





*America After 3PM: From Big Cities to Small Towns* is a special report from the most in-depth study ever to explore how America's kids spend the after school hours. Sponsored by JCPenney Afterschool and released in October 2009, *America After 3PM* found that despite an increase in the number of children attending afterschool programs over the last five years, today more than a quarter of the nation's schoolchildren are on their own in the afternoons, and the parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs if programs were available. It also found that the number of children left alone after the school day ends has risen to 15.1 million children (26 percent of school-age children) – an increase of 800,000 children since the 2004 edition of the study.

*From Big Cities to Small Towns* takes a fresh look at the *America After 3PM* data from the perspective of community type and examines how kids' afterschool experiences differ from one community to another. The nearly 30,000 household data set from *America After 3PM* was divided into three community types—rural, urban and suburban—and analyzed for differences in afterschool participation, access, barriers, satisfaction and more.

## **Background**

From the standpoint of ensuring that public policy is responsive to community needs, it is critical to understand differences across community types. Parents, policy makers and voters are keenly aware that access to a variety of services and resources, such as health care, social services and high quality public schools, differs from one community to another. Often federal and state policies are enacted to help address inequities in the distribution of services.

The common perception is that a disproportionate amount of public resources are directed to urban communities, which have the resources to hire grant writers and have a wealth of agencies that are potential partners in writing high quality grant applications, while rural communities struggle to compete. At the federal level, the Obama administration has demonstrated concern about the plight of rural communities by establishing priorities and preference for rural applicants in various federal grant applications. In Congress, numerous bills that focus specifically on rural issues have been introduced, including one that addresses the need for more afterschool programs in rural communities.

When it comes to afterschool, urban communities have certainly benefited from the afterschool supports and infrastructure that have been established in a number of cities. The Wallace Foundation has invested in the creation of city level infrastructure to support quality afterschool in several cities, including Boston, Chicago, New York City and Providence. Many mayors across the country have made access to quality afterschool programs a key part of their platforms and the National League of Cities has supported mayoral summits on afterschool and provided technical assistance to mayors and other city leaders who want to ensure that all kids have a safe place to go after the school day ends. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) initiative, the only federal funding stream dedicated exclusively to afterschool and summer programs, provides funding for afterschool in both rural and urban communities. Analysis of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grantees and centers by community type reveals that while the grants are distributed relatively evenly among urban and rural communities (37% in rural and 35% in urban), because urban grants tend to be larger and include more program locations, more 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC-supported afterschool programs are located in urban areas (43%) than in rural communities (33%).

With that background, the Afterschool Alliance and JCPenney Afterschool set out to determine how the after school experiences of children from different community types vary. We sought answers to questions including: Are urban students more or less likely to participate in afterschool programs? In what community type is demand for afterschool greatest? Are there differences in public support for afterschool? How do the barriers to afterschool participation differ in urban and rural communities? Answers to those questions and more can be found in this report.

## Key Findings

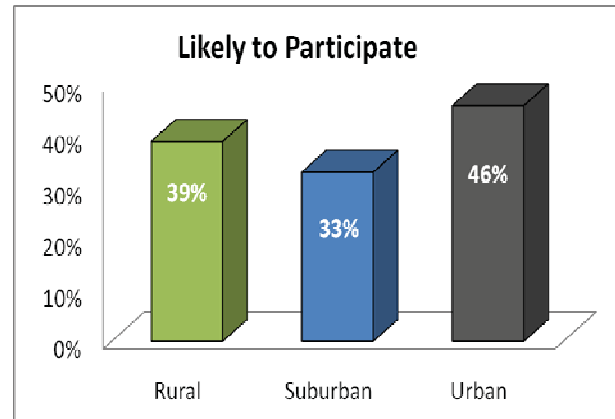
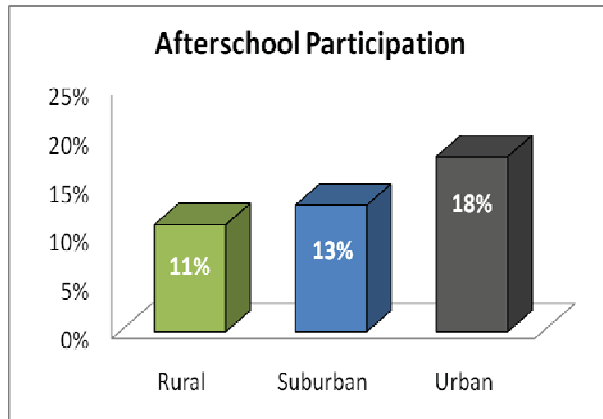
<b>How Kids From Big Cities to Small Towns Spend Their After School Hours</b>							
	<b>National %</b>	<b>Rural %</b>	<b>Number of Rural Kids</b>	<b>Suburban %</b>	<b>Number of Suburban Kids</b>	<b>Urban %</b>	<b>Number of Urban Kids</b>
<b>Percentage of Kids in Afterschool Programs</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1,171,600</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3,933,230</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3,347,430</b>
<b>Percentage of Kids in Self Care</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>2,713,481</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7,838,946</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4,522,469</b>
<b>Percentage of Kids Who Would Participate if an Afterschool Program were Available</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>4,059,948</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>8,304,440</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6,089,922</b>

