

America After 3PM: Key Insights for Supporting Girls in STEM

November 10, 2026

National Girls Collaborative Project

NGCP

NGCP Vision

The vision of the National Girls Collaborative Project is to **support and create STEM experiences that reflect the world we live in.**





National Girls Collaborative Project
NGCP

NGCP Resources

National Webinars

- Offered regularly on relevant topics. Speakers include educators, researchers, authors, and STEM professionals

Monthly Newsletter

- National events, STEM resources, professional development opportunities for educators, research, and reports

NGCP Website

- Blog posts, statistics, research, and more





Featured Speakers



Anita Krishnamurthi, PhD

Afterschool Alliance



Kata Lucas

National Girls Collaborative Project (NGCP)



Hilary Lozar

Boys & Girls Club of the
Flathead Reservation & Lake County

National Girls Collaborative Project
NGCP

America After 3PM STEM



Afterschool STEM Takes Off

Programs Offer More STEM Than Ever, But Too Many Young People Still Miss Out

Afterschool Alliance

EDGE research

About *America After 3PM*

America After 3PM is the nation's most comprehensive look at how children spend their time during the hours after school and during the summer. Conducted roughly every five years, the 2025 study is the fifth edition of the survey. Previous studies were conducted in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2020. STEM questions were included beginning in 2014, making this the third special report on STEM in afterschool.

America After 3PM 2025 is a large, national tracking survey of 30,515 U.S. parents or guardians of a school-age child. At least 200 interviews were completed in every state and the District of Columbia.

The survey was conducted using a mixed-mode methodology to reach as many households as possible and offered in both English and Spanish. All interviews were completed between January 31 and April 21, 2025.

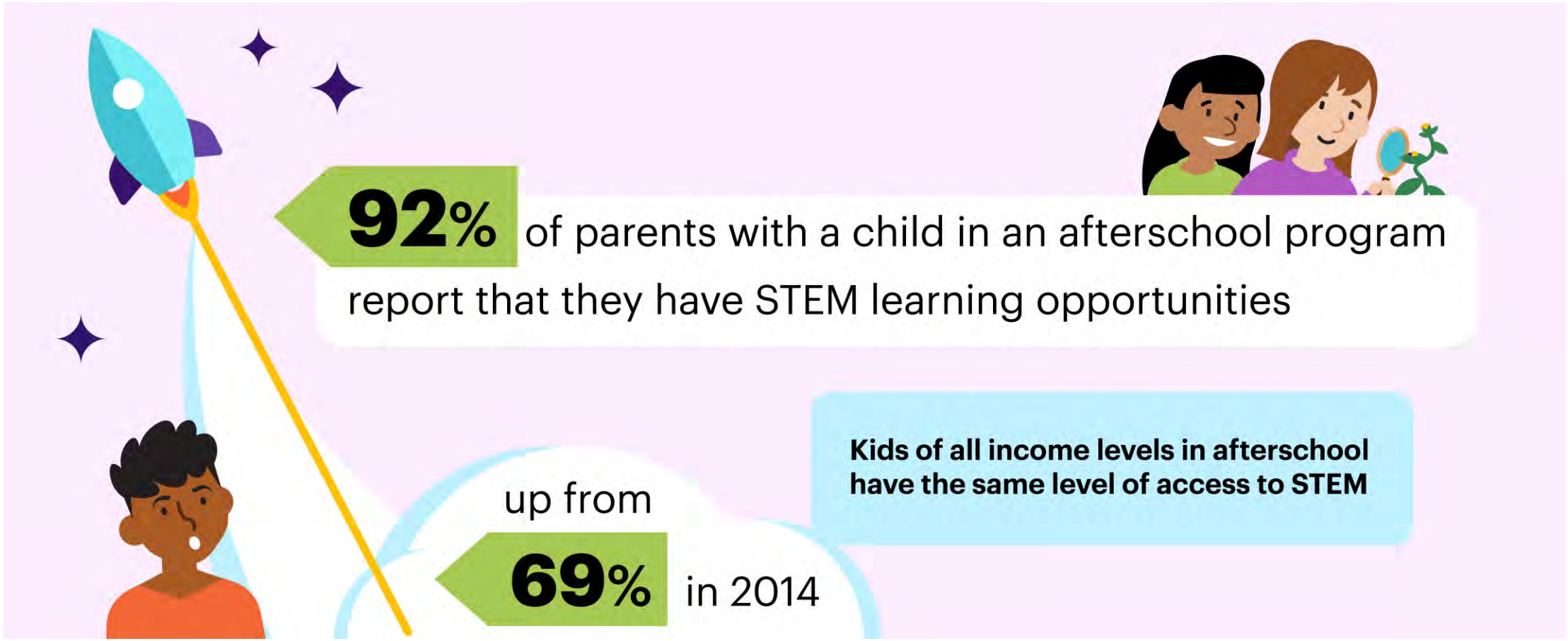
The America After 3PM special report, "Afterschool STEM Takes Off: Programs Offer More STEM Than Ever, But Too Many Young People Still Miss Out" is based on research commissioned and funded by Overdeck Family Foundation.

Key Takeaways

1. STEM in afterschool has become nearly universal
2. STEM in afterschool is not a monolith
3. Rural families value STEM but face steep barriers to access
4. STEM priority grows as youth approach college and career
5. STEM can deliver on skills parents value most

