



## RESEARCH FINDINGS



## **ABOUT AMERICA’S PROMISE – THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH**

America’s Promise is a broad-based Alliance whose members work together to ensure that all young people can realize their full potential.

Alliance partners focus attention and resources to help every child receive the Five Promises essential to success:

- Caring adults who are actively involved in their lives;
- Safe places in which to learn and grow;
- A healthy start toward adulthood;
- An effective education that builds marketable skills; and
- Opportunities to help others.

Founded by retired General Colin L. Powell, the America’s Promise Alliance includes nonprofit, corporate and community groups as well as individuals across the nation. Alma J. Powell currently serves as chair. Among the founding partners are the Corporation for National and Community Service, Points of Light Foundation, The United Way of America, Communities in Schools, MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, the Forum for Youth Investment and the National Collaboration for Youth.

America's Promise grew out of the Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future in 1997, where Presidents Bush, Carter, Clinton and Ford, with Nancy Reagan representing President Reagan, challenged the country to make children and youth a national priority. President George W. Bush affirmed his commitment in 2001.

For more information about the America’s Promise Alliance and its Five Promises, go to [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org). For questions regarding this report and other Alliance research activities, please contact Jonathan Zaff, Ph.D., Vice President of Research at America’s Promise – The Alliance for Youth ([jonz@americaspromise.org](mailto:jonz@americaspromise.org)).

## **ABOUT JUST KID INC.**

Just Kid Inc. (JKI), based in Stamford, Connecticut, is a leading supplier of children’s research, strategy, and product and program development. In addition to working with the country’s top corporations, JKI has a flourishing social marketing practice designed to enhance the health and well-being of our nation’s children by helping clients identify the needs and interests of children and developing new products and programs that engage children on their own terms. A sample of JKI’s clients includes the National Children’s Museum, the Markle Foundation, the Schwab Foundation for Learning, Girl Scouts of America, the USDA, the CDC, the American Camp Association, Partnership for a Drug-Free America, and the YMCA. More information about JKI can be found at [www.justkidinc.com](http://www.justkidinc.com).

## The America's Promise Voices Study: Topline Research Findings

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## Overview

The Voices Study is a nationally representative examination of 10-17 year olds' views of the fundamental resources they need in their lives ... the importance, the presence and the absence of the Five Promises. The study provides a snapshot of what young people think about their future and how they feel about their prospects. Several key findings emerged:

- ✓ **There is a strong dichotomy between youngsters' hopes and their expectations in life – an “American Dream Gap.”** For example, whereas nearly all young people say that they have goals they want to reach in their lives, a substantial proportion -- 42% -- do not ever expect to reach those goals.
- ✓ **The majority of young people report that the Five Promises are being met in their lives. However, for far too many youngsters, serious gaps and shortcomings remain.** For instance, two-thirds of young people say they lack at least one promise and indicate that they have inadequate access to (and supply of) the rest.
- ✓ **Even when resources are available to young people, they do not always find those resources to be child- or teen-friendly and, therefore, may resist utilizing those resources.** For instance, over half responded that they would volunteer more if it were more fun; and three-quarters wished there were more fun places to hang out and still feel safe.
- ✓ **There is an under-leveraged and potentially powerful resource to address these issues and improve the delivery of the Five Promises to young people: young people themselves.** Youngsters express a strong desire to act as potential change agents and make a difference in the world. Indeed, young people, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, continue to be hopeful, well-grounded, and committed to some of the country's most noble values, such as hard work and helping others.

## Section I: Project Background & Objectives

The Voices Study is an examination of 10-17 year olds' insights into young Americans' attitudes about their supports and aspirations. America's Promise -- The Alliance for Youth commissioned Just Kid Inc. (JKI) to develop a study that would act as a guide to youngsters' opinions and their voice. Prior to this research, America's Promise had collected substantial information about children related to the Five Promises. But until now, America's Promise had never collected information directly from children.

The America's Promise Alliance is organized around the framework of The Five Promises, which are:

- Caring adults who are actively involved in their lives;
- Safe places in which to learn and grow;
- A healthy start toward adulthood;
- Effective education that builds marketable skills; and
- Opportunities to help others.

Existing research indicates that the more of these fundamentals are present in a child's life, the more positive the outcomes. They are more likely to succeed in school, have good relationships with their peers and families and be engaged in community life. In addition, children and youth with these resources in their lives are less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol.<sup>1</sup>

The goals of the study were to:

1. Provide a child's perspective about the value and prevalence of the Five Promises in their lives;
2. Help inform the America's Promise Alliance on best strategies for addressing these issues;
3. Complement the substantial amount of data available on children and youth; and

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<sup>1</sup> Academy for Educational Development, Child Trends, National Research Council, The Search Institute.

4. Provide added value for America's Promise Alliance members striving to optimize their programs.

## Section II: Attitudes toward the Five Promises – An Overview

### Young People Recognize the Importance of All Five Promises

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The Five Promises that the America’s Promise Alliance has identified as necessary for the successful development of children and youth are based on research and practice. The Voices Study reveals that young people, too, recognize the importance of each of the Five Promises.

