



# How Kids are Playing in 2024

A Boston Children's Museum/BostonMoms.com Survey



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# Introduction

Playtime has undergone dramatic change in the last few decades, with much less time devoted to traditional play, and more time directed to academic lessons and the use of media (television, video games, and computer and smartphone applications). Childhood has been sped up, with accelerated expectations for many and overwhelming obstacles for others, in both cases playtime suffers. While the definition of play is elusive, there is a growing consensus that it is an activity that is intrinsically motivated, entails active engagement, and results in joyful discovery. Play is voluntary and often has no extrinsic goals; it is fun and often spontaneous.\* The Museum's historic appeal, rooted in hands-on and child-centered experiences, promotes play as a key way to help children thrive as they grow. The Museum sees play having its own "means" and "ends" and taps into children's innate desire to play to foster learning and healthy development.

With this in mind, the Museum wanted to learn more about how children actually are playing in 2024, and the attitudes of parents and adults toward play. The Museum partnered with BostonMoms.com and invited parents to participate in a survey conducted during the period March through July 2024 and to share how their children were playing. The survey was promoted through advertising, social media, and Museum and BostonMoms.com communication channels. The survey was self-selecting and anonymous, with participants voluntarily choosing to participate rather than being identified or selected based on a pre-determined set of criteria. 701 people completed the survey with over 90% being from Massachusetts, 50% from Greater Boston, and 24% from the City of Boston. The results show families place a high priority on play and see it as essential to their child's healthy development. But parents are also concerned that they do not have enough time to play with their child and that their child does not have enough opportunities to play with other children.

\* *The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children*, PEDIATRICS Volume 142, number 3, September 2018:e20182058, American Academy of Pediatrics

## Survey Highlights

89% of those completing the survey said play was essential to their child's healthy development, and 88 % said it was essential to their child's learning.

Parents also said their children have ample time to play, with only 12% indicating their child did not have enough time to play. However, a significant number, 38%, said they do not have enough time to play with their child, and 37% said their child did not have enough opportunities to play with other children.

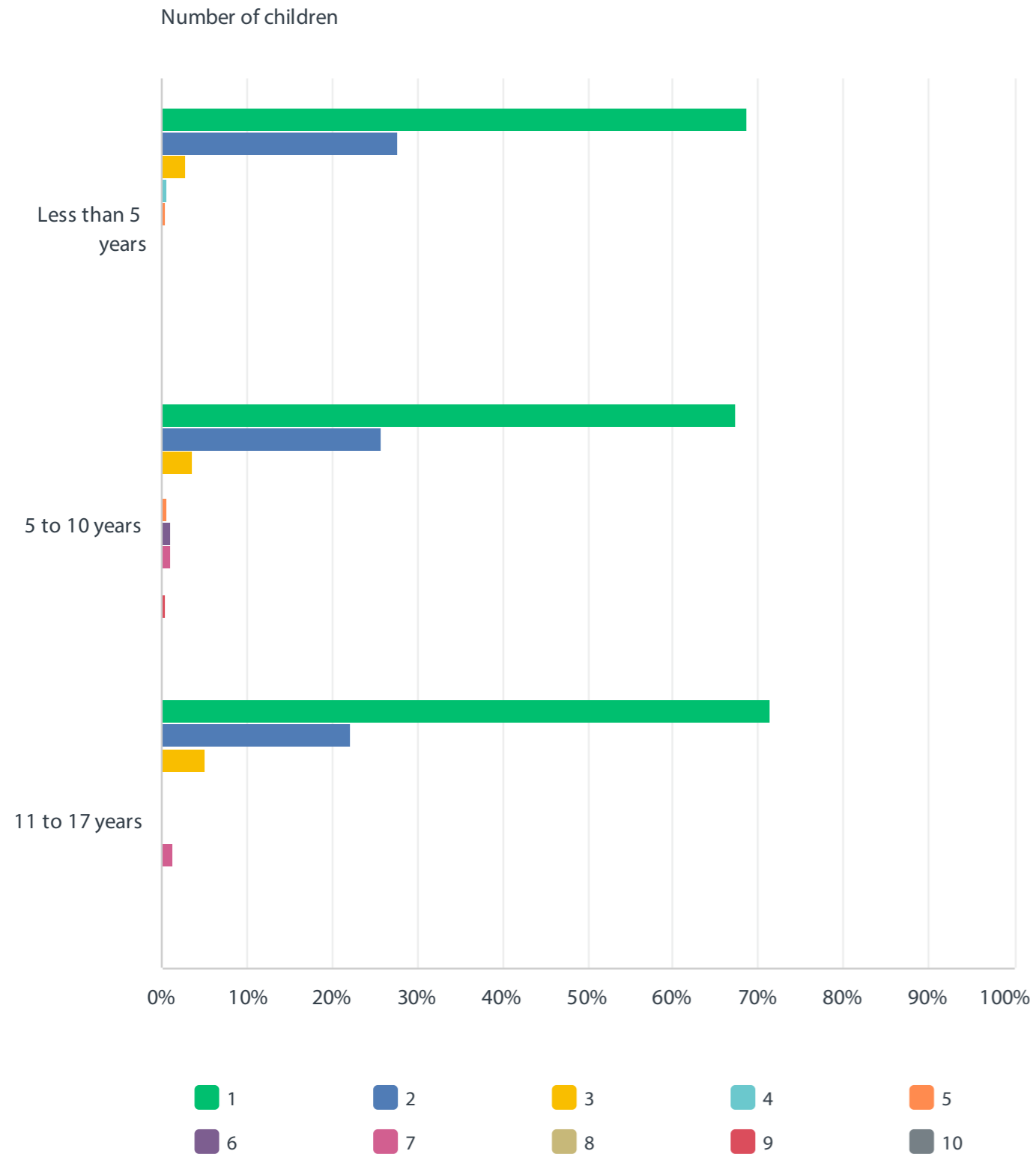
Results showed children are engaging in varied kinds of play activities during a typical week, from pretend play (57%), outdoor play (91%), playing with other children who were not siblings (70%), playing with pets or animals (45%), playing alone (92%), playing with adults (87%), at home activities such as cooking and gardening (67%), and doing arts and crafts (65%).

### **Other key findings from the survey include:**

- 97% agreed (72% strongly) that play is strongly linked to getting along and working with others.
- 70% agreed (30% strongly) that physical safety is a big concern when thinking about where and how their child plays.
- 80% agreed (36% strongly) that safety, in respect to negative or harmful messages that their children could experience, was a big concern.
- 96% agreed (57% strongly) that it is good for their child to take age appropriate risks while playing.
- 76% agreed (39% strongly) that technology is taking away from traditional kinds of play.

