

Research Brief

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Participation in Out-Of- School-Time Activities and Programs

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OVERVIEW

Children and youth who participate in out-of-school-time (OST) programming are more likely than their non-participating peers to do well in school, get sufficient physical exercise, and avoid involvement in risky behaviors. However, there are concerns that there are inequities in access to OST programs, particularly for those from lower-income families. Child Trends drew on parent-reported data from the National Survey of American Families (NSAF), collected in 1997, 1999, and 2002, and data from the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) collected in 2003, 2007 and 2011/12. We examined the rates of participation in OST activities by children 6 to 11 and 12 to 17 years of age, over time, within and across states, and across family income levels.

KEY FINDINGS

- At the national level, over the 15-year period, rates of out-of-school time activity participation increased among adolescents ages 12 to 17 who are not low-income. Also, across the 15 years examined, we found that adolescents were more likely to participate in OST activities than their younger peers, regardless of income level.
- Low household income appears to be a persistent barrier. The gap in OST activity participation, at the national level, between low-income 6- to 11-year-olds and their non-low-income counterparts was 27 percentage points in 2011/12, and 29 percentage points for 12- to 17-year-olds.
- At the state level, most states had non-significant changes over time in OST activity participation, particularly in the case of low-income children and adolescents. However, where there were significant changes, declines were more common than increases among low-income children, whereas increases were more prevalent than declines among their non-low-income counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, understanding of the value of participation in out-of-school time (OST) activities and programs for children has grown. Once primarily thought of as meeting a need for supervision during non-school hours, OST activities are now recognized as important to healthy development, for both younger and older children.

Participation in OST activities and programs has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including academic achievement, school engagement, increased physical activity, and reduced engagement in risky behaviors.¹ However, the accessibility of these activities and programs and whether participation in them is sustained, varies. Cost, location, and accessibility have been cited as barriers, and lower rates of participation have been reported for children and teenagers living in low-income households.²

In addition, recruiting and retaining middle and high school adolescents have been enduring challenges for OST programs.³ Because youth participation in OST activities can lead to better developmental outcomes,⁴ and reduce the likelihood of risky behaviors,⁵ it is important to assess national progress in expanding these opportunities. Moreover, because an increasing number of states have provided funding to make OST activities more plentiful and accessible,⁶ at least prior to the last recession, we should also examine this progress at the state level. Data from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), collected in 1997, 1999, and 2002, and the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), collected in 2003, 2007 and 2011/12, make such analyses possible.

CURRENT ANALYSES

In this brief, we analyze parent-reported data on OST participation among children 6 to 17 years old. Parents were asked whether their child had participated in any clubs or organizations after school or on weekends in the last 12 months; there were minor changes in wording between the surveys administered prior to 2007, and those of 2007 and later. (See Data Box on page 11 for more details on this measure.) Note that this item assesses only whether a child participated, not the duration of participation or the quality of the programming.

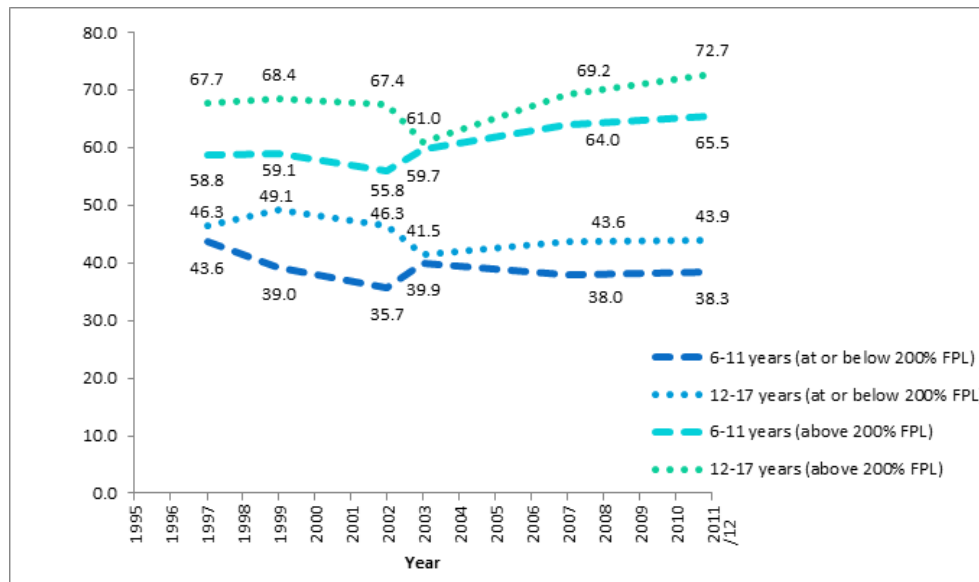
While the National Survey of America's Families provides state-level data for 13 states only, the National Survey of Children's Health includes all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Both surveys provide national-level data. Data from the surveys were used to create estimates of OST participation, disaggregated by age group and income level, for the nation and by state. Family income was categorized as either at or below twice the contemporaneous federal poverty level (low-income), or above that cut-off (not low-income).

