



Harvard

Prevention Research Center

on Nutrition and Physical Activity

# **YOUTH TASK FORCE 2008**

## **What You Do Starts in The Middle**

# BACKGROUND

# YTF OVERVIEW

- The YTF has studied the eating and physical activity habits of youth, primarily in the Boston area. We hope that the information we present helps to inform the work of the PRC and its community partners.
- The YTF is in its second year of funding by the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation with additional support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U48-DP000064).
- We meet bi-weekly from October until May, to work on our project.



# WHO WE ARE

- 11 high school students from Boston, who attend the following schools:
  - Madison Park, Dorchester High, Boston Latin School, East Boston High, Charlestown High, Health Careers Academy, Hyde Park High, New Mission High and South Boston High

Career interests:

- Nursing, medicine, law, biology, business, psychology, forensic science, nutrition



# PAST PROJECTS

- **2002-2003:** Teaching Planet Health lessons to middle school students
- **2003-2004:** “Where and Why are Youth Eating Fast Foods?”
- **2004-2005:** “Hey, How Do You Feel about Physical Education?”
- **2005-2006:** Livin’ Fit Campaign
- **2006-2007:** Canteen Truck and Corner Store Healthy Beverage Initiative Projects



# 2008 PROJECT

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Our project this year was to gather information on health related behaviors of middle school students.

- We put together a survey asking questions about the physical activity, eating and drinking, sleeping and screen time habits of middle school students.
- We also wanted to see the differences between school nights and over the weekend.



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# METHODS

- YTF Coordinators contacted programs that would allow us to survey their students
- Looked at other surveys that already exist to help us develop questions (YMCA project questionnaire and YRBSS)
- Tested the survey on some of our siblings
- Created consent forms, survey, focus group questions
- Took a Human Subjects training and signed Individual Investigator Agreements.
- An HPRC intern assisted in analyzing the data for us





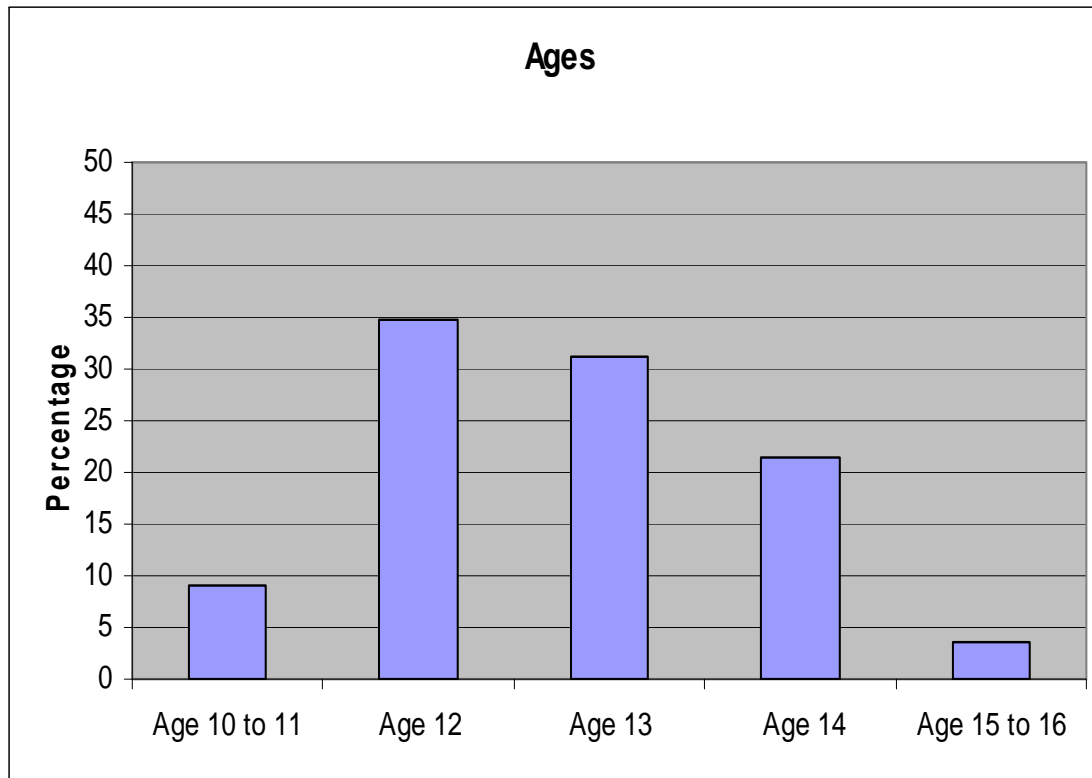
# HUMAN SUBJECTS

- We were required to take a Human Subjects training to make sure that we followed the ethical guidelines and requirements regarding research of human subjects and that people's rights and welfare were protected.
- We didn't know all the work that went into getting a research project approved so this caused a delay but it was a good learning experience.