*America After 3PM: From Big Cities to Small Towns* finds that the nation has a long way to go to meet the needs of kids and families from urban, suburban and rural communities when schools are not in session. The demand for afterschool and summer programs is very high in all community types, especially among low-income students who need them most. Parents across the board are struggling to provide after school care for their children in the weakened economy. They see afterschool programs as an answer. The vast majority of parents whose children are in afterschool programs are satisfied with the programs their children attend, and public support for afterschool programs is unusually strong in urban, suburban and rural communities.

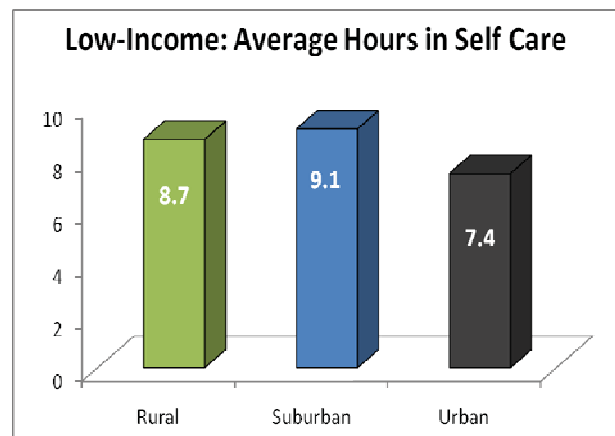
- Participation in self care is affected little by geography. More than a quarter (26 percent) of America's rural, urban and suburban schoolchildren are on their own after the school day ends, and before parents get home from work.
  - 4.5 million urban children, 7.8 million suburban children and 2.7 million rural children are unsupervised in the afternoons.
- Children in urban areas are benefitting from afterschool programs at the highest rate. But there are not enough programs to keep pace with the need in any geographical setting.
  - More than 3.3 million kids in urban areas (18 percent) participate in afterschool programs, compared to 3.9 million kids in suburban areas (13 percent) and 1.2 million kids in rural areas (11 percent). Fifteen percent of school-age children overall participate in afterschool programs.
  - Parents of six million urban children (46 percent), 8.3 million suburban children (33 percent) and 4.1 million rural children (39 percent) who are not currently participating in

afterschool programs say they would enroll their children if a program were available to them.

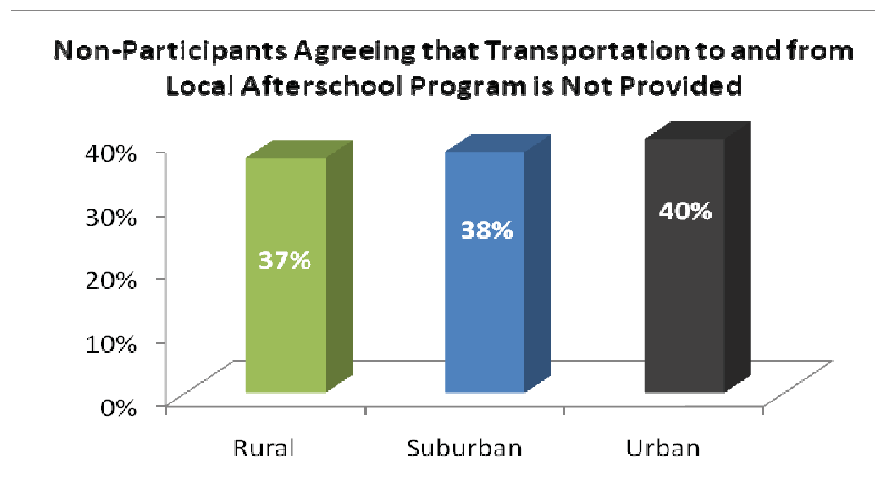
- Urban students also spend the most time in their afterschool programs. On average urban children participate in afterschool programs for 9.3 hours per week, while rural and suburban children participate for a just over 7.5 hours per week.



