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The Social Context of After-School Programs in Michigan

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There is growing evidence that after-school programs promote positive youth development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Gambone, Klem, and Connell (2002) in their model, "A Community Action Framework for Youth Development," suggest that after-school programs prepare young people for successful transition to young adulthood. Through their participation in youth programs, young people have access to opportunities to learn and build important skills. Studies find that, compared to family and community factors, time spent in youth programs is the most consistent predictor of youth thriving (Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, Carlton Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006).

INTRODUCTION

There is growing evidence that after-school programs promote positive youth development (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Gambone, Klem, and Connell (2002) in their model, *A Community Action Framework for Youth Development*, suggest that after-school programs prepare young people for successful transition to young adulthood. Through their participation in youth programs, young people have access to opportunities to learn and build important skills. Studies find that, compared to family and community factors, time spent in youth programs is the most consistent predictor of youth thriving (Borden, Perkins, Villarruel, Carlton Hug, Stone, & Keith, 2006).

Participation in youth programs offers young people the opportunity to acquire such assets as: self-affirmation; positive identity; respect; decision-making skills; a commitment to learning; positive values; family and community support; meaningful roles and empowerment; new physical, social, and intellectual skills; clearly enforced boundaries and expectations; opportunities to develop and express passion and creativity; and constructive use of time (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Perkins, Borden, & Villarruel, 2001; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Earls & Carlson, 2002).

The after-school hours can be either an opportunity for youth to engage in positive activities that enhance their development and foster their competencies, or a time to participate in negative activities that increase their chances of yielding to social pressures to do things like engage in drug use, sex, and antisocial activities (Villarruel & Lerner, 1994). For example, crime statistics show that most acts of youth delinquency (including alcohol and substance abuse, youth crimes, and delinquent behavior) occur during after-school hours when youth are unsupervised and not engaged in youth programs (Fox & Newman, 1998). Moreover, FBI statistics indicate that 47% of violent juvenile crime occurs on weekdays, between the hours of 2 and 8 p.m. (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999, 2006).

There is, therefore, a strong need to study youth after-school programs. How do Michigan parents of youth view after-school programs? Do they enroll their children in after-school programs? Who is more likely to participate in after-school programs? What types of after-school programs exist in Michigan? Using data from the State of State Survey (SOSS), we examined these questions and analyzed the extent to which children between the ages of 5 and 17 in Michigan participated in after-school program activities. We also examined the extent to which children's participation in after-school programs is unevenly accessed and depends on the social context, including race/ethnicity, gender, family structure, socio-economic status, and rural/urban residential location.

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THE SURVEY

This study relies on data from the 2006 State of the State Survey (SOSS-43) in Michigan conducted by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University. The SOSS-43 is a random digit dialing (RDD) telephone survey of the Michigan adult population and was supplemented with a sample of Hispanics/Latinos in Michigan. The survey was conducted from Aug. 10 through Oct. 21 for the main portion of the survey and from Sept. 18 through Nov. 13 for the supplemental Hispanic/Latino sample. Using a stratified and disproportionate sampling design by regions of the state, 1563 interviews were completed¹.

KEY FINDINGS

A. Participation in After-School Programs

Two-thirds of Michigan families with children aged between 5-17 years indicated that their children participated in an after-school program of some sort (Figure 1).

Of those families who sent their children to after-school programs, about one-fourth indicated that their children participated in school-based or community sports, 57% in fine arts/music, and more than half were involved in faith-based programs and in community-based sports. Almost 58% of these families indicated that their children participated in community programs such as 4-H, Big Brothers/Sisters, Scouts, community cultural organizations, and 21st century learning. About 15% were involved in other types of after school programs (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Michigan Children's After-School Program Participation

