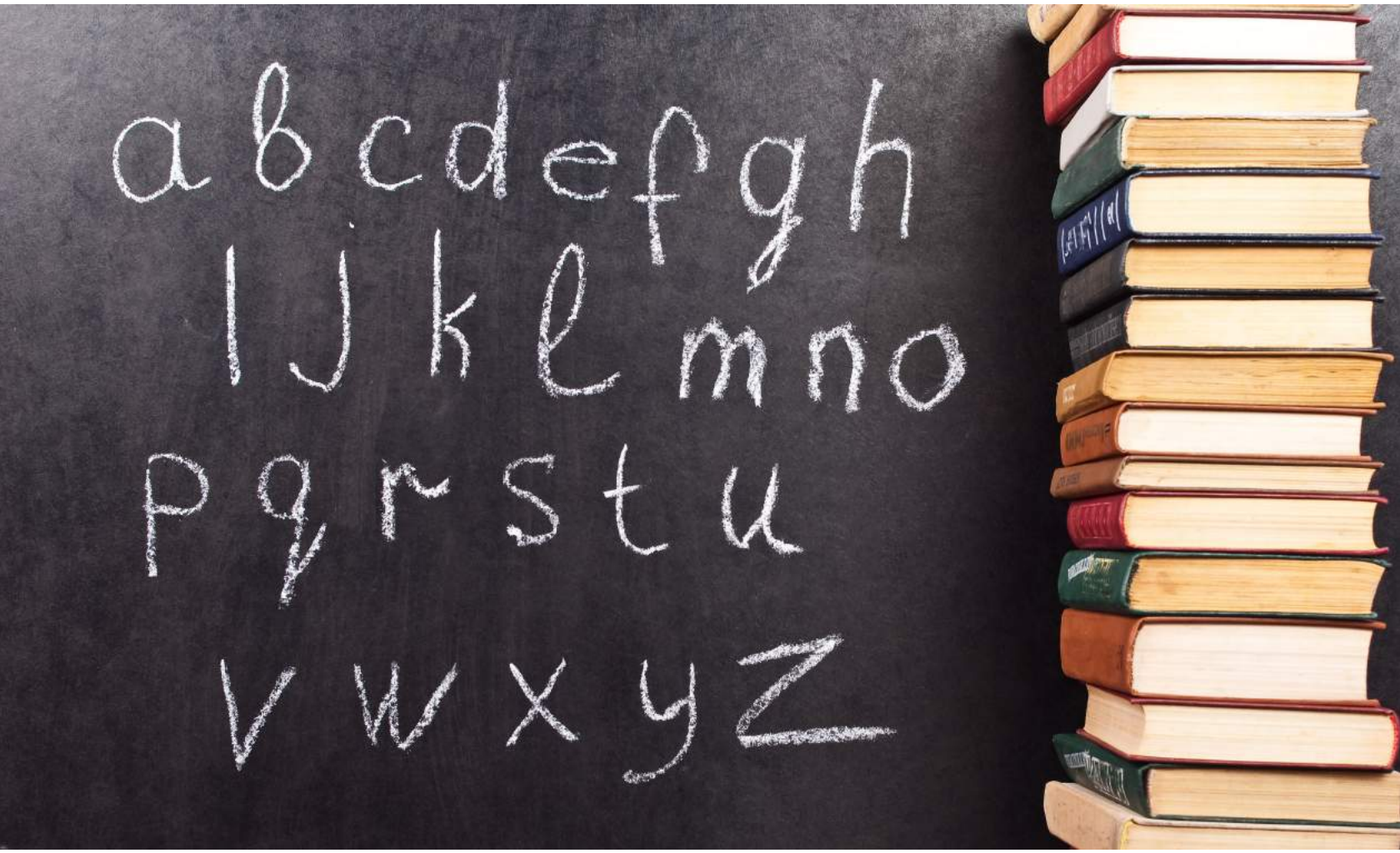
Afterschool Programs in West Virginia

Improving the Lives of the State's Children



west virginia Center on Budget & Policy

WVSAN
West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network

November 2012

Author

Elizabeth Paulhus is a Policy Analyst with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Stuart Frazier from the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy for his assistance in compiling the list of afterschool programs throughout the state and for his helpful comments and suggestions on the report. Thanks to all county extension agents and members of boards of education who took the time to provide names and addresses of afterschool programs in their county. Thanks as well to Ted Boettner, Executive Director of the WVCBP, for his edits and suggestions.

A special thanks goes to Chris Kimes, WV Statewide Afterschool Network Director, Nila Cobb from the WVU Extension Service, and members of the WVSAN's steering committee for their assistance and input.

Layout and design by Elizabeth Paulhus.
Cover image credit: (c) SeDmi / www.fotosearch.com

This report was supported by a generous grant
from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
to the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Maps

Executive Summary

West Virginia's children are struggling to attend school, develop healthy lifestyles, and receive their high school diploma. During the 2011/2012 school year, one in three students in West Virginia had at least five unexcused absences from school. Truant children often fall behind their peers, perform worse in school, and are more likely to drop out. More than one in three children in West Virginia are obese, putting them at risk for a multitude of health issues. West Virginia has the 20th highest dropout rate among high school students, and these dropouts will find it increasingly difficult to find employment and become financially secure in the future.

This report examines these issues of truancy, childhood obesity, and high school dropouts in West Virginia and looks at the role afterschool programs can play in alleviating them. In addition, this report maps the locations of afterschool programs in West Virginia against a range of educational, poverty, health, and economic measures at the census tract and county levels. These maps can help afterschool advocates identify areas of the state that may need additional support and attention.

Key Findings

- County truancy rates ranged from just under 10 percent to nearly 58 percent.
- Childhood obesity rates in the United States tripled from 1980 to 2008, rising from seven percent to 21 percent.
- Obesity rates are higher among nonwhite children than white children. Obesity rates also tend to be higher among children in low-income families than children in high- or middle-income families.
- In 2007, 16.7 percent of West Virginia youth between the ages of 10 and 17 were overweight and an additional 18.9 percent were obese.
- West Virginia's preschool-age obesity rate is increasing rapidly. In 2000, only 12 counties in the state had preschool obesity rates greater than 13 percent. By 2009, the number had increased to 25 counties.
- Between 2008 and 2009, 4.1 percent of West Virginia's high school students left school without transferring to another school or completing their degree.
- West Virginia's dropout rate among African-Americans is low compared to other states. The rate for white students is one of the highest.
- 18 percent of West Virginia's population over 25 did not complete high school.
- Among 16 to 25 year olds, high school dropouts have the lowest employment rate of 45.7 percent. In comparison, 86.8 percent of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher had work in 2008.
- Dropouts earn millions less in a lifetime than those who graduate from college or have higher degrees.
- Studies have shown that **afterschool programs** can **improve a student's behavior, grades, and attendance**, and can **close the achievement gap**. Since children typically attend these programs nearly every weekday for several hours at a time, the **potential influence an afterschool program can have on the life and health of a child is immense**.
- There are **at least 380 afterschool program sites in West Virginia**, although they are not distributed evenly across the state.

Introduction

Recent data on the state of West Virginia's children paints a grim picture. According to 2012 Kids Count data, West Virginia ranked 47th in education. The state faces high truancy rates, high dropout rates among white students, and poor test scores in science, math, reading, and writing. More than one in three children are obese, which puts them at risk for heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues both as children and as adults. In addition, nearly one in five children lack adult supervision after school finishes for the day.[1]

Although many programs have been created throughout the state to address these issues, one model has received little attention: afterschool programs. According to the Afterschool Alliance, only 13 percent of West Virginia's children in grades K through 12 attend an afterschool program.[2] This mirrors national data, which show that children living in rural areas have the lowest participation rates in afterschool programs, due largely to lack of availability and transportation issues.[3]

Typically, afterschool programs run in the afternoon, ending around 5 or 6 pm. Most afterschool programs are held in a school or a community organization like the YMCA or local churches and focus on children in kindergarten through 12th grade. These programs often include tutoring and homework assistance, as well as some physical activity and food.

A number of studies have shown that afterschool programs can play an important role in reducing truancy, childhood obesity, and dropout rates. They have been shown to improve behavior, grades, and attendance,[4] as well as close the achievement gap between students.[5] The most effective programs share certain characteristics: engagement with teachers, parents, and community partners; sharing information on pupils between teachers and staff of the afterschool program through a coordinator or liaison; hands-on, innovative, experiential learning that children find engaging.[6]

Sections One, **Two**, and **Three** of this report provide an overview of truancy, childhood obesity, and school dropouts. Each section focuses on one of these three issues and explores why it is problematic for children, the extent of the issue in West Virginia, programs that exist in West Virginia to reduce it, and the role that afterschool programs can play in alleviating the issue. These sections should serve as a resource to advocates of afterschool programs and policymakers alike as they work to reduce truancy, childhood obesity, and school dropouts.

Section Four maps the location of afterschool programs throughout West Virginia and contrasts them with poverty, dropouts, childhood obesity, and other social and economic indicators at the county or census tract level. These maps can help the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network and its partners identify target areas that need more programs or more support.

Section One

Truancy

One of the largest problems facing schools across the United States is truancy and chronic absenteeism.[7] The story in West Virginia is no different. Truancy is not a new issue. An 1862 article in The New York Times wrote, "The opening of a life of juvenile crime is usually truancy from school."[8] In 1876, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* romanticized the idea of skipping classes in order to have great adventures in the world. Many school districts had truancy officers in the 19th century, although this model lost popularity during the 20th century. Today under West Virginia Code §18-8-3, every county is required to have a director of school attendance who works with teachers, families, and students to ensure that children are coming to school on a regular basis.

The difference between the past and the present is that children no longer skip a class or a day from time to time. Rather, they miss five, ten, even twenty or more days of school in the course of the year. With truancy rates higher than 50 percent in some schools in West Virginia, this is an issue that must be addressed for the sake of the state's future.

The Trouble with Truancy

Frequently, it is assumed that parents of truant children do not value education enough or that the children are spending time with bad influences. However, truancy can be the result of many factors from the school, home and community, or personal.[9] Parents may not be notified of their child's absences. A teacher may not respect his or her students. The school may have a culture of bullying that a child finds threatening. The school may not properly address the needs of children who require special education. A family may be dealing with an illness or financial problems. A child could be neglected or abused. A child or a parent may be using drugs or alcohol. A child may have mental health needs that are not being addressed. The list goes on.

Truancy can have lifelong implications. Children who miss many school days fall behind their peers and are less likely to perform well in school. These students may have to repeat a grade level, which greatly increases their risk of dropping out of school.[10] A study of West Virginia dropouts in the 1990s showed that many of them had been absent from school for more than 10 days, had failed several classes, and had been held back.[11] The consequences of dropping out of school will be discussed in Section Four.

Truancy also has been connected to juvenile delinquency and negative behaviors like teen pregnancy, gang involvement, and substance use/abuse.[12] Additional studies have linked truancy with problems later in life, including adult criminal activity and incarceration.[13]

Truancy in West Virginia

Chapter 18 of the West Virginia Code states that compulsory school attendance starts with children who turn six before September 1 of that school year and concludes when they are 16 (or 17 for those starting high school in 2011 or later).[14] Students with five or more unexcused absences are considered truant, and compulsory attendance meetings (CA2) are mandated.[15] Legal action can be taken against parents of truant students or the students themselves.

During the 2009/2010 school year, the latest year for which data has been made publicly available, county truancy rates ranged from just under 10 percent to nearly 58 percent (**Figure 1**).[16] Two-thirds of the counties saw more than a quarter of their students skip five or more days of school.

Although the Department of Education claims that truancy rates have declined in West Virginia over the past few years due to tougher intervention programs, truancy still remains high in the state.[17] One in three students in West Virginia

had at least five unexcused absences in 2011/2012.[18] The problem appears to be particularly acute in some schools, like Webster County High School, where seven out of ten students had skipped at least five days of school in 2011/2012.[19] Twenty-five schools in West Virginia reported that more than half of their students were truant.[20]

Programs to Reduce Truancy in West Virginia

Over the course of the past few years, several counties in West Virginia have created truancy diversion programs to reduce the truancy rates in their schools. Although the models differ slightly, they all involve partnerships between different stakeholders, including superintendants, principals, teachers, probation officers, the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), and the courts. The following counties provide examples of some of the models being used.

Putnam County

In 2009, Circuit Judge Phillip Stowers of Putnam County started "Truancy Triage." Truancy cases first come before the magistrate, who develops a plan involving curfews, grades, attendance, and such for the individual student. A probation officer then ensures that the student has followed the plan. If not, the case gets sent to DHHR or to the circuit court.

Since its inception, Truancy Triage has reduced truancy diversion hearings by 60 percent.[21] This is especially impressive when one considers that the definition of truancy became more stringent during that period, falling from 10 days to five days in 2010. The Putnam County Board of Education agreed in May 2012 to hire a full-time truancy probation officer, instead of relying on the county's criminal probation department.[22] This officer will be able to spend significant time in schools monitoring students and working with administrators and teachers to reduce truancy.

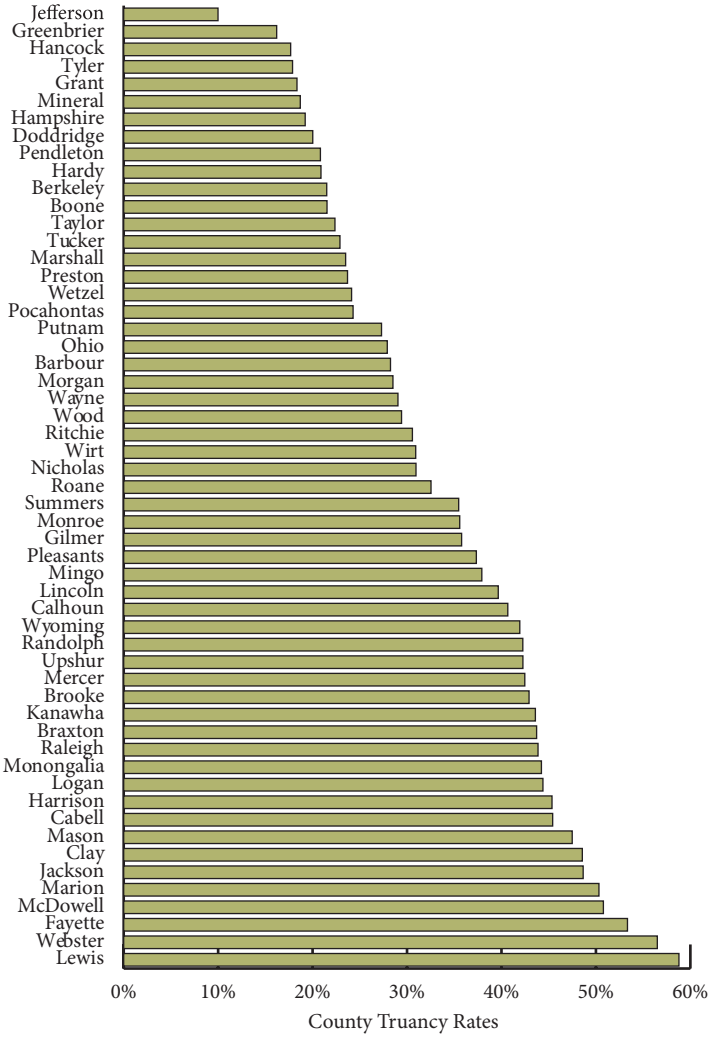
Cabell County

In 2012, Cabell County began its program to reduce truancies. Circuit Judge Paul T. Farrell holds special meetings in his courtroom for students who have been chronically absent from school. Each school in the county has a separate meeting which the students and their families attend. Representatives from DHHR, the school board, the Prosecutor's Office, and the Public Defender's Office join Judge Farrell for these meetings.[23] The various parties explain to the students and families that charges will be filed against them if the children do not attend school. Penalties range from $50 plus court fees for a first offense to possible jail time for a second offense.

Each high school in the county also has a truancy officer that monitors the students and reports to the prosecutor's office if the child fails to come to school. These officers also work with families to make sure they know about programs and services available to their son or daughter, such as counseling or tutoring.

FIGURE 1

More Than a Quarter of Students Were Truant in the Majority of West Virginia Counties



Source: West Virginia Judiciary, "Truancy," accessed at http://www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/truancy/truancy.html.

The program is still too young to know how effective it will be, but the results from the initial meeting seem promising. Of the 50 students from Huntington High who attended the first meeting, 29 of them began regularly attending school.[24]

Nicholas County

The truancy diversion program in Nicholas County is the reverse of the program in Putnam County. Circuit Judge Gary Johnson felt that fines, sending parents to school with their children, and magistrate court were ineffective at reducing truancy.[25] After meeting with various stakeholders in the county, Johnson decided to transfer all truancy cases to the circuit court.

If a student has five unexcused absences, the school can notify the prosecutor's office. Young children of elementary school age are not charged with truancy. Rather, the parents may be charged with educational neglect (WV Code §49-1-3).[26] Older children are charged with truancy and likely face juvenile probation. In both cases, hearings are held in the courtroom to highlight the gravity of the situation. In some instances, DHHR is called in to provide support to the family. Students then enter an improvement period, in which they must attend school, avoid disciplinary problems, and strive to pass their classes. If students fail to meet these requirements, sanctions can be levied against them or their family. In the worst cases, children can be removed from the family.[27]

In the 2010/2011 school year, 21 high school students were monitored by the court. The year before, they had attended school only 67.7 percent of the time and had completed 4.7 of the 8.0 credits required. While in the diversion program, their attendance increased to 86.39 percent, and they had completed 6.07 credits.[28]

Mercer County has a similar program that has shown positive results after only six months. Truancy is down 19.13 percent, and 52 percent of the students brought before the judge did not miss a single day of school after their court appearance.[29] As Circuit Judge Omar Aboulhosn said, "Our focus is not on punishing the child. Our focus really is on trying to find out what kind of services we can provide to them to help them be successful students."[30]

Afterschool Programs and Truancy

Although the tough approach of potential jail time seems to reduce truancy rates, another effective and less punitive measure is attendance at a high-quality afterschool program. Some children stop coming to school because they feel that they are already so far behind their peers and are embarrassed by the situation. Others struggle with self-esteem issues. Afterschool programs can help rectify these problems.