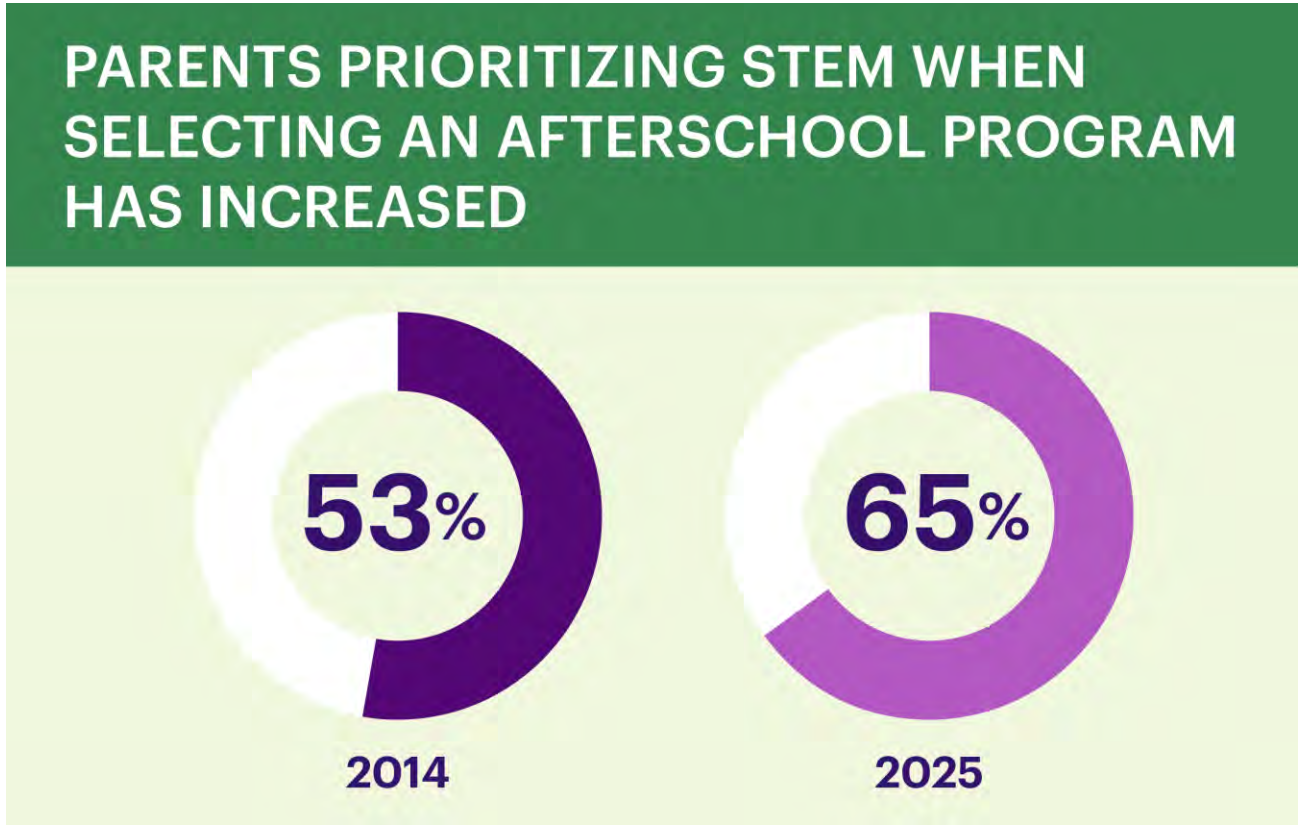
America After 3PM STEM

STEM is now widely offered in afterschool programs



Afterschool Alliance

Parents want STEM opportunities for their children when selecting programs

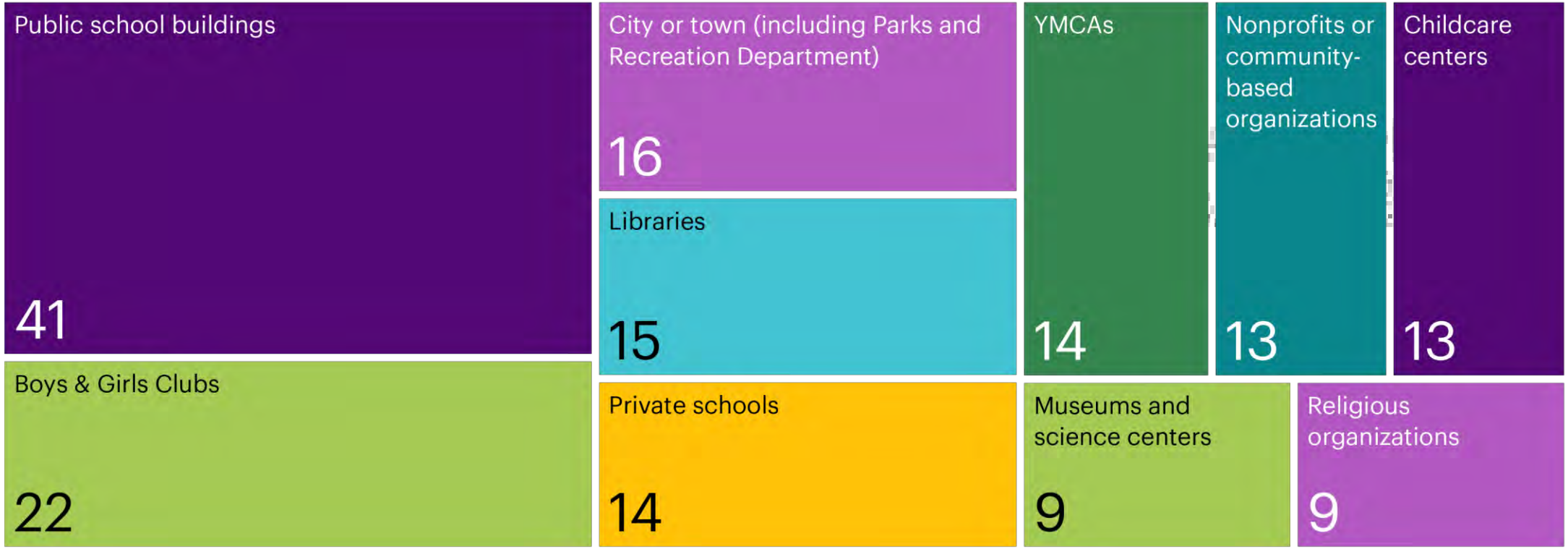


77%

of all parents agree that afterschool programs help children gain interest and skills in STEM

Afterschool STEM is offered across the community

Percentage of parents with a child in an afterschool program that offers STEM reporting where the program takes place:



Disparities for low-income children

A smaller percent of low-income families report their child participates in STEM at least 2-3 days per week



Afterschool programs overall are still out of reach for too many

America After 3PM STEM

Parents of

29.6 million kids

want afterschool programs

22.6 million kids

still don't have access

More than

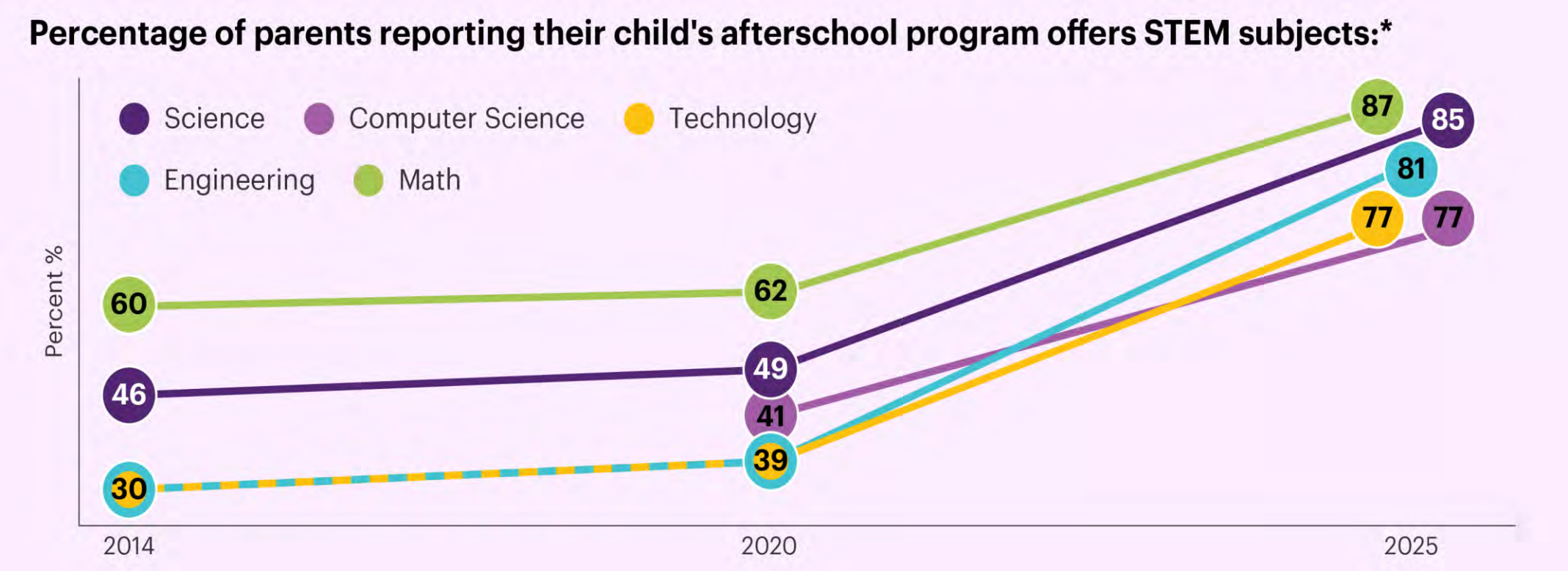
3 in 4

kids are missing out



Afterschool Alliance

Dramatic growth in availability of individual STEM subjects, with computer science, technology, and engineering nearly doubling in the past five years



*The 2014 and 2020 surveys asked about technology and engineering activities as a single combined answer option.