# Ages of children of survey takers

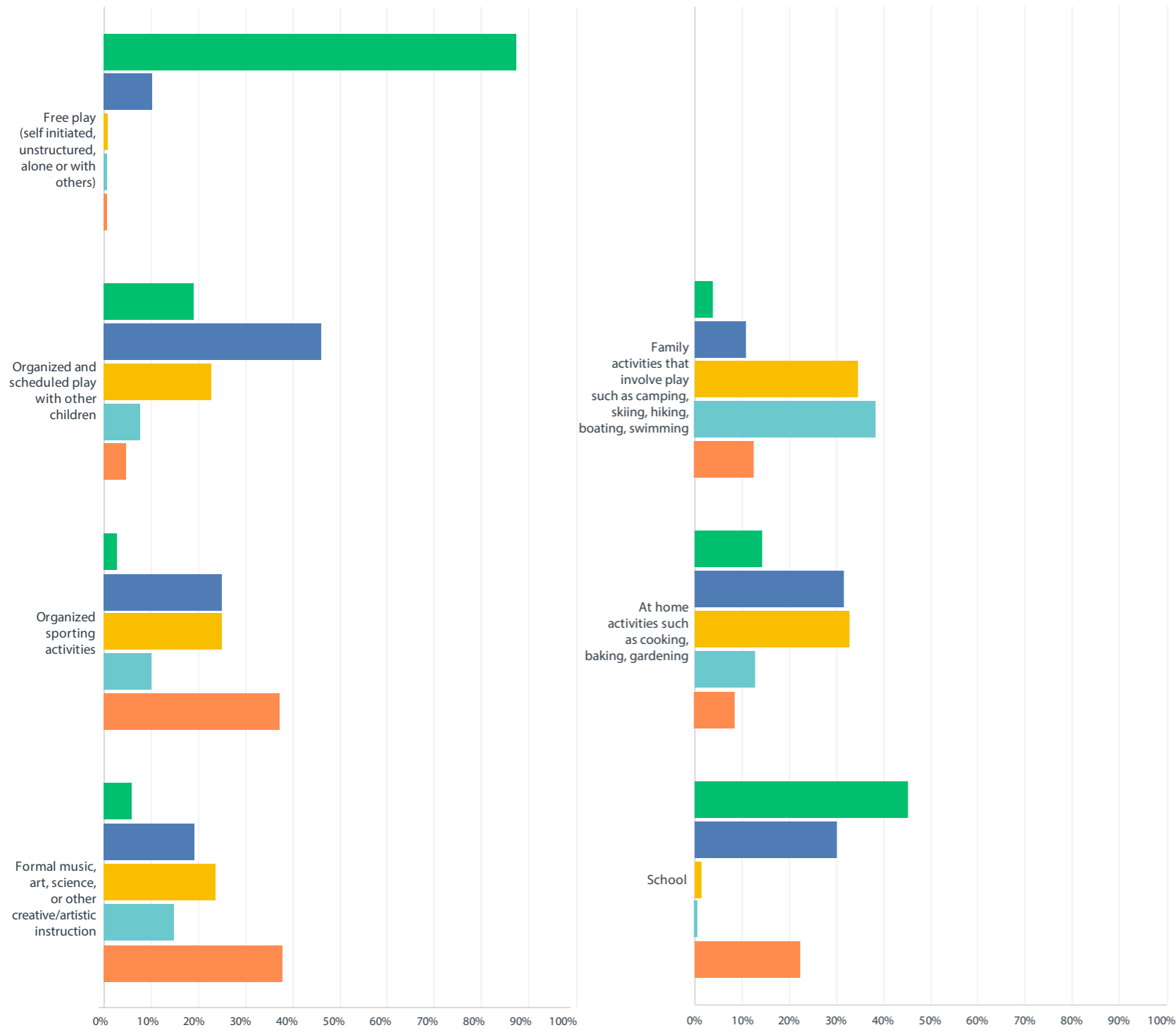
Answered: 700 Skipped: 1



Number of children											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	TOTAL
Less than 5 years	68.67%	27.69%	2.73%	0.55%	0.36%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	549
	377	152	15	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	
5 to 10 years	67.45%	25.84%	3.69%	0.00%	0.67%	1.01%	1.01%	0.00%	0.34%	0.00%	298
	201	77	11	0	2	3	3	0	1	0	
11 to 17 years	71.43%	22.08%	5.19%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	77
	55	17	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	

# Frequency of participation in play and learning activities

Answered: 699 Skipped: 2

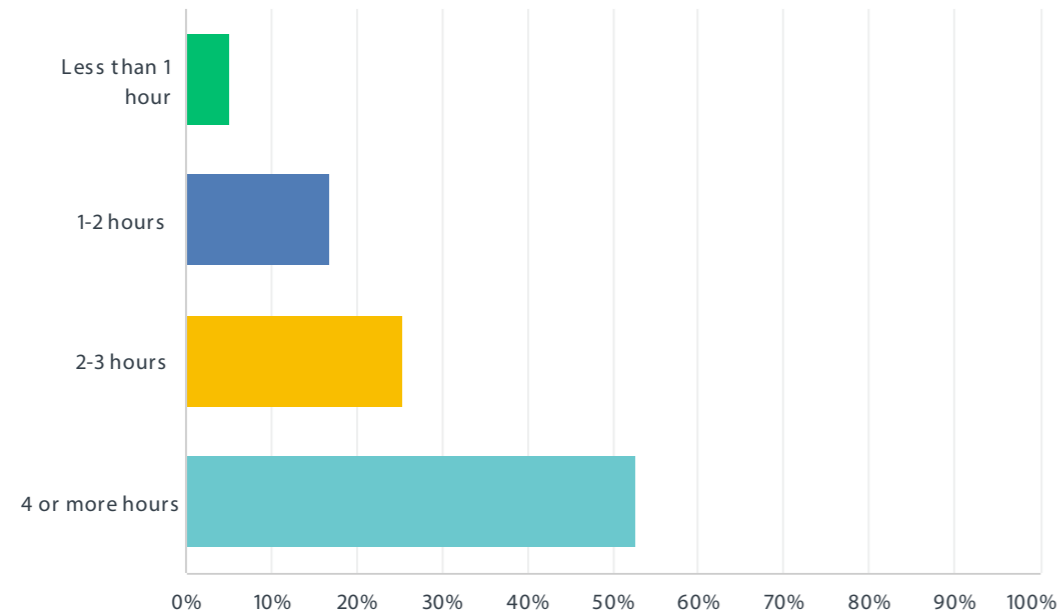


	EVERY DAY	SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK	SEVERAL TIMES A MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR	NEVER/RARELY	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Free play (self initiated, unstructured, alone or with others)	87.52% 610	10.33% 72	0.86% 6	0.72% 5	0.57% 4	697	1.16
Organized and scheduled play with other children	18.91% 132	46.13% 322	22.78% 159	7.59% 53	4.58% 32	698	2.33
Organized sporting activities	2.88% 20	24.89% 173	25.04% 174	9.93% 69	37.27% 259	695	3.54
Formal music, art, science, or other creative/artistic instruction	5.90% 41	19.28% 134	23.60% 164	14.82% 103	36.40% 253	695	3.57
Family activities that involve play such as camping, skiing, hiking, boating, swimming	3.75% 26	10.81% 75	34.44% 239	38.47% 267	12.54% 87	694	3.45
At home activities such as cooking, baking, gardening	14.22% 99	31.61% 220	32.90% 229	12.79% 89	8.48% 59	696	2.70
School	45.26% 315	30.03% 209	1.58% 11	0.72% 5	22.41% 156	696	2.25

■ Every day
 ■ Several times a week
 ■ Several times a month
 ■ Several times a year
 ■ Never/rarely

### About how many hours does your child spend playing (not using digital technology) on a typical weekday?

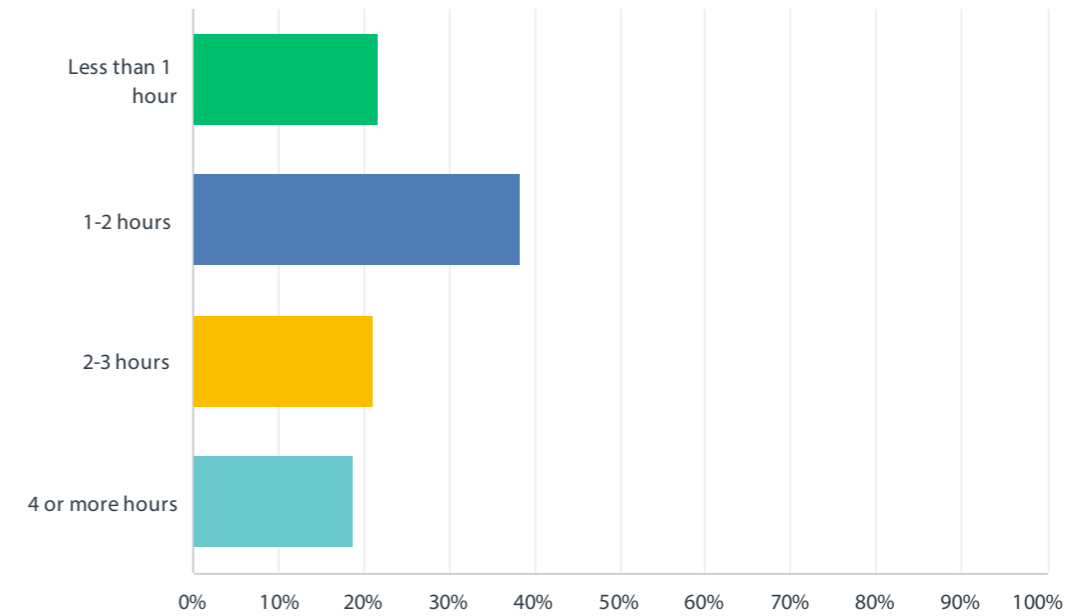
Answered: 698 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 hour	5.16%	36
1-2 hours	16.91%	118
2-3 hours	25.36%	177
4 or more hours	52.58%	367
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>698</b>

### How many hours do you spend playing with your child on a typical weekday?

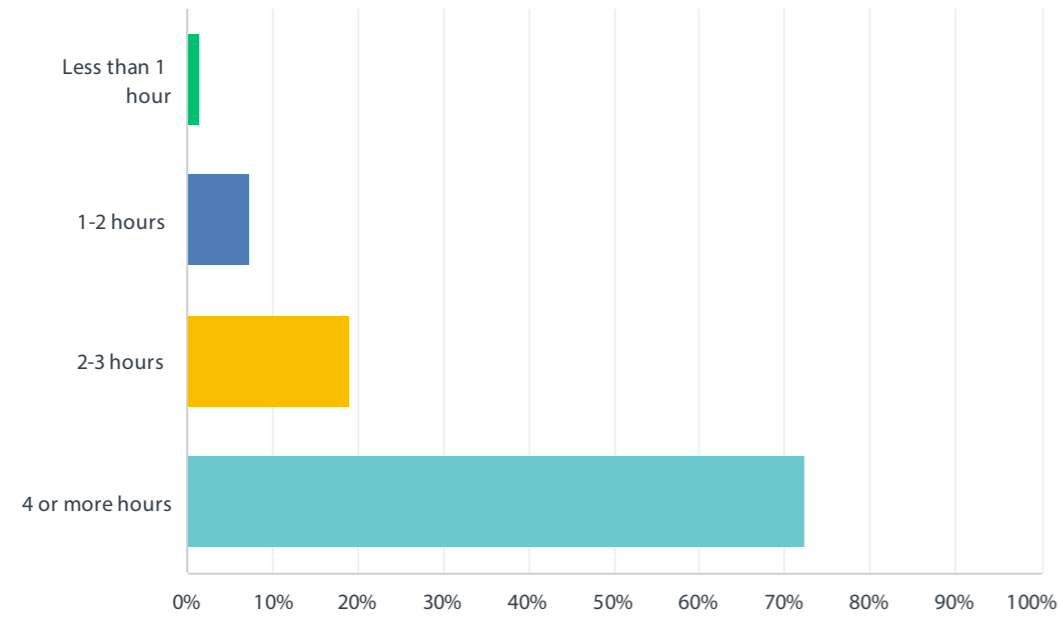
Answered: 697 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 hour	21.66%	151
1-2 hours	38.45%	268
2-3 hours	21.09%	147
4 or more hours	18.79%	131
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>697</b>

