

# Summertime in America for Black Families and Communities



## Introduction

Although the official start of summer is not yet here, conversations about what the summer of 2021 will look like for children and families have long been underway to help young people recover as the pandemic's impact continues to stretch out across the country. The report *Time for a Game-Changing Summer, With Opportunity and Growth for All of America's Youth*, released in May 2021, finds that as participation in summer programs prior to the pandemic was on an upwards trajectory, there remained a significant number of children missing out. For every child in a summer learning program in 2019, another would have been enrolled in a program if one were available. Children in families with low incomes were more likely to miss out.

Demand for summer programs, both met and unmet, is great among Black families, where approximately half of Black children (49 percent) were in a summer program in 2019 or would have been enrolled in a program if one were available to them.<sup>1</sup> For Black families, the summer is viewed as a time for infinite possibilities, where in addition to high demand for summer programs, there are also high expectations for their children's summer programs. The value of summer programs among Black families remained steadfast during the pandemic, with approximately 4 in 5 Black parents (78 percent) agreeing with the statement that "all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs."

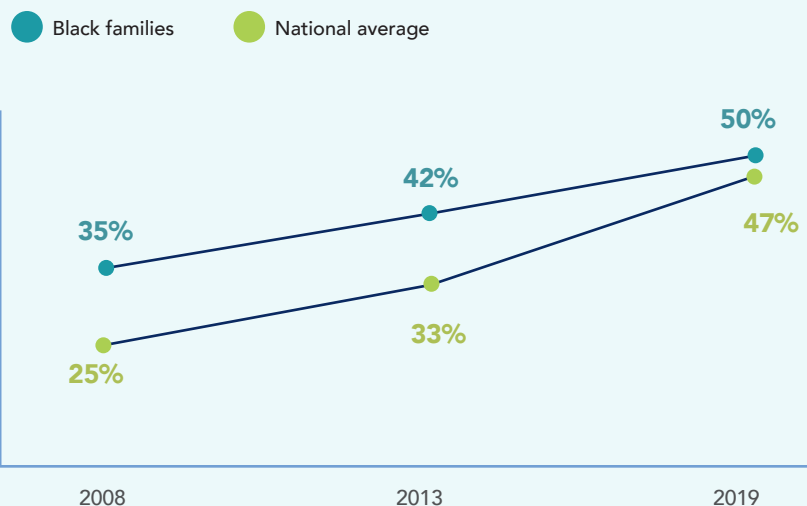
## Participation in summer programs continues to grow

America After 3PM finds that half of Black families report that at least one child participated in a summer learning program in 2019. Black families reporting that they have a child involved in a summer program has consistently increased over the course of the America After 3PM study, growing from 35 percent in 2008, to 42 percent in 2013, and reaching 50 percent in 2019. The percentage of Black families reporting that their child was in a summer program remains higher than the national average, though the difference has narrowed over time (Figure 1).

The strong level of satisfaction for summer programs among African American families may contribute to the high level of participation. More than 2 in 3 Black parents (68 percent) report that they were extremely

**Figure 1: Summer participation was on an upward trajectory**

Percentage of families reporting at least one child attended a summer program



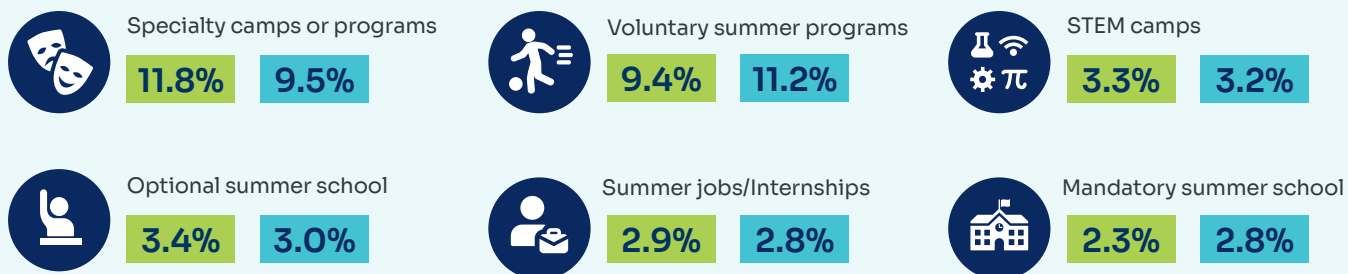
<sup>1</sup> "Black" and "African American" are used interchangeably throughout this report to reflect the survey questionnaire answer option of "Black or African American." Both "Black" and "White" are capitalized for the purposes of this report as referring to a racial and ethnic group of people.