America After 3PM STEM

Afterschool Alliance

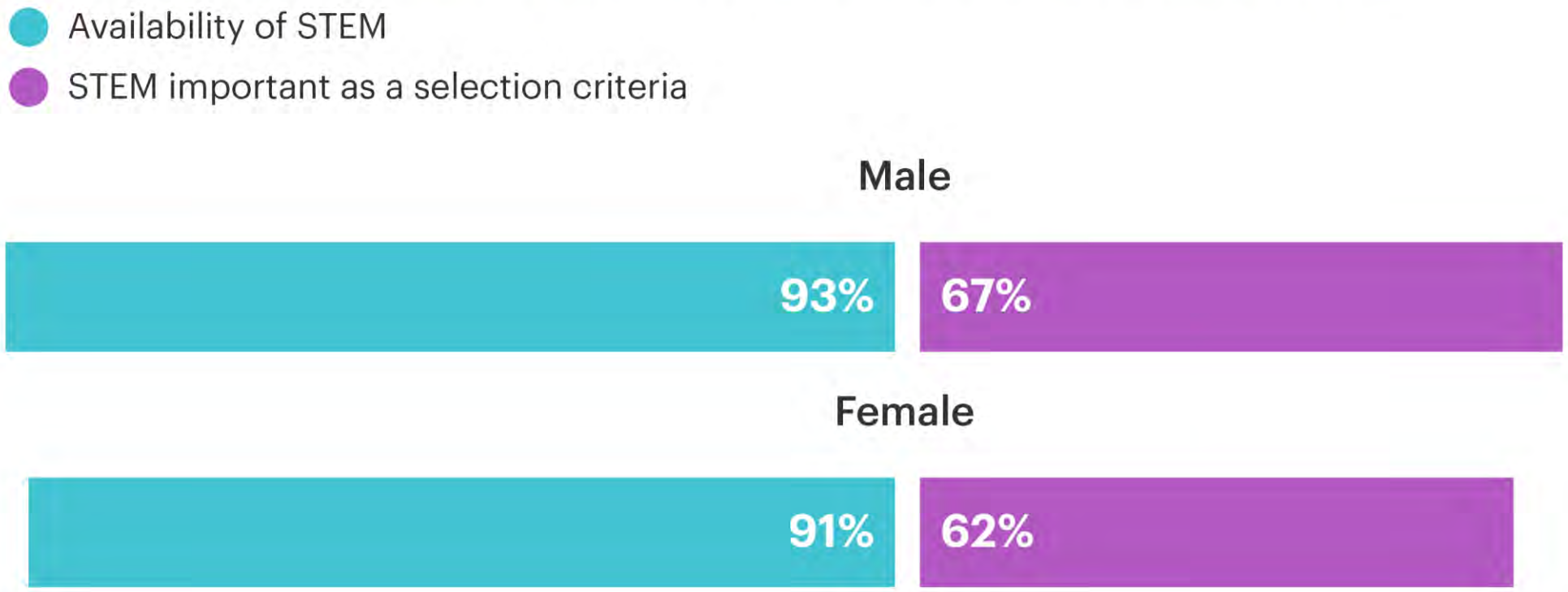
But parents place top value on science and math

- Parents rank science and math much higher than computer science, technology, and engineering when the priority for STEM is disaggregated
- Science and math are the most widely available subjects in programs and also the ones parents are most satisfied with
- This pattern holds across income levels and races



STEM and gender differences

Percentage of parents reporting they have a child in an afterschool STEM program:



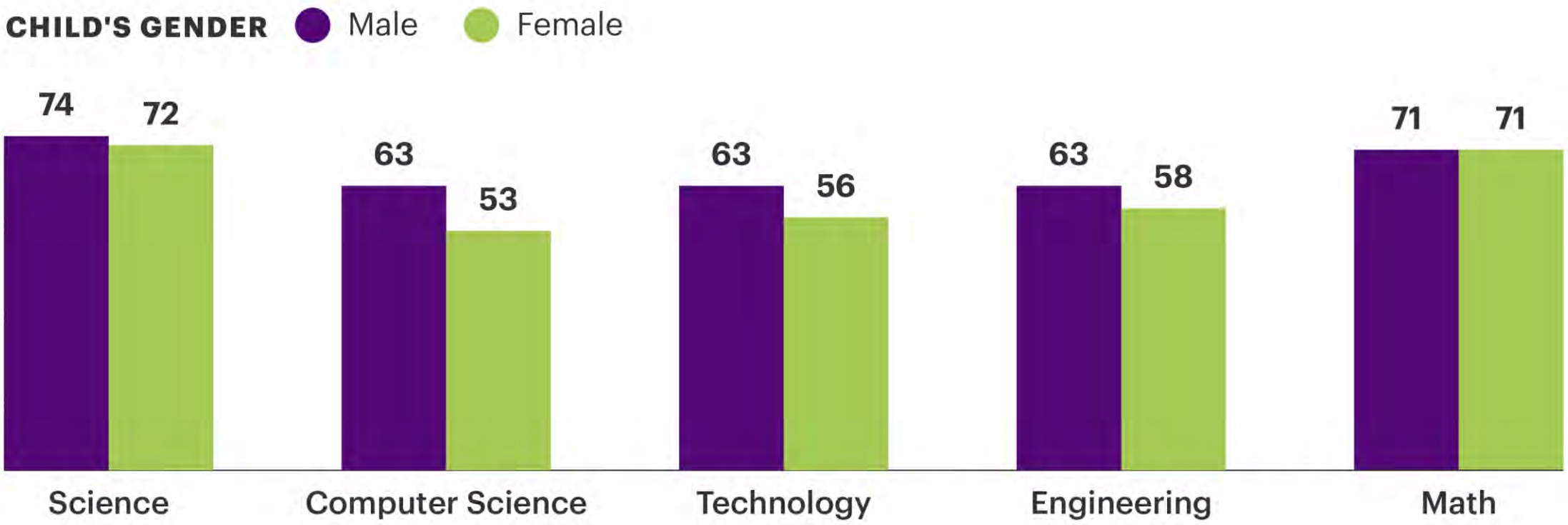
America After 3PM STEM

Afterschool Alliance

America After 3PM STEM

Notable gender gap in parent priorities for computer science, technology, and engineering