### How many hours does your child spend playing (not using digital technology) on a typical weekend day?

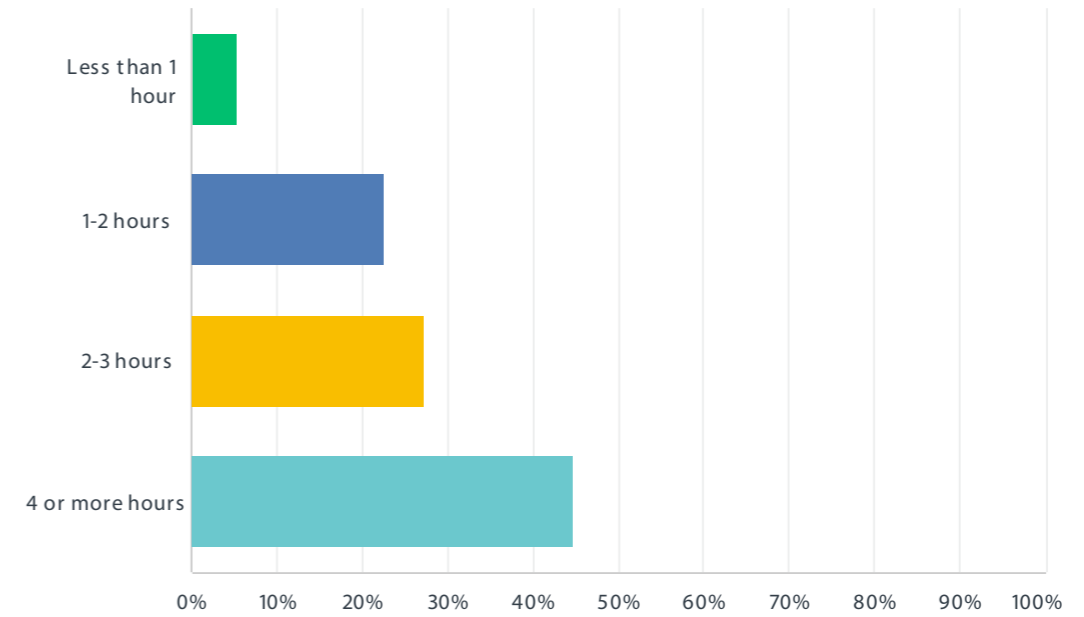
Answered: 698 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 hour	1.43%	10
1-2 hours	7.16%	50
2-3 hours	19.05%	133
4 or more hours	72.35%	505
TOTAL		698

