VALUES OF AMERICANS

A STUDY OF ETHICS AND CHARACTER

Boy Scouts of America
Youth and Family Research Center

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Values of Americans
A Study of Ethics and Character

Research Conducted by Harris Interactive

Report Produced by
Boy Scouts of America
Youth and Family Research Center

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Findings from this study indicate positive outcomes for men who were Scouts as youth and for current youth members, especially for men and boys who have been in Scouting for five or more years.

Values of Americans

A Study of Ethics and Character

Introduction

American values and ethics are believed to be in a state of flux. Today, Americans face a bewildering range of lifestyle options, with complex and unprecedented decisions to make. With corporate ethics being questioned and the media reporting unethical individual acts, one wonders what values are important to Americans today. Do they still hold the same ethics and values as they did 10 years ago, or have the values of our society changed?

The Boy Scouts of America commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct the *Values of Americans* study to examine the ethics and character of Americans—young and old—to see if values have changed over time. The Boy Scouts also wanted to determine how Scouting has influenced the values of adults over their lifetime and the values of youth members who are Scouts.

In 1995, the Boy Scouts of America released a study by Harris Interactive entitled *The Values of Men and Boys in America.* This study examined the values of adult males and male youth in America. Findings from this study indicate positive outcomes for men who were Scouts as youth and for current youth members, especially for men and boys who have been in Scouting for five or more years.

While the current study mirrors the 1995 study as closely as possible, this study not only focuses on men and boys, but includes the values of women and girls. Today, women make up over one-third of Boy Scout volunteers. In addition, the Boy Scouts of America has had a coed Scouting program since 1998 called Venturing, with females making up slightly less than half of the membership. Therefore, it is important to include every American who helps shape the program and the values of the Boy Scouts of America.

Methodology

The study presented herein comprises two interrelated surveys: one of adult men and women, and the other with males and females in the fourth through 12th grades. The adult survey was administered via telephone to a random sample of 1,524 U.S. adults aged 18 and older. The youth survey consists of a paper survey distributed to a random sample of 1,714 youth attending public, private, and parochial schools across the United States. Both surveys were conducted September through October of 2004.

Results from this study are compared with the previous study released in 1995 with men and boys. So that comparisons are made with like samples, only men and boys from the 2005 study are used in the comparisons. In addition, only statistically significant differences between the two studies are presented herein.

Overview of Findings

America prides itself on being a diverse country. It is a mixture of genders, races, ages, cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs. This diversity brings with it a host of values, some that are held very strongly and acted upon, and others that are less vital in people's everyday lives. On some value indicators, such as honesty, citizenship, and ethics, there are significant differences between the value younger and older Americans place on specific traits. There are also gender differences most often surrounding values related to family and community service, as well as racial and ethnic differences surrounding faith. Yet amid this diversity there are commonly held values involving family, country, personal responsibility, and ethics that bring us together as Americans.

Values of Adult Men and Women in America

Overall, American adults are satisfied with their personal lives. Most are happy with their current job or occupation and the person they turned out to be. They value having close family ties, lifelong friendships, and religious faith; this is especially true among women and Hispanics.

However, they are concerned about the state of American society and the world today, and rightly so. Compared with men 10 years ago, fewer men today place a high importance on showing concern for their neighbors' property, keeping their property clean and tidy, or attending religious services regularly. Measures of ethical beliefs have also declined since 1995. Fewer men today agree that being honest with everyone pays off, and that preserving our environment for future generations is very important. Fewer men also think it is absolutely wrong under all circumstances to smoke marijuana, and slightly more report smoking this drug.

American values related to ethical behaviors vary according to the perceived degree of the offense. They have a strong opposition to illicit use of hard drugs such as heroin or LSD, but have more lenient views on taking office supplies for personal use and speeding. Women are generally more strongly opposed to any unethical behavior than men.

Values of Youth in America

Like adults, youth are more satisfied with their immediate lives than with American society or the world today. They feel safe in their immediate environment, such as their school and their neighborhood, but much less safe in the larger world. However, the feeling of safety varies by race. African Americans are less likely than whites to feel safe in their school or their neighborhood.

Also like adults, youth place a great deal of importance on family relationships; however, this importance declines with age. Girls are also more likely than boys to place a high importance on family relationships. However, all youth regardless of age and gender say that their parents are the most influential people when it comes to teaching values and ethics.

Youth are also generally honest and ethical. Most would not participate in dishonest or destructive acts, and very few report participating in acts such as carrying a gun to school, using hard drugs such as LSD, or

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Men who were Scouts agree that Scouting has had a positive influence on their lives, as well as on American society as a whole. Scouting has positively influenced their character development, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and family relationships.

shoplifting. However, like adults, they tend to participate in dishonest or unethical acts that they feel carry fewer consequences or that have higher peer pressure, such as cheating on homework or tests and drinking alcohol. Almost one in five youth has also participated in binge drinking or fighting another group of youth. It should also be noted that participation in each of these destructive or unethical behaviors increases with age.

Comparing youth in 1995 to youth today reveals some encouraging trends. Fewer youth today report shoplifting, cheating on homework, carrying a gun to school, or being a member of a gang.

The Scouting Difference

Men who were Scouts agree that Scouting has had a positive influence on their lives, as well as on American society as a whole. Scouting has positively influenced their character development, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and family relationships. In fact, compared with men in 1995, a larger number of men today say that Scouting activities improved their family life at the time they were Scouts, had a positive effect on their school life in later years, and positively influenced their career development and advancement as an adult.

Compared with men who were never Scouts, men who were Scouts five or more years as youth are more satisfied with their present lives and occupations, have sustained lifelong friendships, and place a higher value on family relationships. Men who were Scouts also earn higher incomes, achieve higher levels of education, and attend religious services more often then men who were never Scouts.

Boys who are or were Scouts also agree that Scouting is a positive influence in their life. Scouting has helped them gain self-confidence, leadership skills, determination, and social interaction skills. Scouting has also impacted their academic skills. Scouting activities have helped Scouts improve their reading, science, engineering, physical fitness, and emergency preparedness skills. In addition, boys who are Scouts report earning higher grades than do boys who were never Scouts.

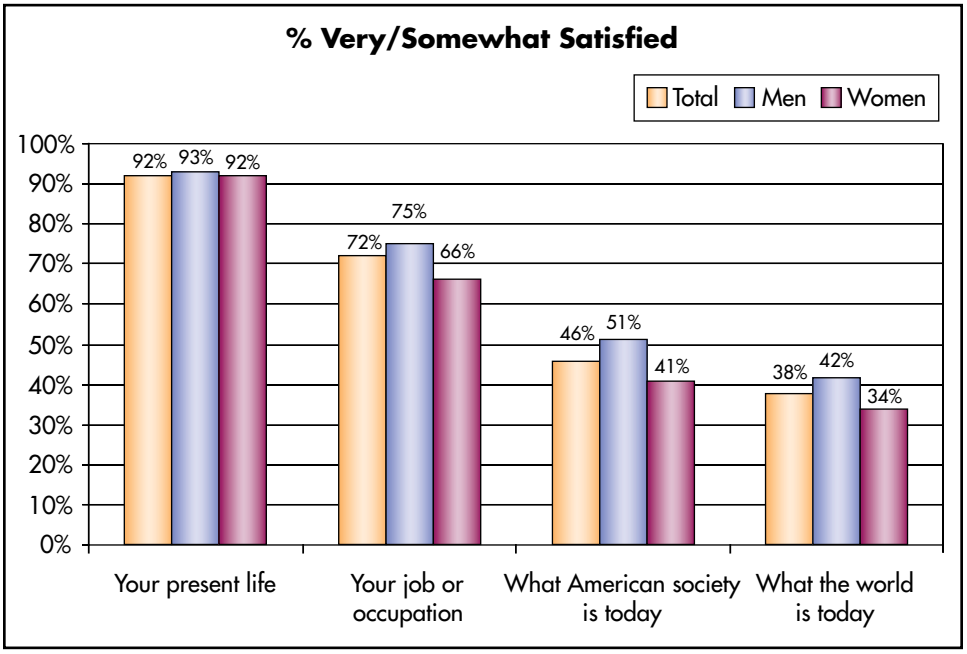
Current and former Scouts are more active and have a wider range of interests than boys who have not been Scouts. They tend to watch less television than other boys and engage in more extracurricular activities such as fine arts, hobbies, and school clubs.

Scouts are also more likely to make the most ethical decisions, not the easiest. Scouts are more likely to volunteer to be a leader, practice responsible recycling procedures, and take part in community service. They are also more likely to report a classmate with a gun and are less likely than non-Scouts to drink alcohol.

Values of Adult Men and Women in America

Life Satisfaction and Self-Image

Overall, American adults tend to be very positive about their personal life and have a very positive self-image. The majority of Americans are satisfied with their present life and are happy with their current job or occupation. In contrast, less than half of Americans surveyed are satisfied with American society or the state of the world today. This is especially true for women. Compared to men, women tend to be less satisfied with their current occupation, American society, and the state of the world today.



Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

The majority of Americans are satisfied with their present life and are happy with their current job or occupation. In contrast, less than half of Americans surveyed are satisfied with American society or the state of the world today.

Men today are more satisfied with their jobs or occupations than they were 10 years ago. They are also more satisfied with American society and the world than they were in 1995.

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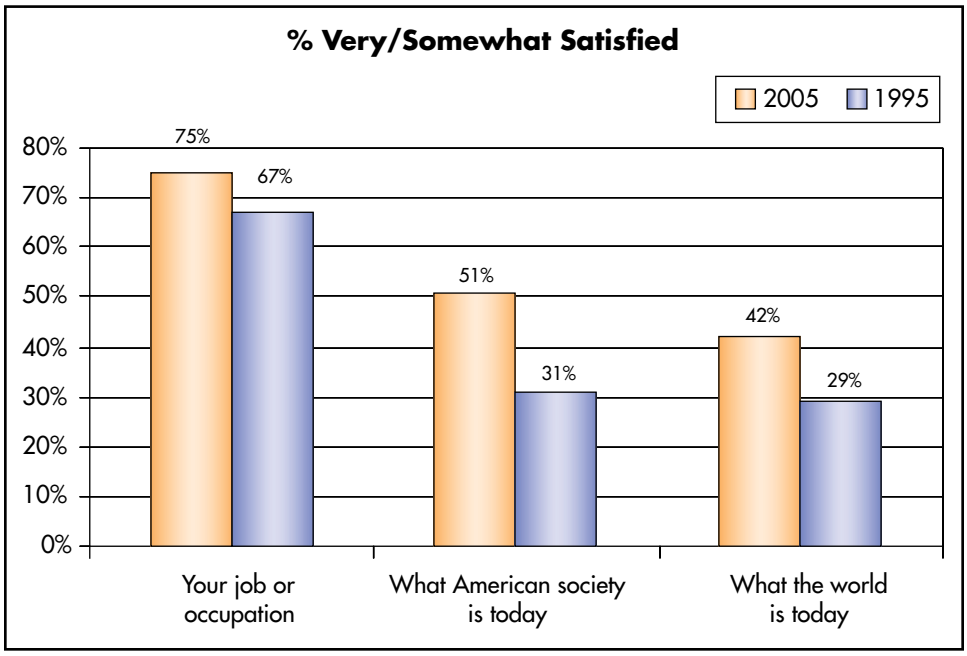
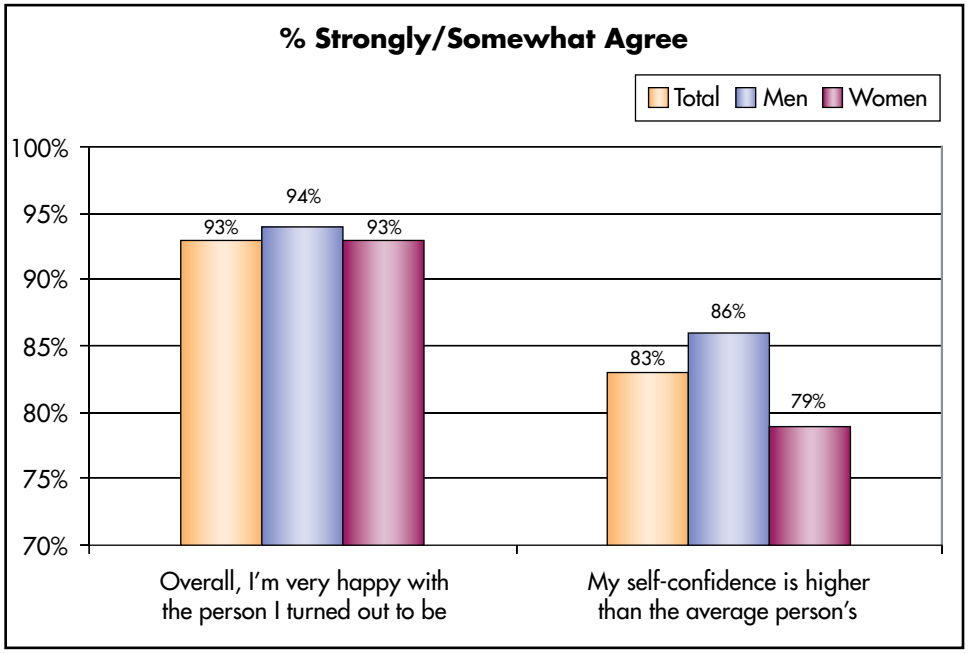


Base: 1,005 men in 2005; 1,109 men in 1995.

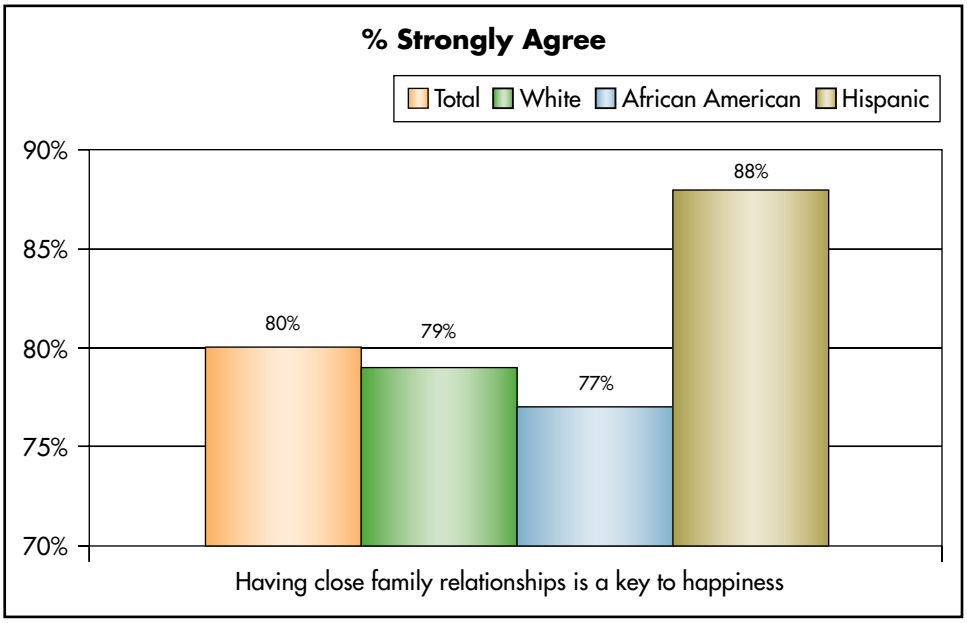
American men and women are happy with the person they turned out to be. In fact, two-thirds (66 percent) of Americans strongly agree with this statement. While Americans are happy with themselves, fewer report having self-confidence that is higher than the average person's. However, men are more likely than women to agree that their self-confidence is higher than the average person's.



Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

Family and Friends

Americans value having close family ties. Eight of 10 Americans (80 percent) say that having close family relationships is a key to happiness. However, the importance of family ties varies by age and ethnicity. Younger adults, ages 18 to 24, are less likely (74 percent) than any other age group to say that a close family relationship is a key to happiness. Hispanic Americans are more likely than any other racial group to strongly agree that close family relationships are a key to happiness.



Base: 1,216 whites; 102 African Americans; 93 Hispanics.

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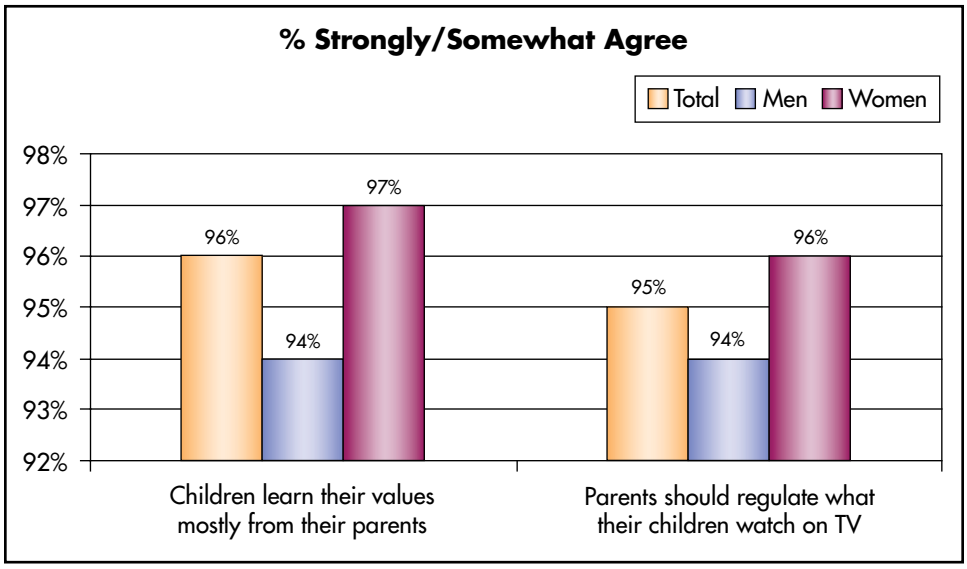
Americans agree that children learn their values mostly from their parents.

Parents play an important role in the development of children's values and character. Americans agree that children learn their values mostly from their parents. Women, more so than men, tend to strongly agree with this statement. Most Americans also believe that parents should guide their children by regulating what they watch on television.



Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

As well as valuing family relationships, Americans also value the relationships they form with friends. Most Americans (80 percent) have maintained at least one lifelong friendship. Most of these friendships started in school or college (54 percent) or through work (49 percent).

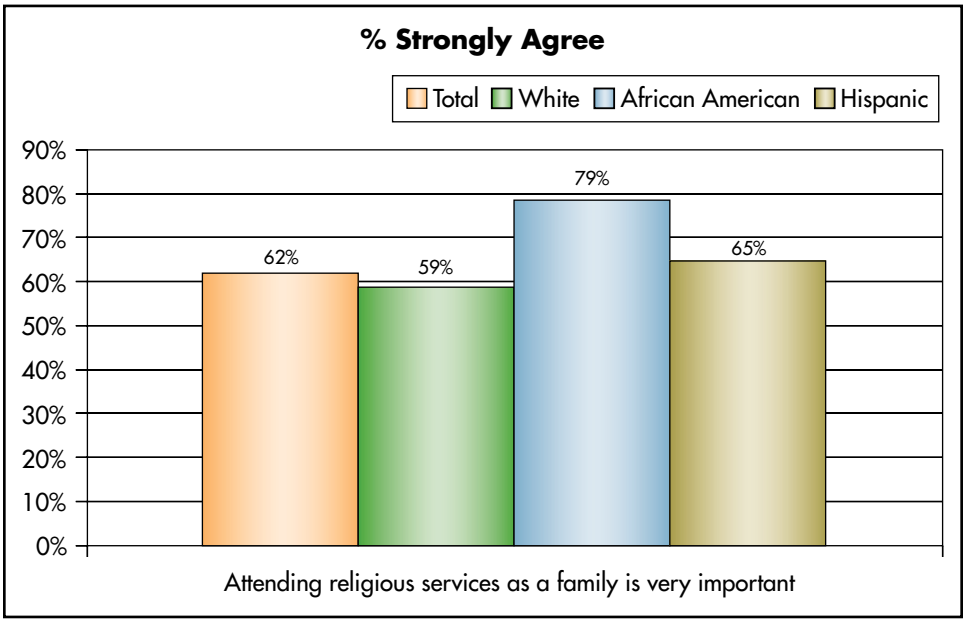
Community

Building respect and helping others in the community are also values held by most Americans. Almost all Americans (99 percent) agree that older people should be respected. However, significantly fewer young adults, ages 18 to 24, compared with adults 25 and over, strongly agree that older people should be respected (85 percent). The majority of Americans also value helping others. Eighty-seven percent agree that helping others should come before one's own interests, with almost half (45 percent) strongly agreeing with this statement.

Faith

Faith is an important part of most Americans' lives. Eighty-five percent of Americans agree that attending religious services together as a family is important, and 62 percent of them strongly agree with this statement. Women are more likely than men to strongly agree that attending services as a family is very important.

Faith plays a large role in the lives of African Americans. They are more likely than any other racial group to strongly agree that it is important to attend religious services as a family. They also put this belief into action and are more likely than any other group to attend religious services more than once a week. In addition, African Americans are more likely than any other racial group to say that attending religious services is an important part of good citizenship.



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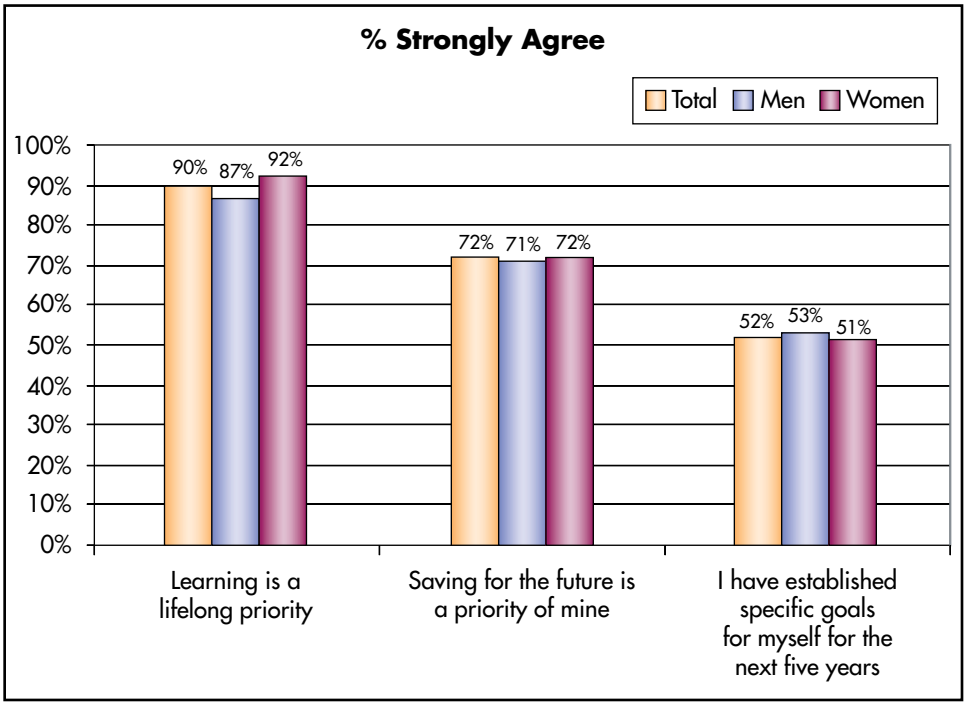
Planning for the Future

Americans think about and plan for their and their family's future. Nine of 10 American adults say that learning is a lifelong priority. Saving for the future is also a priority for a majority of Americans, and most have established specific goals for the next five years.



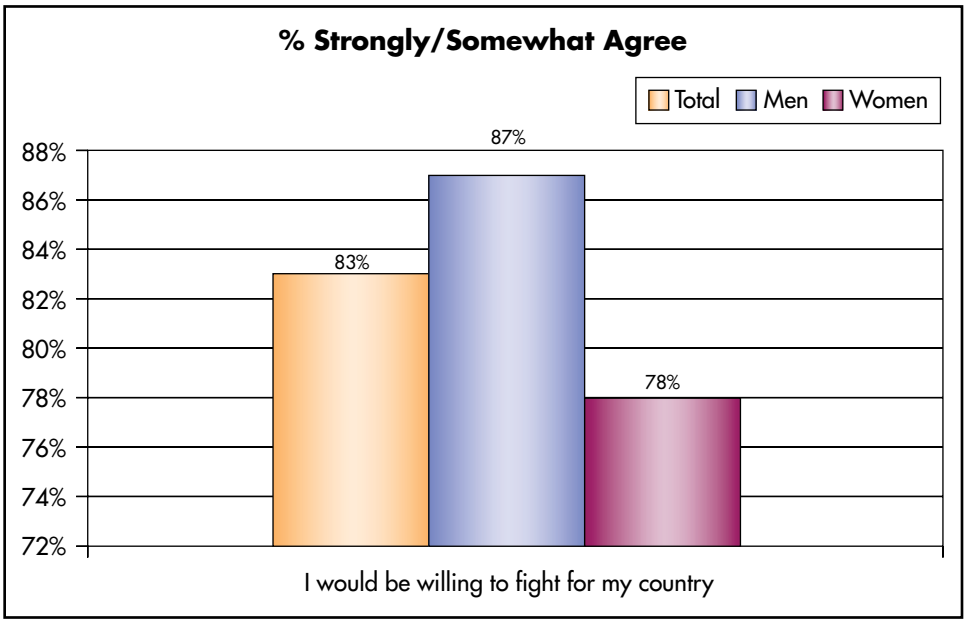
Base: 1,005 men; 519 women.

Eighty-three percent of adults agree that they would fight for their country, with men being more likely than women to strongly agree.

Americans are concerned with the environment and the world that they will leave to future generations. Ninety-seven percent of Americans agree that preserving our environment for future generations is very important, with three-fourths (75 percent) strongly agreeing that the environment is important.