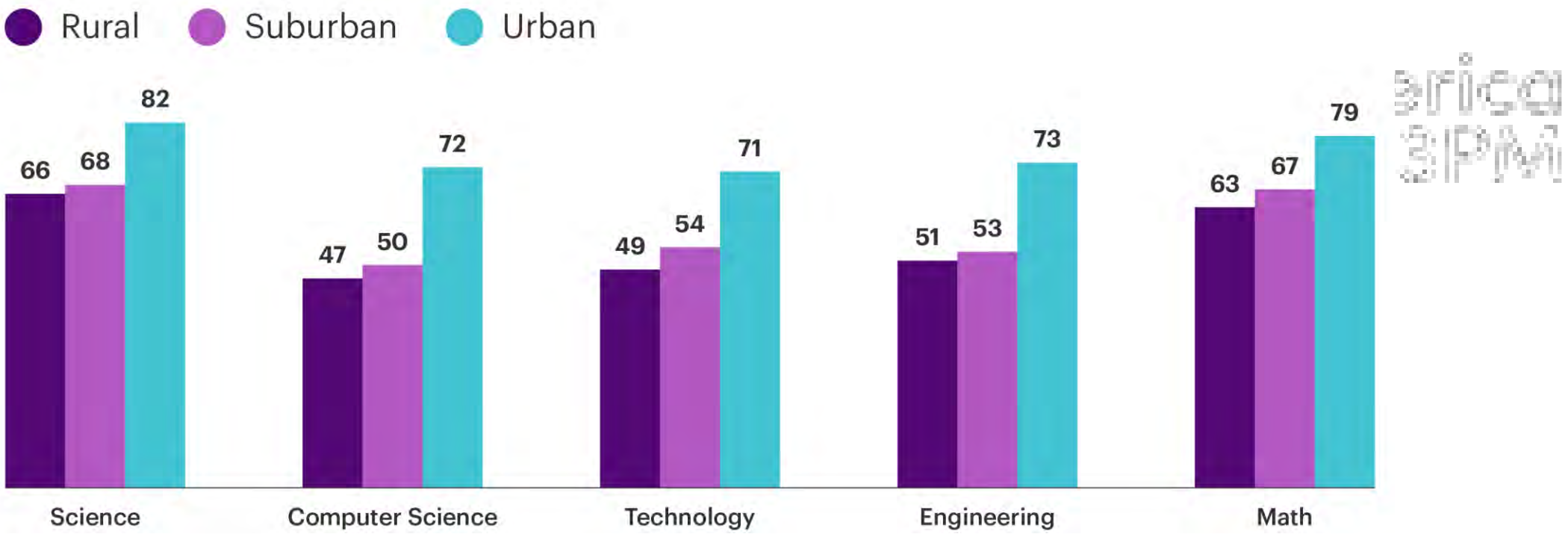
Percentage of parents reporting STEM subjects as extremely or somewhat important in selection of afterschool program based on child's gender:



Afterschool Alliance

Urban parents prioritize STEM more than rural and suburban families

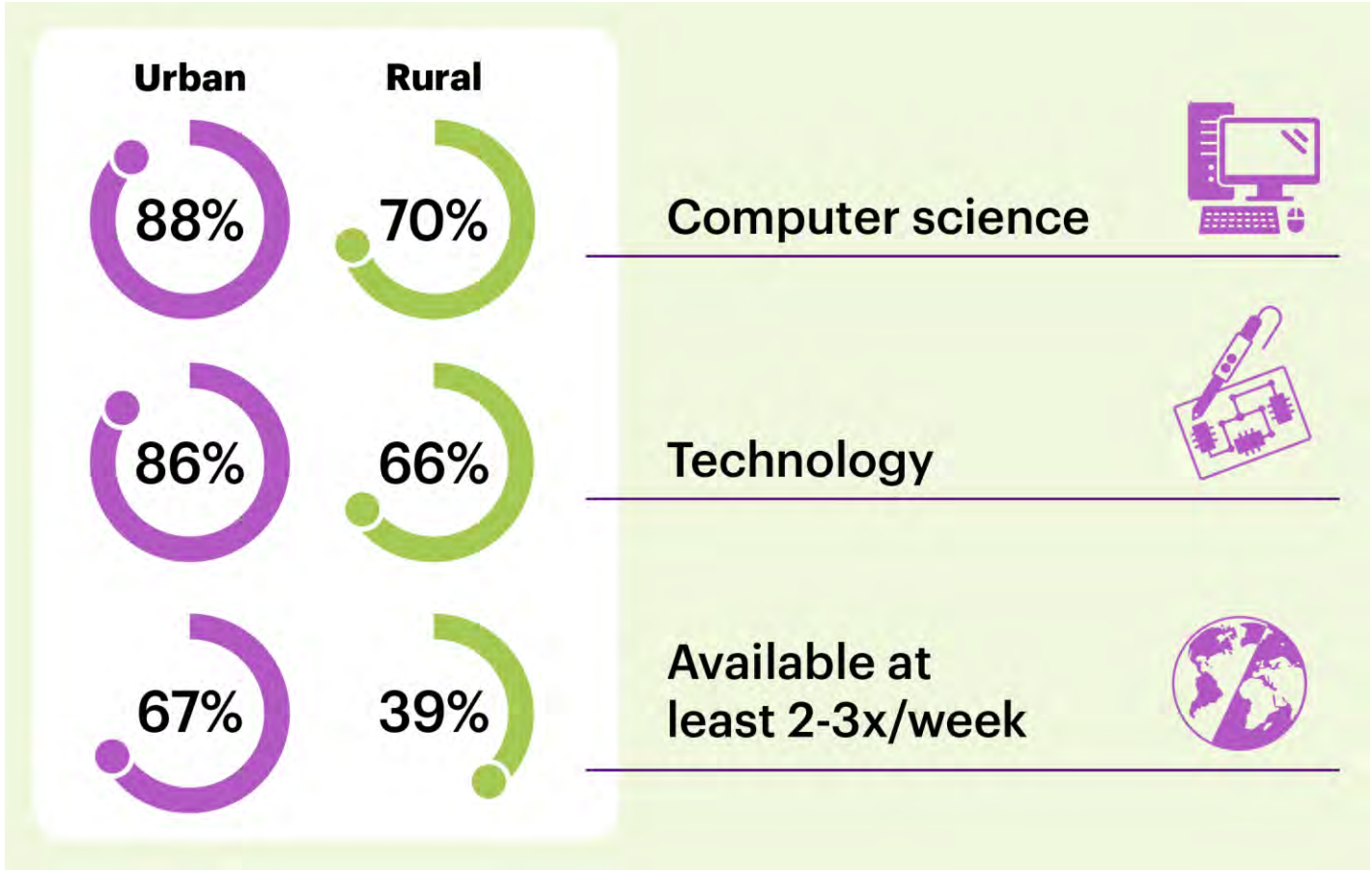
Percentage of parents reporting STEM as extremely or somewhat important in afterschool program selection, by community type:



America After 3PM STEM

Afterschool Alliance

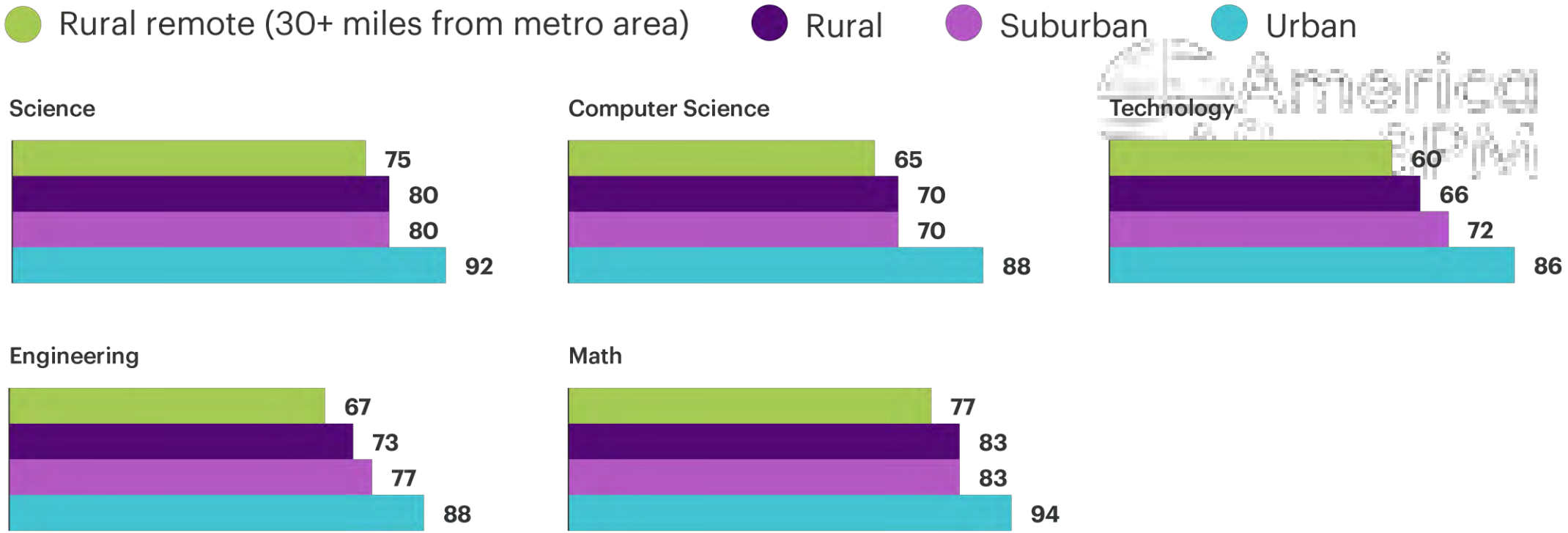
Rural parents report far fewer STEM opportunities