# RESULTS

# OUR SAMPLE (N=101)



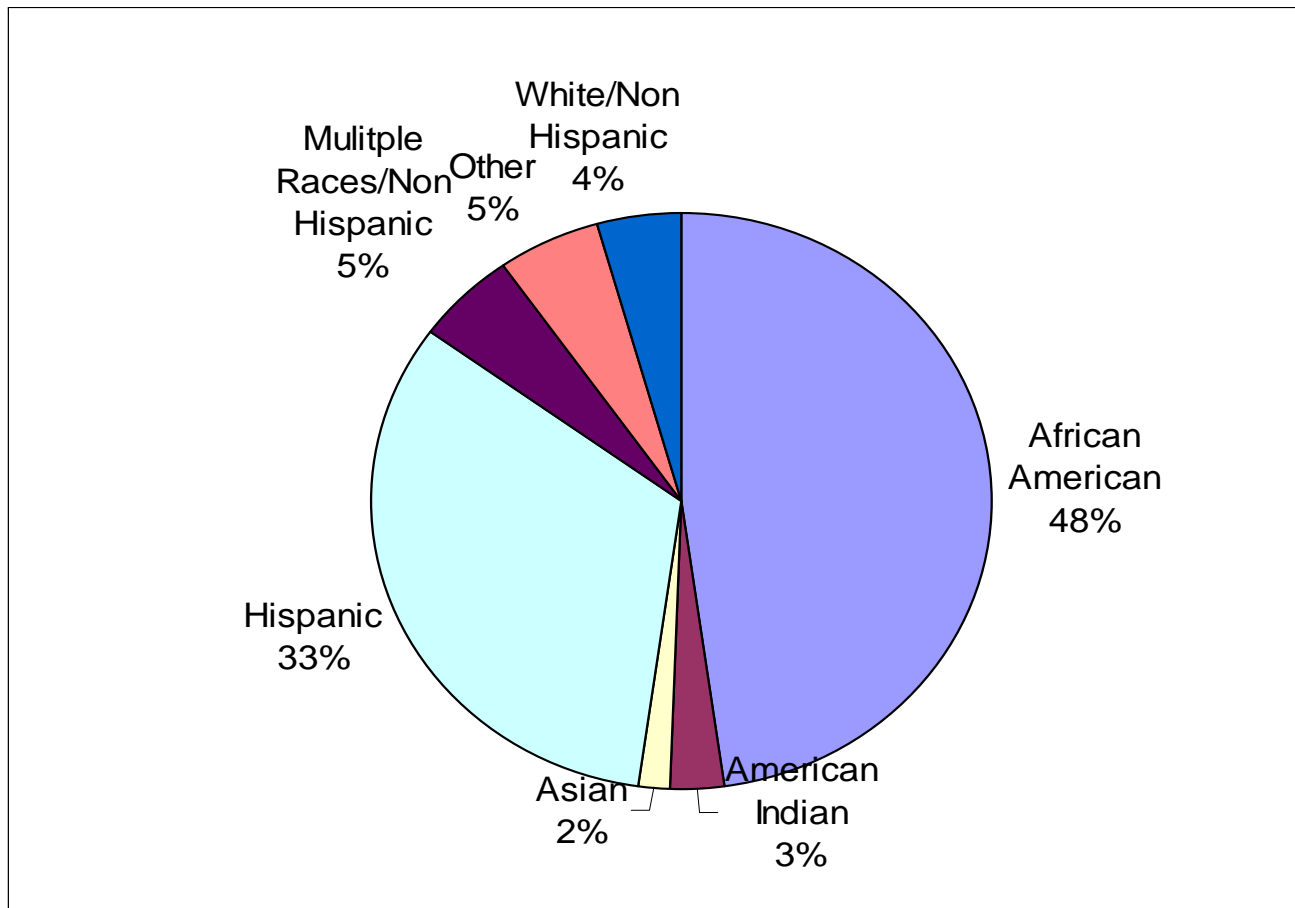
## Gender Breakdown:

