

# Research-to-Results

Fact Sheet

Child TRENDS

...information for program providers, funders, and policy makers seeking to reach at-risk children.

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## FAMILY AND NEIGHBORHOOD RISKS: HOW THEY RELATE TO INVOLVEMENT IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME ACTIVITIES

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### BACKGROUND

Many studies find that children in *high-risk neighborhoods*<sup>1</sup> are less likely to participate in out-of-school time programs and are more likely to have poor outcomes than are their peers from more advantaged neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> These poorer outcomes may result from the lower levels of resources, social cohesion, and trust present in high-risk neighborhoods.<sup>3,4</sup> Similarly, children from *high-risk families*<sup>5</sup> are less likely to participate in out-of-school time programs and are more likely to have poor outcomes than are their peers from more advantaged families.<sup>6,7</sup> This reflects the multiple disadvantages experienced by children in high-risk families.<sup>8</sup> An increasing number of studies have found that participation in an out-of-school time program is related to better outcomes for children,<sup>9</sup> however, most of this research examines family risks and neighborhood risks separately. This fact sheet looks at both types of risk by analyzing data for children aged 6 to 17 from the National Survey of Children's Health.<sup>10</sup>

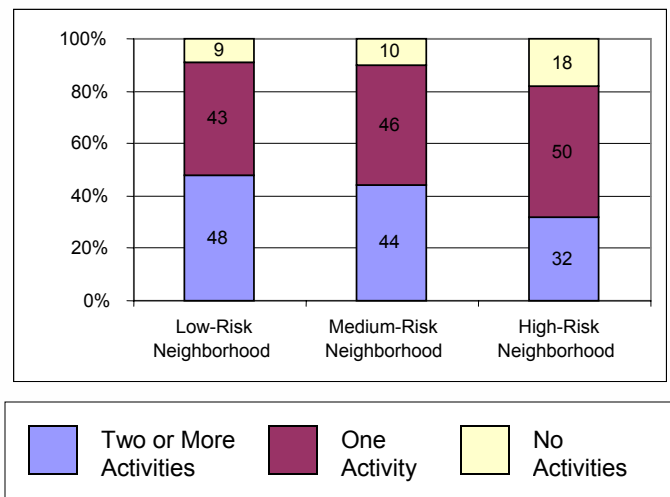
### IS NEIGHBORHOOD RISK RELATED TO PARTICIPATION IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS?

How are family and neighborhood risks together related to involvement in out-of-school time activities? Do both matter? A *high-risk neighborhood* refers here to a neighborhood about which the child's parent believes that neighbors do not help each other out, do not watch out for each other's children, are not able to be counted upon, have a bad influence on their children, and are not able to be trusted to help their children when they are hurt or scared. A *high-risk family* refers here to a family with a combination of at least four of the following factors: being in poverty, being a single-parent household, having a low level of parental education, being a large family, and not owning a home.<sup>8</sup> In each graph below, the bar on the left shows involvement in activities for children in low-risk neighborhoods, the middle bar refers to children in medium-risk neighborhoods, and the bar on the right refers to children in high-risk neighborhoods.

### CHILDREN IN LOW-RISK FAMILIES

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all children are in low-risk families.<sup>11</sup>
- The vast majority of children in low-risk families are involved in at least one activity, and many are involved in two or more activities. For example, only 9% of children in low-risk neighborhoods are not involved, compared with 10% in medium-risk neighborhoods, and 18% in high-risk neighborhoods.
- Among children in low-risk families:
  - Children in high-risk neighborhoods are less likely to participate in out-of-school time activities.
  - However, only 18% are not involved in any kind of activity.

