



# HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS?

+ Rebekah Grace Villamor



# BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR EXPLORATION



Creates opportunities for social interaction and collaboration



It gives children a chance to take appropriate risks



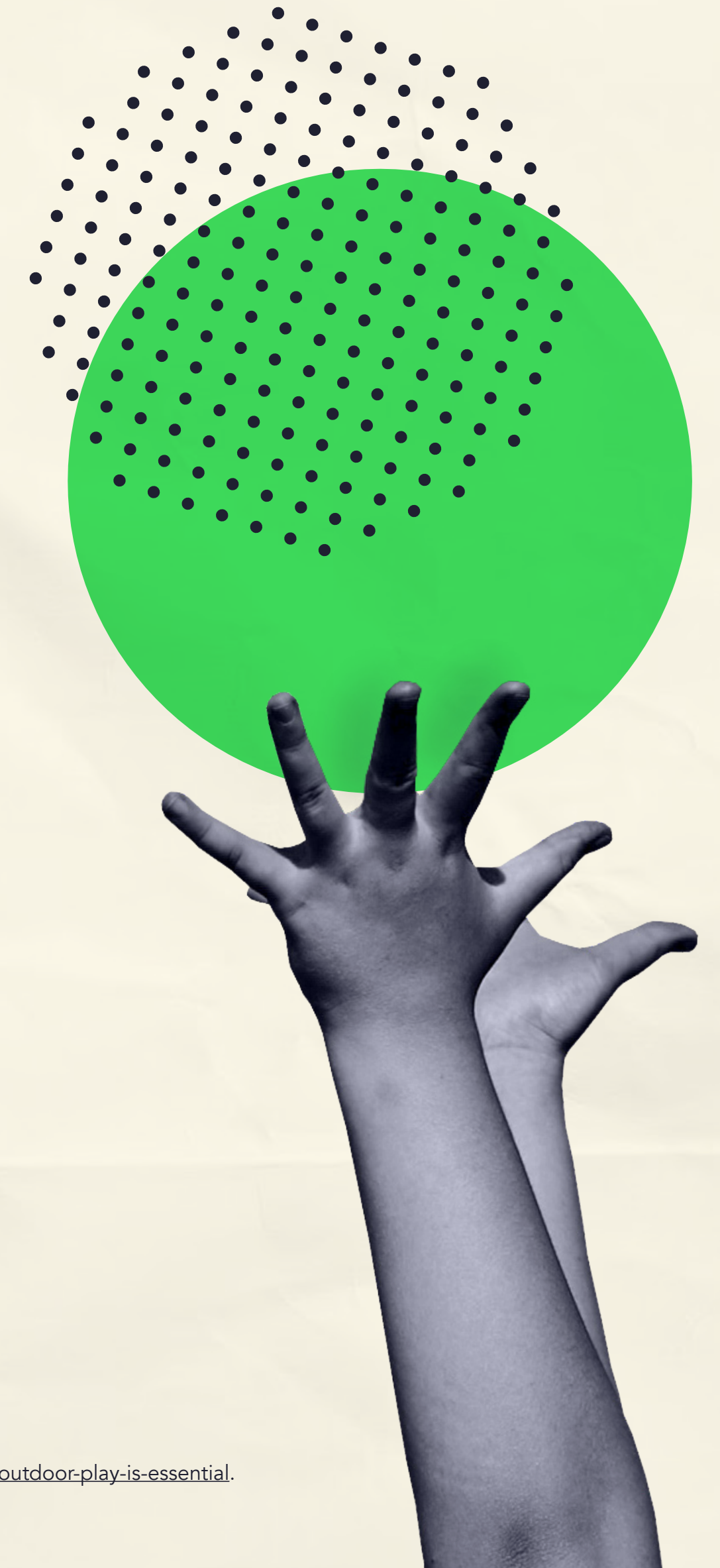