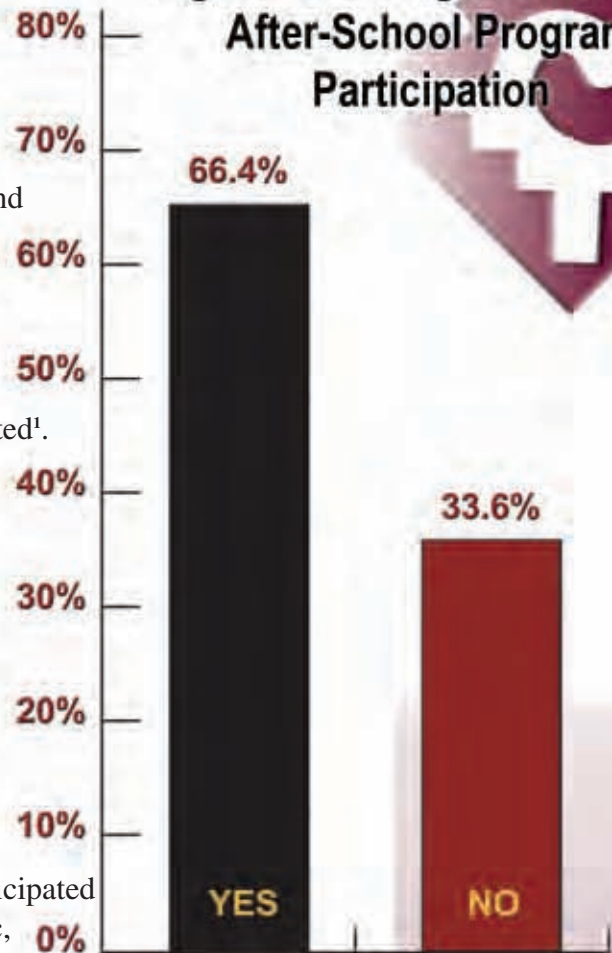
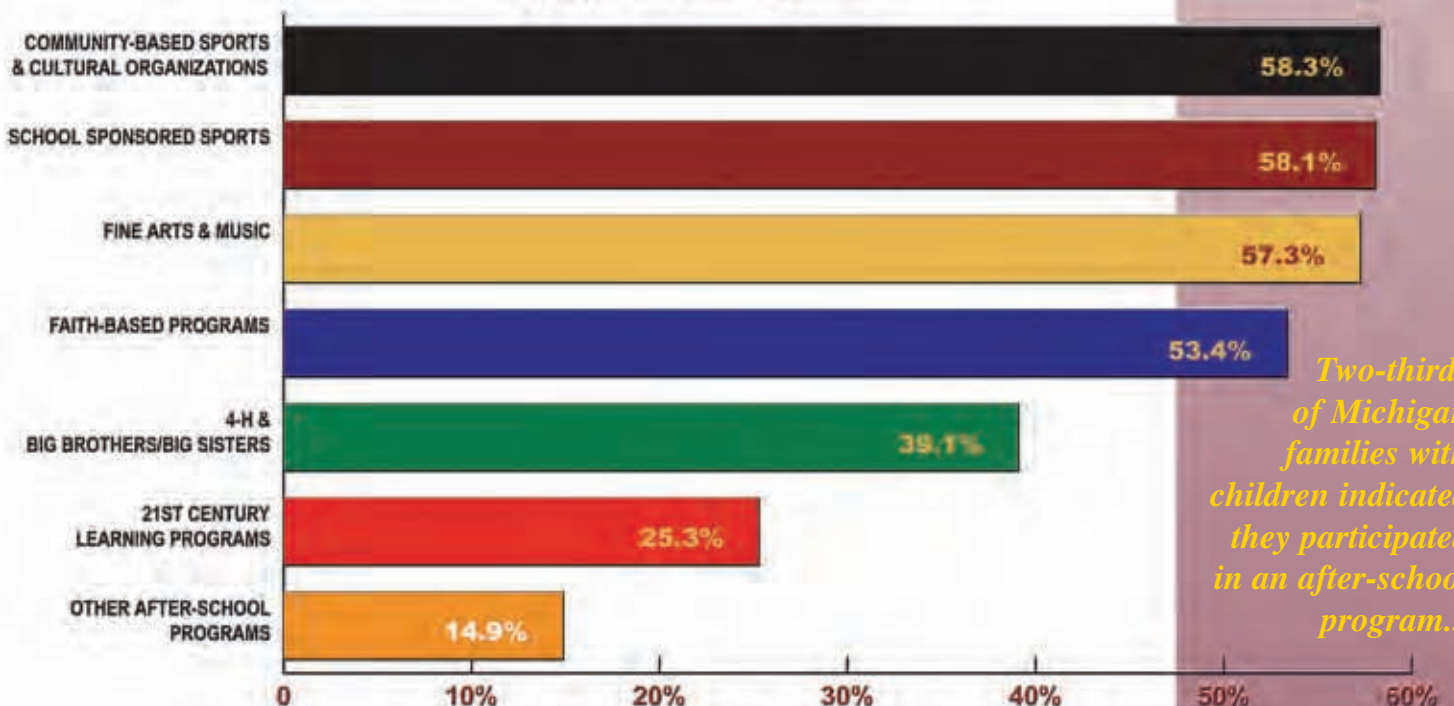


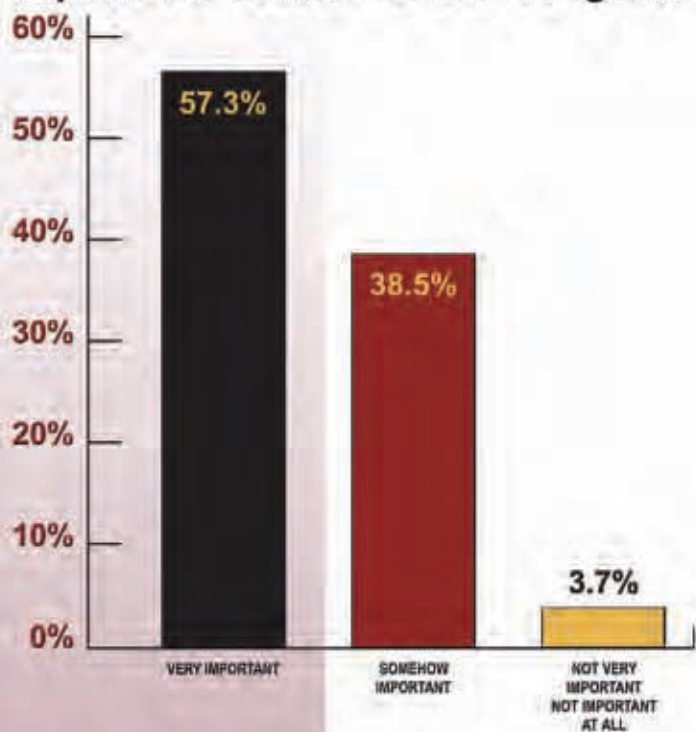
Figure 2. Michigan Children's Participation in After-School Programs by Type of Program



Two-thirds of Michigan families with children indicated they participated in an after-school program...

Nearly one out of six respondents reported that it is very important for school-aged children to participate in organized after-school programs. About 39% of respondents reported that it is somehow important for school-age children to participate in organized after-school programs. Almost 4% of respondents reported that it is not very important or not important at all for school-age children to participate in organized after-school programs (Figure 3).

