Afterschool and summer programs play an important role in supporting the healthy development of young people, and are all the more critical today. Approximately 6 in 10 parents are more worried about their child's emotional well-being today than they were before the pandemic, and missing out on social connections and friendships is a top concern for parents. Recognizing the serious impact the pandemic has had on young people's health and well-being, in October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children’s Hospital Association joined together to declare a National State of Emergency in Children’s Mental Health.¹

As parents increasingly look to afterschool programs to support young people’s overall health and development, but issues of access prevent millions of young people from participating in programs, action is needed to ensure that all young people have the same opportunities to help them forge healthy futures.

Parents increasingly view afterschool as important to the healthy development of children

From building social skills and positive relationships with mentors to keeping kids safe in the hours after school, the 2020 America After 3PM study finds that parents overwhelmingly agree that programs are providing a broad set of supports for children that are integral to their healthy development.

More than ever before, parents believe programs support kids’ needs

Parents are now more likely to agree that programs provide children a wide range of supports than a decade ago. For instance, compared to 2014, parents are more likely to agree that afterschool programs keep kids in their community safe and out of trouble, reduce the likelihood that young people will use drugs or engage in other risky behaviors, and provide working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised.

Parents increasingly agree that afterschool programs support children’s healthy development

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide children opportunities to be physically active</th>
<th>Provide children opportunities to engage with their peers</th>
<th>Provide working parents peace of mind knowing that their children are safe and supervised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+9</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allow children to build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors</th>
<th>Reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors</th>
<th>Keep kids safe and out of trouble</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provide healthy beverages, snacks, or meals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percentage point calculations may be different due to rounding.
Regardless of community, region, or politics, parents agree on the benefits of afterschool programs.

Across community types, regions of the country, and political affiliations, large majorities of parents agree on the benefits of afterschool programs.

Percentage of parents agreeing that afterschool programs provide children and families the following supports:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY TYPE</th>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>POLITICAL AFFILIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Opportunities to engage with their peers and reduce unproductive screen time**
  - Rural: 87%
  - Suburban: 84%
  - Urban: 85%
  - Northeast: 84%
  - Midwest: 85%
  - South: 85%
  - West: 86%
  - Democrat: 87%
  - Independent: 85%
  - Republican: 85%

- **Provide working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised**
  - Rural: 86%
  - Suburban: 82%
  - Urban: 82%
  - Northeast: 81%
  - Midwest: 85%
  - South: 83%
  - West: 83%
  - Democrat: 85%
  - Independent: 82%
  - Republican: 82%

- **Opportunities to be physically active**
  - Rural: 85%
  - Suburban: 83%
  - Urban: 85%
  - Northeast: 82%
  - Midwest: 84%
  - South: 82%
  - West: 83%
  - Democrat: 83%
  - Independent: 84%
  - Republican: 83%

- **Allow children to build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors**
  - Rural: 82%
  - Suburban: 77%
  - Urban: 79%
  - Northeast: 79%
  - Midwest: 76%
  - South: 76%
  - West: 79%
  - Democrat: 81%
  - Independent: 76%
  - Republican: 81%

- **Reduce the likelihood that youth will engage risky behaviors**
  - Rural: 76%
  - Suburban: 74%
  - Urban: 75%
  - Northeast: 73%
  - Midwest: 74%
  - South: 75%
  - West: 74%
  - Democrat: 78%
  - Independent: 76%
  - Republican: 78%
Afterschool programs support healthy development

Focusing on the activities and supports provided by afterschool programs, the three most important aspects parents look for when selecting their child’s afterschool program are a safe environment, knowledgeable and caring staff, and the opportunity to build life skills. And, in keeping with parents’ priorities, America After 3PM finds that a strong majority of parents are satisfied with the supports they value most for their child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A safe environment</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable and caring staff</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to build life skills, such as interacting with peers, developing social skills, and responsible decision-making</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUPPORTING HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

During the pandemic, afterschool and summer learning programs further established themselves as integral partners in the network of supports necessary to ensure that all students, in particular those who were struggling and missing out, were provided the care and opportunities that they needed to emerge from the pandemic re-engaged and re-energized.

Afterschool and summer programs reporting that they are providing their students:

- Time to interact with peers and build social skills:
  - Fall 2021: 91% (N/A), Summer 2021: 86% (N/A), Spring 2021: 86% (N/A)

- Physical activity:
  - Fall 2021: 86% (N/A), Summer 2021: 82% (N/A), Spring 2021: 81% (N/A)

- Opportunities to develop life skills:
  - Fall 2021: N/A, Summer 2021: N/A, Spring 2021: 85%

- Opportunities to talk with their peers or staff members about their feelings:
  - Fall 2021: 81% (N/A), Summer 2021: 77% (N/A), Spring 2021: 80% (N/A)

- Snacks and/or meals:
  - Fall 2021: 67% (N/A), Summer 2021: 65% (N/A), Spring 2021: 77% (N/A)

- Home visits and/or check-in calls with students and families:
  - Fall 2021: 21% (22%), Summer 2021: 22% (32%), Spring 2021: N/A

Supports are especially important for parents of color and families with low incomes

All families value a safe environment and knowledgeable and caring staff, while parents of color and families with low incomes particularly value afterschool’s role in supporting healthy development.

Parents say these factors are "extremely important":

- **Safe environment**
  - Low-Income: 80%
  - Higher-Income: 80%
  - AANHPI*: 79%
  - Black: 83%
  - Latino: 83%
  - White: 78%

- **Knowledgeable and caring staff**
  - Low-Income: 75%
  - Higher-Income: 77%
  - AANHPI*: 74%
  - Black: 71%
  - Latino: 82%
  - White: 78%
  - National average: 73%

- **Opportunities to build life skills**
  - Low-Income: 63%
  - Higher-Income: 56%
  - AANHPI*: 58%
  - Black: 67%
  - Latino: 64%
  - White: 54%
  - National average: 58%

- **Physical activity opportunities**
  - Low-Income: 54%
  - Higher-Income: 52%
  - AANHPI*: 47%
  - Black: 55%
  - Latino: 58%
  - White: 51%

- **Programming to reduce risky behaviors**
  - Low-Income: 48%
  - Higher-Income: 41%
  - AANHPI*: 56%
  - Black: 50%
  - Latino: 45%
  - White: 38%

- **Snacks or meals**
  - Low-Income: 48%
  - Higher-Income: 36%
  - AANHPI*: 36%
  - Black: 46%
  - Latino: 44%
  - White: 38%

*Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander parents.
**SUMMERTIME AND HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT**

During the summer, parents were more likely to report that opportunities such as time to experience the outdoors, physical activity, and building life skills were important in their selection of their child’s summertime experience compared to selecting an afterschool program.

*Parents reporting the following were extremely important in choosing what their child does over the summer and their afterschool program:*

- Time outdoors: 41% in afterschool, 52% in summer; change = +11
- Physical activity: 53% in afterschool, 60% in summer; change = +8
- Building life skills: 58% in afterschool, 63% in summer; change = +4

*Percentage point calculations may be different due to rounding.*

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**The need to increase access and availability of afterschool programs**

Afterschool and summer programs are vital to communities across the nation, providing the supports that young people need now, more than ever. However, from 2014 to 2020, afterschool program participation has decreased as barriers to participation and unmet demand for afterschool programs have grown. As parents increasingly look to afterschool programs to support young people’s overall health and development, but issues of access prevent millions of young people from benefitting from the opportunities that programs provide, action is needed at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure access to afterschool programs for every young person who wants to participate.

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**Barriers and unmet demand go up, while participation goes down.**

- **Unmet Demand**
  - 19.4M in 2014
  - 24.6M in 2020

- **Participation**
  - 10.2M in 2014
  - 7.8M in 2020

- **2014**
  - Programs are too expensive: 43%
  - Transportation issues, no safe way to and from program: 39%
  - Lack of available programs: 29%

- **2020**
  - Programs are too expensive: 57%
  - Transportation issues, no safe way to and from program: 53%
  - Lack of available programs: 42%

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**For every child in afterschool, 3 are waiting for an available program.**

**Parents favor public funding for afterschool programs to expand opportunities for kids in underserved communities.**

87%
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. Data were collected by Edge Research on behalf of the Afterschool Alliance. The percentages and projected numbers in America After 3PM are based on survey responses from parents. Projections for child-level data represent the 57.4 million children and youth in the United States based on numbers from the Census Bureau’s October 2018 Current Population Survey.

For additional information about America After 3PM, visit: afterschoolalliance.org/aa3pm.

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