

The Summer Struggle for Everyday Families

Affording the Opportunities Parents Want for Youth

America After 3PM

America After 3PM is the nation's most comprehensive look at how children spend their time during the hours after school and during the summer. Conducted roughly every five years, the 2025 study is the fifth edition of the survey. Previous studies were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020.

America After 3PM serves as a resource for policymakers, educators, parents, and advocates on demand for afterschool and summer programs, barriers to program participation, which students are missing out, and parents' views on afterschool and summer programs.

The America After 3PM special report, "The Summer Struggle for Everyday Families: Affording the Opportunities Parents Want for Youth," is based on research funded by The Wallace Foundation.

Methodology

America After 3PM 2025 is a large, national tracking survey. This year 30,515 U.S. parents or guardians of a school-age child participated. At least 200 interviews were completed in every state and the District of Columbia.

The survey was conducted using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible and offered in both English and Spanish. All interviews were completed between January 31 and April 21, 2025.

An Advisory Committee comprised of afterschool and summer researchers and experts provided input on the design of the survey instrument.

Questions about summer program participation ask about the summer of 2024.

Big Takeaways

1 1 in 2 Children Missing Out; Affordability a Top Challenge

2 Parents Want a Summer Full of Opportunity

3 Summer Programs Earn High Marks

4 Parents Support Public Funding and Want Programs for All

1 1 in 2 children missing out; Affordability is top barrier

Parent demand far from being met

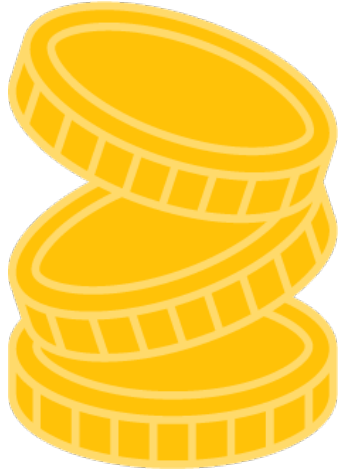
HALF OF CHILDREN ARE MISSING OUT



Parents of
24.6 million kids
want a summer program

12.6 million kids
don't have access

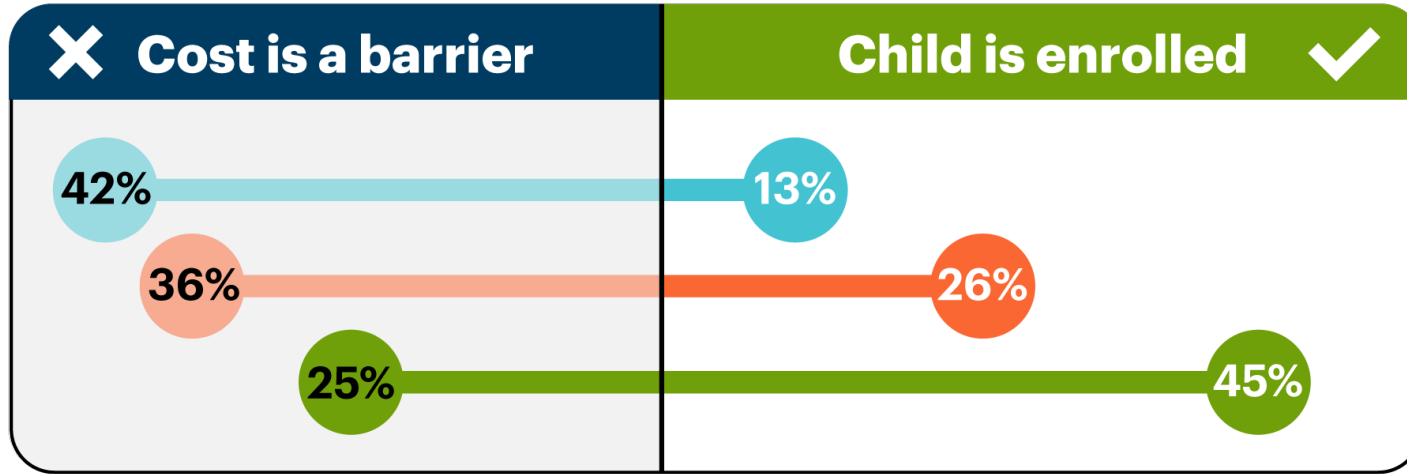