The promise of Caring Adults is most likely to be rated “very important” by survey respondents. More than 4 in 5 youngsters rate Safe Places, a Healthy Start and Marketable Skills to be “important” or “very important” for kids/teens today, and half rate Opportunities to Serve as “important” or “very important” (See Figure 2.1.)

On a personal level, the majority of survey respondents believe that the promises are being met in their lives. Yet, over 2 in 5 (43%) feel they do not have enough Opportunities to Serve, and approximately 1 in 3 (34%) lack sufficient Marketable Skills (See Figure 2.2.) When asked to choose which one promise is most missing in their lives, 2 out of 3 (67%) did indicate that a promise is missing from their lives– with the most responses centered around Opportunities to Serve (See Figure 2.3.)

Caring Adults	45% of kids expressed a need for more adults they could turn to when they need help.
Safe Places	Nearly three in ten say young people in their community have too many guns, knives, and other weapons.
Healthy Start	60% of teens admit that they do many things that are not healthy, and 67% say they feel a lot of stress in their lives.
Effective Education/ Marketable Skills	One in three kids don’t think they are learning the skills they need to be successful in life.
Opportunities To Serve	46% of kids say most community service and volunteer programs are ‘really boring’.

Comparing youngsters' responses to the survey question evaluating the general importance of each of the Five Promises to their responses to the survey question about whether the Five Promises are being met for them personally revealed a particularly large gap for Marketable Skills. That is, although 86% of respondents rate marketable skills as "important" or "very important," only 66% indicate that they personally have enough of the skills they need to be successful.



### Section III: Importance of Caring Adults who are actively involved in their lives

#### Caring Adults Are a Priority for Young People

Young people overwhelmingly believe that supportive adults are vital to their journey as they navigate the waters of growing up. Over 9 in 10 (91%) agree that “people my age need adults who don’t judge them when they have problems.” In the words of a teen girl in a focus group, “If you don’t have someone looking over your back, you’re going to get in trouble. It’s good to have someone to protect you, to tell you the truth. Also, it keeps you in control – in a straight line.”

On a personal level, roughly 3 in 4 youngsters feel they have Caring Adults in their own lives. Seventy-five percent agree that “there are adults in my community who really look out for me,” and 72% agree that “there are lots of adults I know to whom I can easily turn to for help with the tough things in my life.” Nevertheless, a substantial number wish they had even more Caring Adults: nearly half (45%) agree that “I wish I had more adults I feel I could turn to when I need help,” and 1 in 4 (26%) agree that “besides my parents or guardians, I don’t have enough adults in my life who look out for me.”

##### **The Gap**

87% of kids say it is very important to have caring adults in their lives

yet

45% of kids express a need for more adults they can go to when they have a problem

Surprisingly, although many Americans perceive high school-age students to be rebellious, independent and resistant to adult involvement, teens are in fact far more likely than younger children to say they need more Caring Adults. On a range of measures, older students are *less likely* than younger students to report that they receive support from adults. High school students are also nearly twice as likely to say they don’t have enough adults looking out for them, and nearly 40% more likely to say they wish they had more adults they could turn to (See Figure 3.1.)

## **Opportunities for Non-Parents to Play a Greater Role**

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In focus groups, many participants spoke of their comfort level turning to parents – especially mothers – when they need guidance and support, at least for certain kinds of issues. One middle school girl said, “I can tell my mom anything – it doesn’t matter, she will give me advice, and she doesn’t get mad.” The survey data reinforce these sentiments. When asked to whom they go for advice or help, nearly 7 in 10 (69%) youngsters respond “mom.” Only about half (46%) of respondents indicate that they turn to “dad” for advice or help.

Youngsters are much less likely to say they turn to other adults, with fewer than 1 in 3 indicating they turn to a “teacher,” “grandparent,” or “family friend.” Approximately 1 in 10 turn to a “religious leader,” “coach,” or “doctor or health professional” (See Figure 3.2.)

High school students are much less likely than younger students to say they turn to adults (other than religious leaders and coaches) for advice or help. Instead, high schoolers more frequently seek out the support of friends (See Figure 3.3.)

Coupled with the earlier data about teens being more in need of Caring Adults, these data suggest the importance of non-parents such as mentors, coaches and teachers playing a far more active role in children’s lives, especially for America’s teens.

## Section IV: The need for more Safe Places in which to learn and grow

### Young People Are Looking for Safe Places That Are also Fun

In every focus group conducted as part of this study, young people expressed frustration with the existing options of places to spend their free time. Although many felt safe in their communities, they were not satisfied with the options available to them. As one middle school girl said, “I wish there were other places to hang out – a closer mall, or a place that has it all. The mall has shopping centers, but it doesn’t have games and other stuff. I want laser tags and movies.” It seems to come down to the fact that young people aren’t just looking for places to go where they feel safe. Rather, they’re looking for safe places to go where they can also have fun. In fact, approximately 3 in 4 (74%) youngsters agree with the statement, “I wish there were more fun places where I could hang out and feel safe.”