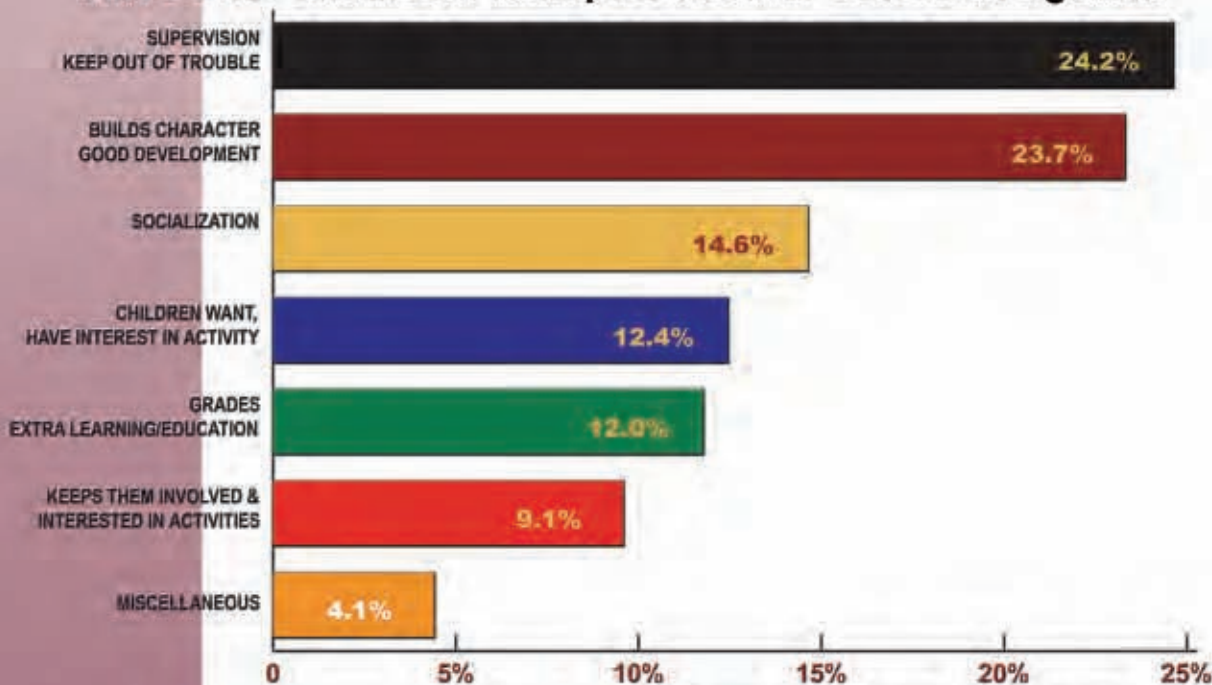
Figure 3. Parental Perception of Importance of After-School Programs



Most respondents reported that the first reason they involve their school-aged children in after-school programs is that it helped supervise and keep children out of troubles (24.2%) and build character/good development (23.7%). Other parents considered after-school programs as agents of socialization (14.6%) and believed they would improve the education, learning and/or grades of their children (12.0%). Approximately 12.4% of parents involved children in after-school programs because of the type of activity/program their children want or are interested in while 9% of parents reported that they involve their children in after-school programs because they want them involved/interested in activities being offered (Figure 4).

Four main factors that influenced the selection of a specific after-school program were, in order of their importance, children's interest in the activity being offered (37%), time/schedule (16%), educational value/content (14%), and cost of the program (11%) (Figure 5). The two main barriers that prevented participation in after-school programs were time/lack of time to participate in the program (23.8%) and money to cover the cost of the program (20.6%) (Figure 6).

Figure 4. Primary reason Mentioned Why Parents Choose to Have their Children Participate in After-School Programs



However, when parents were asked if they would involve their school-aged children in voluntary after-school programs, if after-school programs were available in their community and were free, 9 out of 10 parents responded positively (Figure 7).



1. After-School Programs and Gender

Fathers reported higher rates of their children’s participation in after-school programs than mothers. Overall, fathers (72.2%) were significantly more likely than mothers (61.0%) to report that their children participated in after-school programs (Figure 8).

2. After-School Programs and Race/Ethnicity

Latino parents, especially Latino non-English speakers were less likely than White parents to involve their children in after-school programs. White parents equally involved their children in after-school programs as Black parents (Figure 9)

3. After-School Programs and Levels of Education

Parents with some college education and those with a college education or greater were significantly more likely than those with high school and those with less than high school education to involve their children in any after-school programs (Figure 10).

4. After-School Programs and Family Income

Children from higher incomes were significantly more likely than those in middle or lower incomes to participate in after-school programs (Figure 11). About 79% of parents with family income of \$50,000 or greater involved their children in after-school programs. Comparatively, almost 59% of parents with family income between \$30,000 and \$50,000, and 52% of parents with less than \$30,000 of family income, involved their children in after-school programs, respectively.

5. After-School Programs and Marital Status

Children in never-married families were less likely than those in married/cohabiting and formerly-married families to participate in after-school programs. Only 52% of never married parents indicated that their children participated in after-school programs, compared to 71% of married/cohabiting parents, and 69% of formerly-married parents, respectively (Figure 12).

