

Faces of Youth

We commit some of our gravest injustices when we make broad, sweeping generalizations—especially disparaging ones—about entire groups of people. This is a bad habit that our society has, to a large extent, outgrown. Most of us no longer find it acceptable to characterize whole races or genders or ethnic groups in this manner.

Why, then, do we persist in taking such an approach to our young people?

American adults tend to treat youth as a problem. In an April 2000 Fox News poll, for instance, no less than 80% said that the way children behave today is strongly or somewhat indicative that the country is in the midst of a moral crisis. A search of the Roper Center's iPOLL database reveals 2,046 survey questions that were asked about youth in the last five years. This number falls by more than half if questions having to do with alcohol, narcotics, sex, crime, death, and problems in general are eliminated from the search results—and this does not even take into account all the negative items that are classified under other topic areas, such as family, television or values.

Of course, like everyone else, American adolescents *do* have, and make, problems. As the data on the following pages show, most high school seniors themselves say that growing up is harder today than it was when their parents were kids, and parents overwhelmingly agree that their teens face more problems than they did at the same age. Shockingly large proportions of high school seniors say they have peers who have gotten pregnant or

attempted suicide, and four in ten have already had to face a serious life crisis. Yet nearly 80% feel that their lives so far have been no harder than most others their own age.

But this is far from being the whole story. The one thing that shines forth from these data more clearly than anything else is the complexity of these adults-in-the-making, and the things they think and the things they do. Far from fitting the stereotype of rebellious, disaffected teenagers, for instance, 85% of high school seniors rate their relationships with their parents as excellent or good; 92% percent say their parents are people they look up to or want to be like.

While many 12 to 17 year olds are preoccupied with their friends, their jobs, and other activities, the thing the majority is most likely to do after school each day is just to go home. Two-thirds of high school seniors do volunteer work, even though only 23% are required by their schools to do so. And although many 13 to 19 year olds say they feel peer pressure to use drugs, have sex, or grow up too fast, they aren't troubled by it nearly as much as their parents think they are.

How can we hope to capture in any single sketch the many faces of youth? Even if it were possible to do so, it wouldn't be fair. As the data here show, our young people are multidimensional beings who defy oversimplification, and people in their own right—just like their elders.

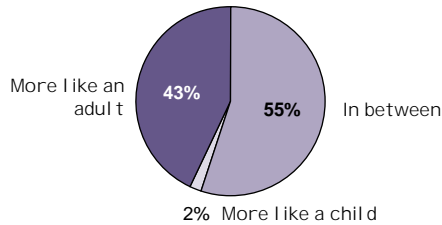
—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, Editor



Growing Up

Question:

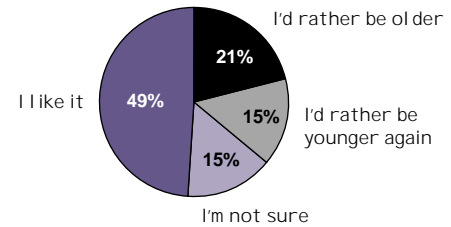
Right now, do you feel more like an adult, more like a child or somewhere in between?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

Question:

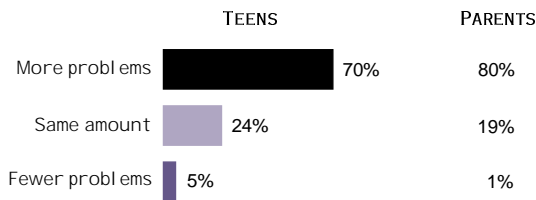
Please tell me which one of the following four statements describes how well you like being the age you are right now—(1) I like it, I wouldn't be a different age; (2) I'd rather be older; (3) I'd rather be younger again, or; (4) I'm not sure.



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

Question:

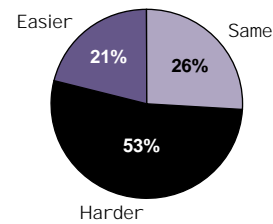
...Compared with the way things were when your parents were teenagers, do you think teens today face more problems, fewer problems, or about the same amount? (Parents asked to compare today's teen problems and their own as teens.)



Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19 and parents.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Question:

Compared to when your parents grew up, do you think growing up is harder, easier or about the same for you?

