineering, and math learning opportunities." In the 2020 wave of the survey, STEM learning opportunities was defined as "science, technology, engineering, math, or computer science learning opportunities."*



## Social and emotional learning in afterschool

The 2020 edition of *America After 3PM* includes a new set of questions to examine whether afterschool programs are helping young people develop the skills that have been identified as critical in positive youth development, such as the ability to communicate and work well with others, make responsible decisions, and have confidence in themselves.

Nearly 9 in 10 parents (88 percent) report that opportunities for their child to build life skills, such as interacting with their peers, developing social skills, and learning how to make responsible decisions, is an important factor in selecting their afterschool program, with a strong majority (58 percent) reporting that it is extremely important. Opportunities to build life skills is among the top tier reasons for parents choosing a program.

Almost all parents report that their afterschool program helps their child develop social and emotional skills and competencies in some form (96 percent), with most parents reporting that their program provides opportunities for their child to build social skills (90 percent), gain confidence (82 percent), and make responsible decisions (73 percent). More than 8 in 10 parents (84 percent) report that they are satisfied with the opportunities to build life skills in their child's afterschool program, with most saying that they are extremely satisfied (53 percent).

Moreover, parents report that their child's afterschool program provides a positive setting that fosters healthy development, including a safe environment (92 percent) and knowledgeable and caring staff (89 percent). Overall, parents—both parents with a child in an afterschool program and parents whose child is not in a program—believe that programs provide an environment that promotes positive youth development. Roughly 8 in 10 agree that children have the opportunity to learn life skills, such as the ability to communicate and work in teams (82 percent), build confidence (81 percent), learn responsible decision-making (79 percent), and build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors

(77 percent). Three in four parents agree that afterschool programs reduce the likelihood that young people will engage in risky behaviors, such as drug use.

An example of positive youth development in action in afterschool is Burlington Expanded Learning Opportunities, a program that offers afterschool and summer learning programming at all nine schools in Vermont's Burlington School District (BSD). Alongside BSD, the program has incorporated a district-wide restorative practices approach that focuses on building relationships and social capacity; improving problem-solving skills; encouraging empathy, accountability, and ownership; and building interpersonal skills among both youth and staff. Operating Monday through Friday from 2:50-5:30 p.m. and serving students from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, students practice skills each day that include building positive relationships and working collaboratively. No matter the activity they choose, which range from the arts to community engagement, restorative practices are embedded into each exercise and interaction. For instance, the Earn-A-Bike program teaches participants about biking, safe riding skills, and the fundamentals of bike maintenance and repair. Over the course of the program, students work together to rebuild donated bicycles—which they ultimately get to take home—by employing organizational and planning skills, teamwork, and problem-solving. In a 2019 program staff survey, 86 percent reported that they noticed that the implementation of restorative practices had a positive impact on their work with students.

A special report on *America After 3PM*'s findings related to social and emotional learning will be released in early 2022.





# Afterschool Program Resource Examples

## Mizzen by Mott:

Mizzen by Mott is a new app built with and for afterschool professionals to provide high-quality, engaging learning content to the field. Featuring exciting content from premier organizations like NASA, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the California Academy of Sciences, and others, Mizzen brings activities and lessons that boost STEM learning, language arts and literacy, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Learn more at: [3to6.co/mizzen](https://3to6.co/mizzen)

## NJSACC's Virtual Afterschool Resource Guide:

The Statewide Network for New Jersey's Afterschool Communities created a 52-page guide in response to COVID-19 that includes a collection of activities and resources for afterschool and summer program providers on topics ranging from project-based learning to creating virtual staff trainings. Find the resource guide at: [njsacc.org/2020/04/njsaccs-virtual-afterschool-resource-guide/](https://njsacc.org/2020/04/njsaccs-virtual-afterschool-resource-guide/)

## Learning About COVID-19 Activity Guide:

Developed for the 50 State Afterschool Network, with leadership from the Alaska Afterschool Network, the guide is broken into four categories of age groups—5-9 years old, 10-12 years old, 13-15 years old, and 16-18 years old—and includes activities and challenges for afterschool program providers that can be tailored to use in a virtual or in-person setting. The guide is also designed in a manner that it can be sent as a take-home packet for students. Find the activity guide at: [akafterschool.org/covid19-activity-guide](https://akafterschool.org/covid19-activity-guide)

## Million Girls Moonshot:

The Moonshot is designed to spur girls' interest, understanding, and confidence in STEM and equip them to become problem solvers with an engineering mindset. For afterschool programs interested in incorporating an equity and inclusion framework and engineering mindset into their programming, sign up with your state afterschool network for news and updates about STEM training and resources available through the Million Girls Moonshot. For more information visit: [milliongirlsmoonshot.org](https://milliongirlsmoonshot.org)