#### **The Gap**

84% of kids agree on the need and importance of safe places

yet

more than one in four kids don’t feel safe walking alone in their neighborhoods

A significant percentage of young people express grave concerns about their own safety. Threats from other youngsters are widespread, with clear concerns about youth fighting and the prevalence of weapons (especially among high school students), as well as bullying from other kids (especially among elementary and middle school students) (See Figure 4.1.) On a more macro level, a small but substantial group of youngsters feel unsafe in their communities. Nearly 1 in 3 (31%) *disagree* that “I would feel safe walking around alone in my community,” and at least 1 in 10 *agree* that they “don’t feel safe enough after school” (13%) or “don’t feel safe enough on weekends” (10%).

## **Many Less Structured After-School Activities Present Potential Opportunities for Risky Behaviors**

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Other existing research has investigated specific after-school activities young people engage in (for example, see Public Agenda's 2004 report, [All Work and No Play?](http://www.publicagenda.org) at [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org)). The Voices Study examined less structured after-school activities that may represent potential safety threats.

The vast majority of respondents engage in at least some form of potential risk behavior after school. Most frequently, youngsters report “eating junk food” after school (84% report eating junk food all the time or some of the time). Although this activity does not necessarily represent immediate danger, given the skyrocketing childhood obesity rate in this country, it is certainly cause for concern in the long run.

Other potential risk behaviors follow, with roughly three-quarters of youngsters reporting that they “just hang out” (78%) or “look for something exciting on the Internet” (70%). Roughly half of youngsters say they “hang out with boys/girls” (51%) or “try to meet new people” (48%) after school. Again, although these behaviors do not necessarily represent imminent peril, they clearly have potential for risk. Slightly less frequently, 2 in 5 (39%) youngsters admit to unequivocally risky behavior, saying that they “try new things you can’t do when adults are around” after school. With the exception of eating junk food, which is prevalent among all youngsters, high school students are more likely than younger students to report engaging in all of these potential risk behaviors (See Figure 4.2)

These findings support the notion that youth participation in constructive, supervised after-school activities provides a safe alternative to risky activity. However, the extent to which such after-school activities must be fun for participants cannot be underestimated.

## Section V: Challenges to a Healthy Start toward Adulthood

### The Health Message Is Getting Through

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More and more, the nation's attention has turned to the poor eating and exercise habits of Americans. Youngsters are being bombarded with entreaties to take care of themselves, from their parents and teachers, the media, marketers, legislators and others. The message is getting through loud and clear. Focus group participants consistently spoke of the need for – and benefits of – healthy living. However, many also admitted that they don't always pay attention to their own health and nutrition. In the words of one middle-school boy, "I want to stay healthy my whole life. You can have a little junk food here and there, but mainly I have a balanced diet." And from a teen boy, "I want to live for a long time – I don't want to be a blob. You feel so much better, too. You feel more energetic when you're healthy."

#### **The Gap**

92% of kids think it is important for them to pay attention to their health

yet

Over 50% of kids admit that there are 'a lot' of things they do that are not healthy

Nearly all youngsters in the survey recognize the importance of prioritizing health, even at a young age. Over 9 in 10 (92%) agree "It's important for people my age to pay attention to their health." Only 19% agree "I don't need to worry about my health because I'm young" (See Figure 5.1.)

For the majority of youngsters, healthy living is more about how they feel than how they look. Over 3 in 4 (78%) say that "feeling good" is a bigger benefit of being healthy than "looking good" (See Figure 5.2.)

### Limitations to a Healthy Lifestyle

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Despite their best intentions, many young people acknowledge that they may not be leading the healthiest lifestyle. Roughly half (51%) of survey respondents admit "There a lot of things I do that are not healthy." And, although the majority agree that "I have

gotten a really healthy start on my life,” nearly 1 in 3 (31%) *disagree* with that statement. One reason youngsters do not entirely embrace a healthy lifestyle may be skepticism about the health messages they are hearing. Three in five (60%) agree “grown-ups exaggerate how bad a lot of things are for people my age” (See Figure 5.3.)

Youngsters point to a number of other factors that prevent them from prioritizing health. Stress, in particular, is a pervasive contributor to unhealthy living. Focus group participants emphasized the pressure they felt from multiple sources, including parents, teachers, and friends, about multiple issues, including grades, sports, and the future. One teen boy said, “We’re always under pressure, but it’s a question of whether you can handle the pressure.” Two out of three (67%) survey respondents agree, indicating “I feel a lot of stress in my life” (See Figure 5.3.)

“I feel a lot of stress in my life”

(see the chart copied and attached ... 41% of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders, 60% of 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 80% of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders)

Another limitation to youngsters’ healthy lifestyle is the inadequate availability of healthy food at their schools. Focus group participants spoke extensively about unimpressive cafeteria options. One teen boy said, “The food at school is just grease. I wouldn’t call it food. It doesn’t even look like food.” A middle-school boy said, “School food is a temptation. They sell soda, and there’s a snack bar and vending machines. But there are too many calories, fat, and sugar.” Over half (53%) of survey respondents confirm this issue on a national scale, agreeing that “My school cafeteria sells too much unhealthy food” (See Figure 5.3.)