- Participation in summer programs is appreciably higher among urban children (29 percent) than rural (20 percent) and suburban children (23 percent), and while demand for summer programs is high among all populations, urban parents show slightly more interest in getting their child involved in summer programs (45 percent) than suburban (42 percent) and rural parents (42 percent).
- Parents in all communities are struggling to provide after school care for their children in the weakened economy.
  - More than half of rural (60 percent), urban (54 percent) and suburban (64 percent) parents of afterschool participants agree that current economic conditions have affected their ability to pay for after school care for their children.
  - More than three in five rural (65 percent), urban (62 percent) and suburban (67 percent) parents of students in afterschool programs report that cost was a major feature that motivated their selection of the afterschool program their child is enrolled in.
- The rural-urban difference in afterschool participation is greater among low-income populations, though demand and concerns with cost are high among all low-income families.
  - Low-income youth in rural areas are less likely to participate in afterschool programs (12 percent) than low-income youth in suburban (21 percent) and urban areas (30 percent).
  - Self care rates among urban low-income youth (33 percent) are higher than those of suburban (25 percent) and rural low-income youth (23 percent).
  - Regardless of community type, low-income parents of students not in afterschool programs report that after lack of need, cost was the biggest factor in their decisions not



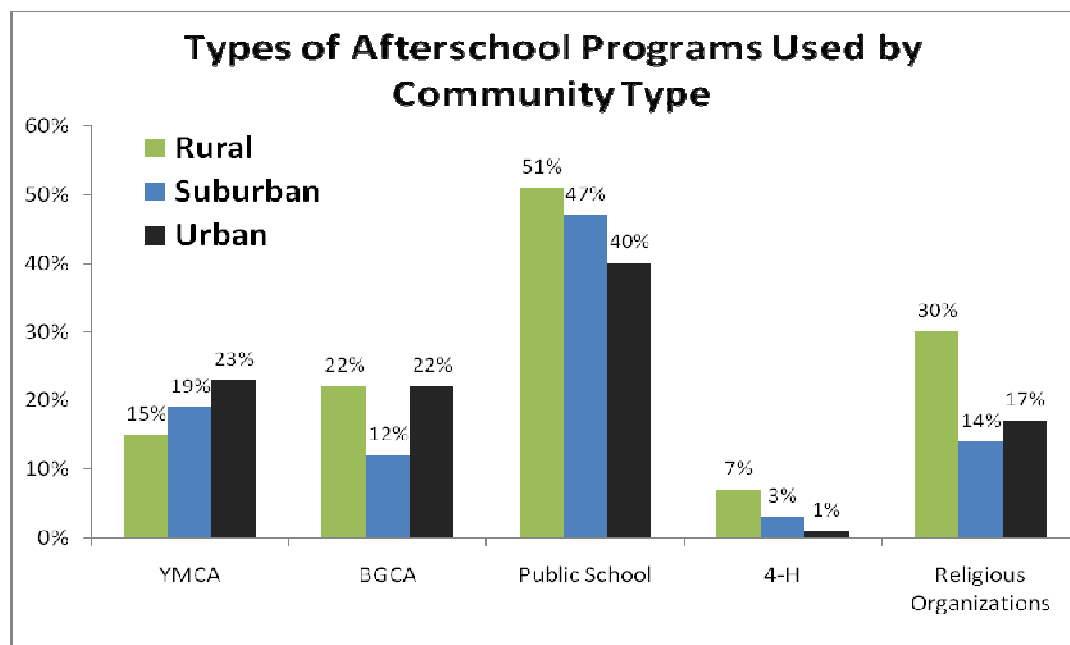
- to enroll their children in afterschool programs: rural (56 percent), suburban (66 percent), urban (64 percent).
- Among families whose children are not in afterschool, more than half (56 percent) of urban low-income parents and nearly half of rural (46 percent) and suburban (48 percent) low-income parents would enroll their child in afterschool programs if they were available in their area.
- Low-income suburban youth spend an average of 9.1 hours in self care per week, while low-income rural and urban youth spend an average of 8.7 and 7.4 hours, respectively, in self care.
- Each community type has its own distinct barriers to access to after school care. While rural parents seeking care struggle with availability and information about afterschool options, urban parents cite convenience of location and safety issues as their major concerns.
  - Rural parents of children who don't participate in afterschool programs were much more likely (57 percent) to agree that after school options are limited in their communities than suburban (37 percent) and urban respondents (36 percent).
  - Many more rural parents of children who don't participate in afterschool programs (40 percent) report that programs are not available in their communities compared to 25 percent of suburban and 23 percent of urban parents of children not in afterschool programs.
  - Urban parents of non-participants are more concerned (17 percent) than suburban (11 percent) and rural parents (12 percent) that their children do not have a safe place to go to after school.
  - Additionally, urban parents of non-participants are more likely to report that afterschool programs are not in a convenient location (35 percent) compared to suburban (30 percent) and rural (29 percent) parents of non-participants.