## You for Youth:

You for Youth (Y4Y) is an online hub highlighting best practices, lesson plans, check lists, videos, and more for the afterschool community. Although the site was created for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, resources are publicly available at: [y4y.ed.gov/](https://y4y.ed.gov/)



PHOTO CREDIT: Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action



# VII

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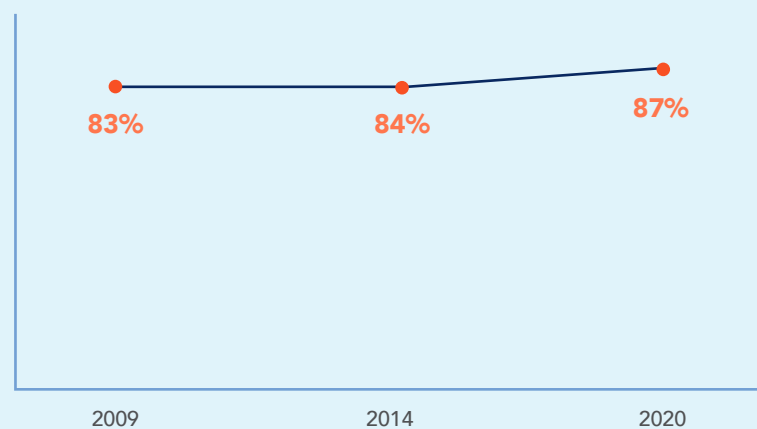
**Support for increased investment in afterschool is greater than ever**

# Support for increased investment in afterschool is greater than ever

Today, most parents (84 percent) agree that all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs.

**Figure 25: Support for public funding of afterschool programs is at an all-time high**

Percentage of parents in favor of public funding for afterschool programs



Support for public funding for afterschool programs has reached its highest level in the history of America After 3PM, with 87 percent of parents in favor of public funding for programs that provide afterschool opportunities to students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth, up from 84 percent in 2014 and 83 percent in 2009 (*Figure 25*). Among working parents, support for public funding is even higher (89 percent).

Overall, there is a high level of support for public funding of afterschool programs across the country. More than 5 in 6 rural (86 percent), suburban (87 percent), and urban parents (90 percent) support public funding for afterschool programs, with at least 8 in 10 parents in every state in favor of federal funding, from a high of 92 percent in New Mexico and Nebraska to 80 percent in Wyoming (*Figure 26*).

**Support for public funding for afterschool programs has reached its highest level in the history of America After 3PM.**

In a time of political polarization, investment in afterschool programs for young people who are now without access to these programs bridges political divides. Support for public funding of afterschool programs is strong across political affiliation, with 91 percent of parents who identify as Democrat, 87 percent of parents who identify as Independent, and 85 percent of parents who identify as Republican, in favor of such support.



## AFTERSCHOOL IN THE TIME OF COVID-19:

### Support for public funding of afterschool continues

Parents' support for public funding of afterschool programs remains strong, with 85 percent of parents overall in favor. Similar to America After 3PM survey results, support for afterschool programs spans political parties and regions:

Democrats



Independents



Republicans



Parents in rural communities



Parents in suburban communities



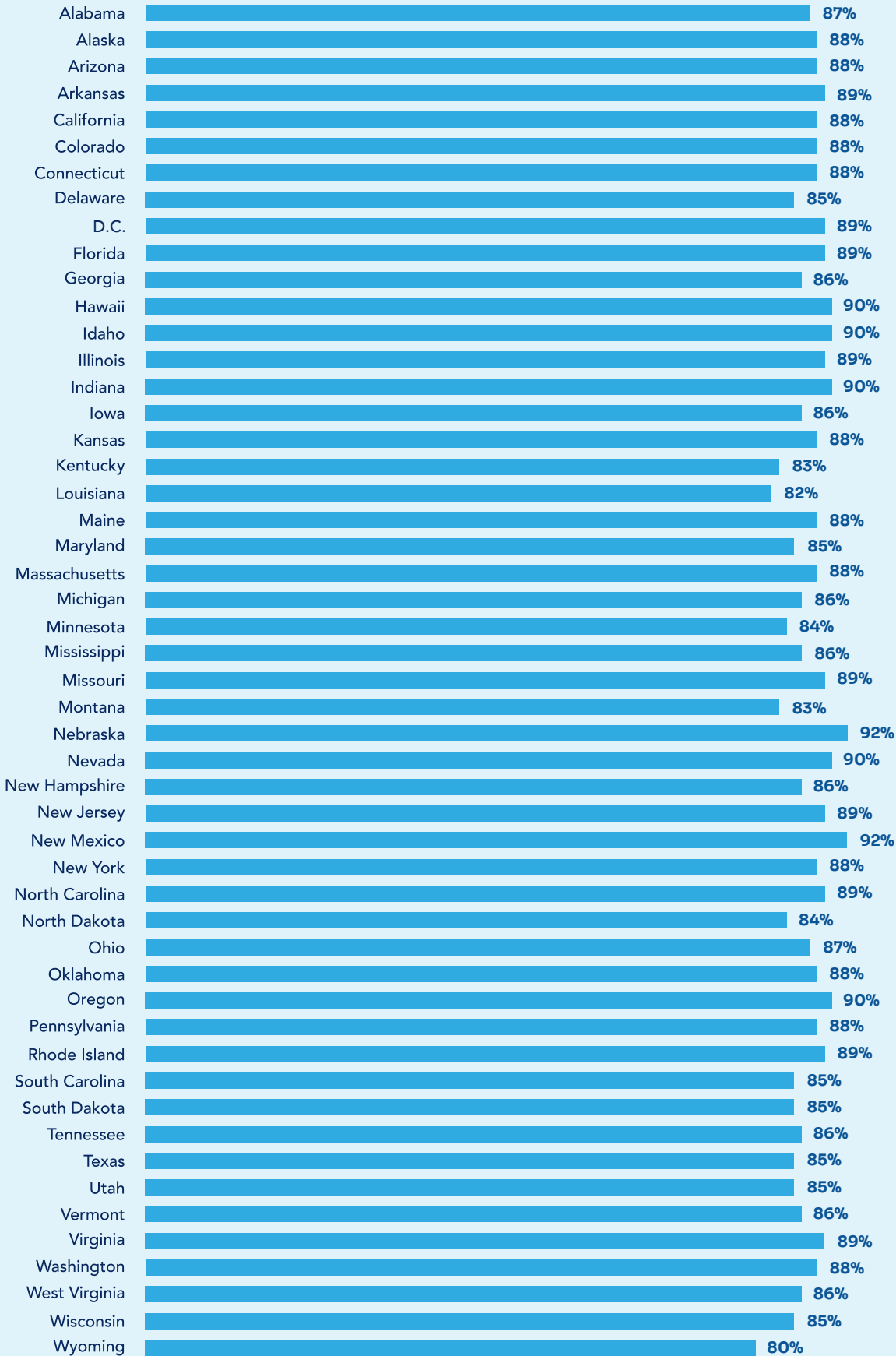
Parents in urban communities





**Figure 26: Nationwide, parents are in favor of public funding for afterschool programs**

Percentage of parents in favor of public funding for afterschool programs





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# Conclusion

# Conclusion

With more families struggling to afford and access an afterschool program, unmet demand hitting an all-time high, and 94 percent of parents satisfied with their child's afterschool program, citing significant benefits and supports provided by afterschool programs, it is clear there is a compelling need to increase access to afterschool programs. Furthermore, the opportunity to participate in programs is shrinking, as cost and lack of affordable afterschool opportunities are denying a significant number of low-income young people access to afterschool programs.

Public funding for afterschool programs helps provide affordable, quality programs for millions of children nationwide. Data from the U.S. Department of Education show steady participation in the number of young people accessing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funded afterschool programs between the 2014-15 and 2018-19 school years.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a number of states have experienced increases in the number of young people accessing state funded programs. This backbone of support is critical, but it is not meeting the need. Since the last edition of America After 3PM in 2014, public investments in afterschool programs have largely stalled. For instance, funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, the only federal funding stream dedicated exclusively to afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs, has not kept up with the cost of inflation, increasing less than 9 percent between 2014 and 2020. After adjusting for inflation, the current funding level is \$10 million below the 2014 level. A multi-faceted approach, with investments at the local, state, and federal levels of government, is needed to increase quality, affordable afterschool opportunities.

The need for increased investment in afterschool is especially urgent with the coronavirus pandemic forcing many schools to move to a distance-learning model or operate on a hybrid schedule of in-person and virtual classes. The October 2020 survey of parents found that more than 3 in 4 agree that Congress should provide additional funding for afterschool programs to help provide a supervised, enriching environment during virtual school days.

If our country aims to give all children and youth the best chance to succeed in school and in life, and to provide equal opportunities for all young people, we must do much more to make quality, affordable afterschool programs available to all.

<sup>1</sup> Afterschool Alliance calculation based on data from the U.S. Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Annual Performance Data. U.S. Department of Education. (2020). 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) analytic support for evaluation and program monitoring: An overview of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC performance data: 2018-2019 (15<sup>th</sup> report); U.S. Department of Education. (2016). 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) overview of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC performance data: 2014-2015 (11<sup>th</sup> report).

<sup>2</sup> Afterschool Alliance calculation based on data from the U.S. Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Annual Performance Data.