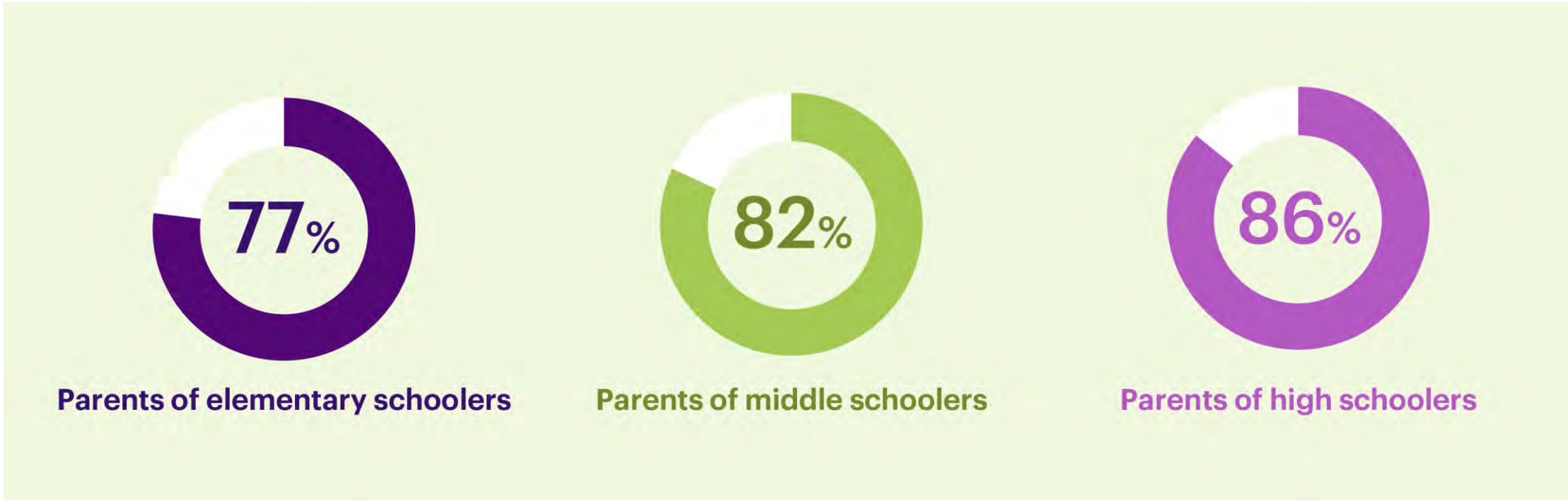
Distance increases disadvantage

Percentage of parents reporting they have a child in an afterschool program that offers STEM, by community type:

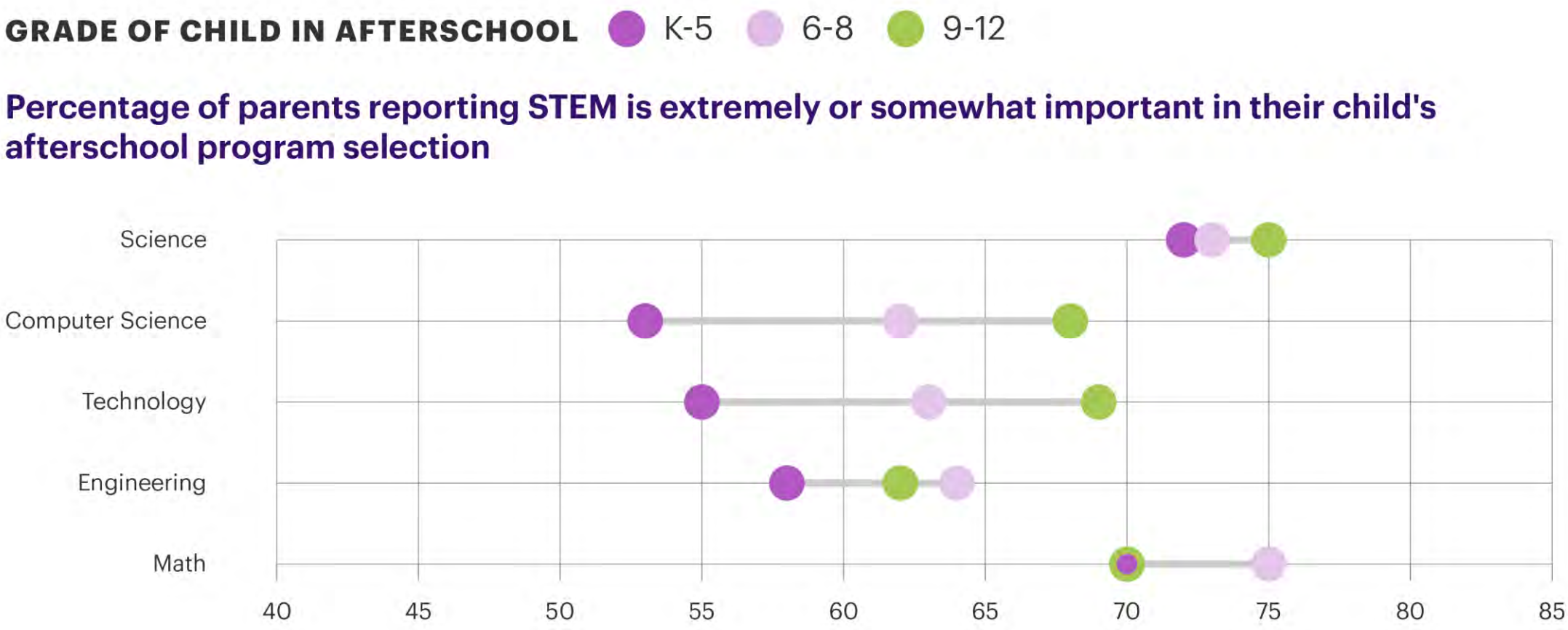


Afterschool Alliance

Parent agreement that afterschool programs help children gain STEM interest and skills rises as children get older