Figure 5. Primary Reason Parents Select After-School Programs

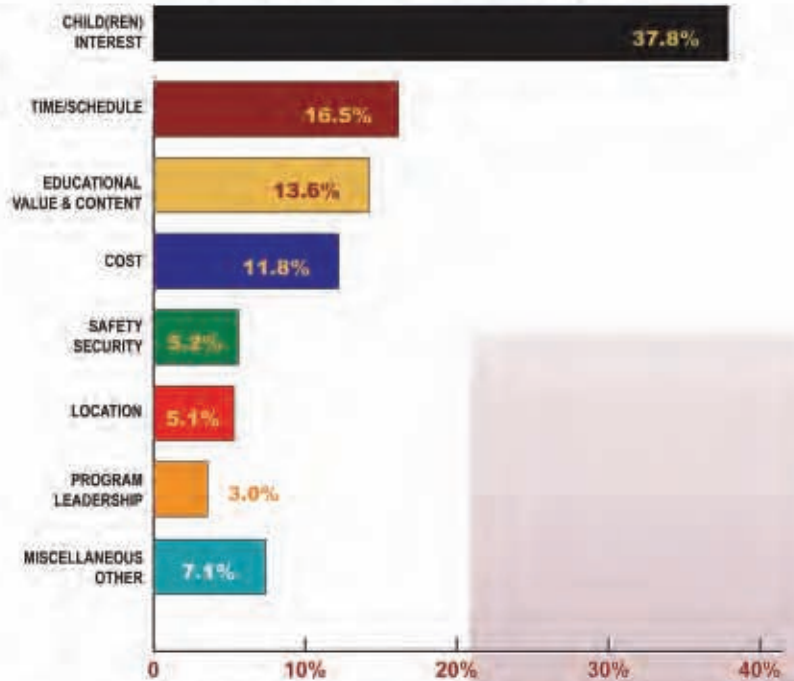
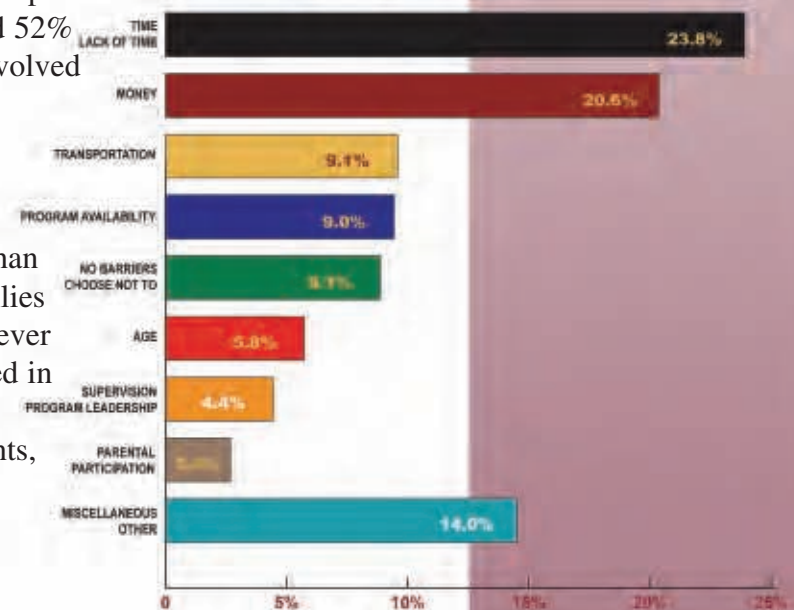


Figure 6. Primary Parental Barriers to Enrolling Children in After-School



6. After-School Programs and Metropolitan/Nonmetropolitan Residence

Children living in nonmetropolitan areas were more likely than those in large metropolitan areas and those in metropolitan non-core areas to participate in after-school programs. Children in large metropolitan areas were more likely than those in metropolitan non-core areas to participate in after-school programs. About 72% of parents in non-metropolitan areas indicated their children participated in after-school programs, compared to 66% and almost 59% in large metropolitan areas (at least 250,000 population) and metropolitan non-core areas (less than 250,000 population), respectively (Figure 13).

Figure 7. Percent of Parents Who Would Voluntarily Send Children to After-School Programs, if Locally Available and Free

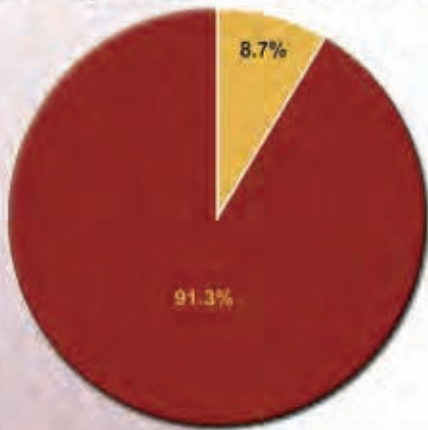
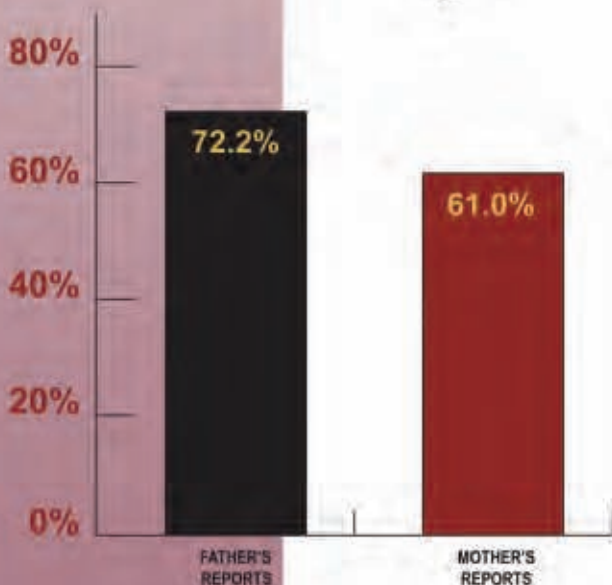


Figure 8. Parental Reports of their Children's Participation in After-School Programs



B. Breath of Participation in After-School Programs

The total number of after-school programs in which children participated was computed to capture the breath of participation. The mode of the breath of participation was 2 (Figure 14).