**Figure 2:** During the 2019 summer, Black children took part in a wide range of structured summer experiences

Percentage of children taking part in various structured summer experiences

● National average ● Black children



satisfied with their child's structured summer experience, with 95 percent of Black parents reporting that they were satisfied overall.



### Parent satisfaction is high.

95% of black parents are satisfied with their child's structured summer experience.

For the first time, America After 3PM projects the number of children participating in a structured summer experience—which includes participation in a summer learning program, sports program, summer camp, summer school, or summer job or internship, and is different from child care—and finds that nearly 1.9 million Black children (22 percent) took part in a structured summer experience during the 2019 summer.

Voluntary summer programs are the most common structured summer experience among Black children (11.2 percent), followed closely by non-STEM specialty camps or programs (9.5 percent), whereas children overall are more likely to take part in a non-STEM specialty camp or program (11.8 percent) than voluntary summer programs (9.4 percent). However, similar to children overall, less common summer experiences include STEM camps (3.2 percent), summer school for credit or enrichment (3 percent), mandatory summer school (2.8 percent), and a summer job or internship (2.8 percent) (Figure 2). Among Black families with a child in a structured summer experience, most reported that their child was in one type of summer activity (63 percent), while 20 percent report that their child took part in two types of activities and 16 percent say that their child took part in three or more types of structured summer experiences.

Among Black families with a child in a structured summer experience, more than 5 in 6 (85 percent) report that their child was in a voluntary summer program or specialty camp or program, including STEM, arts, drama, or sports camps or programs. Black families are more likely than parents overall to report their child was in a

voluntary summer program (50 percent vs. 45 percent), but less likely to say that their child was in a specialty camp or program (42 percent vs. 54 percent), and much less so than White parents (42 percent vs. 61 percent) (Figure 3).

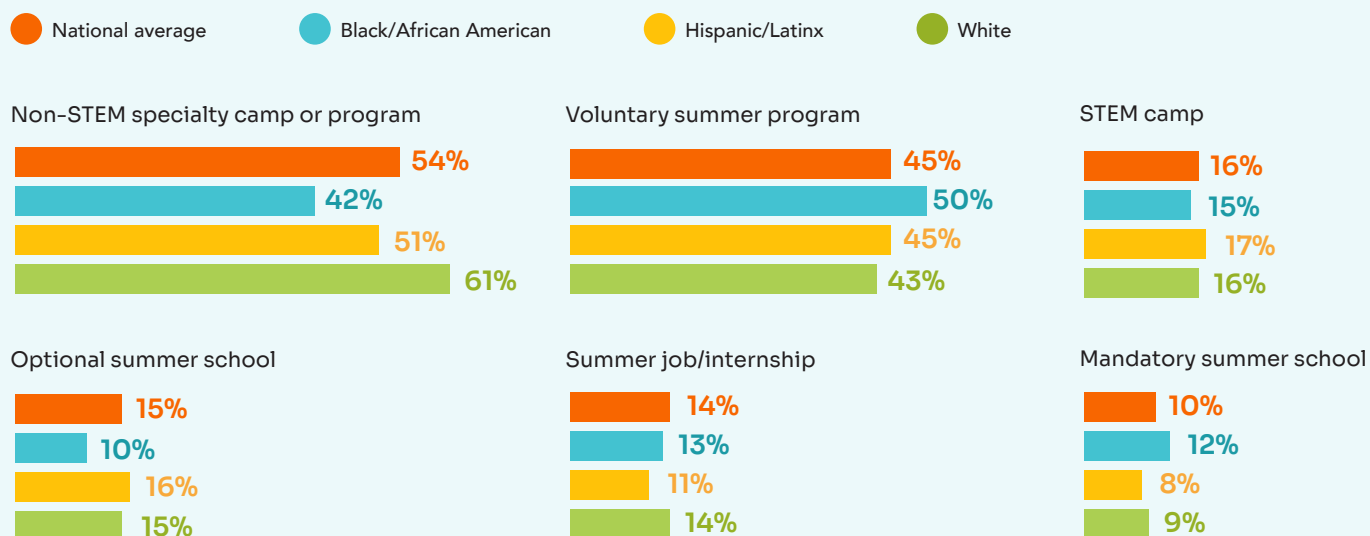
On average during the 2019 summer, Black children participated in summer activities between 4.4 and 6.4 hours a day, from 3.7 to 5.3 weeks during the summer, spending the most time in voluntary summer programs (6.3 hours a day for 5.2 weeks) and the least amount of time in mandatory summer school (4.4 hours a day for 3.7 weeks).