A study of more than 75 afterschool programs showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between these programs and improvements in the participants' behavior, performance in school (including improved attendance), and attitudes about themselves.[31] However, the authors of the study point out that not all afterschool programs are created equal. The ones that lead to significant impacts are those that they term SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, explicit).[32] SAFE programs take a "sequenced step-by-step training approach, emphasize active forms of learning so that youth can practice new skills, focus specific time and attention on skill training, and clearly define their goals."[33]

A number of other studies show that afterschool programs lead to higher standardized test scores and better work habits, and can close the achievement gap.[34] Students that perform better academically have increased self-esteem, are more engaged in learning, and are less likely to avoid coming to school.[35]

Studies have also shown that afterschool programs may have the greatest impact on those students who lag furthest behind their peers.[36] This is not surprising, since afterschool programs can provide intensive, one-on-one or small group assistance that is tailored to the specific needs of a child. Programs are most effective when tied closely to the curriculum of the local schools and when staff of the afterschool program work in concert with teachers to identify struggling students.[37] By helping students to improve reading and math skills, for example, afterschool programs build the students' confidence and enable them to be better participants in the regular classroom environment. In turn, these students act out less in class, are suspended with less regularity, and are truant less frequently.[38]

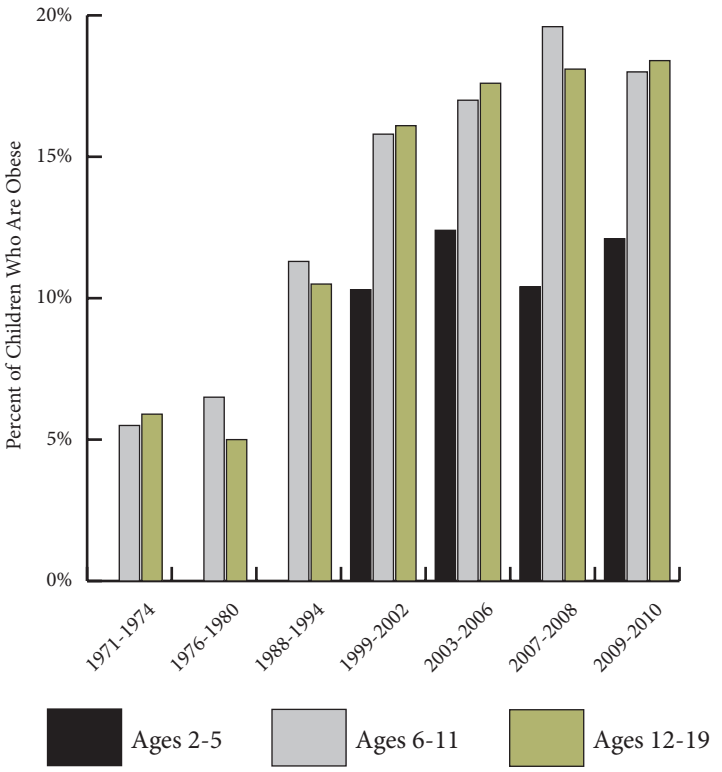
Section Two

Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity has become an epidemic in the United States and is one of the largest public health issues facing the nation's young people. Being obese means having excess body fat and is often measured using the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is based on a person's height and weight.[39] Childhood obesity is typically defined as having a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for one's age and gender.[40] In 1980, seven percent of children in the United States ages 6 to 11 were obese. By 2008, this figure had nearly tripled to 21 percent (**Figure 2**).[41] During that same time period, the percentage of children ages 12 to 19 who were obese grew from five percent to 18 percent.[42] Although the exact causes of this rapid growth are not clear, children are likely consuming more calories and expending less energy on a daily basis.

FIGURE 2

Childhood Obesity Has Risen Sharply since the 1970s

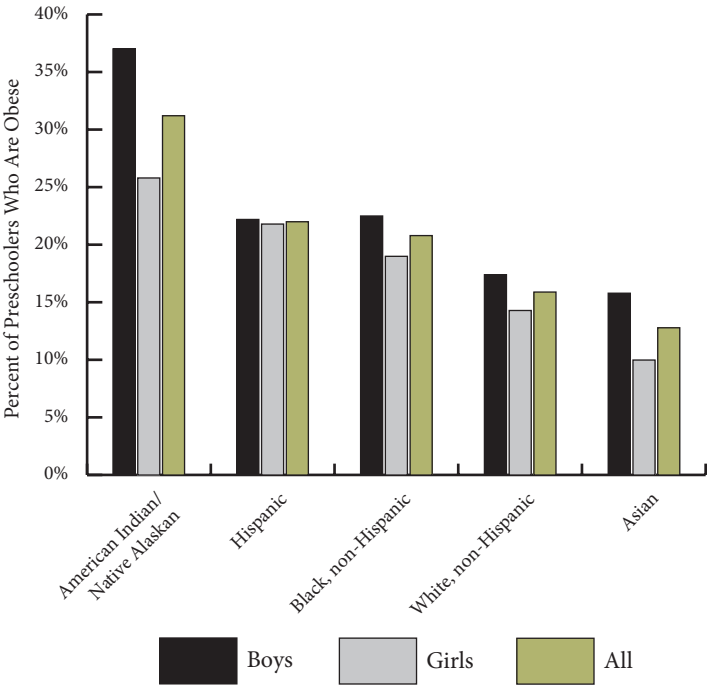


Source: Figure replicated from ChildTrends DataBank, "Overweight Children and Youth" (June 2012), downloaded from www.childtrendsdatabank.org/sites/default/files/15_Overweight_Children_and_Youth.pdf.

Racial disparities exist in obesity prevalence. Studies have shown that obesity rates are higher among nonwhite children than white children. For example, one study that looked at preschoolers found that Native American children had an obesity rate twice as high as non-Hispanic white children. African Americans and Hispanics also had higher rates than whites (**Figure 3**).[43]

FIGURE 3

Childhood Obesity Rates Differ by Race



Source: Sarah E. Anderson and Robert C. Whitaker, "Prevalence of Obesity Among US Preschool Children in Different Racial and Ethnic Groups," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* Vol. 163, No. 4, accessed at http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=381274.

There also are disparities in obesity rates by income levels. Children in low-income families (below 130 percent of poverty) have higher rates of obesity than children living in high-income families, although there are some anomalies in this assertion when race is included in the analysis.[44] For African American and Mexican American boys, the middle-income bracket has the highest obesity rates. Low-income Mexican American girls actually have lower obesity rates than their higher income peers (**Figure 4**). One possible reason for the higher rates of obesity among low-income families is the type of food they eat. Families who have less to spend on groceries often buy cheaper foods that contain sugars, fats, and refined grains.[45] These foods are high in calories but low on nutrients.

The Trouble with Obesity

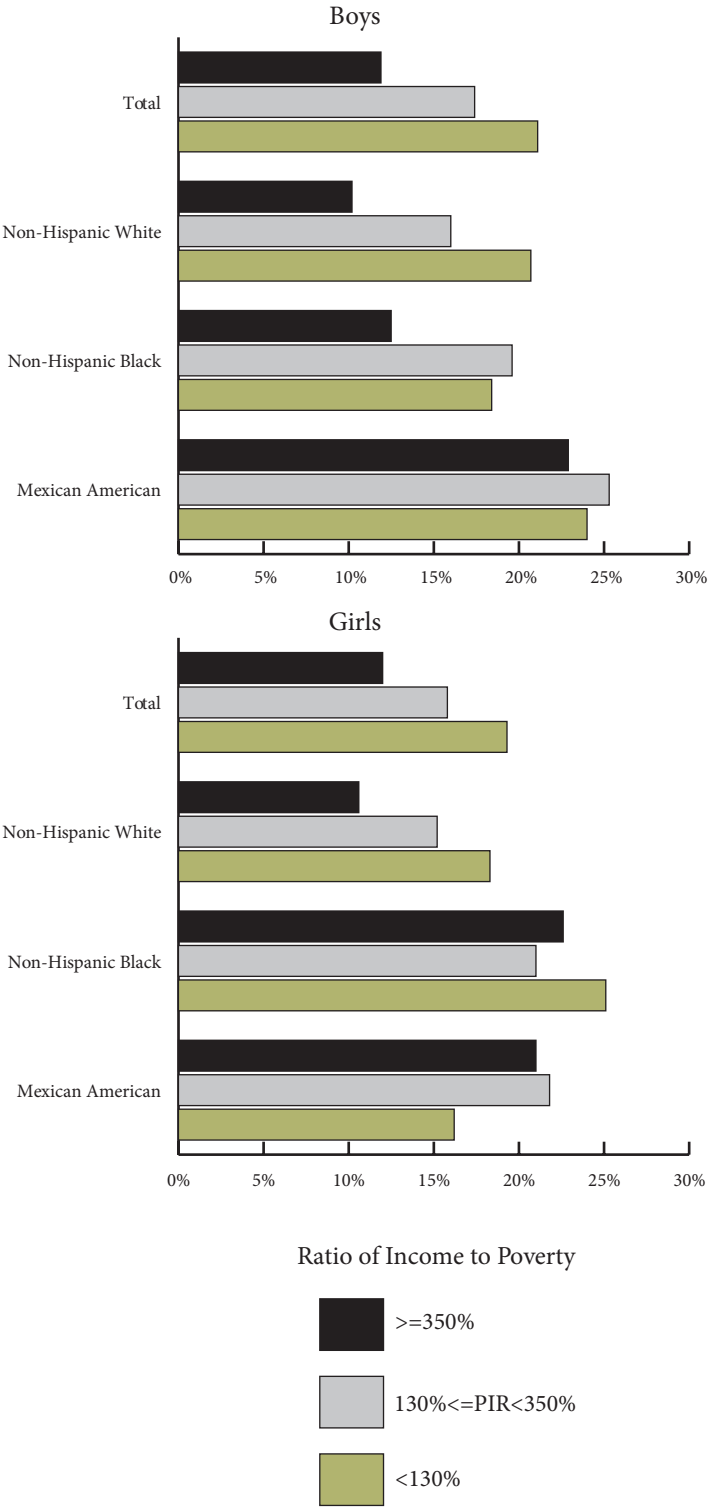
Obese children have a higher risk for many illnesses than children of normal weight. Children who are obese risk developing pre-diabetes, a condition in which their blood glucose levels are above normal but are not elevated enough to be considered diabetes.[46] They are likewise at higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, which in turn can lead to kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, eye disease, and nervous system disease, among other health issues.[47]

Studies have found that overweight and obese children are also more likely to have high cholesterol (total, LDL, HDL) and elevated blood pressure, which are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.[48] One study of children ages 5 to 17 found that 70 percent of obese youth exhibited at least one risk factor.[49] Currently, one in three deaths are attributed to cardiovascular disease, making it the leading cause of death in the United States.[50] These statistics are only likely to become more troubling as the current generation ages with its high rates of obesity and risk factors for cardiovascular disease. A 2005 study examining the effect of obesity on life expectancy found that children today might have shorter life spans than their parents because of the obesity epidemic.[51]

Children who are obese may have bone and joint problems, due to the excess weight supported by their frames.[52] Since obese children often remain obese as adults, and arthritis is common among those who are obese, these children also face a high likelihood of developing arthritis at some point in their life.[53]

FIGURE 4

Childhood Obesity Rates Differ by Income



Source: Cynthia Ogden et al., "Obesity and Socioeconomic Status in Children and Adolescents: United States, 2005-2008" (Washington, DC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, December 2010), accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db51.htm.

Finally, children who are obese may struggle with low self-esteem and feel that they are stigmatized because of their weight. Several studies have linked obesity in children with depression and anxiety disorders, which often go hand in hand with increased rates of smoking and drinking in children.[54] These emotional problems can last well into adulthood.[55]

Childhood Obesity in West Virginia

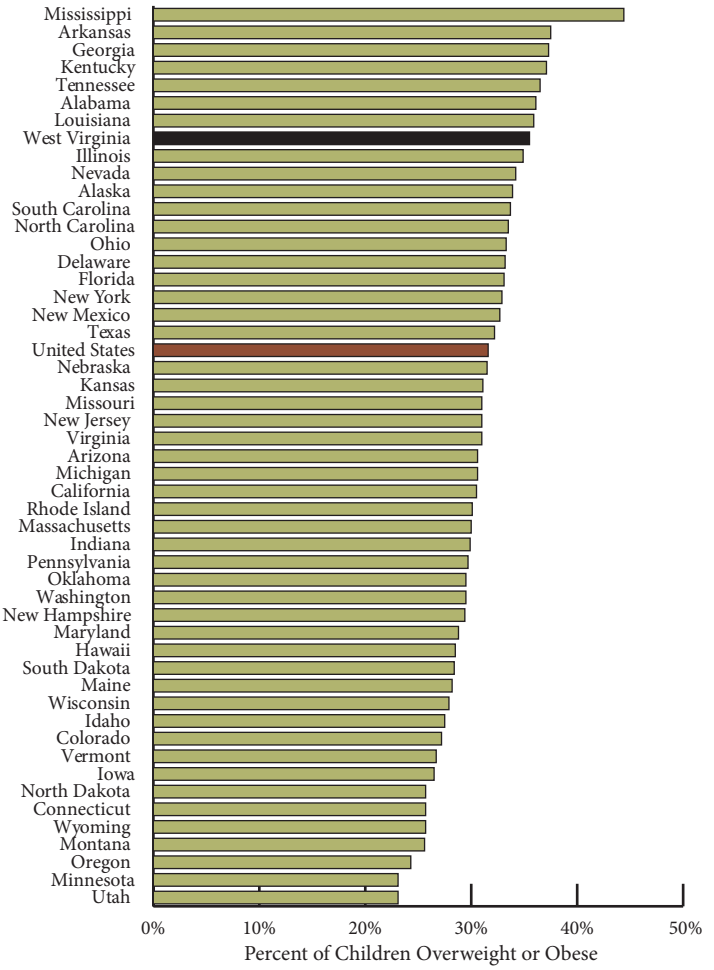
The most recent data available on childhood obesity showed that 16.7 percent of West Virginia youth between the ages of 10 and 17 were overweight and an additional 18.9 percent were obese.[56] With 35.6 percent of its children being overweight or obese, West Virginia falls above the national average of 31.6 percent and ranks as the eighth most obese/overweight state among children (**Figure 5**).[57] Despite the poor ranking, West Virginia actually saw an improvement from 2003 when the state had the fourth highest childhood obese rate.[58]

The rates of childhood obesity in West Virginia vary depending on the family's income. Nearly half (47.4 percent) of children in families living in poverty were overweight or obese, compared to only slightly more than a quarter (27.4 percent) of children in families living at or above 400 percent of the poverty thresholds.[59] These rates are slightly higher than the national average: 44.8 percent and 22.2 percent, respectively (**Figure 6**).[60]

There are also differences in obesity rates by gender in West Virginia. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), run by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), surveys students in grades 9 through 12 about various health behaviors. In 2011, the YRBSS showed that 15.7 percent of high school students in West Virginia were overweight and 14.6 percent were obese.[61] The rate of being overweight was slightly higher among boys than girls: 16.1 percent compared to 15.3 percent (**Figure 7**).[62] The biggest disparity was in obesity rates. Whereas only 9.5 percent of high school girls in the state were obese, 19.5 percent of boys were.[63]

FIGURE 5

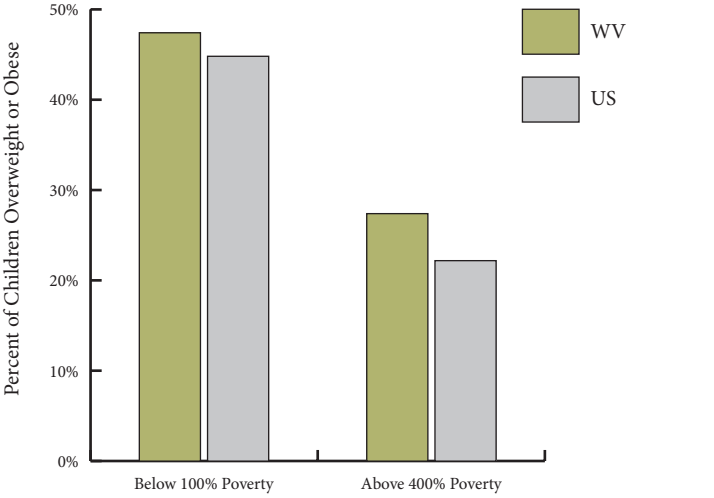
West Virginia Has One of the Highest Rates of Overweight/Obese Children



Source: Data Resource Center for Child & Adolescent Health, "Results from the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health," accessed at http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/allstates?q=226.

FIGURE 6

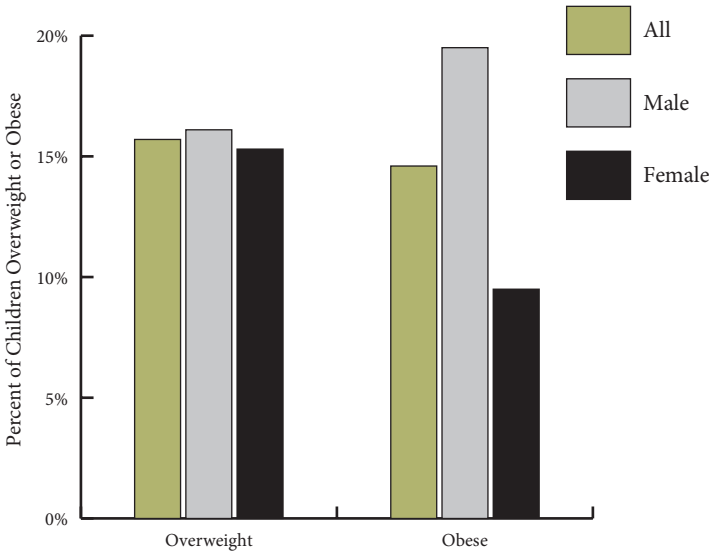
Obese/Overweight Rates Vary Greatly by Income



Source: Child Policy Research Center, "West Virginia State Fact Sheet," downloaded from www.childhealthdata.org/ViewDocument.aspx?l=NSCH&id=570.