- Transportation and cost are barriers to afterschool participation in all community types.
  - More than a third of rural (37 percent), urban (40 percent) and suburban parents (38 percent) of children who do not participate in afterschool programs report that transportation to and from the program is not provided.
  - Afterschool program cost is a concern for all populations, but it is especially important to urban and suburban populations. More than half of both urban (56 percent) and suburban

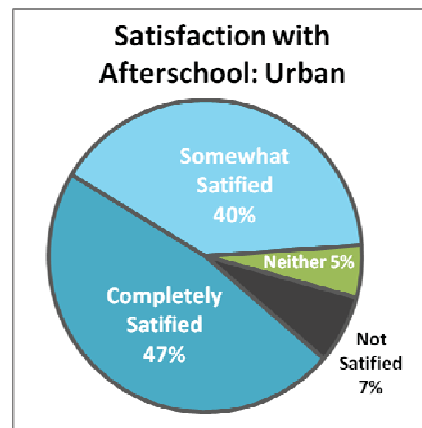
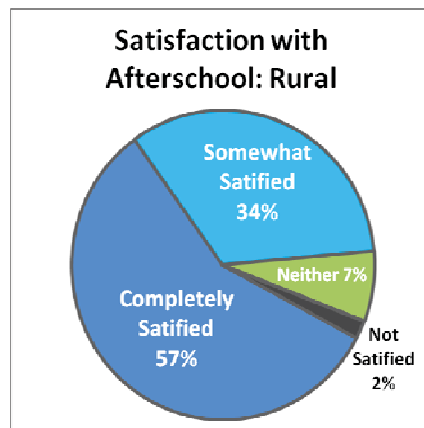
parents (53 percent) of non-participants responded that afterschool programs are too expensive, while 46 percent of rural parents of non-participants reported that cost was a barrier to enrollment.

- On average, rural parents are spending \$47 on afterschool programs each week – much less than both urban and suburban parents, who are spending a weekly average of \$69 and \$67, respectively, on afterschool programs for their children.
- As might be expected, rural, urban and suburban children participate in different types of afterschool programs.
  - Public schools are the most common provider of afterschool programs across all community types with 51 percent of rural youth, 40 percent of urban youth and 47 percent of suburban youth attending afterschool programs at their local public school.
  - YMCA-run programs are used more often by urban students (23 percent) than those living in rural (15 percent) or suburban (19 percent) areas.
  - Participation in Boys & Girls Clubs is lower among suburban children (12 percent) than those who are rural or urban (both at 22 percent).
  - Rural children participate in programs run by the 4-H (7 percent) and religious organizations (30 percent) at a much higher rate than urban and suburban children.