1. Number of After-School Programs and Race/Ethnicity

The total number of after-school programs children were involved in varied depending on children's social context. Black children were more likely than White children to participate in a greater number of after-school program activities (Figure 15).

2. Number of After-School Programs and Levels of Education

Children from higher education families (some college or college) were more likely than those from lower-education families (high-school or less) to participate in greater number of after-school programs (Figure 16).

3. Number of After-School Programs and Family Income

Children from higher-income families were significantly more likely than lower-income families to involve children in greater number of after-school programs (Figure 17).



4. Number of After-School Programs and Marital Status

Children from formerly-married families (divorced, separated, or widowed) were more likely than those from married/cohabiting families to participate in a greater number of after-school programs (Figure 18).

5. Number of After-School Programs and Metropolitan/Nonmetropolitan Residence

Children from nonmetropolitan areas and those in non-core metropolitan areas were more likely than those in metropolitan areas to involve in greater number of after-school programs (Figure 19).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report summarizes differences in participation in after-school program activities among children in Michigan from varying social contexts, including gender, race/ethnicity, marital status of parents, parental education and family income, and metro/nonmetro residence. Female parents were less likely than male parents to involve children in after-school programs. Latino non-English speaking children were less likely than White children to participate in any after-school programs. Latino children's low participation in after-school programs may be due to linguistic and cultural differences between families, children, and after-school program providers. Black children were not significantly different from White children to participate in after-school programs, but they were more likely to participate in a greater number of after-school program activities. Many of these after-school programs specifically target minority youth, which may explain why Black children participated at higher rates in these programs.

Children from never-married families were less likely than those from married or cohabiting families to participate in after-school program activities. Children from formerly-married families (divorced, separated, or widowed) were not significantly different from those in married/cohabiting families to participate in after-school programs, but were more likely than those in married/cohabiting families to participate in greater number of after-school programs. The higher rate of participation in after-school programs among children from formerly-married parents, on one hand, may result from programs targeting disadvantaged children, including those from single parents.

Figure 9. Percent of Parents Whose Children Participated in Any After-School Programs by Race and Ethnicity

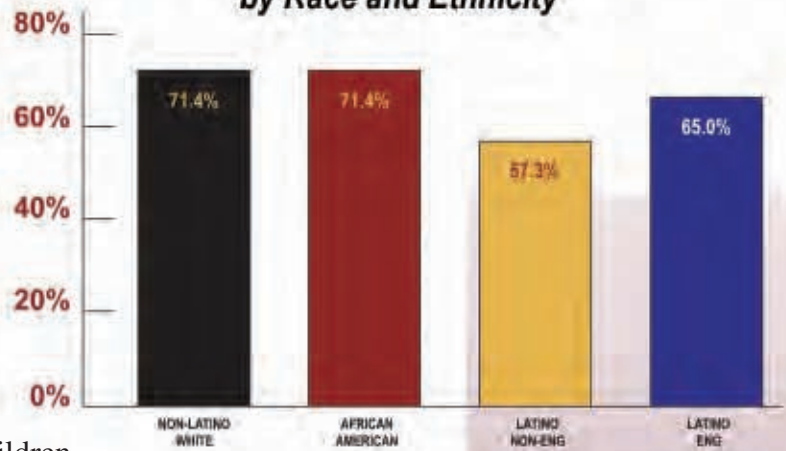
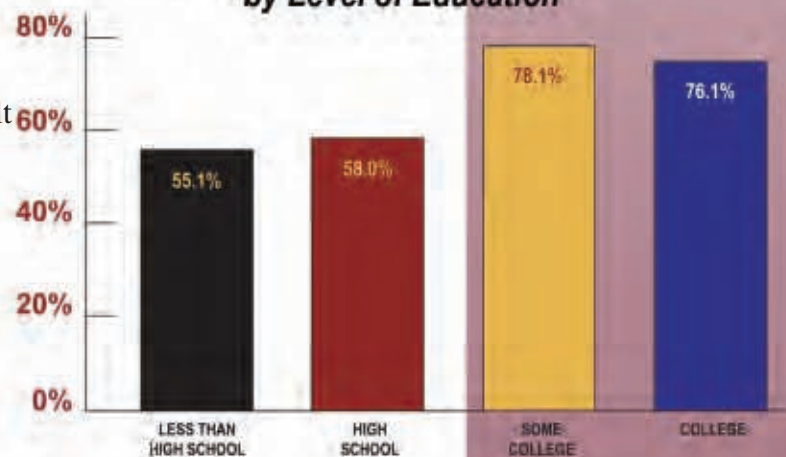



Figure 10. Percent of Parents Whose Children Participated in any After-School Programs, by Level of Education