National Estimates of Participation in Out-of-School Time Activities

Between Over the last 15 years, adolescents (ages 12-17) have been more likely than younger children to participate in OST activities, regardless of family income. However, low household income is a persistent barrier to OST participation.

The gap in OST activity participation between low-income 6- to 11-year-olds and their non-low-income counterparts was 27 percentage points in 2011/12, and 29 percentage points for 12- to 17-year-olds, at the national level. These income-related gaps appear to be increasing over time. OST activity participation rates among school-age children (ages 6 to 11) from low-income households declined by five percentage points between 1997 and 2011/12, whereas they increased by seven points for their non-low-income peers. For older adolescents (12 to 17), participation was unchanged between those years for low-income youth, but increased by five points for non-low-income youth.

Figure 1: Percent of Children 6-11 and Adolescents 12-17 Whose Parent Reports They Participated in an Out-of-School-Time Program in the Last 12 Months



State-level Estimates of Out-of-School Time Participation

Children Ages 6 to 11

Among the 13 states with data available from all survey years, six showed significant change between 1997 and 2011/12: in Alabama, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin, participation rates declined for low-income children; for non-low-income children, participation declined in Mississippi, but increased in Massachusetts, Michigan, Texas, and Wisconsin. (See Table 1.) Among the remaining 38 states, none had participation increases between 2003 and 2011/12 for low-income children, but for non-low-income children, six states (California, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont) had increases and one (Utah) experienced a decrease.

Children Ages 12 to 17

Among the 13 states with data available for all survey years, rates declined between 1997 and 2011/12 for low-income youth in Alabama, Florida, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Washington; they increased in Colorado. For non-low-income youth, rates increased in Massachusetts, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and declined in Mississippi. (See Table 1)

Between 2003 and 2011/12, for which data on all 50 states and the District of Columbia are available, only Colorado had increased participation for low-income youth, while Utah had decreased participation. For non-low-income youth, 20 states had participation increases, and none had decreases.

As of 2011/12, the gap in participation rates between low- and non-low-income children ages 6 to 11 varied from a high of 37 percentage points (Massachusetts) to a low of seven points (New Hampshire). Among 12- to 17-year-olds, the participation gap ranged from a high of 42 points (Maryland) to a low of 10 points (Montana).

Conclusion

In sum, overall data mask several important distinctions: higher rates of OST participation among adolescents than among children 6 to 11, and higher rates among more affluent adolescents than those at or below 200 percent of the poverty line. Rates of participation in OST are increasing among children and adolescents in these more affluent families.

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
United States												
6-11	43.6	58.8	39.0	59.1	35.7	55.8	39.9	59.7	38.0	64.0	38.3	65.5
12-17	46.3	67.7	49.1	68.4	46.3	67.4	41.5	61.0	43.6	69.2	43.9	72.7
Alabama												
6-11	44.9	56.5	41.7	60.7	35.2	58.4	34.7	56.0	35.5	60.3	29.6	61.3
12-17	50.7	74.1	56.3	76.2	46.5	68.4	32.8	67.0	34.3	65.7	40.1	66.6
Alaska												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	45.9	60.2	56.1	73.1	48.0	62.2
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.8	54.7	47.5	67.1	38.0	67.1
Arizona												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	31.1	52.5	33.4	68.6	32.6	62.4
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	34.4	58.8	41.6	66.0	37.1	73.6
Arkansas												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	43.2	63.3	37.6	59.2	37.3	68.4
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	44.3	63.1	45.3	72.0	43.0	70.2
California												
6-11	34.7	57.9	34.3	47.9	32.4	50.1	30.3	50.1	26.5	59.9	39.5	65.4
12-17	38.6	65.4	44.6	57.2	41.5	66.9	34.6	52.8	29.8	54.4	38.1	71.1
Colorado												
6-11	40.4	59.9	50.4	61.6	37.8	54.9	40.3	62.6	47.2	66.7	37.2	64.2
12-17	46.4	71.1	55.9	71.1	57.3	62.7	38.1	58.4	48.2	64.3	61.6	74.8
Connecticut												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	37.3	64.0	48.8	72.8	48.5	68.6
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	48.3	67.2	42.4	76.3	52.1	78.8