Affordability is top barrier



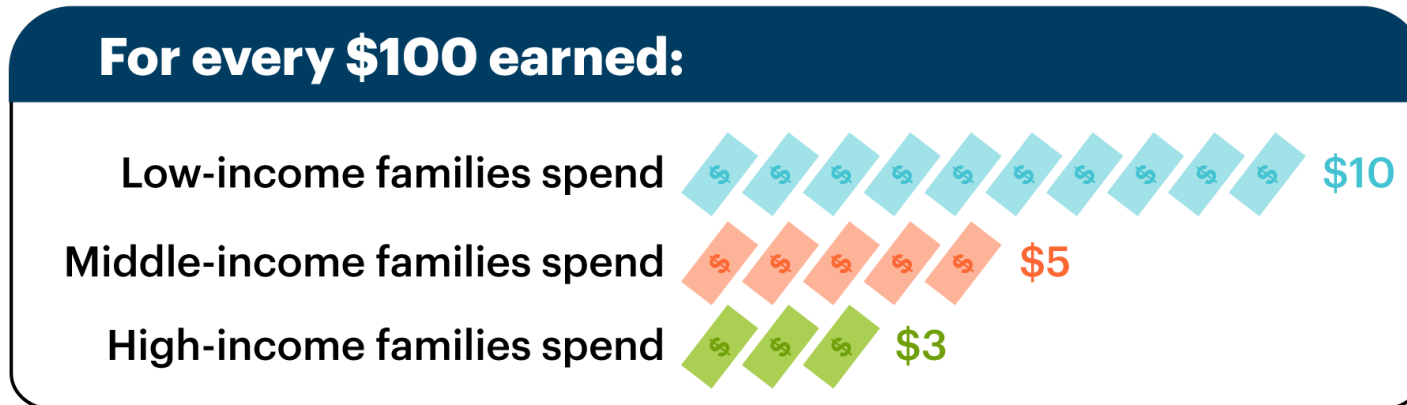
Program cost is the primary challenge families face, with nearly **4 in 10 families** (38%) reporting affordability as a barrier

Other barriers:

- 18%** Issues with location or transportation
- 13%** Information on summer programs not easy to find
- 13%** Programs not available in community
- 13%** Program hours did not meet needs



Children in high-income families are **3X more likely** to be enrolled in a summer program



Over the summer months, low- and middle-income families spend a greater slice of their income on summer programs

- Low-income families
- Middle-income families
- High-income families

Gap between families grows

Families with high income **spend 9x more** on out-of-school time activities than families with low income (\$6,588 to \$734)

9x

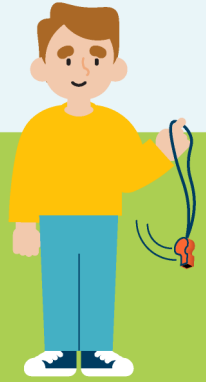
After adjusting for inflation:

- Spending by families in the highest income bracket **grew by more than \$2,000**
- Spending by families in the lowest income bracket decreased

2 Parents want a summer full of opportunity for their children

Outdoors and screen-free

Safe, fun, active



Learning and being social

Community partners power summer programs



Summer Priorities

- ✓ Outdoors
- ✓ Active
- ✓ Less screens
- ✓ Build confidence
- ✓ Variety of activities

Parents' view: Summer vs. School Year

Opportunities to experience the outdoors



Opportunities to build confidence



Opportunities to spend more time on fun and educational activities; less time on screens



Program cost



Physical activity



Variety of activities



● Summer ● Afterschool

3 Parents rate summer programs highly

Parents give summer programs high marks



Parents are satisfied across the variety of summer offerings:

97% Specialty camp or program

96% Voluntary learning and enrichment summer program

95% Summer school

Half of parents with a child in a summer program say that they are **extremely confident** that their child will be **well prepared for the upcoming school year.**