It promotes good physical health



It invites new contexts for learning



It promotes better sleep





# CHILDREN TODAY SPEND **LESS** TIME OUTDOORS THAN ANY OTHER GENERATION.



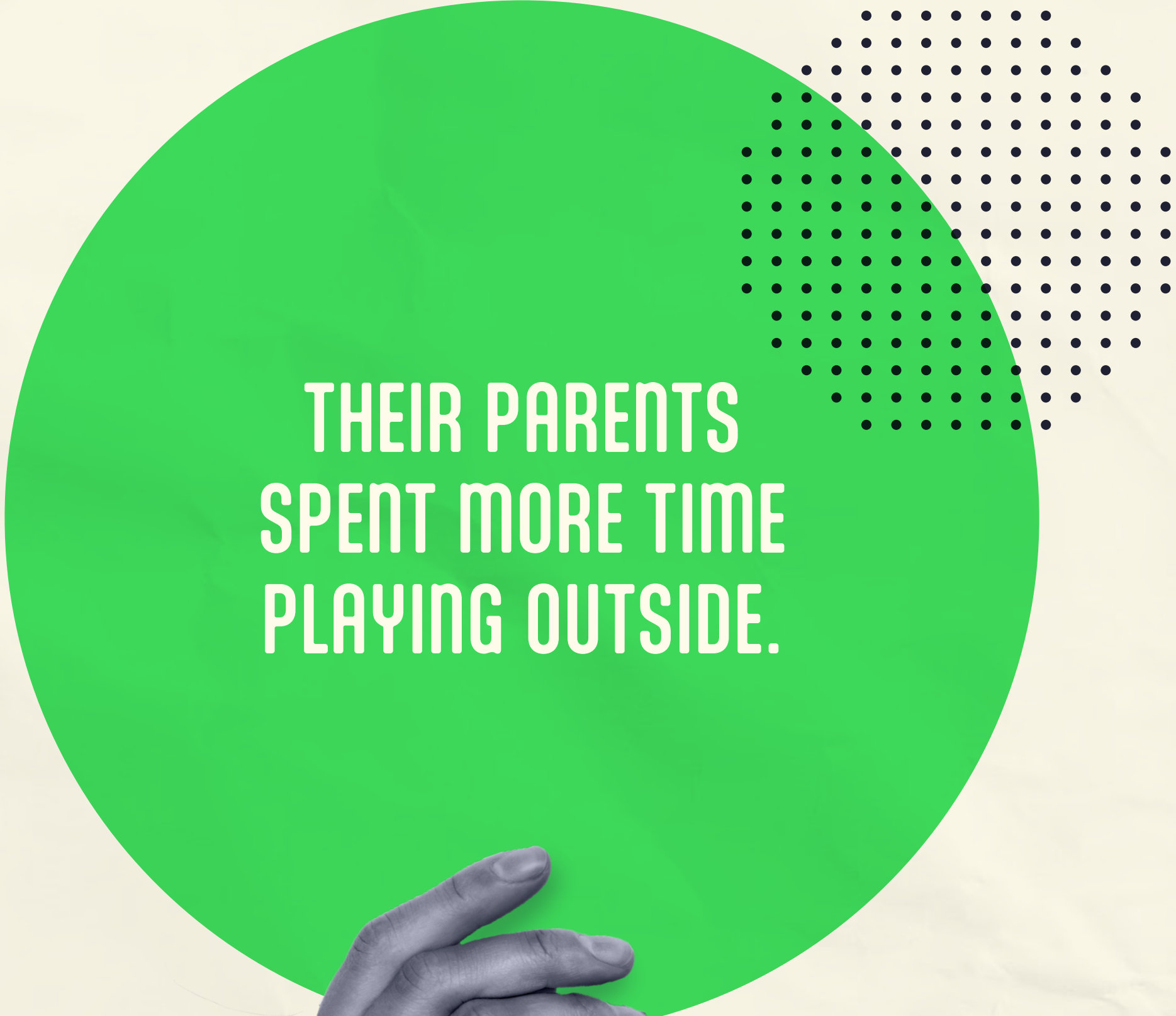
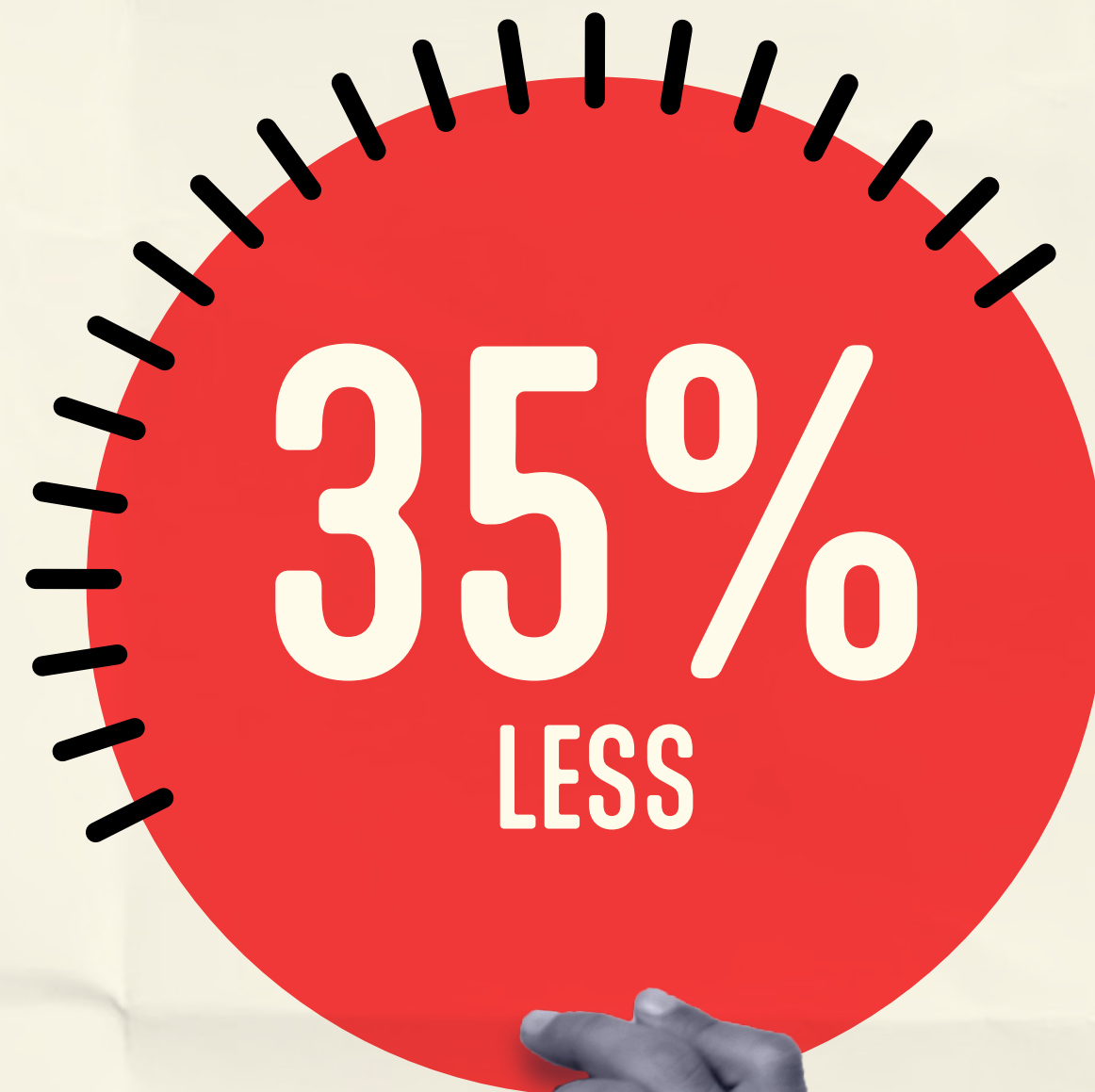
# **+** DECLINE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR **6-13 YEAR OLDS**