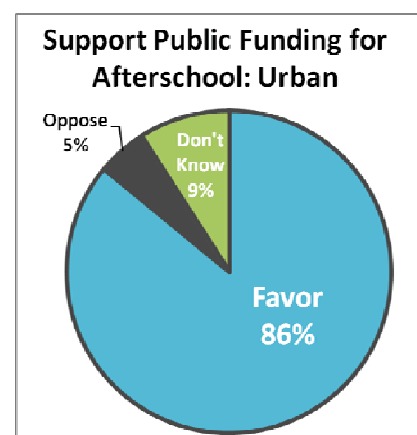
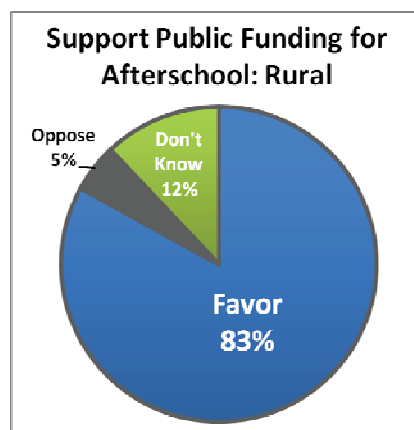


- Rural, urban and suburban participants report different reasons for selecting their afterschool programs.
  - Urban participants were more likely (40 percent) to choose an afterschool program based on whether it provided music, art and culture than suburban (31 percent) and rural participants (30 percent).
  - Rural participants were more likely (24 percent) to choose an afterschool program because it was the only program available to them, compared to suburban (13 percent) and urban participants (11 percent).

- Thirty-eight percent of rural participants chose their afterschool program because transportation was provided to and from it. By comparison, only 27 percent of urban participants and 18 percent of suburban participants chose their program for this reason.



- Americans see afterschool programs as an answer, regardless of geographical differences. The vast majority of parents of children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the programs their children attend, and public support for afterschool programs is unusually strong across urban, suburban and rural populations.
  - Nine in ten rural parents (91 percent) and nearly nine in ten suburban (86 percent) and urban parents (88 percent) are satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend.
  - All parents agree that children need “some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn” including 88 percent of rural parents, 89 percent of suburban parents and 92 percent of urban parents.
  - Parents overwhelmingly support public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs across geographies.
    - Eighty-three percent of rural and suburban parents, and 86 percent of urban parents, support public funding for afterschool programs.
    - Eighty-three percent of rural parents, 82 percent of suburban parents and 87 percent of urban parents support public funding for summer learning programs.



## **Afterschool: A Valuable Support to Kids and Families in All Communities**

*America After 3PM: From Big Cities to Small Towns* provides clear evidence that there is an urgent and unmet need for greater support for afterschool programs in all types of communities across the United States.

While there are some distinctions regarding availability and access to afterschool among the three community types, they all share clear similarities: Children and families in all community types need more afterschool programs. Parents are satisfied with the programs that children are attending, but there are not nearly enough programs to meet the need in any type of community.

Particularly in this challenging economy, we must do more to keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families in the hours after the school day ends and before parents return home from work. At the federal level and in some states and localities, the afterschool community is facing a serious threat to afterschool funding from policy makers who want to divert resources from afterschool to extended day programs. Policy makers should note that families from all types of communities want and need more afterschool programs, and feel strongly that more resources should be directed to support afterschool programs. If we are going to ensure that more children in America have after school learning opportunities, we need to direct more resources to afterschool rather than diverting funds to other initiatives.

Regardless of whether a child lives in a rural, urban or suburban community, every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program. The benefits of participating in quality afterschool are clear, as is the public demand for programs. What's needed is increased support from all levels of government, and the philanthropic and business communities, to help ensure that every child, regardless of community type, can benefit from a safe, enriching, quality afterschool program.

According to U. S. Census data from 2007, the total school-age population is 57.3 million, which is the foundation for the national projections in *America After 3PM*.

*America After 3PM* was sponsored by JCPenney Afterschool. Between March and May 2009, 29,754 parents/guardians responded to survey questions about their after school child care arrangements during the 2008-2009 school year. RTi, a market research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the data for the Afterschool Alliance. Additional information from *America After 3PM* is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).