FIGURE 7

Obese/Overweight Rates Vary by Gender

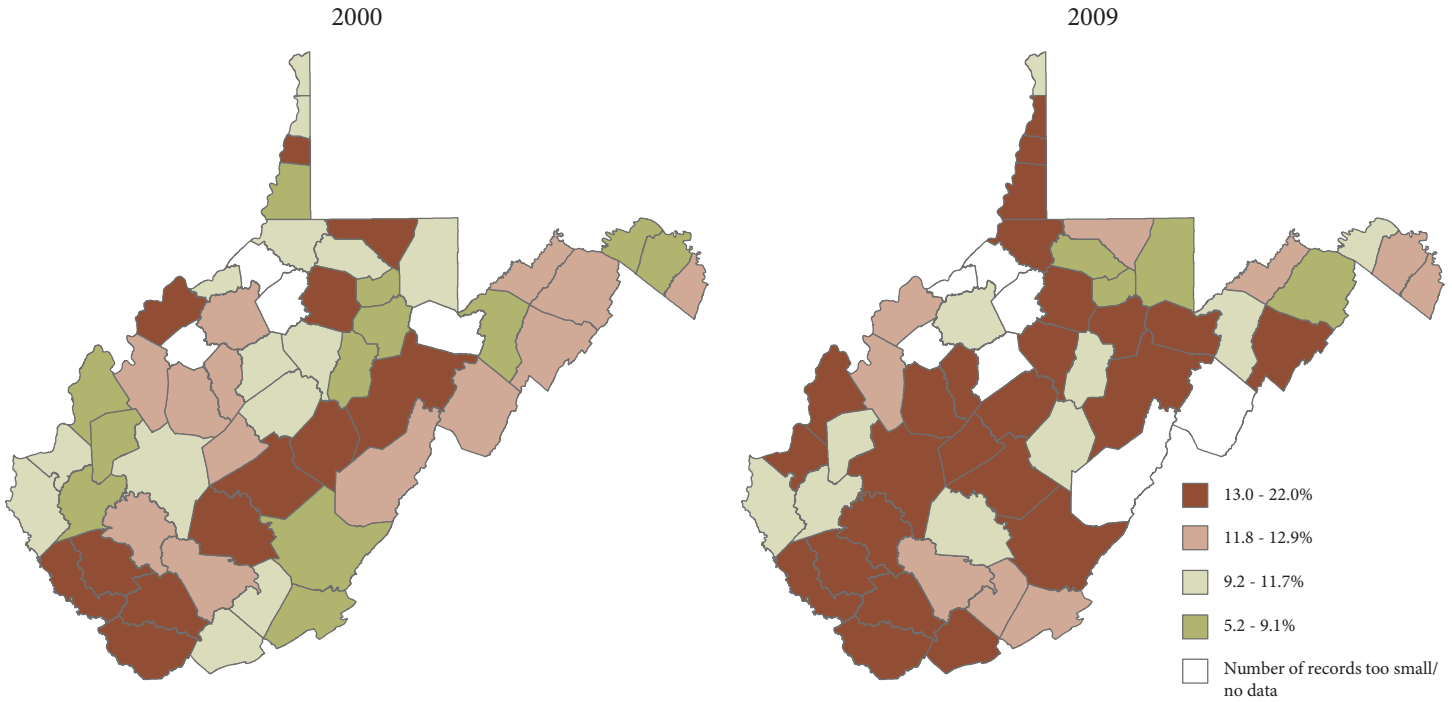


Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Online: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System 2011," accessed at http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=WV.

Perhaps the most troubling data about childhood obesity are the rates among preschool-age children five years old or younger. Among West Virginia families with preschool children that receive assistance from federal programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), 13.4 percent of the children are obese.[64] Although this figure is slightly lower than the national average of 14.7 percent, the percentage of children on WIC who are obese in West Virginia increased from 11.5 percent in 2000.[65] In addition, only 12 counties in the state had preschool obesity rates greater than 13 percent in 2000. By 2009, the number had increased to 25 counties (**Figure 8**).[66] With obesity rates increasing in children under the age of five, health complications and costs are likely to arise in West Virginia's younger generation.

FIGURE 8

Preschool Obesity on the Rise in Most West Virginia Counties



Source: Maps duplicated from West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau of Public Health, "Obesity in West Virginia" (November 2011), downloaded from www.wvdhhr.org/bph/HSC/Pubs/Other/ObesityReport2011/obesityreport2011.pdf.

Programs to Reduce Childhood Obesity in West Virginia

A handful of projects have been undertaken in the past decade to reduce childhood obesity in West Virginia. The following are brief descriptions of a few of the most recent interventions.

The Healthy Lifestyles Act

In 2005, Governor Joe Manchin signed House Bill 2816, the Healthy Lifestyles Act, into law. The Act created the West Virginia Office of Healthy Lifestyles within the Department of Health and Human Resources tasked with increasing physical activity, healthy eating, access to better food, and breastfeeding.[67]

The Act also was designed to tackle the problem of childhood obesity through five mandates, which were implemented by the Department of Education. First, it prohibited the sale of soft drinks during the school day in elementary, middle, or junior high schools. High schools could sell soft drinks, but only if the vending machine has an equal number of healthy options as unhealthy options.[68]

Second, the Act set requirements for physical activity depending on the grade-level of the child. The Department of Education required elementary school children to have ninety minutes of physical education (PE) a week.[69] Middle school children must have at least one full period of PE each day for one semester, equaling 2,700 minutes of PE each year. High school students are required to have at least one full credit of PE for graduation plus electives.

Third, the bill required students in grades 4 through 8 and participants in the required high school course to take a fitness test.[70] Fourth, children in kindergarten, 2nd grade, and 5th grade were measured for their BMI as part of the Coronary Artery Risk Detection in Appalachian Communities (CARDIAC) Project.[71] Fifth, health education must contain some instruction about eating well and exercising properly. Students in 6th grade, 8th grade, and high school also are now assessed on their knowledge of health.[72]

The Healthy Lifestyles Act was implemented in August 2006 and evaluated twice to see what effect these mandates had. By the end of the second year (2008/2009), the obesity rate among West Virginia's students had changed very little. Among kindergarten students, the rate remained stable. The rate dropped slightly for second graders and rose slightly for fifth graders.[73] Less than a third of boys and a fifth of girls reported daily physical activity and exercise.[74] These results could be attributed in part to the difficulties many schools had with implementing the Act, which did not contain any additional funds to help schools with this process.[75] In 2007/2008, four in ten schools in West Virginia reported that they lacked the resources to implement at least one of the mandates.[76]

Although the results at the end of the second year were not dazzling, there were some positive outcomes. The evaluation found declines in consumption of soda and fast food, and increases in milk drinking and eating more vegetables and fruits.[77]

WV Games for Health

From 2007 to 2010, West Virginia University and the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA) partnered to get children moving more in and out of school. The concept was simple: provide schools with Dance Dance Revolution (DDR), a video game, and train educators on how to incorporate the game into PE classes. The program was implemented in all high schools and middle schools, as well as half of the elementary schools, before funding ran out.[78]

The statewide project in the public schools occurred because of the positive results from a clinical study run by researchers at WVU to determine the impact of daily aerobic exercise on children, especially those who exhibited risk factors for cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. The children in the study were all between the ages of eight and twelve, and had parents who were PEIA members.[79] After undergoing some baseline tests, children in the study used DDR fives times a week for 30 minutes for 12 weeks. At the end of the study, these at-risk and overweight children had seen improvements in their health, including lower blood pressure and better endothelial function.[80]

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation started the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities program to fund local initiatives that sought to create healthier communities. One of the 49 grantees was KEYS 4 Healthy Kids (K4HK) in Charleston, WV, headed by the Charleston Area Medical Center's Health Education and Research Institute.[81] The acronym KEYS stands for knowledge, eating healthy, youth being active, and safety and empowerment.[82]

The initiative focuses in part on making it safer and more accessible for people to walk or bike to local sites, such as schools or churches. For example, K4HK organized a "walkability audit" on the West Side of Charleston in May 2011 to determine how accessible the new school was for students who might be walking or biking there.[83]

Another main objective is to increase access to local fruits and vegetables through farmers' markets and community gardens.[84] Funding for the initiative started in December 2009 and runs through December 2013. Students also learn about nutrition, planning meals, and identifying healthy foods.[85] By educating children about health and encouraging them to create healthier habits, the initiative aims to reduce childhood obesity.

Afterschool Programs and Childhood Obesity

Afterschool programs can play a very important role in the fight to reduce childhood obesity in West Virginia. Children typically attend these programs nearly every weekday for several hours at a time, so the potential influence an afterschool program can have on the life and health of a child is immense. In addition, many of the publicly funded programs like the 21st Century Community Learning Centers focus on children living in high-poverty areas, who may be at particular risk for poor nutrition and weight issues.

Even with the new PE requirements in West Virginia, children still do not get enough physical activity in their daily lives. They often spend their afternoons in front of the television or computer instead of running around outside. A Kaiser Family Foundation study from 2010 found that children ages 8 to 18 spend an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes using one form of entertainment media or another.[86] Many also lack a basic understanding of nutrition and healthy eating, and are not exposed to good eating habits at home. Afterschool programs can create initiatives that get children moving more and can provide them with healthier snacks, drinks, and food while they are at the center. Afterschool programs have the flexibility to be creative in their approaches to these issues. For example, a program could offer a cooking class to students to show them how to prepare healthier foods and better budget for food. Or students could participate in a school or community garden to learn about the origins of their food.

Several resources exist that offer some guidance to afterschool programs looking to improve the diets and fitness of the participating children. The YMCA partnered with Harvard's Prevention Research Center to develop the "Food and Fun After School" curriculum.[87] They offer simple, inexpensive ways that afterschool programs can encourage better nutrition and more physical activity for children ages 5 to 12.[88] The partners also created some standards for healthy eating and physical activity that afterschool programs could implement. These range from offering more fresh produce to serving water instead of juice to having at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day to limited time spent on computers.[89]

The Healthy Behaviors Initiative, a project of the Center for Collaborative Solutions, also offers some practical solutions to afterschool programs that want to improve the wellness of their children. The "Changing Lives, Saving Lives" guide recommends using hands-on experiential learning, introducing healthy eating habits, and offering more fruits and vegetables, among other suggestions.[90]

Afterschool programs in West Virginia could serve a key role in combating childhood obesity by implementing some of the suggestions from these two resources. Simple changes in the food served and the amount of time given to physical activity could contribute to reduced obesity rates and increased health among the state's students.

Section Three

High School Dropouts

Between October 2008 and October 2009, 3.4 percent of high school students in the United States dropped out of school.[91] These students joined the ranks of the roughly 3.0 million young people (ages 16 to 24) who had not completed high school or an alternative like the GED.[92] High school dropouts account for approximately 8.1 percent of the non-institutionalized civilian population ages 16 to 24.[93] Although dropout rates are lower today than in the 1970s, they remain too high.

Forty years ago, people could find employment without a high school degree. In today's world, high school dropouts face high unemployment. Only 11 percent of jobs in the United States' economy are for high school dropouts.[94] By 2018, nearly all high school dropouts will likely be working in three sectors: sales and office support, blue collar, or food and personal services.[95] Many of the jobs in these sectors open to high school dropouts pay low wages and do not provide benefits like health insurance. Dropouts are downwardly mobile, falling out of the middle class and into the lowest income brackets.[96]

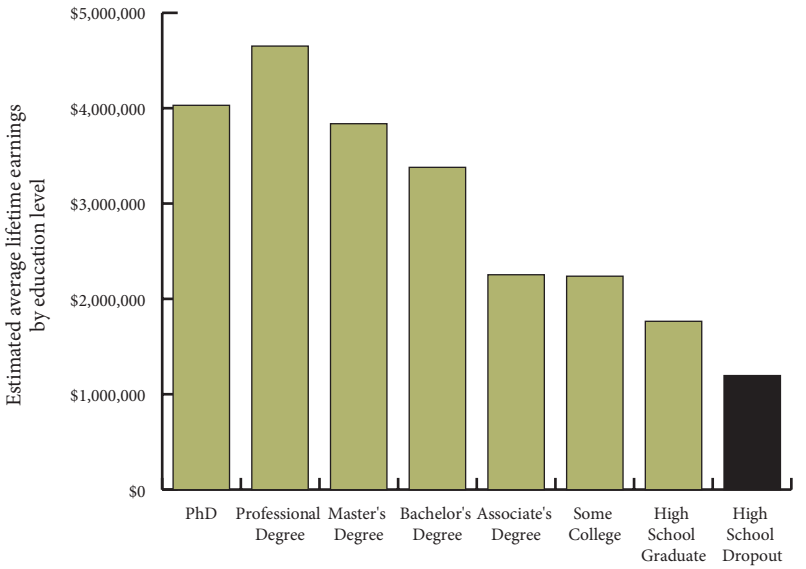
As mentioned in a previous section, dropping out of school is closely linked with truancy. Students who miss too much school often fall behind in their coursework and may have to repeat a grade, which greatly increases their chances of dropping out completely.[97] According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this grade retention often is the result of a child's inability to read proficiently by fourth grade, which causes them to fall behind in their comprehension of new subjects and leads to frustration with school.[98] Students may be dropping out in high school, but the underlying problems they face start much earlier in their lives.

The Trouble with Dropping out of School

Students who fail to complete high school or alternatives like the GED face a lifetime of negative outcomes. High school dropouts earn less than their peers who have at least a high school degree. According to one study, dropouts earn nearly $260,000 less in the course of a lifetime than high school degree holders.[99] Other reports put this figure much higher, closer to $560,000.[100] Dropouts earn millions less over a lifetime than those who graduate from college or higher degrees (**Figure 9**).[101] This not only makes dropouts less economically secure, but also means that states and the federal government receive less revenue from income taxes than they would if these individuals had completed high school.[102]

FIGURE 9

High School Dropouts Earn Millions Less over a Lifetime than Those with More Education



Source: Figure duplicated from Anthony Carnevale et al., "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018" (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce, June 2010), accessed at http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/.

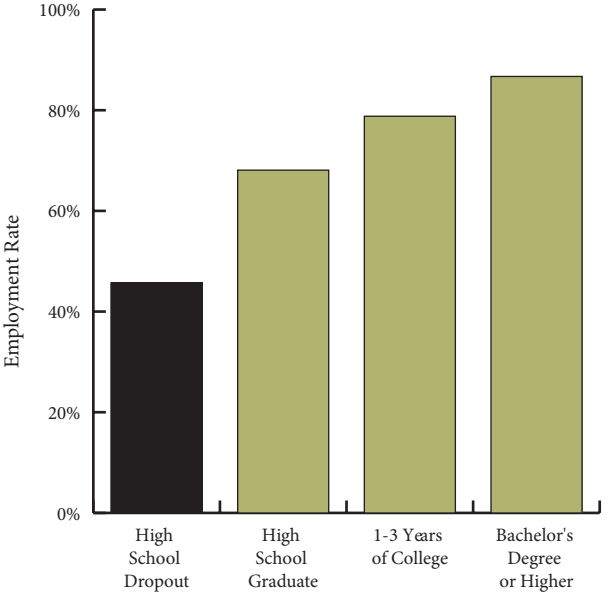
High school dropouts have the lowest employment rates in the country. Whereas 86.8 percent of 16 to 24 year olds with a bachelor's degree were employed in 2008, only 45.7 percent of high school dropouts had work (**Figure 10**).[103] Dropouts have not fared well during the past decade. Many dropouts have stopped actively seeking work and are not part of the labor force. In 2009, only 48 percent were in the labor force, a sharp decline from the 2002 level of 68 percent (**Figure 11**).[104] Of those dropouts in the labor force, more than half were unemployed.[105]

Additionally, high school dropouts also have poorer health on average than those who completed high school. They have shorter life expectancies and are at greater risk of dying from cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and other illnesses.[106] This health disparity may be caused in part by the lower income levels of high school dropouts and the lack of access to health insurance through work.[107]

Finally, the poor job prospects of high school dropouts lead many individuals to crime to make ends meet. High school dropouts comprise a disproportionately large percentage of the correctional system. One in four African American males that drop out of high school are incarcerated, compared to one in fourteen white or Hispanic male dropouts.[108] In total, one in ten male dropouts are incarcerated in this country.[109] This compares sharply to the rates for men with higher levels of educational attainment: one in 33 male high school graduates, one in 500 men with at least a bachelor's degree (**Figure 12**).[110] This mass incarceration of high school dropouts costs the nation billions of dollars.[111]

FIGURE 10

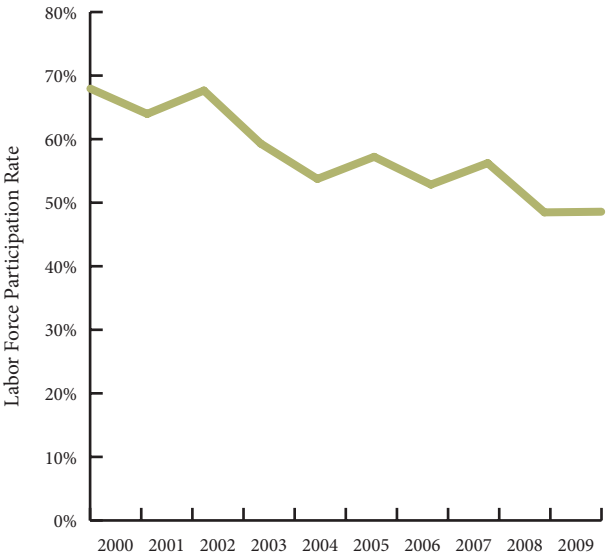
High School Dropouts Have Lowest Employment Rates



Source: Figure duplicated from Andrew Sum et al., "The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School" (Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, October 2009), downloaded from iris.lib.neu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=clms_pub.

FIGURE 11

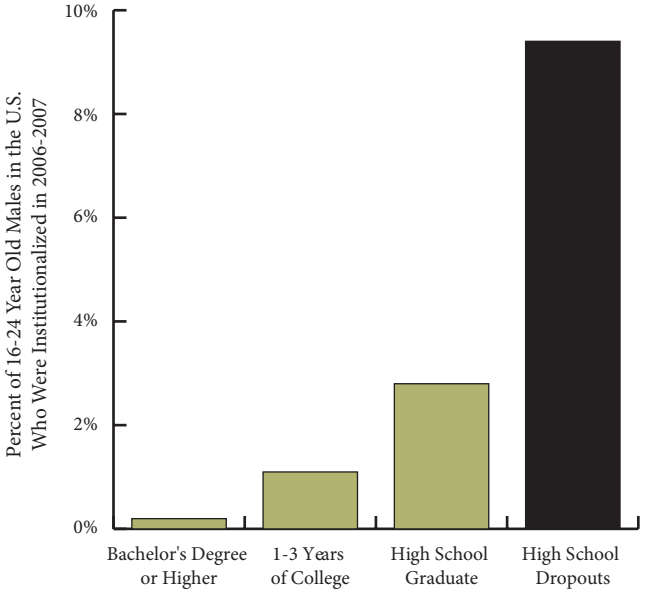
The Labor Force Participation Rate for Dropouts Has Been Falling



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Youth Indicators 2011, "Table 28. Labor status of 16- to 24-year-old high school dropouts in the civilian labor force," accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012026/tables/table_28.asp.

FIGURE 12

High School Dropouts Have Highest Rate of Incarceration



Source: Figure duplicated from Andrew Sum et al.