Community-based organizations, schools, and city or town facilities including parks and recreation departments are the most common providers of voluntary summer programs and non-STEM specialty camps or programs. Black families reporting that their child participated in a voluntary summer program at a community-based organization is statistically higher than parents overall (39 percent vs. 31 percent). Black parents are most likely to report that their child's STEM camp was held at a college, university, or school.



**Figure 3:** Black families are more likely than parents overall to report their child was in a voluntary summer program, but less likely to say that their child was in a specialty camp or program

Among families with a child in a structured summer experience, the percentage who report that their child took part in the following various activities



### Structured summer experiences by the numbers

Voluntary summer programs	Non-STEM specialty camps or programs (e.g., arts, sports, drama, etc.)	STEM camps	Summer jobs/ internships	Optional summer school	Mandatory summer school
5.2 Average number of weeks	4.7 Average number of weeks	3.9 Average number of weeks	5.3 Average number of weeks	4 Average number of weeks	3.7 Average number of weeks
6.3 Average hours per day	6.4 Average hours per day	5.5 Average hours per day	6.1 Average hours per day	4.8 Average hours per day	4.4 Average hours per day
\$139.20 Average weekly cost*	\$224.60 Average weekly cost*	\$381.10 Average weekly cost*	N/A	\$135.00 Average weekly cost*	N/A
<b>Top 3 Locations</b>	<b>Top 3 Locations</b>	<b>Top 3 Locations</b>	<b>Top 3 Locations</b>	<b>Top 3 Locations</b>	<b>Top 3 Locations</b>
1. Community-based organization (39%) 2. School (29%) 3. City or town facility (18%)	1. School (31%) 2. Community-based organization (22%) 3. City or town facility (19%)	1. College or university (44%) 2. School (33%) 3. Museum or science center (16%)	1. Community-based organization (29%) 2. Other (25%) 3. School (25%)	1. School (81%) 2. City or town facility (22%) 3. Library (21%)	1. School (72%) 2. College or university (12%) 3. City or town facility (10%)

\*Among parents who report that they pay a fee



High hopes for the summer

Black parents’ expectations for their child’s summer are high, in particular compared to the national average and to White parents, and when compared to their priorities for the school year. In the America After 3PM survey, parents were asked to say how important a series of items were in determining what their child did over the summer. Among the 16 items asked about, Black parents were significantly more likely than White parents and parents overall to say that all 16 items were extremely important in their selection of a summer activity.

Safety of environment (88 percent), knowledgeable and caring staff (88 percent), convenient hours (80 percent), and opportunities to build life skills (76 percent) stand out as the factors of most import to African American families when deciding what their children will do during the summer. The largest differences are found between Black and White parents reporting that helping keep their child from losing academic ground (67 percent vs. 39 percent), snacks or meals (62 percent vs. 39 percent), STEM learning opportunities (57 percent vs. 35 percent), convenient hours (80 percent vs. 60 percent), and programming to reduce risky behaviors (58 percent vs. 38 percent) are important in selecting what their child does during the summer (Figure 4).