# COMPARED TO THEIR PARENTS

American children spend *less time* playing outside compared to their parents when they were kids.



THEIR PARENTS  
SPENT MORE TIME  
PLAYING OUTSIDE.



# WHY CHILDREN SPEND *LESS TIME* OUTSIDE



## RAPID URBANIZATION

Traffic  
Air Pollution  
Urban Heat island effect



Reduces natural green  
spaces & biodiversity



Negatively impacts  
children's opportunities  
to play outside



## SCREEN TIME

2-17 year olds spend *more than two hours of screen time* per weekday, in addition to screen time spent for schoolwork.



## SAFETY CONCERNS

50% of parents surveys cited "*fear of strangers*" as the reason for preventing their children to play outdoors.

Unesco, UNESCO. "Time to Go out and Play." The UNESCO Courier, 18 Sept. 2023, [courier.unesco.org/en/articles/time-go-out-and-play](https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/time-go-out-and-play).

CDC. "QuickStats: Percentage of Children Aged 2–17 Years with 2 Hours of Screen Time per Weekday, by Sex and Age Group - National Health Interview Survey, United States, 2020." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022, [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7103a6.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7103a6.htm).

Muñoz, Maya. "Outdoor Play: 50 Statistics and Quick Facts." MayaPeds, 23 Aug. 2022, [www.mayapeds.com/outdoor-play-statistics-and-facts/](https://www.mayapeds.com/outdoor-play-statistics-and-facts/).