Dropouts in West Virginia

Between 2008 and 2009, 4.1 percent of West Virginia's high school students left school without transferring to another school or completing their degree.[112] Compared with other states on this measure, West Virginia had the 20th highest rate (**Figure 13**). The lowest dropout rate occurred in grade 9, when only 3.7 percent of students did not return to school. The highest rate of 4.6 percent was in grade 11 (**Figure 14**).[113]

FIGURE 13

West Virginia's Dropout Rate in the Top 20

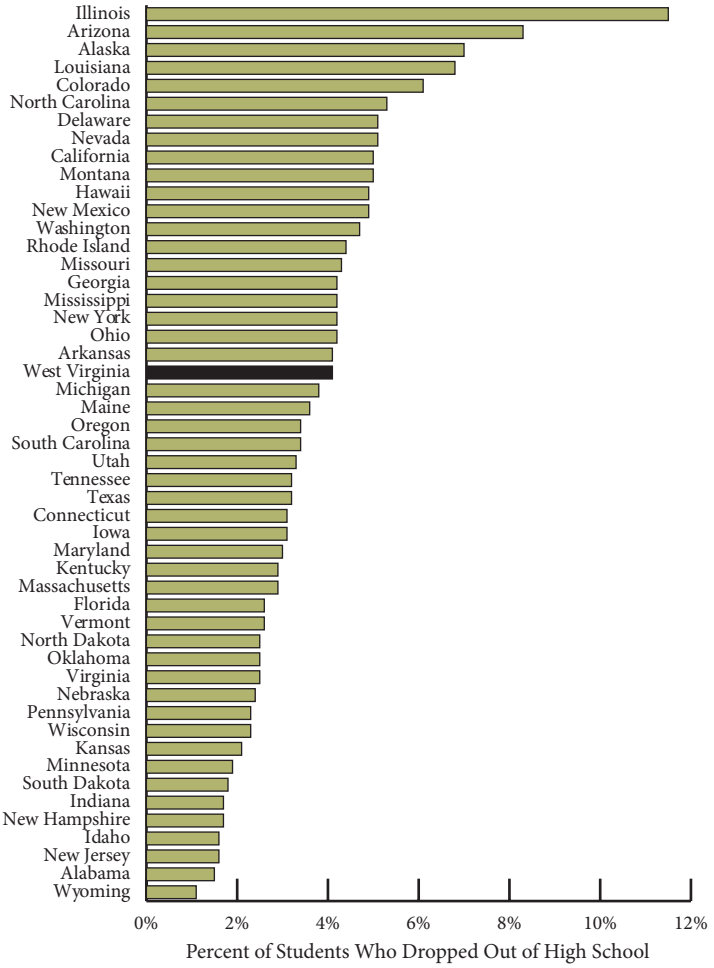
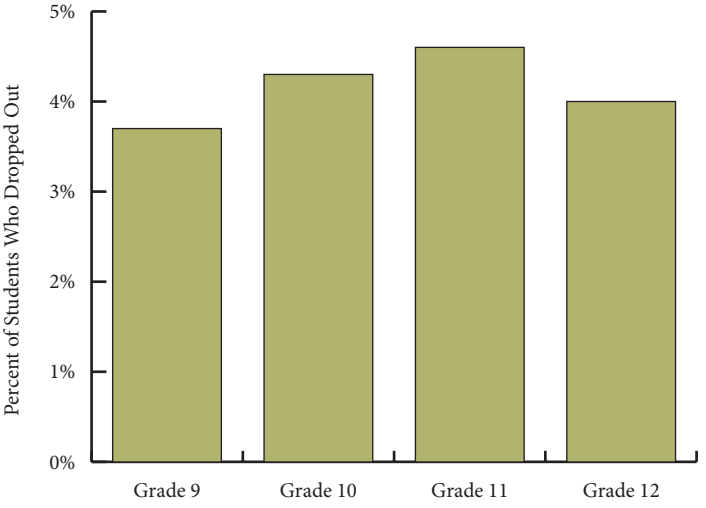


FIGURE 14

West Virginia's Highest Rate of Dropouts Occurs in 11th Grade



Source for Figures 13 and 14: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, "State Dropout and Completion Data," accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/drpcompstatelvl.asp.

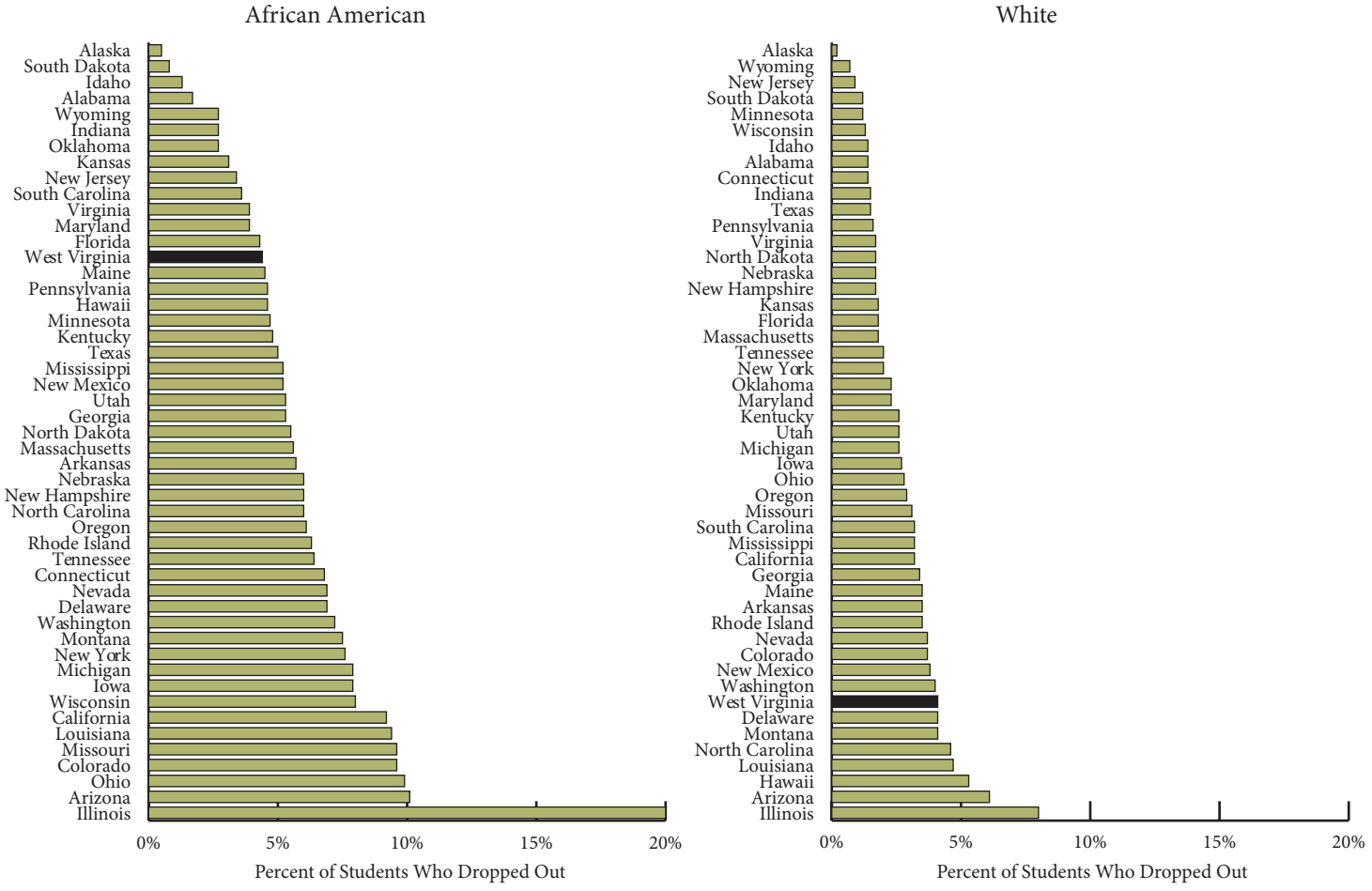
Note: Data are aggregated from the local education agencies to the state level.

The high school dropout rate varies slightly by race as well. Whereas 4.1 percent of white students dropped out of high school between 2008 and 2009, 4.4 percent of African American students did not return to school.[114] When West Virginia is compared to other states, an interesting story emerges. Although the rate for African American students is higher than that of white students, West Virginia's rate actually is the 14th lowest in the United States. The rate for white students, on the other hand, is one of the highest with a rank of 42nd (**Figure 15).**

Data from the individual school districts in West Virginia show wide variety in high school dropout rates. At one end of the spectrum is Brooke County where the high school dropout rate is 0.7 percent. At the other end is Monroe County where the dropout rate is 7.1 percent.[115] Twenty-seven of the fifty-five counties have dropout rates below the state average of 4.1 percent (**Figure 16**).

FIGURE 15

Compared to Other States, West Virginia's Dropout Rate Is Low for African Americans, High for White Students



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.
Note: No data available for Vermont. Data are aggregated from the local education agencies to the state level.

High school dropouts comprise 16.5 percent of the 18 to 24 year old population in West Virginia.[116] This is slightly lower than the national average of 17.1 percent.[117] However, West Virginia fares worse than the United States among the population 25 and older. While 15 percent of the nation's population over 25 did not complete high school, the rate is 18 percent in West Virginia (**Figure 17**).[118]

Programs to Reduce Dropouts in West Virginia

Over the past several years, a handful of policies and programs have been created in West Virginia to reduce high school dropout rates. These programs seek to meet the state Board of Education's goal to have all students in West Virginia graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills to succeed in post-secondary education and/or their careers.[119] The following examples highlight a few of the approaches being taken.

Local Solution Dropout Prevention & Recovery Innovation Zones

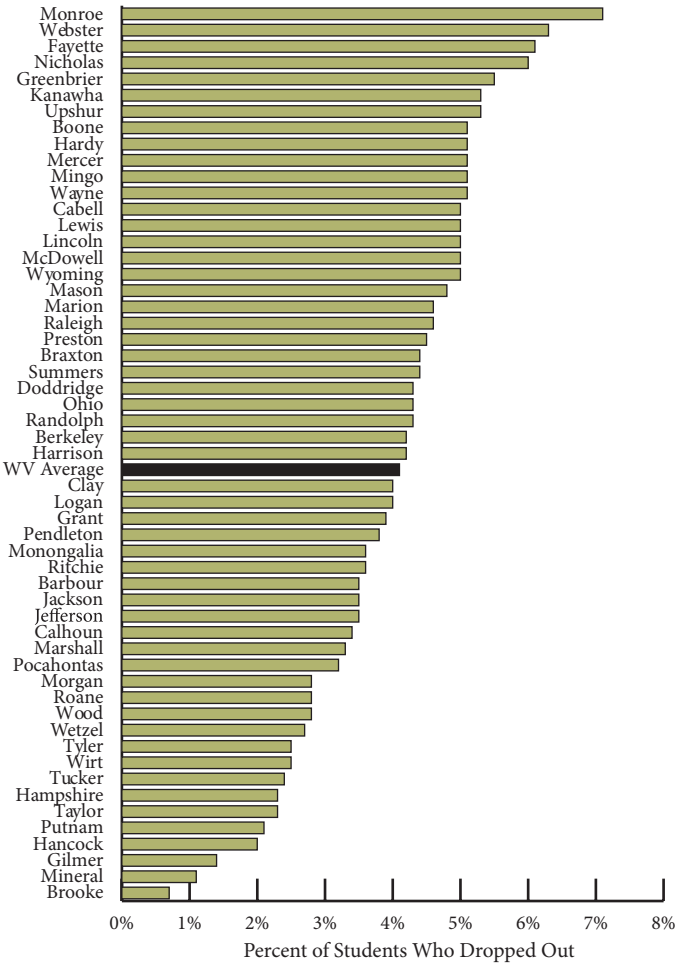
In 2011, an amendment was added to the School Innovation Zones Act to create Dropout Prevention & Recovery Innovation Zones. Schools now can apply for funding from the Department of Education to finance programs that seek to reduce the number of dropouts and increase high school completion rates. Applicants must show that they have partnerships with either local community groups or state agencies.[120] Each school or school district can develop solutions that work for their local issues and challenges, rather than using a one-size-fits-all model.

For example, Independence Middle School in Raleigh County has received a grant to create an Early Warning System (EWS) that will monitor students' attendance, behavior, and course performance to identify children who are high-risk candidates for dropping out when they reach high school age.[121]

In Wood County, the three high schools are focusing their grant on freshmen, the transition year from middle school to high school.[122] This program includes ongoing mentoring and support for all students. Similar to Independence Middle, the high schools will implement an EWS to identify

FIGURE 16

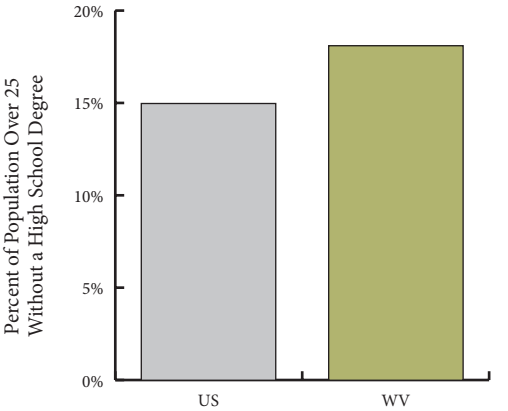
Dropout Rates Vary Widely by County



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data.
Note: No data available for Pleasants County.

FIGURE 17

Higher Percentage of West Virginia's Population Lacks High School Degree Compared to the U.S.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table B15002: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over," West Virginia & United States.

students at-risk of dropping out. Intervention strategies, like additional tutoring, will be developed to reduce the chances of these students dropping out.

Since the grant has only been in existence for one school year, it is too early to say how well these programs have worked to reduce high school dropouts. However, if preliminary figures from the first year in Putnam County are any indication of how these programs are performing in the other counties, these Innovation Zones could be a powerful tool to reduce dropouts at the local level. According to the superintendant of Putnam County schools, the number of ninth grade dropouts decreased from 37 in 2010-2011 to seven in 2011-2012.[123] If this trend continues, it bodes well for the success of the program.

Walk the Talk

Since 2008, students from Capital, Riverside, Saint Albans, South Charleston, and Wheeling Park high schools have participated in a four-year program called "Walk the Talk," run by the Education Alliance.[124] Small groups of at-risk high school students – those with poor attendance, bad grades, and behavior issues – are paired with a mentor from the business community. This individual meets with the students once a week and strives to address issues they face at school and in the home. The mentor also helps the students to think about college and future career options. No robust evaluation of the program has been made publicly available at this time.

onTarget WV

The West Virginia Department of Education, through its Virtual School, has created a program called onTarget WV. Students who fail courses during the school year can now recover those credits through an online system.[125] They can take everything from Spanish to Algebra to Biology.[126] By recovering credits toward graduation, students may not have to repeat a year of school, which should reduce their risk of dropping out completely. The program is still too new to be evaluated, but could prove to be a good resource for students who have fallen behind their classmates.

Afterschool Programs and Dropouts

Students who decide to drop out of school often have become disengaged from the educational system.[127] They may be far behind their peers and simply stop trying to catch up. They may have skipped so many days of school that they cannot make up the work. Perhaps school seems dull and impractical for the real world. Sometimes students receive little support from family and peers, and do not understand the importance of an education. High-quality afterschool programs may reduce the likelihood of students dropping out by combating these symptoms.

Since the path toward dropping out of high school begins in elementary and middle school for many children, afterschool programs serve the important role of providing mentoring and tutoring to these young children in reading, mathematics, and other subjects.[128] Through this more intensive, one-on-one assistance, students may see improvements in their grades, making them less likely to fail a class or repeat a year of school. This in turn should decrease the likelihood of dropping out.

Effective afterschool programs complement the regular school curriculum, but can offer students something more hands-on and experiential. For some students, this might help them to understand how learning connects with, and is relevant to, their everyday lives. Since afterschool programs do not have to worry about "teaching to the test" or performance markers, they can be innovative and creative in the way in which they teach subjects ranging from art and music to science and mathematics. Programs can tailor their offerings to the interests of the students. Students who may not find regular school stimulating can become engaged with learning once again, making them more apt to continue attending school.[129]

Afterschool programs geared specifically at high school students may emphasize service learning, provide career or technical education, or offer internships or apprenticeships for students to gain some hands-on experience in the work world.[130] Programs should work toward strong partnerships with the broader community, as well as with parents of the students.[131] In this way, the support network for each individual student broadens, helping him or her to remain in school.

Section Four

Mapping Afterschool Programs

In an effort to help identify gaps in services or potential areas for expansion, this study used mapping software to pinpoint the locations of West Virginia's afterschool programs. The following maps overlay the locations with other measures, which are divided into four categories: Educational, Poverty, Health, and Economic. Depending upon which measures the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network and other interested parties decide to target, they can use the corresponding maps to see which counties should be the focus of their attention.

The afterschool locations were identified through several avenues. Many of the sites were found online, either through the Department of Education's website (e.g. the 21st Century Community Learning Centers) or through web searches. Other sites were provided by county extension agents, while still others were submitted by county boards of education.

The report does not include Title I Tutoring sites, Critical Skills programs, STEP, or Energy Express. In total, the list of unique afterschool program sites in West Virginia currently stands at 380, although the author recognizes that there may be some missing programs. In some instances, more than one afterschool program occurs in the same location. For ease of mapping, these multiple programs were mapped as a single location. All sites are mapped at their exact location using a process called geocoding. This enables one to more precisely identify regions of individual counties and the state that lack afterschool programs.

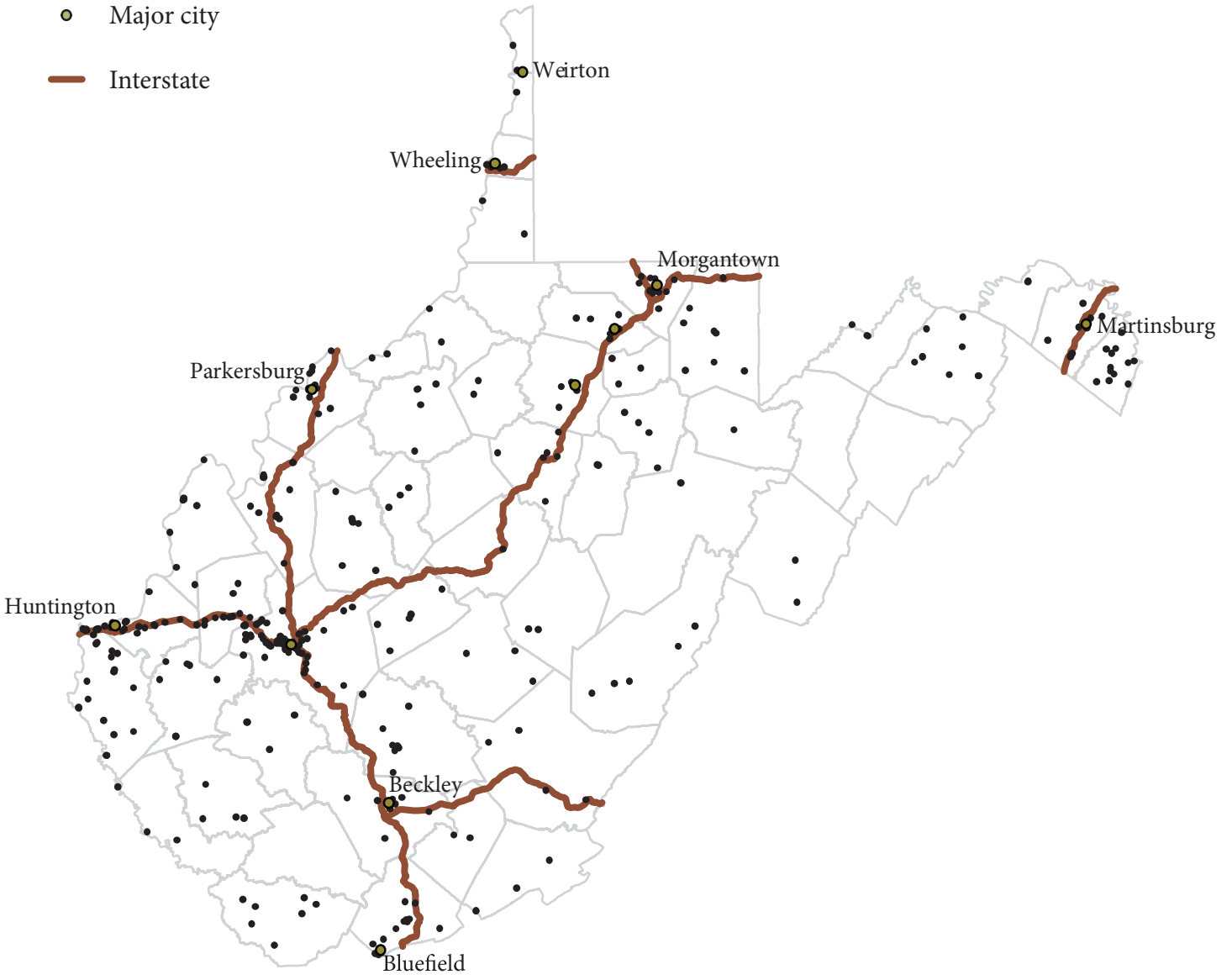
For the four categories of measures, the author used census tract data whenever possible to show variance within counties. In some cases, the sample size was simply too small and the margin of error too great. In these instances, county data were used.