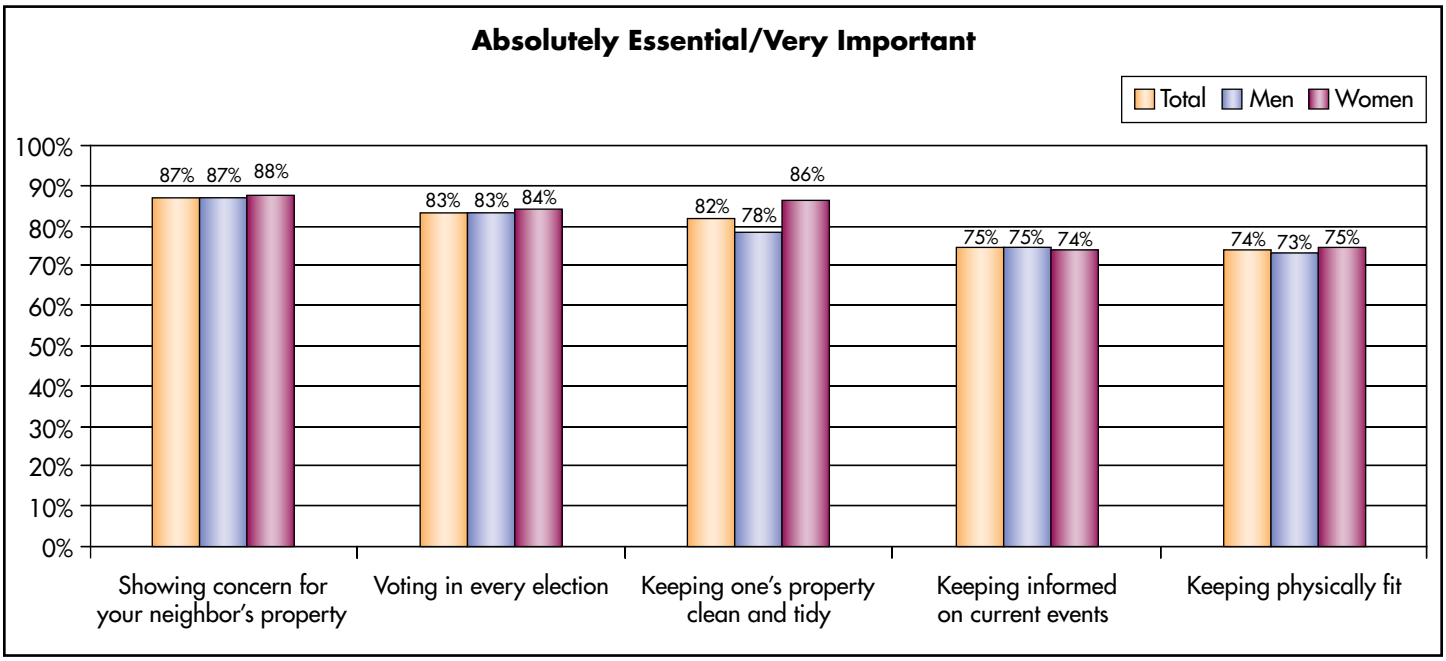
Citizenship

The American spirit of defending life and liberty is still alive. Eighty-three percent of adults agree that they would fight for their country, with men being more likely than women to strongly agree. And African Americans are less likely than whites to strongly agree that they would fight for their country.



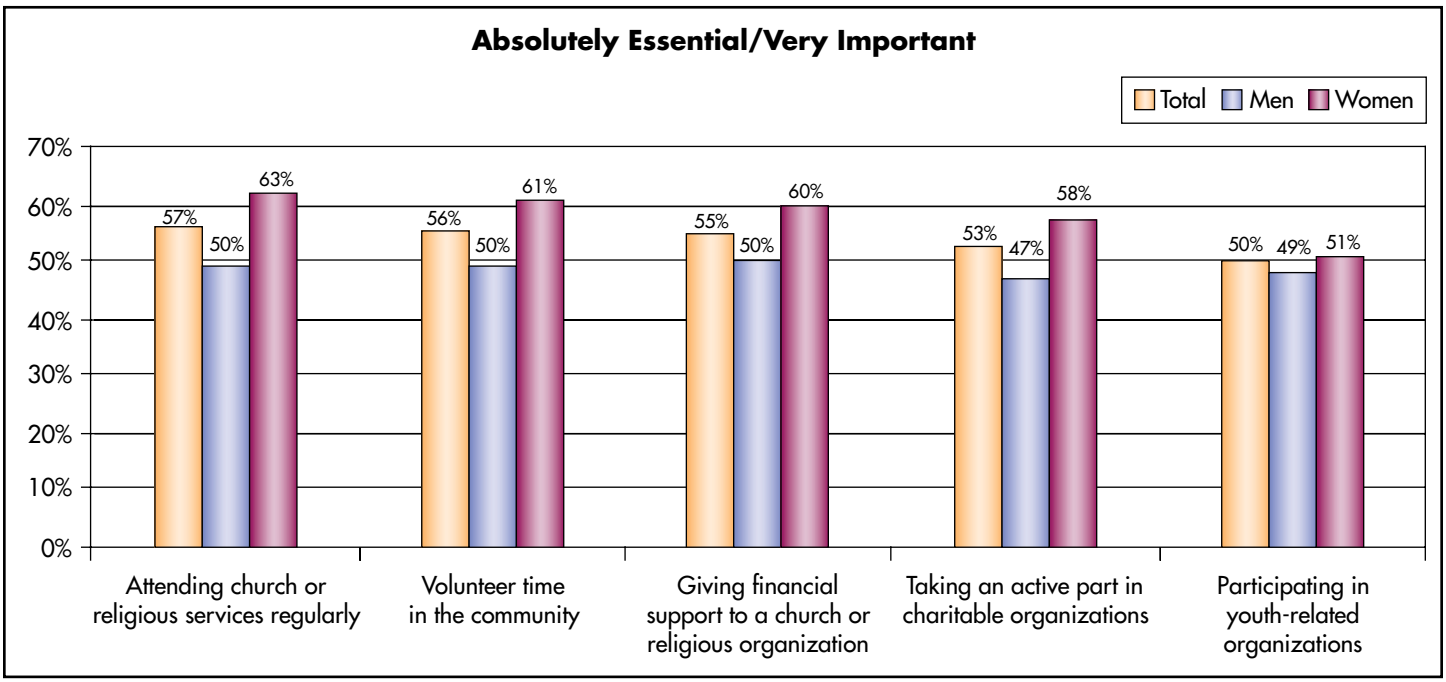
Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

What makes a good citizen? Overall, Americans place a strong emphasis on showing concern for their neighbor's property, voting in every election, keeping one's property clean and tidy, keeping informed on current events, and keeping physically fit as indicators of good citizenship.



Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

At least half of Americans say that attending religious services regularly, giving financial support to religious organizations, taking an active part in charitable organizations, and volunteering time in the community are important in order to be a good citizen. However, women are more likely than men to say that these actions are an important part of good citizenship.



Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

Indicators of citizenship are another area where there are differences between generations. Younger adults, ages 18 to 24, are generally less likely than those 25 or older to say that voting in every election (24 percent vs. 37 percent), showing concern for their neighbor's property (19 percent vs. 31 percent), keeping their property clean and tidy (13 percent vs. 25 percent), keeping informed on current events (10 percent vs. 22 percent), giving financial support to a church or religious organization (5 percent vs. 17 percent), volunteering their time in the community (9 percent vs. 13 percent), and participating in youth-related organizations (7 percent vs. 12 percent) are absolutely essential to good citizenship.

When examining responses by race/ethnicity, Hispanic Americans are less likely than other racial/ethnic groups to say that voting in every election is an absolutely essential part of good citizenship (28 percent vs. 39 percent). African Americans are more likely than other races/ethnicities to place a great importance on keeping one's property clean and tidy (35 percent vs. 25 percent), and attending church or religious services (31 percent vs. 17 percent) regularly as a part of good citizenship. White Americans are more likely than other races/ethnicities to say that it is absolutely essential to keep informed on current events (23 percent vs. 15 percent).

Americans today place less importance on some measures of citizenship than in 1995. The largest change is among the number of people who say it is absolutely essential to show concern for their neighbor's property. Other changes that are significant include keeping one's property clean and tidy, keeping physically fit, and attending religious services regularly.

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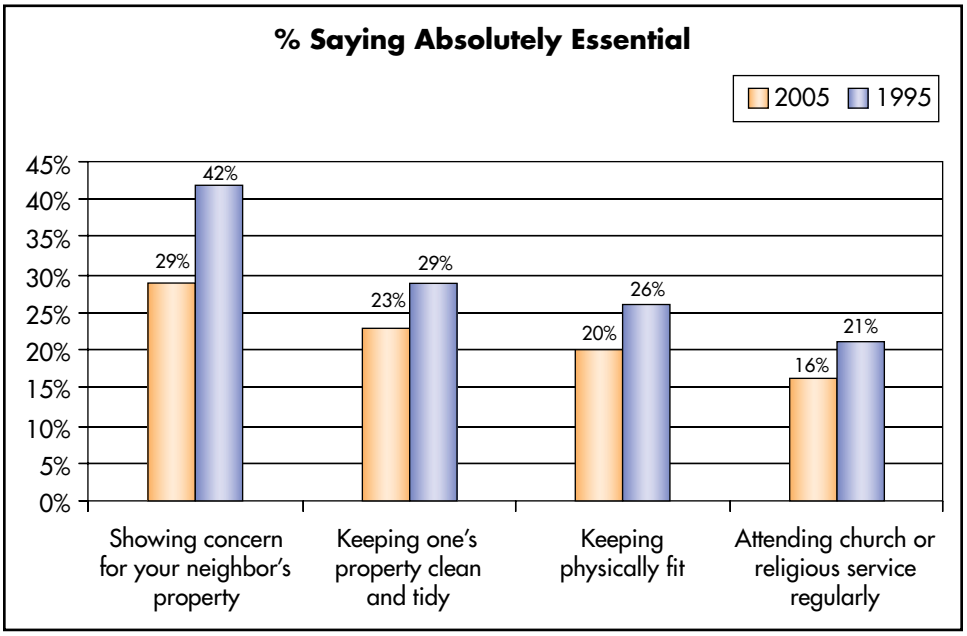


Base: 1,005 men in 2005; 1,109 men in 1995.

Ethics

To gauge the ethical compass of Americans, several scenarios were presented and participants in the study were asked to tell whether the action was absolutely wrong under all circumstances, wrong under most but not all circumstances, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all.

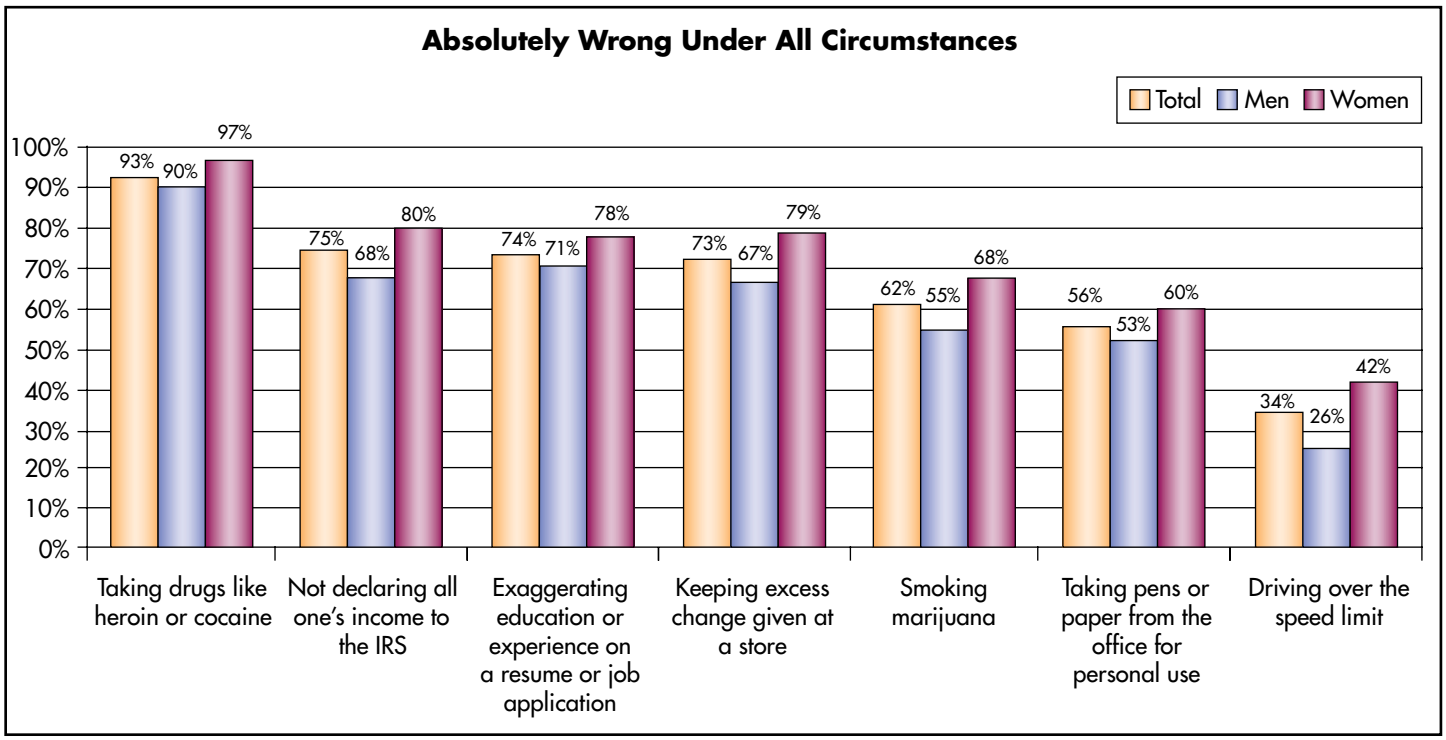
Americans are most strongly opposed to taking hard-core drugs such as heroin or cocaine, with 93 percent saying that it is absolutely wrong under all circumstances. However, they are less strongly opposed to marijuana usage, with only 62 percent saying marijuana use is wrong under all circumstances.

Americans also generally believe in paying taxes that are owed. Cheating on taxes by not declaring all of one's income to the IRS is considered to be absolutely wrong by three-fourths (75 percent) of Americans. Women are more likely than men to say that not declaring all of one's income is absolutely wrong under all circumstances (80 percent vs. 68 percent).

Around three-fourths (74 percent) of Americans also say that it is absolutely wrong to exaggerate one's education or experience on a resume or job application. In addition, if given incorrect change at a store, most would give it back, with 73 percent saying that it is absolutely wrong under all circumstances to keep excess change given at a store. Far fewer have a problem taking office supplies from their employer, with only slightly more than half saying that taking pens or

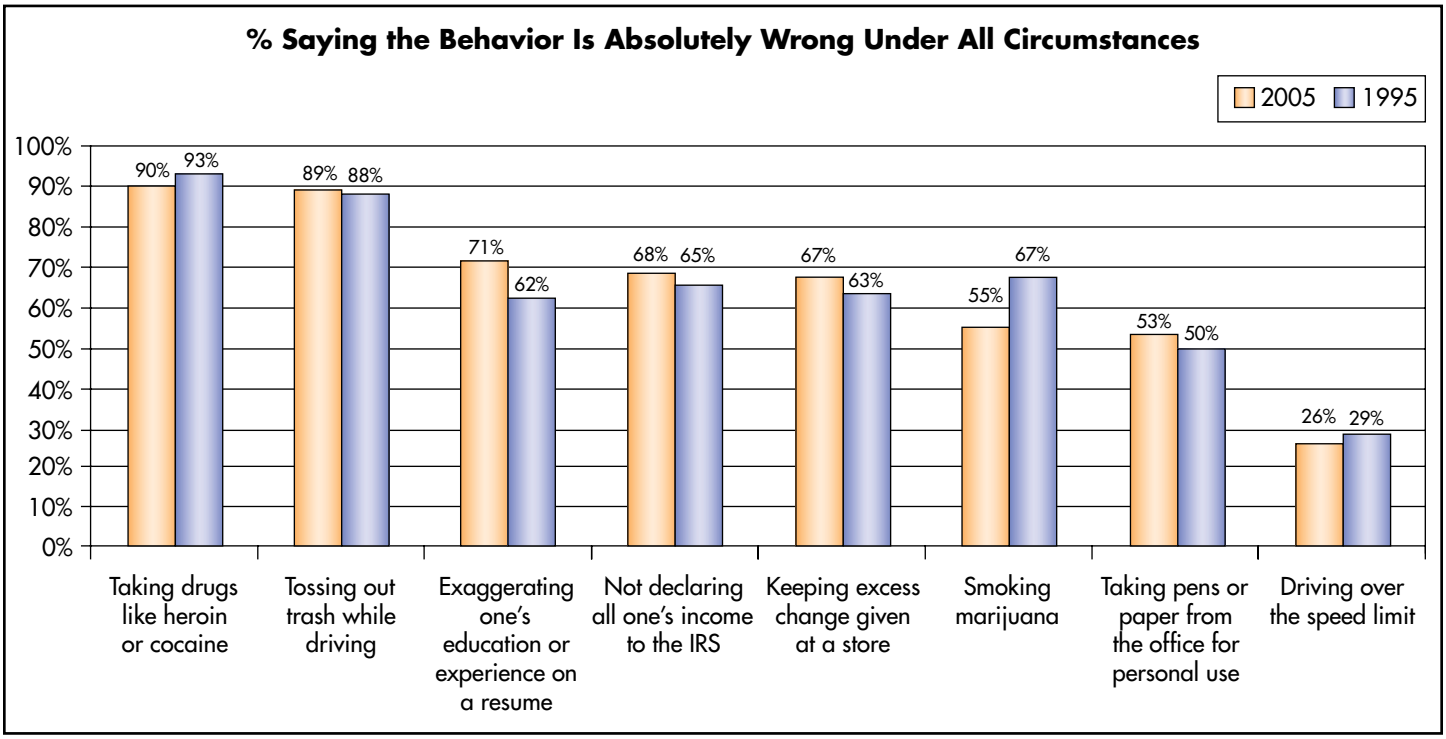
paper from the office for personal use is absolutely wrong under all circumstances. And only about one-third (34 percent) of Americans say that driving over the speed limit is absolutely wrong under all circumstances.

Women are more opposed to ethical violations than are men, particularly speeding, smoking marijuana, tax evasion, and keeping excess change. In contrast, younger adults, those 18 to 24 years of age, are less opposed to ethical violations than Americans who are over 25 years of age. They are less likely to say that littering (85 percent vs. 90 percent), exaggerating education or experience (53 percent vs. 74 percent), keeping excess change (58 percent vs. 73 percent), smoking marijuana (55 percent vs. 62 percent), and taking office supplies for personal use (40 percent vs. 56 percent) are absolutely wrong under all circumstances.



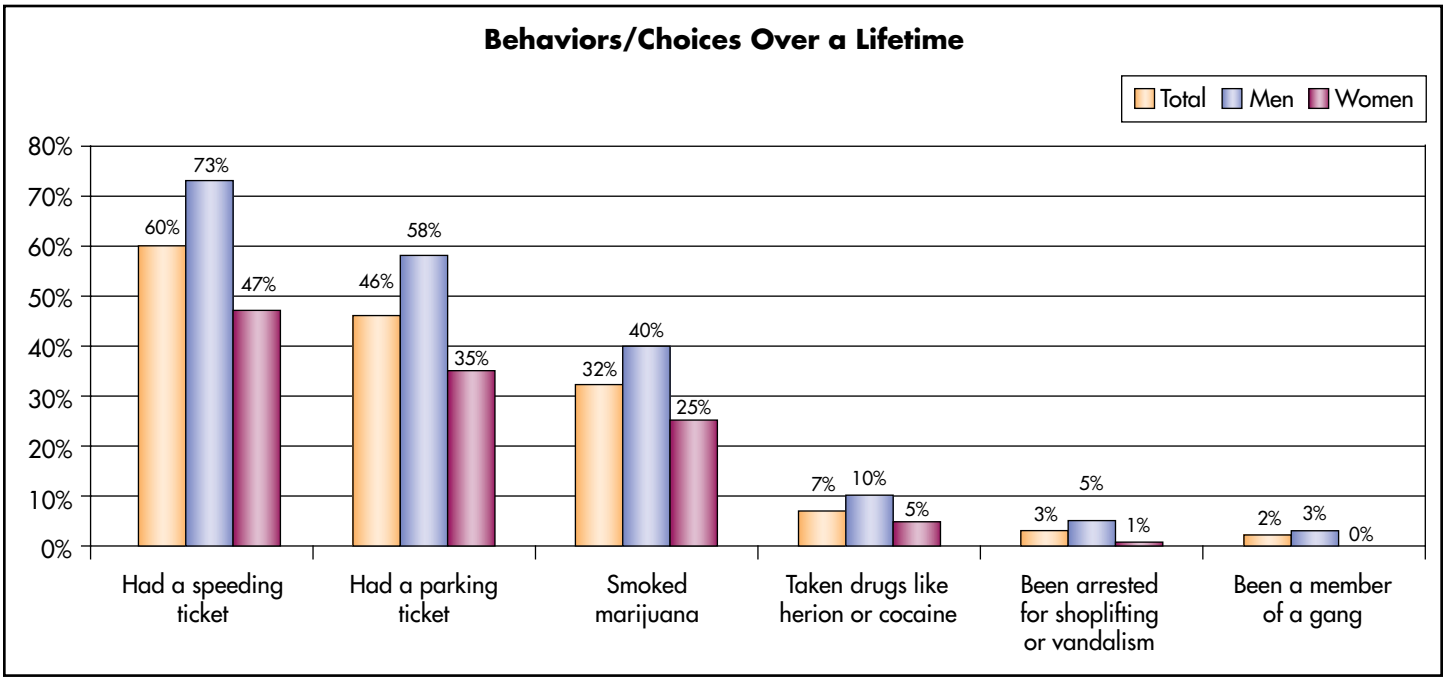
Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

Men today are less opposed to marijuana use than in 1995. This is largely due to the opinions of the youngest respondents. Attitudes toward all other unethical behaviors remained relatively stable over the last 10 years.



Base: 1,005 men in 2005 study; 1,109 men in 1995 study.

Americans' actions mirror their reported ethics. While 60 percent of Americans have received a speeding ticket, very few report having taken hard drugs like heroin or cocaine, and even fewer have been arrested for shoplifting or vandalism or been a member of a gang.



Base: 1,524 adults; 1,005 men; 519 women.

More than three-fourths of Americans (79 percent) agree that a person should not resort to a means he or she knows to be wrong, even though it will lead to success, with more almost two-thirds (64 percent) strongly agreeing with this principle.

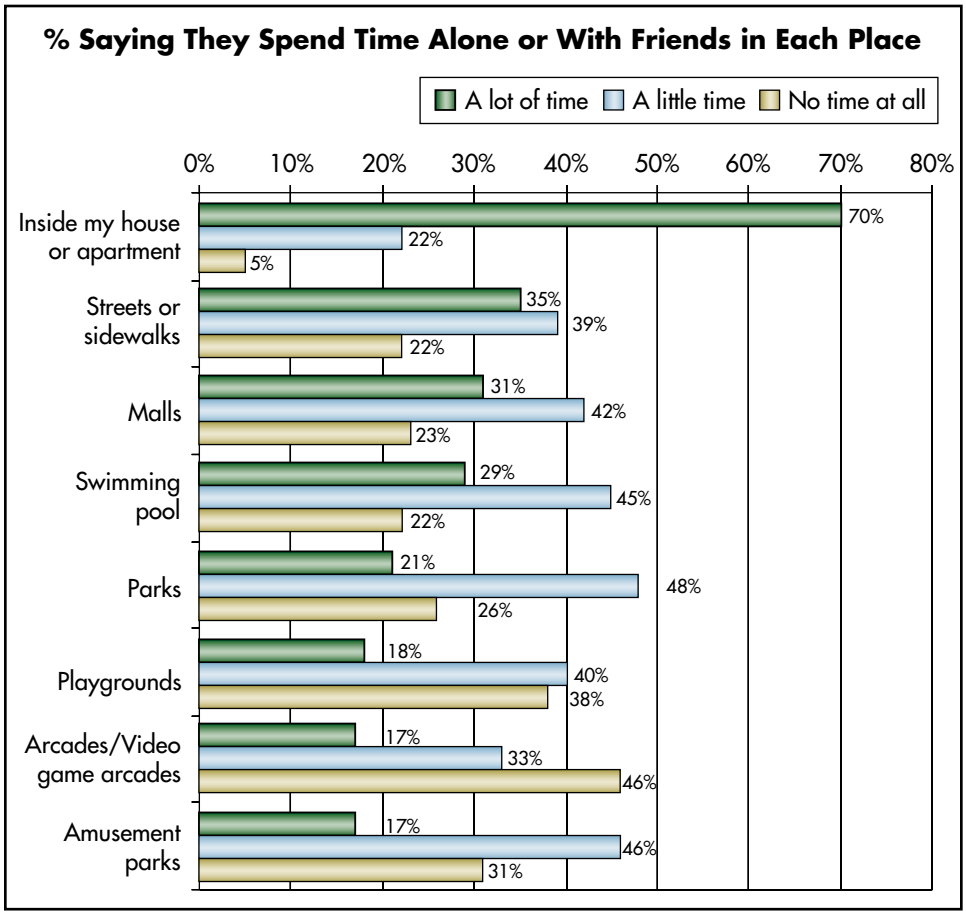
More than three-fourths of Americans (79 percent) agree that a person should not resort to a means he or she knows to be wrong, even though it will lead to success, with more almost two-thirds (64 percent) strongly agreeing with this principle. However, younger adults, ages 18 to 24, are less likely than adults over 24 to strongly agree that a person should not resort to means they know are wrong (38 percent vs. 64 percent).

Over one-third of adults (37 percent) disagree with the statement "being honest with everyone is not something that pays off in the kind of world we live in."