# + **NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DECREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The prevalence of *obesity for 2-19-year-olds* in 2017-2020 was *19.7%* and affected about 14.7 million children and adolescents. ---



--- A study found that *6-17-year-olds* who reported no exercise were *twice as likely to have mental health problems*, particularly related to anxiety and depression.



# +

# INTERVIEW

Community Expert Interview



**Dr. Ashton, MD**  
[ Pediatrician ]

### The Benefits:

- It is a time for *free play* and a good opportunity to use their *imagination*.
- They can *learn* about their environment and science.
- A great way for them to learn to *work out differences* and *improve their social skills* when playing with friends.
- From a medical perspective, outdoor exploration is a great way to get *exercise and vitamin D*. Playing outside will also *decrease children's sedentary and mindless hours on electronics*.

### Major challenges that hinder outdoor exploration:

- *Their environment*. They may live in an urban area, depending on an adult to bring them to a park.
- There are also *safety concerns*. Parents are hesitant to let their kids play outside for fear of kidnapping, getting hit by a car, or just getting in trouble one way or another.

# INTERVIEW

Community Expert Interview



**Dr. Wnek, MD**  
[ Pediatrician ]

## Effective Strategies to motivate children to explore the outdoors:

- *Motivate by example.* As a parent or adult, go with your child to the playground, the backyard, or even a simple walk/bike ride. This allows for activity but also conversation and quality bonding time.
- If the child does not want to participate, make it a point to go out without them (when safe). *Children are curious in nature, and they will follow next time.*

## The role of parents and caregivers:

- *Caregivers and parents are the guides to outdoor exploration.* They are the ones who are in a position to teach children how to play and create.
- *A child must first see* that mud can be used to make cakes for a tea party or that sticks can be swords. Parents then encourage the child to further build on that foundation.

# + INTERVIEW

Community Partner Interview



**Janah**

[ 3rd Grader - 8 y.o. ]

## **Time spent outdoors:**

- I play outside at least *1-2 times a week*. I don't think I play outside enough, and it's because I don't ask a lot. It's because *my friends aren't always outside playing*.

## **Outdoors or inside play:**

- *I like playing inside because everyone in the family stays inside.* I like playing with my friends, but I like hanging out with my older sisters more. Since they are always inside, that's where I want to be.

## **Parent/caregiver motivation:**

- *I am not always told to go out and play* since everyone is always busy with work and school.

## **How to be encouraged to explore the outdoors:**

- *If I were given a prize*, then I would want to play outside even more.

# +

# INTERVIEW

Community Partner Interview



**Krystal**

[ Mother of young children ]

### Concerns that may hinder outdoor exploration:

- *Seasonal allergies and ticks.* We live in the North West; therefore, tick-borne disease is very common. Allergies sometimes progress to a cold.

### How you motivate and engage your children in outdoor exploration:

- *We love to do easy hikes as a family.* The kids also love to run and climb. They love to climb trees and jump in the water when they see a small lake or stream. *Because they're kids, they love to get messy.* Nature gives them that outlet.

# + INTERVIEW

Community Partner Interview



**Caley**  
[ Babysitter ]

## Time spent outdoors:

- On average, *the children I babysit spend 1-2 hours outdoors*. I think the children could spend more time outdoors, especially those families who spend a lot of time using electronic devices.

## The challenges that hinder outdoor exploration:

- I am usually *babysitting during the evening*, so the children aren't able to spend a lot of time outdoors before it is dark outside.
- *Some families do not live in a safe environment* where their children can play safely outside, or they do not have a property that has the space to allow for outdoor play.

## Favorite outdoor activities:

- *Parks and playgrounds* are always favorites for the children I babysit because they provide a variety of choices for play.
- Other *games involving more imaginative play*, like drawing with chalk on the sidewalk or playing "restaurant," are also highly favored and enjoyed.

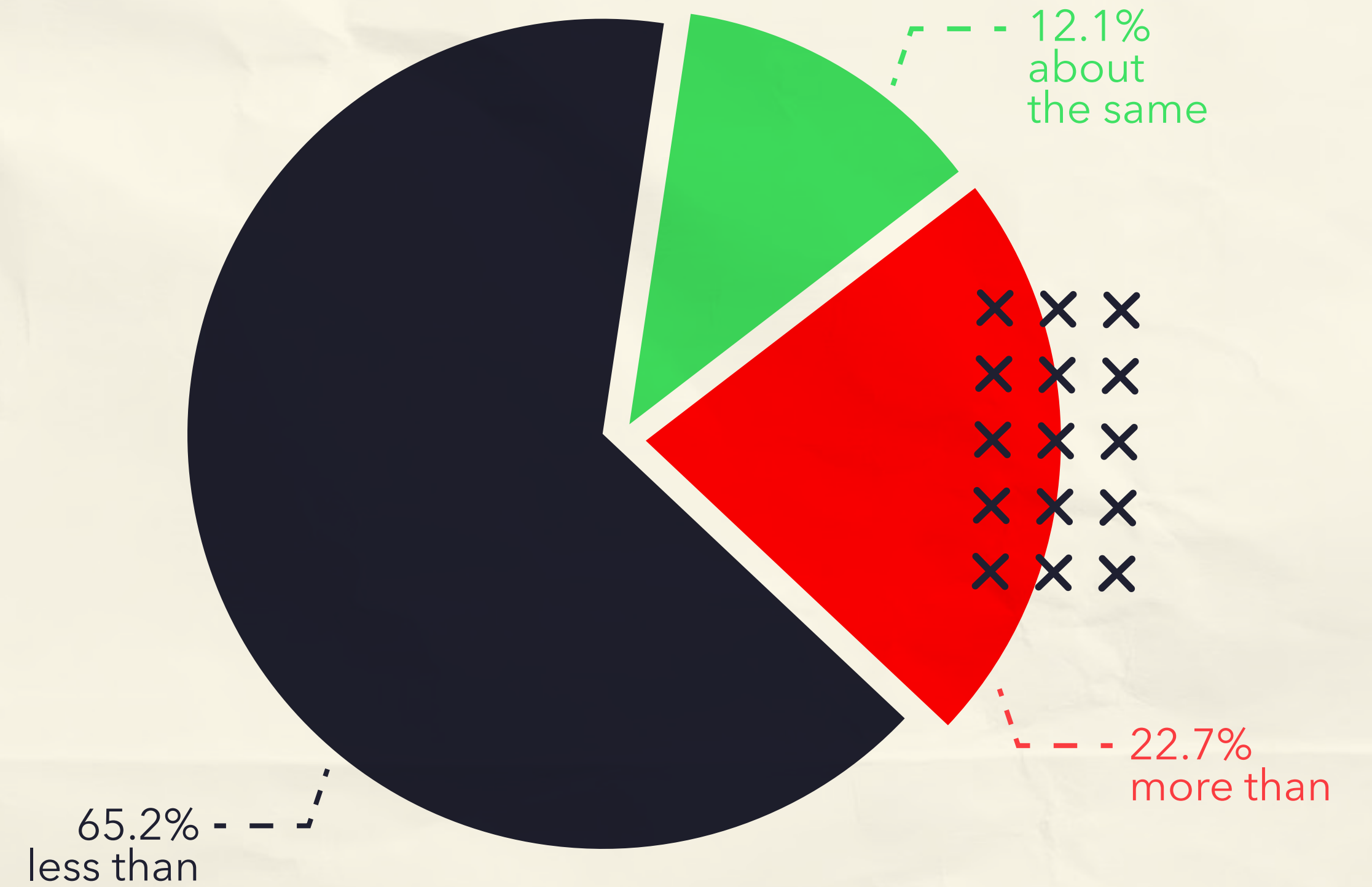
# + SURVEY

66 Participants – Adults (Parents + Not Parents)

## Outdoor exploration positively contributes to a child's physical and mental development



## The frequency of children's outdoor exploration today compared to past generations



# + SURVEY

66 Participants – Adults (Parents + Not Parents)

Factors believed to have led to a decrease in children's outdoor play and exploration in recent years:

GADGETS / ELECTRONICS / SCREEN TIME [47]

SAFETY [10]

PARENTING [7]

COVID19 PANDEMIC [4]

WEATHER [2]



Children spend less time outdoors due to electronic use, safety, and environmental concerns (urban neighborhoods, lack of play space near homes and backyards, etc.).

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Parents and caregivers play an essential part in encouraging children to explore the outdoors.

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Outdoor exploration and physical activity are vital for children's mental and physical health.





# PROBLEM AND SOLUTION



## THE PROBLEM

How to *encourage* children  
AND their parents/caregivers  
to spend time outdoors?



## THE SOLUTION

To establish an *organization*  
that partners with local  
outdoor venues to *promote*  
*safe spaces and encourage*  
outdoor exploration for  
children and parents.