A few counties jump out right away as places to focus energy. According to the sources previously mentioned, there are no afterschool programs in Gilmer, Grant, Hardy, Wetzel, Wirt, and Wyoming counties. While some counties like Kanawha have dozens of afterschool programs, others like Braxton, Morgan, Pendleton, Taylor, and Webster have only one or two for the whole county. Even in counties with small populations, this likely is inadequate coverage.

The larger population centers, like Charleston, Huntington, Morgantown, Parkersburg, and the easternmost counties of the Eastern Panhandle, have significant numbers of afterschool programs. In these areas, many of the public schools offer afterschool programs, as do nonprofits like the YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs. Not surprisingly, rural sections of the state often lack programs, which follows the national trend of less access in rural areas.

MAP 1

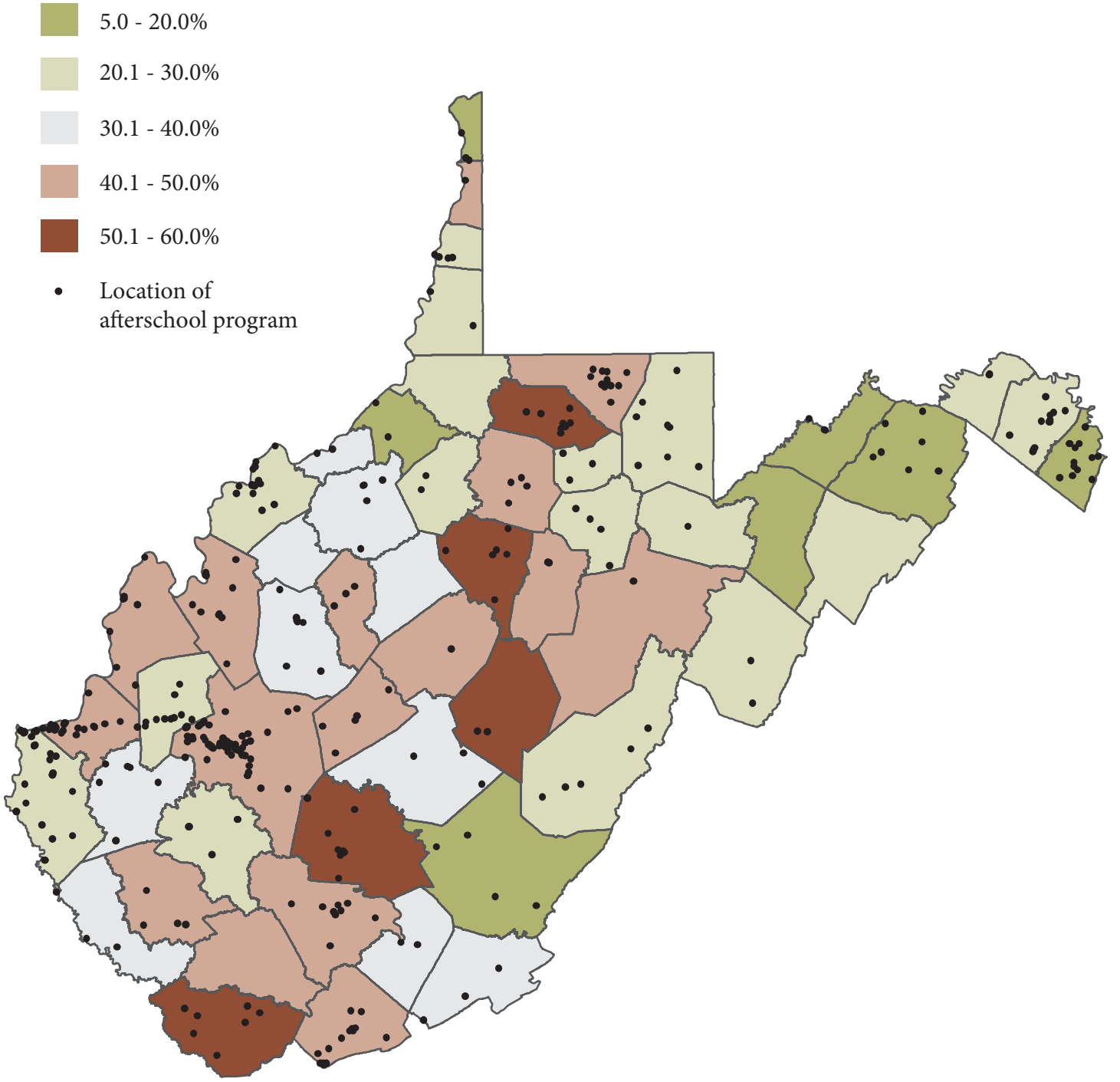
Locations of Afterschool Programs in West Virginia



Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 2

Percent of Students Truant in Each Local Education Agency

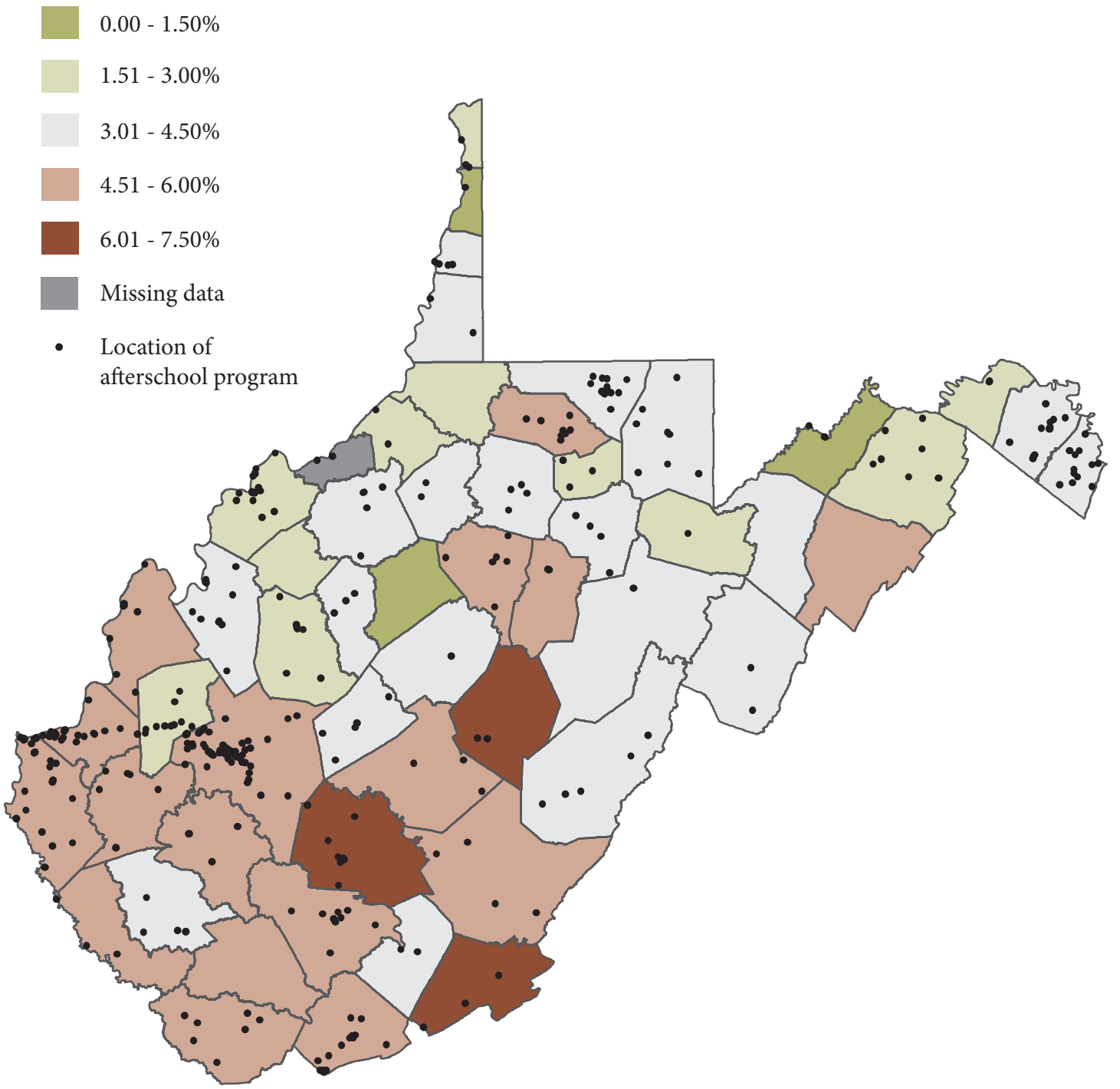


Source: Data compiled from the West Virginia Judiciary, "Truancy: Unexcused Absences for the 2009-2010 School Year," accessed at http://www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/truancy/truancy.html.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 3

Dropout Rates

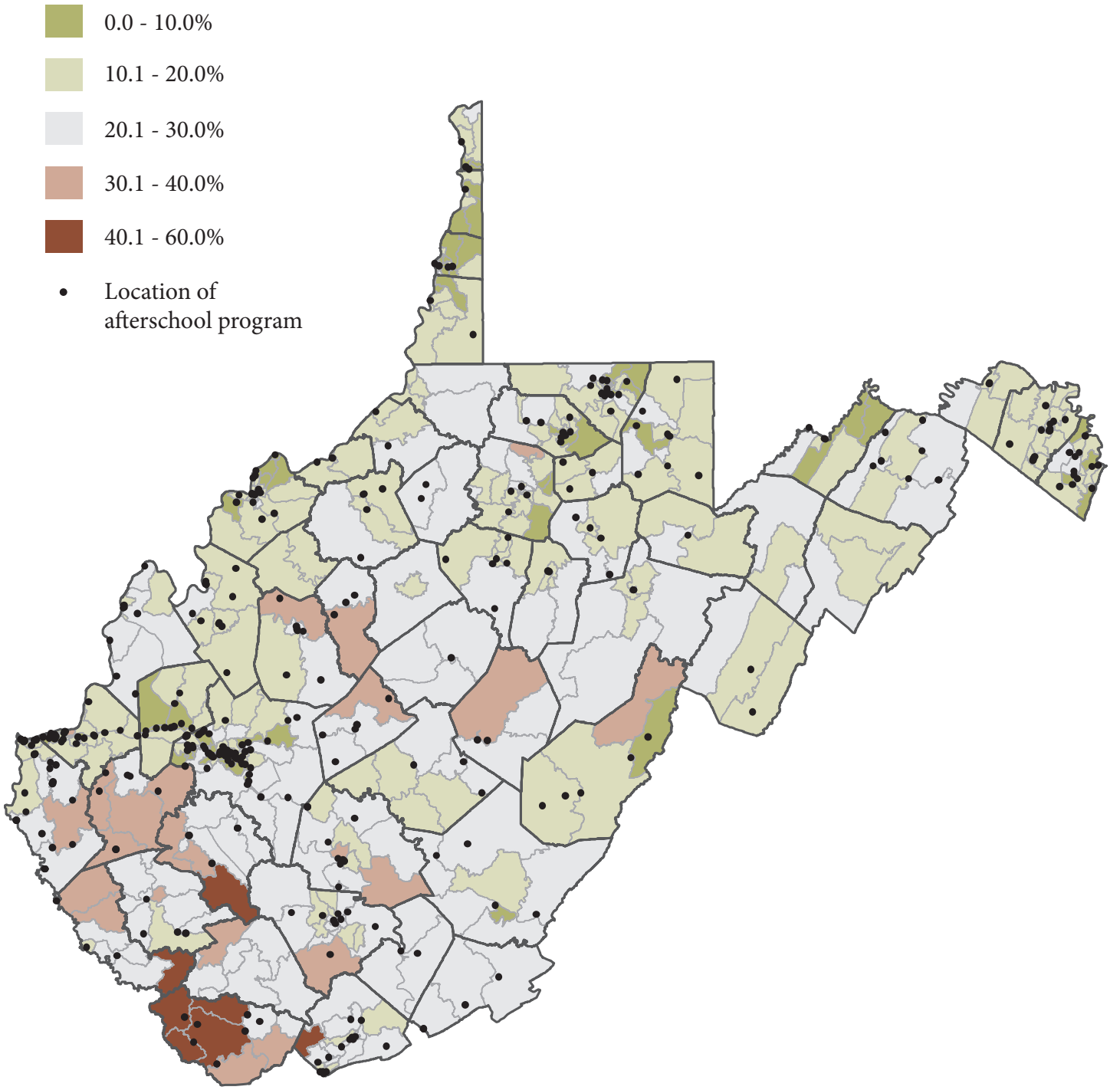


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, "State Dropout and Completion Data," accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/drpcompstatelvl.asp.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 4

Percent of Population over the Age of 25 without a High School Degree

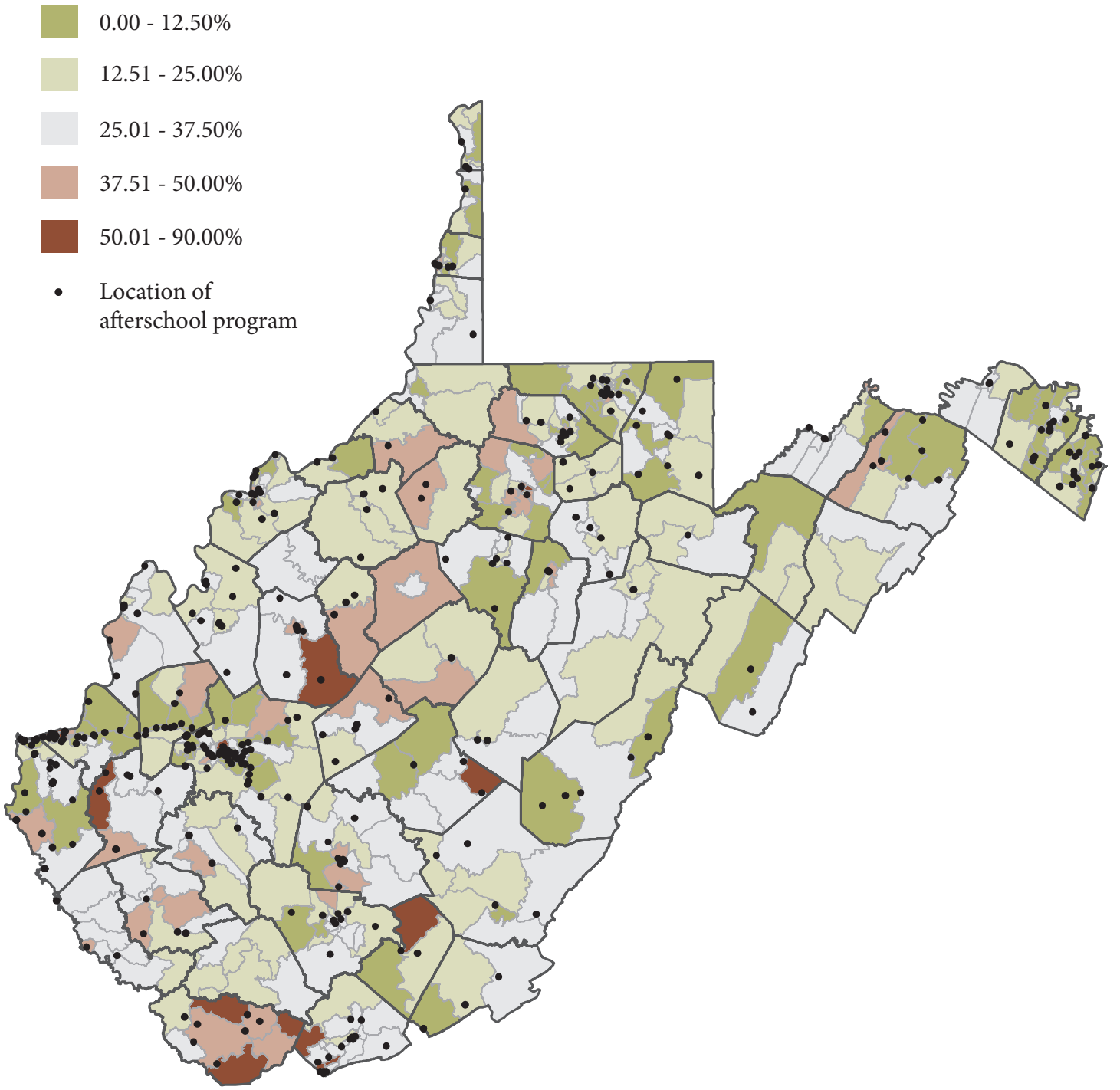


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months," West Virginia census tracts.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 5