### How many hours do you spend playing with your child on a typical weekend day?

Answered: 698 Skipped: 3



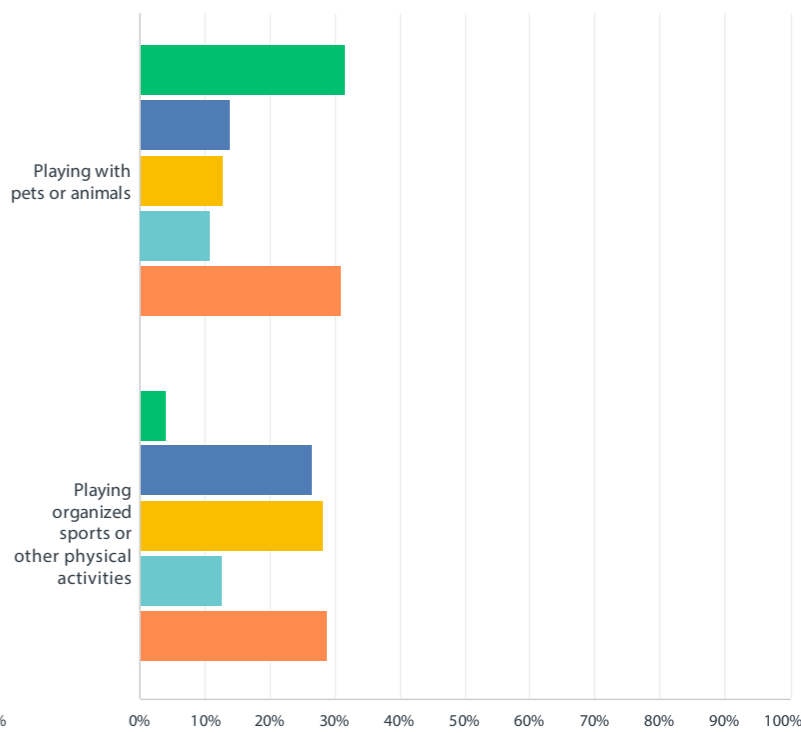
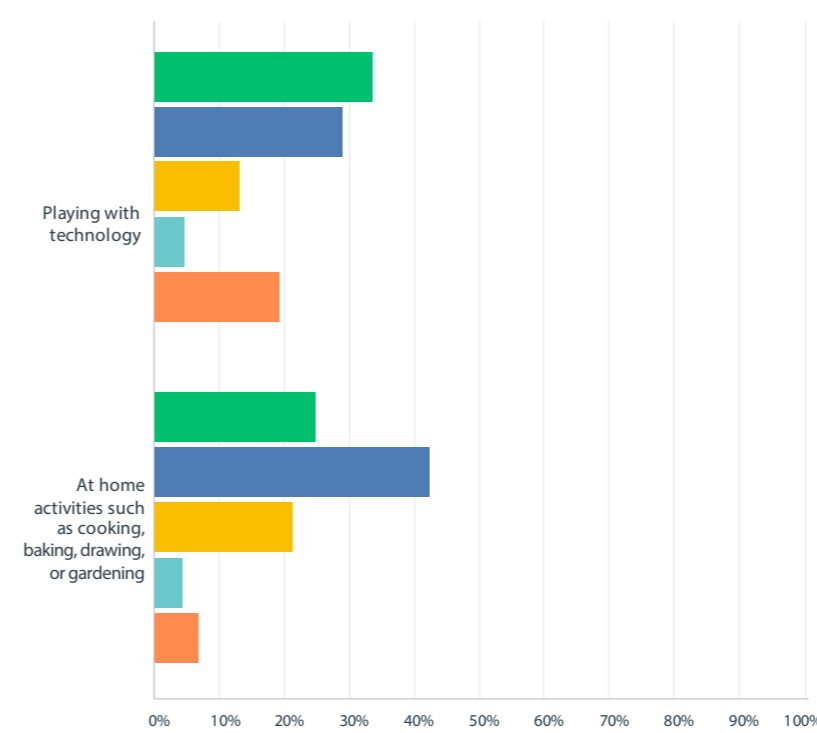
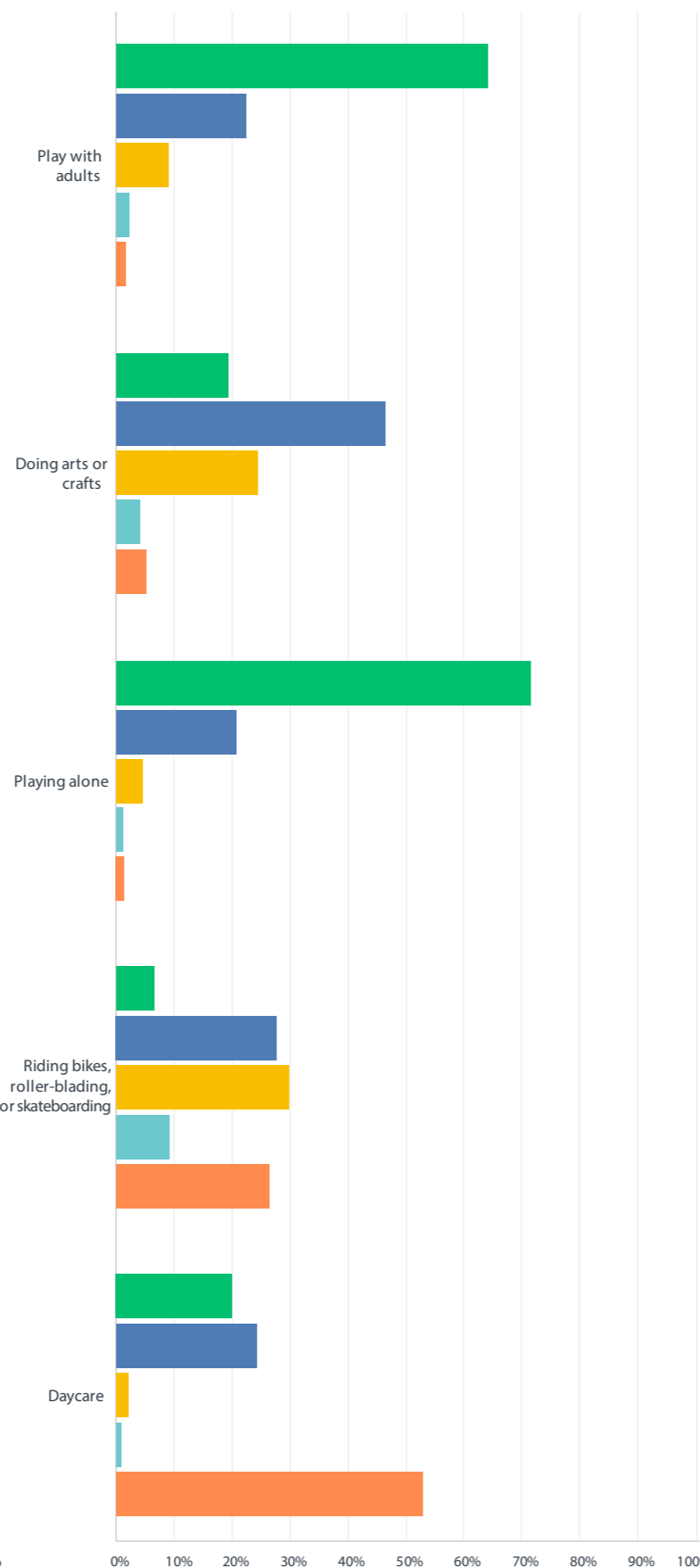
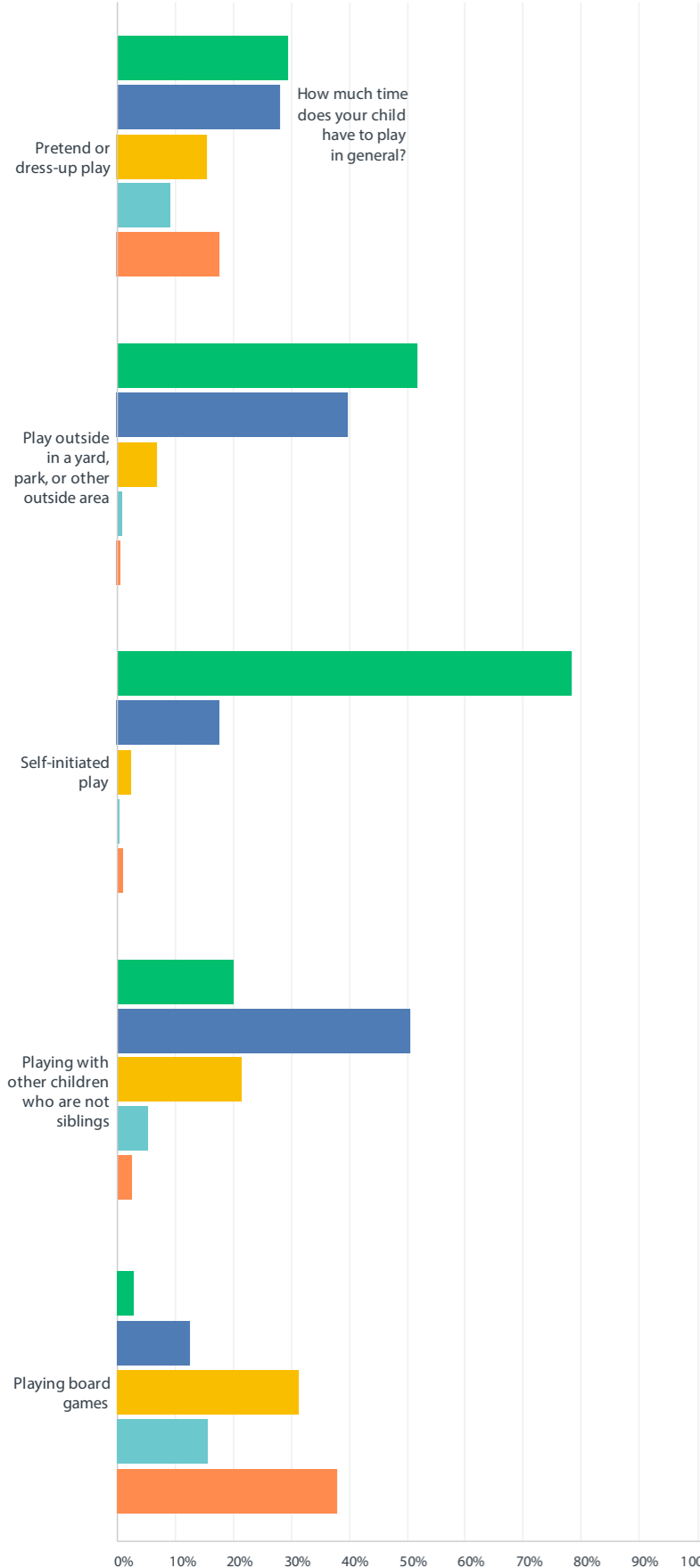
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than 1 hour	5.30%	37
1-2 hours	22.64%	158
2-3 hours	27.36%	191
4 or more hours	44.70%	312
TOTAL		698



# How often does your child/children participate in the following activities?

Answered: 628 Skipped: 73

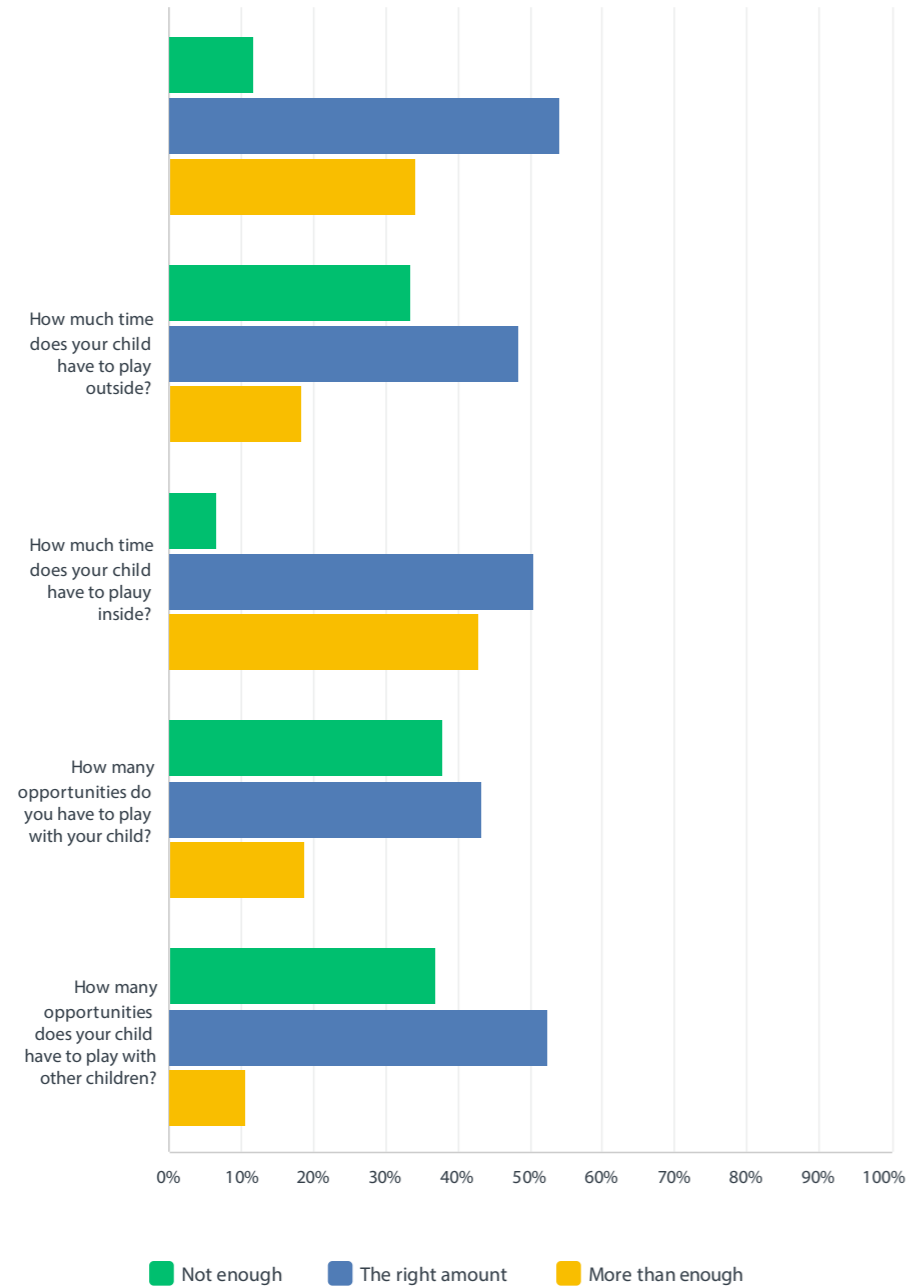
■ Every day
 ■ Several times a week
 ■ Several times a month
 ■ Several times a year
 ■ Never/rarely