Comparing priorities for the school year and the summer, Black parents were more likely to report that each factor asked about was extremely important in selecting what their child did during the summer than when selecting an afterschool program. Double-digit percentage point differences are found between African American families reporting that snacks and meals (62 percent vs. 46 percent), a variety of activities (69 percent vs. 54 percent), physical activity (68 percent vs. 55 percent), music or arts (43 percent vs. 31 percent), outdoor experiences (55 percent vs. 44 percent), program costs (66 percent vs. 56 percent), and STEM learning opportunities (57 percent vs. 47 percent) were extremely important during the summer compared to when selecting an afterschool program (Figure 5).



SUMMER IN THE TIME OF COVID-19:  
Families continued to need summer programming during the pandemic

In 2020, participation in summer programs was down as programs closed or cut back offerings during the pandemic, yet nearly 2 in 5 Black families (38 percent) report that their child participated in a structured summer experience, which included voluntary summer programs, summer school classes, specialty camps or programs, or summer jobs or internships in 2020. Among Black families with a child in a structured summer experience in 2020, 37 percent report that the experience was virtual, 38 percent report that it was in person, and 23 percent report a hybrid model. Satisfaction with summer offerings also remained high despite the pandemic, with 9 in 10 Black parents reporting that they were satisfied with their child’s summer program.

5.1	5.4
Average weeks during the summer	Average hours per day

Top 6 activities and supports parents report as extremely important in selecting their child’s summer experience during the pandemic

◆	Knowledgeable and caring staff	71%
◆	Safety and cleaning precautions against the coronavirus	68%
◆	Safe environment	67%
◆	Opportunities to build life skills	63%
◆	Opportunities for social connections with peers and caring adults	60%
◆	Helps keep my child from losing academic ground over the summer	60%