The perpetual presence of peer pressure also has a negative impact on youngsters’ healthy lifestyle. Nearly half (48%) of survey respondents report that in their community, kids/teens put a lot of pressure on other kids/teens to “do things you don’t think are right.” About a third of all respondents specify pressure around activities like

smoking, drug use, alcohol use and sex (See Figure 5.4.) Most youngsters recognize the negative health associations with substance use. However, 85% *disagree* that “it’s okay to experiment with things like drinking, tobacco, and drugs as long as you don’t use them too much.”

An additional obstacle youngsters face is the challenge of uncovering and deciphering information about healthy living. Young people repeatedly told us that they heard mixed messages about what makes a food, drink or supplement healthy, and what steps they should take to stay (or become) healthy. For example, one teen boy who was interested in weightlifting wondered, “Supplements, protein shakes, and things like that – are they healthy? Why? What is it that I’m taking? I can read the label but I don’t know what it means. You need to learn more about what you’re putting into your body.” A middle-school girl said, “I would like to learn how other people get healthy, and stay healthy.”

Reflecting this thirst for health information, over 3 in 4 (78%) youngsters report needing more health information on at least one topic (See Figure 5.5.) Most frequently, survey respondents indicate that they need more information on “handling stress” (43%), “staying healthy as I grow up” (43%), “exercising” (41%), and “the best foods to eat” (40%). Interestingly, some of the health issues that currently have the most advertising messages and grassroots efforts targeted to them -- such as the effects of drugs or alcohol, avoiding pregnancy, and the effects of smoking or chewing tobacco -- are the topics about which youngsters are least likely to say they need more information. Either way, there is a clear need for information and messages on a number of topics that are not currently being addressed.

## Section VI: Gaps in an Effective Education that builds Marketable Skills

### **The American Dream is Alive and Well but a “Dream Gap” Persists**

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Today’s young people demonstrate much of the same optimism about the future as previous generations of Americans. In the words of a middle-school girl who participated in the focus groups, “You can achieve anything you put your mind to – anything is possible.”

Nearly all (95%) respondents have set personal goals for themselves, agreeing “I have goals that I want to reach in my life.” And, in a classic illustration of the American dream, youngsters recognize that hard work is the key to a successful future. Over 9 in 10 (92%) agree, “My success depends on how hard I work.” Most young people are optimistic about their future job prospects, with 88% agreeing “I’m confident that I’ll be able to find a good-paying job when I’m an adult” (See Figure 6.1.)

#### **The Gap**

95% of kids affirm they have goals they want to reach in their lives

yet

42% don’t know if they’ll be able to reach those goals

Yet, some doubt is evident amidst youngsters’ goals and optimism about the future. Over 2 in 5 (42%) express concern about achieving their specific dreams, agreeing “I don’t know if I’ll be able to reach my goals.” And 1 in 5 (20%) *disagree* that “In America, kids can grow up to become anything they want.” Tellingly, these doubts appear to increase as children enter the teen years (See Figure 6.2). For example, high school students are far more likely than elementary school students to *disagree* that kids can grow up to become anything they want (27% for high school students compared to 10% for elementary school students.)

### **Opportunity for Skill Development**

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Most youngsters believe the skills they are learning now are a starting point for later success. Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) agree that “I am learning skills now that will help me be



successful later in life.” Yet – perhaps explaining the doubt some youngsters feel about the future – nearly all young people recognize the need for greater skill development. Ninety-five percent of survey respondents indicate that there are at least some skill areas where they need more experience in order to become successful in life (See Figure 6.2.)

Financial skills and job skills are the two areas youngsters are most likely to identify as in need of development (64% and 62%, respectively.) Technology is one of the least frequent areas identified as in need of development (37%), suggesting that many young people have extensive experience with this important skills (See Figure 6.3).

### **Sources of Skills Training**

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Youngsters primarily identify their parents and their school as the best sources for skills development. Nearly 3 in 4 say “parents or guardians” (72%) or “school” (72%) are doing the best job teaching them the skills they need to be successful in life. On the other hand, many young people feel they can count on themselves to learn the skills they need for success. Roughly half (48%) of respondents identify “myself” as the source doing the best job teaching them skills (See Figure 6.4.) Teens are even more likely than younger children to feel self-sufficient and less likely to count on parents and school for skill development (See Figure 6.5.)

Very few respondents (9%) identify “a job I have” as a good source for learning skills, although this number is slightly higher for high school students (15%), presumably because they are older and more likely to be employed. However, youngsters recognize the value of the work environment as an opportunity for skills training and career development. Over 7 in 10 (71%) agree, “I wish I had a chance to see how people work in the real world.” In addition to working with youth to hone specific skills, educators and employers interested in developing the future workforce might want to consider ways to bring young people into a range of workplaces to explore career options (See Figure 6.2.)

## Section VII: The Potential for Opportunities to Help Others

### Young people Are Committed to Altruism

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As seen earlier, youngsters rate Opportunities to Serve as the resource they are least likely to have enough of, as compared to the other resources. Young people express a high level of commitment to altruism and service on a personal level. Many focus group participants spoke of the challenges of prioritizing service in their lives – but when they *were* able to participate, they found volunteerism quite rewarding. As a teen boy in a focus group described, “It’s important for kids our age to be involved in community service – if you stay in your house, no one knows you. If you feel you are doing well in life, you need to give back. It gives you self-worth, makes you feel good as a person. Maybe someday someone will help you.”