Values of Youth in America

Out-of-School Activities

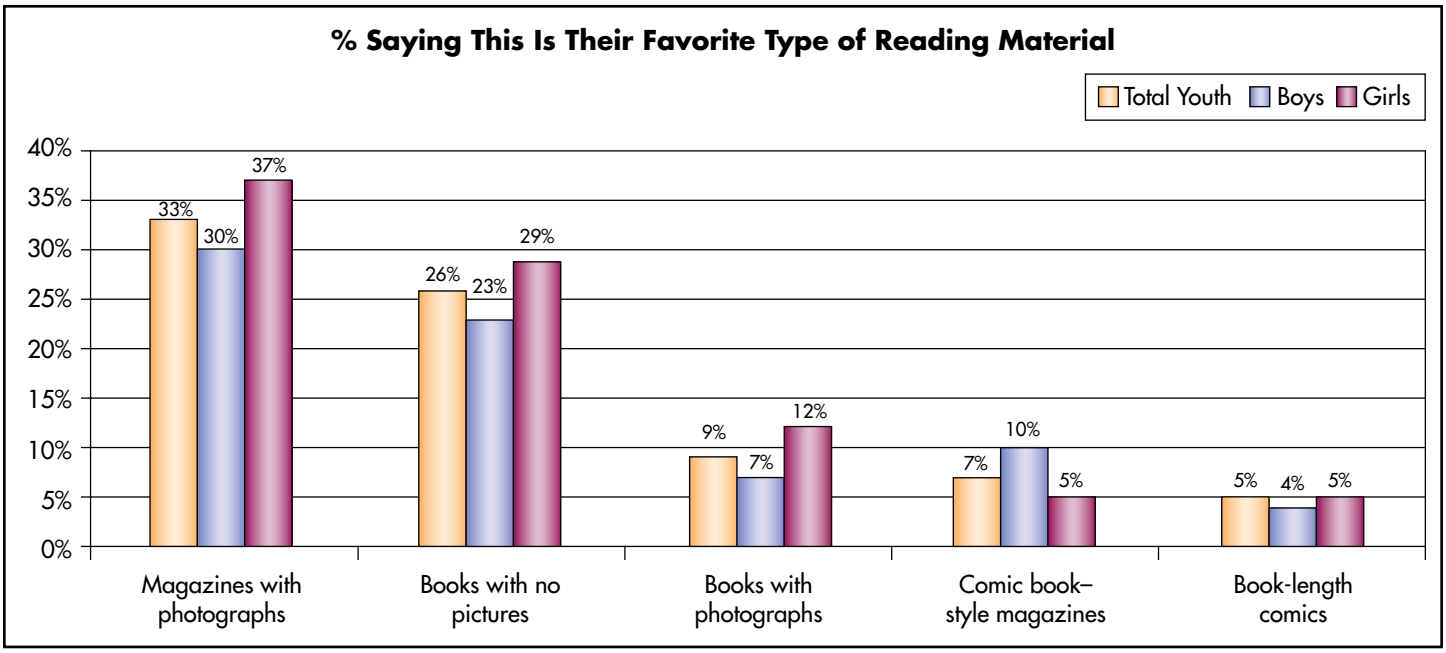
Today's youth are more scheduled and monitored than any other generation before them. Whereas youth were once free to ride their bikes and play outside without adult supervision, today youth are discouraged from venturing out on their own. Therefore, it is not surprising that when asked where they usually spend most of their free time, 70 percent of youth say they spend a lot of time inside their house or apartment. Far fewer spend time playing on the streets or sidewalks, or going to the mall, swimming pool, park, or playground.



Base: 1,714 youth.

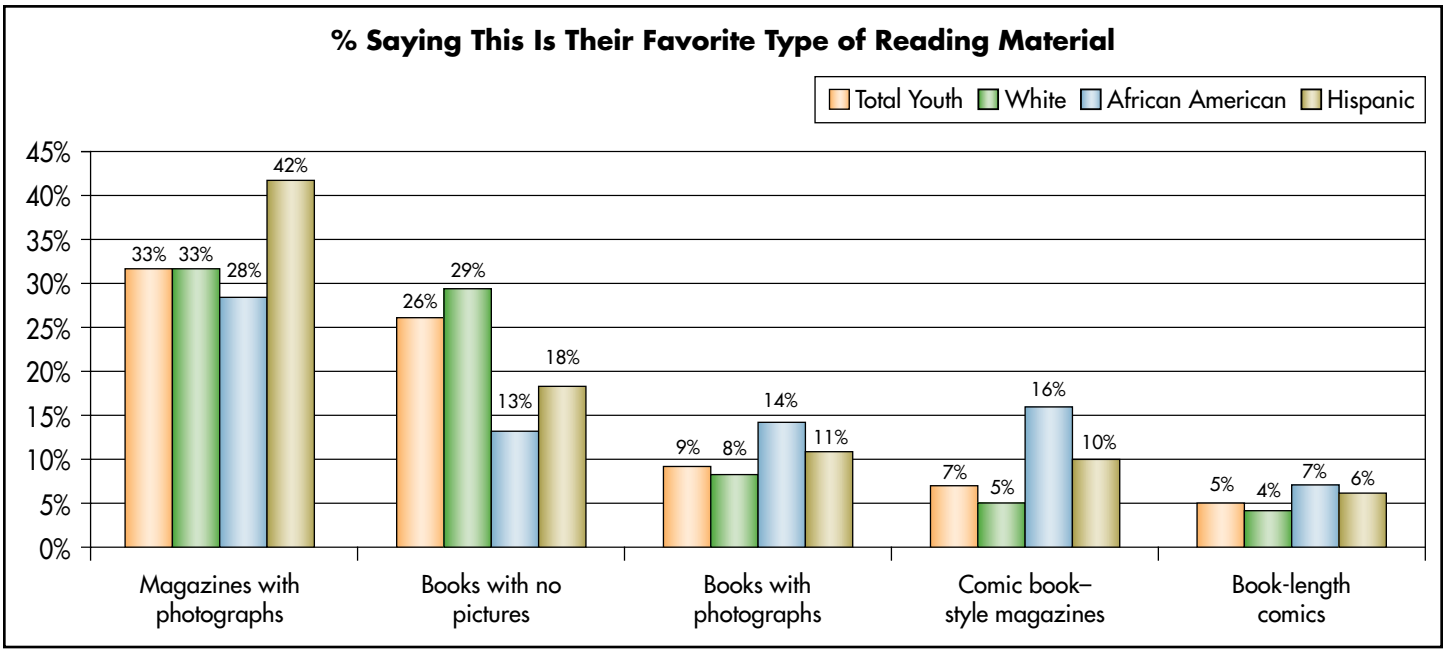
While most youth report reading for pleasure, 11 percent don't like to read, with boys being more likely than girls to say they dislike reading (15 precent vs. 7 percent). Overall, youth who like to read say they

prefer to read magazines with photographs or books with no pictures. However, girls are more likely than boys to select these two types of reading materials as their favorite, while boys are more likely to say that they prefer reading comic book–style magazines.



Base: 1,714 total youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

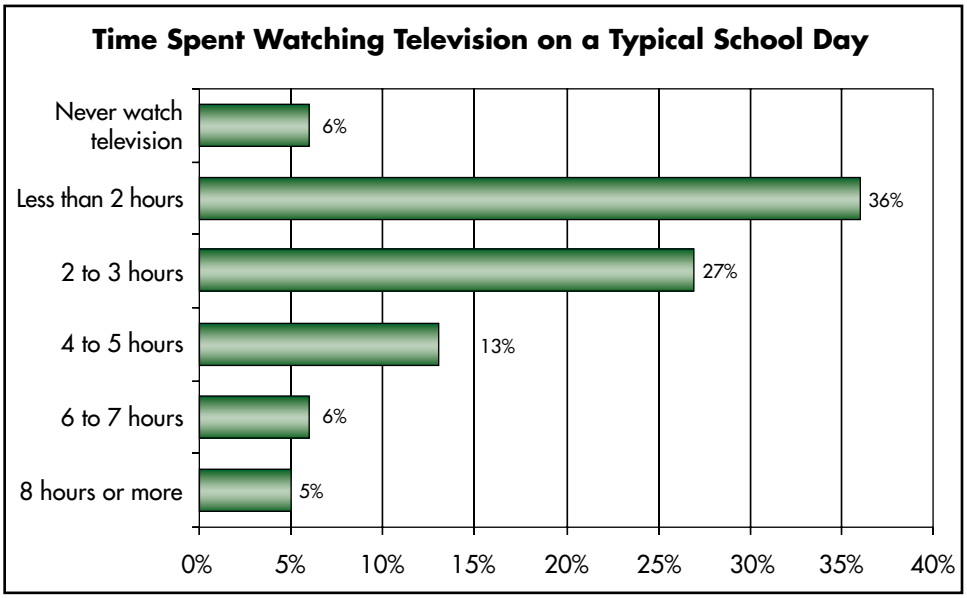
When examining reading preferences by race/ethnicity, Hispanic youth are more likely than white or African American youth to say that magazines with photographs are their favorite. White youth are more likely to say that books without pictures are their favorite type of reading material, and African American youth are more likely than white youth to say that comic book–style magazines are their favorite.



Base: 1,135 white youth; 225 African American youth; 369 Hispanic youth.

Girls are more likely than boys to participate in visual arts programs that include music, dance, drama, or arts and crafts. Boys are more likely to participate in sports and hobbies such as chess, model building, or foreign languages.

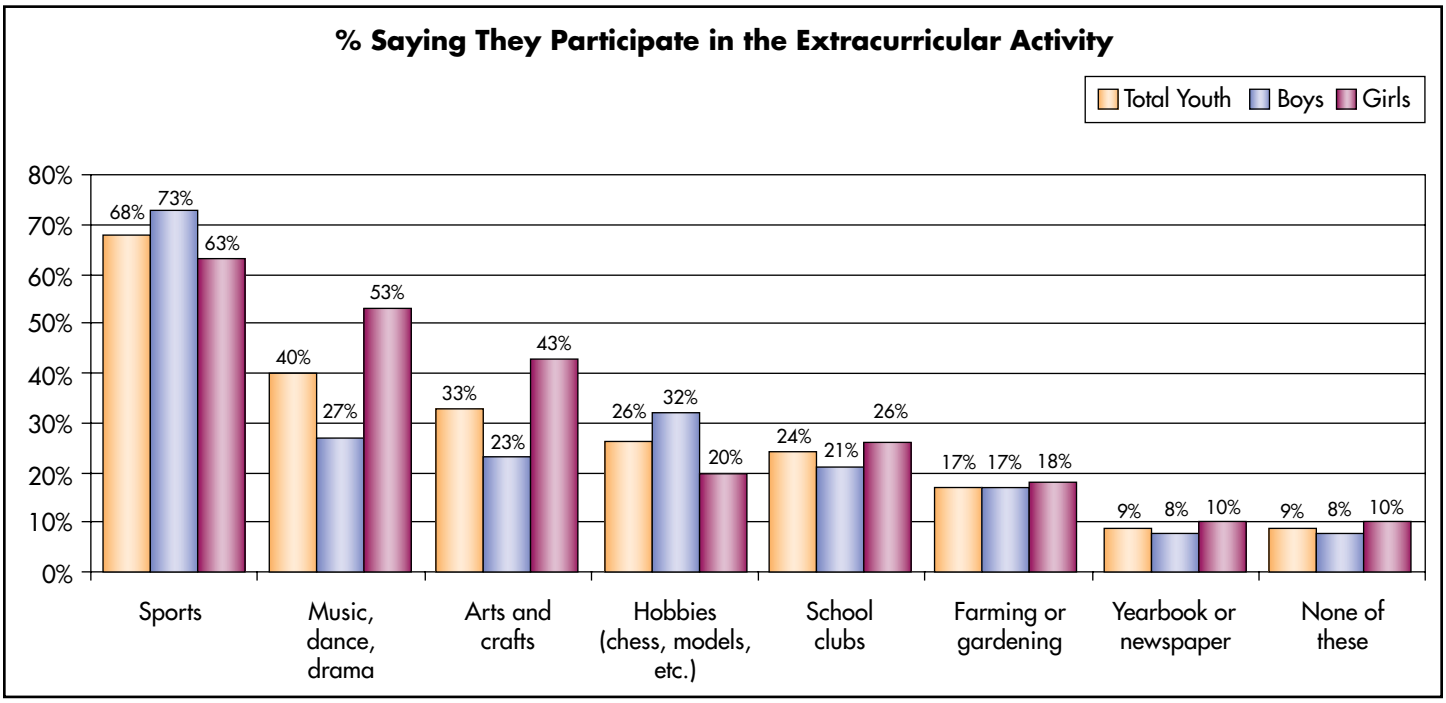
Most youth watch some TV every day. Almost one-fourth of youth report watching at least four hours of television on a typical school day. One-fourth watch television two to three hours per day, and one-third report watching two hours or less on a typical school day. Only 6 percent say they never watch television on a school day. However, the number of hours boys report watching television has decreased slightly since 1995.



Base: 1,714 youth.

Youth are involved in a variety of extracurricular activities. The most common type of activity participated in outside of school is sports, with over two-thirds of youth saying they participate in some type of sport. Taking part in activities that have to do with visual arts is also a common out-of-school activity. Four of every 10 youth say they participate in music, dance, or drama. One-third say that they participate in arts-and-crafts programs. Hobbies such as chess, model building, and learning foreign languages, as well as school clubs, are also popular, with more than one-fourth of youth saying they participate in these activities after school.

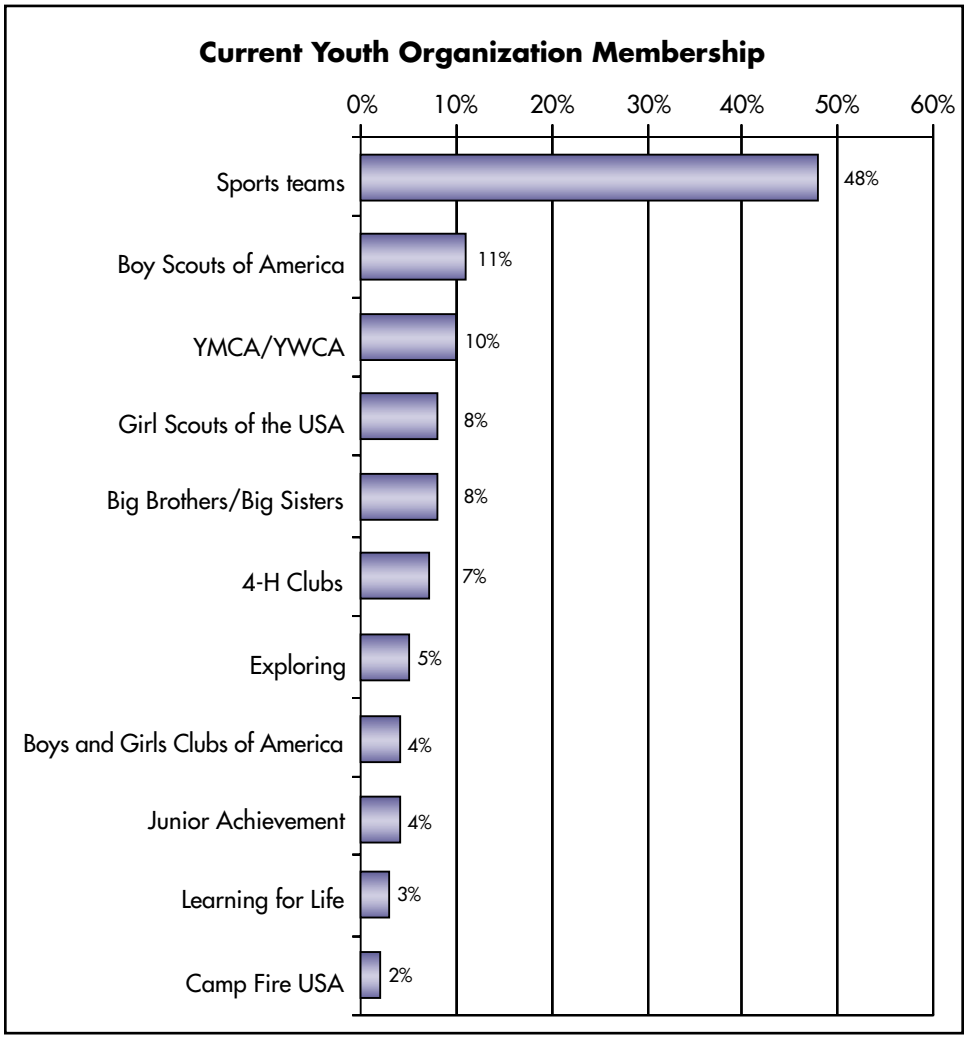
Girls are more likely than boys to participate in visual arts programs that include music, dance, drama, or arts and crafts. Boys are more likely to participate in sports and hobbies such as chess, model building, or foreign languages.



Base: 1,714 total youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

Youth who participate in organized after-school activities most often say that they are currently involved in a sports team, the Boy Scouts of America, or the YMCA/YWCA program.

Youth who participate in organized after-school activities most often say that they are currently involved in a sports team, the Boy Scouts of America, YMCA/YWCA program, Girl Scouts of the USA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, 4-H, or Exploring. Most youth say the social aspects are what attracts them to extracurricular activities. They like hanging out with friends, having fun, playing sports, meeting new people, and just having something to do.

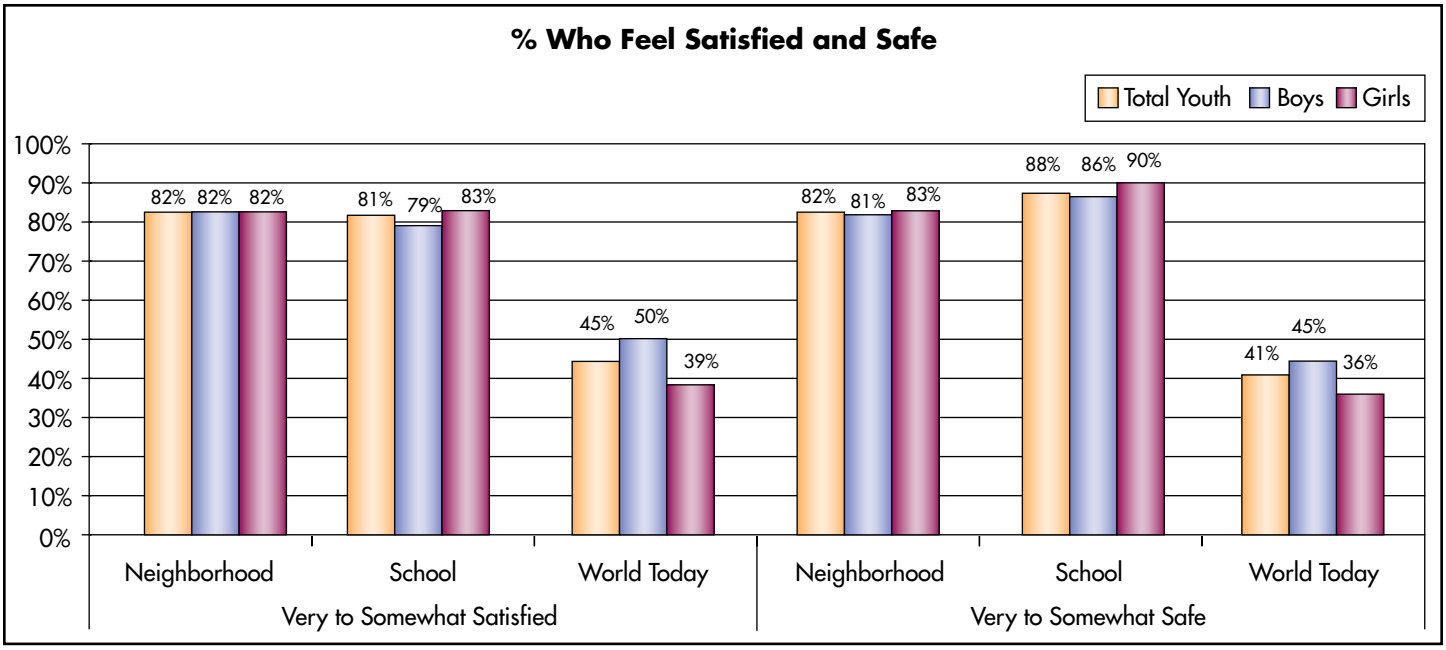


Base: 1,714 total youth.

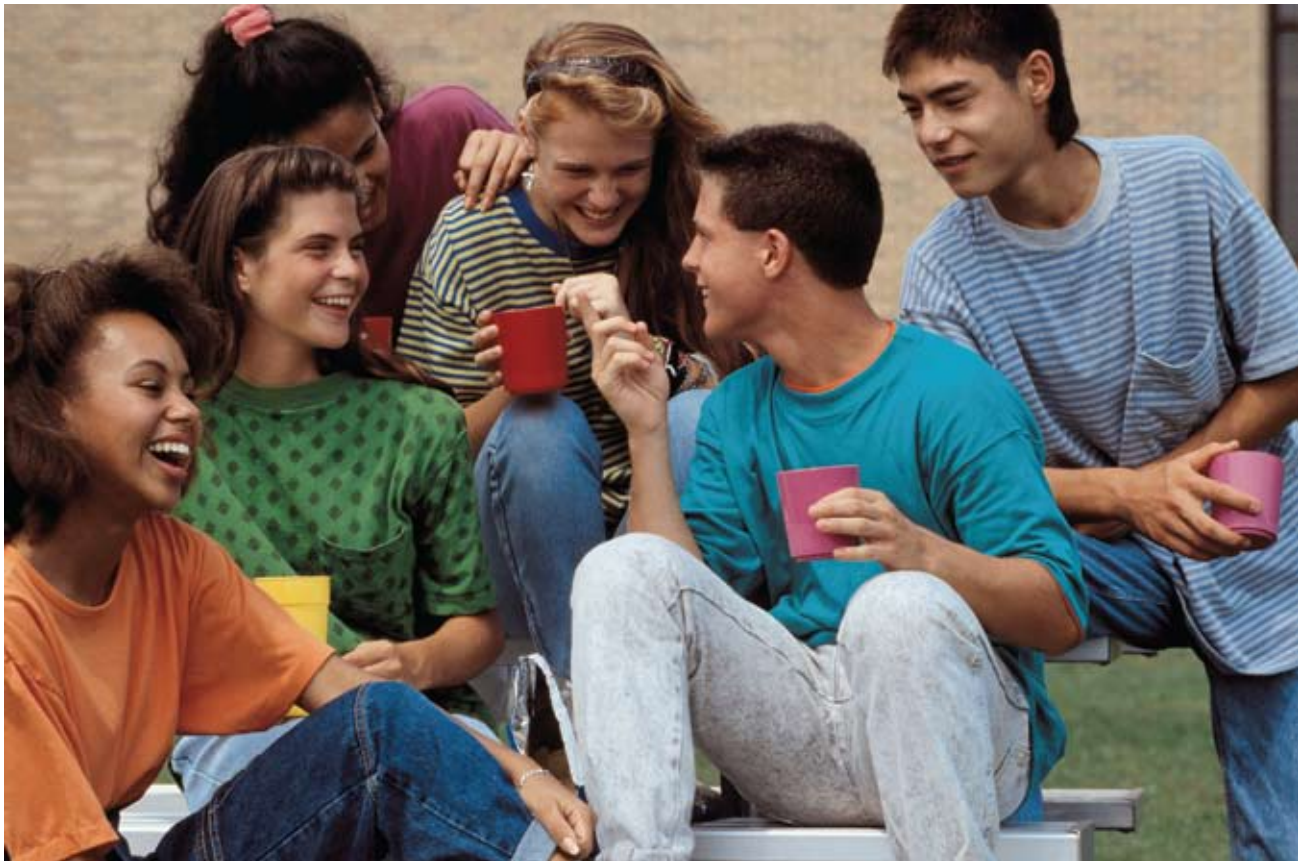
Note: Boy Scout base includes 868 males, and Girl Scout base includes 846 females.

Life Satisfaction and Self-Image

As with the adults, most youth are satisfied and feel safe in the microcosm in which they live. Overall, youth are satisfied with their neighborhood and their school, and they feel safe in these environments. However, fewer than half are satisfied with the way the world is today, and they do not feel the world is a safe place. While girls and boys are just as likely to say they feel satisfied with and safe in their neighborhood and school, girls are less likely than boys to say that they are satisfied with and feel safe in the world today.

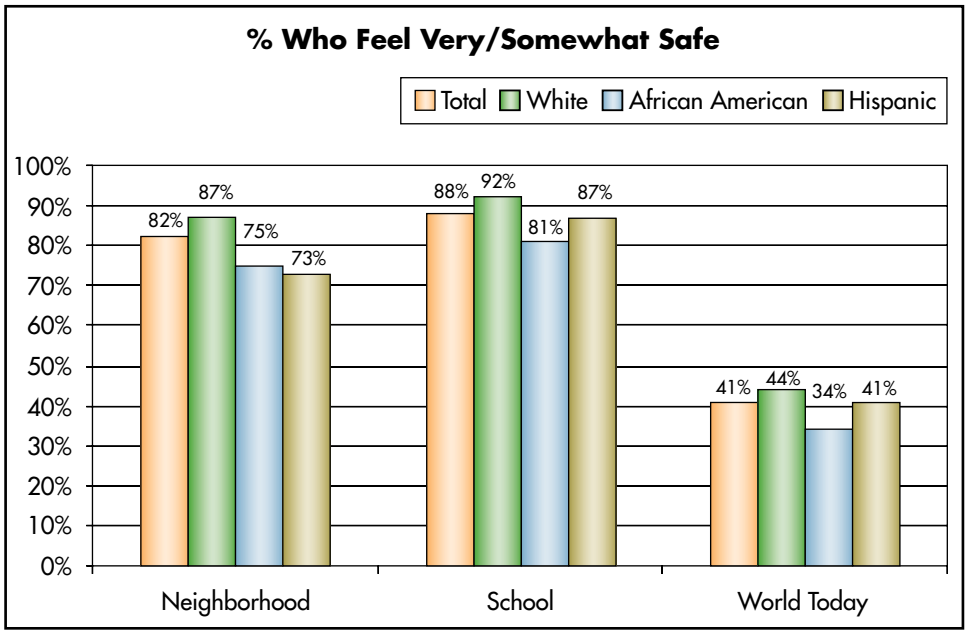


Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.