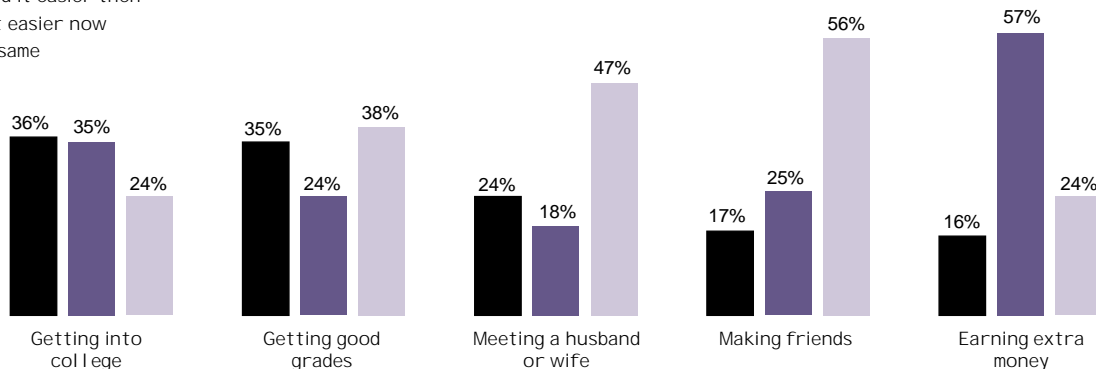


Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

When it comes to each of the items listed, do you think that your parents had it easier when they were your age, that you have it easier now, or that it was about the same for them as it is for you?

- Parents had it easier then
- You have it easier now
- About the same

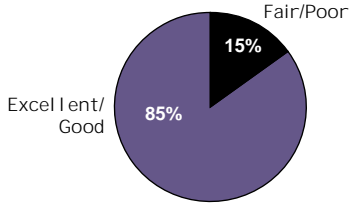


Note: Asked of high school students ages 13-18.
Source: Survey by Peter D. Hart Research for the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, May 2-15, 2001.

Mom and Dad

Question:

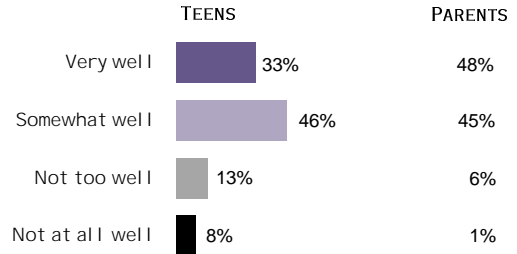
How would you rate your relationship with your parents overall—excellent, good, fair, or poor?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

Question:

How well do you feel your father or mother understands the problems and situations you face in everyday life? Would you say [he or she] understands them...? (Parents asked how well they think they understand teen's problems.)



Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19 and parents.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Question:

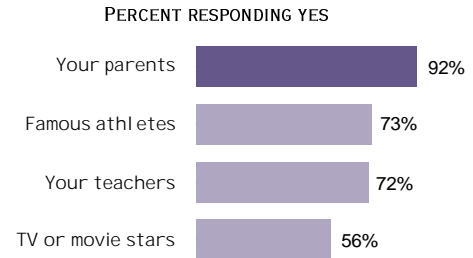
In general, do you think your parents are in touch with what life is like for people your age today, or are your parents out of touch?



Note: Asked of high school freshmen.
Source: Survey by CBS News, January 1997.

Questions:

I'm going to read you a list of different groups of people. As I read each one, tell me if these are people you look up to or want to be like. What about...?

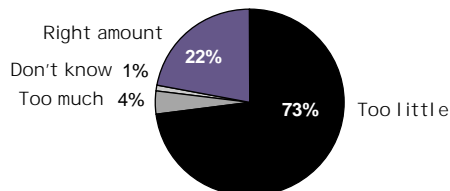


Note: Asked of youths ages 10-17.
Source: Survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, June 24-August 24, 1999.

Quantity Time

Question:

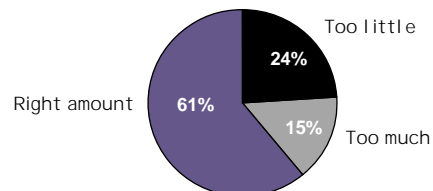
In general, do you think parents today spend the right amount of time together with their teenagers, too little time, or too much time?



Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Question:

Do you think parents in your family spend the right amount of time together with their teenagers, too little time, or too much time?