#### **The Gap**

94% of kids want  
to make the world  
a better place

yet

nearly half say community service  
and volunteering is ‘really boring’

Most youngsters report selflessness and altruism to be central to their own identity and to youth in general. For example, nearly 9 in 10 (87%) agree “helping others is part of who I am as a person” and 8 in 10 (80%) agree “it’s more important to do things for others than to worry about myself all the time.” A somewhat smaller – but still considerable – number (69%) agree “kids/teens care about the issues the world faces as much as adults do.” These attitudes are borne out in behavior, with over 3 in 4 (76%) of youngsters reporting that they volunteer or help out in their communities at least occasionally, and over 2 in 5 (43%) volunteering or helping out at least monthly.

However, while nearly all survey respondents see altruism as a goal, a small gap appeared in terms of respondents feeling empowered to make a difference. That is, 94% agree that “I would like to make the world a better place,” but only 86% agree that “I can make a difference in the world,” indicating that aspirations are sometimes greater than perceived impact (See Figure 7.1.)

Even so, youngsters recognize the unique contributions that they can provide to change efforts. Over 3 in 4 (77%) agree “sometimes kids/teens have a better understanding of how to fix the world’s problems than grown-ups do.”

## **Benefits and Barriers to Volunteerism**

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Youngsters report that intrinsic benefits of volunteerism are a far bigger driver of their involvement than are extrinsic benefits. In the words of a teen girl who participated in the focus groups, “I like volunteering because you feel good after. One time they had us clean the school up, plant flowers, and fix it up. I got dirty but I had fun. You feel good because you’re having fun and at the same time you’re helping the community.”

Indeed, the two most frequent responses to a question asking respondents why they volunteer or help out in their community are: “I have fun doing it” (65%) and “It makes me feel good inside” (63%) (See Figure 7.2.) Such meaningful, intrinsic benefits are far greater motivators of volunteerism than external benefits or requirements such as “It will look good on my college applications” (48%) or “My school requires it” (23%). In fact, half of youngsters (50%) agree “It’s not rewarding to volunteer or help out in the community if someone makes me do it.”

It’s also not rewarding for youngsters to serve their communities if they don’t have a good time while they are doing so. In the words of one teen boy, “I feel good about volunteering but it isn’t fun – I just feel like you need to do this.” Nearly half (46%) of survey respondents share his view, agreeing “Most community service and volunteer programs are really boring” (See Figure 7.3.) And when asked what might get them to volunteer more in their community, youngsters’ two most frequent responses are both ways to have a better time volunteering: “if my friends did it” (66%) and “if it were more fun” (57%) (See Figure 7.4.)

Surprisingly, despite the widespread perception that today’s youth are quite over-scheduled and pressed for time, time constraints do not appear to be a major impediment

to volunteering. Only 27% of young people say that they would help out more “if it didn’t take so much time.”

These findings emphasize the need for service opportunities that connect youth with fun, exciting activities that help them “do good” while having a good time. It seems that with more engaging Opportunities to Serve, today’s youngsters would fulfill their potential – and their desire – to make a difference in the world.

## ***Section VIII: Methodology***

### **Research Plan**

Just Kid Inc. and America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth undertook a two-stage process that first gathered qualitative data from youngsters in two communities, and then tested preliminary learnings among a nationally representative sample via a quantitative survey.

### **Research Stage 1: Formative Research**

Qualitative research provided an initial understanding of youngsters' feelings and needs regarding the Five Promises, which helped to design and shape the development of the questionnaire used to gather quantitative data. In many cases, questionnaire items were written using direct phrases from focus group participants. In addition, actual quotes from the qualitative research are used in this report to illustrate the numbers behind the quantitative survey.

Focus groups are a research technique that is conducive to an in-depth exploration of attitudes and feelings. In order to speak with youngsters representing a diverse range of opinions and experiences, four focus groups were conducted in two communities – Louisville, Kentucky, and Stamford, Connecticut – in January, 2005.<sup>2</sup> Participants were from various economic, ethnic and geographic backgrounds. Groups were 1 ½ - 2 hours long, allowing for an in-depth discussion about the Five Promises and a group exercise about defining success (see discussion guide in Appendix C.) Focus groups consisted of 7-8 youngsters per session. In Louisville, respondents were selected from a research facility database and were required to meet certain recruitment criteria. In Stamford, respondents were selected from local schools.

1. Louisville, KY – suburban/rural population, primarily White

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<sup>2</sup> Focus groups were moderated by Just Kid, Inc. staff member Jessica Weinstein.

- a. 12-13 year-old girls
- b. 16-17 year-old boys

Stamford, CT – urban/suburban population, mixed ethnicity

- c. 12-13 year-old boys
- d. 16-17 year-old girls

## **Research Stage 2: Quantitative Research**

The second step of the research process was a quantitative study. The main goal of this quantitative research was to explore youngsters' perceptions of the Five Promises among a national sample.