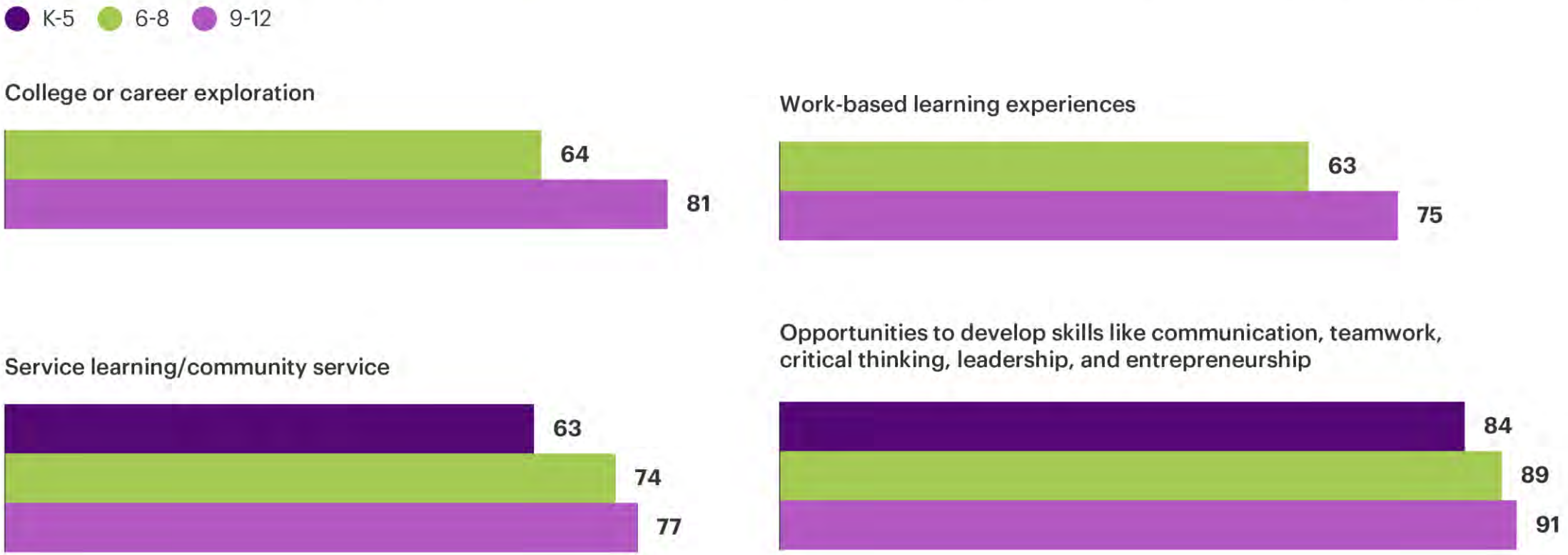


Parents of high schoolers value computer science and technology more



As children approach college and career, parents also prioritize applied, future-oriented learning

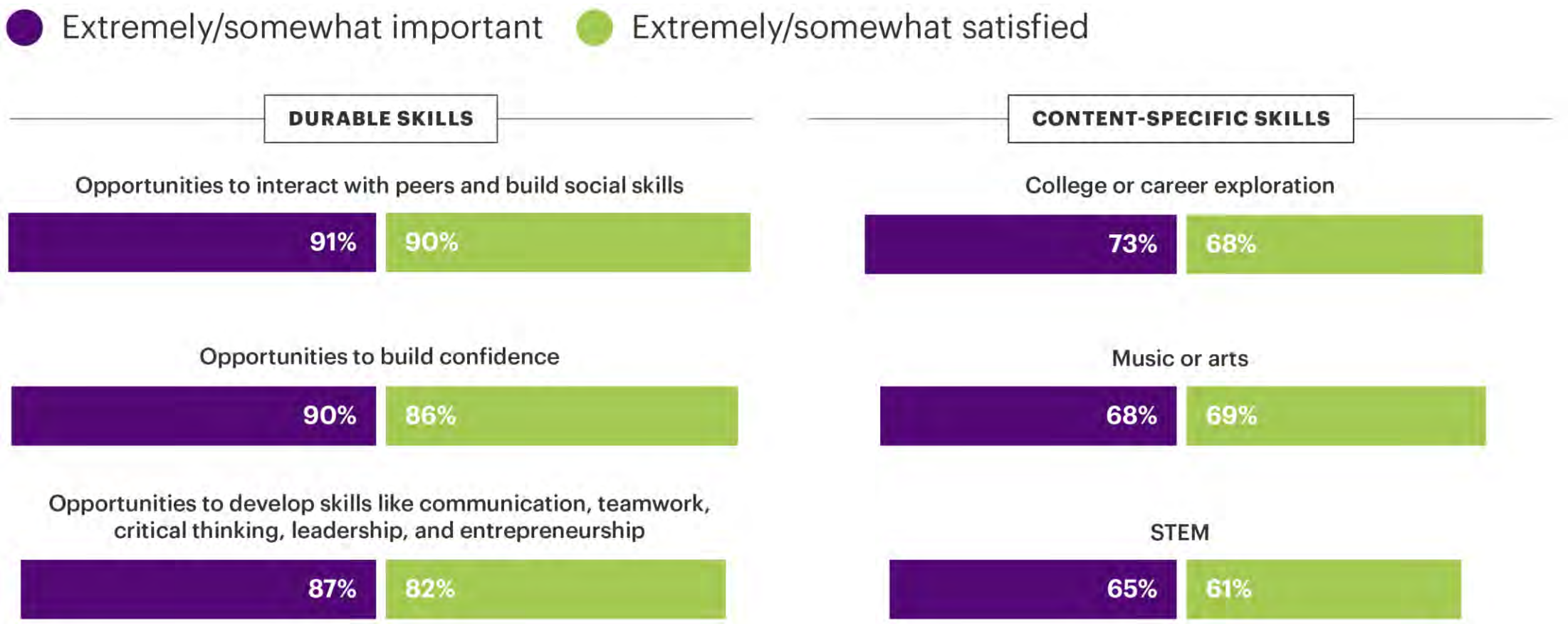
Percentage of parents reporting the following factors as extremely or somewhat important in their selection of afterschool programs:



America After 3PM STEM

Afterschool Alliance

Parents highly prioritize durable skills and whole-child development



Income is a stronger differentiator for summer STEM camps than for afterschool STEM

- Low-income families want summer STEM more than high-income families
- 20% of high-income families with a child in a summer program have a child in a STEM camp compared to 11% of low-income families





Recommendations

- Expand access with investments in underserved and rural areas
- Ensure afterschool programs are included as partners in legislation focused on education and training in STEM
- Increase investment in STEM subjects that lag
- Help programs connect STEM learning to skills parents value most, including durable skills development
- Incentivize stronger partnerships with STEM-rich institutions

Learn more

Visit aa3pm.co to access all resources

Data Dashboard

Full Report

Executive Summary

Girls & Young Women in STEM

Girls and young women do well in math and science

- 86% want careers where they can help others[1]
- 55% of 5th-12th grade girls are interested in a STEM career[2]



Girls' perceptions of their abilities in math and science decline from 5th-12th grade

- 89% of 5th-12th grade girls feel pressure to fit into specific roles or stereotypes[3]
- 28% of 5th-12th grade girls avoid classes with low female enrollment[4]
- Young women take AP Computer Science, AP Physics, and AP Calculus at lower rates than boys/young men[5]