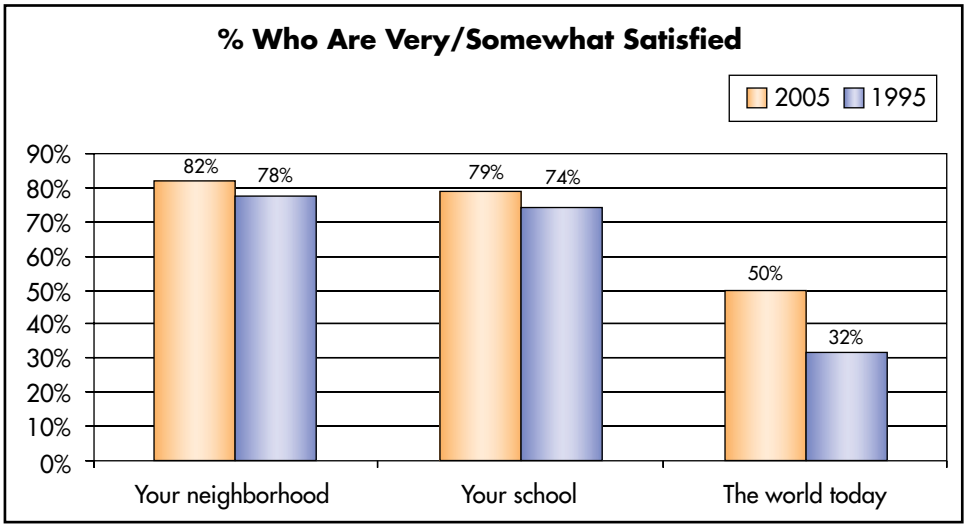
Overall, youth are satisfied with their neighborhood and their school, and they feel safe in these environments. However, fewer than half are satisfied with the way the world is today, and they do not feel the world is a safe place.

The feeling of safety varies by race and ethnicity. African American youth are more likely than white or Hispanic youth to indicate that they do not feel safe in school. African American and Hispanic youth are also more likely than white youth to say they do not feel safe in their neighborhood.



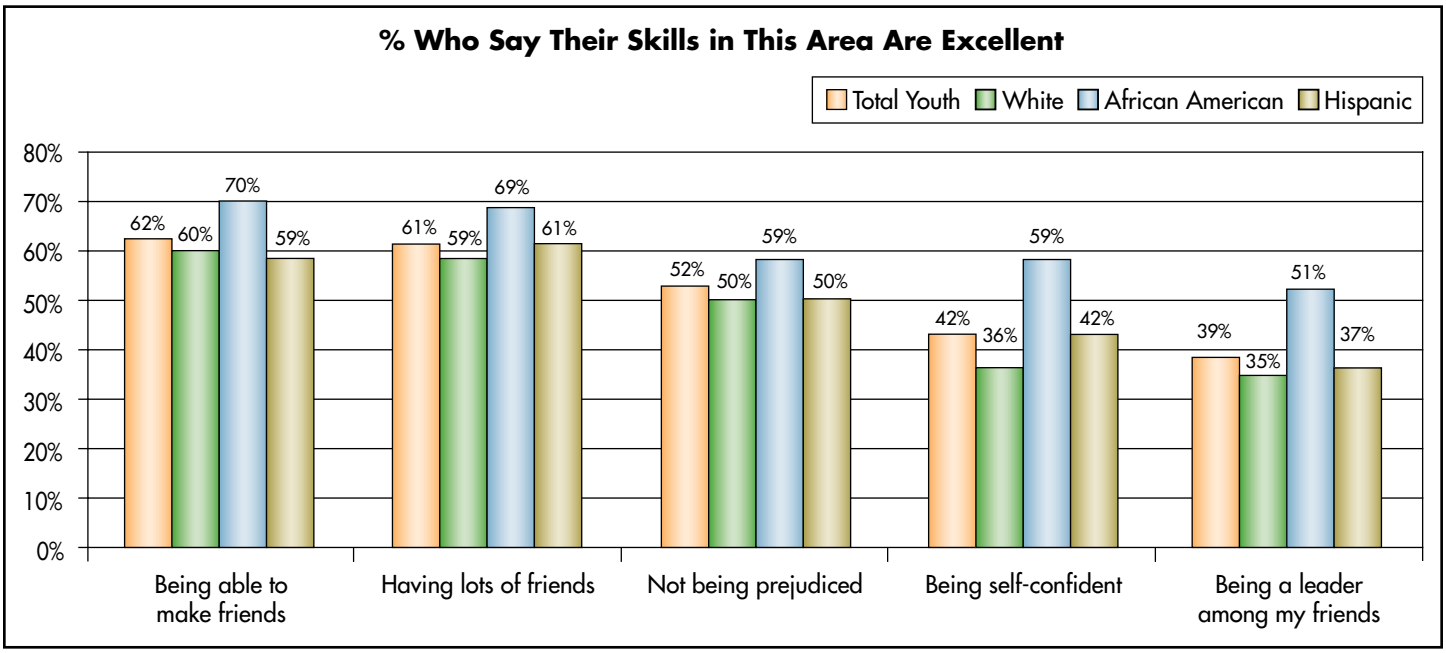
Base: 1,135 white youth; 225 African American youth; 369 Hispanic youth.

Like the findings from adult men, boys today are about as satisfied with their immediate environments as boys in 1995. However, when comparing satisfaction with the way the world is today, boys today are much more satisfied with the world than boys in 1995.



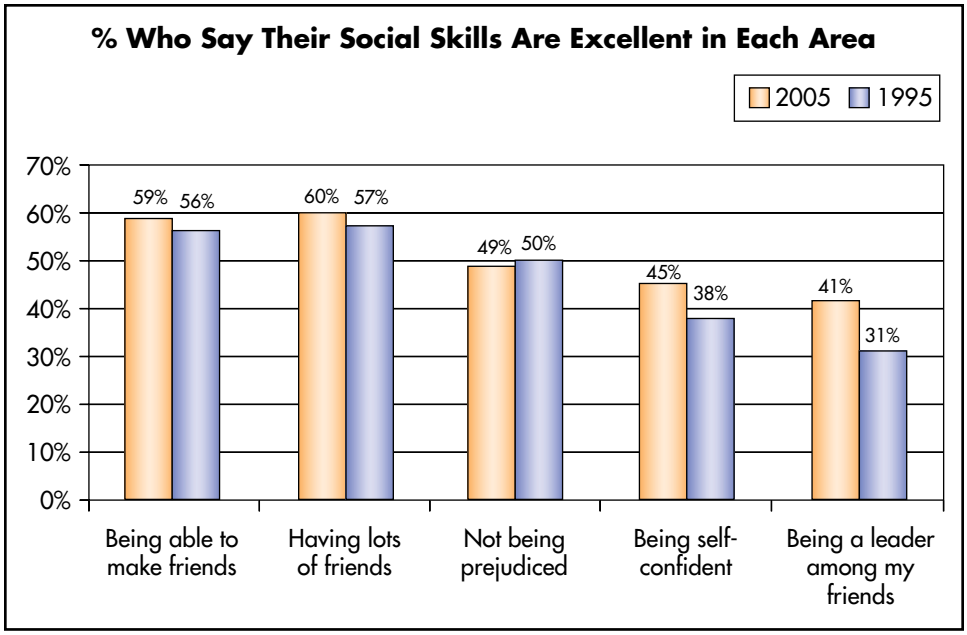
Base: 868 boys in 2005; 2,528 boys in 1995.

Overall, most youth have a positive self-image. The majority of youth rate themselves as excellent on being able to make friends, being self-confident, having lots of friends, being a leader among their friends, and not being prejudiced. Like the adults, African American youth rate their self-confidence higher than white or Hispanic youth.



Base: 1,135 white youth; 225 black youth; 369 Hispanic youth.

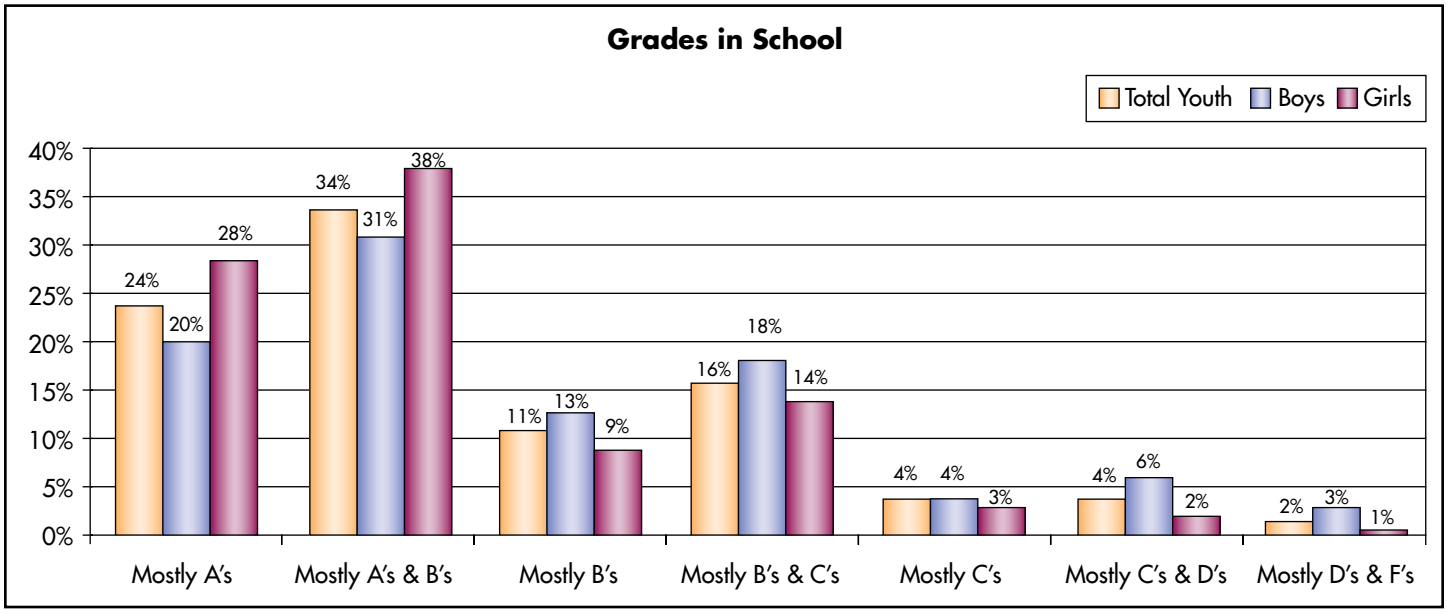
Among the social skills presented, boys' self-rating of leadership ability and self-confidence significantly increased from 1995 to 2005. All other self-ratings of social skills also increased, but not as dramatically.



Base: 868 boys in 2005; 2,528 boys in 1995.

Academic Skills

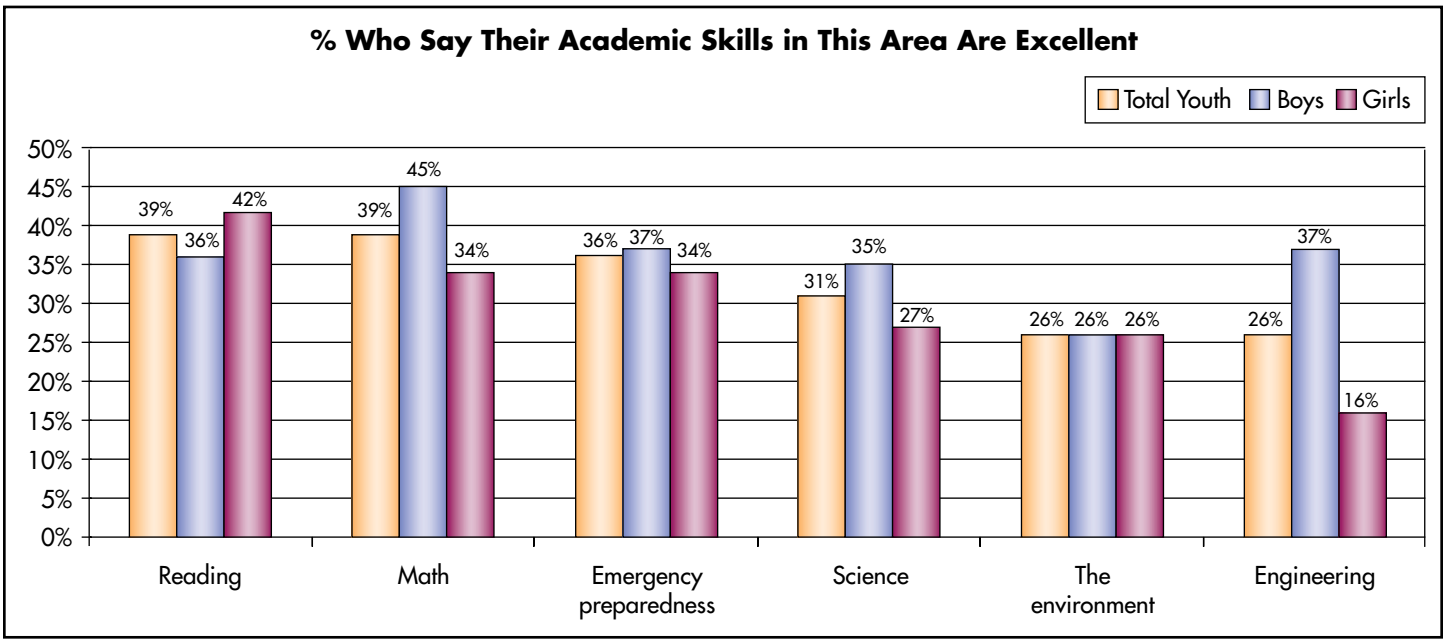
More than half of youth report that they earn grades of mostly A's or A's and B's. Far fewer report that they make mostly C's or below. However, boys today report earning slightly lower grades than in 1995. These differences are mainly in the percentage who report that they make mostly A's or mostly A's and B's.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

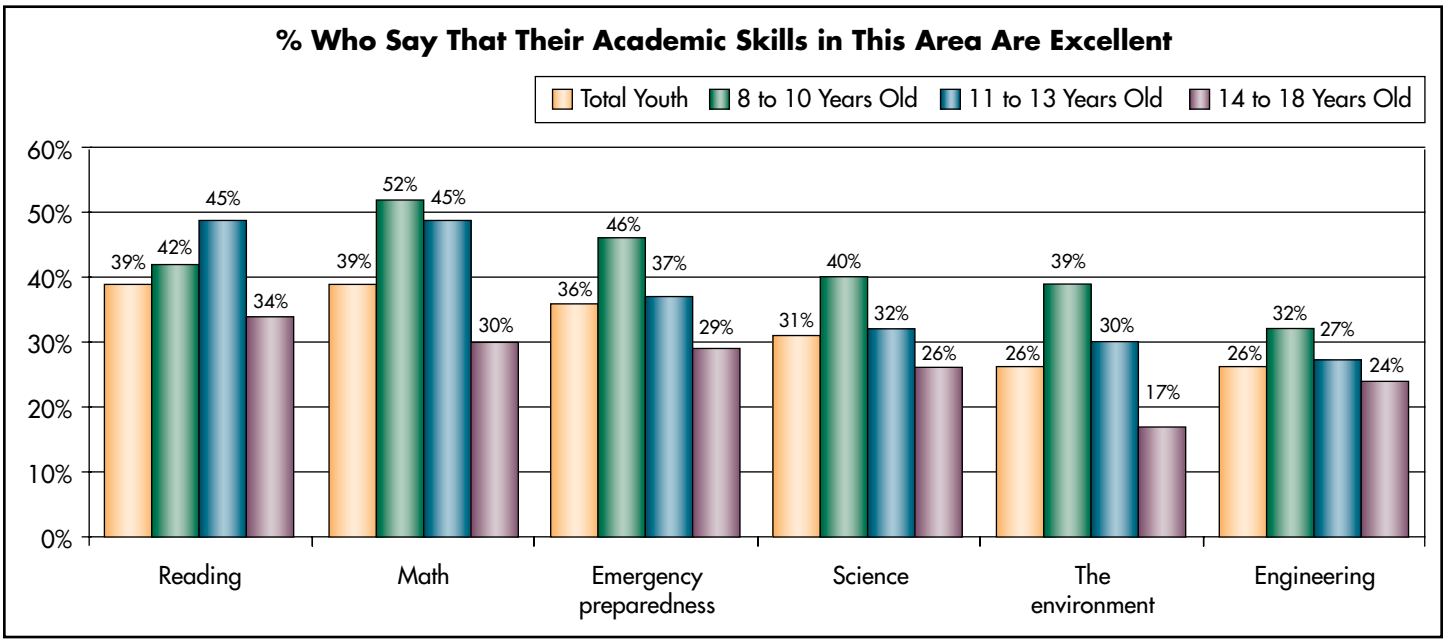
Although more than half of youth report earning mostly A's and B's, fewer than half rate their skills in academic areas as excellent. More than one-third of youth say that their reading and math skills are excellent. In addition, more than one-fourth also say their science and engineering skills are excellent. However, there are dramatic gender differences in the ratings of skill level in subject areas. Girls are more likely to rate their reading skills as excellent, while boys are more likely to rate their math, science, and engineering skills as excellent.

More than one-third of youth rate their emergency preparedness skills as excellent. In addition, slightly more than one-fourth rate their environmental skills as excellent.



Base: 868 boys; 846 girls.

For most subject areas, the number of youth reporting they have excellent skills in each area declines as youth get older and subjects become more difficult.

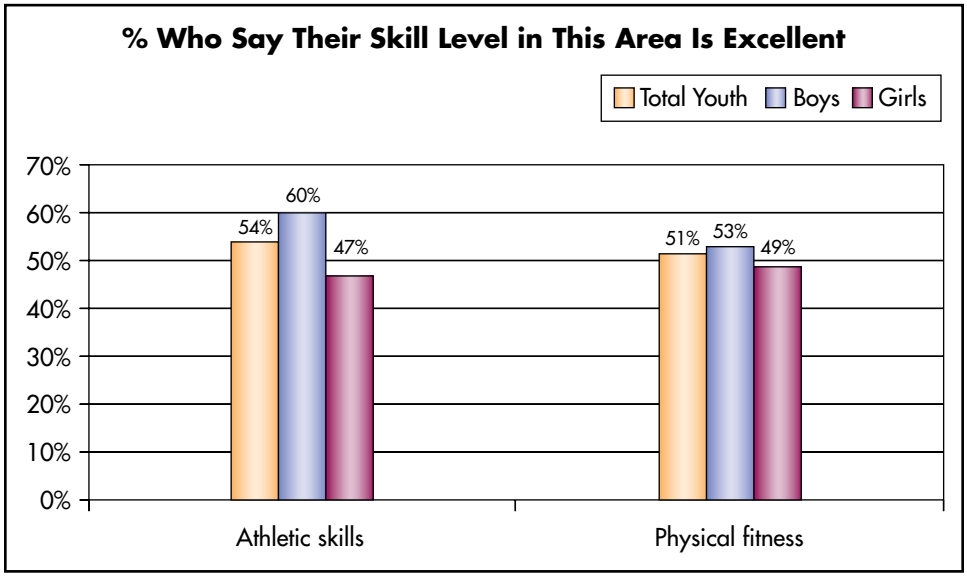


Base: 247 8- to 10-year-olds; 694 11- to 13-year-olds; and 762 14- to 18-year-olds.

Almost nine of 10 youth agree that having close family relationships is a key to happiness and that spending time together is important.

Athletic Skills

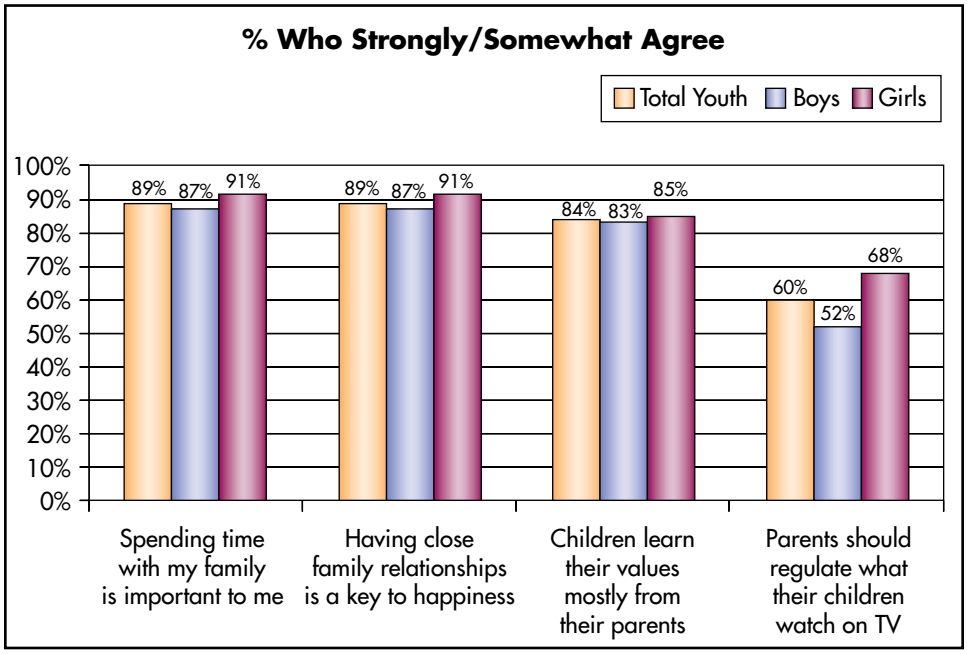
More than half of youth report that they have excellent athletic skills. However, boys are more likely than girls to rate their athletic abilities as excellent. Both boys and girls rate themselves similarly for physical fitness.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

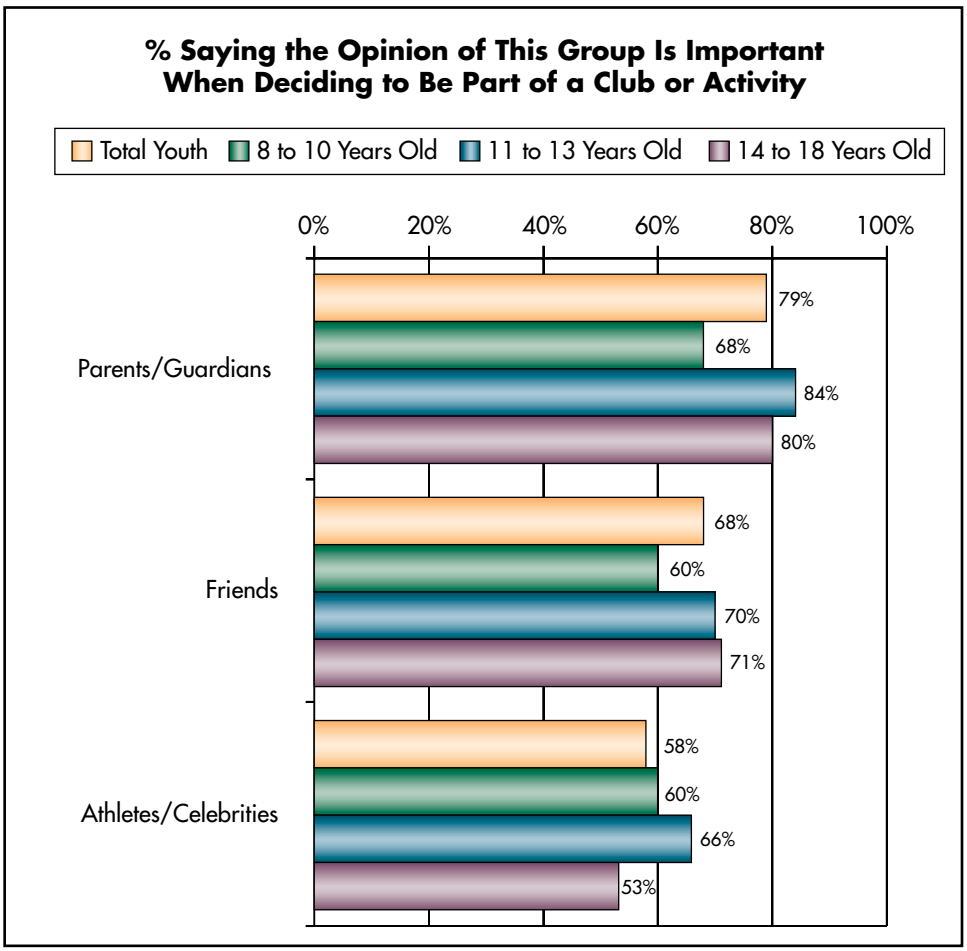
Family and Friends

Family relationships are very important to the development and happiness of youth. Almost nine of 10 youth agree that having close family relationships is a key to happiness and that spending time together is important. Most youth also agree that their parents are the most influential in teaching values. However, fewer youth feel parents should guide them by regulating what they watch on television.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

Youth value their parents' opinions. Seventy-nine percent of youth say that their parents' opinion about clubs or activities is important. This is significantly higher than the percentage that says that their friends' or celebrities' opinions about clubs or activities are important. Youth 11 years of age or older are more likely than younger youth to say that their parents' opinions are important.



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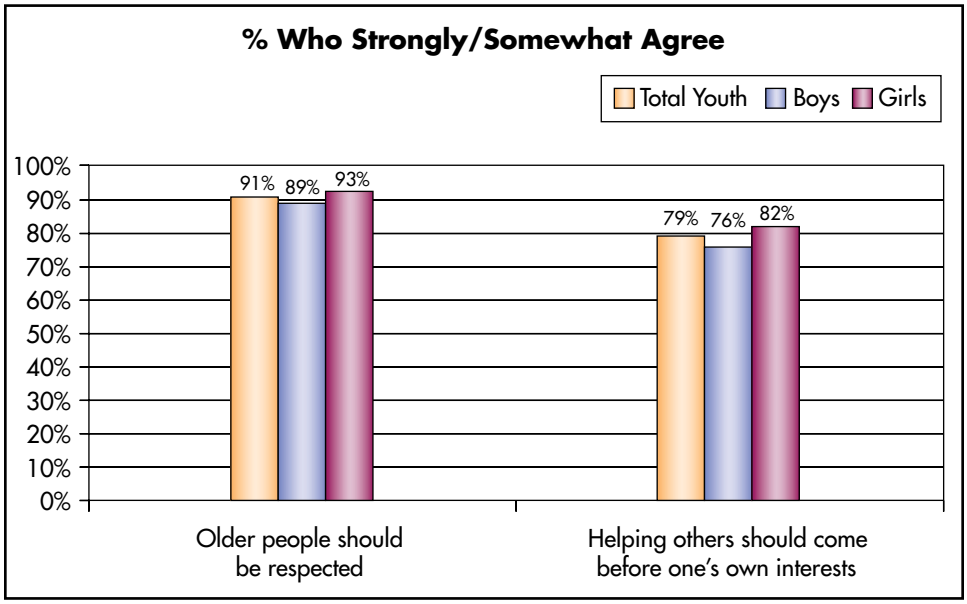
More than three-fourths of youth agree that it is very important to attend religious services with their family (78 percent).