	EVERY DAY	SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK	SEVERAL TIMES A MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR	NEVER/RARELY	TOTAL
Pretend or dress-up play	29.39% 184	28.12% 176	15.65% 98	9.11% 57	17.73% 111	626
Play outside in a yard, park, or other outside area	51.75% 325	39.81% 250	6.85% 43	0.96% 6	0.64% 4	628
Self-initiated play	78.53% 490	17.79% 111	2.40% 15	0.32% 2	0.96% 6	624
Playing with other children who are not siblings	19.94% 125	50.56% 317	21.53% 135	5.42% 34	2.55% 16	627
Playing board games	2.71% 17	12.60% 79	31.26% 196	15.47% 97	37.96% 238	627
Play with adults	64.16% 401	22.56% 141	9.12% 57	2.40% 15	1.76% 11	625
Doing arts of crafts	19.49% 122	46.49% 291	24.44% 153	4.31% 27	5.27% 33	626
Playing alone	71.61% 449	20.89% 131	4.63% 29	1.28% 8	1.59% 10	627
Riding bikes, roller-blading, or skateboarding	6.71% 42	27.80% 174	29.87% 187	9.11% 57	26.52% 166	626
Daycare	20.00% 125	24.32% 152	2.08% 13	0.80% 5	52.80% 330	625
Playing with technology	33.71% 211	28.91% 181	13.26% 83	4.79% 30	19.33% 121	626
At home activities such as cooking, baking, drawing, or gardening	24.88% 156	42.42% 266	21.37% 134	4.47% 28	6.86% 43	627
Playing with pets or animals	31.63% 198	13.90% 87	12.78% 80	10.86% 68	30.83% 193	626
Playing organized sports or other physical activities	3.99% 25	26.52% 166	28.12% 176	12.62% 79	28.75% 180	626