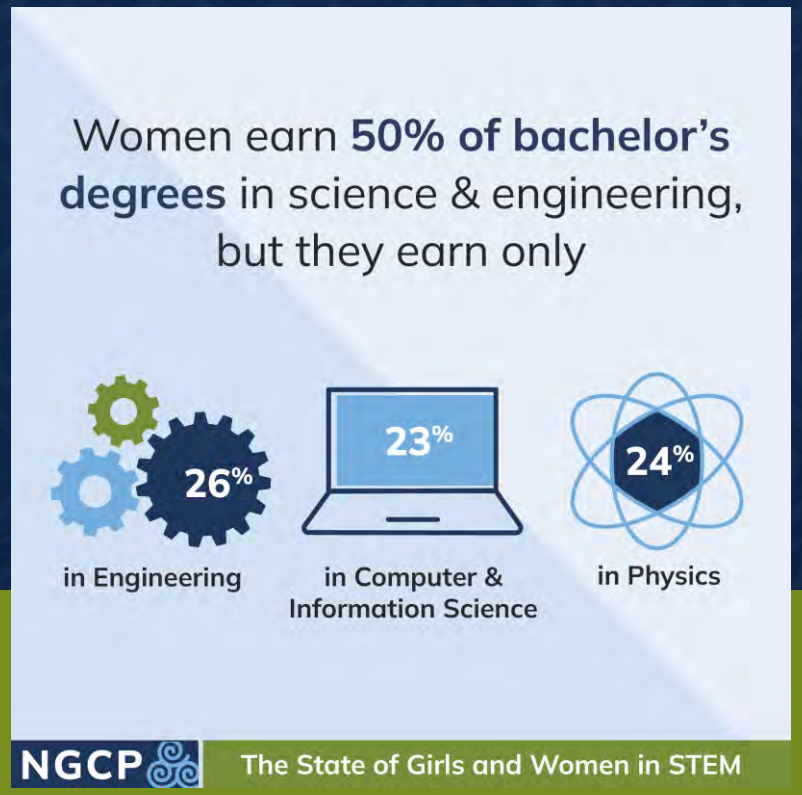
National Girls Collaborative Project

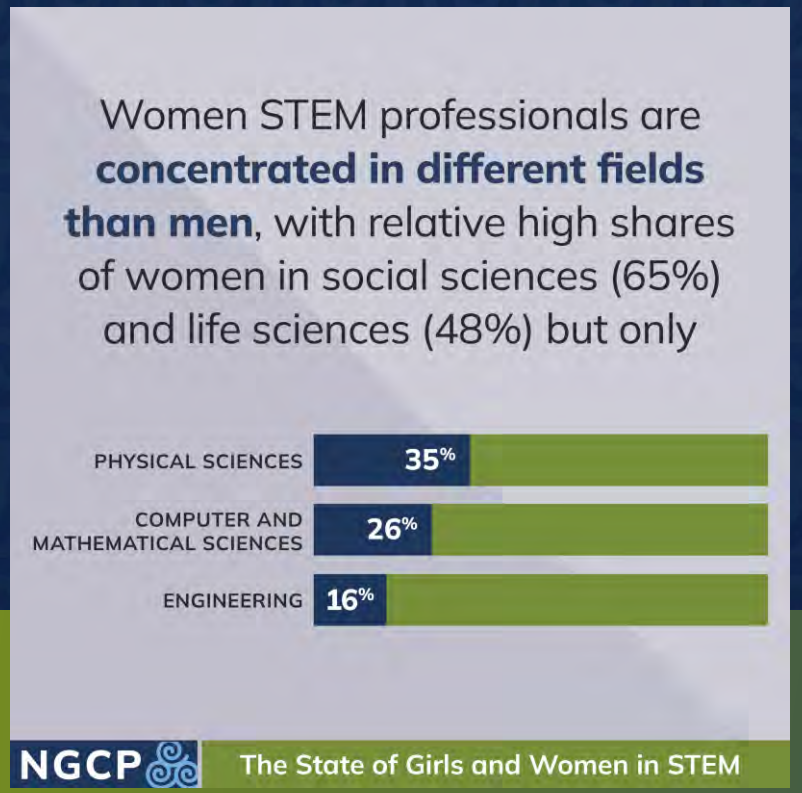
NGCP

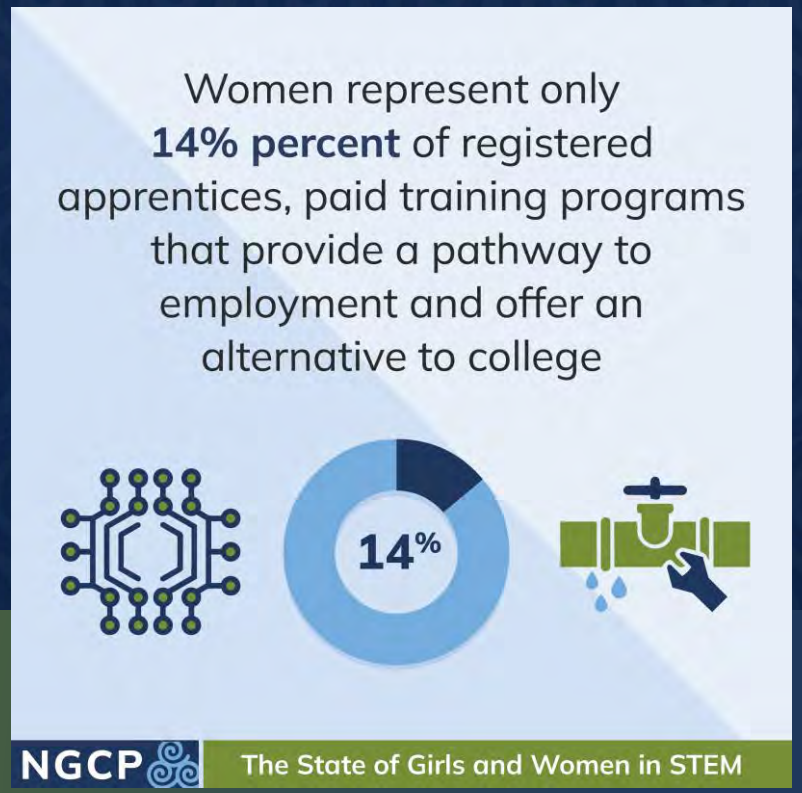
[1-4]Hinkelman, L. (2024)
[5]College Board. (2025)

Gender Gaps in STEM

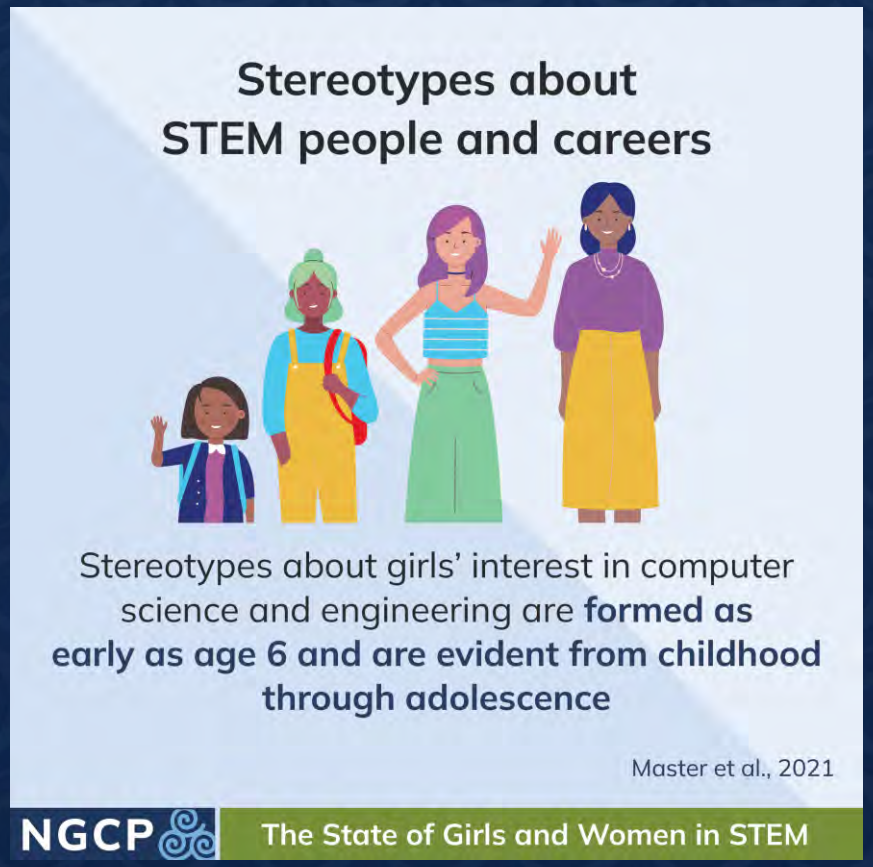
- Women are the **least represented** in **Computer Science, Engineering, and Physics** in Higher Education and the STEM Workforce, and are **underrepresented** in the **trades**