Community

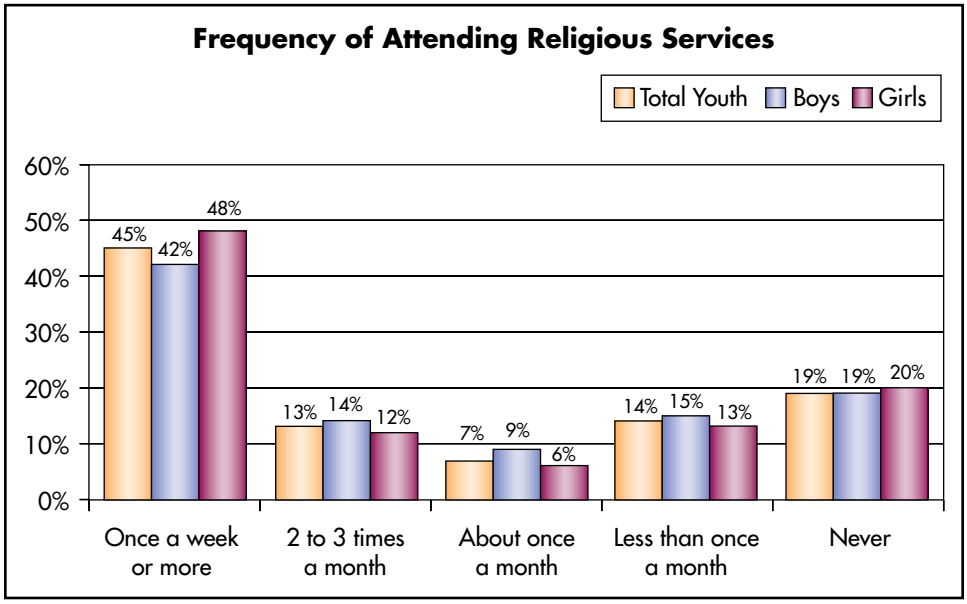
Youth also show a commitment to making their community a better place to live. They believe that older people should be respected. More than three-fourths say that helping others should come before one's own interests. And, 85 percent of youth rate themselves as being good to excellent at helping other people in need.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

Faith

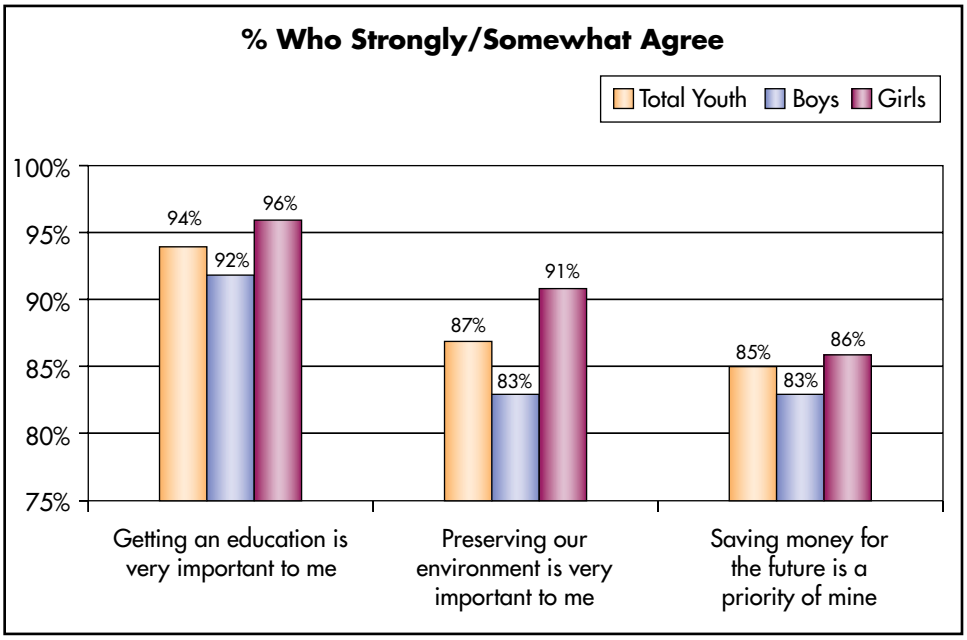
Faith is also considered to be important by a majority of youth. More than three-fourths of youth agree that it is very important to attend religious services with their family (78 percent). However, less than half of youth say that they attend religious services at least weekly, and almost one-fifth say they never attend religious services. Boys are less likely than girls to say that they attend services at least once a week.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

Planning for the Future

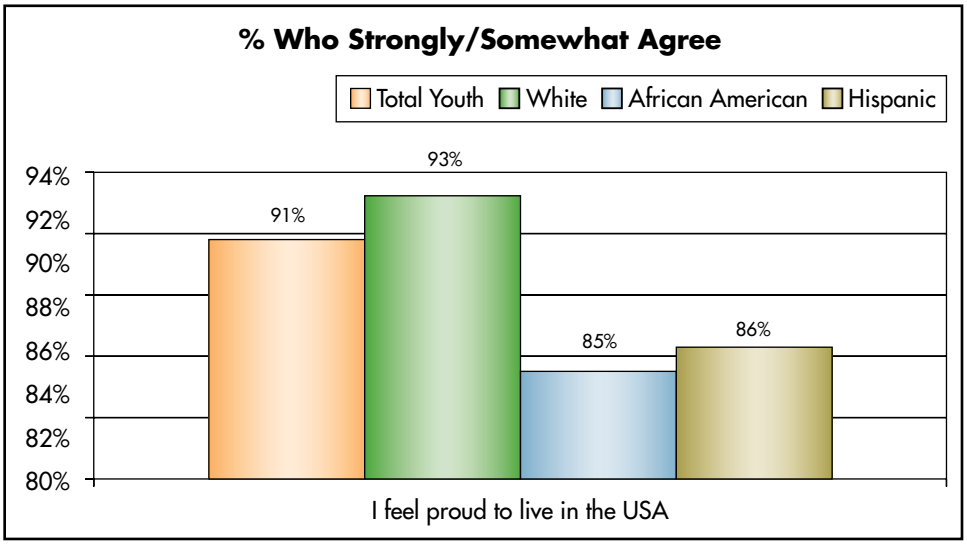
Most youth are looking toward and planning for their future. Almost all youth say that getting an education is very important to them. In addition, more than four of every five youth say that preserving our environment is very important and that saving for the future is a priority. Girls, more so than boys, agree that preserving the environment is very important.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

Citizenship

More than nine of 10 youth feel proud to live in the United States of America. White youth are more likely than African American or Hispanic youth to say that they are proud to live in the United States.



Base: 1,135 white youth; 225 black youth; 369 Hispanic youth.

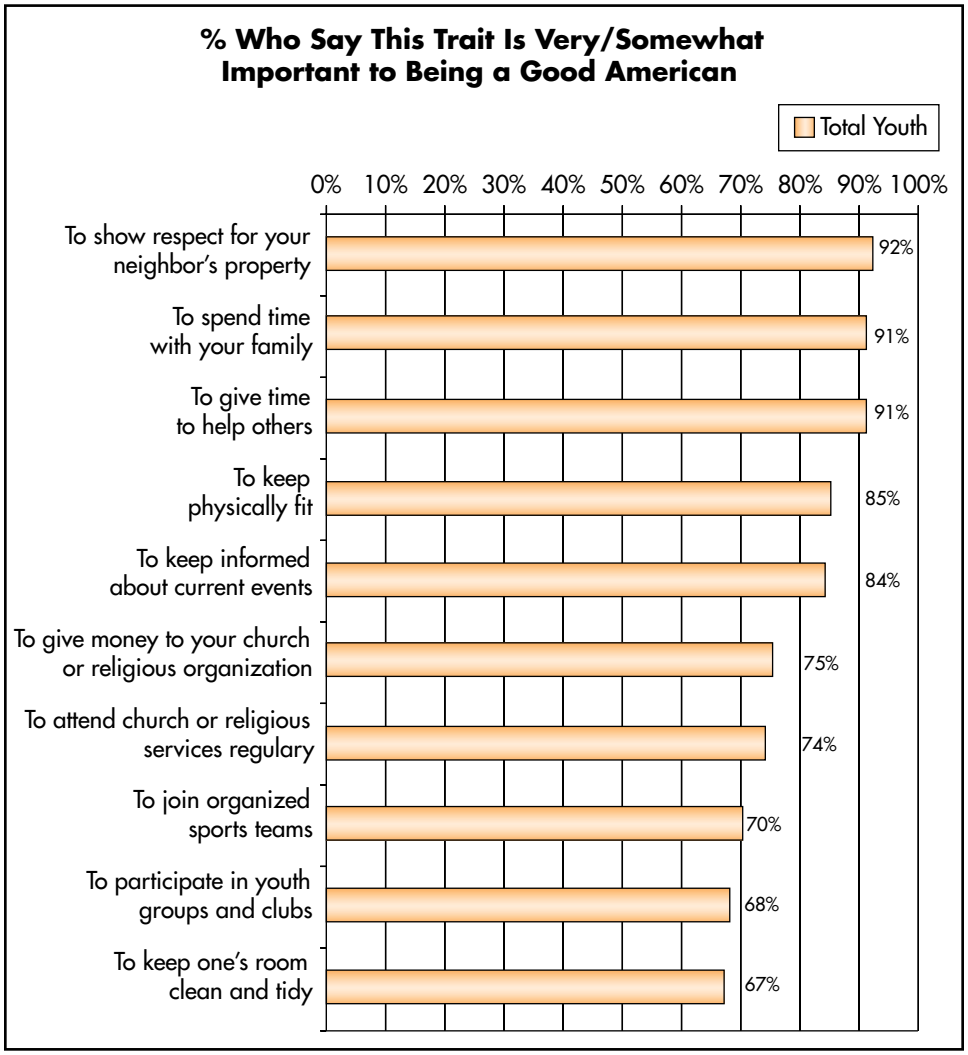
More than nine of 10 youth feel proud to live in the United States of America.

Family and neighbors are central to youths' beliefs about the things that define being a good American. Most say that spending time with their family, respecting their neighbor's property, keeping physically fit, and helping others are important indicators of being a good American.

Family and neighbors are central to youths' beliefs about the things that define being a good American. Most say that spending time with their family, respecting their neighbor's property, keeping physically fit, and helping others are important indicators of being a good American. Fewer than half think attending religious services regularly, keeping informed about current events, giving money to religious organizations, joining sports teams, keeping their rooms clean, or participating in youth groups are important traits of a good American.

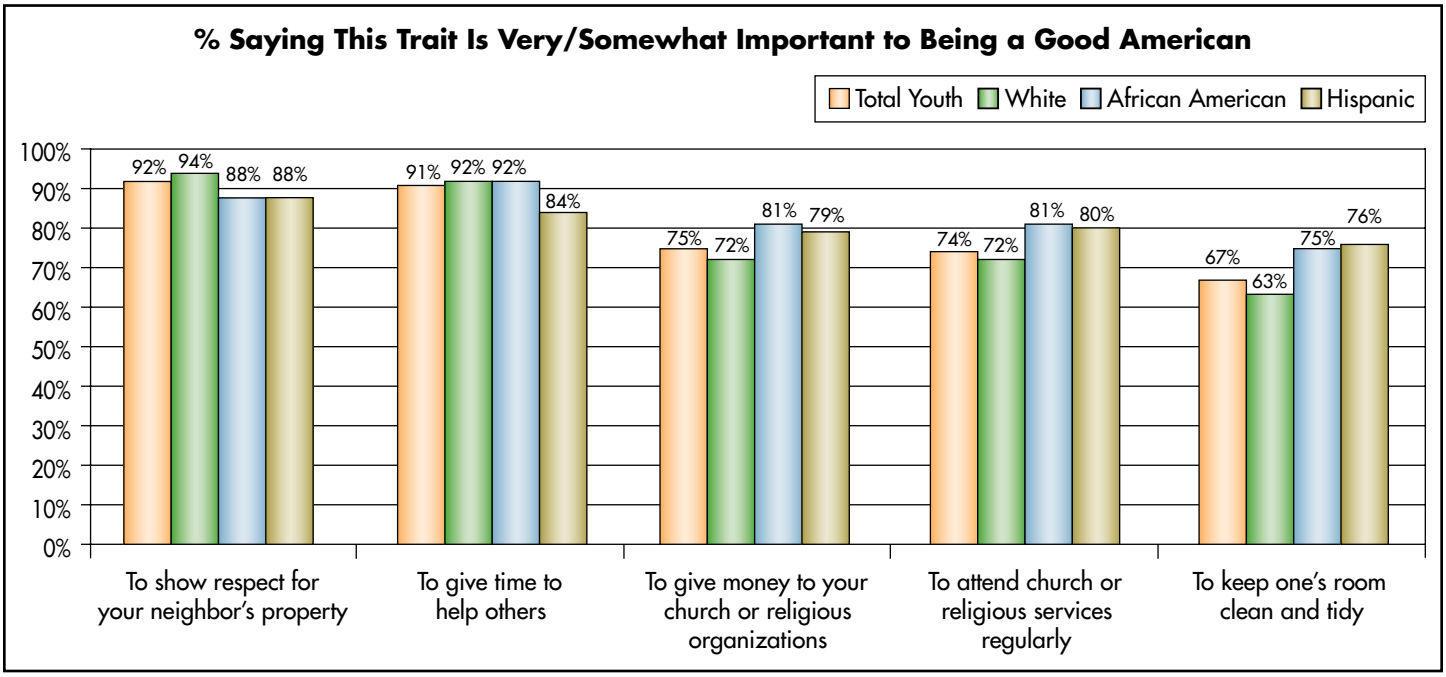
Girls are more likely than boys to say that showing respect for your neighbor's property (75 percent vs. 62 percent), giving time to help others (64 percent vs. 47 percent) are important to being a good American.

When comparing responses given by boys in 1995 and 2005, boys today are more likely to say that keeping informed about current events is very important (36 percent vs. 44 percent).



Base: 1,714 youth.

Youth of different races, ethnicities, and ages place different levels of importance on some aspects of being a good American. White youth are more likely than African American and Hispanic youth to say that showing respect for your neighbor's property is important to being a good American. African American and Hispanic youth are more likely than white youth to say that attending church services regularly, giving money to religious organizations, and keeping one's room tidy are important to being a good American. In addition, white and African American youth are more likely than Hispanic youth to say that giving time to help others is central to being a good American. As youth get older, the importance they place on most measures of good citizenship declines.



Base: 1,135 white youth; 225 black youth; 369 Hispanic youth.

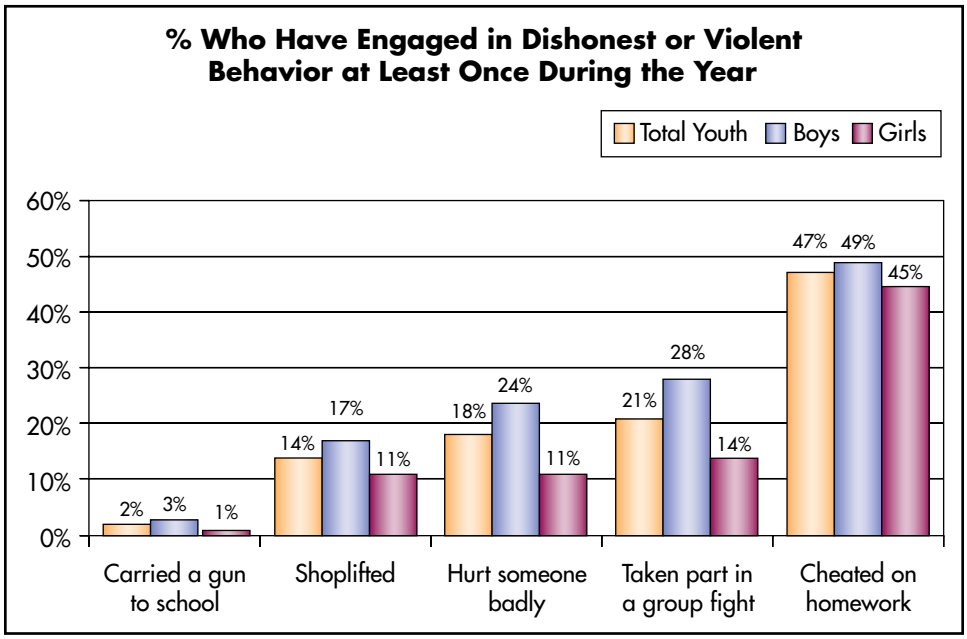
Ethics

When faced with ethical dilemmas, most youth choose to do what is ethical and honest. Youth were given several scenarios related to the environment, being pressured to take part in delinquent acts, and stealing. In each scenario, around 90 percent of youth selected options that were ethical and honest. Most youth are reluctant to participate in delinquent or dishonest activities such as breaking windows or shoplifting even when they are being pressured by peers. Only around 10 percent of youth said they would take part in the activities. However, reluctance to participate in delinquent activities declines with age.

Youth generally report that they do not engage in activities or behaviors that they feel carry heavy consequences, such as carrying a gun to school or being a member of a gang (8 percent). Although a majority of youth do not engage in dishonest or violent behaviors, some youth do report that they have shoplifted, hurt someone badly enough to need bandages or a doctor, or participated in a group fight, with boys being more likely than girls to have participated in these activities.

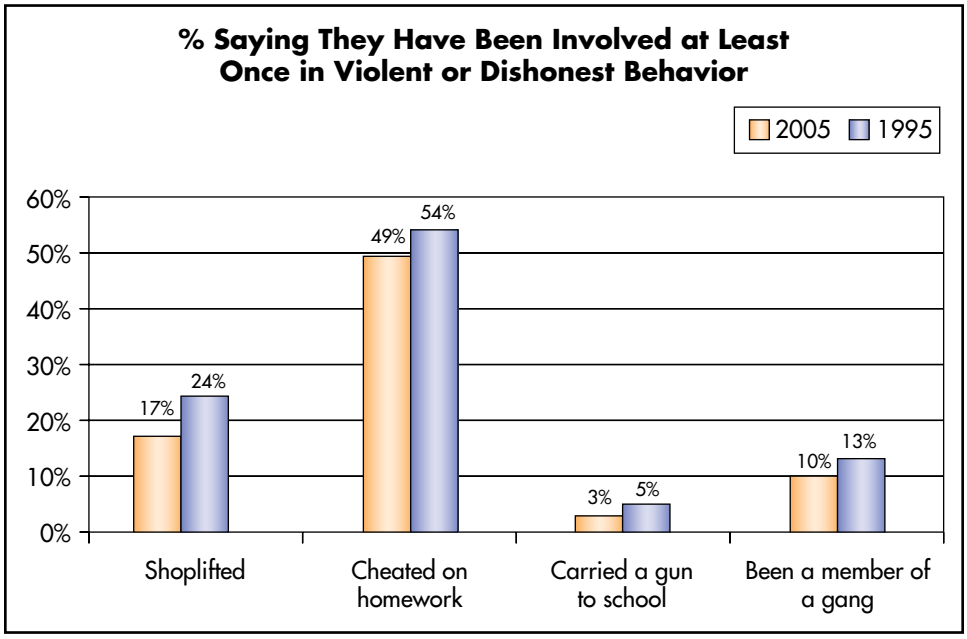
When faced with ethical dilemmas, most youth choose to do what is ethical and honest.

Cheating on homework was by far the most common dishonest behavior in which youth of both genders participate. The number of youth who cheat on school work increases with age. One-fifth (21 percent) of youth 8 to 10 years of age report cheating, compared to two-thirds (64 percent) of youth 14 to 18 years of age.



Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

Fewer boys today engage in dishonest and violent behaviors than in 1995, with shoplifting declining markedly from 1995 to 2005.



Base: 868 boys in 2005; 2,528 boys in 1995.

Most youth have not used hard drugs such as LSD, methamphetamines, heroin, or Ecstasy in the past year. However, more have tried marijuana, drunk a glass of alcohol, or been involved in binge drinking, with almost one in five saying they have had five or more drinks within a couple of hours at least once in the past year. Boys are more likely than girls to have drunk alcohol or been involved in binge drinking in the past year.

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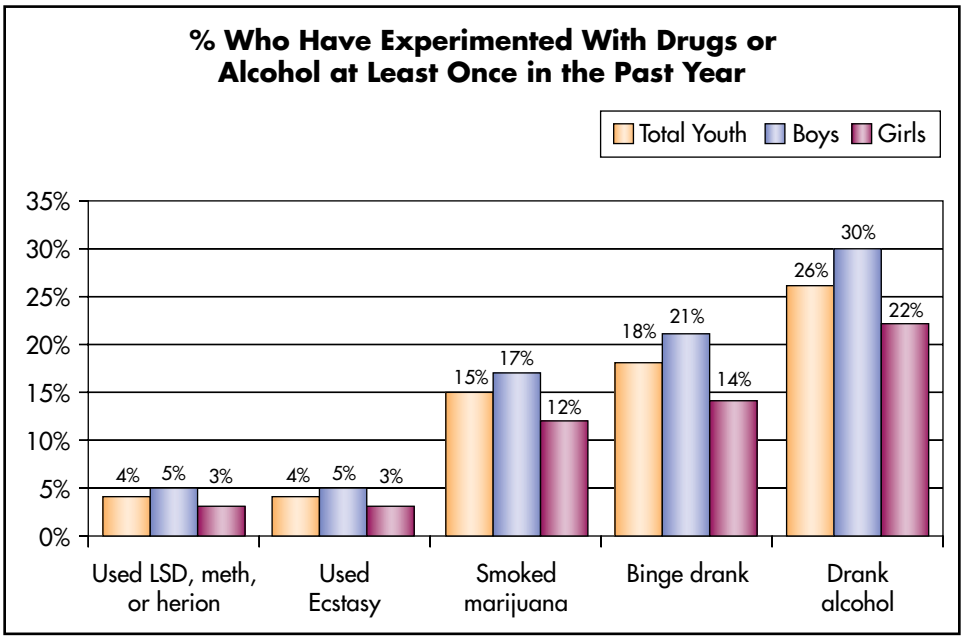

Base: 1,714 youth; 868 boys; 846 girls.

The use of marijuana and alcohol increases dramatically with age. Almost one-fourth of 14- to 18-year-olds say they have used marijuana in the past year—three times the number of 11- to 13-year-olds who say they have smoked marijuana.

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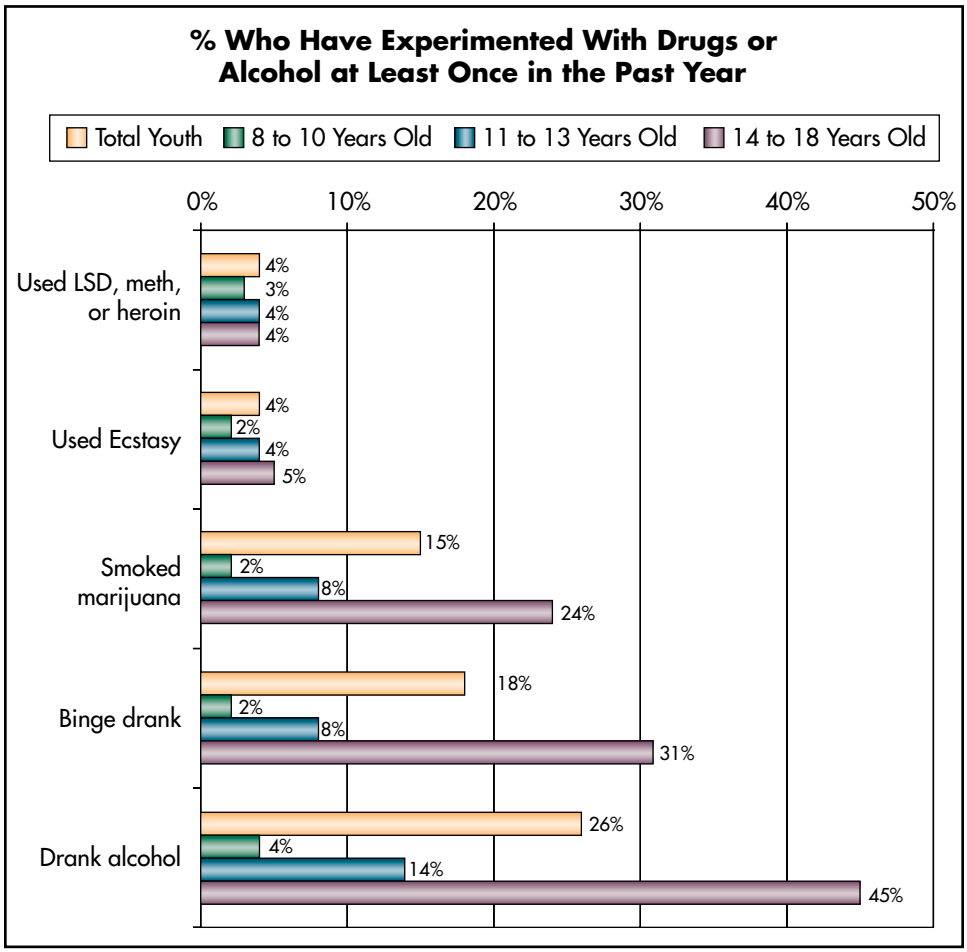


Base: 247 8- to 10-year-olds; 694 11- to 13-year-olds; and 762 14- to 18-year-olds.