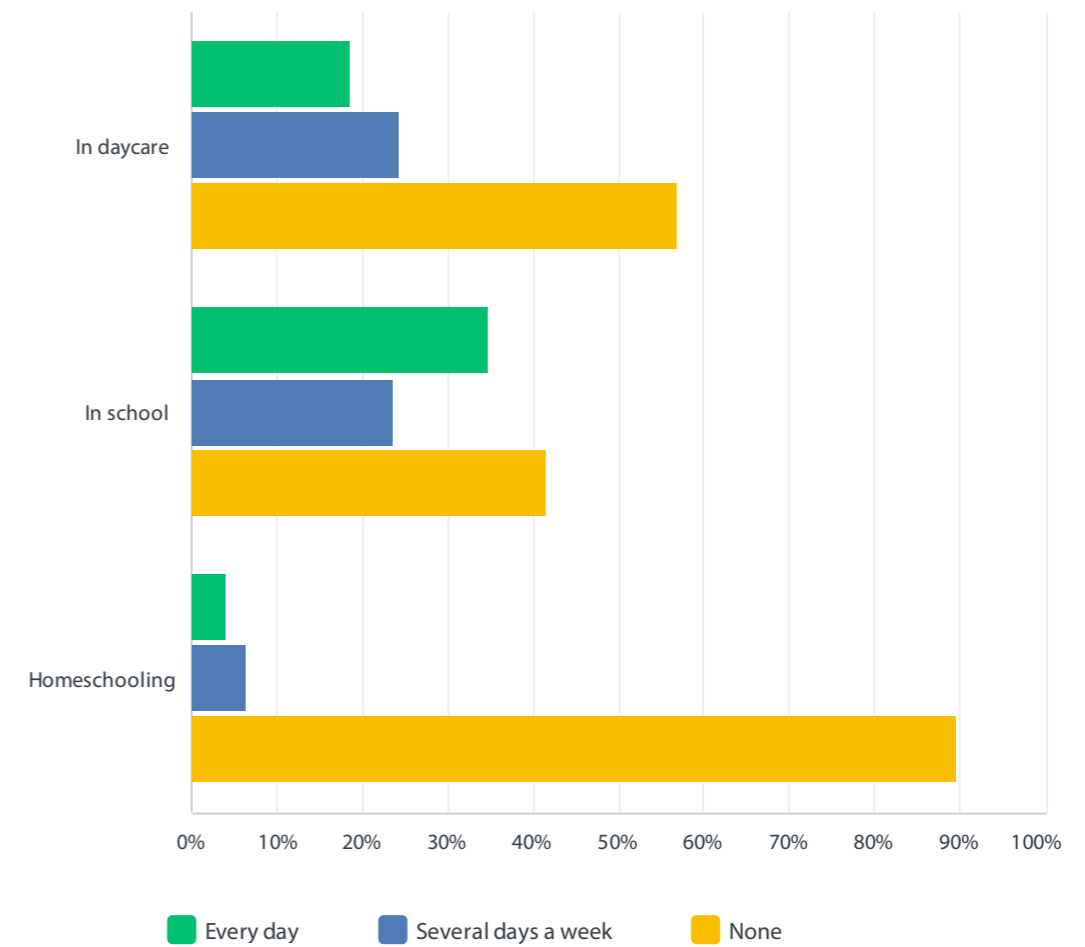
## How much time for play

Answered: 627 Skipped: 74



## Time spent in school, daycare, or homeschooling

Answered: 627 Skipped: 74

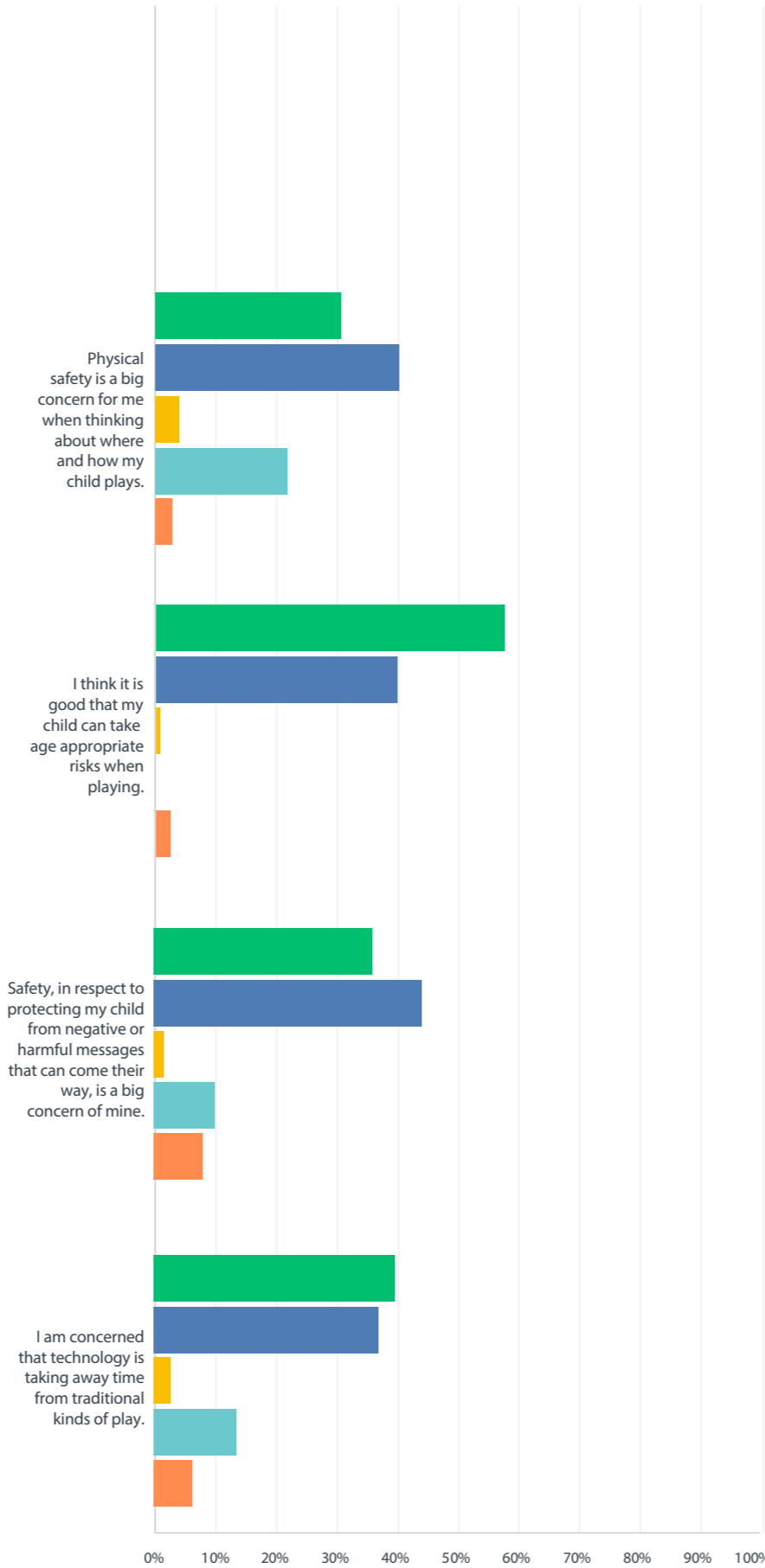
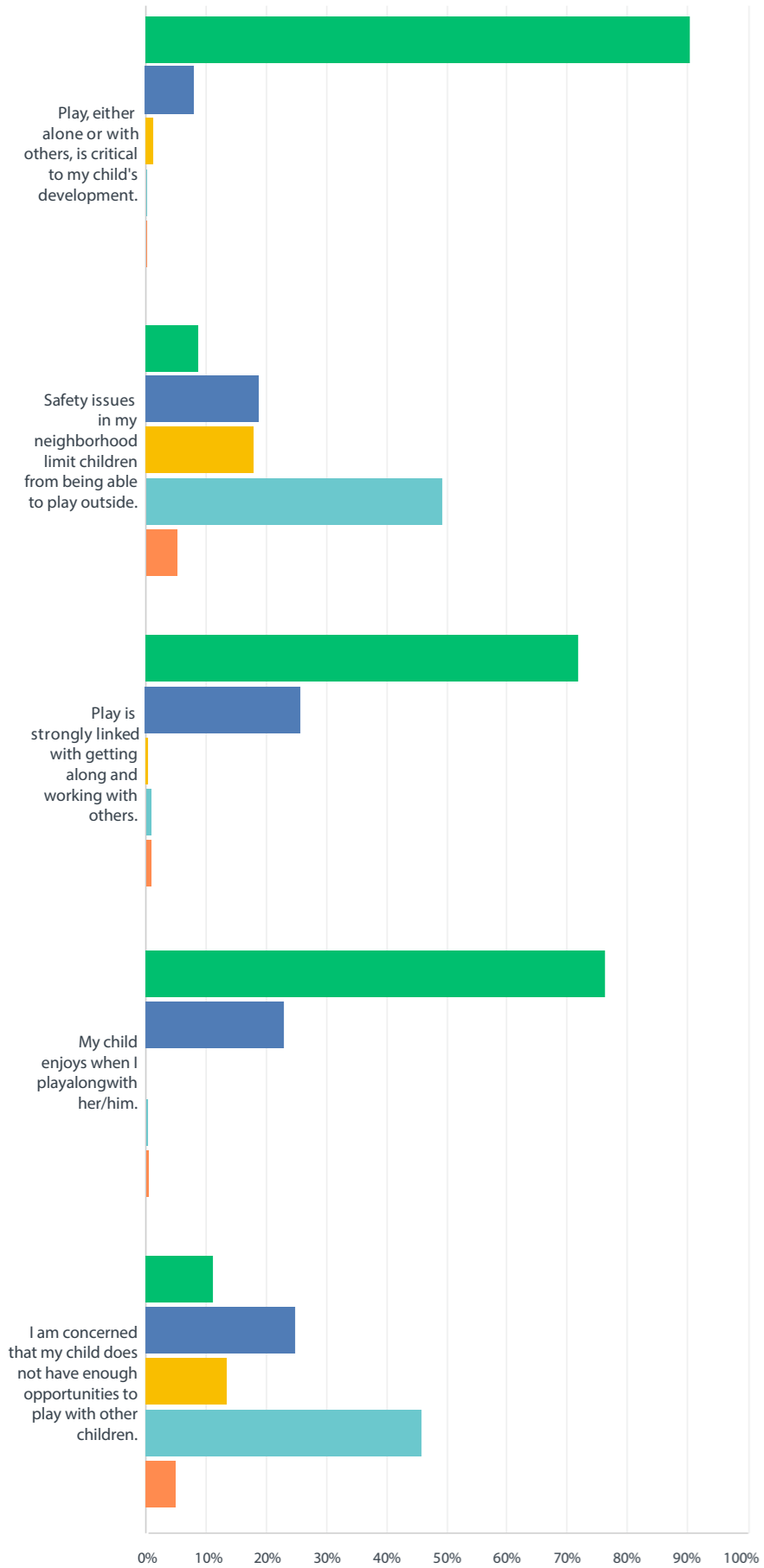


	NOT ENOUGH	THE RIGHT AMOUNT	MORE THAN ENOUGH	TOTAL
How much time does your child have to play in general?	11.82% 74	54.15% 339	34.03% 213	626
How much time does your child have to play outside?	33.44% 209	48.32% 302	18.24% 114	625
How much time does your child have to play inside?	6.58% 41	50.56% 315	42.86% 267	623
How many opportunities do you have to play with your child?	38.04% 237	43.18% 269	18.78% 117	623
How many opportunities does your child have to play with other children?	36.96% 231	52.48% 328	10.56% 66	625

	EVERY DAY	SEVERAL DAYS A WEEK	NONE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
In daycare	18.62% 116	24.40% 152	56.98% 355	623	2.38
In school	34.82% 218	23.64% 148	41.53% 260	626	2.07
Homeschooling	4.03% 25	6.44% 40	89.53% 556	621	2.86

# Opinions and perceptions of issues regarding play

Answered: 595 Skipped:

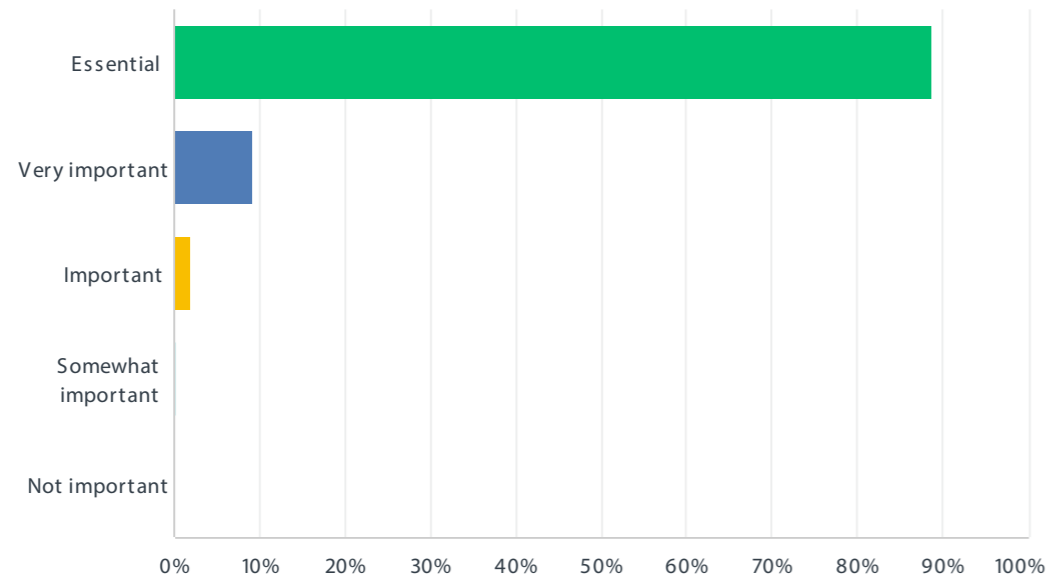


Strongly agree Agree Strongly disagree Disagree Not sure

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NOT SURE	TOTAL
Play, either alone or with others, is critical to my child's development.	90.42% 538	8.07% 48	1.18% 7	0.17% 1	0.17% 1	595
Safety issues in my neighborhood limit children from being able to play outside.	8.78% 52	18.75% 111	17.91% 106	49.16% 291	5.41% 32	592
Play is strongly linked with getting along and working with others.	71.89% 427	25.76% 153	0.34% 2	1.01% 6	1.01% 6	594
My child enjoys when I play along with her/him.	76.43% 454	23.06% 137	0.00% 0	0.17% 1	0.34% 2	594
I am concerned that my child does not have enough opportunities to play with other children.	11.11% 66	24.75% 147	13.47% 80	45.79% 272	4.88% 29	594
Physical safety is a big concern for me when thinking about where and how my child plays.	30.69% 182	40.30% 239	4.05% 24	21.92% 130	3.04% 18	593
I think it is good that my child can take age appropriate risks when playing.	57.36% 339	39.59% 234	0.68% 4	0.00% 0	2.37% 14	591
Safety, in respect to protecting my child from negative or harmful messages that can come their way, is a big concern of mine.	36.09% 214	44.18% 262	1.69% 10	9.95% 59	8.09% 48	593
I am concerned that technology is taking away time from traditional kinds of play.	39.97% 237	37.10% 220	2.87% 17	13.66% 81	6.41% 38	593