The Influence of Stereotypes



- Children think boys are better than girls at computer science and engineering[1]
- Gender stereotypes about math are neutral or slightly favor girls/young women[2]
- Children think that girls are much better in verbal domains[3]
- Parents are 3x as likely to encourage boys over girls to engage in programming games, sports and LEGO® play[4]
- Parents are 2x as likely to encourage boys to engage in coding than girls[5]

Stereotypes impact girls' confidence, interest, & likelihood of pursuing STEM[6]

[1,2]Master et al. (2025); Miller et al. (2024)
[3]Miller et al. (2024)
[4,5]Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (2021)
[6]Sullivan, A. (2019)

Fostering Belonging in STEM

The Power of Friendship

- Social inclusion (particularly by male peers) in STEM settings can improve girls' sense of belonging[1]
- Friendships in afterschool science programs can strengthen science identity[2]



Exposure to Relatable Women STEM Role Models

- Shifts perceptions of STEM careers and who participates in STEM[3]
- Broadens the notion of STEM careers pathways and people[4]

Connect STEM to girls' lives and to community impact

- Enable girls to see how their interests, backgrounds, and skills/knowledge are valuable to STEM[5]
- Help girls see how STEM careers are central to fostering social change and addressing interconnected problems



National Girls Collaborative Project

NGCP

[1]Cyr et al. (2025)
[2]Hill et al. (2024)
[3]González-Pérez et al. (2020) ; King and Pringle (2019)
[4]Broadley (2015); Hughes et al. (2013)
[5]Hughes et al. (2020)

Strategies to Foster Belonging

Counter Stereotypes Explicitly

- Foster discussion of stereotypes related to STEM people, skills, and careers
  - Why do these stereotypes exist?
  - Do you think they're true?
  - How do they make you feel?



Be Mindful of Your Own Messaging

- Reflect on your own beliefs, mindsets, and messaging
  - How do you talk about your own experience with math or science?
  - How do you talk about STEM professionals?
  - How do you react when you make a make mistake?

Strategies to Foster Belonging

Showcase Relatable Role Models

- Choose books and media that showcase the diverse STEM people, skill sets, and careers
- Integrate role models into in-person, online, and hybrid learning
- Think about diversity related to gender, race, ethnicity, ability, career stage, field, STEM interest, and more



Make Connections between Girls' Cultural and Social Backgrounds and STEM

- Activities, curriculum, and opportunities have a girl-centered design
- Draw on girls' interests, knowledge, background, skills, culture, and lived experiences
- Value girls' contributions and unique cultural strengths



Research Highlighted & Resources

Research Highlighted

- Broadley (2015)
- College Board (2025)
- Cyr & Colleagues (2025)
- Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (2021)
- González-Pérez et al. (2020)
- Hill & Colleagues (2024)
- Hinkelman (2024)
- Hughes et al. (2013)
- Hughes et al. (2020)
- King & Pringle (2019)
- Master et al. (2025)
- Miller & Colleagues (2024)
- NGCP's State of Girls & Women in STEM (2026)
- Sullivan (2019)

NGCP Resources

- NGCP Blog: 5 Ways to Counter STEM Stereotypes in Children and Youth
- NGCP Blog: 4 Ways to Support Girls' STEAM Learning through Play
- NGCP Webinar: Understanding STEM Stereotypes: A Look at the Newest Research and Strategies
- NGCP Blog: Picture Books to Break Stereotypes in STEM (and Beyond!)



National Girls Collaborative Project
NGCP



STEM in Rural Settings; Boys & Girls Club of the Flathead Reservation & Lake County



A look at STEM exposure and engagement in rural areas for female learners

November 10, 2026

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF THE FLATHEAD
RESERVATION & LAKE CO.

NGCP National Girls Collaborative Project

About me and my path to STEM



- Educator for 20 years, 8 of which in STEM, 3 of those in OST
- Public School STEM program reached over 400 kids per year, grades K-4
- Program ended, has since been reinstated with fewer resources
  - STEM is so obviously crucial to elementary ages
  - K-4 is best time to encourage female learners, build confidence
  - K-4 also best time to model friendships between boys and girls, building all-inclusive learning environments
- Several formative moments in my own education led me to STEM
  - Powerful female TAG educator/mentor
  - Warm and welcoming male science educators in middle/high school
  - Cross-gender friendships in middle/high school science classes
  - One kid asked for help in math, made me think of myself as an educator
- Two-way mentorship: “That’s the STEM Lady!” and “She’s SUPER SMART!” (my proudest moments!)

About my current program



- BGC STEM program reaches around 250 per year, grades K-12
- STEM program structure features access for all
- Club membership fees are among the lowest I've ever heard of
- Crucial role as Coordinator is to train staff and mentor them to find STEM identities*
- Being a female in STEM automatically encourages mentorship of female learners
- STEM sees some of the highest engagement levels of all programs offered
- One of the few places locally for kids to engage in STEM (thank you libraries!!)
- Specialties: technology, beginner coding, engineering/LEGO, Maker activities, logic puzzles/games, pilot programs (NGCP QuantumGirls, CAST Take Flight)
- Future Friday program engages teens in real college and career pathway options
- STEM every two weeks during school year, every week during summer*

*Staff is increasingly becoming more comfortable presenting STEM on their own- a major win!

Girls in STEM in our 3 Clubs

- Girls often outnumber boys in STEM classes during sports seasons-
  - Not an opt out system, all participate, almost always in groups
- I model being a female in STEM with a positive light and rely on positive relationships
  - This boosts engagement most times, especially with special programs like QG
- Parent relationships also come into play when looking at female engagement in STEM
  - Special family events are very useful in boosting engagement in general
- Girls in tech frequently ask to work together; not always ideal or realistic, but good for quick engagement, results in better retention in programs/completion of projects





Girls in STEM in our 3 Clubs, continued

- Environment, encouragement and presenter attitude are everything!
  - Making STEM fun, hands-on, partner or group-based, and actively engaging with youth are key factors to success of any STEM program
- Some tips and tricks: call on girls more frequently, verbally compliment them frequently, give more wait time for answers, never treat an answer as “wrong,” guide learning by asking more questions rather than providing a single answer, model and encourage positive cross-gender interactions/mentorship opportunities
- STEM doesn’t have to be all about expensive technology-
  - keep it cheap and easy at first, scale up gradually





General recommendations



- Make STEM fun! This doesn't mean expensive-
  - Cheap and easy hands-on High Yield Activities are easy to find!
- Get creative with local partnerships and use them to their fullest potential-
  - Look around your community for females in STEM: dental offices, nurses, science fields (there are tons), educators, engineers, software experts, library programs, etc
  - Assist with transportation through grants, local dealerships, school bus routes, etc
  - Organize family STEM events using local resources
- Pair local STEM Mentors with learners to boost confidence and engagement



General recommendations, continued

- Cultivate and strengthen staff STEM identities through team games and events-
  - Start with what they're into; it can be linked to STEM
  - This will lead to more STEM exposure in the classroom
- Continue pushing for Meta AI or local funds to go to STEM education, staff PD, scholarships, fee assistance, camps
- Open dialogue to real and tangible STEM career/education opportunities through family STEM events, parent portal communication, special programs, or field trips
- Rural usually equals agricultural- use this in grant and resource searches!





Q & A

We'll take questions from the chat.

NGCP

CONNECT + CREATE + COLLABORATE

Learn more at **ngcproject.org**