



KidsHealth® KidsPoll—Are Kids Too Busy? Summary of Findings

KidsHealth KidsPoll is collaboration between the Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth, the Department of Health Education and Recreation at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, the National Association of Health Education Centers, and participating health education centers. The purpose is to gather information (opinions, attitudes, and feelings, etc.) about current health issues from children. Information is gathered using handheld data collection devices from children ages 9 to 13 as they attend classes in the health education centers. Information is shared with educators, caregivers, healthcare organizations, the media, and other interested parties at the national and local levels. The goal is to provide insightful information that will enable them to develop programs to help children to make healthy life decisions, prevent disease and injury, and understand their bodies. This poll focused on whether kids believe they are too busy.

Individual Demographics

Individual-level information was collected anonymously from each child who participated.

- 882 children
- 53% boys, 47% girls
- 9-13 (average age 10.3)
- 9 centers participated in this poll:
 - Children's Health Education Center – Milwaukee, WI
 - Health World Children's Museum – Barrington, IL
 - Kansas Learning Center for Health – Halstead, KS
 - McMillen Center for Health Education – Ft. Wayne, IN
 - Robert Crown Center for Health Education – Hinsdale, IL
 - Ruth Lilly Health Education Center – Indianapolis, IN
 - Saint Joseph Mercy Health Exploration Station – Canton, MI
 - Susan P. Byrnes Health Education Center – York, PA
 - Weller Health Education Center – Easton, PA

School Demographics

School-level information was not collected from each child, but is based on statistics for the schools.

- 21 schools
- Participating students came from schools that averaged: 61% White, 23% Black, 13% Hispanic, 2% Asian/Pacific, 1% Native American:
 - 54% of students were from schools that had student bodies that were 0-33% Black/Hispanic/Asian/Native American combined
 - 24% of students were from schools that had student bodies that were 33-67% of these groups
 - 22% of students were from schools that had student bodies that were 67-100% of these groups
- Students came from schools with an average of 33% of the students qualifying for reduced lunch:
 - 49% of students were from schools that had 0-33% of their student body qualifying for free or reduced lunch
 - 33% of students were from schools that had 33-67% of their student body qualifying for free or reduced lunch
 - 28% of students were from schools that had 67-100% of their student body qualifying for free or reduced lunch

The U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education use a measure of city size and location called a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The categories for MSA are:

- Large city center = center of a MSA city with population >250,000
 - Midsize city center = center of a MSA city with a population <250,000
 - Large city fringe = urban fringe of a large MSA city
 - Midsize city fringe = urban fringe of a midsize MSA city
 - Large town = not within a MSA with a population >25,000
 - Small town = not within an MSA with a population 2,500-25,000
 - Rural outside = not within an MSA with a population <2,500
- The percentage of students from schools in each locale were: 17% large city center, 9% mid-size city center, 28% large city fringe, 5% mid-size city fringe, 1% large town, 18 small town and 9% rural.
 - Average school size—501:
 - 25% of students from schools with an enrollment of 0-300
 - 45% of students from schools with an enrollment of 301-600
 - 22% of students from schools with an enrollment of 601-900
 - 10% of students from schools with an enrollment of 900+

Significant Demographic Associations

- There was a high correlation between proportion of schools with more non-white students and proportion receiving lunch assistance ($r = 0.57$).

Statistically Significant Findings—Overall

In this questionnaire, students were told that the word “**activity**” meant an activity that is planned or organized, such as: sports, lessons, teams, clubs, groups, scouts, or tutoring.

- 1) *Besides school, how many other activities do you participate in right now?*
- None*
 - One*
 - Two*
 - Three*
 - Four or more*

The least common response was none; a fairly even number responded in each of the other categories. There were no differences by gender or who chooses the activities. There were statistically significant differences by age, but no meaningful pattern was apparent.

- 2) *Who chooses the non-school activities you participate in?*
- My parents (or guardians) choose most of my activities*
 - I choose some and my parents (or guardians) choose some*
 - I choose most of my activities*
 - I don't do any non-school activities*

The vast majority (62%) claim that they choose their own activities, followed by 29% who say they choose some and their parents choose some. Only 9% said their parents do most of the choosing. There were no differences based on gender or on the number of activities being done. Younger students were more likely to say that parents choose and older students were more likely to say they alone choose.

- 3) *On most schooldays, about how many hours do you play video games, watch TV, or use the computer for fun?*
- Less than 1 hour*
 - 1 hour*
 - 2 hours*
 - 3 hours*
 - More than 3 hours*

Reports of screen time were bi-modal; about half reported 2 or less hours and over 40% reported more than 3 hours. Boys were more likely to report more than 3 hours (50% vs. 35%). Older students were also more likely to report more than 3 hours of screen time (9=35%, 10=38%, 11=42%, 12+=62%). There were no differences by who chooses the activities or by the number of activities.

