



The “Age” Challenge

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Amateur Radio Age Demographics

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- Average age of non-ARRL member hams:

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Amateur Radio Age Demographics

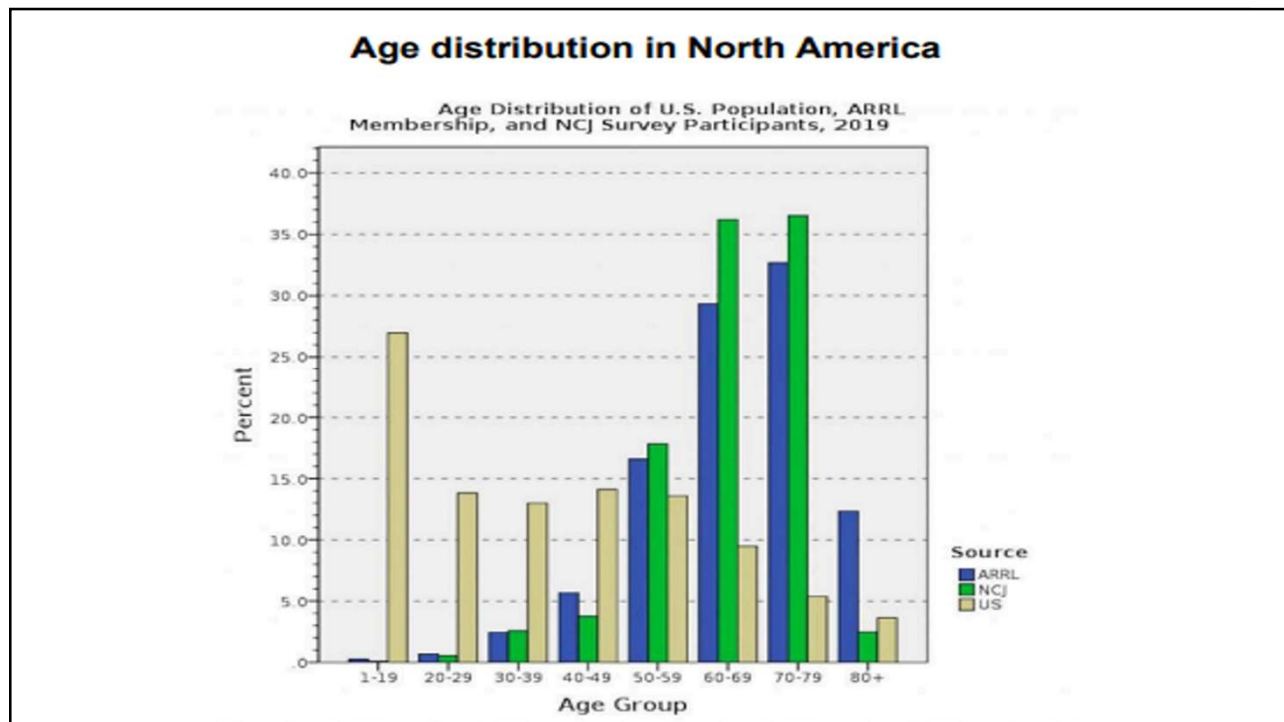
- US – 730,839 amateurs; Canada ~70,000
- Average age of non-ARRL member hams:
 - 52
- Average age of ARRL members:
68