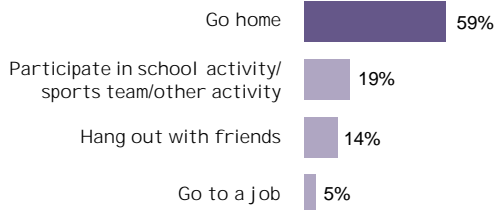


Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Spending Time

Question:

In general, what are you most likely to do in the afternoon after school?



Note: Asked of youths ages 12-17.
Source: Survey by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, October 20-November 5, 2000.

Question:

Does your school require students to do volunteer work or community service in order to graduate?

PERCENT RESPONDING YES



Question:

In the past twelve months, have you done any volunteer work for religious, educational, health, environmental or other organizations—by volunteer work I mean not just belonging to a group, but actually working in some way to help others for no pay?

PERCENT RESPONDING YES

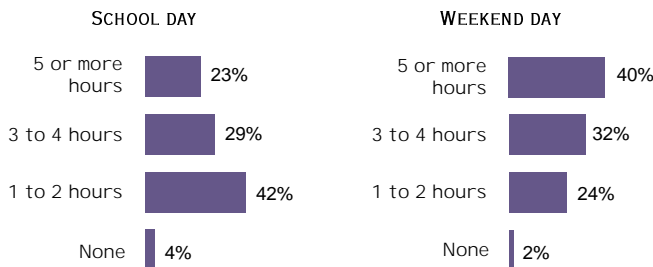


Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Hours in the Day

Questions:

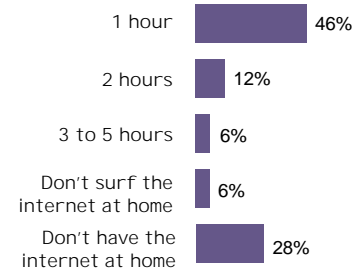
On an average school day, Monday through Friday, about how many hours do you spend watching TV...? On an average weekend day...?



Note: Asked of youths ages 10-17.
Source: Survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, April 2-23, 1998.

Question:

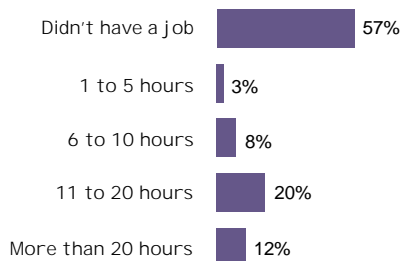
In a typical weekday, about how many hours do you personally access the internet, World Wide Web, or any online information source on your computer at home?



Note: Asked of high school seniors who have a computer at home.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Questions:

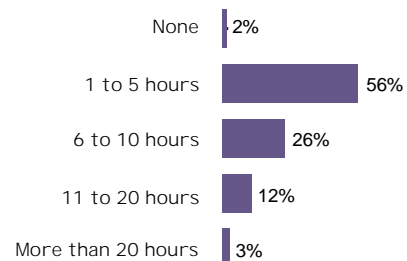
Did you have a job during this school year? [If yes] How many hours did you work in a typical week?



Note: Asked of high school students ages 13-18.
Source: Survey by Peter D. Hart Research for the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, May 2-15, 2001.

Question:

During the school year, about how many hours a week would you say you spend doing homework?

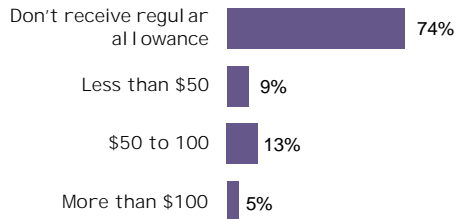


Note: Asked of high school students ages 13-18.
Source: Survey by Peter D. Hart Research for the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, May 2-15, 2001.

Income

Questions:

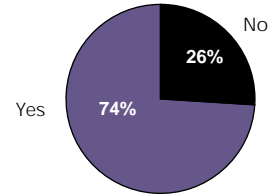
Do you receive a weekly or monthly allowance from your parents or a member of your immediate family? [If yes] How many dollars does your allowance total for each month?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group/Lake, Snell, Perry for Americans for Consumer Education and Competition, February 4-11, 2001.

Question:

Do you have a part-time job or do jobs to get paid outside your home, or don't you?

