

**HOPE AMIDST  
CONTINUED  
CHANGE**

**TEEN SNAPSHOT**

Nearly  
**90%**

of After School Matters teens are Black (52%) or Latinx (33%)

**81%**

of our teens live in Chicago's high-poverty community areas

**Teens' Experiences in the Second Year of the Pandemic**

When the pandemic began in 2020, After School Matters—the leading provider of out-of-school-time programs for Chicago teens—adapted its program structure to provide teens with safe, remote opportunities for summer engagement. In Summer 2021, After School Matters re-envisioned its program model once again to provide 671 remote and in-person programs, hosted by 729 instructors, to over 10,000 teens across Chicago.

During this time, After School Matters also established a multi-year research partnership in with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to explore teen experiences, instructor perspectives, and program quality during the pandemic.

Findings from the **newest report** suggest that while teens still face pandemic-related challenges, After School Matters' high quality, relationship-based programs continue to inspire teens, support skills development, and contribute to their hopefulness for the future.

**Learn more about After School Matters teens' experiences during Summer 2021 below.**

**WHAT WE FOUND**

In the second year of the pandemic, teens continue facing additional adult-like challenges.

**TEENS' DAILY REALITIES**

Many teens are stressed, likely because of ever-changing COVID-19 guidelines, returning to in-person learning, facing additional responsibilities at home, and experiencing food insecurity and financial hardships.

**63%** of teens had some level of hesitation about returning to in-person schooling in the fall

**JOB LOSS**

**31%**

of teens reported they or someone in their family had lost a job or had their hours cut due to the pandemic.



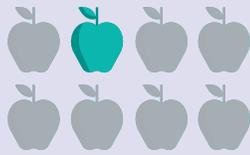
**FOOD INSECURITY**



**1 in 3**

teens (29%) report experiencing food insecurity

VS



**1 in 8**

children (12%) estimated as food insecure in Cook County<sup>2</sup>

Teens in more vulnerable areas of the city and those with higher rates of COVID-19 are more likely to be food insecure.

**TEEN STRESSORS**

Teens report taking on additional adult-like responsibilities and stressors due to the pandemic.

**39%** Home alone during the week

**15%** Someone in household infected with COVID-19

**25%** Providing childcare during the week

**12%** Moving between multiple homes and locations

**23%** Coping with the loss of loved ones

<sup>1</sup>After School Matters served 10,219 teens in the summer 2021 program session. A total of 4,164 teens (33%) participated in this research to share their daily realities and program experiences.

<sup>2</sup>Gundersen, C., Dewey, A., Engelhard, E., Strayer, M., & Lapinski, L. (2021). *Map the Meal Gap 2021: A report on county and congressional district food insecurity and county food cost in the United States in 2019*. Feeding America. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2019/child/illinois/county/cook>

## POSITIVE IMPACT OF ASM PROGRAMMING

Despite facing ongoing challenges related to the pandemic, teens remain positive, hopeful, and engaged in programming. After School Matters' programs maintained a high level of quality across in-person and remote models, demonstrating the value of offering a variety of program formats.

 **92%** had fun in their program

 **89%** feel proud of what they accomplished in their program

 **87%** feel like they matter in their program

 **82%** say their program provided a safe space for them to be their true self



### BELONGING, WELL-BEING, AND HOPE

Teens who felt they belonged in their program or reported feeling more supported by their instructors were also **more likely to report more positive well-being and feeling more hopeful about their future.**

**84%** of teens report that their program helps them lessen or manage their stress

### NEW NORMAL

As they continue adjusting to a new normal, teens urged adults to acknowledge their stress, mental health, and other challenges and asked that adults lead with patience and compassion.

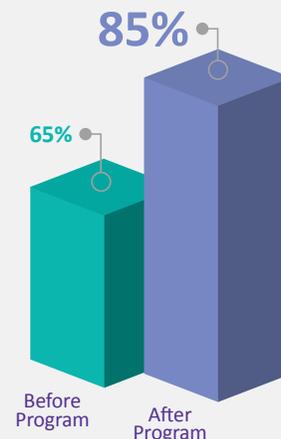


**78%** of teens say they feel more hopeful about their future after participating in their program.



### SKILLS GAINED

On average, teens report significant gains in their skills, including stronger content skills (e.g., coding, dance) and 21st century skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving) after participating in their program, meaning that both remote and in-person learning provide critical opportunities for teens to learn and practice skills.



## The Takeaway

While the pandemic continues to present new challenges for teens and program providers, high quality programming is still possible and provides vital social emotional and mental health support to teens disproportionately impacted by the effects of COVID-19. These findings emphasize the importance of teens' relationships with their instructors and peers to buffer stress and improve well-being. After School Matters is using these results and others to inform its efforts to provide targeted supports and services to Chicago teens and our communities as we continue adapting to the ongoing pandemic. In particular, this year's report reaffirms the importance of After School Matters' ongoing efforts to provide multiple programming formats to meet teens' diverse needs, address food insecurity within our community, and intentionally create programming and supports that foster authentic relationship building and teen belonging.

After School Matters partnered with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for this analysis. View the full report at [afterschoolmatters.org/AIRreport](https://afterschoolmatters.org/AIRreport).

### About After School Matters

After School Matters is a nonprofit organization that provides after-school and summer opportunities to Chicago public high school teens to explore their passions and develop their talents, while gaining critical skills for work, college, and beyond. After School Matters programs are project based, led by industry experts, and provide a pathway to progress in skills development and independence. Teens earn a stipend while participating in programs in the arts, communications and leadership, sports, and STEM. Over the span of nearly three decades, After School Matters has impacted more than 350,000 teens throughout the city of Chicago.

*"Being in a group of people that shared my interests and seeing that there are plenty of people even just in a program like this that are accepting, good people that are in life. I am hopeful to meet more people like them and find a similar space for myself in the future."*