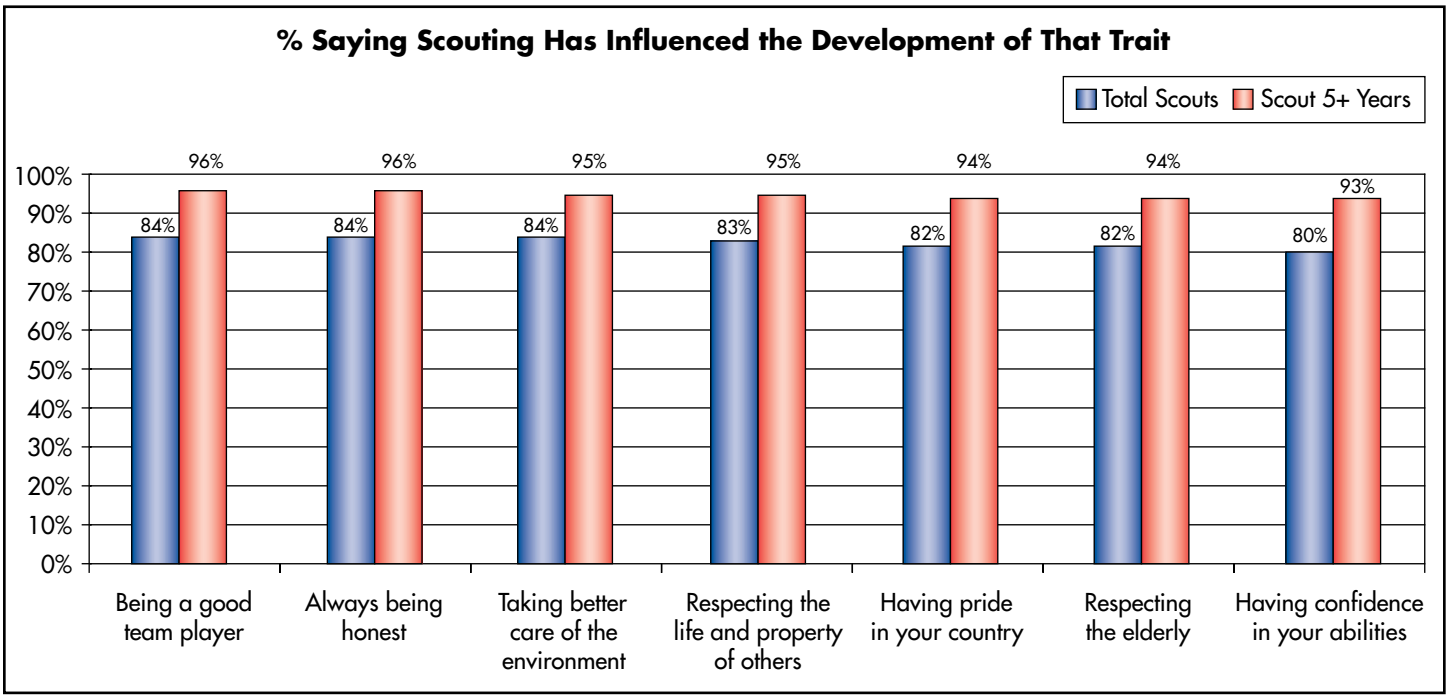
The Scouting Difference

Men Who Were Scouts as Youth

Fifty-four percent of men say that they were in a Boy Scout program as a youth, with most having been a Cub Scout or a Boy Scout. On average they were in a Scouting program for four years; however, 42 percent stayed in Scouting for five or more years.

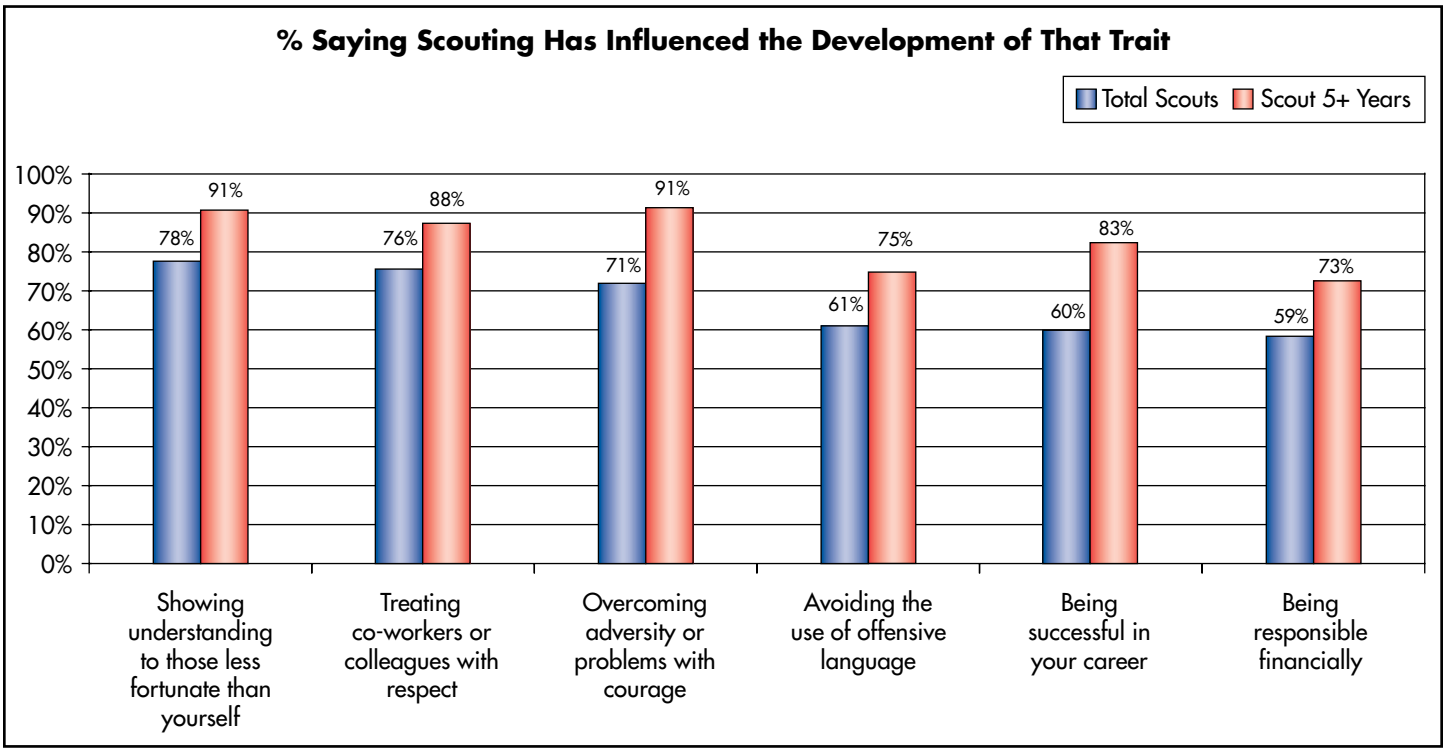
The majority of men who were Scouts as youth say that Scouting has been a positive influence in their lives. This sentiment is particularly strong among men who remained in Scouting five or more years.
In addition, 83 percent agree that the values they learned in Scouting continue to be very important to them today, with 63 percent strongly agreeing with this statement.

Former Scouts, especially those who were Scouts five or more years, attribute the program with their developing positive character traits such as being a good team player, always being honest, taking better care of the environment, respecting the life and property of others, having pride in their country, respecting the elderly, and having confidence in their abilities.



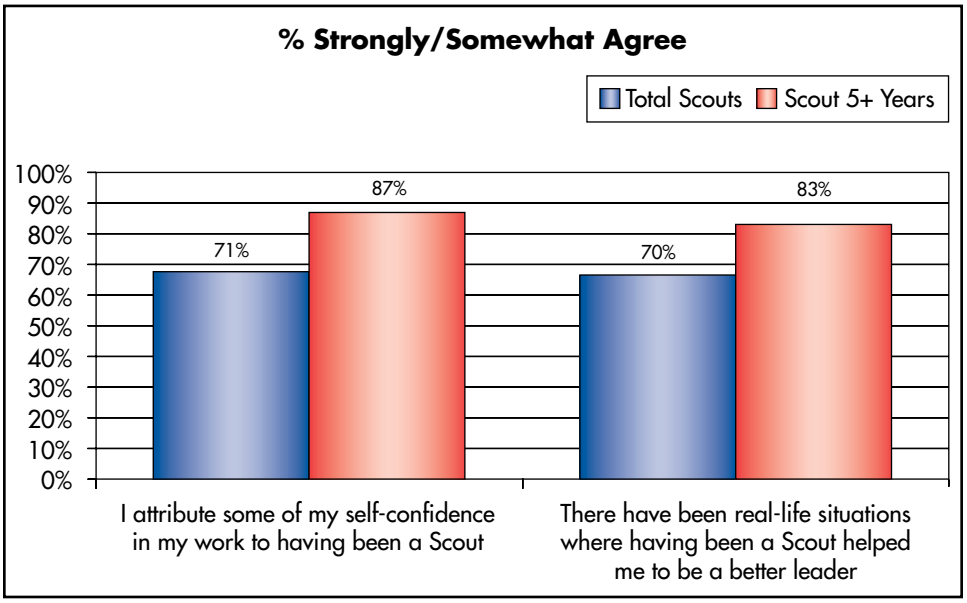
Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth.

Scouting also influences the development of other traits; however, Scouting's influence on these traits again is greatest after a young man has been in Scouting for five or more years. These traits include showing understanding to those less fortunate than themselves, treating coworkers or colleagues with respect, overcoming adversity or problems with courage, avoiding the use of offensive language, being successful in their career, and being responsible financially.



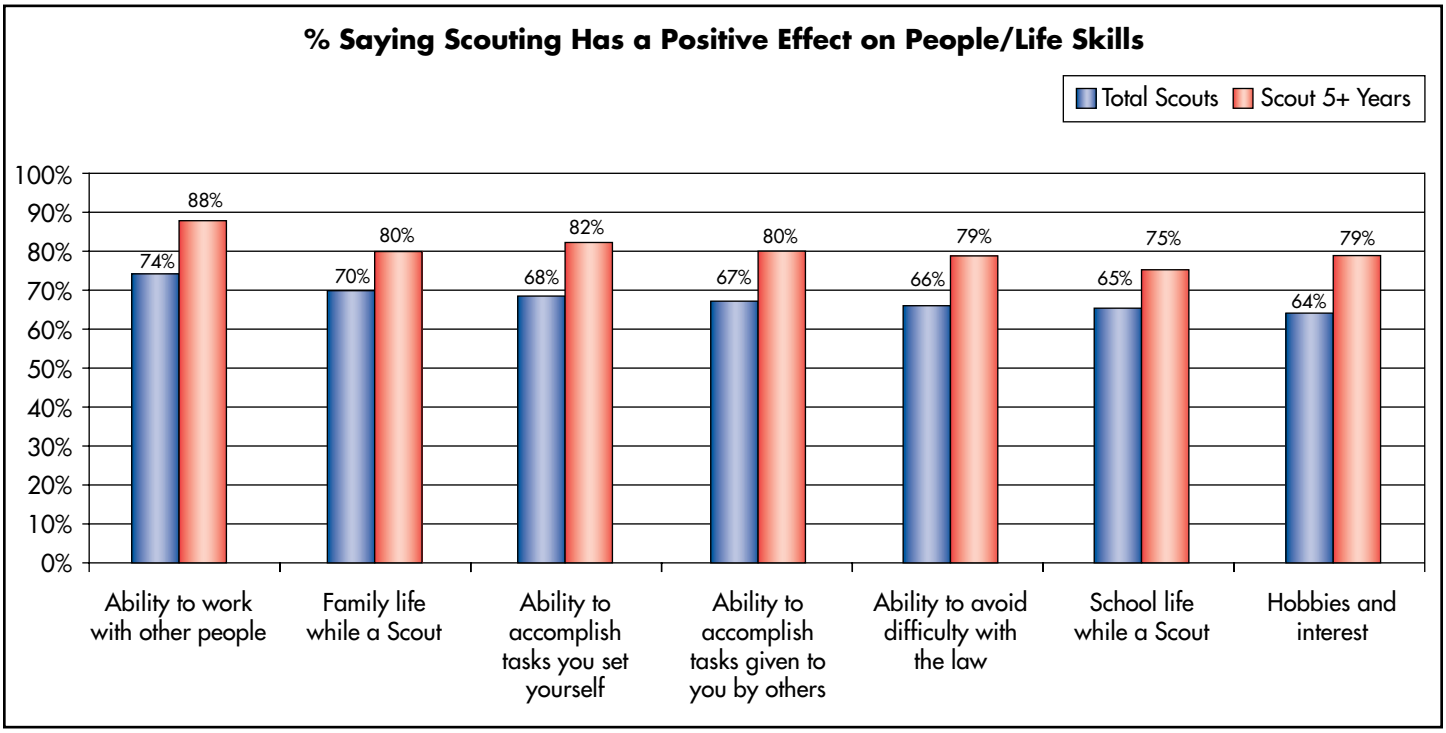
Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth.

Other ways in which men say that being a Scout changed their life include increasing their self-confidence in their work and being a better leader. Again, these changes are greatest among men who were Scouts for five or more years.



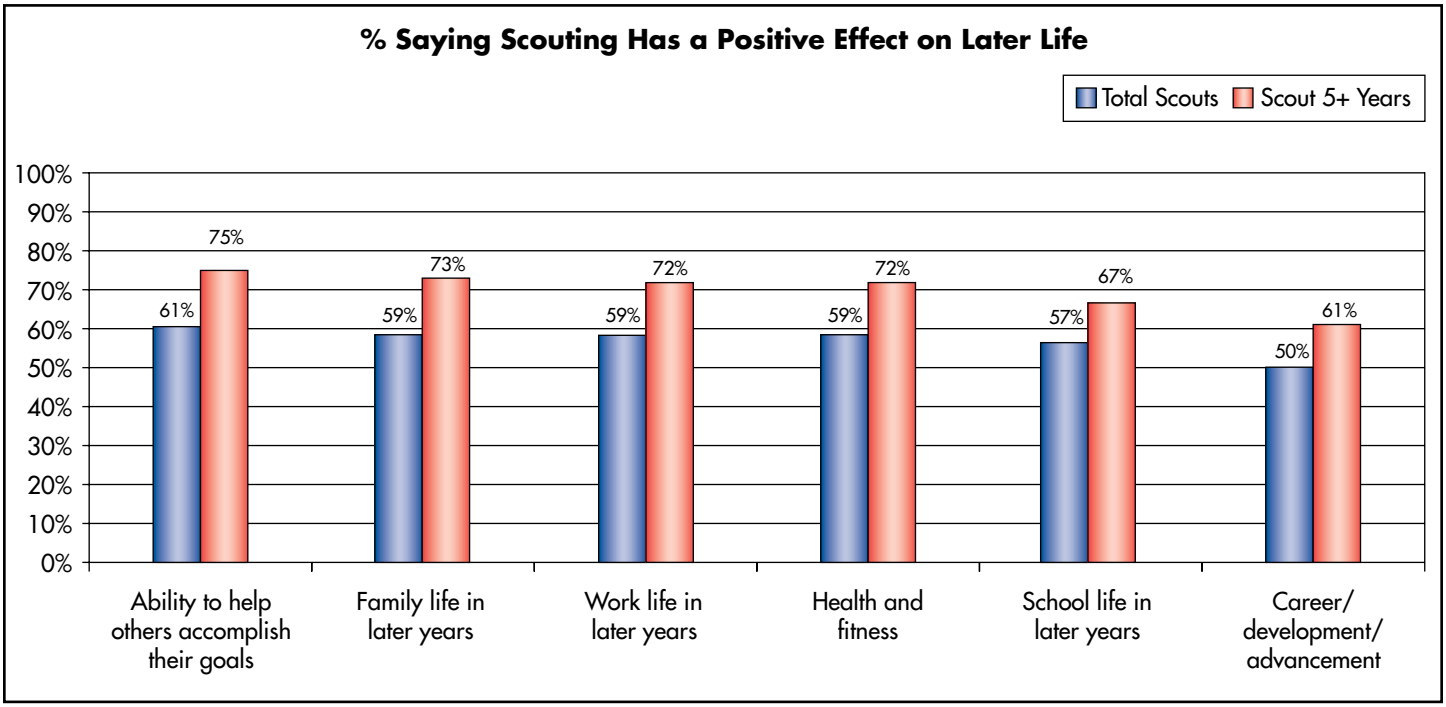
Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth.

Men who were Scouts as youth say that Scouting had a positive effect on their life at the time that they were Scouts as well as their current life. More than two-thirds say that Scouting positively affected their ability to work with other people, their family life at the time that they were Scouts, their ability to accomplish tasks given by others, their school life at the time they were Scouts, their ability to accomplish tasks they set themselves, their ability to avoid difficulty with the law, and their current hobbies and interests, with these positive effects being greatest among men who were Scouts five or more years.



Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth.

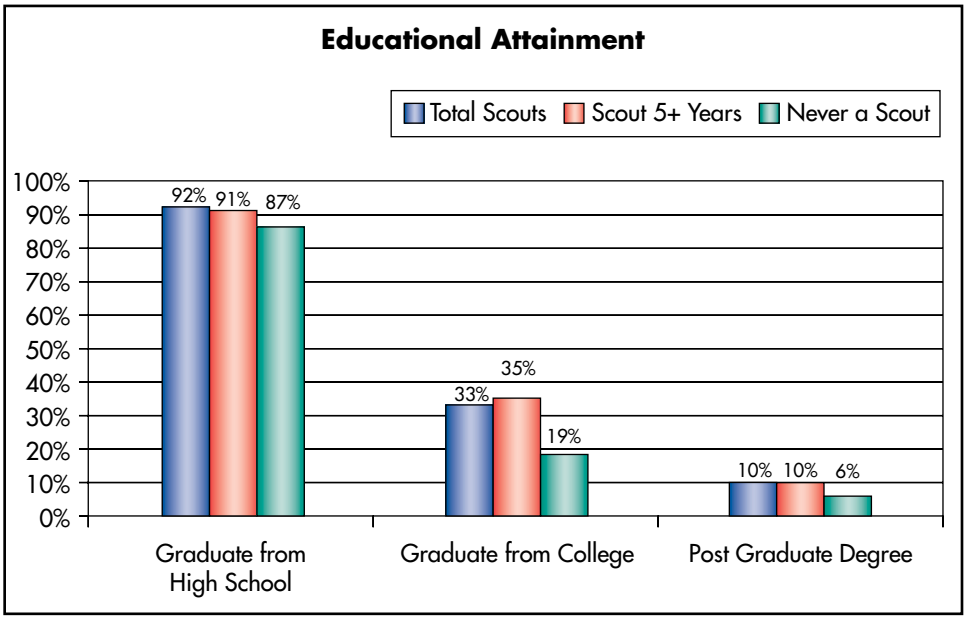
More than half of men who were Scouts as youth say that Scouting has a positive effect on their ability to help others accomplish their goals, their family life in later years, their school life in later years, their work life in later years, their overall health and fitness, and their career development and advancement. Again, men who were Scouts five or more years indicate a greater positive effect than those who have less tenure in Scouting.



Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth.

Comparison of Men Who Were Scouts With Those Who Have Never Been Scouts

Men who were Scouts are more likely than those who have never been Scouts to have higher levels of education, have higher earnings, and to own their own homes. The more Scouting experience a man had as a youth, the greater the positive effect on earnings and home ownership. On average, men who were Scouts have household incomes of $75,000 compared to $61,000 reported by men who have never been Scouts. In addition, almost three-fourths (74 percent) of men who were Scouts own their own home, compared to 65 percent of men who were never Scouts.

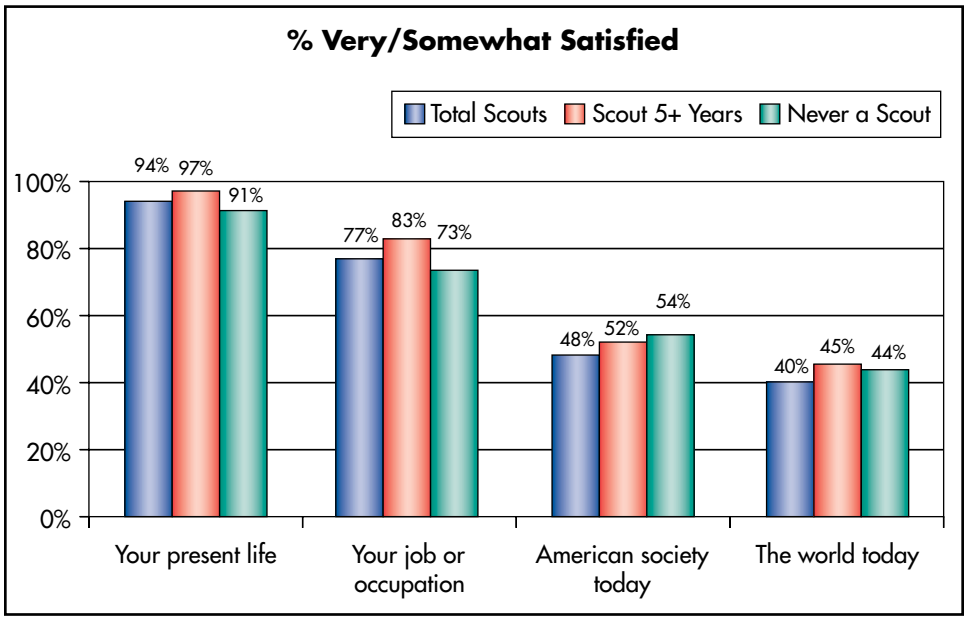


Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth; 248 men who were Scouts 5+ years; 410 non-Scouts.

Men who were Scouts are more likely than those who have never been Scouts to have higher levels of education, have higher earnings, and to own their own homes.

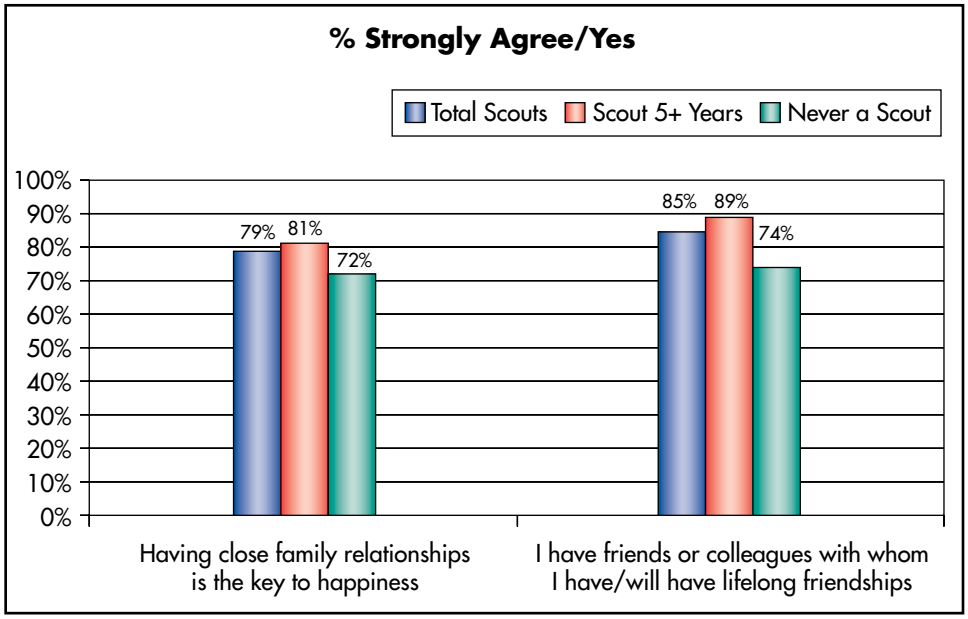
Men who were Scouts as youth are more likely than those who were not Scouts to say that having close family relationships is the key to happiness.

Overall, men who were Scouts as youth are more satisfied than other men with their personal lives and their jobs or occupations. However, they are less satisfied with American society and the way the world is today.



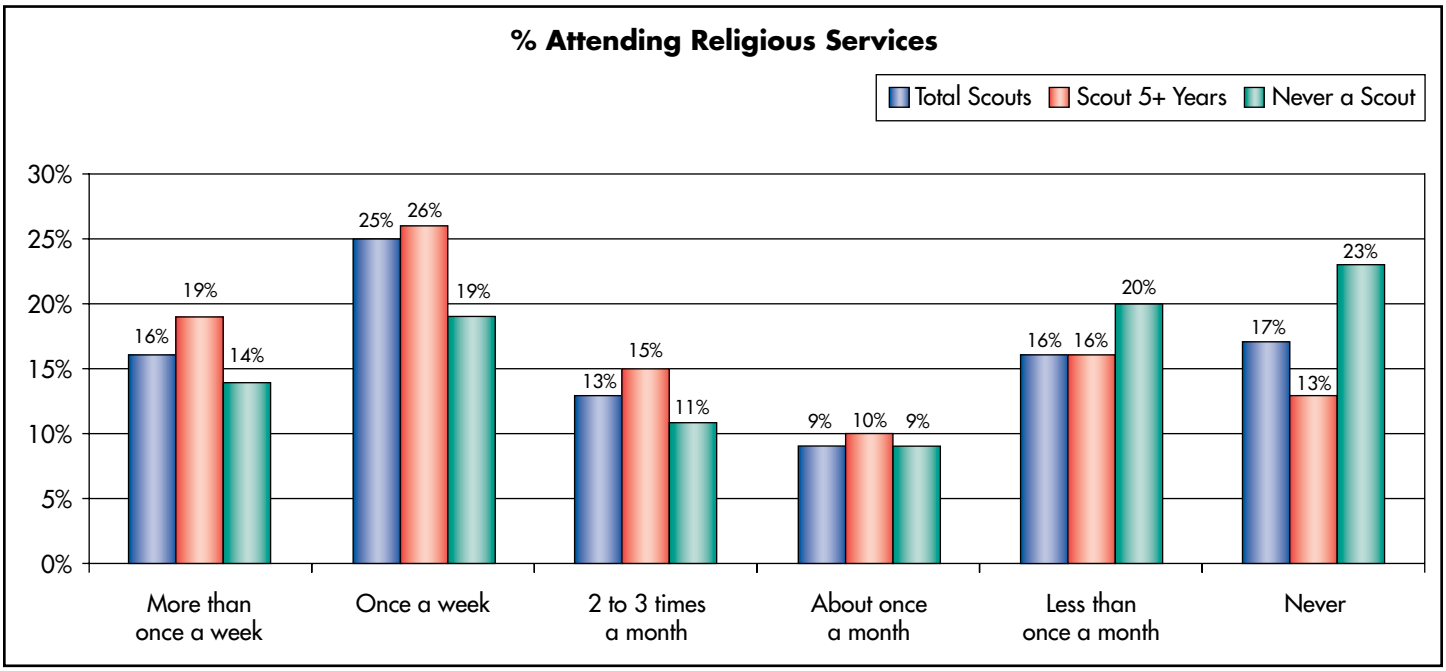
Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth; 248 men who were Scouts 5+ years; 410 non-Scouts.