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Family Income at or below/above two times the federal poverty level												
Delaware												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	47.9	55.7	42.6	64.3	39.4	68.5
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	32.7	59.8	49.0	71.2	39.1	67.4
District of Columbia												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	40.4	52.9	50.3	73.0	54.8	68.9
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	42.4	63.7	48.2	66.0	51.1	76.9
Florida												
6-11	40.2	62.4	36.5	54.2	34.4	48.5	39.5	52.6	42.3	61.3	42.9	64.1
12-17	48.9	64.8	49.0	66.1	55.3	66.9	39.1	57.3	47.0	70.3	35.8	70.5
Georgia												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	39.6	60.2	32.3	62.4	30.6	64.0
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	44.2	68.5	41.2	71.7	53.9	77.9
Hawaii												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	40.6	49.9	51.5	64.9	52.8	66.5
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	43.3	57.8	57.0	74.0	54.8	74.8
Idaho												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	52.6	57.5	50.1	64.1	43.5	65.7
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	56.6	69.1	52.4	68.6	51.4	64.9
Illinois												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	49.3	67.5	41.9	66.0	36.0	68.8
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.5	62.6	45.4	69.7	47.0	77.0
Indiana												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	45.9	60.1	41.9	65.1	43.7	68.7
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	52.3	64.5	52.7	73.2	42.5	78.0

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Family Income at or below/above two times the federal poverty level												
Iowa												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.9	62.4	44.2	71.4	54.2	69.8
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	55.8	68.6	54.8	69.3	48.6	77.5
Kansas												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	51.1	67.8	54.9	71.7	41.6	68.4
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	58.7	68.8	48.2	72.4	44.3	74.9
Kentucky												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	37.5	64.1	38.1	60.0	36.5	62.6
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	50.8	65.7	44.4	71.5	40.8	75.5
Louisiana												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	39.9	61.8	38.9	55.1	36.2	56.3
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	43.4	62.5	47.8	67.0	49.1	70.5
Maine												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	60.9	60.9	60.2	68.6	54.8	67.3
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	39.5	51.5	50.7	73.7	54.7	73.1
Maryland												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	48.8	65.7	34.7	69.7	41.3	70.6
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	48.7	62.4	46.7	74.3	30.9	72.5
Massachusetts												
6-11	49.4	58.1	45.7	56.7	42.8	55.8	44.0	60.7	46.5	71.6	35.5	72.4
12-17	51.8	68.7	47.4	60.8	47.9	62.7	45.8	56.6	51.6	77.0	46.7	75.2
Michigan												
6-11	49.2	57.1	42.1	61.4	43.3	60.2	47.8	64.1	41.3	68.8	39.1	66.4
12-17	45.8	62.7	45.0	72.0	56.6	65.6	40.4	56.9	52.9	71.9	52.2	70.7

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Family Income at or below/above two times the federal poverty level												
Minnesota												
6-11	53.7	64.4	53.5	69.0	51.4	61.6	48.1	64.6	60.1	68.2	53.1	67.7
12-17	59.0	69.9	60.2	69.1	64.7	64.7	54.2	62.8	52.5	72.7	44.4	68.7
Mississippi												
6-11	42.0	61.3	43.2	62.1	36.7	65.3	45.9	59.4	32.1	56.0	34.2	49.1
12-17	53.1	73.7	52.5	74.7	51.0	68.1	41.8	66.2	43.7	66.7	45.4	64.8
Missouri												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	42.1	67.3	40.1	64.3	39.6	66.8
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.5	63.2	44.7	71.9	49.6	77.1
Montana												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	62.8	61.8	61.2	70.7	52.3	71.2
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	54.2	61.9	50.8	70.4	62.7	72.3
Nebraska												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	57.6	71.5	48.1	76.0	43.2	69.7
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	58.1	65.1	56.3	75.7	57.6	73.9
Nevada												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	32.2	50.4	32.2	55.3	37.9	57.6
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	41.8	54.1	44.0	61.9	42.9	71.9
New Hampshire												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.6	58.8	51.1	70.1	62.8	69.3
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	48.0	55.3	44.0	70.7	42.3	71.7
New Jersey												
6-11	38.9	62.0	38.0	58.6	28.9	54.6	27.0	62.8	35.1	66.2	38.7	67.8
12-17	47.7	68.2	40.6	65.3	46.8	69.5	38.3	63.9	51.2	75.5	32.6	71.6

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
New Mexico												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	57.7	34.8	57.7	40.2	66.8	39.9	67.5
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	61.8	42.3	61.8	35.5	63.3	43.6	70.9
New York												
6-11	38.5	62.5	39.3	56.5	36.7	54.7	40.4	64.6	46.6	66.8	38.8	66.6
12-17	48.6	68.4	43.8	68.5	32.6	66.3	36.4	61.0	46.9	71.3	42.3	74.1
North Carolina												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	41.5	65.6	37.9	54.9	32.6	63.2
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	44.5	65.9	44.4	68.2	45.8	71.6
North Dakota												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	62.0	71.6	44.0	70.4	54.4	62.4
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	57.5	68.5	52.7	70.1	43.3	74.2
Ohio												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	49.5	59.3	46.2	69.4	34.7	65.5
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	41.1	61.7	40.2	76.9	42.1	68.4
Oklahoma												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.6	63.3	41.7	59.8	44.4	56.9
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	35.8	68.8	51.1	68.0	41.0	71.2
Oregon												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.4	57.3	43.1	63.2	37.8	66.0
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	46.6	62.0	43.2	67.2	48.0	71.7
Pennsylvania												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	44.6	58.4	43.7	61.3	44.9	68.6
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	40.5	62.6	54.7	77.0	55.7	73.9