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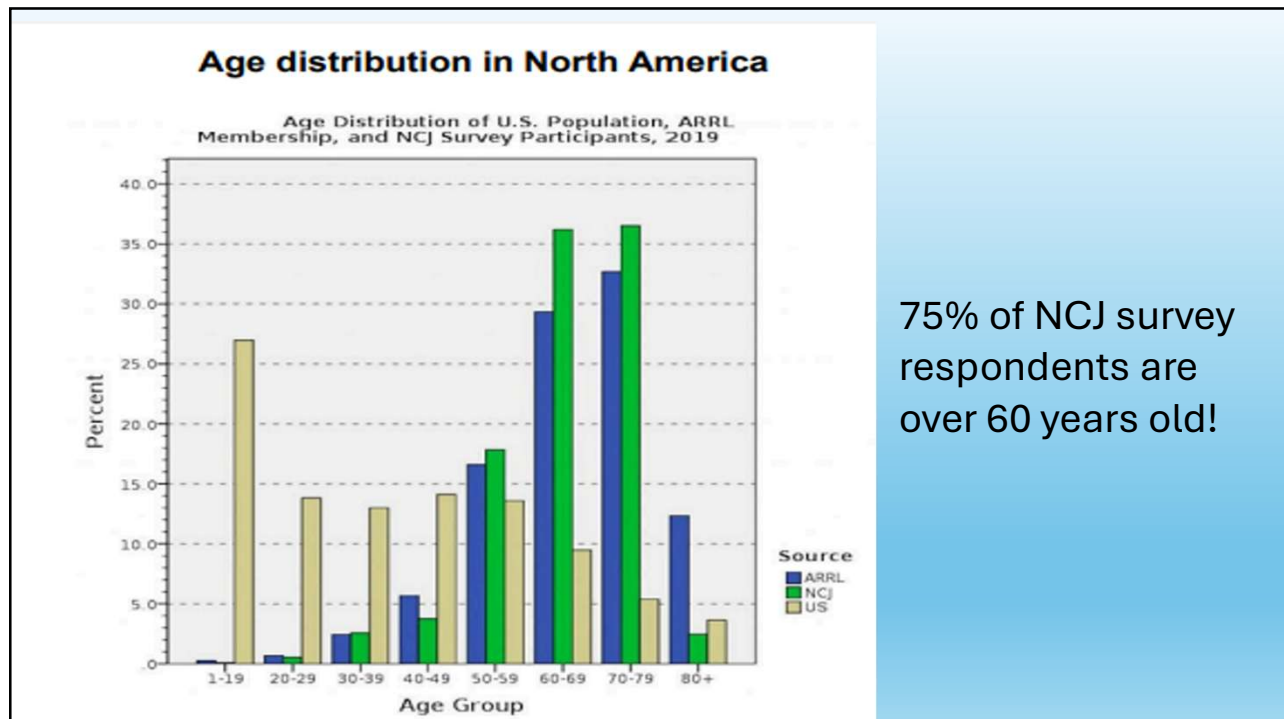
Amateur Radio Age Demographics

- US – 730,839 amateurs; Canada ~70,000
- Average age of non-ARRL member hams:
 - 52
- Average age of ARRL members:
 - 68
- Median age of US hams – lower 60s
 - > 50% are over 60 years old

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Sobering Reality



- All Asian DX Contest
 - Exchange includes age
- ARRL Sweepstakes
 - Exchange includes year first licensed

Radiosport is an old person's hobby!

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KØKYL Kylee Shirbroun, ex-KEØWPA



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Youth in Amateur Radio

2026 MWA Annual Meeting

Kylee Shirbroun, KØKYL

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Agenda

- Introduction
 - Statistics
- Youth on the Air (YOTA)
- YOTA camps
 - 2026 YOTA camp
 - Other YOTA activities, e.g. contests
- Contesting for youth
 - Contests specifically for youth
 - Contests with youth categories
- Other ways youth can operate
- Opportunities for youth to be DX!
- Scholarships for youth
- How you can help

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Break Down of Licensed Youth

- ~ 2-3% of all hams are under 18
 - ~ 1% are 18-20 years old
 - ~ 2-3% are 21-24 years
- ~ 4-6% are under 25 years old**

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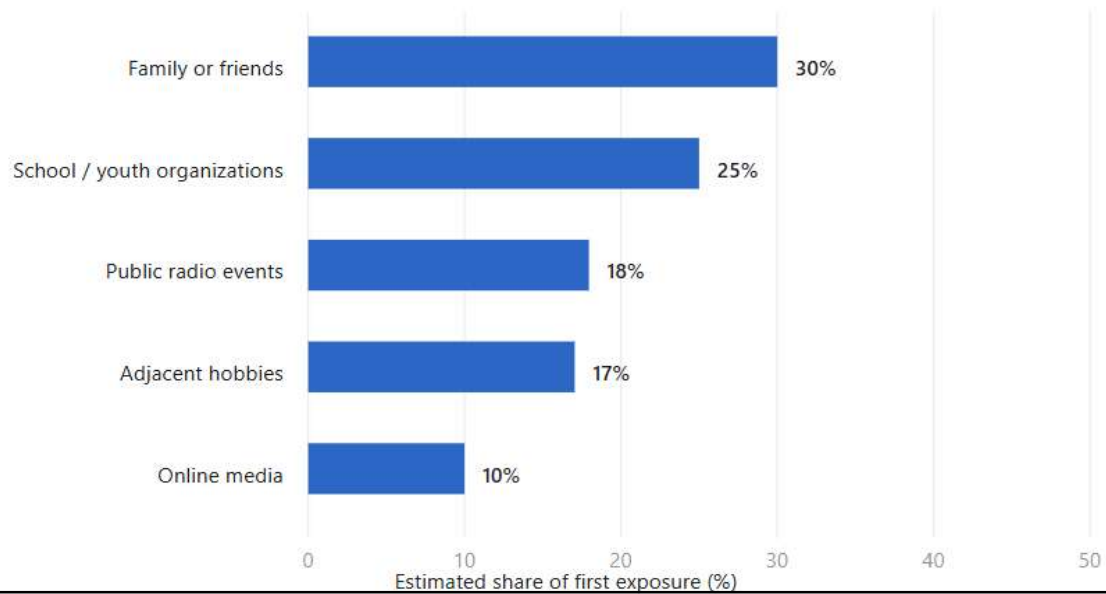
Estimated Kids Day Participant's Age Breakdown *