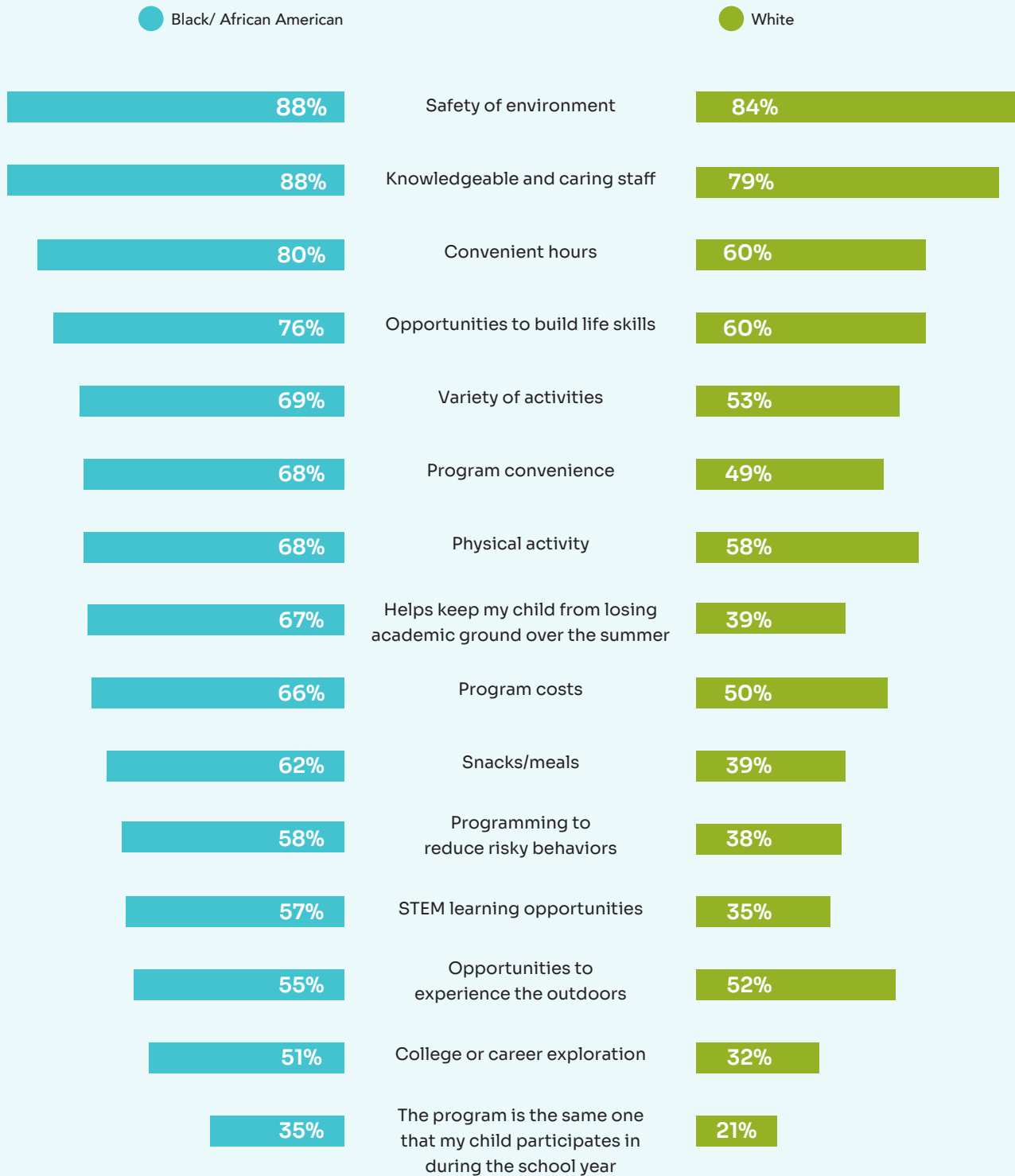
Top 3 locations

◆	School	27%
◆	Community-based organization	23%
◆	City or town facility	12%



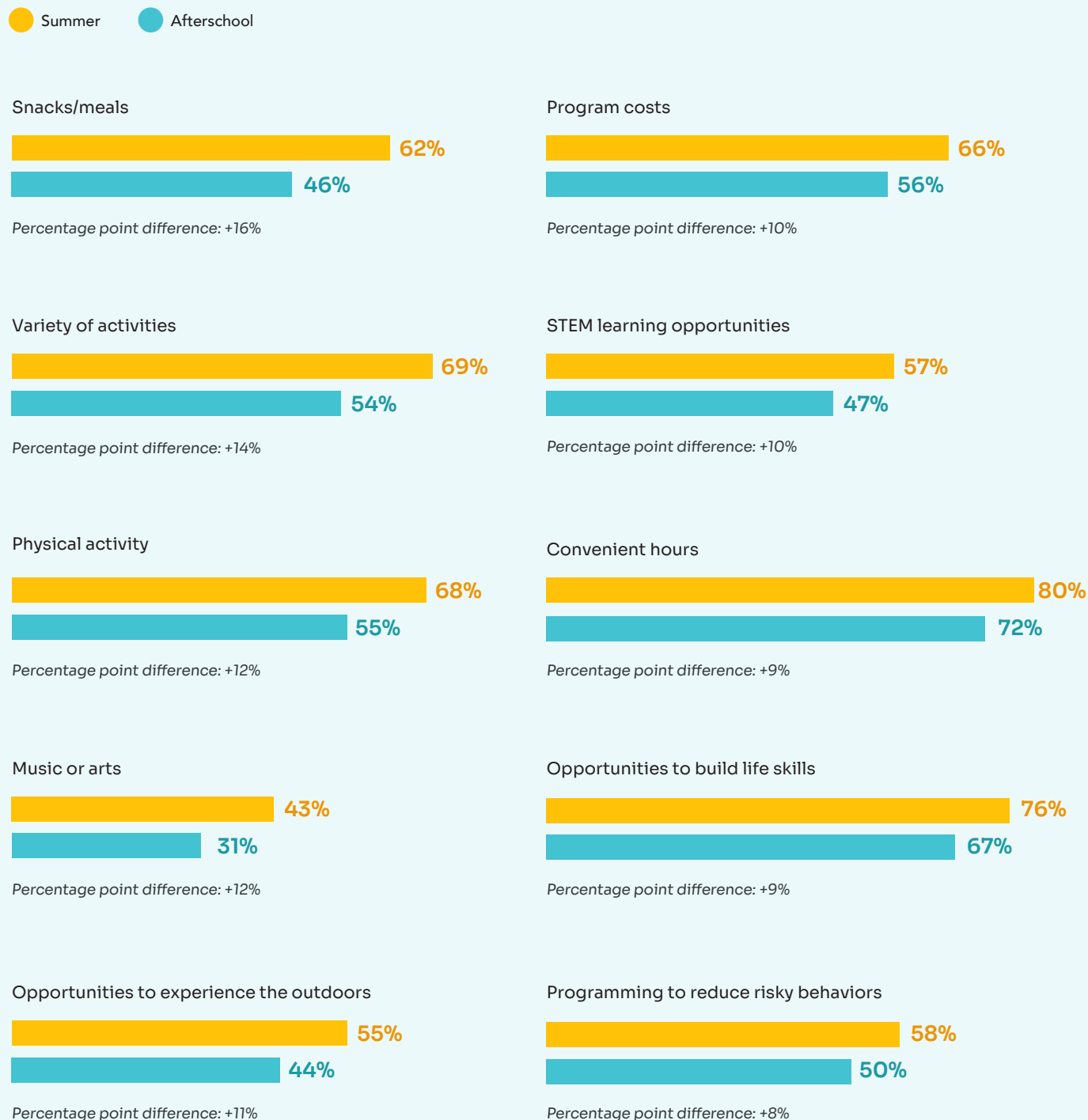
**Figure 4:** Black parents' expectations are high for the summer