Percent of Children under the Age of 18 in Poverty

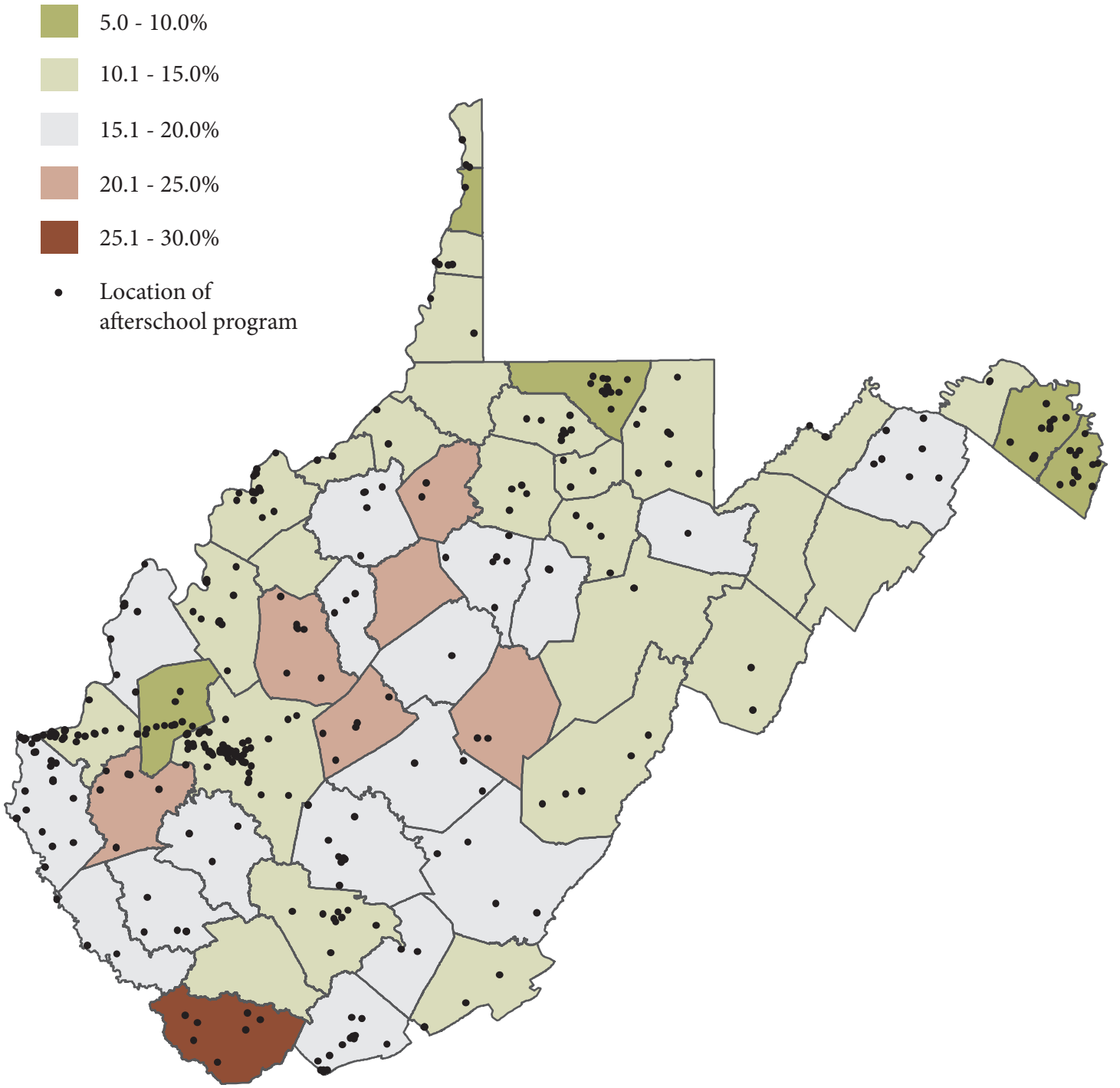


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months," West Virginia census tracts.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 6

Percent of Population over the Age of 25 in Poverty

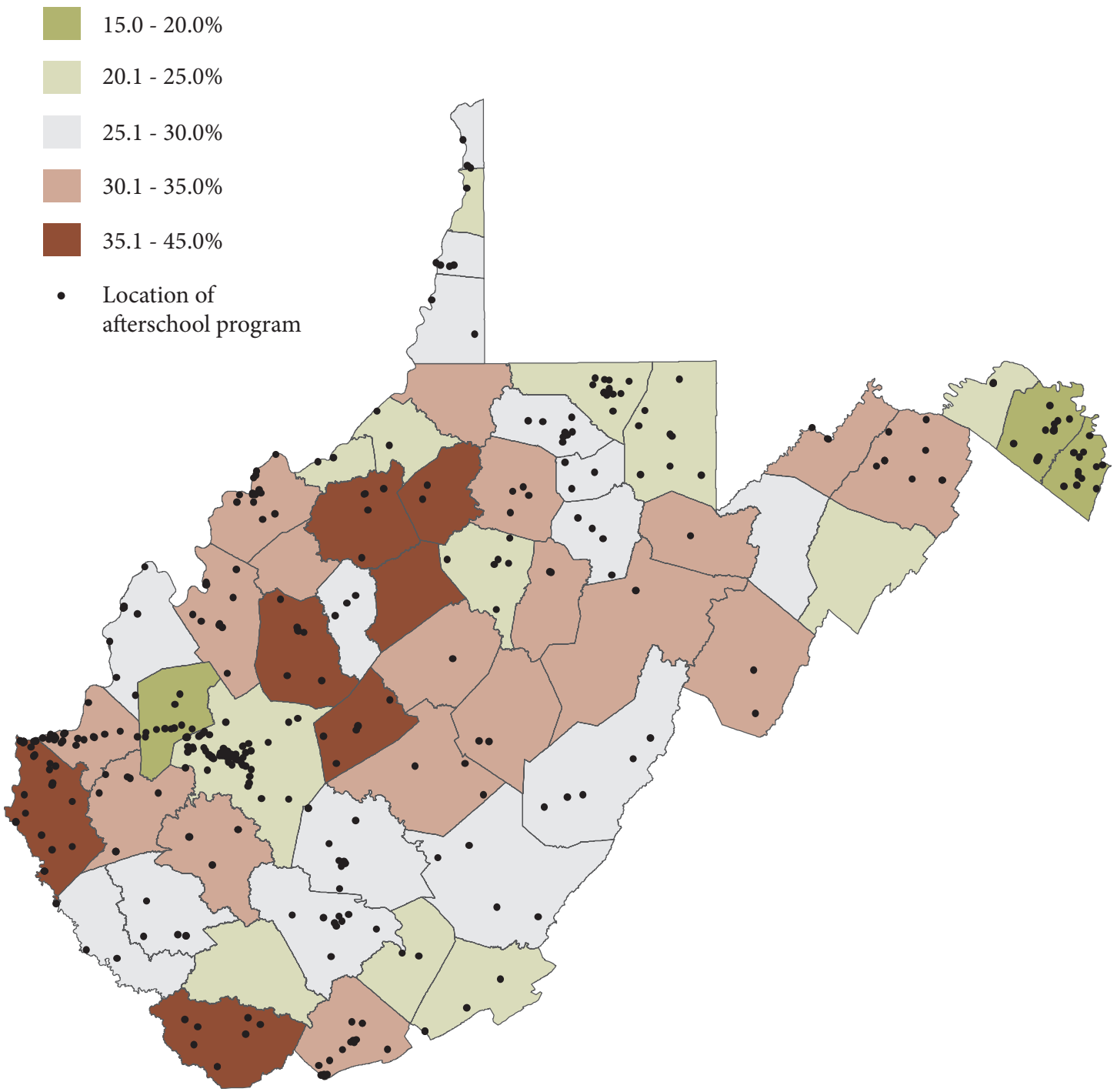


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months," West Virginia counties.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 7

Percent of Population over the Age of 25 without a High School Degree in Poverty

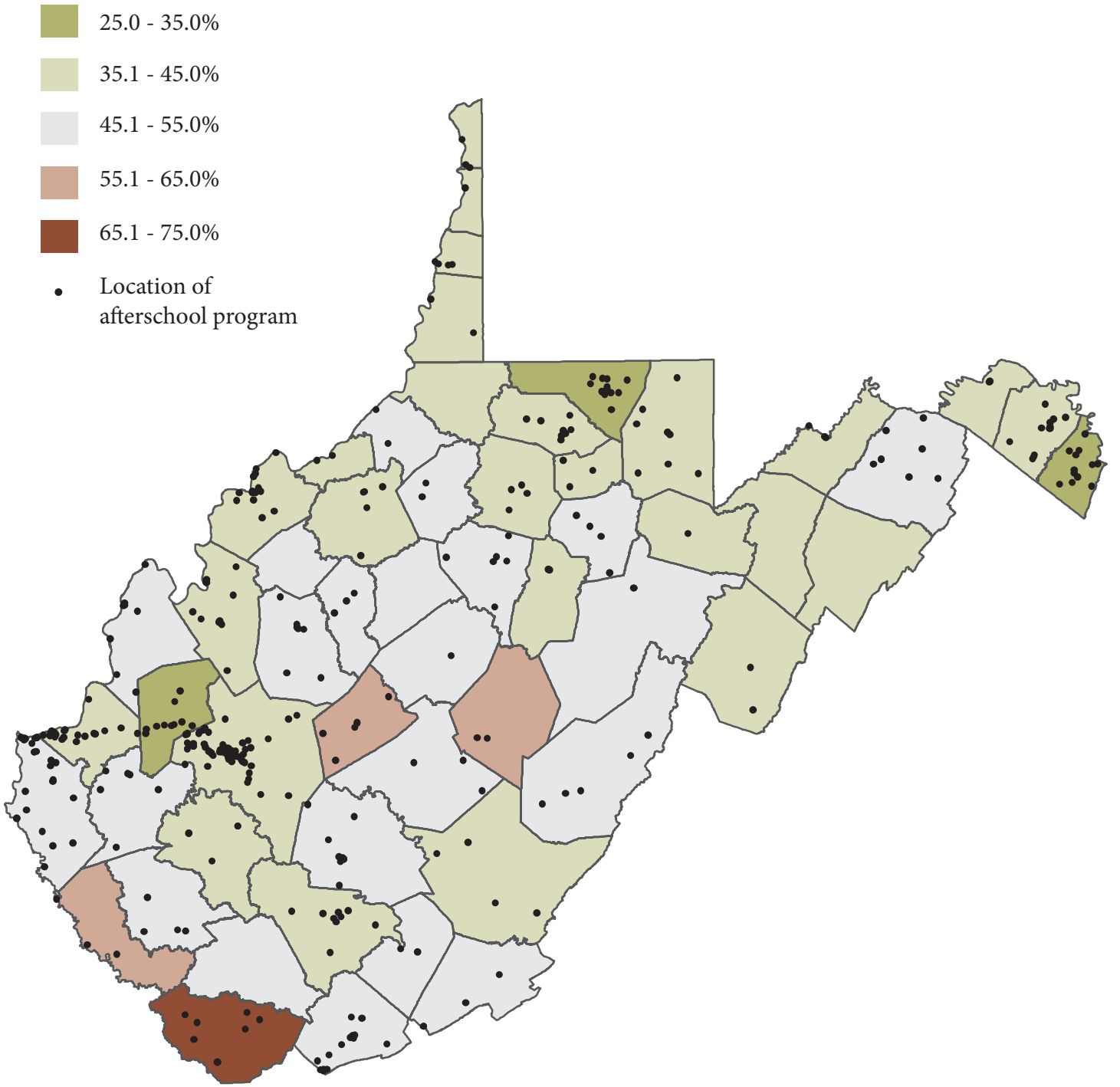


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months," West Virginia counties.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 8

Percent of Children Receiving Free School Lunches

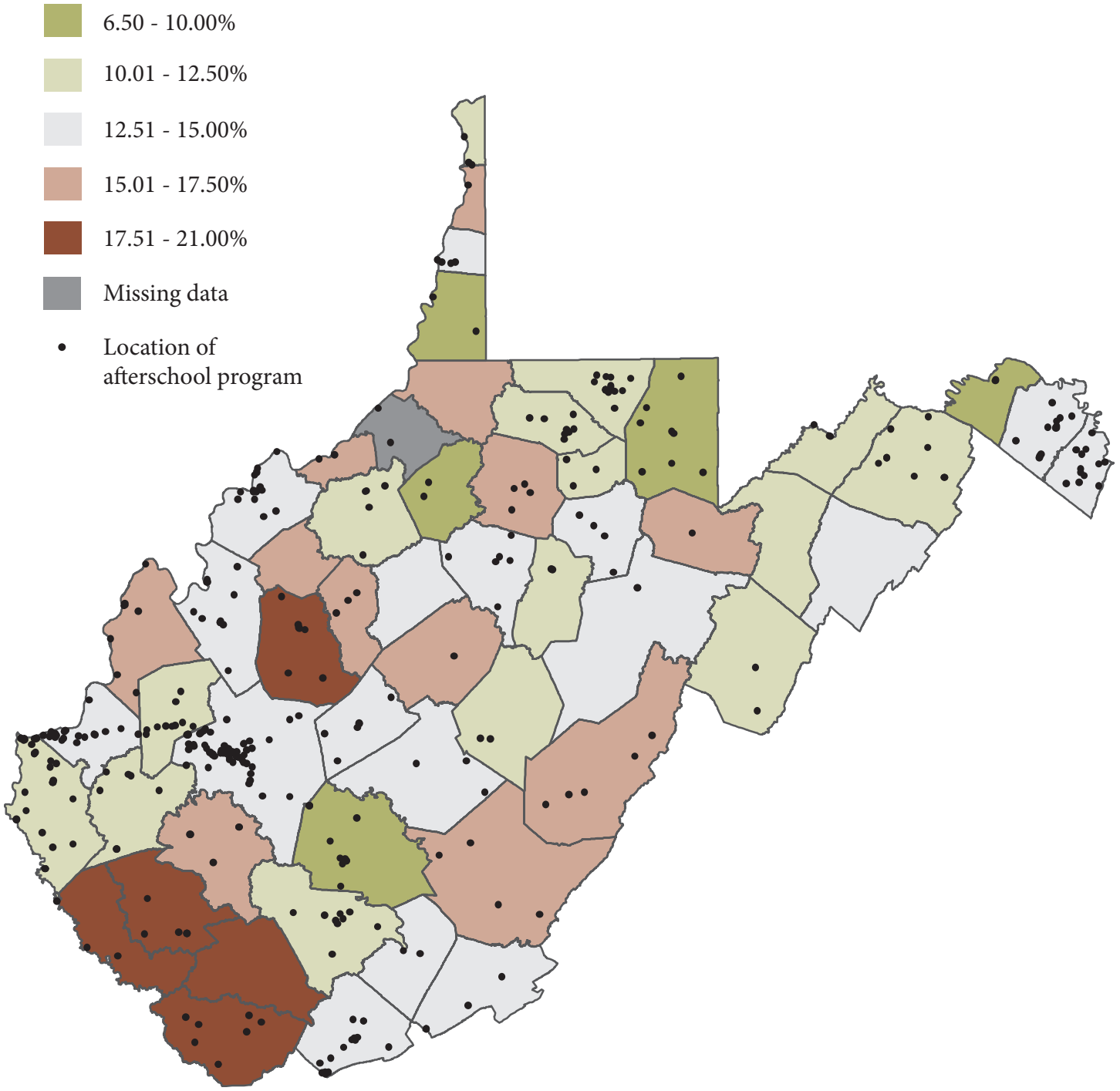


Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Food Environment Atlas, "Students free-lunch eligible (%), 2009."

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 9

Low-Income Preschool Children Obesity Rate

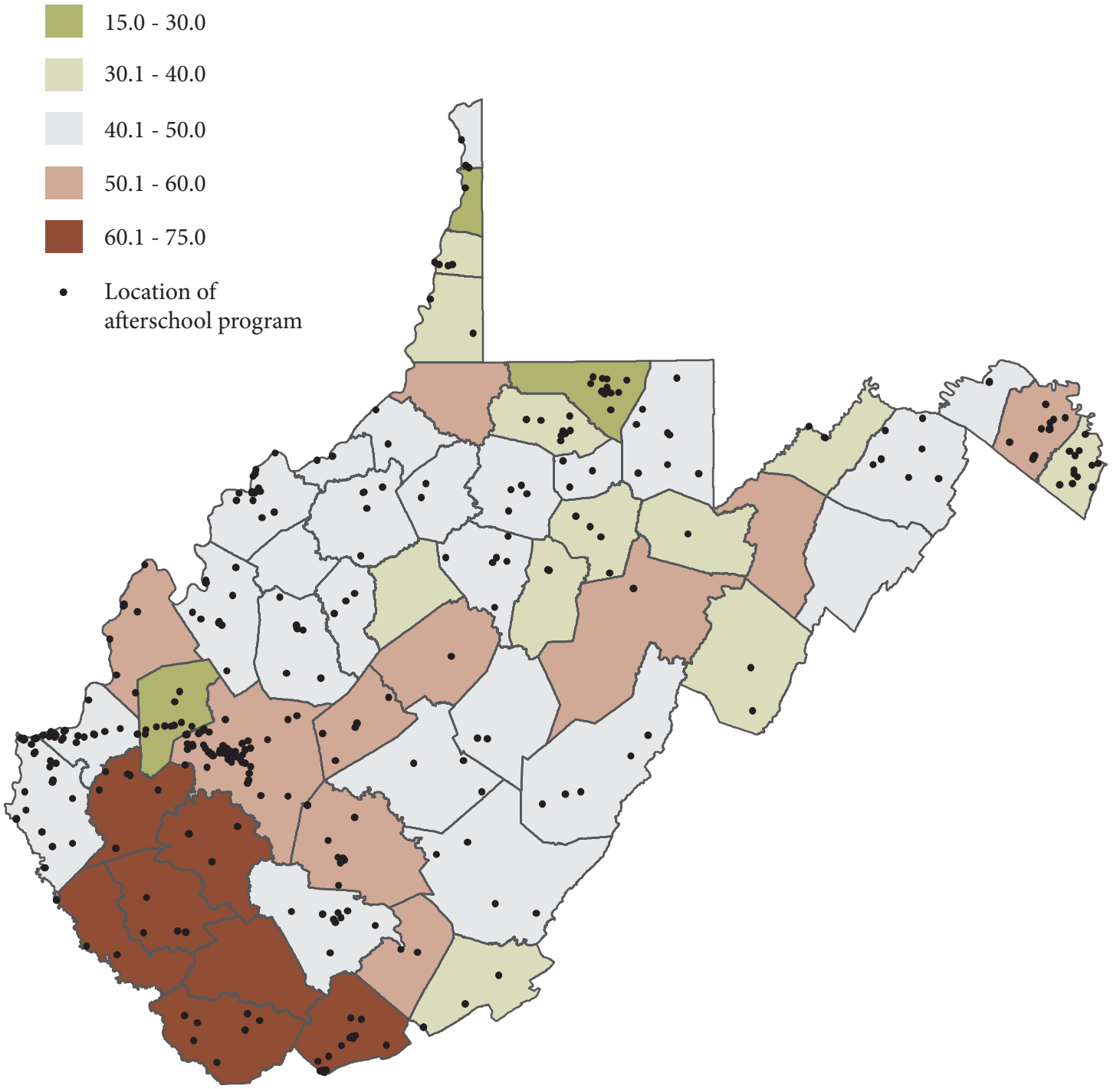


Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Food Environment Atlas, "Low-income Preschool Obesity Rate, 2008-10."