46% Males

54% Females

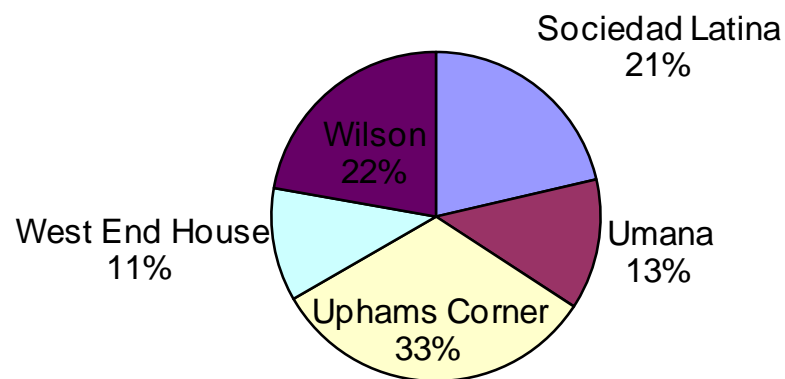


# RACE/ETHNICITY



# OUR SAMPLE BY SITE

After School Programs

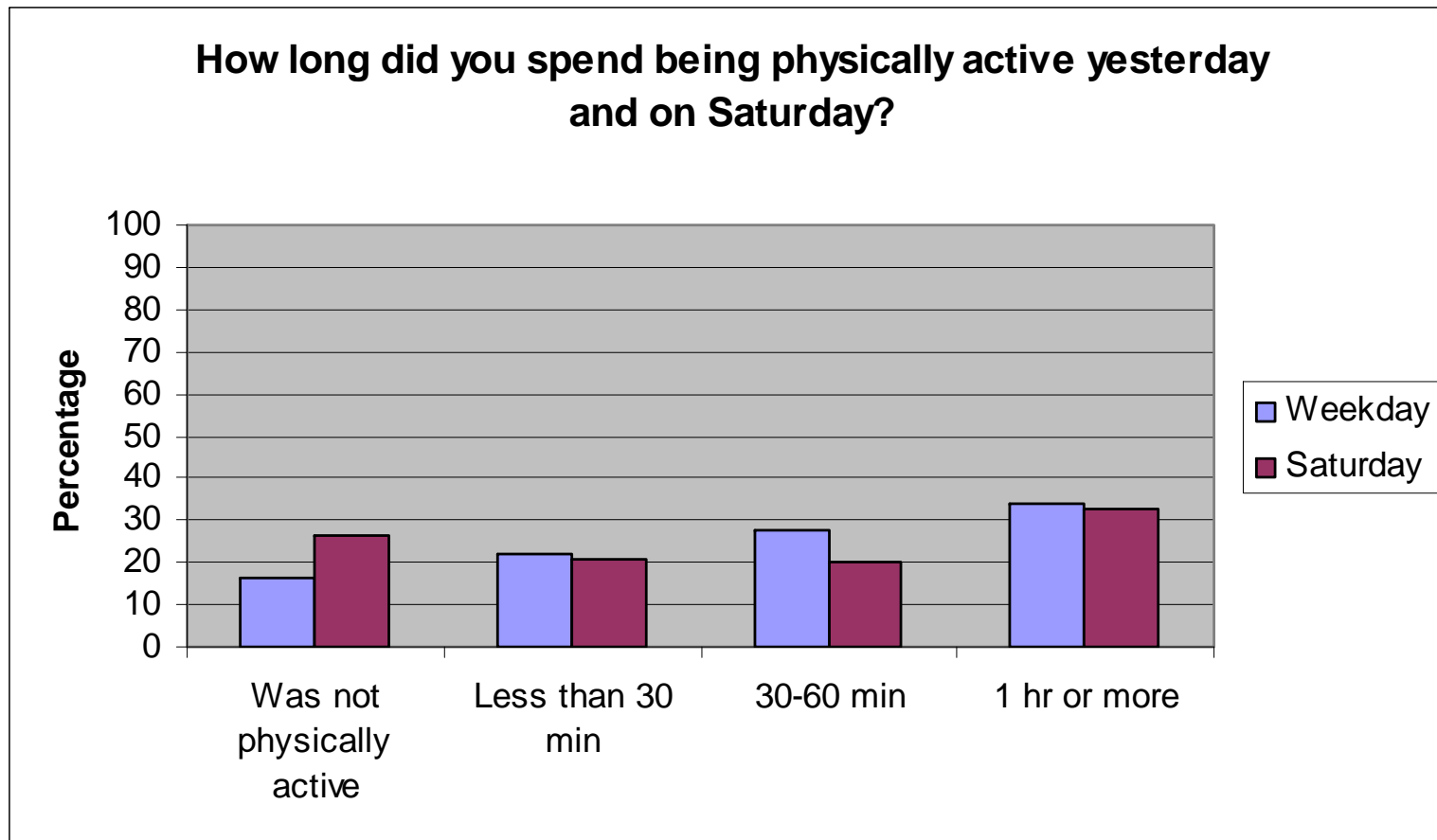


# OUR SAMPLE

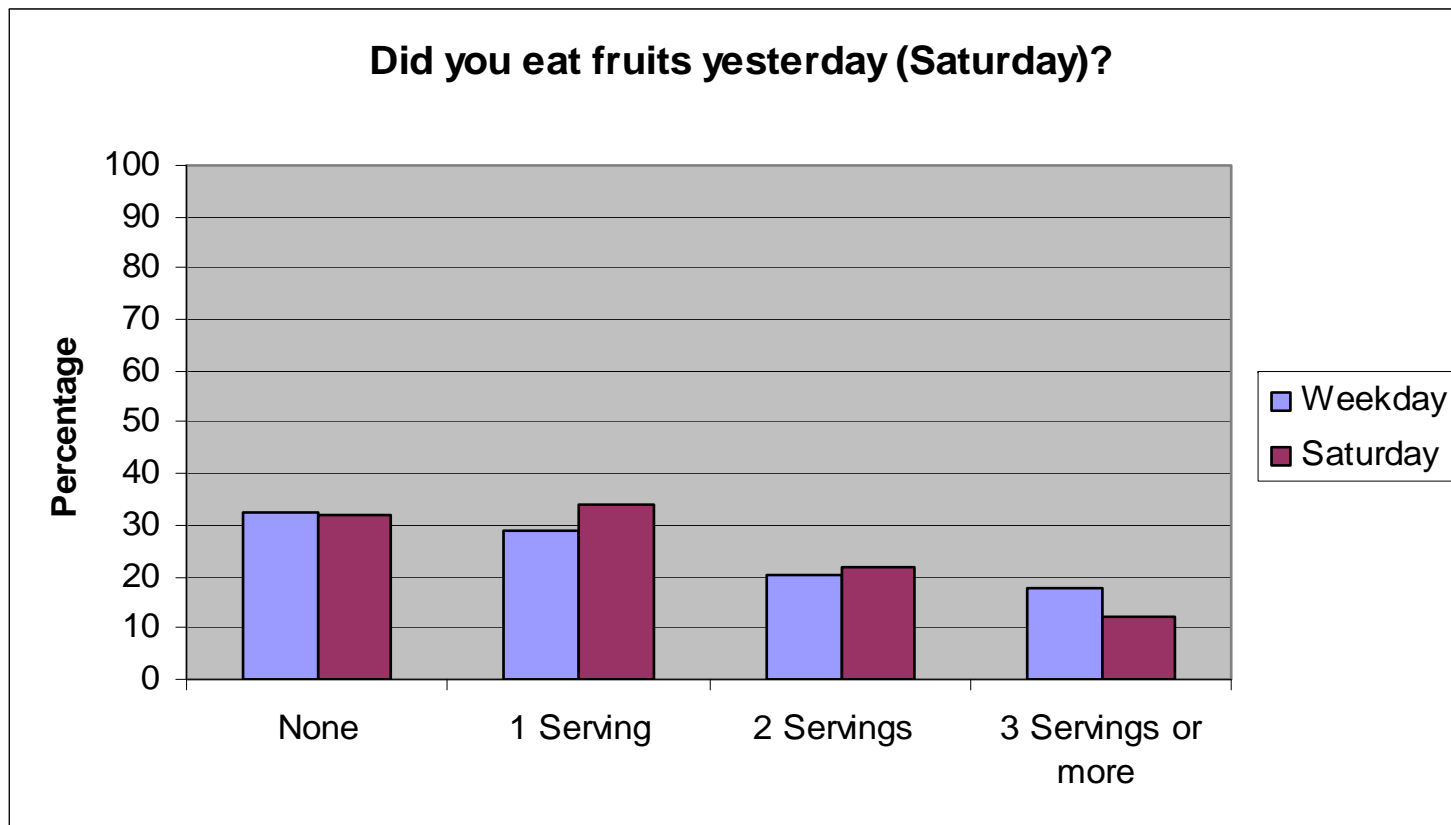
- Most of our participants (34%) came from Dorchester, East Boston (15%), Roxbury (14%)
- The remaining students came from other neighborhoods:
  - Allston/Brighton, Chinatown, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roslindale, South Boston, South End, and West Roxbury