Percentage of parents reporting the select following items were extremely important in choosing what their child does over the summer, by race and ethnicity



**Figure 5:** Black parents' expectations for the summer look different than the school year

Percentage of Black parents reporting the following items were extremely important in choosing what their child does over the summer and the percentage reporting that the items were extremely important in the selection of their child's afterschool program\*



\*Percentage point calculations may be different due to rounding



## Significant unmet demand for summer programs, with challenges regarding access

Despite the growth in African American families reporting their child is participating in a summer program, there remains significant unmet demand for summer programs, with more than 2.3 million Black children (35 percent) not in a summer program who would have been enrolled in one if a program were available to them. Nearly 7 in 10 Black families without a child in a summer program (68 percent) report that they would enroll their child in a program if one were available to them. While this level of demand remains higher than the national level (57 percent), it is a decrease from 2009, when unmet demand among Black families was at 77 percent (Figure 6).

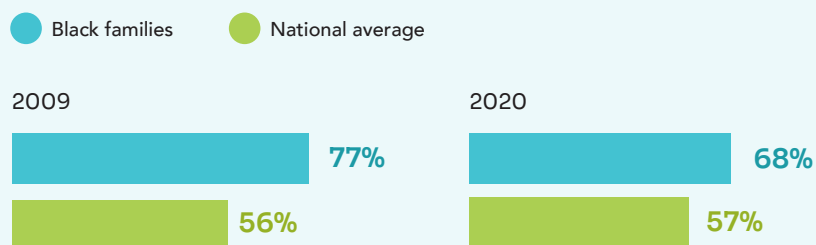
The cost of programs is the top reason Black parents say they did not enroll their child in a summer experience during 2019, followed closely by families doing other things together during the summer. More than 1 in 3 Black parents report that programs were too expensive (36 percent) or their families did other things over the summer (34 percent). Cost was an extremely important factor for two-thirds of Black parents with a child in a structured summer experience.

Summer program location or transportation to the program, lack of awareness of available programs, and no available programs or spaces in programs relevant to their child's needs or interests are barriers for 1 in 5 Black parents (23 percent, 20 percent, and 19 percent, respectively). Similarly, among Black parents with a child in a summer activity, more than one-third say that an extremely important factor in their selection of what their child did during the summer was that the program was the same one their child participated in during the school year.

Comparing differences by race and ethnicity, Black parents were statistically more likely than White parents to report issues with location or transportation (23 percent vs. 19 percent) and less likely to say that their family did other things during the summer (34 percent vs. 42 percent) (Figure 7). Although cost was the most common reason why Black parents report that they did not enroll their child in a summer program, Black parents were less likely than White parents to say that programs were too expensive (36 percent vs. 40 percent).