Year	Under 13	13-17	18-20	21-25	Under 26 total
2020	~900-1,400	~500-800	~100-200	~100-250	~1,600-2,650
2021	~1,000-1,500	~550-850	~125-225	~125-275	~1,800-2,850
2022	~1,050-1,600	~575-900	~125-250	~125-300	~1,900-3,050
2023	~1,100-1,700	~600-950	~150-275	~150-350	~2,000-3,275
2024	~1,100-1,750	~600-1,000	~150-300	~150-375	~2,000-3,425
2025	~1,100-1,800	~600-1,000	~150-300	~150-400	~2,000-3,500
2026	~1,200-1,700	~700-1,000	~200-300	~200-400	~2,300-3,400

* Note: Most participants are not licensed

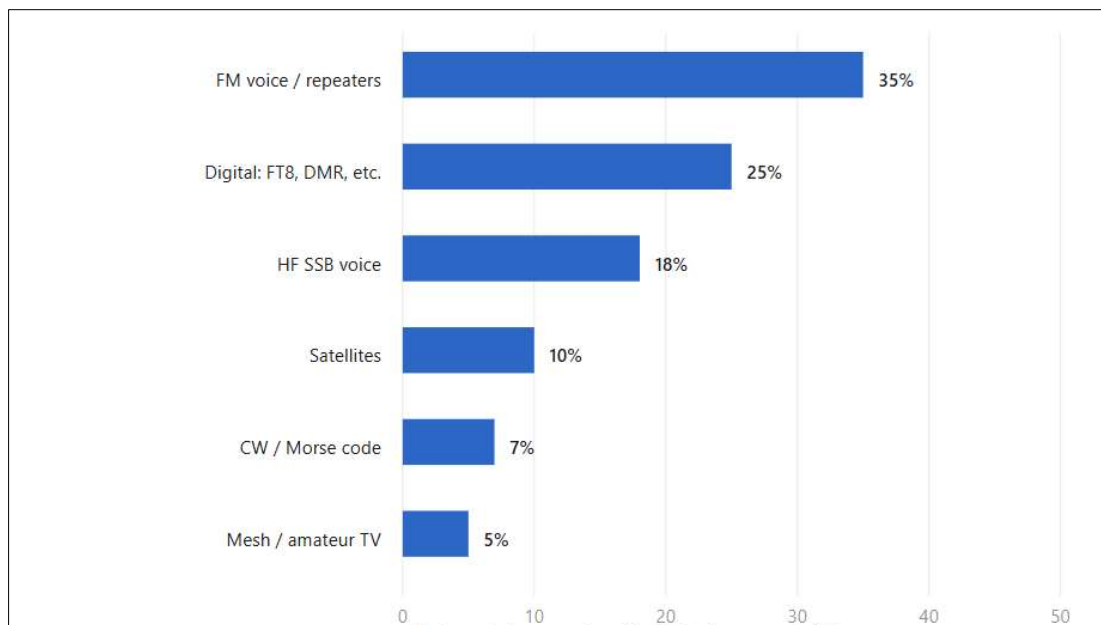
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How Young People are First Exposed to Ham Radio



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Modes Favored by Youth



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Youth on the Air (YOTA) History/Origin

- A program **for and by** young (26 & under) hams in the Americas
- Modeled after the *Youngsters on the Air* program in IARU Region 1 (Europe, Africa & Middle East).
- Mission: empower the next generation of hams
 - Provide immersive learning experiences
 - Foster international friendships
 - Promote a lifelong passion for radio communication and technology

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YOTA Camps

- Held annually; week-long; different location each year
- At least 50% of sessions led by younger hams (30s and under)
- Build a stronger community of young hams that can mentor each other
- Build a youth leadership group to plan and present future YOTA events
- Develop meaningful skills that may not be available in local clubs or schools
- Promote all youth programs in the Americas
- Replicate the annual camp to subregional camps across all the Americas

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2026 YOTA Camp



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2026 YOTA Camp

- Goal: provide the campers with new and fun experiences
- Who: ham radio operators between the ages of 15-25
- Cost: only \$100 (+ transportation)
 - Financial support from individual and corporate sponsors

