



America After 3 PM:

A Household Survey on Afterschool in America

Background Information

It is no secret that youth in America spend their afternoons in a patchwork quilt of supervised and unsupervised environments – a matter of vast and justifiable concern to parents, educators, law enforcement leaders, lawmakers and communities. For years, scant data have forced experts and activists to rely on a broad range of five to 15 million children who are unsupervised after school. There has also been a dearth of comprehensive data on the number of children in afterschool programs. The U.S. Department of Education provides reports on the number of children participating in afterschool programs funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative; the YMCA reports the number of children served in YMCA afterschool programs; and other national, state and local providers have their own participation data. But combining these figures does not provide an accurate picture of the number of youth in afterschool programs, because many children participate in more than one program – and others are left out altogether.

In order to learn how many children are in afterschool programs and how many are unsupervised after school, in the summer of 2003 the Afterschool Alliance conducted a household survey, with funding from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. The *America After 3 PM* survey gives the most comprehensive and accurate picture yet of what this nation's youth are doing each day after school. It differs from other household surveys in that it includes data on K-12 youth, rather than just K-8 youth. This survey also collected more detailed information about parent satisfaction with afterschool programs, and it offers the best data yet about demand for afterschool, including the likelihood that non-participating children would join afterschool programs, if programs were available.

Methodology

To administer the *America After 3 PM* survey, the Afterschool Alliance worked with research teams at Rothstein-Tauber, Inc-Directions for Decisions (RTi-DFD) and GE Consumer Finance to collect data via mail surveys sent to more than 30,000 households. The findings are nationally representative. This report includes a first look at the state-level data as well. In some instances, the findings have been projected to represent the approximately 57 million K-12 youth in the U.S. during the 2002-2003 school year (the timeframe referenced in the data collection). All of the projected estimates are based on data that were weighted to produce unbiased and consistent estimates of national totals.

The *America After 3 PM* survey was conducted in two phases. In the first phase of data collection, pre-screening was done for overall participation in various forms of after school care. A total of 30,791 households were screened to determine overall participation in afterschool programs and other types of after school care. In phase two, detailed questionnaires were mailed to a targeted sample to obtain a proportionate number of afterschool program participants and non-participants. The final sample achieved for the main interviews was 18,181.

A note of caution about the data: Experts believe parents are hesitant to admit kids are unsupervised, so the numbers reported regarding self care may be lower than the number of children actually in self care.

Summary of National Findings

Care Arrangements: In the *America After 3 PM* survey, parents/guardians were asked about their children’s regular participation in various afterschool care arrangements. (Note: Care arrangements add up to greater than 100 percent due to multiple regular care arrangements for many children.)

Sixty-seven percent of K-12 youth, approximately 38 million youth, are regularly cared for by a parent or guardian in the hours after school. Forty-three percent, approximately 25 million youth, are only in parental care (no other types of care are utilized) during the hours after school.

While the majority of children spend some portion of the hours after school in the care of a parent or guardian, more than 14 million K-12 youth (25 percent) are responsible for taking care of themselves. African-American and Hispanic youth spend significantly more time (eight hours per week) unsupervised.

In contrast, only 6.5 million (eleven percent of) K-12 youth participate in afterschool programs. On average, afterschool participants spend eight hours per week in afterschool programs. Twenty-eight percent of all afterschool program participants are enrolled in more than one program.

Other care arrangements include traditional child care centers (11 percent), sibling care (11 percent) and non-parental adult care, such as a grandparent or neighbor (15 percent).

Younger children are much more likely to be in afterschool programs. Of the afterschool program participants, 66 percent are kindergarten through fifth grade, 15 percent are in grades 6-8, and 8 percent are in grades 9-12 (11 percent of children in afterschool are in unidentified grades).

Conversely, older children are more likely to spend time unsupervised. Of the children reported to be in self care, 11 percent are in grades 1-5, 34 percent are in grades 6-8 and 51 percent are in grades 9-12 (4 percent of children in self care are in unidentified grades).

Table One, below, shows the percentage of children in each grade level who are in afterschool, as well as the national projected number of children per grade level in afterschool.

TABLE ONE		
Grade level	% children in grade level in afterschool	Number of children in afterschool
Kindergarten	13	564,023
Grades 1 to 5	15	2,753,131
Grades 6 to 8	6	727,722
Grades 9 to 12	3	389,888
Unreported	8	537,034

Table Two, below, shows the percentage of children in each grade level who are in self care, as well as the national projected number of children per grade level in self care.

TABLE TWO		
Grade level	% of children in grade level in self care	Number of children in self care
Kindergarten	1	42,819
Grades 1 to 5	7	1,303,945
Grades 6 to 8	34	3,901,463
Grades 9 to 12	52	5,968,930
Unreported	9	602,819

Need or Demand for Afterschool: While historically, statistics regarding the number of children in self care have been used to make the case for the need for afterschool programs, *America After 3 PM* went one step further and assessed demand for afterschool. To assess demand for afterschool programs, families that do not currently have children participating in afterschool programs were asked about the likelihood that they would participate if a quality afterschool program were available to them.

Of the 14.3 million children in self-care, nearly four million (26 percent) would be likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available in the community.

Of all non-participating children, 30 percent, or more than 15 million youth, would be likely to participate if an afterschool program were available in the community. (Note: These youth participate in a variety of non-afterschool program care arrangements and include the above cited four million self care children who are likely to participate.)

African American and Hispanic non-participating children are even more likely than others to participate if an afterschool program were available in their community. Fifty-three percent of African American parents and 44 percent of Hispanic parents say their child would be likely to participate if an afterschool program were available.

Satisfaction with and Perceived Benefits of Afterschool Programs: To determine parent satisfaction with afterschool programs, questions related to overall satisfaction, satisfaction with specific components of programming and reasons for selecting programs were asked of participants.

Ninety-one percent of parents are extremely or somewhat satisfied with the afterschool program their child attends. Hispanic parents are slightly less satisfied (88 percent), while African-American parents are slightly more satisfied (92 percent).

The top three reasons parents cite for selecting an afterschool program are cost, convenience and child enjoyment of program.

Non-participants report that their child would benefit most from afterschool programs in the following ways: fun/personal enjoyment, staying safe and out of trouble, provide academic enrichment, improved social skills and improved physical health and fitness.

Contextual Information about Afterschool Programs: Additional survey questions provided contextual information about the afterschool programs in the respondent's community, including providers of programs and cost data.

The majority of afterschool programs are provided by public schools. YMCAs, religious organizations, Boys and Girls Clubs, and private schools round out the top five providers of afterschool care.

On average, families spend \$22 per week per child for afterschool programs, with programs for younger children (grades one through five) costing significantly more than programs for older children. The cost of afterschool programs for children in grades one through five averages \$27 per week, compared to \$12 per week for children in grades six through eight, and \$7 per week for children in grades nine through twelve.

Only 13 percent of families report receiving any government assistance with the cost of afterschool programs.

Conclusion

America After 3 PM finds that families of 22 million children want afterschool and only 6.5 million of them are currently participating in afterschool programs. Need is especially high for middle school children. Just six percent of middle schoolers are in afterschool programs; another 34 percent of America's middle schoolers are unsupervised in the afternoons. Families with children in afterschool programs are overwhelmingly satisfied with the programs their children attend.

It is clear that the supply of afterschool programs continues to fall short of the demand. Parents recognize the benefits of afterschool and look to their communities to help them keep their kids safe and healthy and provide enriching activities. The afterschool community has a tremendous task before it.

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