**Figure 6:** Unmet demand for summer programs

Percentage of families without a child in a summer program who would enroll them if a program were available



## SUMMER IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: Unmet demand for summer programming remains high

In the midst of the pandemic, 49 percent of Black families without a child in a summer program would have enrolled their child if a program were available. Concerns about COVID-19 were a factor behind a majority of parents' choice to not enroll their child in a summer program (53 percent) in 2020. However, 44 percent of Black parents reported that the unavailability of summer programs in their community factored into their decision as well.

A summer 2020 survey of program providers found that, on average, summer programs served approximately half as many children in 2020 as they served in 2019 due to social distancing guidelines and reduced student-to-staff ratios. Among program providers providing in-person services, 40 percent reported having a waitlist for their summer program in 2020.



In a February/March 2021 survey of program providers, most providers (79 percent) report that they plan to provide programming during the 2021 summer, and more than one-third (36 percent) say that they are most concerned about their ability to meet the demand from families.





**Figure 7:** Top five reasons families reported why they chose not to enroll their child in a summer program

**Black families**

1	Programs too expensive	36%
2	Family does other things over the summer	34%
3	Issues with location or transportation	23%
4	I don't know what programs are available for my child	20%
5	No programs, or spaces in programs, were available relevant to my children's needs or interests	19%

**White families**

1	Family does other things over the summer	42%
2	Programs too expensive	40%
3	Issues with location or transportation	19%
4	I don't know what programs are available for my child	18%
5	No programs, or spaces in programs, were available relevant to my children's needs or interests	18%

### Black parents express strong support for public funding of summer learning opportunities

Support for public funding of summer learning opportunities is extremely high among Black parents, with 89 percent of Black parents in favor overall and more than 2 in 3 (67 percent) strongly in favor of public funding for summer learning opportunities for young people in underserved communities. Black parents' strongly in favor of public funding is statistically higher than White parents and parents overall (55 percent and 57 percent, respectively).

Support is slightly lower than in previous editions of the America After 3PM study, where 91 percent of Black parents reported support for summer learning opportunities in 2014 and 95 percent in 2009 (Figure 8).

**Figure 8:** Support for summer learning opportunities remains strong

Percentage of Black parents reporting they are in favor of public funding for summer learning opportunities



### SUMMER IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: 5 in 6 parents support public funding of summer learning opportunities

In an October 2020 nationwide survey of parents, 85 percent of African American parents report that they are in favor of public funding



for summer learning opportunities for students in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth, demonstrating that public support for summer programming remains high during the pandemic. The same survey finds that approximately 4 in 5 African American parents (78 percent) agree with the statement that, "all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs."







## About the survey

America After 3PM is a national survey of parents or guardians of school-aged children, screening 31,055 households and having 14,393 households completing in-depth interviews via an online survey using a blend of national consumer panels. At least 200 households completed interviews in every state and Washington D.C., between January 27 and March 17, 2020. Where the minimum could not be met, supplemental telephone interviews were conducted. A total of 29,595 households, including 3,554 Black households, were surveyed and answered questions regarding ways in which their child or children were cared for during the summer of 2019. Data was collected by Edge Research on behalf of the Afterschool Alliance. Projections for child-level data represent the 8.5 million Black children and youth in the United States based on numbers from the Census Bureau's October 2018 Current Population Survey.

Also included throughout this report are findings from parent and program provider surveys: two nationally representative online surveys of parents, one fielded August 4-18, 2020 of 1,071 parents of school-aged children and the other fielded October 12-29, 2020 of 1,202 parents of school-aged children; and three online program provider surveys, a survey of 1,047 afterschool and summer learning program providers, conducted July 20-August 31, 2020, a survey of 1,445 program providers conducted between September 28-October 27, 2020, and a survey of 1,235 program providers conducted February 19-March 15, 2021. All surveys were conducted by Edge Research.

For additional information about America After 3PM, visit: [afterschoolalliance.org/aa3pm](https://afterschoolalliance.org/aa3pm).

The America After 3PM special report, *Time for a Game-Changing Summer, With Opportunity and Growth for All of America's Youth*, is based on research commissioned and funded by The Wallace Foundation as part of its mission to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people, and in the arts for everyone by supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices.

Data from this special report is based on the 2020 America After 3PM survey results, made possible with support from the New York Life Foundation, Overdeck Family Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Altria Group, and the Walton Family Foundation, as well as the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