 HAM RADIO PREP

HEiL
HAM RADIO

 **ICOM**

WWROF
WORLD WIDE RADIO OPERATORS FOUNDATION



The **YASME**
FOUNDATION
www.yasme.org



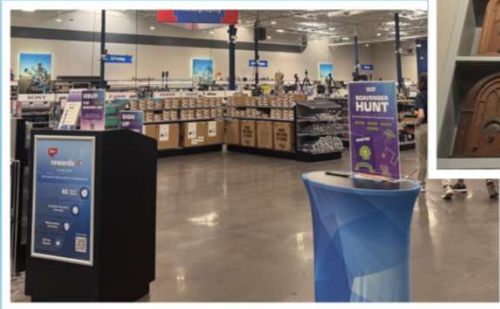
 **ARDC**
AMATEUR RADIO DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

DX
ENGINEERING

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Field Trips

- Gigaparts
- US Space and Rocket Center
- SIGNALS museum



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My Favorite Activities

- Operating satellites
- Contact with astronaut on the ISS
- 2 meter sprint



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Other Activities

- Intercultural evening
- EME (Moon Bounce) talk
- Talks about DXpeditions



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More Activities!

- Balloon launch
- Kit building
- Grid square practice



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2026 YOTA Camp Videos

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Youth Oriented Contests

- ARRL School Club Roundup
 - Oct & Feb
- Kid's Day
- Rookie Roundup
- YOTA Contest

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Contests with Youth Categories

- CQ Worldwide DX Contests
- ARRL DX Tests
- ARRL 10 Meter Contest
- North American QSO Parties
- Some state QSO parties

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Youth Contesting Program (YCP)

- Teams of up to 4 youth operators go to a “big gun” station
- Host
 - Helps the youth
 - Provides advice
 - Operates alongside the youth



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Other Opportunities for Youth to Operate Without Having Their Own Home Station

- Remote Ham Radio (RHR)
 - Free for youth under 21
- Fox Hunting
- Satellites
- School station
- Guest operating
 - Eg. WØAA (ACØW) & NØHJZ (Thanks!)

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DX Guest Operating Opportunities

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| • 4O3A – Montenegro | • J62K – St. Lucia |
| • 9A1A – Croatia | • LX2A – Luxembourg |
| • A44A – Oman | • LX7I – Luxembourg |
| • DM9EE – Germany | • LZ5R – Bulgaria |
| • EA8URL – Canary Islands | • OX5E – Denmark |
| • EC2DX – Spain | • PJ2T – Curacao |
| • ES5TV – Estonia | • PJ2Y – Curacao |
| • ES9C – Estonia | • PJ6Y – Saba |
| • F6KOP – France | • SK3W – Sweden |

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Scholarships for Youth



ARRL Scholarships

- Over 170 available
- Range from \$500 to \$25,000

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Ham-radio youth scholarship options beyond ARRL

Program	Where	Who it fits	License	Timing / award
Foundation for Amateur Radio	Worldwide	Licensed college-bound hams	Required	Several donor-funded awards; verify current cycle
OMIK Scholarship Fund	U.S.	High-school seniors or college students in STEM/communications	Not stated as required	Apply Jan. 1–May 1; recent awards: \$1k–\$2k
AARN STEM Excellence	U.S.	Pell-eligible, underrepresented STEM freshmen	Before graduation	Fall 2027; \$2k + laptop + radio package
Radio Amateurs of Canada	Canada	Full-time postsecondary students	Required	Deadline Oct. 31; \$250–\$1k
Local amateur-radio clubs	Local / regional	Often high-school seniors and technical students	Varies	Amounts and deadlines vary—ask local clubs

Confirm eligibility, award amount, and deadlines with each sponsor before applying. QCWA is omitted because it uses the ARRL Foundation application portal.

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How You Can Support the Growth of Youth in Amateur Radio

- Sponsor a youth going to YOTA camp
- Donate to YOTA at <https://youthontheair.org/donate/>
- Apply to have your station used with YCP →
- Donate to J62K's youth program
- Invite a youth to guest operate
- Do a demo at a school
- Set up a school station



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**Sharing Your
Love of Ham
Radio
with School
Kids**

**Offer to help set
up a school club!**

**Demonstrate
at a school!**

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Setting Up a School Station



- Simple!
 - Transceiver
 - Simple wire antenna (and tuner)
 - Laptop for logging
 - Script for students
 - Map with pins
- Act as control operator
 - Mentoring
- Casual operating
 - Instant pile-ups!
- School Club Round-Up

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Questions?

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Thank You and 73!

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