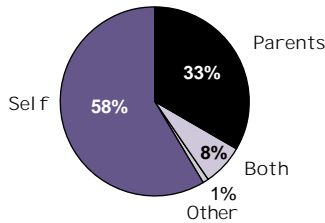


Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Outgo

Question:

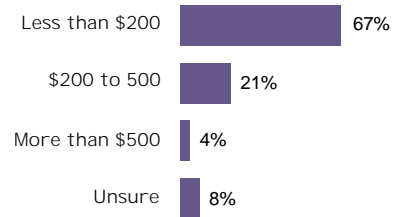
...How do you handle the payment of the bills for [your] credit card? Are you responsible for this yourself, or do your parents take care of these matters?



Note: Asked of high school seniors who have credit cards of their own.
Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group/Lake, Snell, Perry for Americans for Consumer Education and Competition, February 4-11, 2001.

Question:

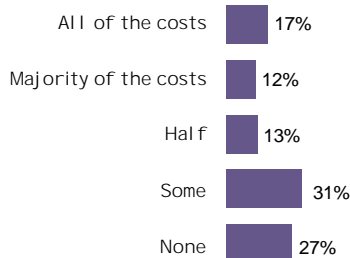
...[H]ow many dollars do you spend each month in both cash and credit card expenditures, if you have credit cards?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group/Lake, Snell, Perry for Americans for Consumer Education and Competition, February 4-11, 2001.

Question:

...How much of the cost of the purchase, insurance, and maintenance of [your] automobile have you been required to pay—all the costs, a majority of the costs, half of the costs, only some of the costs, or none of the costs...?

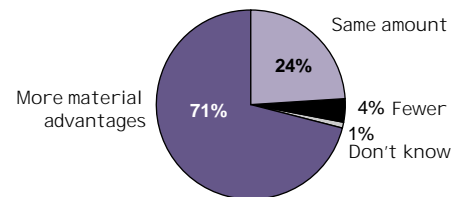


Note: Asked of high school seniors who own or are the primary driver of an automobile.
Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group/Lake, Snell, Perry for Americans for Consumer Education and Competition, February 4-11, 2001.

When I Was Your Age...

Question:

Do your teenagers have more material advantages than you did as a teenager, fewer material advantages, or about the same amount?

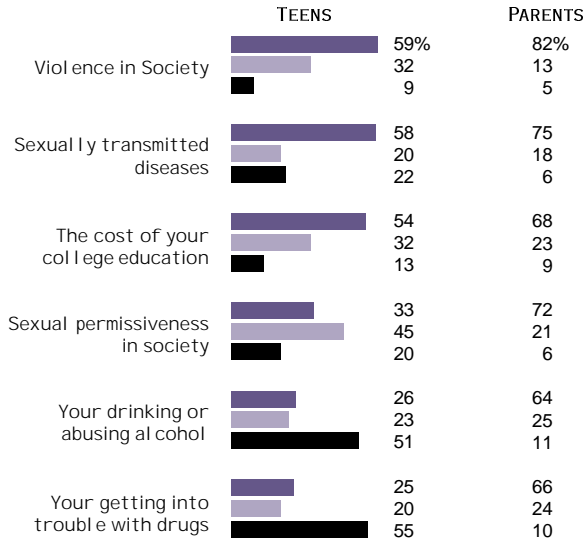


Note: Asked of parents.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Growing Pains

Questions:

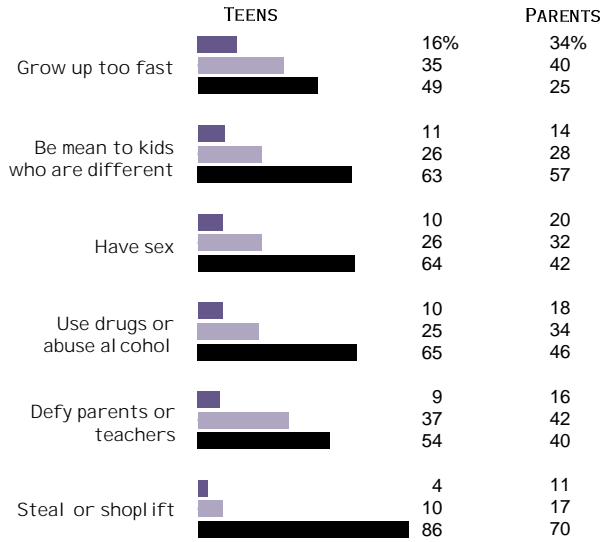
...[P]lease tell me how concerned you are about the each one. What about...? Does this worry you a lot, a little, or not at all? (Parents asked about own level of concern for each aspect of "raising teens today.")



Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19 and parents.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Questions:

How much peer pressure from friends do you feel today to do each of the following...? Do you feel a lot of pressure to do this, a little, or none at all? (Parents asked how much pressure they think their own teens feel.)

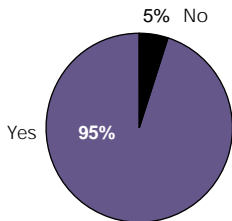


Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19 and parents.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Life's Hard Lessons

Question:

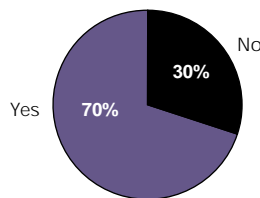
Do you know anyone your age who has gotten pregnant, or not?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

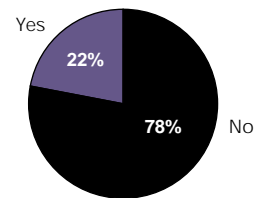
Do you know anyone your age who has ever attempted to commit suicide?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

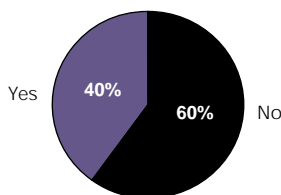
Do you personally know anyone who has tested positive for the HIV virus, or anyone with AIDS, or anyone who has died from AIDS?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

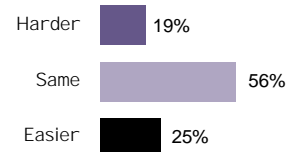
Have you ever had to face a serious crisis or disaster in life?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

Question:

Thinking about the responsibilities and problems you have to face, do you think your life so far has been harder than the lives of most other kids your age, easier than the lives of most other kids your age, or about the same?

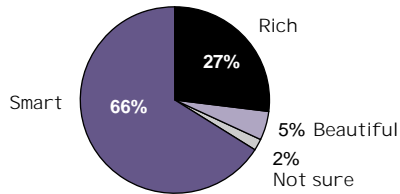


Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

What Really Matters

Question:

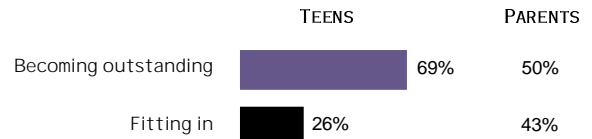
If you could be rich, smart, or beautiful, but only one of the three, which would you choose?



Note: Asked of high school students ages 13-18.
Source: Survey by Peter D. Hart Research for the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, May 2-15, 2001.

Question:

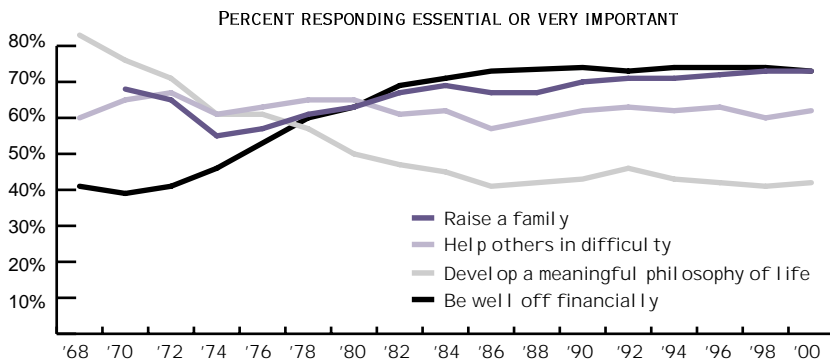
If you had to choose between fitting in with friends or becoming outstanding in some way, which would you choose?



Note: Asked of youths ages 13-19 and parents.
Source: Survey by Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, April 20-28, 2000.

Question:

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following: raising a family, being very well off financially, helping others who are in difficulty, developing a meaningful philosophy of life.



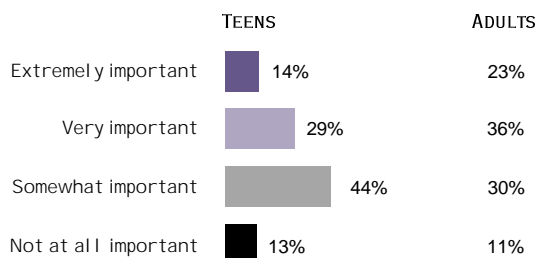
Note: Asked of college freshmen.
Source: Surveys by the Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, for the American Council on Education, latest that of Fall 2000.