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Rhode Island												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	58.9	41.9	58.9	39.1	71.9	45.6	65.6
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	57.1	39.5	57.1	45.7	71.2	43.4	69.3
South Carolina												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	59.7	39.2	59.7	31.3	63.7	38.6	62.5
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	63.8	46.1	63.8	41.1	67.8	40.3	74.3
South Dakota												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	66.0	48.9	66.0	48.6	65.6	52.3	67.3
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	64.9	52.8	64.9	54.4	68.7	56.9	72.9
Tennessee												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	60.7	41.7	60.7	37.2	62.7	32.6	60.2
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	64.3	39.4	64.3	40.7	72.7	39.9	69.3
Texas												
6-11	35.6	49.1	34.5	57.2	34.6	54.9	30.7	55.3	26.8	62.9	31.4	64.3
12-17	44.5	70.2	44.4	72.0	41.8	68.9	36.8	59.3	38.4	70.1	41.8	73.0
Utah												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	74.1	56.5	74.1	47.5	59.9	46.3	61.5
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	77.9	75.3	77.9	58.8	68.3	51.5	75.0
Vermont												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	59.2	48.5	59.2	55.7	67.6	46.4	72.0
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	54.8	41.0	54.8	53.6	69.8	42.5	72.1
Virginia												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	58.7	42.5	58.7	34.2	65.3	42.3	63.8
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	61.6	40.9	61.6	42.7	73.1	53.6	70.4

Table 1: Of Children and Adolescents, Percent with a Parent Who Reports they Participated in Out-of-School-Time Activities in the Past 12 Months, by Age and Poverty Status.

State/Age Group	1997		1999		2002		2003		2007 ³		2011-2012 ³	
	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	Above
Washington												
6-11	37.7	56.7	49.8	53.1	36.7	50.4	41.6	54.3	40.5	59.5	35.7	62.7
12-17	59.4	69.7	55.2	63.8	50.4	67.5	53.4	54.5	54.1	64.7	43.5	72.8
West Virginia												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	51.5	65.2	43.3	67.0	38.6	55.8
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	38.3	62.0	43.7	63.4	44.9	67.5
Wisconsin												
6-11	53.3	60.1	51.7	64.9	47.4	61.2	44.9	69.4	41.0	62.9	41.6	69.8
12-17	61.4	65.9	55.2	68.3	52.7	66.0	44.7	67.3	51.8	75.8	52.4	74.8
Wyoming												
6-11	--	--	--	--	--	--	58.8	66.3	51.9	65.3	54.3	69.3
12-17	--	--	--	--	--	--	51.9	66.2	51.7	70.8	57.7	75.6

Source: Parent-reported data from the National Survey of America's Families (1997, 1999 and 2002 waves) and the National Survey of Children's Health (2003, 2007, and 2011-2012 waves)

Data and Variables

National Survey of American Families

The National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) was a telephone survey of U.S. parents (usually the child's mother) or parent-figures, conducted in 1997, 1999, and 2002 by the Urban Institute and Child Trends as one component of the "Assessing the New Federalism" project. For all rounds of data collection, oversize samples were drawn in 13 states (Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin) to allow the production of reliable estimates at the state level. Interviews were conducted with more than 40,000 families, yielding information on more than 100,000 people.

National Survey of Children's Health

The National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) was conducted in 2003, 2007, and 2011/12 in all 50 states and the District of Columbia by the National Center for Health Statistics, with funding from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Telephone numbers from a random sampling process were used to contact households, and one child in each household with children was randomly selected to be the focus of the study. An adult in the household knowledgeable about the child answered questions about the child and themselves. The survey is representative of children under 18 years old nationwide and also within each state. A total of 95,677 interviews were completed in 2011/12, the most current wave of data collection.

Variables

Out-of-school (OST) activity participation

1997-2003: In the last year, has (CHILD) participated in any clubs or organizations after school, or on weekends, such as scouts, a religious group or Girls or Boys club? (Yes/No)

2007-2011/12: In the last year, has (CHILD) participated in any clubs or organizations after school, or on weekends? (Yes/No)

Family Income

Family income was coded using multiples of the contemporaneous federal poverty level (FPL): at or below twice FPL or above that cut-off.

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