Children in Low-Risk Families by Level of Neighborhood Risk

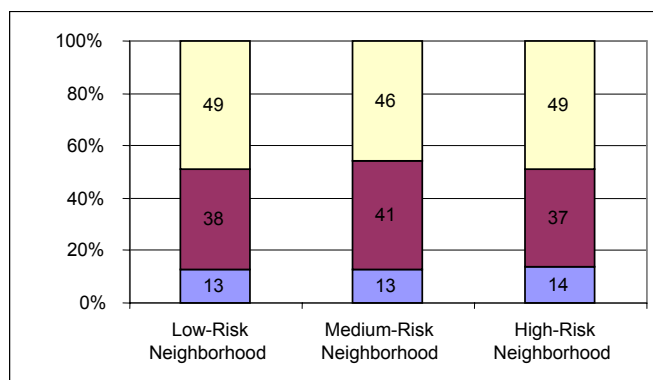


## CHILDREN IN HIGH-RISK FAMILIES

- Only 7% of all children are in high-risk families.<sup>8</sup>
- For children in high-risk families, neighborhood risks are not related to participation in out-of-school time activities. Nearly one-half are not involved in any activity, and only about one in seven participates in two or more activities, regardless of the risk-level of their neighborhood.
- Given their poorer outcomes, it seems important to recruit children from high-risk families into out-of-school time activities.



## Children in High-Risk Families by Level of Neighborhood Risk



## SUMMARY

Both family risks and neighborhood risks are related to whether children are involved in out-of-school time programs. And the differences in involvement are enormous: only 9% of children from low-risk families who live in low-risk neighborhoods are not involved, compared with 49% of children from high-risk families who live in high-risk neighborhoods.

As expected among children from low-risk families, neighborhood quality is related to whether children are involved in out-of-school time activities.<sup>6</sup> Surprisingly, however, among children from high-risk families, neighborhood quality does not seem to matter. Nearly one-half are not involved in any activities regardless of neighborhood risk level.

These findings suggest that active recruitment of children in high-risk families may be necessary if these children are to become involved in out-of-school time activities. In addition, programs serving these vulnerable children may need to be more comprehensive and long-term than are programs serving more advantaged children.

<sup>1</sup> Neighborhood risk is defined by parent-report measures of the family's neighborhood. Items include: "People in this neighborhood help each other out," "We watch out for each other's children in this neighborhood," "There are people I can count on in this neighborhood," "If my child were outside playing and got hurt or scared, there are adults nearby who I trust to help my child," and "How often do you feel [CHILD] is safe in your community or neighborhood?" Negative responses are coded 1 and summed, so that the scale runs from 0-5.

<sup>2</sup> Theokas, C., & Bloch, M. (2006). *Out-of-school time is critical for children: Who participates in programs?* (Research-to-Results Fact Sheet). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

<sup>3</sup> Sampson, R. J., Morenoff, J. D., & Gannon-Rowley, T. (2002). Assessing "Neighborhood Effects": Social processes and new directions in research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 443-478.

<sup>4</sup> Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

<sup>5</sup> Family risks, as defined here, include poverty, being from a single-parent family, parents with low educational level, a large family (4+ children), and not able to own or buy a home. Low-risk families have 0 or 1 of these risk factors; medium-risk families have 2 or 3 risk factors; high-risk families have 4 or 5 risk factors.

<sup>6</sup> Duncan, G. J., Yeung, W. J., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Smith, J. R. (1998). How much does childhood poverty affect the life chances of children? *American Sociological Review*, 63(3), 406-423.

<sup>7</sup> Evans, G. (2004). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychologist*, 59(2), 77-92.

<sup>8</sup> Moore, K. A., Vandivere, S., & Redd, Z. (2006). A sociodemographic risk index. *Social Indicators Research*, 75, 45-81.

<sup>9</sup> Zaff, J.F., Moore, K.A., Papillo, A.R., & Williams, S. (2003). Implications of extracurricular activity participation during adolescence on positive outcomes. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 18(6), 599-630.

<sup>10</sup> Maternal and Child Health Bureau. (2003). *National Survey of Children's Health*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>11</sup> Moore, K. A. (2006). *Cumulative risks among children*. (Research-to-Results Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

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