## How important is play for your child's healthy development?

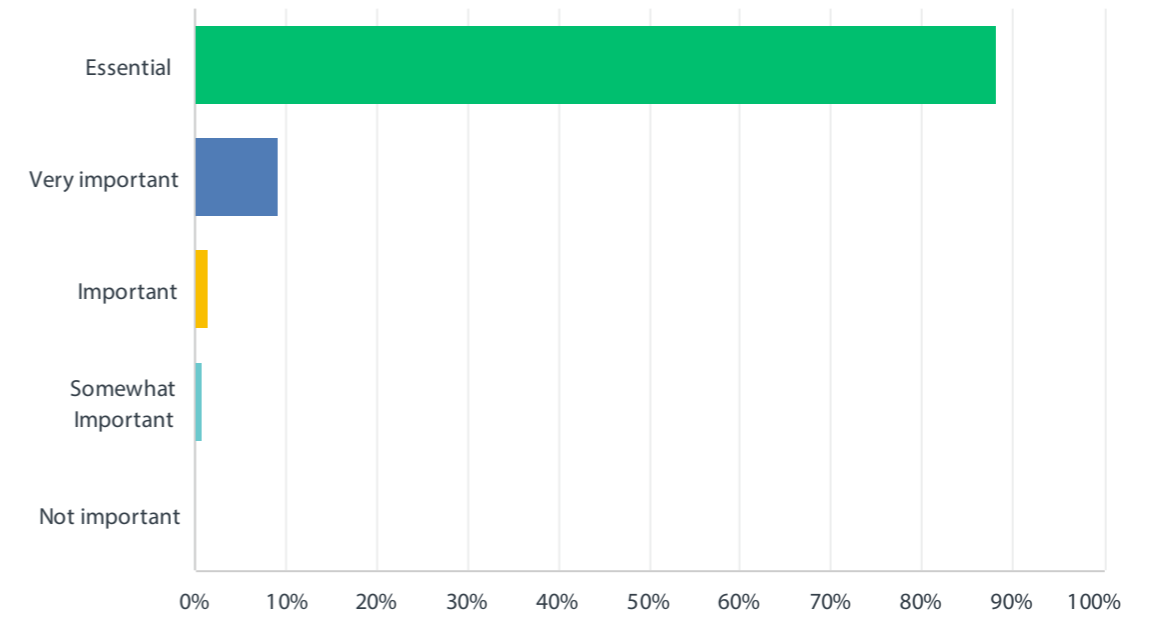
Answered: 594 Skipped: 107



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Essential	88.72%	527
Very important	9.09%	54
Important	2.02%	12
Somewhat important	0.17%	1
Not important	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>594</b>

## How important is play for your child's learning?

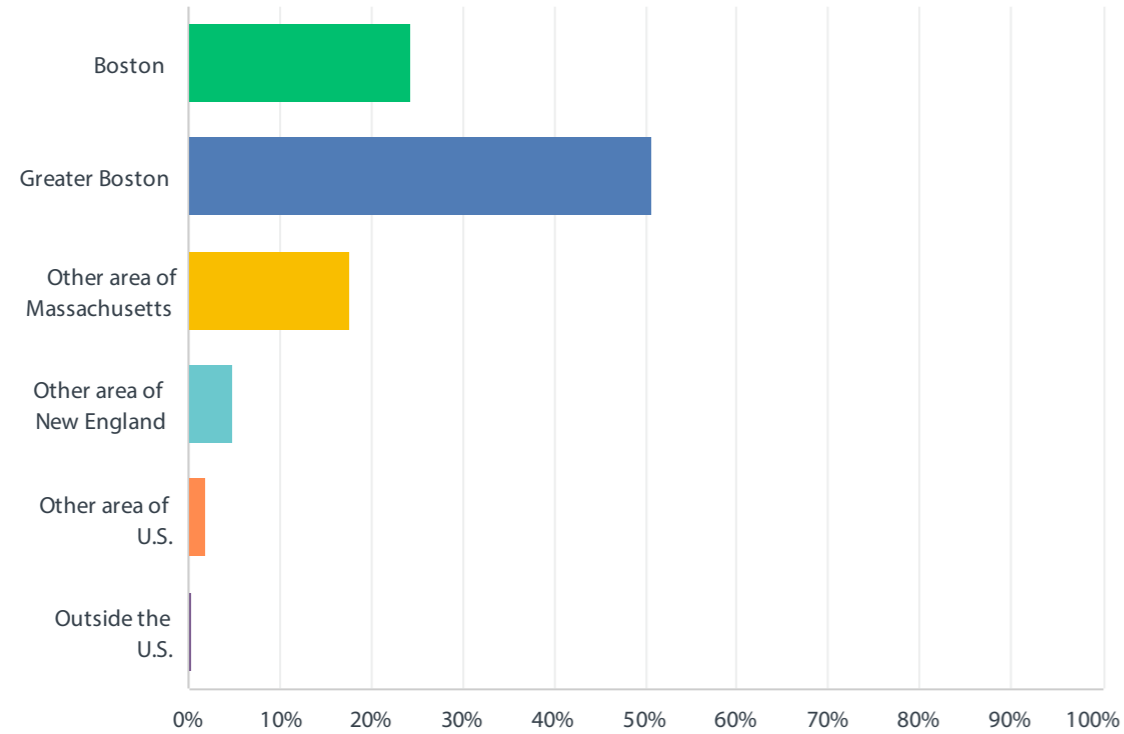
Answered: 575 Skipped: 126



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Essential	88.35%	508
Very important	9.22%	53
Important	1.57%	9
Somewhat Important	0.87%	5
Not important	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>575</b>

## Survey taker's place of residence

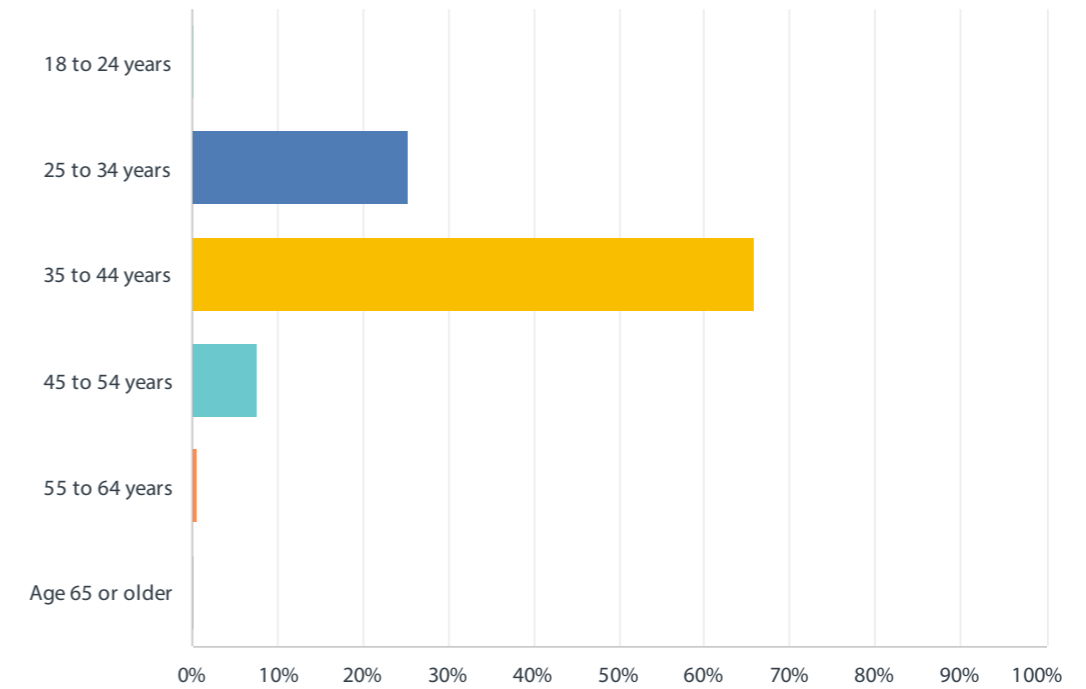
Answered: 594 Skipped: 107



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Boston	24.41%	145
Greater Boston	50.67%	301
Other area of Massachusetts	17.68%	105
Other area of New England	4.88%	29
Other area of U.S.	1.85%	11
Outside the U.S.	0.51%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>594</b>