- 4) *On most schooldays, about how many hours do you spend on homework?*
- less than 1 hour*
 - 1 hour*
 - 2 hours*
 - 3 hours*
 - More than 3 hours*

More than three-fourths (82%) of the students claimed to have an hour or less of homework per night. Ten percent said they have about 2 hours and 8% reported having 3 or more hours per night. Neither gender, age, who chooses activities, nor number of activities affected time spent on homework.

- 5) *Do you think your school gives you:*
- a. *Way too little homework*
 - b. *Somewhat too little homework*
 - c. *About the right amount of homework*
 - d. *Somewhat too much homework*
 - e. *Way too much homework*

Interestingly, most students either said their school gives the right amount of homework (39%) or way too much homework (36%). There were no differences by gender, number of activities, or who chooses activities. Although differences by age were significant, no meaningful pattern was apparent. As a side analysis, about the same proportion of those who reported <1, 1, and 2 hours of homework thought their schools gave too much homework (34%, 28%, and 30%), while those who reported 3+ hours of homework were much more likely (66%) to say they get way too much homework.

- 6) *Which of these best matches your feelings?*
- a. *I wish I had a lot less free time*
 - b. *I wish I had a little less free time*
 - c. *I feel I have the right amount of free time*
 - d. *I wish I had a little more free time*
 - e. *I wish I had a lot more free time*

The great majority of students in every category wish they had a lot more free time. Boys were more likely to wish for a lot more free time than girls (66% vs. 54%). There were no differences by age and, surprisingly, no differences by the number of activities or by who chooses their activities.

- 7) *How often do you feel stressed because you have too much to do?*
- a. *Never*
 - b. *Once in a while*
 - c. *Some of the time*
 - d. *Most of the time*
 - e. *Always*

Forty-one percent say they are stressed most or all of the time; 23% said some of the time; 26% said once in a while; only 10% said never. There were no differences by gender or age, but those who said activities are chosen cooperatively were less likely to be stressed most or all of the time than those who choose activities themselves or whose parents chose most their activities (33% vs. 50% and 43%, respectively). As could be expected, those with more activities were more likely to be stressed (see table).

- 8) *If you had more time, what would you **most** do with it?*
- Play sports or other physical activity*
 - Spend time with my family*
 - Read*
 - Hang out or play with friends*
 - None of these*

When forced to select only one activity, nearly half (45%) said they would hang out or play with friends. Another fourth (26%) said sports or other physical activity. Thirteen percent said their first choice would be family time and only 6% chose reading. Ten percent said none of these. Boys were more likely to say sports or physical activity (32% vs. 19%), whereas girls were more apt to select time with friends (52% vs. 39%). Older students were also more likely to name time with friends (9=37%, 10=43%, 11=49%, 12+=58%). There were no differences by who chooses most of their activities or by the number of activities in which they participate.

Other Findings Worth Highlighting

Another way of looking at the data is to calculate odds ratios for outcomes based on the predictive variables. To statistically control for inter-correlation among variables, odds ratios were calculated using Multivariate Logistic Regression. The outcomes of interest were activity-based stress and desires for more free time.

	<i>Wish for more free time</i>	<i>Stressed “always” or “most of the time” because too much to do</i>
Gender		
Boy	1.3x	1.1x
Girl	comparison level	comparison level
Age		
12 years old or older	1.5x	1.2x
11 years old	1.1x	1.1x
10 years old	1.4x	1.1x
9 years old or younger	comparison level	comparison level
Who chooses most activities		
Parent	1.1x	1.5x
50/50	0.8x	0.6x*
Child	comparison level	comparison level
# of activities		
4 or more	1.4x	2.2x*
3	1.7x	2.1x*
2	1.0x	1.4x
1	1.0x	1.2x
0	comparison level	comparison level

Hours of homework		
3 or more	1.1x	4.7x*
2	2.3x*	1.7x*
1	1.3x	0.9x
<1	comparison level	comparison level
Hours of screen time		
3 or more	2.7x*	1.9x*
2	1.7x	0.9x
1	1.1x	1.8x*
<1	comparison level	comparison level

* odds ratio statistically significant at $P < 0.05$

When analyzed together, the primary predictor for desire for more free times was hours of screen time. Those who reported 3 or more hours of screen time per day were nearly three times more likely to desire more free time.

When analyzed with the effect of the other variables, children who said they choose some of their activities while their parent chose some were less likely to be frequently stressed about all they do than those who either chose their own activities or whose parents chose most of their activities. Further, having more activities, particularly three or more, doubled the likelihood that children will say they are stressed by all they have to do. Excessive screen time also doubled the likelihood of frequent stress. The single greatest predictor of activity-related stress is the reported number of hours spent on homework. Students who said they average about 2 hours of homework per night were nearly twice as likely to report frequent activity-related stress. Those who said they do 3 or more hours per night were almost five times as likely to report this stress.

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