



News Release
October 16, 2014

Contact: [Luci Manning](#)
202/371-1999

Parents in Washington Place High Value on Afterschool Programs, But the State Ranks Among Bottom 10 for Afterschool

Unmet Demand for Afterschool Programs in the State is High

Washington, DC — Washington has made progress since 2009, but still lags behind the rest of nation on afterschool participation, according to a new household survey commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. The 2014 edition of [America After 3PM](#) found that demand for afterschool programs still far exceeds supply; the number of children in Washington who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available surpasses the number of children enrolled in afterschool programs in the state. The household survey also found that the vast majority of parents of children in afterschool programs in Washington report significant benefits from their children's participation.

The *America After 3PM* survey included 30,000 American households and 293 in-depth interviews in Washington. It found that 17 percent of Washington students, 183,099 children in all, are enrolled in afterschool programs, up from 12 percent in 2009, when the survey was last conducted. But 217,293 Washington students are still without adult supervision in the afternoons. The parents of 333,927 Washington children not already in an afterschool program say they would enroll their child *if a program were available*.

“Afterschool providers and advocates in the state are working tirelessly to provide quality afterschool programs to as many children and families as resources will allow,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But Washington has a lot of work ahead if it's to keep up with other states, and even more if it is to provide all children with the afterschool opportunities they need. Most parents in the state who want their child in a program can't find one, and that needs to change. Every child who is unsupervised after school is a child potentially at risk. Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. Every Washington family that needs an afterschool program should have access to one.”

“Since 2009 our state has made significant cuts to funding and other supports for afterschool programs,” said Janet Schmidt, Chief Program and Policy Officer for School's Out Washington. “\$3 million for direct support to communities was cut in June 2009. In June 2013, more than \$400,000 that supported quality supports, such as on-site professional development and quality assessments was also cut. Washington's drop in ranking underscores how critical state investments are to a high quality continuum of services for kids and families to succeed in school and life.”

“The city of Seattle, too, can help address this problem,” Schmidt continued. “We are focused on preschool right now and that is, indeed, a good investment. But the need for safe, supervised programs that give children access to fun, educational, skill-building activities continues after they reach kindergarten. If we are to reap the benefits of an investment in preschool, we need to continue supporting out-of-school time programs for as long as students are in school. Schools Out Washington and a number of partners are working intensively to improve the quality of afterschool programs in King County, but in the end, we need all levels of government to invest in these programs so they are available to all children and youth.”

To determine the *America After 3PM* state rankings, a composite score was calculated for all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, and indexed against the national average. Each state’s overall score is based on afterschool program participation, afterschool programs reaching children in need, and parents’ satisfaction with key features of their child’s afterschool program.

In important respects, Washington results mirror the national survey findings, which include:

- **Participation in afterschool programs is up nationally**, with 18 percent of the nation’s schoolchildren in programs (10.2 million children), up from 15 percent in 2009 (8.4 million children) and 11 percent in 2004 (6.5 million children).
- **At the same time, unmet demand has increased.** The parents of nearly 20 million children (19.4 million) say they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if a program were available to them. That means that the existing supply of afterschool programs is meeting barely one-third of demand.
- **Demand is greatest among African American, Hispanic and low-income families.** Both participation in afterschool and unmet demand for afterschool are much higher among children from low-income households than higher-income households, and higher among African American and Hispanic children than white children. The parents of 60 percent of the nation’s African American children would enroll their child in a program if one were available, as would the parents of 57 percent of Latino children. The same is true of 35 percent of white children.
- **Despite increased participation in afterschool, the number of children unsupervised in the hours after school remains high.** Across the nation, more than 800,000 elementary students, and 2.2 million middle school students spend time alone and unsupervised during the after school hours. In all, 11.3 million children — one in five — are unsupervised in the afternoons.
- **Parental satisfaction with afterschool remains high.** Nine in ten parents (89 percent) say they are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program.
- **Support for public funding of afterschool programs remains strong.** More than four in five parents (84 percent) report that they favor public funding for afterschool opportunities in communities that have few opportunities for children and youth. Support is bipartisan, as well, with 91 percent of parents who identify as Democrats, 86 percent Independents and 80 percent of Republicans favoring public funding for programs. Parents across all geographic regions support public funding for afterschool programs.

The national and Washington *America After 3PM* reports, and accompanying data, are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org. A snapshot of national participation and demand for summer learning programs is also available online.

On October 23, more than 1 million people in communities across the nation and at U.S. military installations worldwide will join the only national rally for afterschool programs. Sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance and now in its 15th year, *Lights On Afterschool* brings communities together for science fairs, fun runs, community service events, music and dance performances, open houses and other events at schools, community centers, malls, parks and recreation centers, science museums, state capitols, and other settings. Find a local *Lights On Afterschool* event at www.afterschoolalliance.org/LOA.cfm.

Findings from *America After 3PM* are based on in-depth interviews with 13,709 U.S. households with children, completed by way of an online survey using a blend of national consumer panels. Shugoll Research collected and analyzed the data for *America After 3PM*. The goal of at least 200 completed interviews was reached in every state and the District of Columbia. In states where this goal could not be reached using online panels, random-digit dialing was used to complete supplementary telephone interviews. In order to participate, respondents had to live in the United States and be the guardians of a school-age child living in their household. All interviews were completed between February 28 and April 17, 2014.

[*America After 3PM*](#) is funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Noyce Foundation, with additional support from the Heinz Endowments, The Robert Bowne Foundation and the Samueli Foundation.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.