*Harris Interactive* fielded this nationally representative quantitative research survey through their online research panel. A stratified, random sample of the Harris Poll Online panel was invited through password-protected email to participate in the survey. Interviews were completed with 1278 United States respondents, ages 10-17. Interviews averaged 17 minutes in length and were conducted between February 3, 2005 and February 11, 2005.<sup>3</sup>

Data were weighted to reflect the general population of 10-17 year olds in the United States according to key demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity, parents' education, urbanicity, and region.) These variables were weighted to known parameters in the United States. The margin of error is plus or minus two percentage points when examining the entire sample, and is slightly higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

The questionnaire was designed by Just Kid Inc. in consultation with America's Promise, and all interpretation of the data reflected in this report was done by Just Kid Inc.

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<sup>3</sup> Although this survey presents the insights and attitudes about a sample that represents the general population of America, we recognize the need for more research focused on subsets of children, such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## Characteristics of the Sample

	%
<b>Grade</b>	
4	4
5	10
6	14
7	12
8	11
9	12
10	12
11	13
12	10
<b>Urbanicity of school</b>	
Urban	29
Rural	49
Suburban	23
<b>Type of school</b>	
Private/parochial	9
Public	86
Home-schooled	4
<b>Household composition</b>	
Two parents	74
Single parent	23
<b>Children in household</b>	
Only child	37
2 children	36
3 or more children	27

	%
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	51
Female	49
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White	58
African American	16
Hispanic	17
<b>Region</b>	
East	24
Midwest	23
South	30
West	24
<b>Highest parent education</b>	
High school or less	30
Some college/Associate's degree	30
4 year/Graduate degree	30
<b>Two-parent employment status</b>	
Both employed full-time	33
One full-time/One part-time	14
One full-time/One at home	21
<b>Religious service attendance</b>	
Attend frequently	56
Attend occasionally	24
Never attend	20

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Michelle P. Poris** is the Director of Quantitative Research at Just Kid Inc. Dr. Poris manages a wide variety of research studies to help corporations and non-profit entities understand the world through a child's eyes. This includes a broad range of national and international syndicated research designed to better understand kids' psychology, lifestyles, and consumer behavior as well as custom studies designed to explore specific categories and topics of interest for clients. Prior to joining Just Kid, Michelle was a Director at Yankelovich, where she oversaw the Yankelovich Youth MONITOR tracking study of kids' attitudes and values. Early in her career, Dr. Poris was a researcher at the Families and Work Institute, a non-profit organization that examines issues of child care, elder care, and work/personal life balance. Dr. Poris has presented research findings and youth trends to many top companies, organizations, and conferences, including the 2003 White House Conference, "Exploring the Digital Generation." Dr. Poris has a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Michigan, and a B.S. in Human Development from Cornell University.

**George Carey** is the President of Just Kid Inc. He founded JKI in 1993 as an integrated kids' marketing service agency offering new product development, advertising, promotional concept development, innovative kid research techniques and strategic consulting on the kids' market. In addition to his work with corporate clients, Mr. Carey has been intrigued with the concept of applying many of the same marketing tools that work in the private sector to efforts of the public sector. He has been deeply involved in the development and execution of numerous social marketing campaigns and research initiatives for a wide variety of foundations and government agencies. Mr. Carey has spoken extensively on "The Effective Marketing Principles of a Successful Kids' Product" at numerous kid marketing conferences around the world and is on several child marketing advisory boards. He has appeared on numerous national news programs, and has been quoted in many magazines and trade journals. Prior to creating Just Kid Inc., Mr. Carey was a Senior Vice President and Management Director at Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising.



