

Snapshots of America's Families



Children's Environment and Behavior Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities encourages personal accomplishment and the development of interpersonal skills.

For adolescents, these activities offer an opportunity to assume meaningful roles and responsibilities. The sense of efficacy gained from these experiences can be an important protective factor for children growing up under adverse circumstances. Research finds, for example, that participation in religious organizations and leadership in school clubs are associated with a lower risk of school-age motherhood.

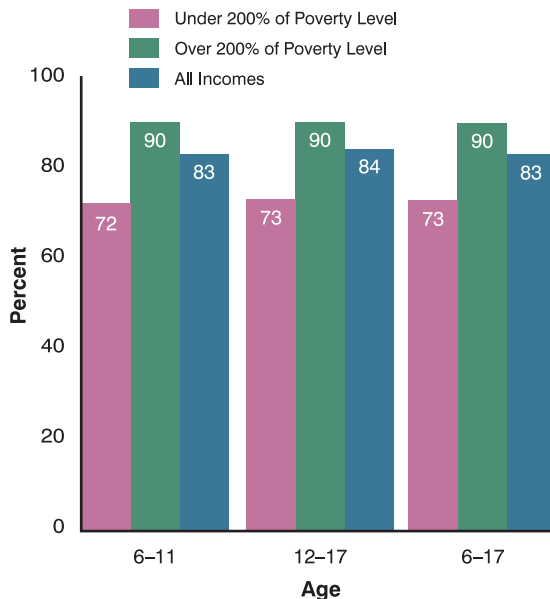
For many children, participation in extracurricular activities is not an option, because of economic constraints, limited opportunities in neighborhoods or schools, or a parent's need for assistance at home. Changes in welfare may affect family economic resources and family schedules. With more income, families may be able to afford activities and lessons for their children, or they may enroll children in schools where activities are more readily available. However, the demands of parental work may increase children's obligations at home, thereby limiting their participation in extracurricular activities.

Children Participating in Extracurricular Activities, by State, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Children Participating in Extracurricular Activities, by Age and Family Income, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Participation in extracurricular activities was assessed on the basis of parents' responses to questions about children's involvement in lessons, clubs, sports, or other activities. Children who participated in at least one of these activities in the past year were categorized as involved in activities.

Nationally, 83 percent of all children age 6 to 17 participated in at least one extracurricular activity, including clubs, sports, or lessons. Of children in families with low incomes (under 200 percent of the poverty level), 73 percent participated, compared to 90 percent of children in higher-income families, a statistically significant difference.

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Assessing the New Federalism

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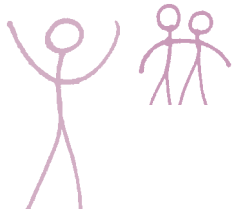
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This *Snapshot* presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), a 1997 survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 states. As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error.

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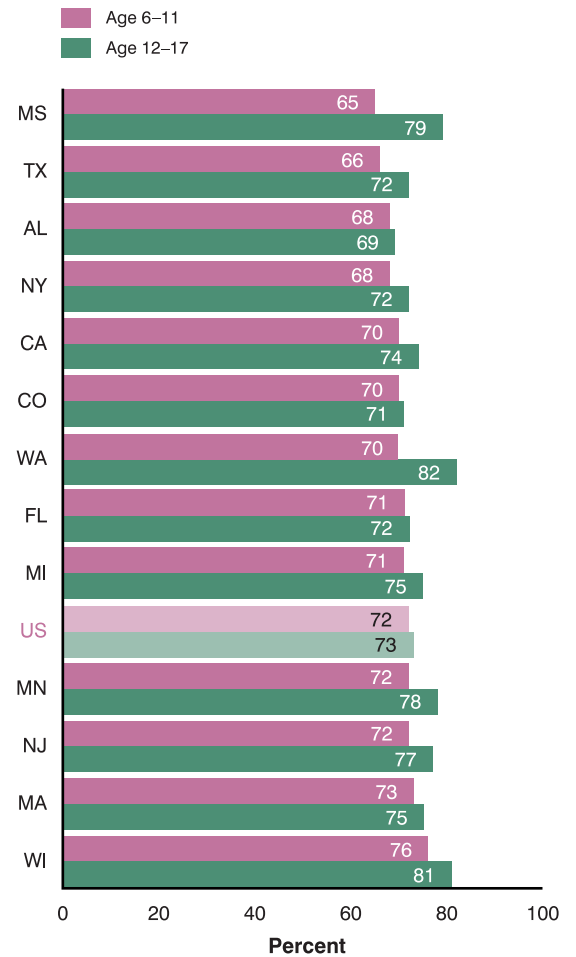
In the 13 states surveyed, extracurricular participation ranged from 78 percent to 87 percent. The percentage of all children participating was above the national average in Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Washington, and Wisconsin. Participation was below the national average in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas.

For children age 6 to 17 in low-income families, participation ranged from 68 percent to 78 percent. Only in Wisconsin was the percentage of children participating in activities above the national average of 73 percent. Participation fell below average in Texas.

For children age 6 to 11 in low-income families, participation in extracurricular activities ranged from 65 percent to 76 percent. None of the states surveyed had rates higher than the national average of 72 percent, but Mississippi and Texas had lower-than-average rates.

Participation by adolescents from low-income families ranged from 69 percent to 82 percent. Rates among these 12- to 17-year-olds were higher than the national average of 73 percent in Washington and Wisconsin, but no state percentages for this age group fell below the national average.

Low-Income Children Participating in Extracurricular Activities, by Age and State, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Children (%) Participating in Extracurricular Activities, 1997

Age	AL	CA	CO	FL	MA	MI	MN	MS	NJ	NY	TX	WA	WI	US
Under 200% of poverty level														
6-11	68.2	70.0	70.1	71.0	72.7	70.7	72.1	65.0	72.2	68.2	65.6	69.8	75.9	72.5
12-17	68.6	74.4	70.6	71.9	74.7	75.0	77.5	78.9	76.7	71.8	72.3	82.4	81.0	73.4
6-17	68.4	71.9	70.3	71.4	73.6	72.7	74.7	71.7	74.3	69.8	68.7	75.3	78.3	72.9
Over 200% of poverty level														
6-11	88.6	91.1	92.4	89.3	94.5	86.3	91.6	85.2	92.6	91.1	89.0	89.8	89.2	90.4
12-17	88.9	91.4	87.9	86.3	91.5	89.0	89.7	87.5	91.1	92.0	87.6	92.2	88.5	89.9
6-17	88.8	91.2	90.2	87.8	93.1	87.7	90.6	86.5	91.9	91.6	88.3	91.0	88.8	90.2
All incomes														
6-11	78.2	80.7	84.6	80.7	88.0	80.7	85.6	73.2	86.9	81.0	77.9	82.5	84.6	82.7
12-17	80.5	84.1	82.4	79.4	86.5	84.7	86.5	82.9	87.1	84.1	80.6	89.2	86.3	83.7
6-17	79.4	82.3	83.6	80.1	87.3	82.7	86.1	78.2	87.0	82.5	79.2	85.7	85.5	83.2

Figures in color represent statistically significant differences from the national average at the .05 confidence level. Figures in black are not statistically significantly different from the national average. All figures in text, charts, and table are rounded.

Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute