Hartford Children & Youth Engagement: Insights from Three Years of UNITY & Other ARPA-Funded Programs

June 2025



CT data collaborative

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Hartford Data Collaborative

Hartford Data Collaborative: Insights from Three Years of UNITY and other ARPA-funded youth programs in Hartford

Summary of Findings

Between the summer 2021 and spring 2024 (fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024), 7,252 children participated in over 70 programs funded by the City of Hartford's Department of Families, Children, and Youth's UNITY initiative and related American Rescue Plan Act funding.[1] Programs ranged from the performing arts to literacy skill development to employment and work-based learning programs.

The Hartford Data Collaborative (HDC) calculated the number of unique participants after linking and integrating data submitted by 72 different programs serving Hartford children and youth after the COVID-19 pandemic to learn more about the types of children and youth who participated in these programs. While program participation varied each year due to the number and types of programs funded by the City, participation was generally highest among elementary and high school students, Black or African-American children and youth, and those living in the Northeast and South End neighborhoods. HDC will continue to work with local youth and workforce providers to better understand the children and youth they serve and their outcomes.

[1] This report reflects the demographics of children and youth from the subset of programs that provided data for analysis. While not representative of all programs funded by the City of Hartford through the UNITY and ARPA initiatives, the data offer important insights into the characteristics of youth served by these participating organizations.

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Background

In the summer of 2021, the Director of the Department of Families, Children and Youth (DFCY) asked the Hartford Data Collaborative (HDC) to take on the role of data collector and integrator of data about children and youth programs funded by the department as part of the newly created Understanding the Needs in Today's Youth (UNITY) project. The Department wanted to know more about the number and type of children and youth served by these programs. For the first time, each program receiving over $5,000 in grant funding was required to sign a legal data sharing agreement with HDC and share individual-level data about the children and youth who participated in their programs.

The purpose of the data collection was not for compliance with program requirements. Rather it was to have the ability to assess how many children and youth were served, determine whether the funded programs were reaching specific high need populations and inform future funding and resources to support children and youth in Hartford.

The UNITY Program ran for three years, fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024. The UNITY programs were administered by service providers serving Hartford children and youth, funded in part from city-administered grants. The City of Hartford DFCY used a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to determine award funding grants, with a focus on targeted program types and priority populations. The goal of UNITY was to fund programs that would engage children and youth post-COVID 19 pandemic, to help with healing from isolation during quarantine. The program ended in spring 2024. The City of Hartford's DFCY selected the programs to receive funding each year; HDC was not involved in the program selection process.

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Data Sharing Process

Over the three years of the UNITY programs, 72 organizations shared data with HDC (some of these programs were for non-UNITY ARPA funded programs). Organizations utilized the City of Hartford's Youth Service Bureau (YSB) spreadsheet of data requirements to collect data about their program participants, including demographic data and some household characteristics.

HDC provided Technical Assistance sessions during FY2023 and FY2024 to help improve the quality of data and reinforce the need for providing complete data so that the City and its residents would better understand which children and youth were being served by the programs. HDC also met regularly with DFCY staff during those years to understand which programs were part of UNITY and to discuss any issues with their submission of program participation data.

Findings

Over 7,000 of children and youth participated in UNITY and ARPA funded DFCY Programs.

HDC's analysis of data submitted by providers found that over three years of programming, 7,209 children and youth participated in UNITY and ARPA funded programs through DFCY grants. These data do not reflect additional Harford children and youth served by providers who did not submit their data to HDC. The total number of children and youth served in each fiscal year were: 2,125 in FY2022, 4,445 in FY2023 and 2488 in FY2024. Thirty-four programs provided data in FY2022, 41 in FY2023, and 31 in FY2024.

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Changes in Youth Enrollment in Selected City-Funded Programs Post-COVID-19

Data reflects the number of unique children and youth enrolled and participating in Hartford UNITY & Department of Families, Children, and Youth-American Rescue Plan Act funded programs by fiscal year



Analysis limited to programs that submitted to the Hartford Data Collaborative on time and in a format that allowed for linking.

Chart: Kate Eikel, CTData • Source: City of Hartford Department of Families, Children, and Youth-funded programs • Created with Datawrapper

The DFCY Director reported that the Department intentionally funded fewer programs in FY2024 as a strategic position to focus larger funding amounts to a smaller number of programs.

The types of programs and populations they served varied each year.

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Program Types (programs could self-identify and select more than one):

Program Type	FY2022 Number of Programs	FY2023 Number of Programs	FY2024 Number of Programs
Civic Engagement and Advocacy	0	0	2
Community based (FY22 and FY23 only)	28	33	0
Employment/ work-based learning	8	11	12
Environmental Stewardship	0	0	1
Literacy	0	0	9
Mentoring	2	0	13
Performing Arts	2	0	5
School based (FY22 and FY23 only)	7	8	0
Sports and Recreation/Youth Sports/ Recreation and Leisure	1	17	14
STEM/Computer Literacy	0	0	3
Summer	1	16	7
Wellness & Tutoring	0	0	13

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The number of employment/work-based learning programs increased from 8 in FY2022 to 12 in FY2024. Similarly, there was growth in the number of programs offering mentoring and wellness/tutoring over time.

Populations Served by program and number of unique children participating.

Population Type	FY2023 Number of Programs	Number of Children served FY2023	FY2024 Number of Programs	Number of Children Served FY2024
Justice-involved and/or at-risk youth up to age 24	17	550	15	917
Disengaged, disconnected, and/or opportunity youth up to age 24	28	1,933	17	803
Young children under 5 years old	6	515	6	359
Adolescents ages 11-13/Middle School (Grades 6, 7, and 8)	26	2,344	20	1,221
Girls under 18 years old	24	2,151	19	1,774
High need neighborhoods	35	2,740	24	2,233
Enrichment neighborhood deserts	25	2,018	14	1,537
Any population being served arts and culture services	15	985	0	0
Any population being provided mental health and/or wellness services as a contained program	10	280	0	0
Any population being provided services for substance abuse prevention and/or treatment	2	97	0	0

DFCY allowed the programs to select which types of populations they served each year. In FY2023, the program type serving the greatest number was those in "high need neighborhoods" (2,740 unique participants) followed by adolescents ages 11-13/middle school students (2,344 unique participants). Programs serving "high need neighborhoods" was also the greatest number in FY2024 (2,233 unique participants), followed by girls under 18 (1,774 unique participants).

