



News Release May 28, 2026

Contact: [Stefanie Goebeler](mailto:Stefanie.Goebeler@afterschoolalliance.org), 803.205.3556
[Magen Eissenstat](mailto:Magen.Eissenstat@afterschoolalliance.org), 202.609.9889

New Study Reveals Major Gap in Access to Summer Programs Across South Carolina *Affordability, transportation, and limited availability are preventing thousands of children from accessing summer programs.*

Washington, D.C. – Many more South Carolina parents want their children in a structured summer program than are able to enroll them, according to a household survey. [The Summer Struggle for South Carolina Families](#) finds that the parents of 344,270 South Carolina children want summer programs for them, but just 155,731 South Carolina children are enrolled. The barriers pushing programs out of reach for South Carolina families are cost, cited by 37% of survey respondents; program location or transportation challenges, cited by 17%; and programs being unavailable, cited by 12%.

An overwhelming majority of South Carolina parents who have been able to enroll their children in a summer program give them high marks, with 73% reporting that they are extremely satisfied with the program their child attends. And a large majority of parents in the state (89%) support public funding for summer programs, including 95% of Democrats, 86% of Independents, and 88% of Republicans.

A structured summer program is defined in *The Summer Struggle* as an enrichment or sports program, summer camp or school, or a job or internship. It is part of the *America After 3PM* series of household surveys, conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance. The new survey includes 30,515 U.S. parents of school-age children who live in their households, including 467 in South Carolina. Parents here say the factors they look for most in summer programs are a safe environment, knowledgeable and caring staff, and support of their child’s mental health and well-being.

“In South Carolina and across the country, summer programs give children a safe place to go, provide alternatives to screen time, keep them physically active, reduce isolation, support learning, and give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and constructively engaged while they are at work,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But finding summer programs they can afford is a real struggle for many South Carolina families. Every child deserves access to a quality summer program but sadly, we are far from reaching that goal. We need greater support from federal, state, and local governments, philanthropy, and businesses to change that.”

“*The Summer Struggle for South Carolina Families* is a sobering reminder that too many working parents are left scrambling to find safe, affordable, and enriching opportunities for their children,” said Zeldia Waymer, President & CEO of the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance. “It should not be this difficult for families to access high-quality summer programs that keep children engaged, active, and learning while school is out. We are committed to working alongside local and state leaders, community partners, and advocates across South Carolina to help close this gap. Every child deserves a summer filled with opportunity — and every family deserves options they can afford.”

Nationally, the new study finds that the parents of 24.6 million U.S. children want a structured summer experience for their child but just 12 million of those children (49%) are enrolled. Findings from all 50 states are [here](#). In most respects, South Carolina results mirror national findings, which include:

Affordability is the most common barrier faced by families unable to enroll their child.

- 38% of these families cite cost as a factor contributing to their inability to enroll their child in a summer program.
- 18% cite the program's location or transportation as a reason.
- 13% report having difficulty finding a program, say summer programs are not available in their community, or the program's hours do not meet their needs.
- 10% say programs had no open slots.

Parents with a child enrolled give summer programs high marks.

- 96% of these parents report being satisfied with the summer program their child attends, with 63% reporting extreme satisfaction.
- Half of parents with a child in a summer program (50%) say they are extremely confident their child will be well prepared for the coming school year, compared to 43% of parents whose child is not in a summer program.

Parents' support for public funding for summer programs is strong and growing.

- Nine in ten parents (89%) favor public funding for summer learning opportunities, up from 83% in 2009, 85% in 2014, and 88% in 2020.
- In the current study, 94% of Democrats, 89% of Independents, and 87% of Republican parents support public funding.
- 93% of parents in urban communities, 89% of those in suburban communities, and 87% of parents in rural communities support public funding.

Across demographic lines, parents want summer opportunities for all children.

- 87% of parents agree that all young people deserve access to quality afterschool and summer programs.
- 92% of parents who are Democrats and 85% of those who are Independents or Republicans agree.
- 88% of parents in suburban and urban communities, and 85% of those in rural communities agree. Support is overwhelming in every region of the country.
- At least 86% of parents of every race/ethnicity agree.

The national and South Carolina *America After 3PM 2025* summer findings and accompanying data are available at <https://aa3pm.co/>. This fifth edition of *America After 3PM* is based on a survey conducted in English and Spanish using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible. Data were collected between January 31 and April 21, 2025. The margin of error for the child- and household level data is +/- < 1 percent. Previous *America After 3PM* surveys were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020. The *America After 3PM* summer findings are based on research funded by The Wallace Foundation.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The Wallace Foundation is an independent, nonpartisan research foundation, with a mission to help all communities build a more vibrant and just future by fostering advances in the arts, education leadership, and youth development. We collaborate with grantees and research partners to design and test innovative approaches to address pressing problems in the fields we serve. The evidence based insights we share—searchable online and free of charge—support policymakers and practitioners in their efforts to improve outcomes, enhance community vitality, and help all people reach their full potential.

South Carolina Afterschool Alliance (SCAA) partners with state government agencies, municipal leaders, foundations, higher education, business leaders, the arts community, local school districts, after school program providers and other critical stakeholders to form a supportive statewide network for afterschool and summer learning programs. SCAA works with its partners to raise awareness, increase sustainability, and promote the importance of quality afterschool programs. For additional information please visit <http://scafterschool.com/>.