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



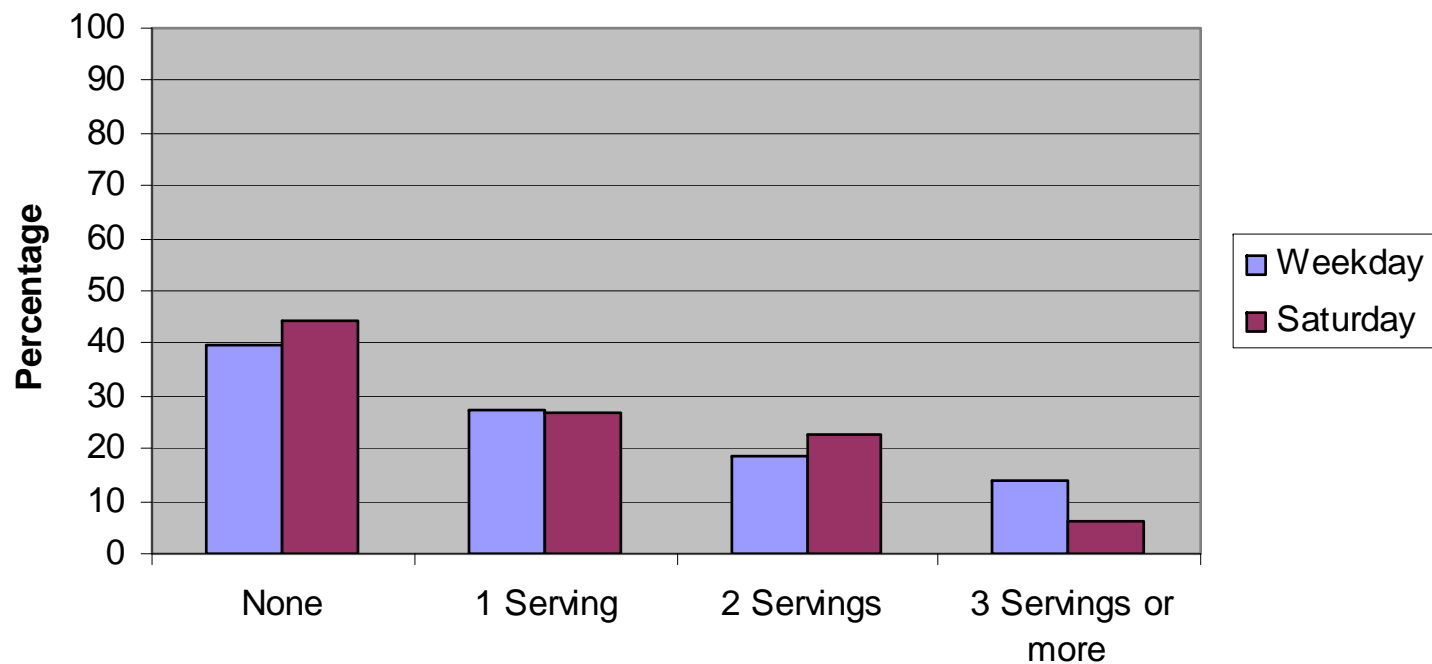
# FRUITS



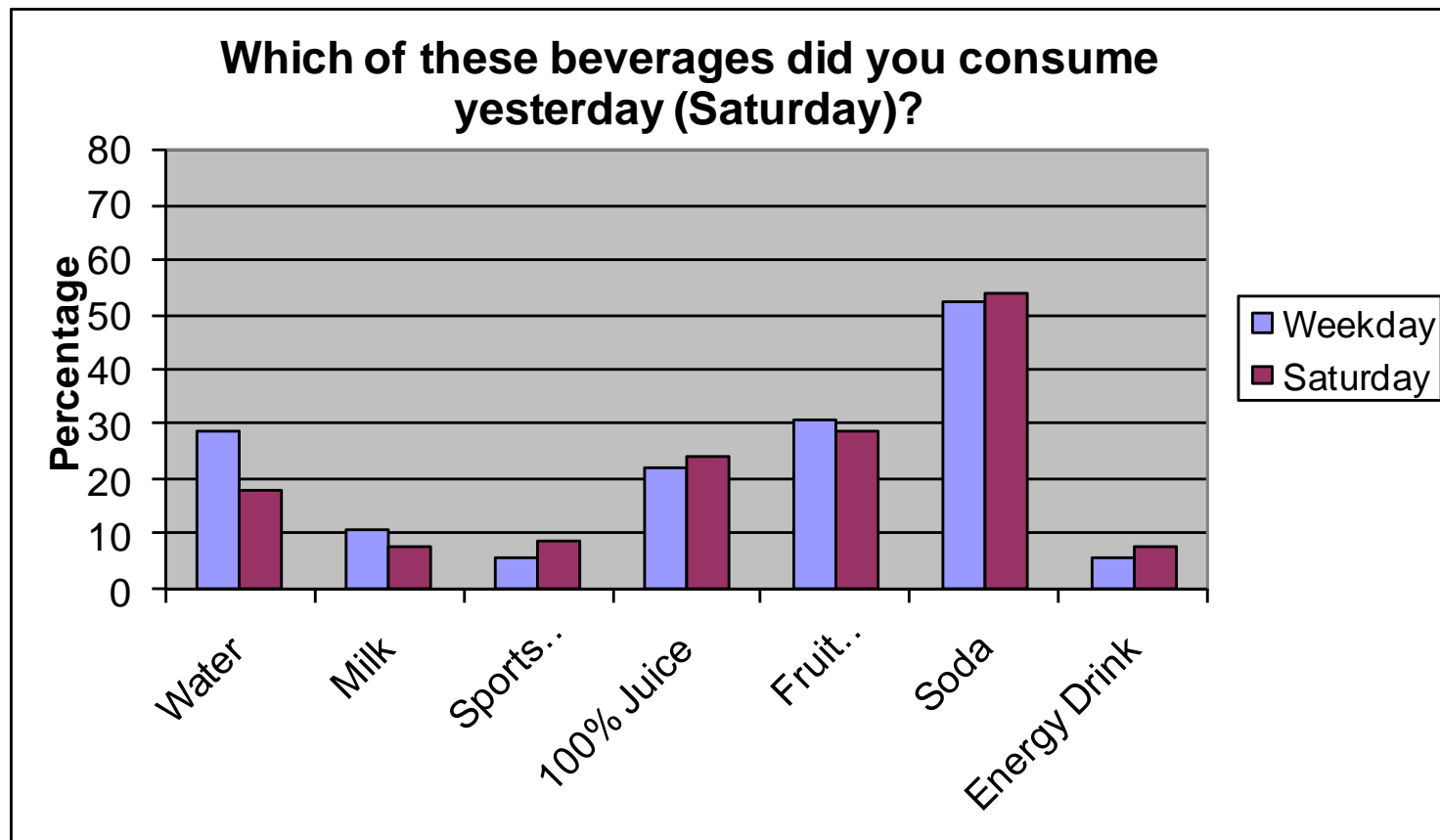


# VEGETABLES

**Did you eat vegetables yesterday (Saturday)?**



# ARE YOU THIRSTY?



# SCREEN TIME

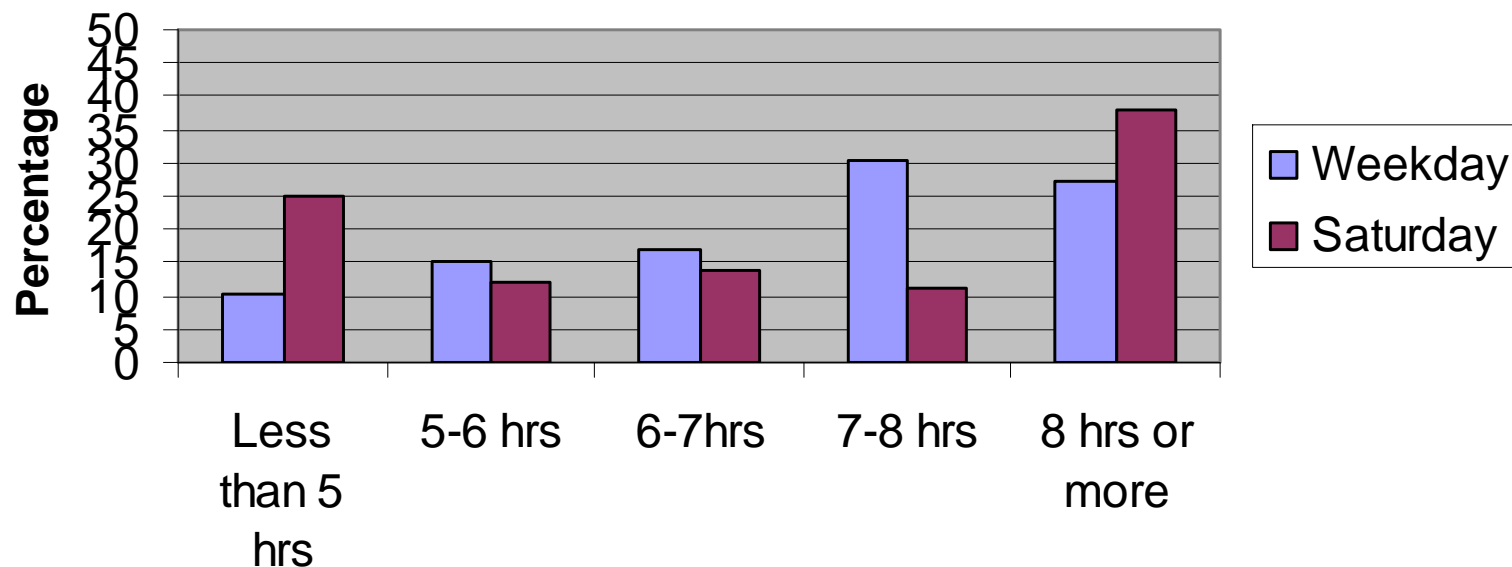
**How many hours did you spend watching TV yesterday (Saturday?) How many hours did you spend on the computer yesterday (Saturday)?**

- On average, middle school children were exposed to 3.08 hours of screen time on a weekday.
- On average, middle school children were exposed to 4.4 hours of screen time on a weekend.



# DID YOU GET YOUR ZZZ'S?

How many hours of sleep did you get  
yesterday (Saturday)?



# DID YOU EAT BREAKFAST?

**What did you eat for breakfast this morning  
(Saturday morning)?**

- 17% of students answered that they did not eat breakfast on a weekday
- 7% of students answered that they did not eat breakfast on a weekend day



# CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

# Our Challenges

- Small sample size
- Human subjects approval
- Readability of consent forms
- Keeping the survey short
- Coordinating with the schools



# Limitations

- Small sample size (Total surveys 119)
- Sample includes students in after school programs and students from extended day programs
- Limitations within classroom





# RECOMMENDATIONS

# YTF Recommendations

- In the household, make a commitment to drink more water instead of soda and high calorie/sugar juices
- Parents should encourage their children to drink low fat milk
- Schools and communities should encourage and provide opportunities for students to exercise 30 to 60 minutes each day
- More affordable community centers and YMCA memberships available for students and parents and more outreach to families about fun opportunities



# YTF Recommendations

- More availability of farmers markets in the communities
- Schools should offer water bottles to all students, this would encourage drinking water outside of the home
- Limit fast food advertisements to youth
- More education to parents regarding healthy foods and fitness
- Parents take TV's and computers out of their children's room
- Health insurance should help by offering fitness benefits



# CONCLUSION

# What's Next?

- Focus Groups with 2 or 3 of the programs
- Report back to programs because they want to know what we found
- Publishing opportunity



# THANK YOU'S

- Thanks to Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation for supporting us and their dedication to improving the lives of children and youth.
- Thanks to our Community Committee partners and to the programs we visited at Sociedad Latina, Wilson Middle School, West End House, Mario Umana Middle School and the Uphams Corner Charter School
- We'd like to thank our YTF coordinators and staff at the HPRC with a special thanks to Jessica Barrett and Tali Avery for helping us!