## Addendum: Figures

Figure 2.1

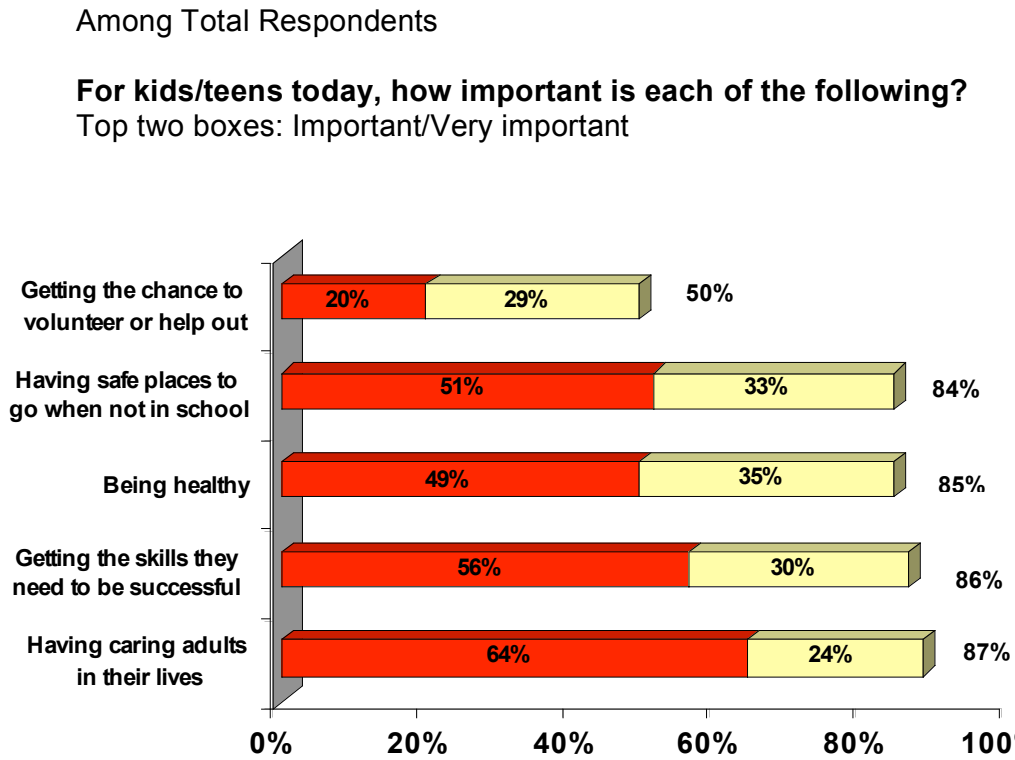


Figure 2.2

Among Total Respondents  
**Do you personally have enough of each of the following?**