Family ties are more important to men who have been Scouts than those who have not. Men who were Scouts as youth are more likely than those who were not Scouts to say that having close family relationships is the key to happiness. Men who were Scouts are also far more likely than those who were not Scouts to have maintained lifelong friendships.



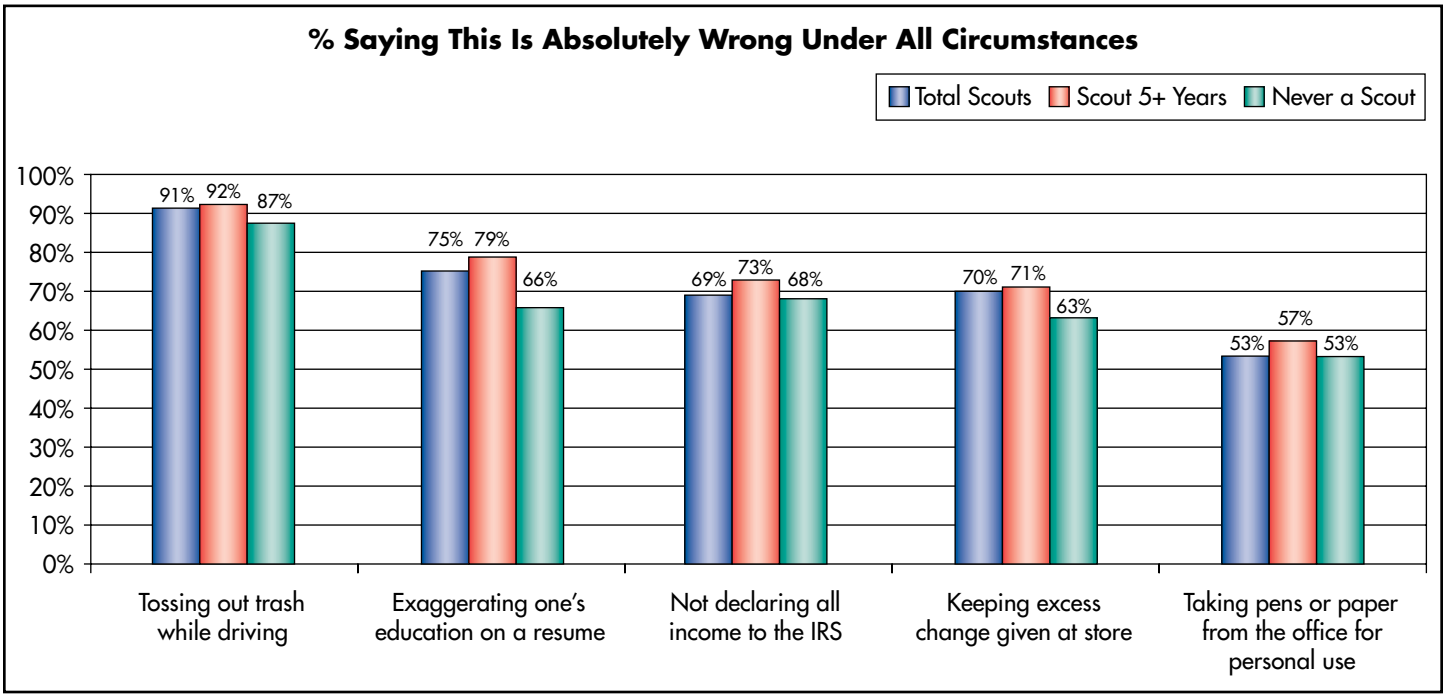
Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth; 248 men who were Scouts 5+ years; 410 non-Scouts.

Scouting experience also influences religious service attendance. Men who were Scouts as youth attend religious services more frequently than those who were never Scouts. In fact, nearly one quarter of non-Scouts never attend, compared with 17 percent of men with Scouting backgrounds. Men who were Scouts five or more years are also more likely than men who have never been Scouts to say that attending religious services together as a family is very important.



Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth; 248 men who were Scouts 5+ years; and 410 men who were never Scouts.

A larger percentage of men with Scouting experience indicate that unethical behaviors are absolutely wrong under all circumstances. This is especially true among men who were Scouts for five or more years. Men with longer tenure in the Scouting program are more likely than non-Scouts to indicate that behaviors such as tossing trash out while driving, exaggerating one's education or experience on a resume or job application, keeping excess change, and taking pens or paper from the office for personal use are absolutely wrong under all circumstances.



Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth; 248 men who were Scouts 5+ years; and 410 men who were never Scouts.

Men with Scouting backgrounds are more likely than those with no Scouting background to place a greater importance on measures of good citizenship. This is especially true of men who were Scouts for five or more years. Men who were Scouts believe that voting in every election, showing concern for your neighbor's property, keeping one's property clean and tidy, and staying physically fit are absolutely essential to good citizenship. Men with Scouting backgrounds also give greater importance to attending church or religious services regularly, financially supporting religious organizations, participating in youth-related organizations, taking part in charitable organizations, and volunteering time in the community.

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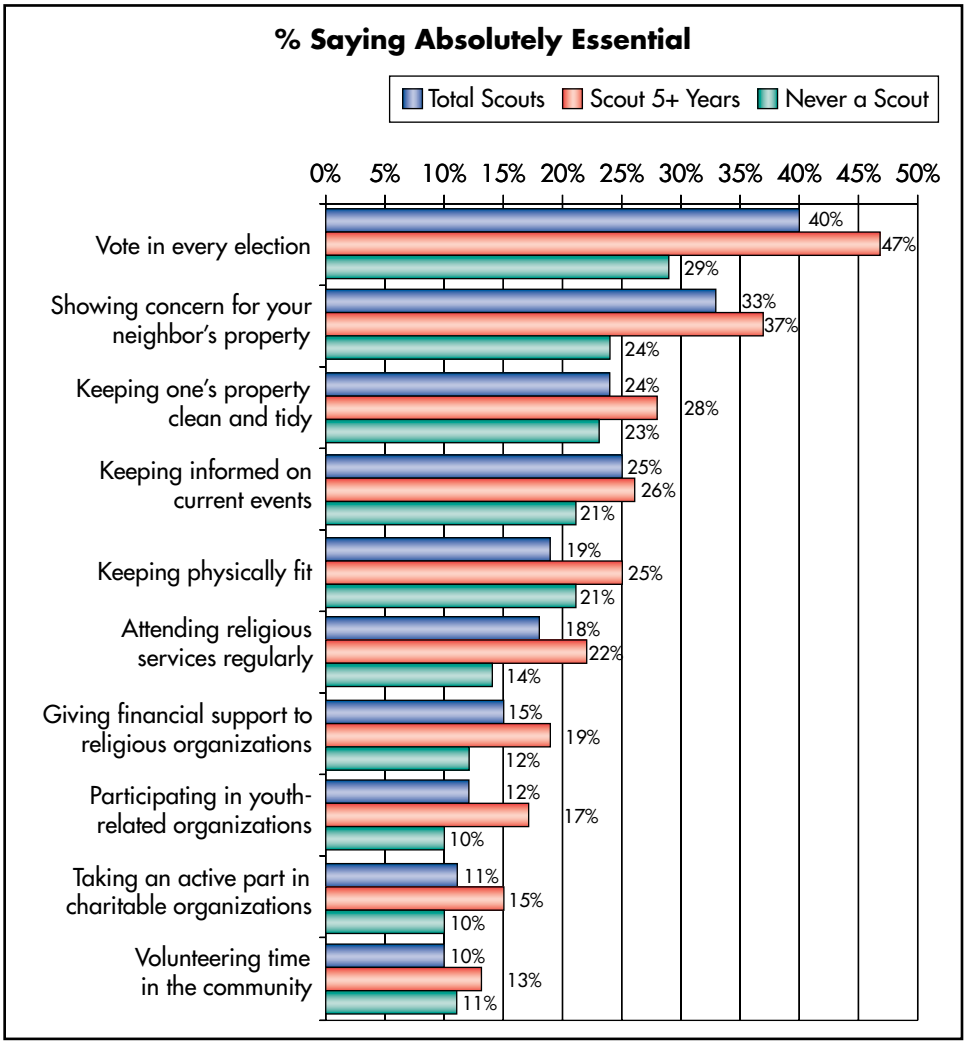
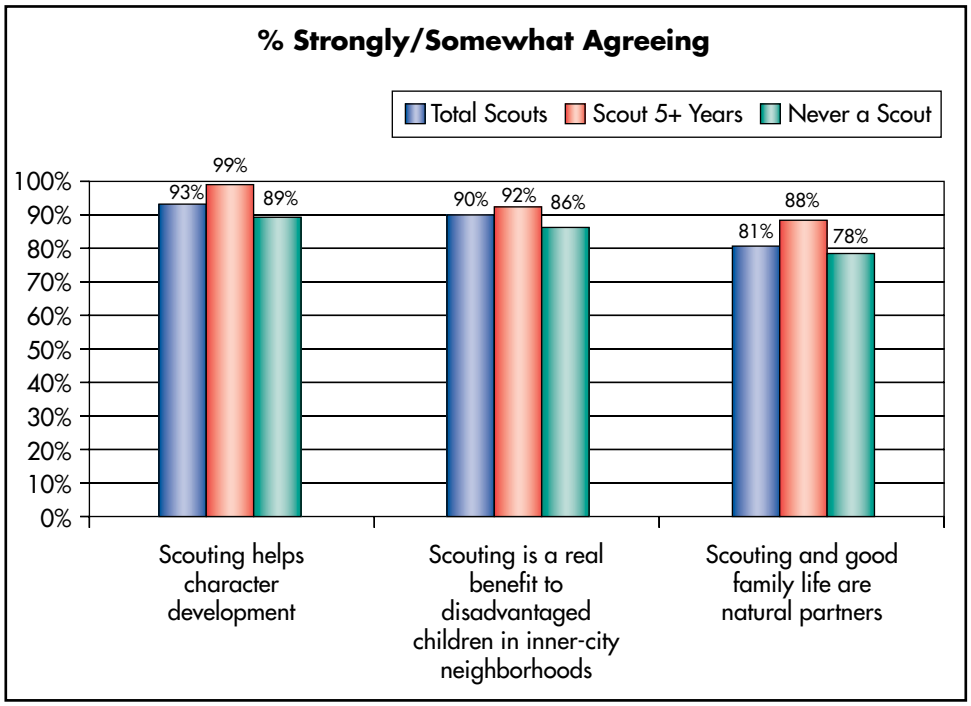


Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth; 248 men who were Scouts 5+ years; 410 non-Scouts.

Men who were Scouts as youth, as well as those who have never been Scouts, agree that Scouting has a positive effect on American society.

Effect of Scouting on American Society

Men who were Scouts as youth, as well as those who have never been Scouts, agree that Scouting has a positive effect on American society. They believe that Scouting helps develop character, is a benefit to disadvantaged children and is a natural partner with good family life.



Base: 595 men who were Scouts as youth, and 668 men and women who have never been in a Scouting program.

Activities of Scouts/Non-Scouts

About one in 10 boys (11 percent) in the United States is currently a Scout, and an additional 23 percent have been a Scout at some point in their life. Boys who are currently or were Scouts have been in the program for an average of nearly five years.

Boys who are Scouts are also involved in a variety of other after-school activities. In fact, Scouts are more often involved in other after-school activities than boys who have never been Scouts.

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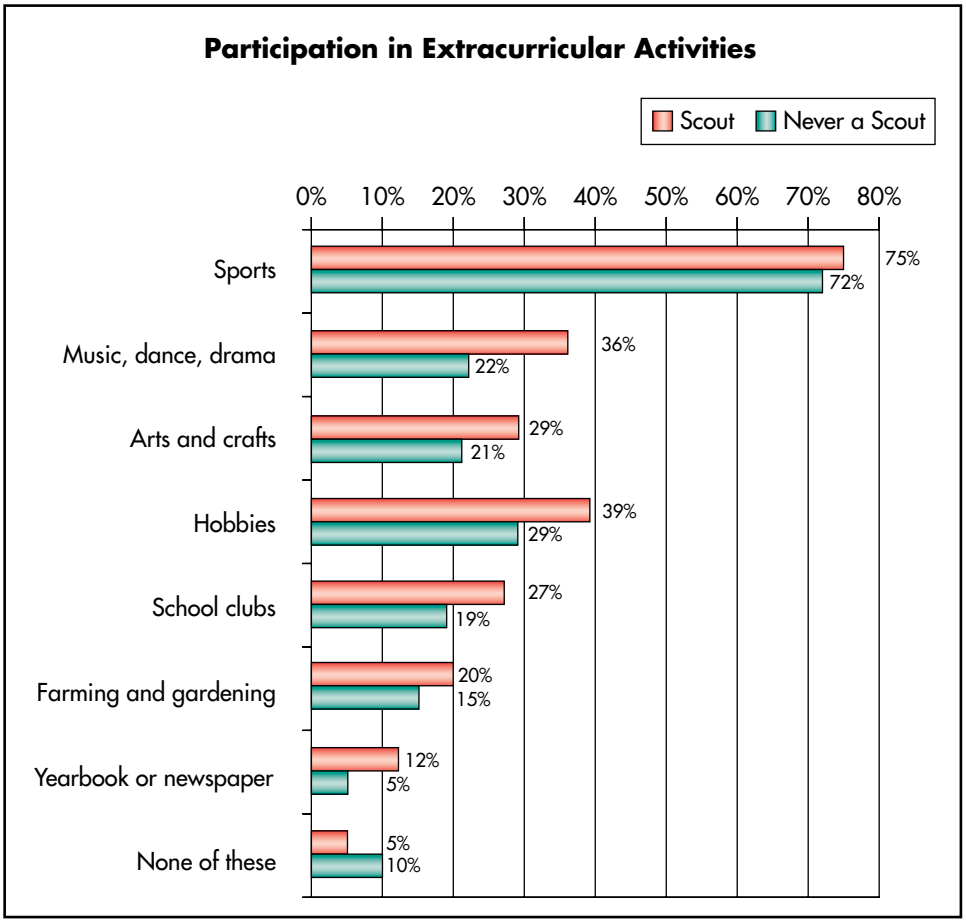

Base: 295 Scouts; 593 non-Scouts.

Scouting builds high ideals in youth. Scouts are less likely than other youth to say they are satisfied with the way the world is today.

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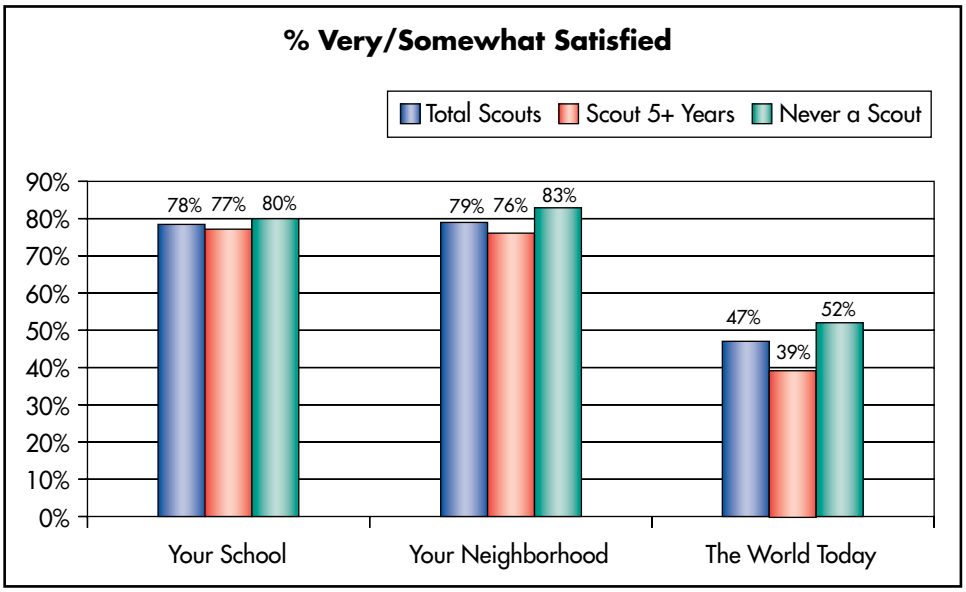
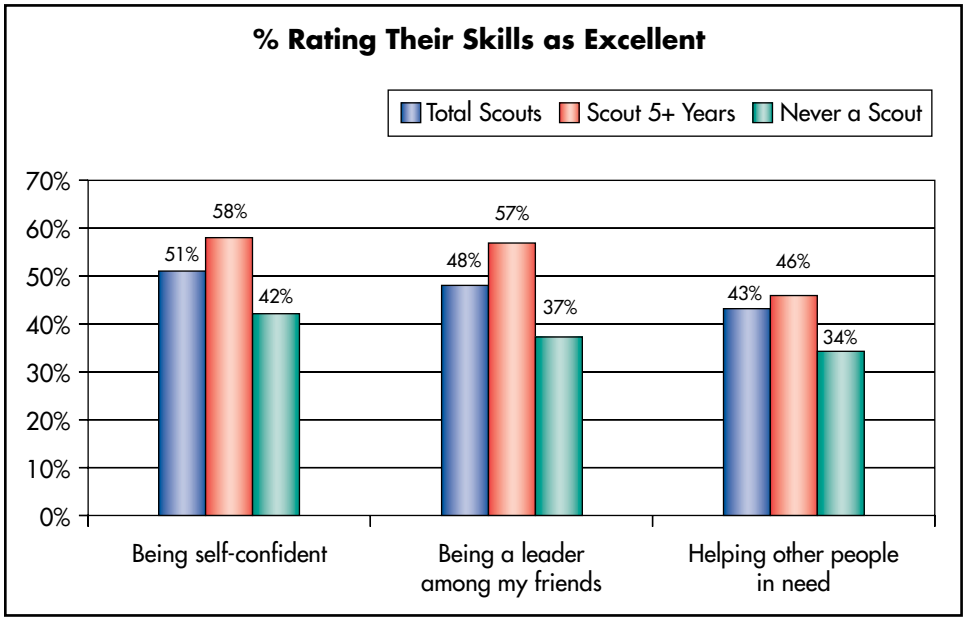


Base: 275 Scouts; 77 Scouts 5+ years; 593 non-Scouts.

Self-Confidence and Leadership Skills

Scouts have a generally positive self-image. They are more likely than boys who have never been Scouts to rate themselves higher on self-confidence, leadership skills, and altruism.



Base: 275 Scouts; 77 Scouts 5+ years; 593 non-Scouts.

Character

Scouting instills in youth the values in the Scout Oath and Law. Most Scouts say that their experiences in Scouting have taught them to respect others, to be self-confident, to set goals for their future, and to do their best. In addition, Scouting has taught them to be honest, courteous, kind, friendly, and thrifty.

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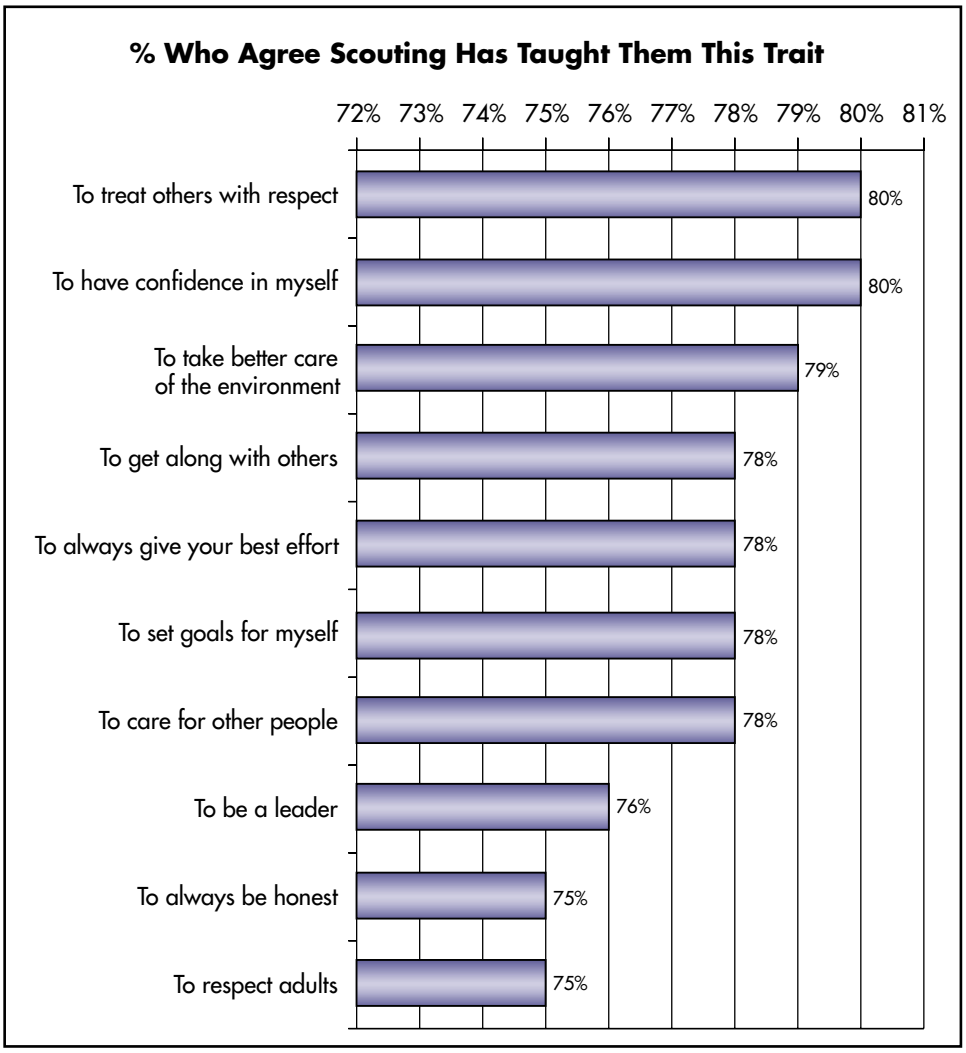
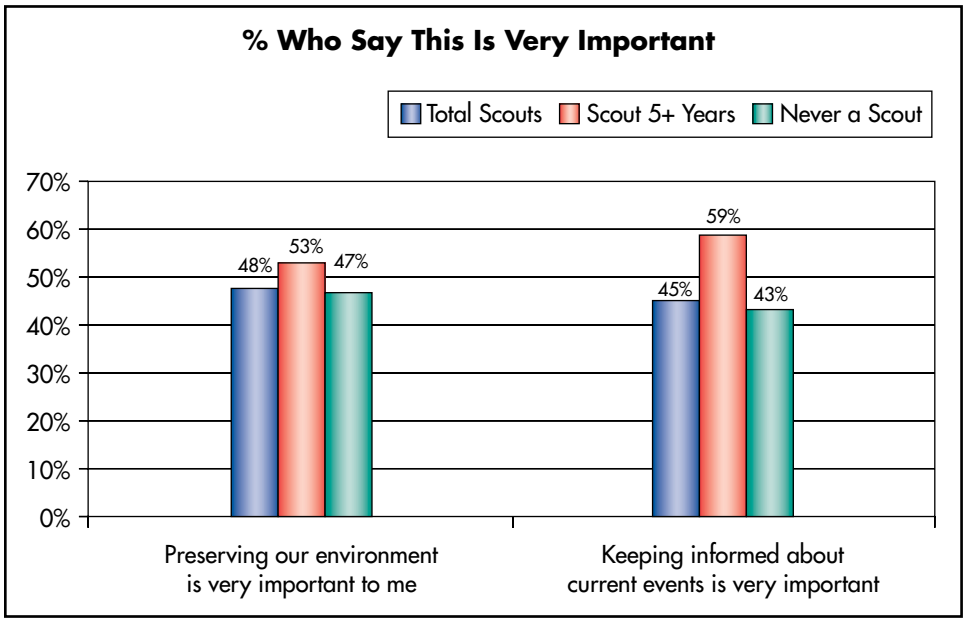


Base: 275 boys who are or were Scouts.

Citizenship

Scouts who have been in the program for five or more years are more likely than other youth to say that preserving the environment and keeping up to date on current events are a very important part of good citizenship.