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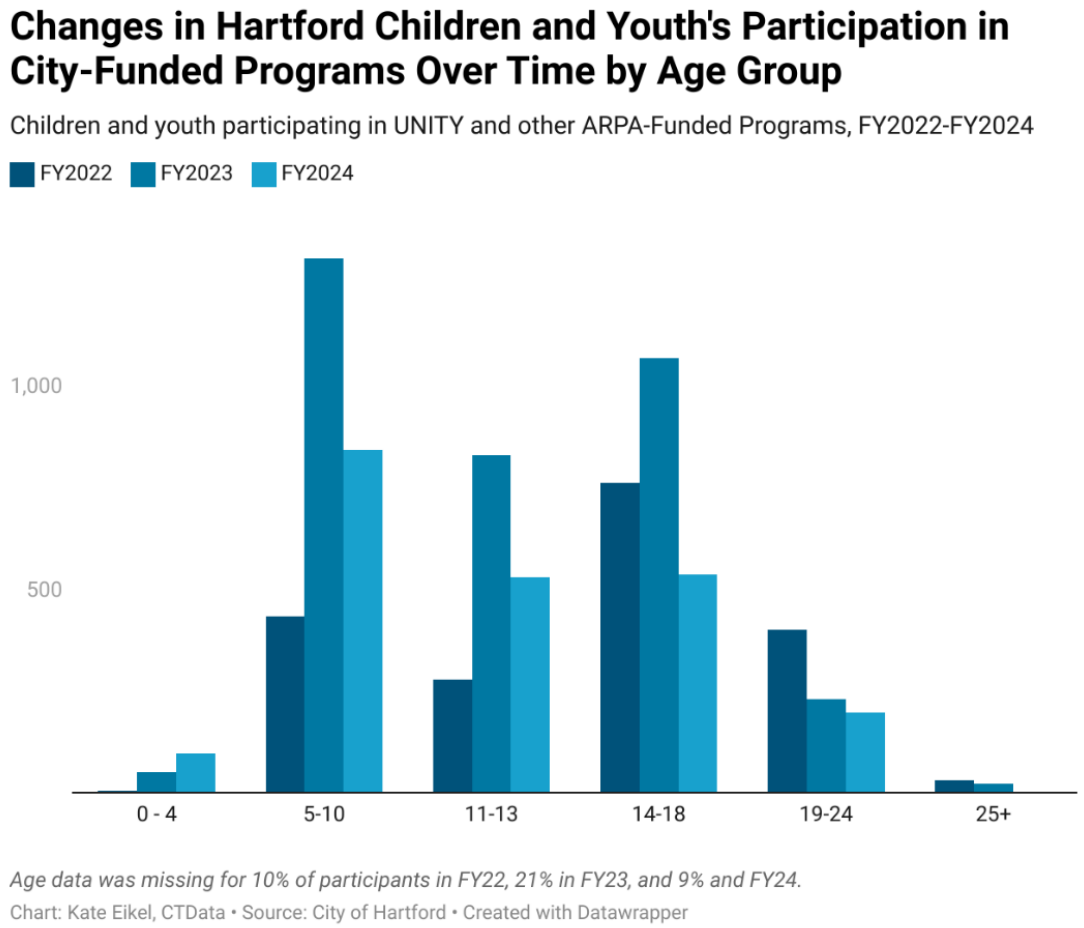
Program participation was highest among elementary and high school age children. Early childhood, middle school age youth, and high school age youth were less represented.



The age groups with the highest numbers of children and youth participating over the three-year period were elementary age (5-10) and high school (14-18).

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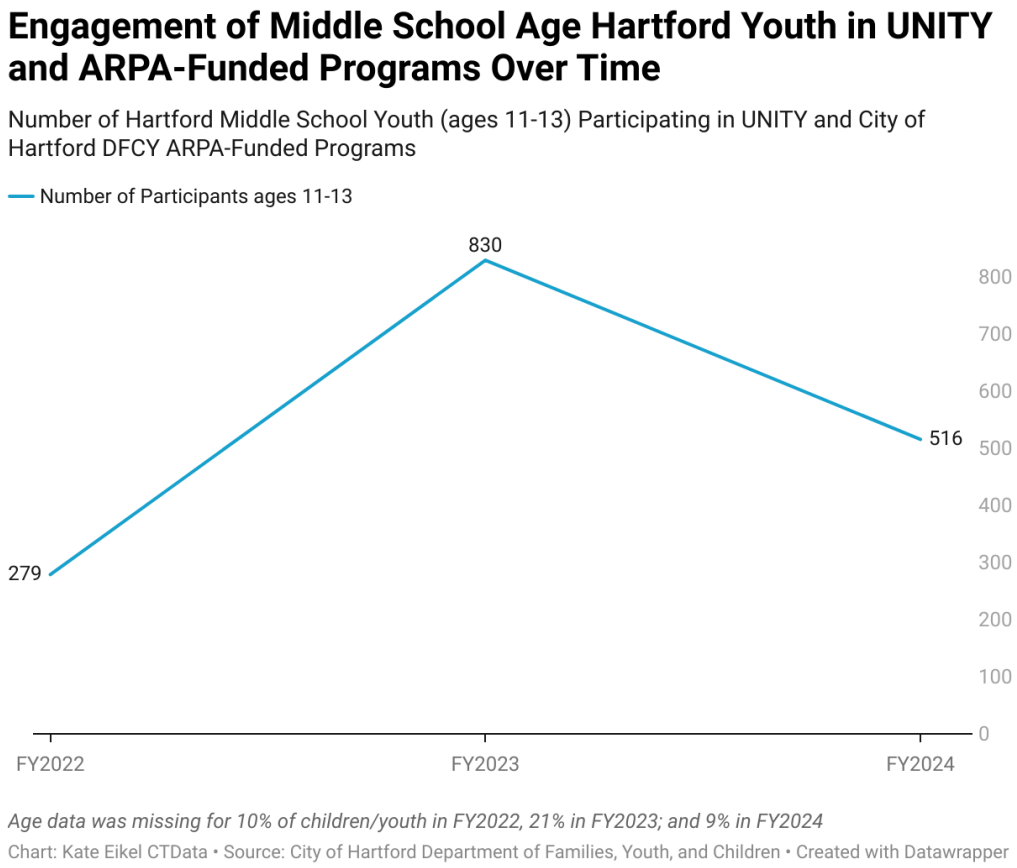
Middle school age children's participation increased over three years of the program.