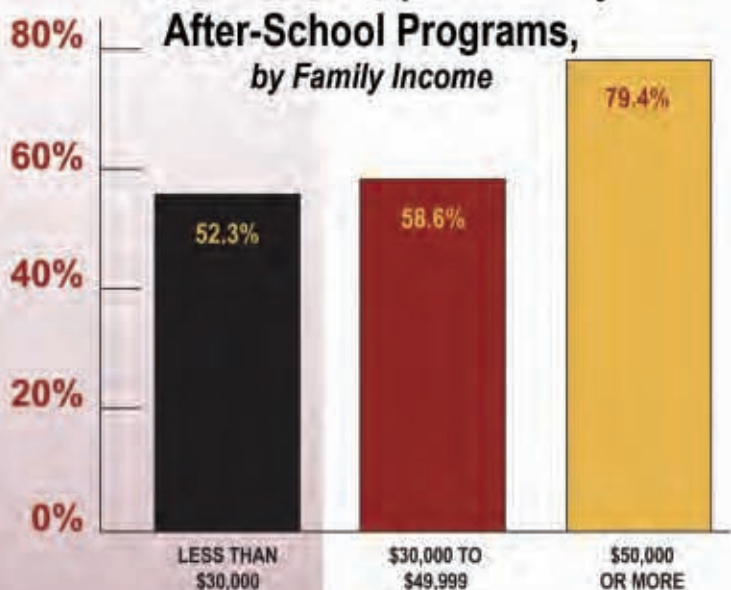




On the other hand, this may be due to the fact these programs provide a better alternative for formerly-married parents to involve their children in after-school programs and provide at the same time an opportunity to concentrate on and/or increase the number of hours of work, and thus, their family income.

Children from highly educated parents and those with higher incomes were more likely to involve their children in after-school program activities and to participate in a greater number of after-school programs. These findings suggest a continuing need for after-school programs for disadvantaged parents, particularly those with lower levels of education and lower family income.

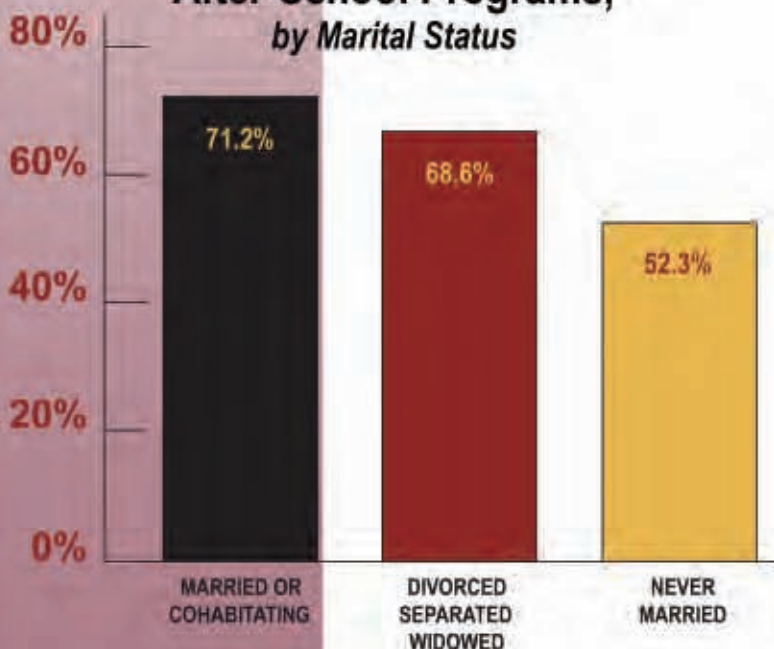
Figure 11. Percent of Parents Whose Children Participated in any After-School Programs, by Family Income



Children living in nonmetropolitan areas were more likely than those in large metropolitan areas and those in metropolitan non-core areas to involve children in after-school programs. Children in large metropolitan areas were more likely than those in metropolitan non-core areas to participate in after-school programs. Children from non-core metropolitan areas and those in nonmetropolitan areas were more likely than those in metropolitan areas to participate in a greater number of after-school programs. These residential disparities in after-school programs suggest a continuing need to ensure that these after-school programs are available to children in all geographical areas.

After-school programs stakeholders should ensure that disadvantaged children, including minorities, those from female and formerly-married parents, lower-educated parents and lower-income families, and living in different geographical areas, have a chance to engage in a variety of beneficial after-school programs.

Figure 12. Percent of Parents Whose Children Participated in any After-School Programs, by Marital Status



SURVEY QUESTIONS

For this brief, a series of questions on “After-School Programs” were asked, including:

- *How important do you think it is for school-aged children to participate in organized after-school programs? Would you say it is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all?*
- *If you had school-aged children and if free, voluntary after-school programs were available in your community, would you send your child?*

- When it comes to funding after-school programs, should it be solely the responsibility of the parents, should it be fully funded by the state, or should it be funded based on family income?

- In the last 12 months, has (the/your) child(ren) in the household participated in any after-school programs?

- In the past 12 months, has (the/your) child(ren) participated in . . .

- School sponsored sports?
- Fine arts or music programs (such as dance or drama)?
- 21st Century learning or tutoring programs?
- 4-H programs?
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts?
- Community-based sports programs?
- Community based cultural organizations (such as the Hispanic Development Corporation or the Black Child and Family Institute)?
- Faith based programs (religious education classes, youth groups)?
- After-school child care programs located at the school?

- Which of the following after-school programs do you think benefit Latino children?

- School sponsored sports?
- Fine arts or music programs (such as dance or drama)?
- 21st Century learning or tutoring programs?
- 4-H programs?
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts?
- Community-based sports programs?
- Community based cultural organizations (such as the Hispanic Development Corporation or the Black Child and Family Institute)?
- Faith based programs (religious education classes, youth groups)?
- After-school child care programs located at the school?



