

# What Parents Think: Results from the 2017 Survey on Play

## Findings Highlight Generational Differences Among Parents and an Opportunity for Increased Education about the Benefits of Outdoor Play

Research from the inaugural Voice of Play Parent Survey finds that kids, on average, are playing four days per week. This is good news for parents and kids alike, as research confirms the multiple benefits of play, including children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive well-being. The survey also uncovered generational differences among parents in play attitudes and behaviors, highlighting an opportunity for increased education on why play is critically important.

### HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS

## Regular play is the way

Parents say that their kids, on average, play **4 days a week**

**42%** of parents say their kids play **4-6 days** a week

**30%** 1-3 days

**24%** every day

**26%** of kids **less than 5 years old** play 7 days a week

**29%** of kids **5-9 years old** play 7 days a week

**18%** of kids **10+** play 7 days a week

2017 Voice of Play Survey, Wakefield Research for IPEMA



## FREQUENT PLAY IS ESSENTIAL

Four in ten respondents (42 percent) say that their kids play four to six days per week, 30 percent play one to three days per week, 24 percent play every day and four percent claim their children do not play at all. In addition, parents who had four or more children were more likely to have kids that play outside seven days per week (31 percent). The percentage of children who spend

time playing seven days per week is as follows: 26 percent being less than five years old, 29 percent being five to nine years old and 18 percent being 10 and above.

## OUTDOOR PLAY IS PREFERRED

80 percent of parents said their kids enjoy playing outdoors significantly more than playing indoors, with 41 percent agreeing strongly with this statement. More than four in 10 parents (44 percent) said their children play outside for 2-3 hours, while 24 percent play less than one hour, 21 percent play one hour and 12 percent play more than three

hours. Children with Millennial parents play outdoors the most, on average 2.23 hours each day, while Generation X (1.85 hours) and Baby Boomer parents (1.94 hours) said their kids log less time outside playing.

## Kids Crave Outdoor Play!

**80%** of parents agree that their children enjoy playing outdoors significantly more than they enjoy playing indoors!

Millennial parents: **88% agree**  
Gen X parents: **74% agree**  
Boomer parents: **73% agree**

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**2.03 hrs** On average, parents say their children spend **2.03 hours playing outdoors** each day!

Millennial parents: **2.23 hours**  
Gen X parents: **1.85 hours**  
Boomer parents: **1.94 hours**

However, while respondents expressed that their kids enjoyed outdoor play more, the survey revealed that a more significant amount of time is spent playing indoors: Millennial parents say their children play 4.11 hours each day, Generation X say 2.66 hours and Baby Boomer parents say 2.47 hours. Forty percent of respondents say their kids play for 2-3 hours indoors, 35 percent say more than three hours, 14 percent say one hour and 11 percent say less than one hour.

# The Benefits of Play

Parents recognize the benefits of play, but there is room for increased education.

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Which of the following do you feel is a benefit of children playing?

- **Social, such as interacting with other or building relationship skills: 81%**
- **Physical, such as exercise or flexibility: 80%**
- **Cognitive, such as developing verbal or manipulative skills: 72%**
- **Emotional, such as building self-confidence or releasing emotions: 72%**

## RECOGNIZING THE BENEFITS

Play has a long list of benefits that are integral to a child's future development. Yet many parents recognize select benefits more than others. Baby Boomer parents were confident to respond that children who play benefit physically (93 percent), socially (87 percent), emotionally (85 percent) and cognitively (80 percent). This

compares to Millennials, who ranked each attribute the lowest of all generations: socially (75 percent), physically (74 percent), cognitively (68 percent) and emotionally (65 percent).

## YEAR-ROUND PLAY IS IMPORTANT!

When the temperatures dip, kids still need time outside if the weather conditions are still safe. However, parents of all generations prioritize outdoor play in the summer months: 89 percent agree that outdoor play is important in the summer, while 84 percent say the same of spring, 76 percent of fall and only 45 percent of winter. Additionally, Millennial parents don't see year-round play as important as their Boomer counterparts. While both Millennial and Boomer parents find playtime in the summer months most important, Millennial parents agree at only 74 percent, while Boomers come in at 93.5 percent. Similarly, 57 percent of Boomer parents think play is important in winter, as compared to 39 percent of Millennial parents. Even if weather conditions don't allow for outdoor play, free play should still be part of the routine.

# Year-Round Outdoor Play is the Way!

But not all parents say outdoor play is important during the cooler months.

37%	39%	54%	69%	83%	83%	84%	81%	73%	64%	46%	38%
JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Research shows that outdoor free play gives kids many valuable benefits.

2017 Voice of Play Survey, Wakefield Research for IPEMA

The survey was conducted online by Wakefield Research on behalf of IPEMA and the Voice of Play initiative. It was a nationally representative survey of 1,000 U.S. parents ages 18 and over. It was released at U.S. Play Coalition's Play Conference, held April 2-5, 2017 at Clemson University. For more information on the survey, visit [www.voiceofplay.org](http://www.voiceofplay.org) or contact IPEMA and the Voice of Play via the link on the website.

**About Adventure Playground Systems:** Adventure Playground Systems believes that playgrounds are interactive social learning centers. We offer a variety of designs where children can expand their horizons by developing their cognitive, imaginative and motor skills. Together we can enhance our children's learning through the love of play!

**About Voice of Play:** IPEMA's Voice of Play initiative promotes growth in the quality and quantity of children's free play and the use of playgrounds. By providing information and resources, the Voice of Play's goal is to increase education and awareness about the many benefits of children's play, including the development of critical physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills. The Voice of Play website and social media efforts are a great resource for those who want to learn about the many benefits of play. Visit [www.voiceofplay.org](http://www.voiceofplay.org).