The number of middle school aged children participating in UNITY and other ARPA-funded programs increased over the three-year period, reflecting growth in one of the priority populations.

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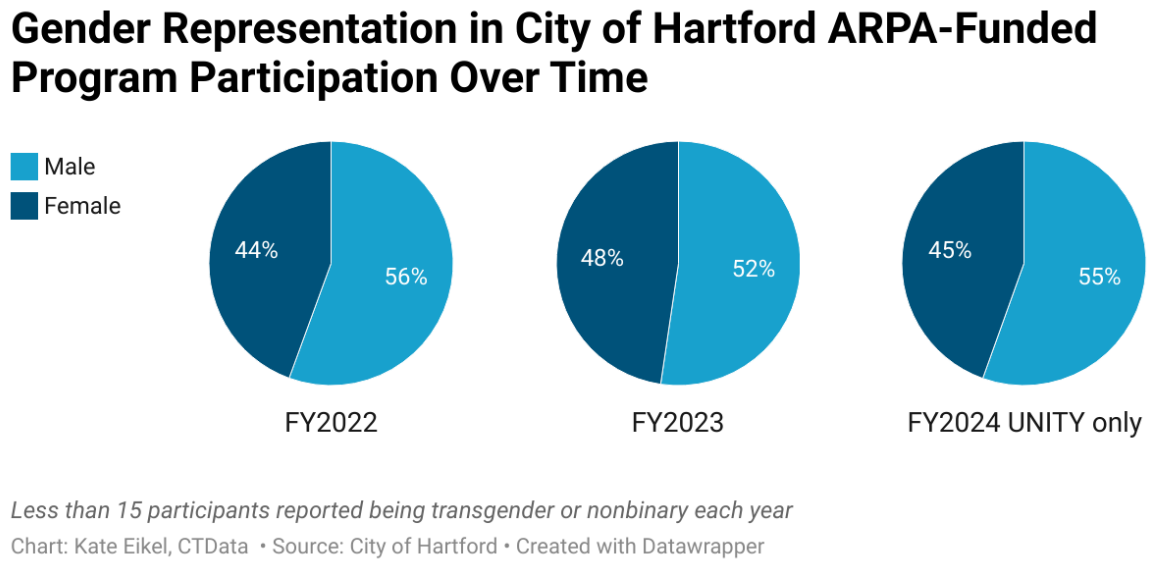
Female participation in programs remained below 50 percent for each year (FY2024 programs were for UNITY only).



The percentage of female participants remained relatively constant over the three-year period, at slightly less than 50%.

A majority of UNITY and ARPA-funded programs identified as Black or African-American.

	FY2022	FY23 UNITY	FY2024
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.3%	1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%	2.1%	4%
Black or African American	66%	69%	59%
Caucasian or White	13%	6%	17%
Multiracial/Two or more races	4%	10%	14%
Other	13%	12%	5%
Missing	38%	34%	29%