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 10

Teen Birth Rate, per 1,000 Teenagers

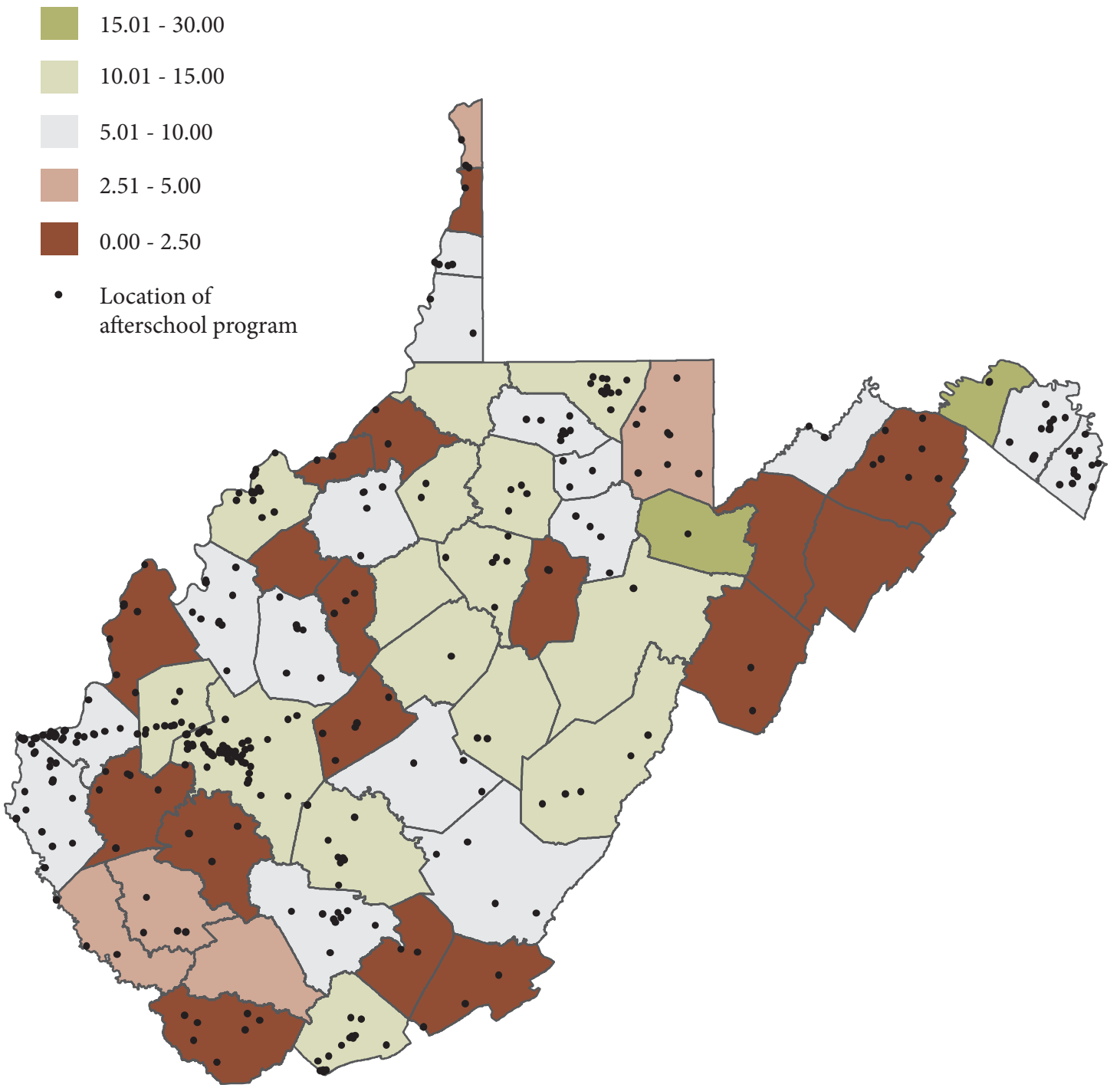


Source: County Health Rankings, Health Factors, Health Behaviors, Teen Birth Rate.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 11

Recreational Facilities Rate, per 100,000 Residents

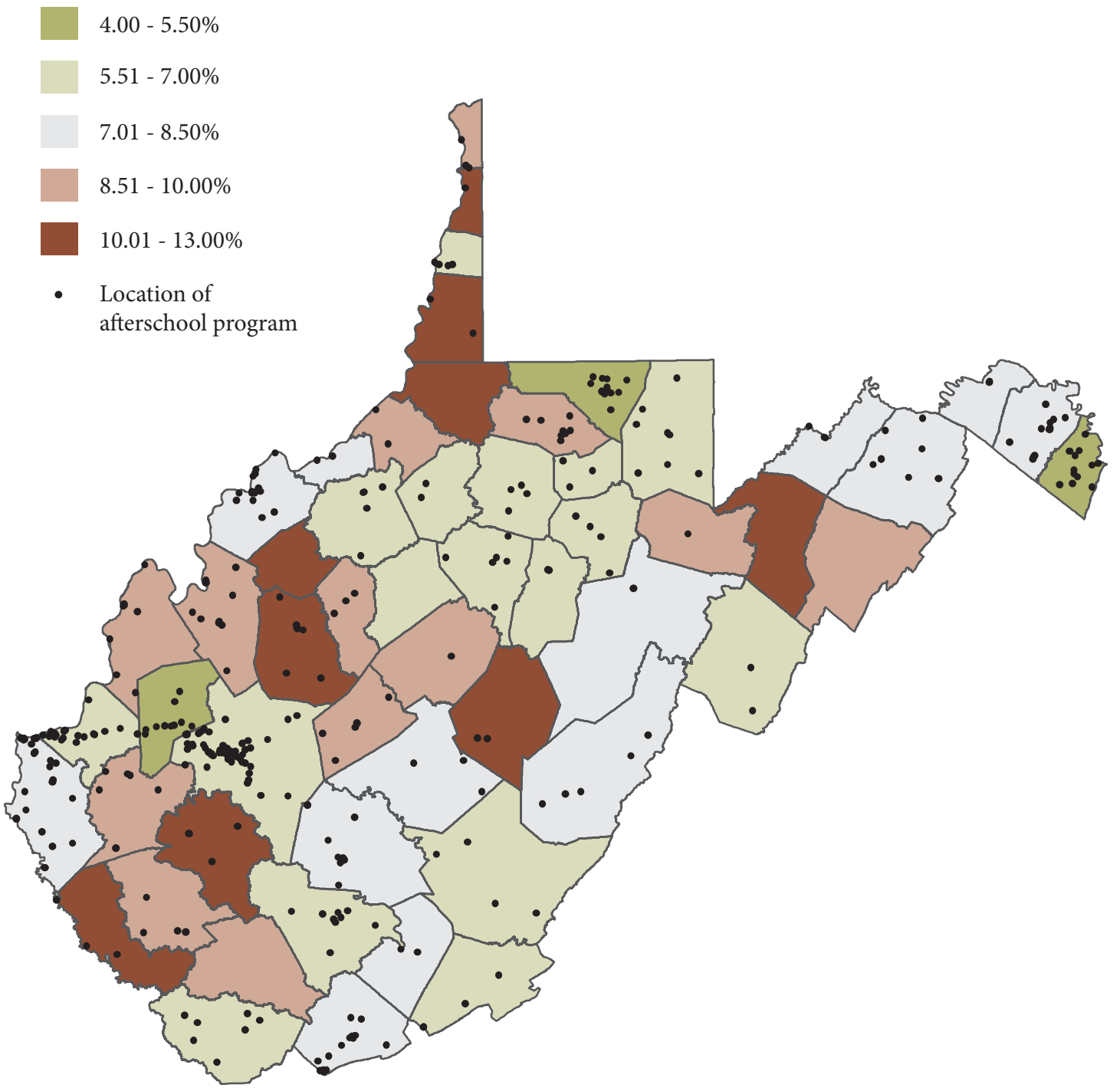


Source: County Health Rankings, Health Factors, Physical Environment, Access to Recreational Faciliities.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 12

Unemployment Rate

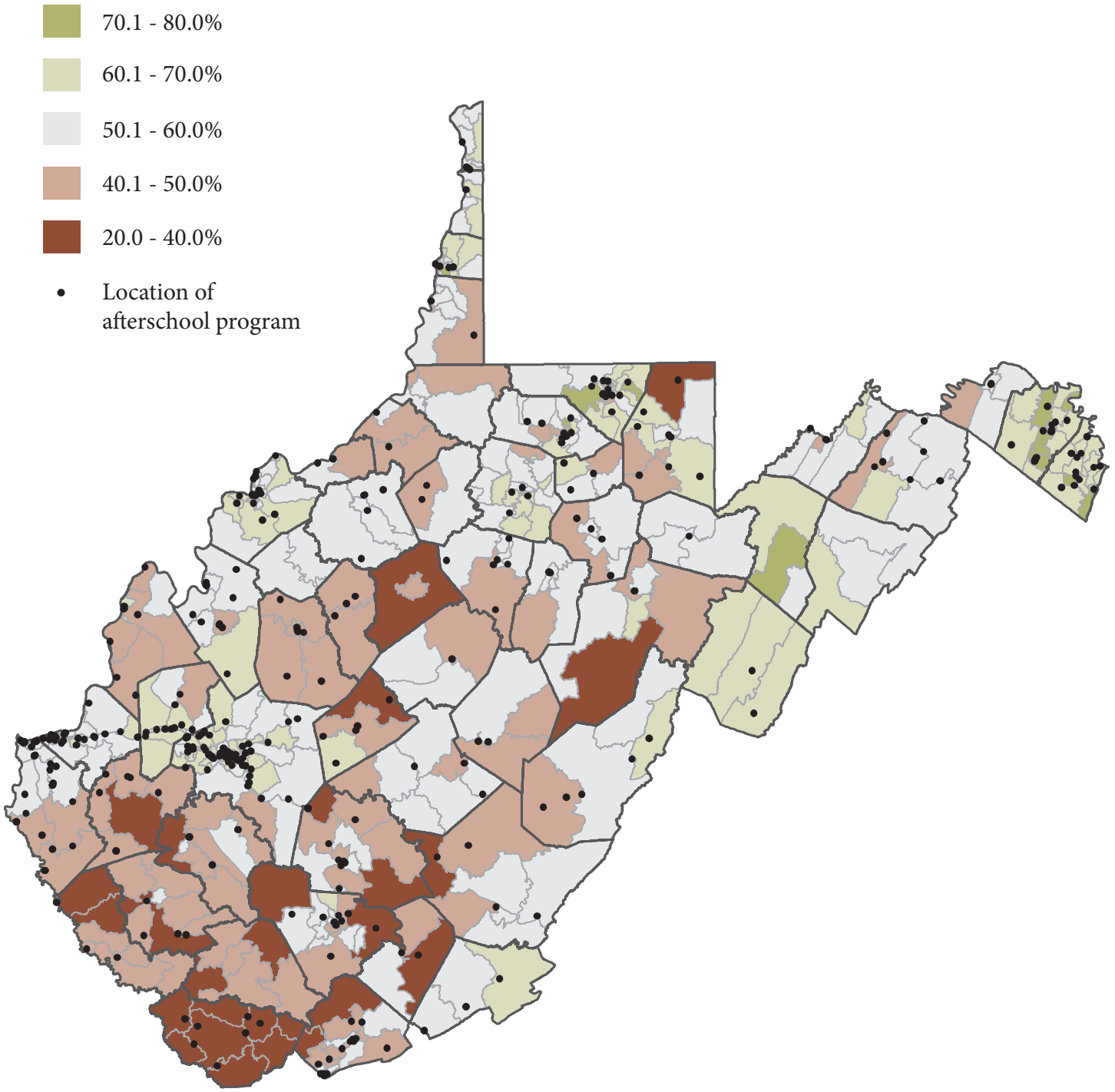


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, "Unemployment Rates by County in West Virginia, July 2012," not seasonally adjusted, accessed at http://www.bls.gov/ro3/wvlaus.htm.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 13

Labor Force Participation Rate, 16 Years and Older

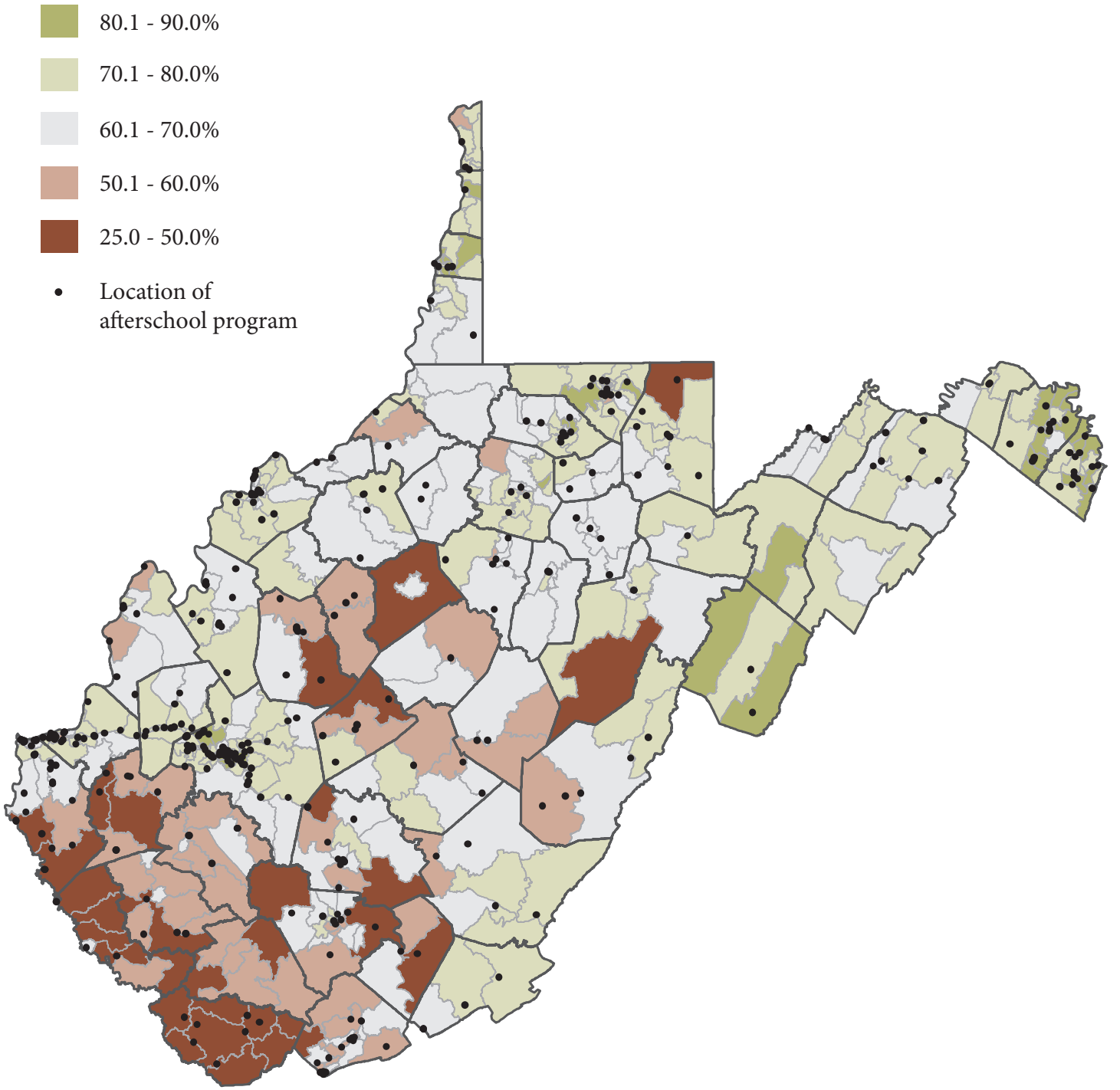


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S2301: Employment Status," West Virginia census tracts.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 14

Labor Force Participation Rate, 25 to 64 Years Old

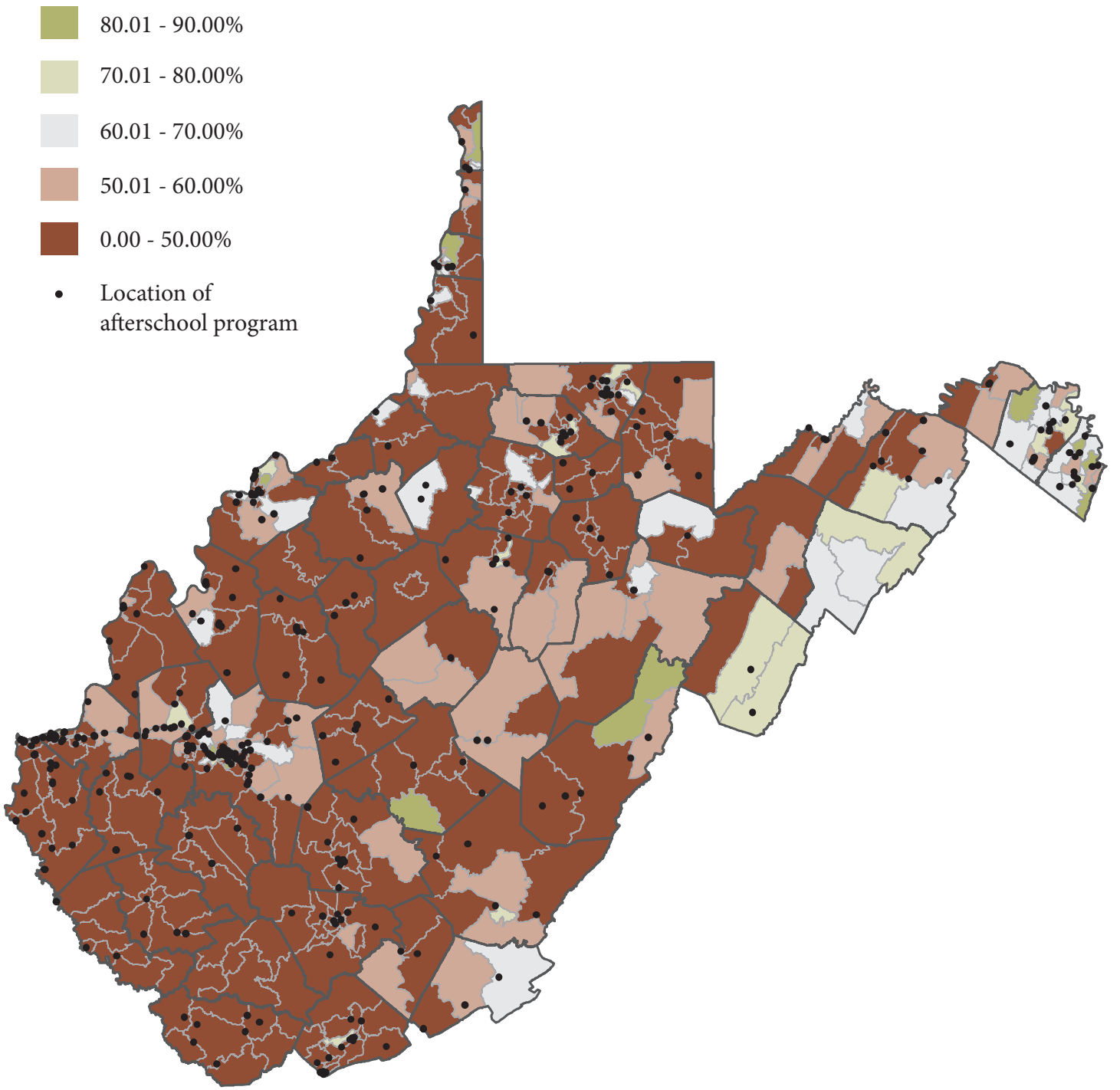


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S2301: Employment Status," West Virginia census tracts.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

MAP 15

Labor Force Participation Rate, 25 to 64 Years Old, No High School Degree



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S2301: Employment Status," West Virginia census tracts.