Figure 13. Percent of Parents Whose Children Participated in any After-School Programs, by Metro/Non-Metro Residence

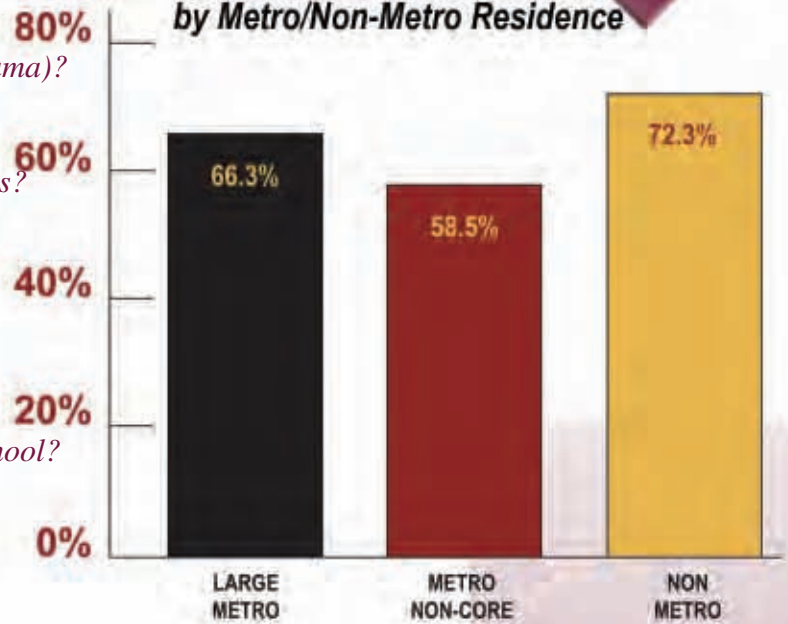


Figure 14. Breadth of Participation in After-School Programs

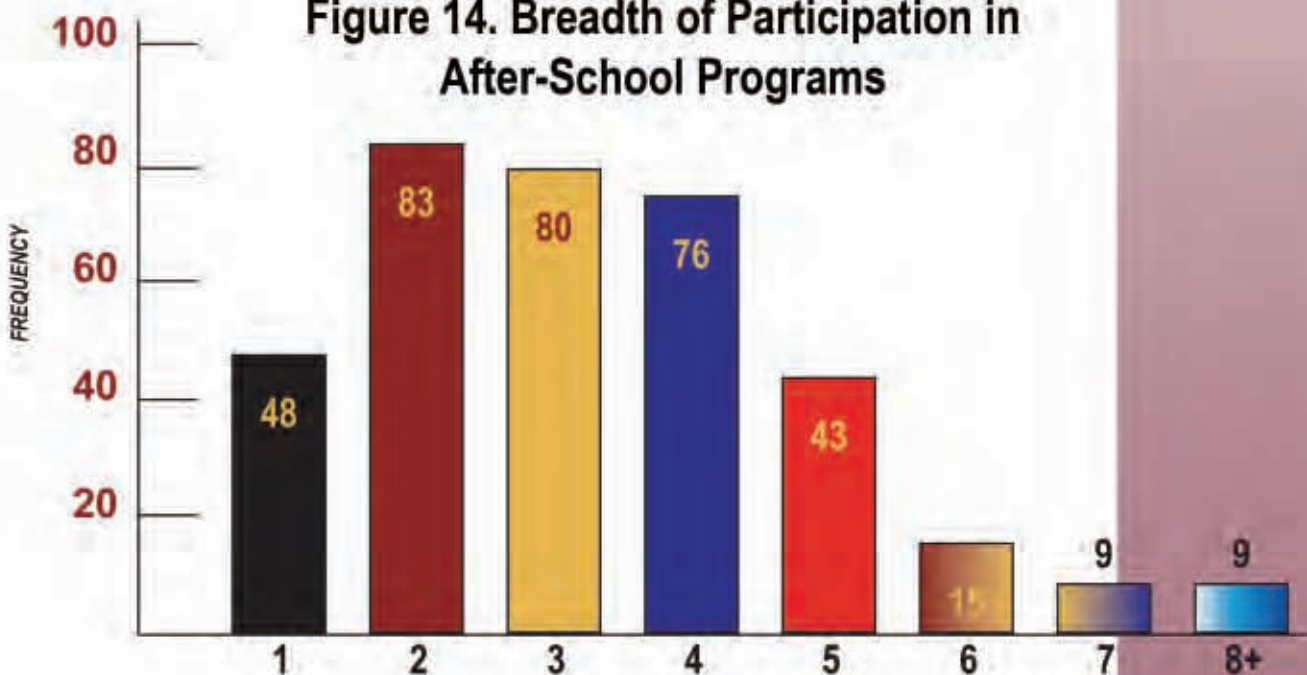




Figure 15. Number of After-School Programs, by Race/Ethnicity

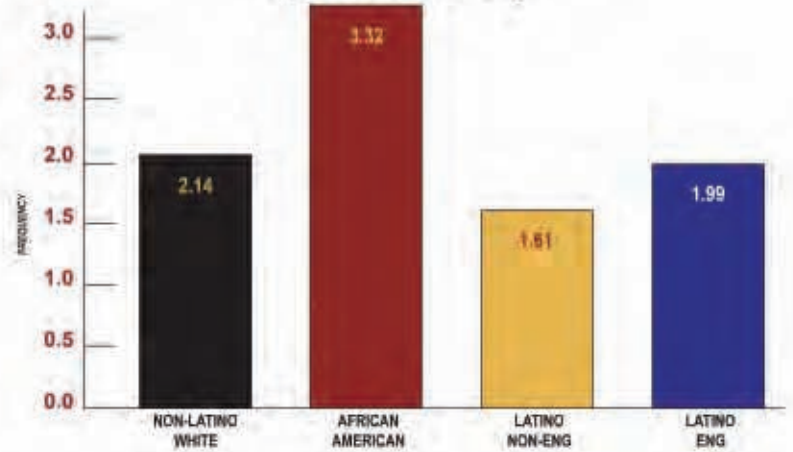


Figure 16. Number of After-School Programs, by Levels of Education

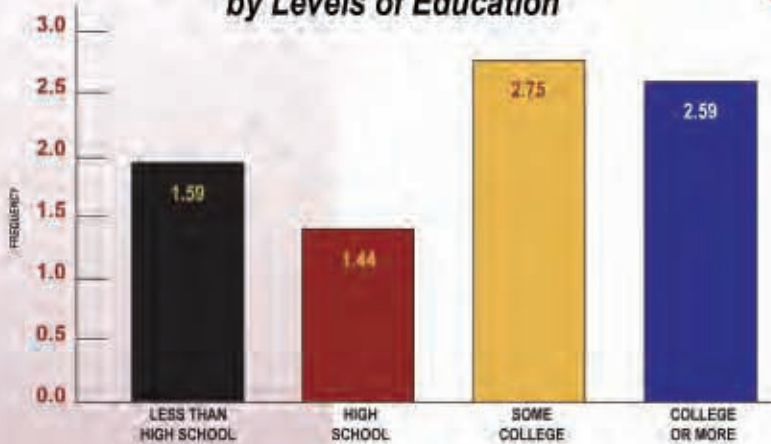


Figure 17. Number of After-School Programs, by Family Income

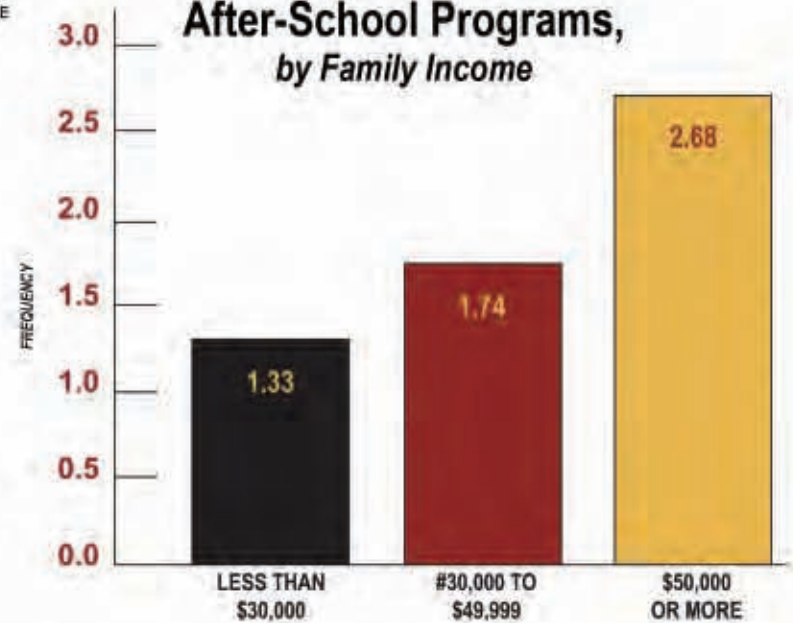
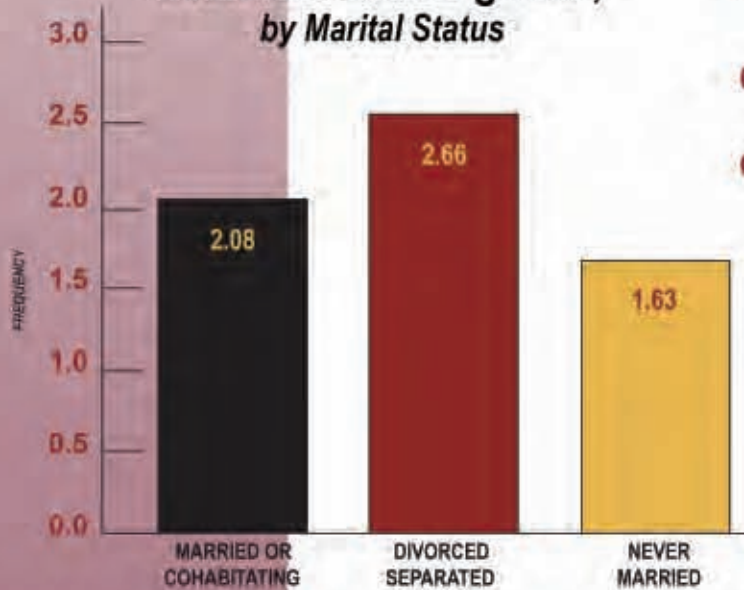


Figure 18. Number of After-School Programs, by Marital Status



RACE—ETHNICITY

- What are some of the reasons why you (or your parents) involve the child(ren) in after-school programs?
- What are some of the things taken into consideration when deciding what kinds of after-school activities to involve the child or children?
- What are some of the barriers that prevent the child or children from participating in after-school programs?

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ENDNOTES

- 1 To ensure representation of the major regions within Michigan, the sample was stratified into six regions, each consisting of a set of contiguous counties, plus the city of Detroit. The grouping of counties corresponds to that used by the Michigan State University Extension service (MSUE). For developing statewide results, weights are constructed to make the overall representative of the state adult population (Hembroff and Silver, 2006). For purposes of this article, we used weighted data.

Figure 19. Number of After-School Programs, by Metro/Non-Metro Residence