## Age of survey taker

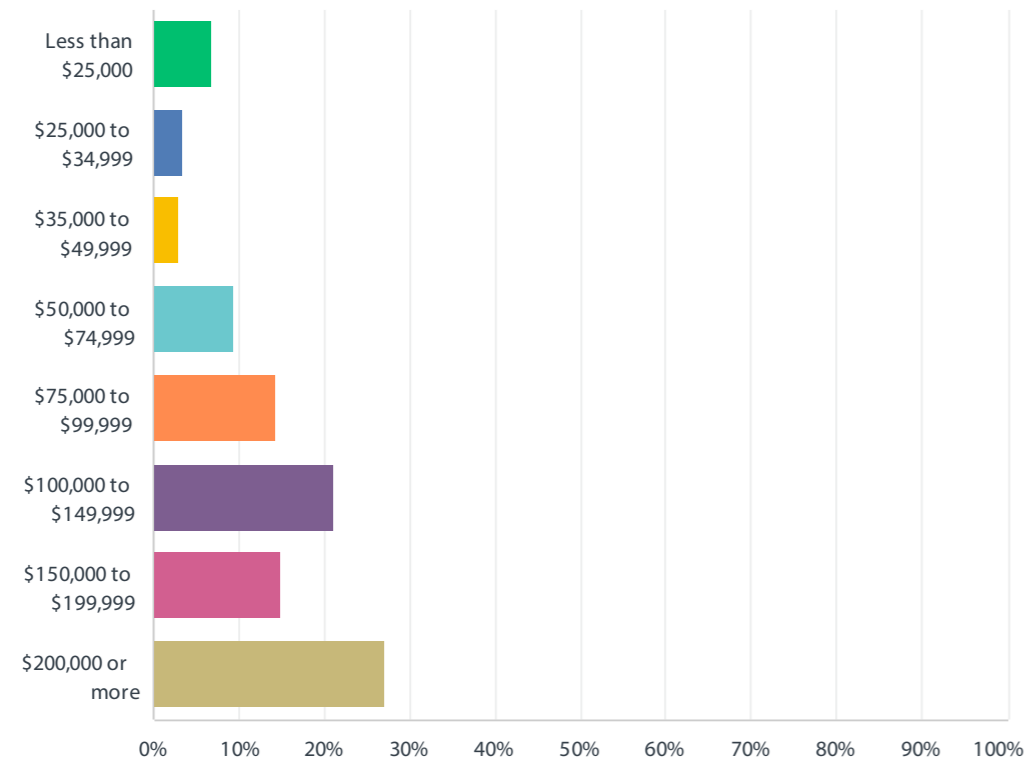
Answered: 593 Skipped: 108



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18 to 24 years	0.17%	1
25 to 34 years	25.46%	151
35 to 44 years	65.94%	391
45 to 54 years	7.59%	45
55 to 64 years	0.67%	4
Age 65 or older	0.17%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>593</b>

## Total household income before taxes during the past 12 months

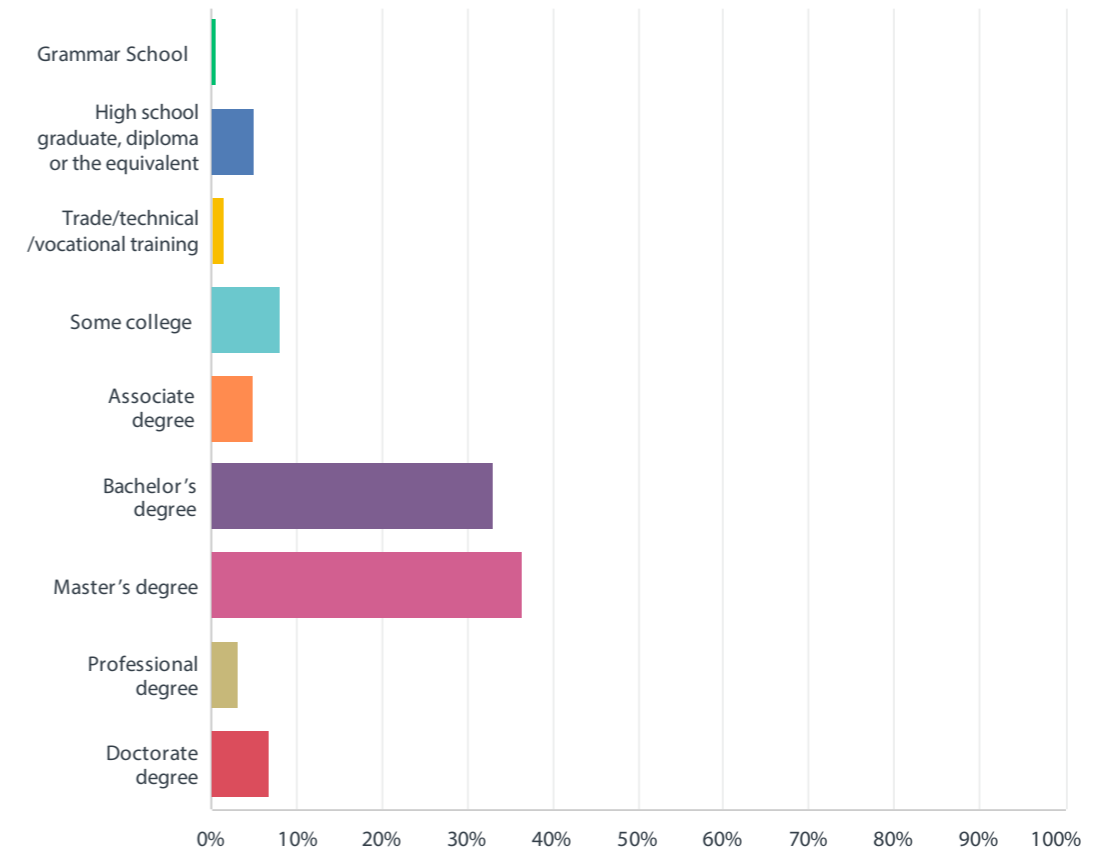
Answered: 574 Skipped: 127



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Less than \$25,000	6.79%	39
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3.31%	19
\$35,000 to \$49,999	2.96%	17
\$50,000 to \$74,999	9.41%	54
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.29%	82
\$100,000 to \$149,999	21.08%	121
\$150,000 to \$199,999	14.98%	86
\$200,000 or more	27.18%	156
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>574</b>

## Highest level of education completed

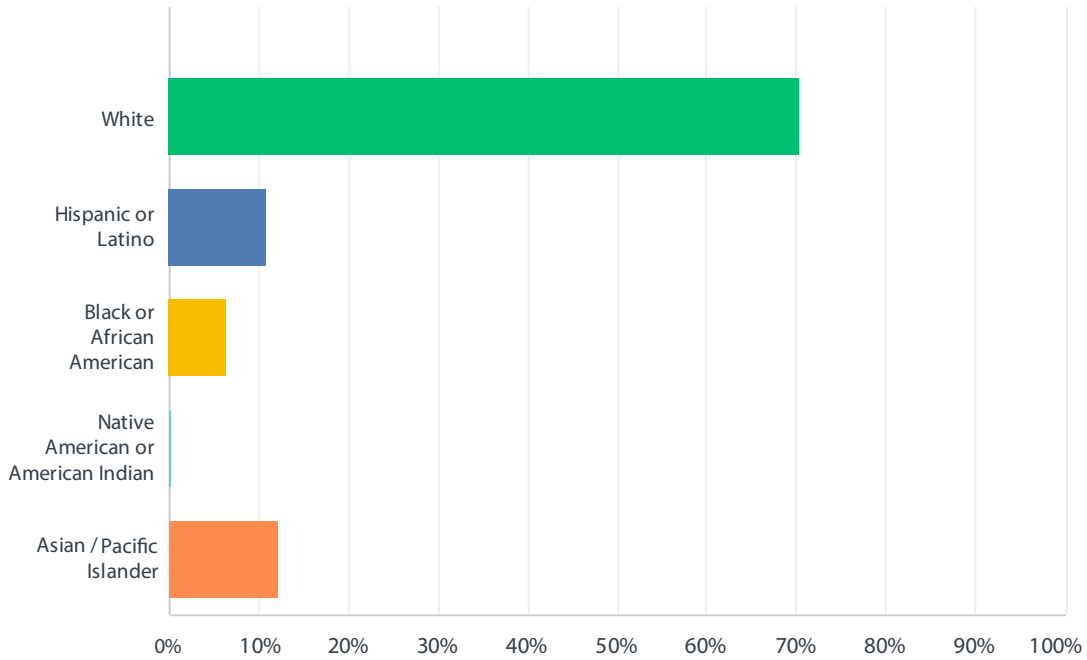
Answered: 588 Skipped: 113



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Grammar School	0.68%	4
High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)	5.10%	30
Trade/technical/vocational training	1.53%	9
Some college	8.16%	48
Associate degree	4.93%	29
Bachelor's degree	32.99%	194
Master's degree	36.56%	215
Professional degree	3.23%	19
Doctorate degree	6.80%	40
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>588</b>

# Ethnicity of survey taker

Answered: 566 Skipped: 135



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White	70.32%	398
Hispanic or Latino	10.95%	62
Black or African American	6.36%	36
Native American or American Indian	0.18%	1
Asian / Pacific Islander	12.19%	69
TOTAL		566