Map created by Elizabeth Paulhus.

Conclusion

West Virginia's educational system continues to rank at the bottom of the nation, while the health of many children in West Virginia is poor. The state must find ways to address its problems of truancy, school dropouts, and childhood obesity so as to improve the quality of life for its children both today and in the future. One effective model that should be used more often is afterschool programs. Currently, only 13 percent of West Virginia's children participate in an afterschool program, which is likely due to lack of access and insufficient program sites. This is particularly true in rural communities. Some counties have afterschool programs in many of their schools, while others do not have any programs.

Afterschool programs that complement the regular school curriculum, engage teachers and parents and other community members, and use innovative and engaging learning techniques are important for West Virginia's children. Since children attend these programs until 5 or 6 pm, they spend less time unsupervised and have more structure in their days. The programs typically set aside time for homework assistance, physical activity and play, and a snack or meal. Children can receive more one-on-one attention than they might during the regular school day, which enables them to catch up to their peers in subjects in which they were lagging. As physical education and recess have dwindled in many school districts, afterschool programs often afford students the opportunity to run and play with their friends, which improves their health and their sociability.

The benefits of afterschool programs are numerous. They can improve a child's grades, self-esteem, classroom behavior, and health. They can make a child less prone to skip classes or days of school. They can lead to better scores on standardized tests. They can improve a child's work habits or expose a child to different careers. They can offer internships to older students seeking to gain some work experience. They can teach a child about eating healthier and can increase their physical activity levels. When these things happen, the lives of West Virginia's children will improve, and truancy, dropout rates, and childhood obesity should begin to decrease.

Every child in the state should have access to afterschool programs either in their own school or through a local nonprofit organization like the YMCA or Boys and Girls Club. As the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network and its partners work to make this goal a reality, they can use the maps in this report to identify counties or areas of the state that need more programs or support. Specific locations can be determined based upon which measure or issue the Network chooses to target. Increased access to afterschool programs in West Virginia is important for the state's children and should be supported by policymakers and advocates alike.

Endnotes

1 Afterschool Alliance, "Afterschool in West Virginia," accessed at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state_abbr=WV.

2 *Ibid*.

3 Afterschool Alliance, "America after 3pm: From Big Cities to Small Towns" (October 2010), accessed at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/aa3pm.cfm.

4 Afterschool Alliance, "Afterschool Essentials: Research and Polling," downloaded from www.afterschoolalliance.org/Essentials_4_20_12_FINAL.pdf.

5 Afterschool Alliance, "Aligning Afterschool with the Regular School Day: The Perfect Complement" (July 2011), accessed at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_50_schoolDay.cfm.

6 *Ibid*.

7 U.S Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Truancy Prevention," accessed at http://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/progTypesTruancy.aspx.

8 Michael Pollak, "F.Y.I.," *The New York Times*, June 20, 2004, accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/20/nyregion/fyi-019240.html.

9 West Virginia Judiciary, "Truancy Handouts," downloaded from http://www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/truancy/pdfs/Truancy%20handouts.pdf.

10 Shelly DeBerry, "Dropout Prevention in WV" (PowerPoint from the West Virginia Department of Education) (cites data from the National Dropout Prevention Network), downloaded from wvde.state.wv.us/healthyschools/documents/DropoutPreventioninWVforAlternativeEdConferencepowerpoint.ppt.

11 *Ibid*.

12 Myriam L. Baker, Jane Nady Sigmon, and M. Elaine Nugent, "Truancy Reduction: Keeping Students in School" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, September 2001), downloaded from www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/188947.pdf. Also, U.S. DOJ, "Truancy Prevention."

13 U.S. DOJ, "Truancy Prevention."

14 West Virginia Code, "Chapter 18. Education, Article 8. Compulsory School Attendance," accessed at http://www.legis.state.wv.us/wvcode/Code.cfm?chap=18&art=8#08.

15 Felicia Corley, "Legislative Mandates Concerning Truancy Effects on Attendance Rates," Marshall University Theses, Dissertations and Capstones, Paper 217, accessed at http://mds.marshall.edu/etd/217/.

16 Data compiled from the West Virginia Judiciary, "Truancy: Unexcused Absences for the 2009-2010 School Year," accessed at http://www.courtswv.gov/court-administration/truancy/truancy.html.

17 Zac Taylor, "Truancy numbers declining statewide, department of education officials say," *The Charleston Gazette*, July 23, 2012, accessed at http://wvgazette.com/News/201207230153.

18 *Ibid*.

19 Amy Julia Harris, "Truancy a 'big problem' in W.Va, " *The Charleston Gazette*, July 7, 2012, accessed at http://www.wvgazette.com/News/201207070092.

20 *Ibid*.

21 Supreme Court of Appeals, State of West Virginia, "News: Statistics indicate Putnam judicial truancy program working," April 18, 2012, downloaded from www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/press/releases/2012-releases/april18b_12.pdf.

22 Kate White, "Putnam school board to hire truancy probation officer," *The Charleston Gazette*, May 7, 2012, accessed at http://wvgazette.com/News/Putnam/201205070235.

23 Clark Davis, "Cabell County cracks down on truancy," *West Virginia Public Broadcasting*, April 18, 2012, accessed at http://www.wvpubcast.org/newsarticle.aspx?id=24810.

24 *Ibid*.

25 Dawn Miller, "Judge tackles truancy with existing law," *The Charleston Gazette*, February 11, 2011, accessed at http://www.wvgazette.com/Opinion/DawnMiller/201102110737.

26 From West Virginia Code, "Chapter 49. Child Welfare, Article 1. Purposes, Definitions," accessed at http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/code.cfm?chap=49:

> (10) (A)"Neglected child" means a child:
> (i) Whose physical or mental health is harmed or threatened by a present refusal, failure or inability of the child's parent, guardian or custodian to supply the child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care or education, when such refusal, failure or inability is not due primarily to a lack of financial means on the part of the parent, guardian or custodian.

27 Dawn Miller.

28 *Ibid*.

29 WVVA TV, "Data show better-than-expected reduction in school truancy," June 13, 2012, accessed at http://www.wvea.org/News---Events/2012-Archive/July-2012/Mercer-sees-better-than-expected-truancy-drop.aspx.

30 Jessica Y. Lilly, "Southern county fighting truancy," *West Virginia Public Broadcasting*, September 23, 2011, accessed at http://www.wvpubcast.org/newsarticle.aspx?id=21918.

31 Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan, "A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents," *American Journal of Community Psychology* Vol. 45, No. 3-4 (2010): 294-309.

32 *Ibid*.

33 *Ibid*.

34 Afterschool Alliance, "Afterschool Essentials."

35 Afterschool Alliance, "Evaluations Backgrounder: A Summary of Formal Evaluations of Afterschool Programs' Impact on Academics, Behavior, Safety and Family Life" (May 2012), downloaded from www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/evaluationsBackgrounder2011.pdf.

36 *Ibid*.

37 Afterschool Alliance, "Aligning Afterschool."

38 Afterschool Alliance, "Evaluations Backgrounder."

39 National Institutes of Health, National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, "Calculate Your Body Mass Index," accessed at http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/.

40 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Basics about Childhood Obesity," accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/basics.html.

41 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Childhood Obesity Facts," accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm.

42 *Ibid*.

43 Sonia Caprio et al., "Influence of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture on Childhood Obesity: Implications for Prevention and Treatment," *Diabetes Care* Vol. 31, No. 11 (Nov. 2008): 2211-2221.

44 Cynthia L. Ogden et al., "Obesity and Socioeconomic Status in Children and Adolescents: United States, 2005-2008" (National Center for Health Statistics, December 2010), accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db51.htm.

45 Caprio.

46 CDC, "Childhood Obesity Facts." and American Diabetes Association, "Prediabetes", accessed at http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/prevention/pre-diabetes/.

47 National Library of Medicine, "Diabetes," accessed at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002194/.

48 WVU Extension Service – Putnam County, "Childhood Obesity Statistics," accessed at http://putnam.ext.wvu.edu/familieshealth/childhoodobesity/stats. and CDC, "Childhood Obesity Facts."

49 CDC, "Childhood Obesity Facts."

50 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Be One in a Million this American Heart Month," accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth/.

51 S. Jay Olshansky et al., "A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century" *The New England Journal of Medicine* Vol. 352, No. 11 (March 2005): 1138-1145.

52 CDC, "Childhood Obesity Facts."

53 CDC, "Childhood Obesity Facts." and Bill Hendrick, "CDC Links Obesity, Arthritis, and Lack of Exercise," *WebMD Health News*, May 19, 2011, accessed at http://arthritis.webmd.com/news/20110519/cdc-links-obesity-arthritis-and-lack-of-exercise.

54 American Psychiatric Association, "Obesity can be harmful to your child's mental health" (October 2003), accessed at http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-10/apa-ocb100103.php.

55 Heather Paxton, "The Effects of Childhood Obesity on Self-Esteem," Marshall University Theses, Dissertations and Capstones, April 2005, downloaded from www.marshall.edu/etd/masters/paxton-heather-2005-ma.pdf.

56 Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, "Indicator 1.4: What is the weight status of children based on Body Mass Index for age (BMI-for-age)?," accessed at http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=226&r=50.

57 Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, "State Ranking Map of Overweight/Obese Children," accessed at http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/rankings/maps?s=31. and "Indicator 1.4a: How many children are currently overweight or obese, based on Body Mass Index for age (BMI-for-age)?" (2007 survey), accessed at http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/allstates?q=218.

58 Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, "Indicator 1.4a: How many children are currently overweight or obese, based on Body Mass Index for age (BMI-for-age)?" (2003 survey), accessed at http://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/allstates?q=1410.

59 Child Policy Research Center, "West Virginia State Fact Sheet."

60 *Ibid*.

61 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Youth Online: High School YRBS, 2011, "Dietary Behaviors," accessed at http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx.

62 *Ibid*.

63 *Ibid*.

64 West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, "Obesity in West Virginia" (November 2011), downloaded from www.wvdhhr.org/bph/HSC/Pubs/Other/ObesityReport2011/obesityreport2011.pdf.

65 *Ibid*.

66 *Ibid*.

67 West Virginia Office of Healthy Lifestyles, "Healthy Lifestyles," accessed at http://www.wvohl.com/HealthyLifestyles/HealthyLifestyles/tabid/558/Default.aspx. and West Virginia Legislature, "H.B. 2816" (2005), accessed at http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Status/bills_text.cfm?billdoc=HB2816%20SUB.htm&yr=2005&sesstype=RS&i=2816.

68 West Virginia Legislature, "H.B. 2816."

69 West Virginia University, Health Research Center, "West Virginia Healthy Lifestyles Act: Year One Evaluation Report" (February 2009), downloaded from www.wvohl.com/Portals/3/YearOneEvaluationReport.pdf.

70 Carole V. Harris et al., "Evaluating the West Virginia Healthy Lifestyles Act: Methods and Procedures," *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* Vol. 7, Supp. 1 (2010): S31-S39, downloaded from paprn.wustl.edu/pastprojects/Documents/Harris_WV.pdf.

71 *Ibid*.

72 *Ibid*.

73 WV DHHR.

74 *Ibid*.

75 WVU, HRC.

76 *Ibid*.

77 WV DHHR.

78 West Virginia Games for Health, "Training Information," accessed at http://wvgamesforhealth.wvu.edu/training_information.

79 "Interview with WV Public Schools about the DDR Initiative (Part 2)," accessed at http://bluealien.org/node/93.

80 Emily C-S Murphy, "The Effect of Aerobic Exercise on Endothelial Dysfunction in Overweight Children," West Virginia University dissertation, 2007, downloaded from wvgamesforhealth.wvu.edu/r/download/11552. and Seth Schiesel, "P.E. Classes Turn to Video Game That Works Legs," *The New York Times*, April 30,2007, accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/30/health/30exer.html.

81 Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, "Charleston, WV," accessed at http://www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org/communities/charleston-wv.

82 Kathryn Gregory, "Field trip for healthy living," *The Charleston Gazette*, April 21, 2011, accessed at http://wvgazette.com/News/201104211080.

83 Veronica Nett, "Community assesses 'walkability' of new West Side elementary school," *The Charleston Gazette*, March 22, 2011, accessed at http://wvgazette.com/News/201103221219.

84 Healthy Kids.

85 Kathryn Gregory.

86 Kaiser Family Foundation, "Daily Media Use among Children and Teens Up Dramatically from Five Years Ago" (January 20, 2010), accessed at http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia012010nr.cfm/

87 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Changes in YMCA Afterschool Programs Increase Children's Physical Activity and Healthy Food Options," accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/prc/prevention-strategies/YMCA-Harvard-Afterschool-Food-and-Fitness-Project.htm.

88 *Ibid*.

89 *Ibid*.

90 Center for Collaborative Solutions, "Healthy Behaviors Initiative, Step-by-Step Guide," accessed at http://www.ccscenter.org/afterschool/Step-By-Step%20Guide.

91 Chris Chapman, Jennifer Laird, Nicole Ifill, and Angelina KewalRamani, "Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2009" (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, October 2011), accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2012006.

92 *Ibid*.

93 *Ibid*.

94 Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl, "Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018," (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce, June 2010), accessed at http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/.

95 *Ibid*.

96 *Ibid*.

97 Shelly DeBerry.

98 Leila Fiester and Ralph Smith, "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters" (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010), downloaded from www.aecf.org/~/media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf.

99 Henry M. Levin, "The Social Costs of Inadequate Education" (summary findings presented at the Teachers College Symposium on Educational Equity, October 24-26, 2005), downloaded from mea.org/tef/pdf/social_costs_of_inadequate.pdf.

100 Anthony Carnevale et al.

101 Cindy Johnston, "Series Overview: The Cost of Dropping Out," *National Public Radio*, July 24, 2011, accessed at http://www.npr.org/2011/07/24/138508517/series-overview-the-cost-of-dropping-out.

102 Henry M. Levin.

103 Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, and Joe McLaughlin, "The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School" (Boston, MA: Center for Labor Market Studies, October 2009), downloaded from iris.lib.neu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=clms_pub.

104 National Center for Education Statistics, "Table 28. Labor status of 16- to 24-year-old high school dropouts in the civilian labor force in the year that they dropped out," accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012026/tables/table_28.asp

105 *Ibid*.

106 Peter Muennig, "Health Returns to Education Interventions" (paper prepared for the Symposium on The Social Costs of Inadequate Education, October 24-25, 2000), downloaded from devweb.tc.columbia.edu/manager/symposium/Files/81_Muennig_paper.ed.pdf.

107 *Ibid*.

108 Sam Dillon, "Study Finds High Rate of Imprisonment among Dropouts," *The New York Times*, October 8, 2009, accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/09/education/09dropout.html.

109 *Ibid*.

110 Andrew Sum et al.

111 Cindy Johnston.

112 National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, "State Dropout and Completion Data: 2008-2009," accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/drpcompstatelvl.asp.

113 *Ibid*.

114 *Ibid*.

115 *Ibid*.

116 U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S1501:Educational Attainment," West Virginia.

117 U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table S1501:Educational Attainment," United States.

118 U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, "Table B15002: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over," West Virginia & United States.

119 West Virginia Department of Education, "Comprehensive District/School Dropout Prevention Plans: Guidance Document," downloaded from wvde.state.wv.us/innovationzones/Documents/Guidance%20Document%20(3).pdf.

120 *Ibid*.

121 West Virginia Department of Education, Innovation Zone and Drop-out Prevention Grant, "Applicant: Independence Middle School, Raleigh County," downloaded from wvde.state.wv.us/innovationzones/Documents/IndependenceMiddleSchoolDropoutIZGrant2011.pdf.

122 West Virginia Department of Education, Innovation Zone and Drop-out Prevention Grant, "Applicant: Wood County Schools," downloaded from wvde.state.wv.us/innovationzones/Documents/WoodCountySchoolsDropoutIZGrant2011.pdf.

123 Kara Moore, "Putnam's dropout prevention program sees success," The Charleston Daily Mail, August 6, 2012, accessed at http://dailymail.com/News/201208060248.

124 Emily R. Schoen, "Blog: Walk the Talk Provides Content Based Curriculum for At-Risk Students," The Education Alliance, accessed at http://www.educationalliance.org/blog/?s=b&by=post&ID=17. and The Education Alliance, "Mentoring Teens: Now More than Ever," accessed at http://educationalliance.org/?ID=38&WalktheTalk.

125 West Virginia Department of Education, "RiseUp: Resources," accessed at http://wvde.state.wv.us/riseup/resources.php.

126 West Virginia Department of Education, "Credit Recovery Course Catalog," accessed at http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/courses/crcatalog.cfm.

127 Afterschool Alliance, "Afterschool: A High School Dropout Prevention Tool" (July 2009), accessed at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_38_DropoutPrevention.cfm.

128 *Ibid*.

129 *Ibid*.

130 *Ibid*.

131 *Ibid*.

The **West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy** is a policy research organization that is nonpartisan, nonprofit, and statewide. It focuses on how policy decisions affect all West Virginians, including low- and moderate-income families, other vulnerable populations, and the important community programs that serve them.

723 Kanawha Blvd, Suite 300
Charleston, WV 25301
Tel: 304.720.8682
Fax: 304.720.9696
www.wvpolicy.org

The **West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network** is a membership organization that seeks to create and sustain a statewide partnership to raise awareness of the importance and accessibility of high quality "out-of-school time" programs for all school age children, share criteria of effective programs and best practices among providers and the public, and promote sustainability of such programs throughout the state.

4700 MacCorkle Ave., SE
Charleston, WV 25304
Tel: 304.720.9882
http://wvsan.ext.wvu.edu/