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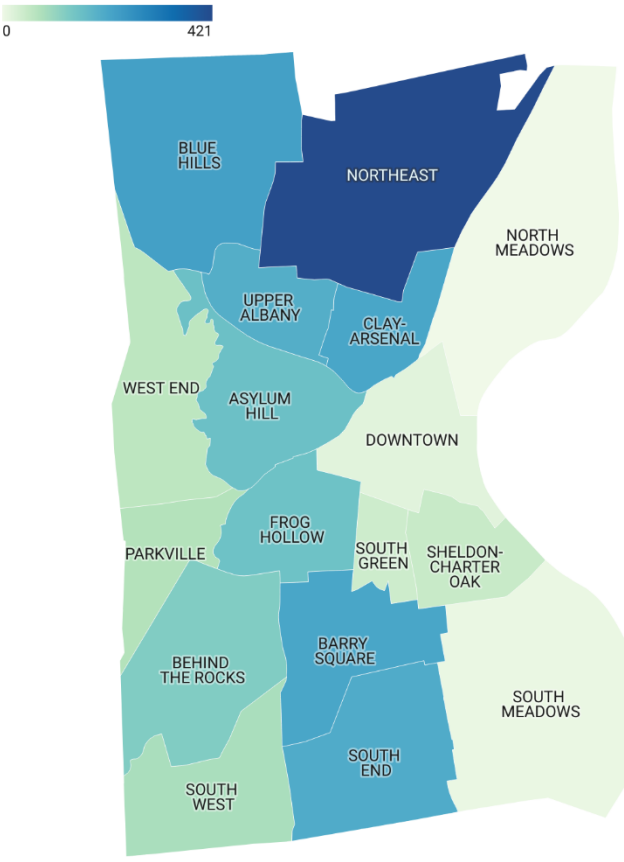
Ethnicity was only reported as Hispanic/Latino or Non-Hispanic/Latino and the percentage of missing data for this demographic designation increased over time.

	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
Hispanic/Latino	44%	53%	44%
Not Hispanic/Latino	56%	47%	56%
Missing	32%	35%	61%

In FY2024, participation was highest among youth residing in the Northeast and Blue Hills neighborhoods.

Children and Youth's Engagement in UNITY and ARPA Programs by Neighborhood

FY2024 ARPA-Funded Program Participants' Neighborhood of Residence



Neighborhood location geocoded from participants' address. 4% of participants' address data were missing.

Map: Kate Eikel, CTData • Source: City of Hartford, Department of Families, Children, and Youth • Created with Datawrapper

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Data quality among programs generally improved over time.

Variable	FY22 Percent Missing	FY23 Percent Missing	FY2024 Percent Missing
Address/Neighborhood	52%	40.9%	4.7%
Age/Date of Birth	9	15.1	14.7
Gender	29%	8.9	14.4
Ethnicity	29	45.2	61.4
Race	52	38.3	28.8

Next Steps

HDC is in the process of developing a way for UNITY and other organizations serving Hartford youth to continue sharing data to learn from their findings. To find out more, see our website: www.ctdata.org/about-hdc.

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Appendix 1: Number of Children and Youth Served in FY2024 by Program

Program Name	Number of Children/Youth In Dataset
Actup Theater, Inc	39
All Hues LLC	17
Beyond Kids Foundation Inc	75
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Connecticut, Inc.	49
Capitol Region Education Council Foundation (CREC)	30
Center for Latino Progress	85
Charter Oak Boxing Academy	108
Charter Oak Cultural Center	21
Community First School	31
Community Renewal Team, Inc.	27
COMPASS Youth Collaborative	212
Girl Scouts of Connecticut Inc.	84
Harc, Inc.	18
Hartford Knights Corp	71
Hartford Lions Soccer Academy	202
Hartford Performs	79
Hartford Public Library	28
Hartford Stage Company	7
Hartford Wildcats, Inc.	163
Hartford's Camp Courant	862
Heart Bible Institute	77
Main Stream Canoes and Kayaks LLC (Main Stream Paddle Sports)	37
McEIVR, Inc. / MakerspaceCT	21
Organized Parents Make A Difference, Inc.	20
Our Piece of the Pie, Inc.	21
Read to a Child, Inc.	23
The DreamBig College	22
TKH Global Consulting	7
URISE Ventures Inc.	38
YMCA of Greater Hartford	93
YWCA Hartford Region, Inc.	77

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