	Raise a family	Help others	Develop a philosophy	Be well off
'68	—	60	83	41
'70	68	65	76	39
'72	65	67	71	41
'74	55	61	61	46
'76	57	63	61	53
'78	62	66	57	60
'80	63	65	50	63
'82	67	62	47	70
'84	69	62	45	71
'86	67	57	41	73
'88	67	—	—	—
'90	70	62	43	74
'92	71	63	46	73
'94	71	62	43	74
'96	72	63	42	74
'98	73	60	41	74
'00	73	62	42	73

Young Seekers

Question:

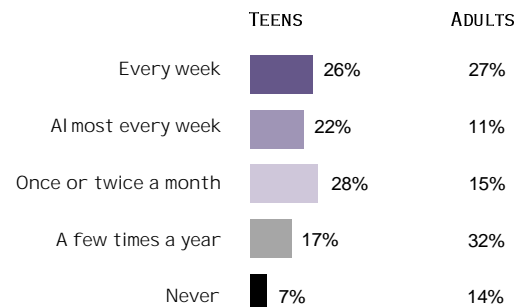
How important is religion in your daily life? Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important?



Note: Asked of high school juniors and adults.
Source: Surveys by CBS News, December 1998 (teens), April 1998 (adults).

Question:

Would you say you attend religious services every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?

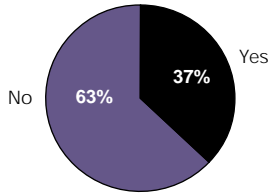


Note: Asked of high school seniors and adults.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000 (teens); February 2000 (adults).

Leaving Childhood Behind

Question:

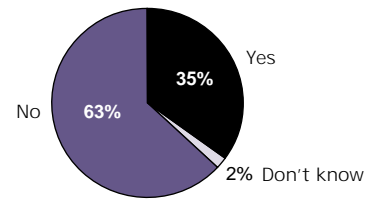
Do you ever feel as though you had to grow up too fast, or don't you feel that way?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

Question:

Do you think you had to grow up faster than your parents did, or not?

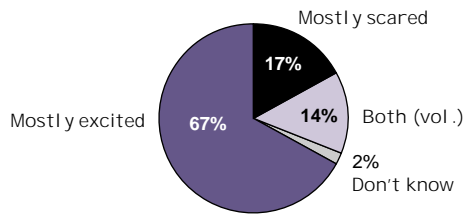


Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, November 1999.

The Road Ahead

Question:

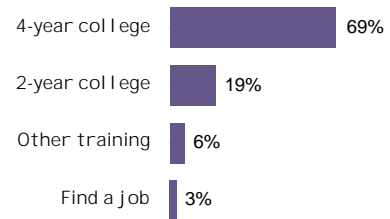
How do you feel about graduating from high school and going out into the world—are you mostly excited about it, or are you mostly scared about it?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

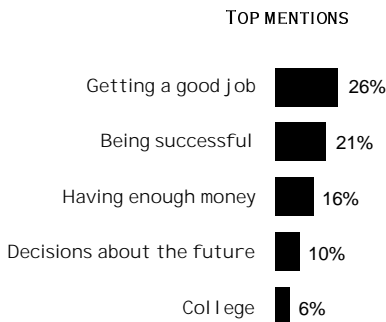
What are your plans after high school? Do you plan to find a job, attend a two-year college or junior college, attend a four-year college, or attend some other type of training institution?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group/Lake, Snell, Perry for Americans for Consumer Education and Competition, February 4-11, 2001.

Question:

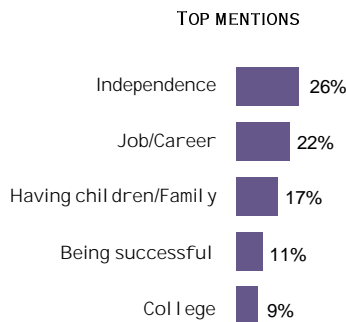
When you think about your future, what worries you the most?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

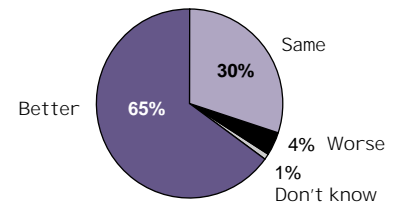
When you think about your future, what do you look forward to the most?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.

Question:

Compared to the life your parents have, do you think your life will be better, worse, or about the same...?



Note: Asked of high school seniors.
Source: Survey by CBS News, May 2000.