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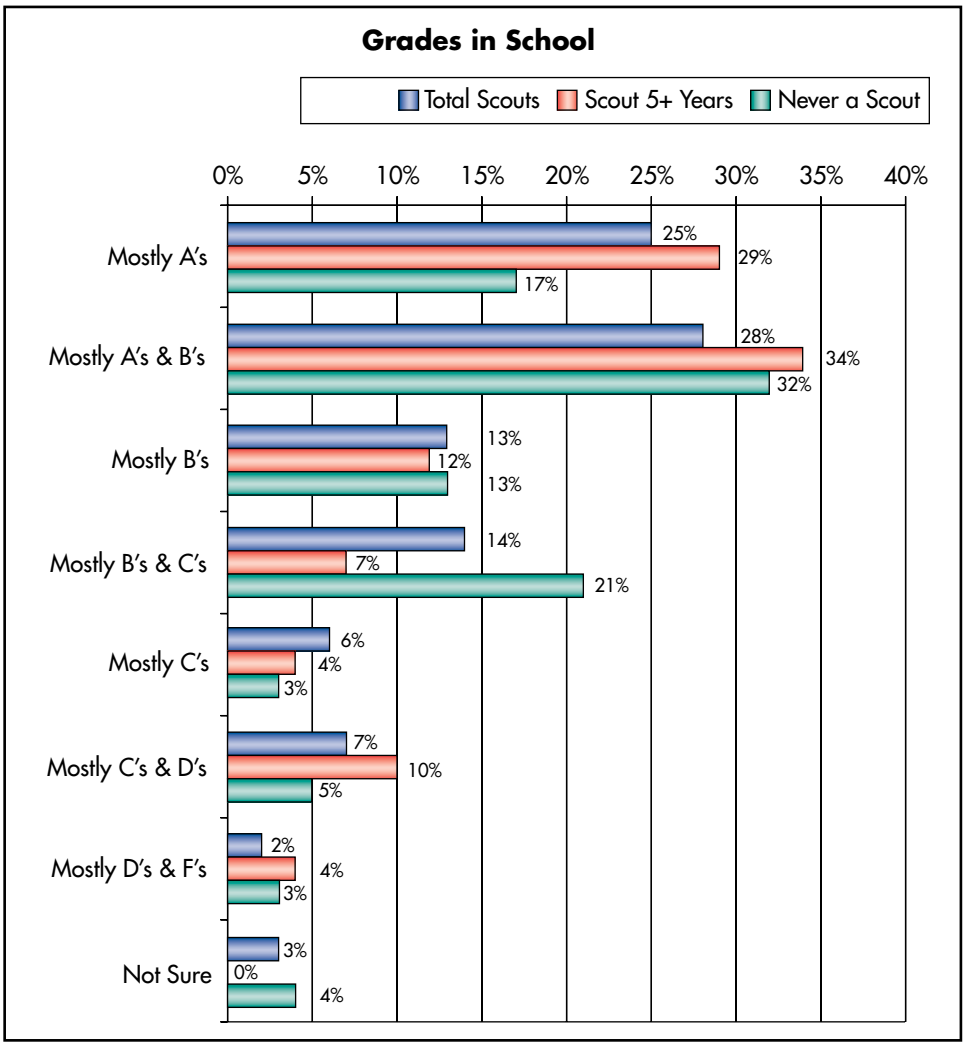
Academic and Nonacademic Performance

Scouts are more likely than boys who have never been Scouts to report they earn mostly A's. This is especially true of boys who have been Scouts for five or more years.



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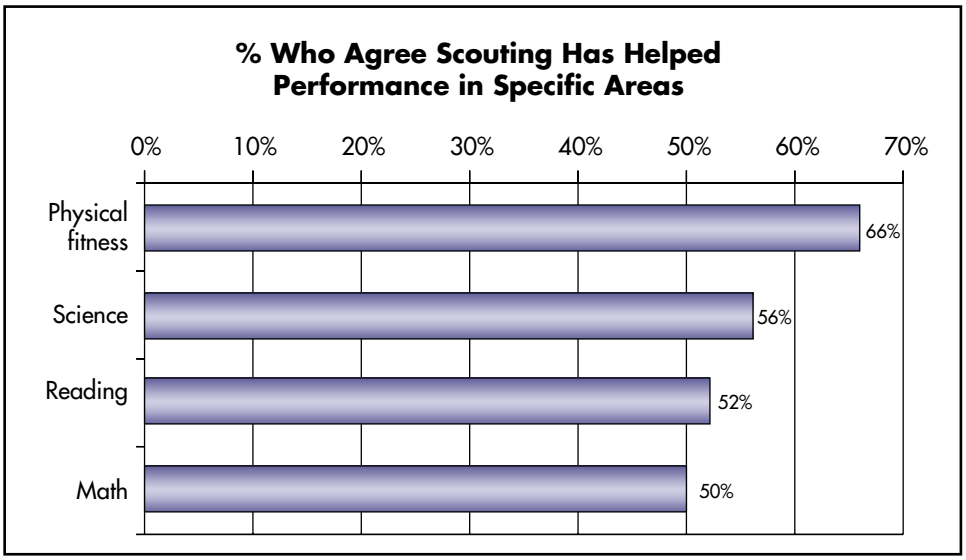
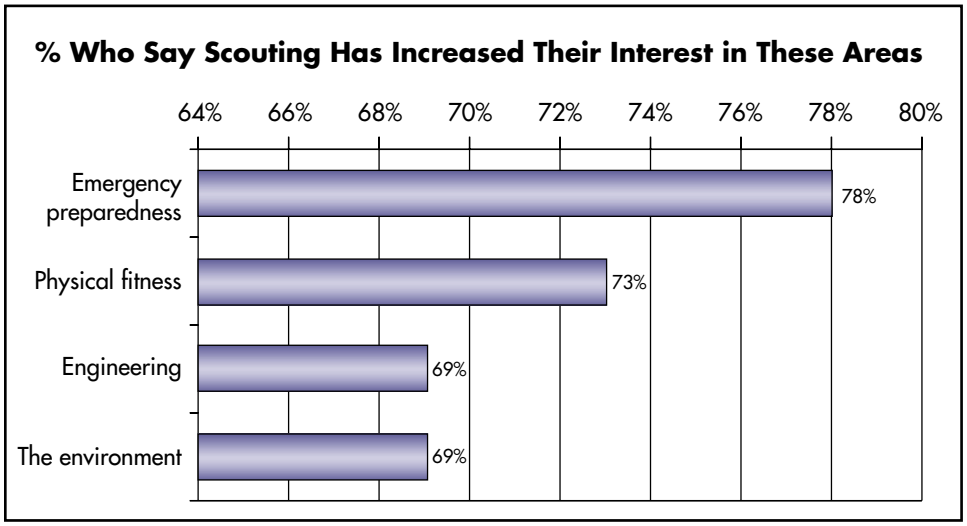


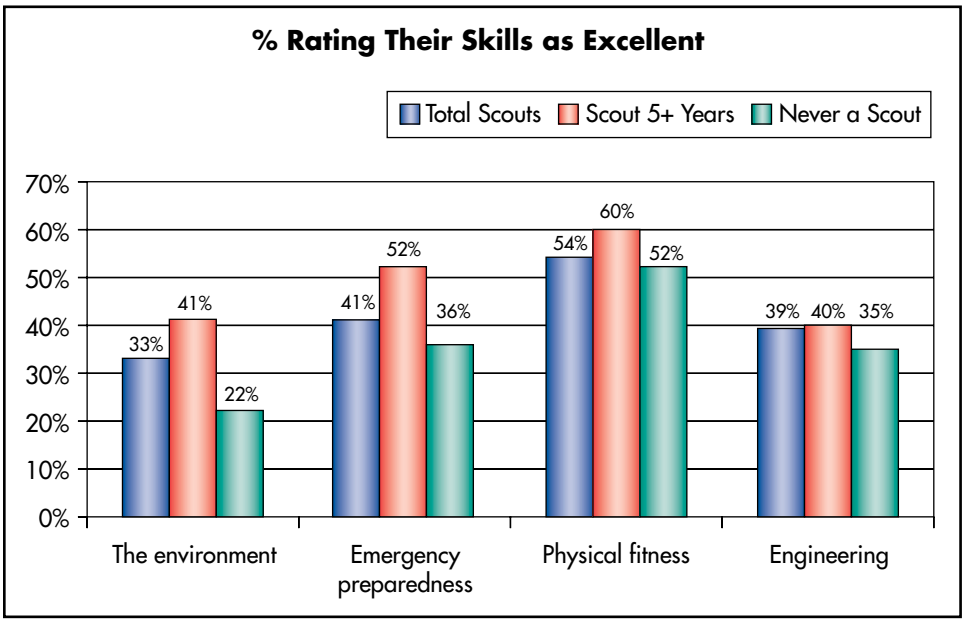
Base: 275 boys who are or were Scouts.

With the variety of merit badges and advancement activities that youth experience through Scouting programs, youth develop new interests based upon their Scouting experiences. Scouts say that their interest in emergency preparedness, physical fitness, engineering, and the environment have all increased because of what they have learned in Scouting.



Base: 275 boys who are or were Scouts.

Since Scouting builds their interest in many areas, it is not surprising that youth in Scouting rate their skills in these areas higher than do youth who have never been in Scouting. A significant number of Scouts, particularly Scouts who have been in the program five or more years, rate their skills in the environment and emergency preparedness higher than youth who have never been in a Scouting program.



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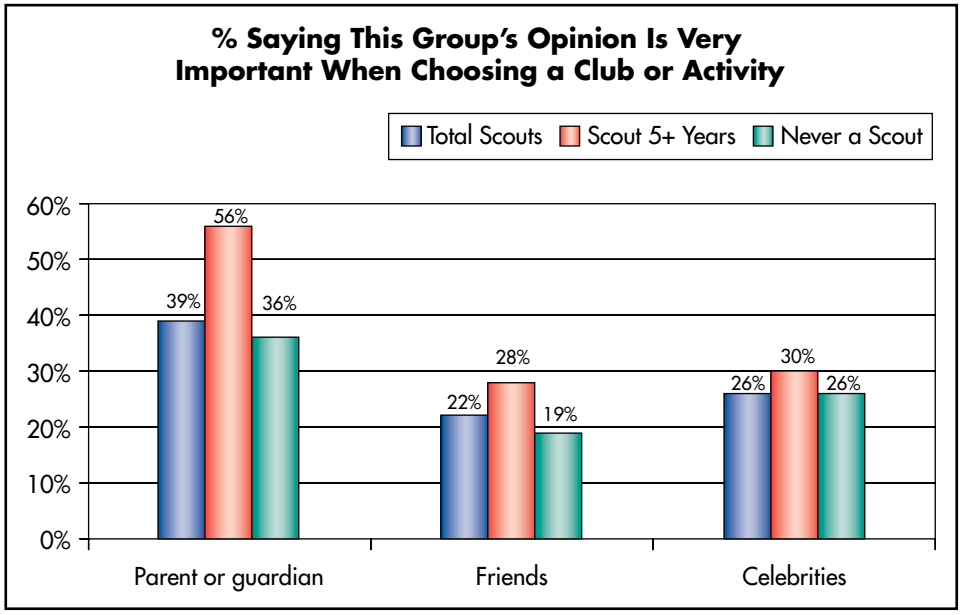
As was found 10 years ago in the *Values of Men and Boys* in America study, Scouts today are still more likely to make the most ethical—not the easiest—choices.

Family Relationships

Youth who have been in Scouting five or more years are more likely than other youth to say that their parent's opinion is very important when selecting a club or activity in which to participate.



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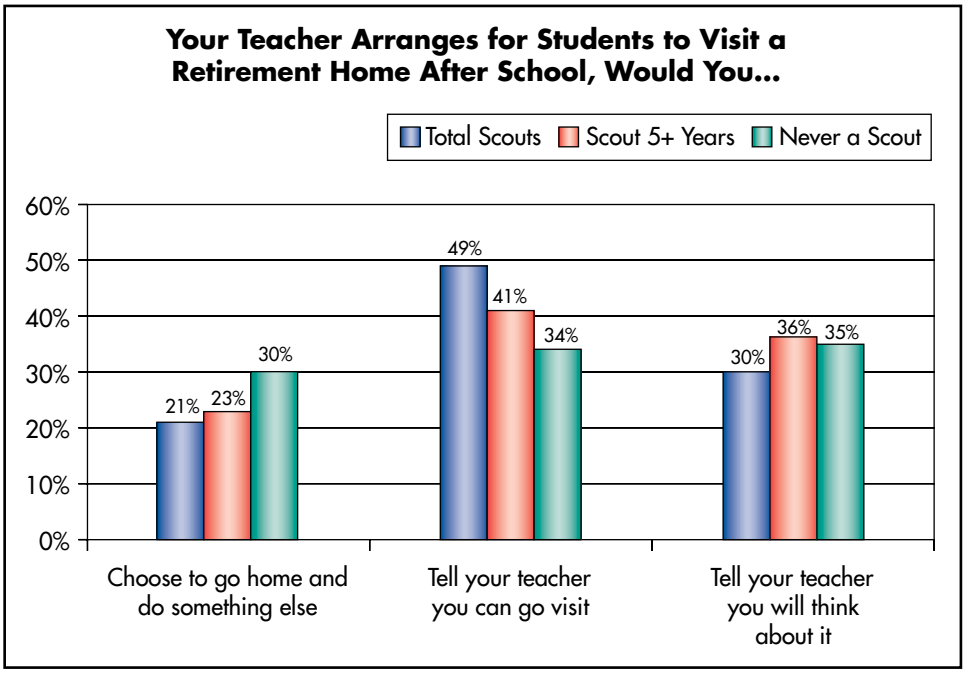
Ethical Decision Making

As was found 10 years ago in the *Values of Men and Boys in America* study, Scouts today are still more likely to make the most ethical—not the easiest—choices, especially if they have been in the Scouting program five or more years. Scouts are more likely than other boys to voluntarily visit a retirement home after school with their classmates, tell their best friend they will not participate in acts of vandalism with a group of kids, tell an adult if a classmate brings a gun to school, and not eat an apple a friend stole from a fruit stand.



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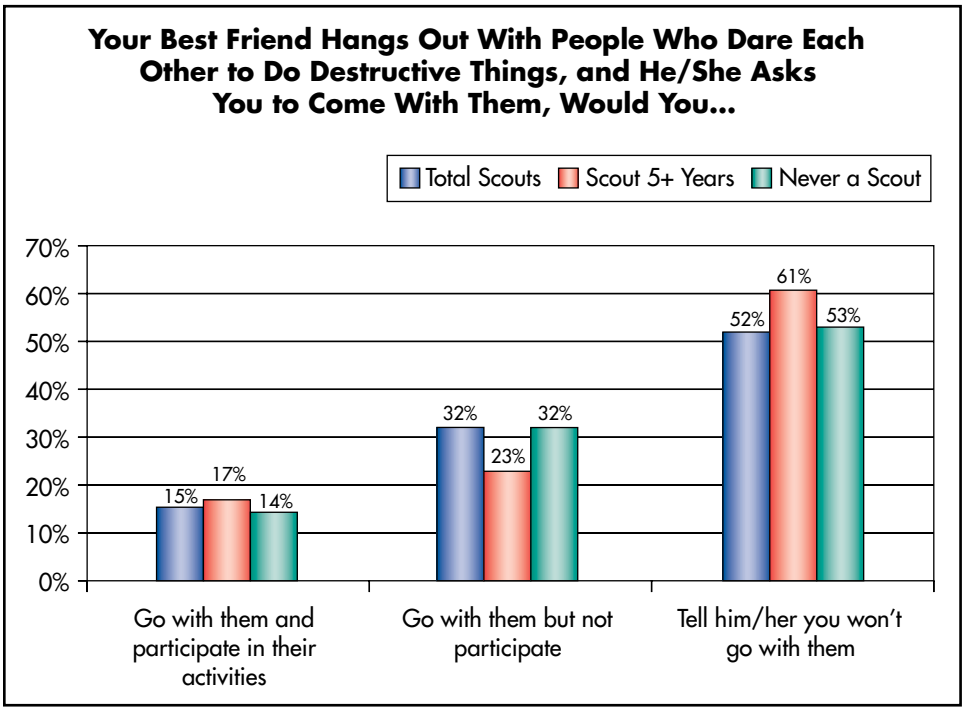

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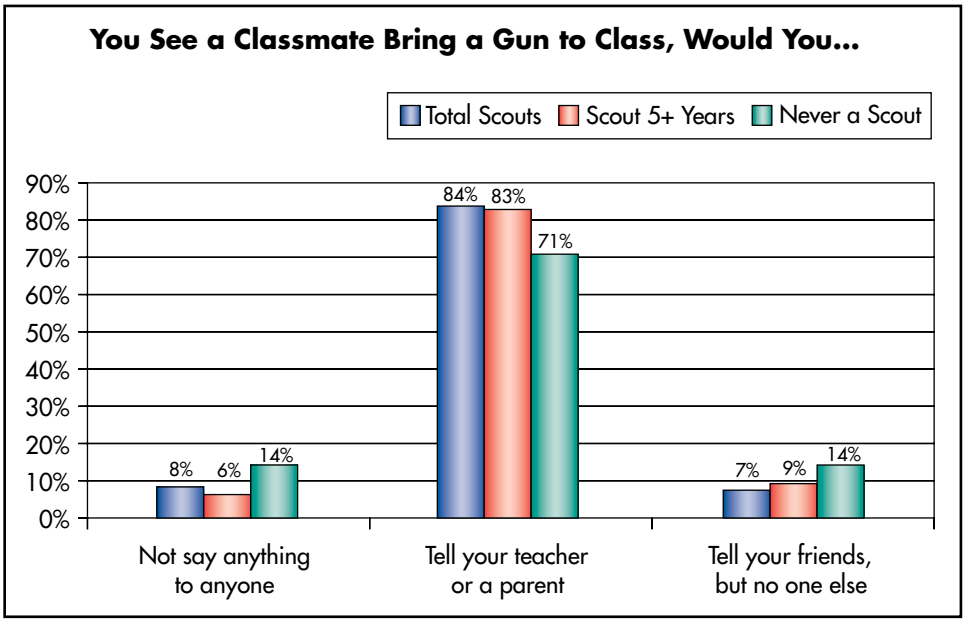

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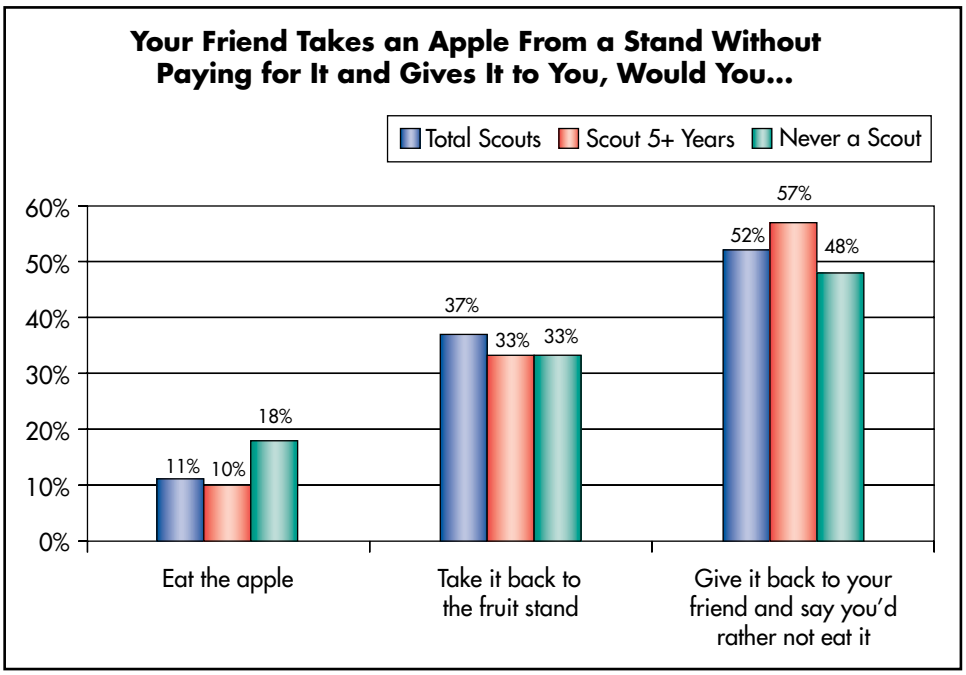

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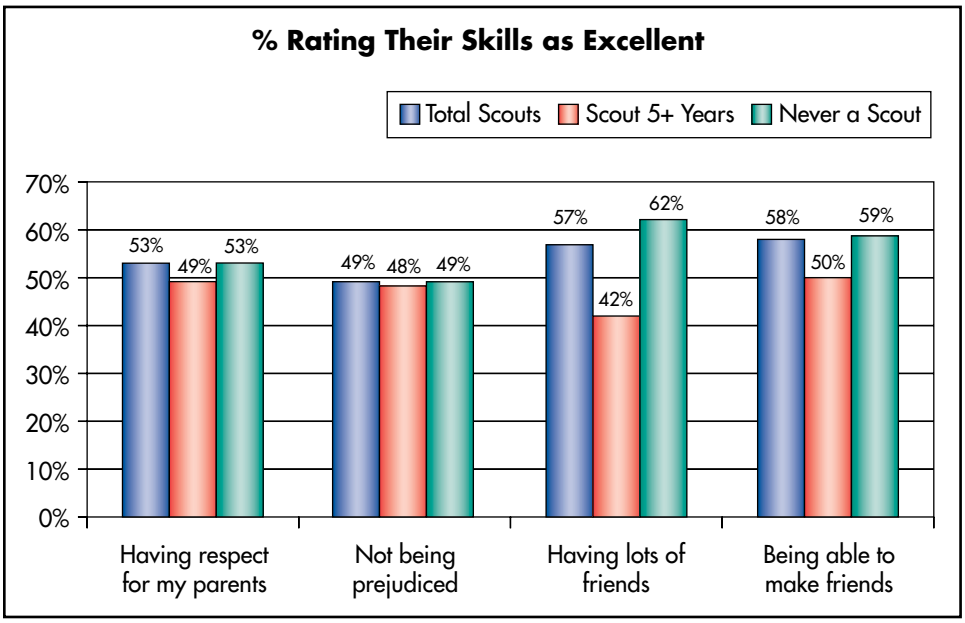
Boys Share Similar Struggles

While Scouting helps nurture character traits in youth, it should not be forgotten that Scouts are just like other youth, feeling the same pressures to fit in and be accepted by peers. Scouts are less likely than other boys to report drinking a full glass of alcohol, (26 percent vs. 33 percent). However, like other youth, boys in Scouting experiment and try different things and participate in activities that are less than ideal. Scouts are just as likely as other boys to report having cheated on homework (49 percent vs. 49 percent), carrying a gun to school (4 percent vs. 3 percent), binge drinking (18 percent vs. 22 percent), smoking marijuana (16 percent vs. 18 percent), and using drugs at least once in the past year (6 percent vs. 4 percent).

Scouts also rate themselves just like other boys on respecting their parents, not being prejudiced, and being able to make and keep friends.



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Demographic Characteristics of Samples

Adult Study

The following table provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the entire sample for the adult survey. A total of 1,524 adults have been surveyed for this study.

Adult Demographics	Percentage
Gender	
Male	49%
Female	51%
Race	
White	73%
African American	11%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1%
Native American or Alaskan Native	3%
Other	8%
Declined to Answer	4%
Ethnicity	
Hispanic origin	11%
Not of Hispanic origin	85%
Not sure	1%
Declined to answer	3%
Marital Status	
Married	57%
Divorced	9%
Separated	1%
Widowed	7%
Never married	16%
Single, but living with someone	8%
Declined to answer	2%
Employment Status	
Employed full-time	45%
Employed part-time	9%
Self-employed	10%
Not employed	34%
Declined to answer	2%
Education	
Less than high school	11%
High school graduate or equivalent	36%
Some college or technical school	27%
College graduate	16%

Postgraduate degree	8%
Declined to answer	2%
Presence of Children	
Have children	70%
Do not have children	29%
Declined to answer	1%

Youth Survey

The following table provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the entire sample for the youth survey. A total of 1,714 youth have been surveyed for this study.

Youth Demographics	Percentage
Gender	
Boy	51%
Girl	49%
Race	
White	64%
African American	18%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%
Native American or Alaskan Native	3%
Other	10%
Not sure	2%
Ethnicity	
Hispanic origin	16%
Not of Hispanic origin	75%
Not sure	9%
Living Arrangements	
Both parents	58%
Mother only	14%
Parent and stepparent	14%
Mother sometimes and father sometimes	5%
Father only	2%
One parent and their companion	2%
Relative	2%
Someone else	3%

Cub Scout Promise

I, (name),

promise to do my best
To do my duty to God and
my country,
To help other people, and
To obey the Law of the Pack.

Scout Oath or Promise

On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty to God and my country
and to obey the Scout Law;
To help other people at all times;
To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.

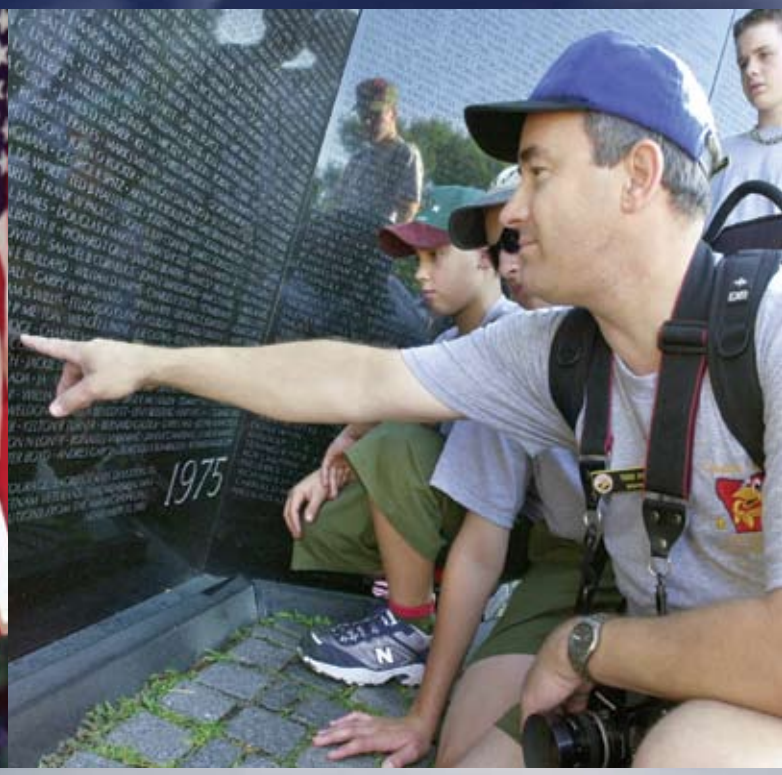
Scout Law

A Scout is trustworthy,
loyal, helpful, friendly,
courteous, kind, obedient,
cheerful, thrifty, brave,
clean, and reverent.

The Venturing Oath

As a Venturer,
I promise to do my duty to God
and help strengthen America,
to help others, and to seek
truth, fairness, and
adventure in our world.

Notes



Boy Scouts of America
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
P.O. Box 152079
Irving, Texas 75015-2079
http://www.scouting.org

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