Parents with a child in a summer program are more likely to express confidence

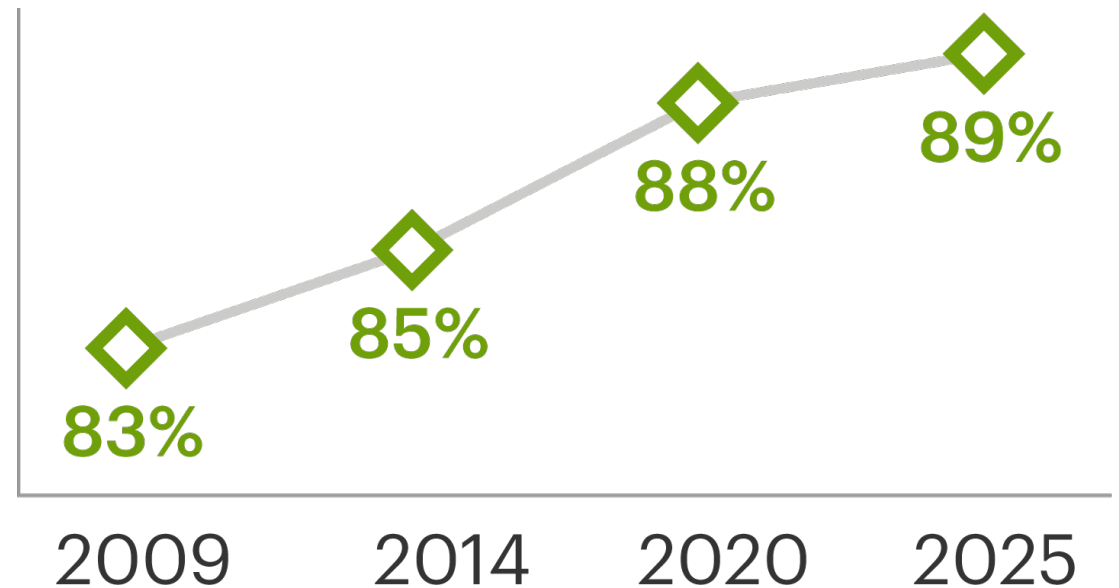


4 Parents support public funding and want programs for all

Parents support summer opportunities for all young people

87% agree that all
young people deserve
access to quality
afterschool and
summer programs

89% are in favor of public funding for
summer learning opportunities, with
support continuing to trend upward



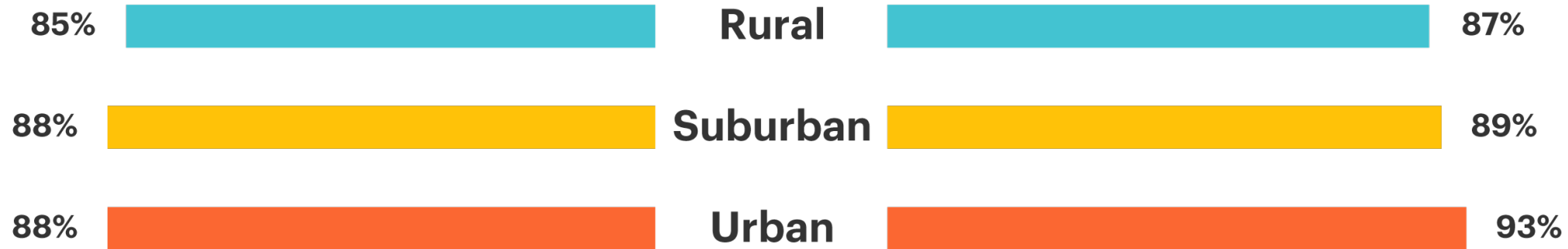
Parent support is aligned



Yes, all youth should have access to quality afterschool and summer programs



Yes, public funding should be used for summer learning opportunities



Support for public funding is also bipartisan



94%

Democrats



89%

Independents



87%

Republicans

Policy recommendations and opportunities


Policy recommendations and opportunities

Increase investment in summer programs

Target barriers to participation

Create more summer programs that align with parents' and young people's priorities

Lower barriers to including snacks and meals at comprehensive summer programs

A photograph of two children participating in a ropes course. A girl in a white shirt and pink pants is in the foreground, standing on a wooden platform and holding onto ropes. A boy in a white shirt and blue shorts is in the background, also on the course. The background is filled with green trees under a clear blue sky. The image is overlaid with a white diagonal shape on the left and a green diagonal shape on the top right.

Learn more and see
recommendations for
action at aa3pm.co