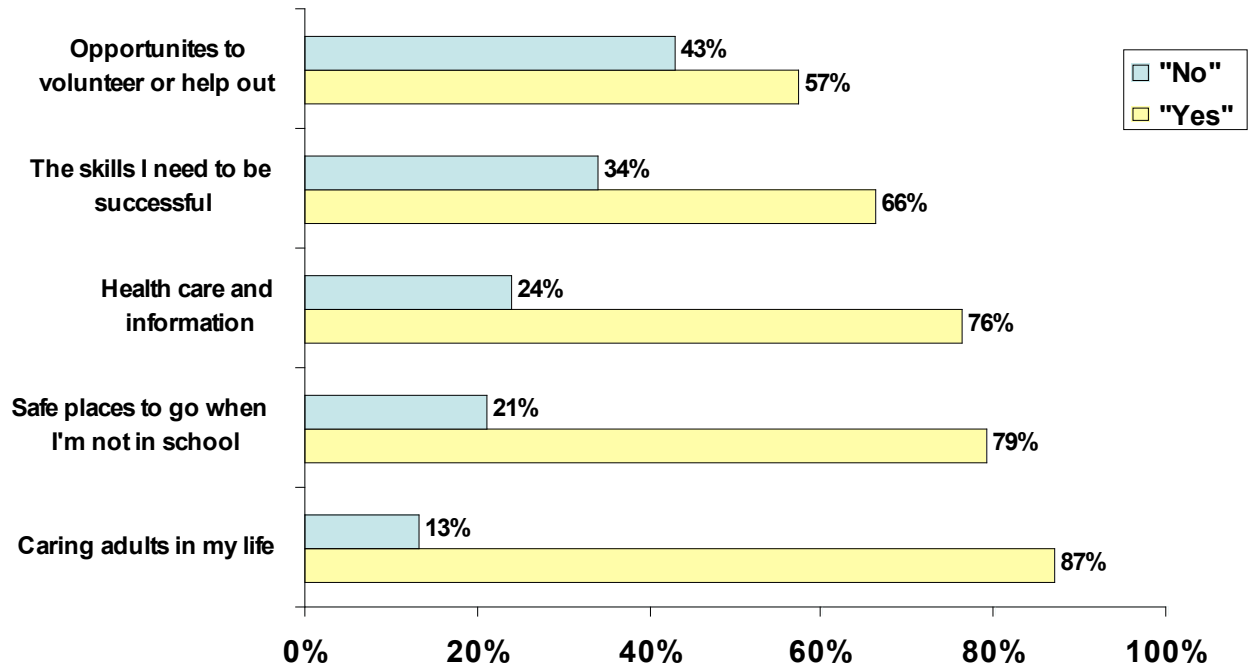


Figure 2.3

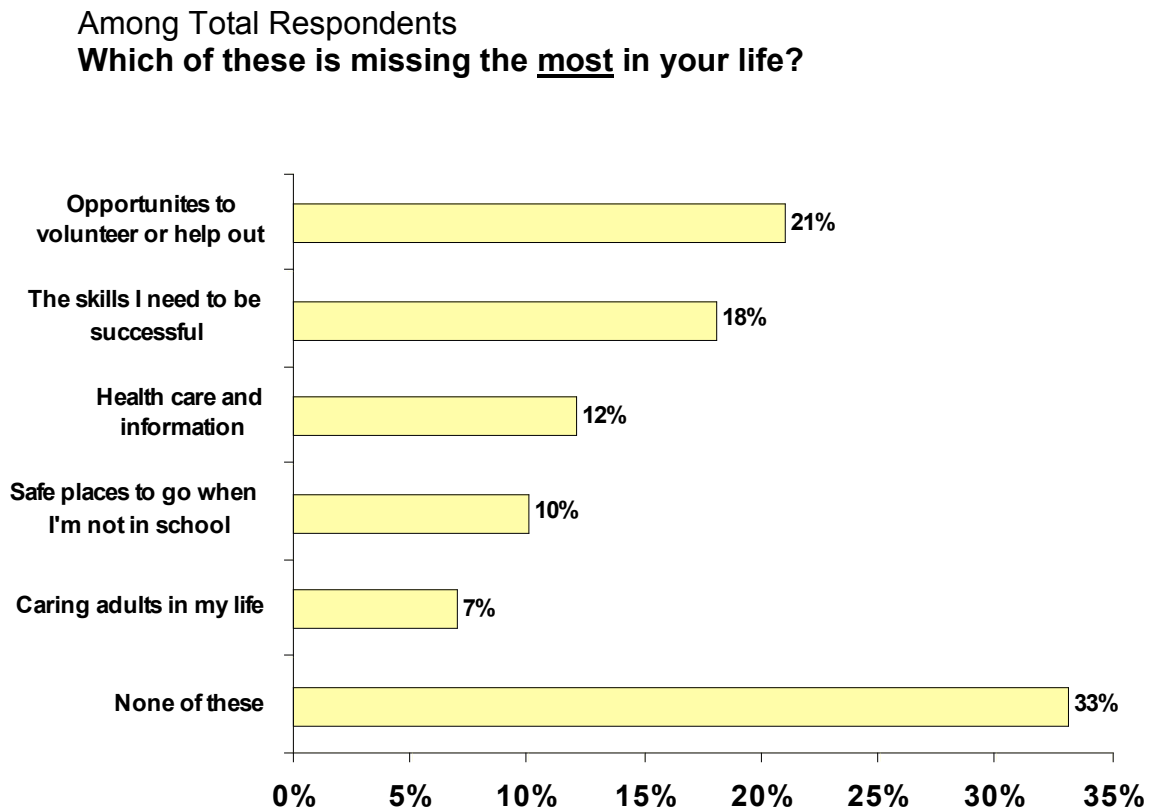


Figure 3.1

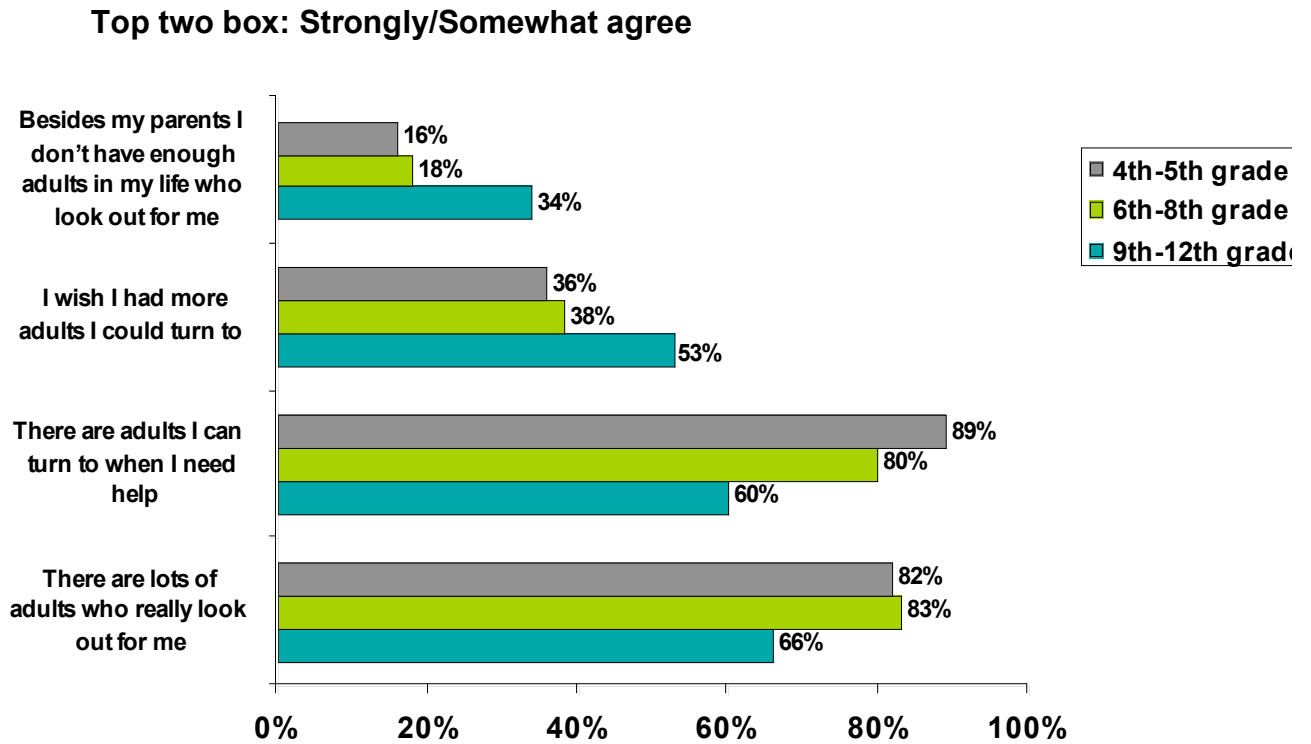


Figure 3.2

Among Total Respondents  
**When you need some advice or help, whom do you go to?**

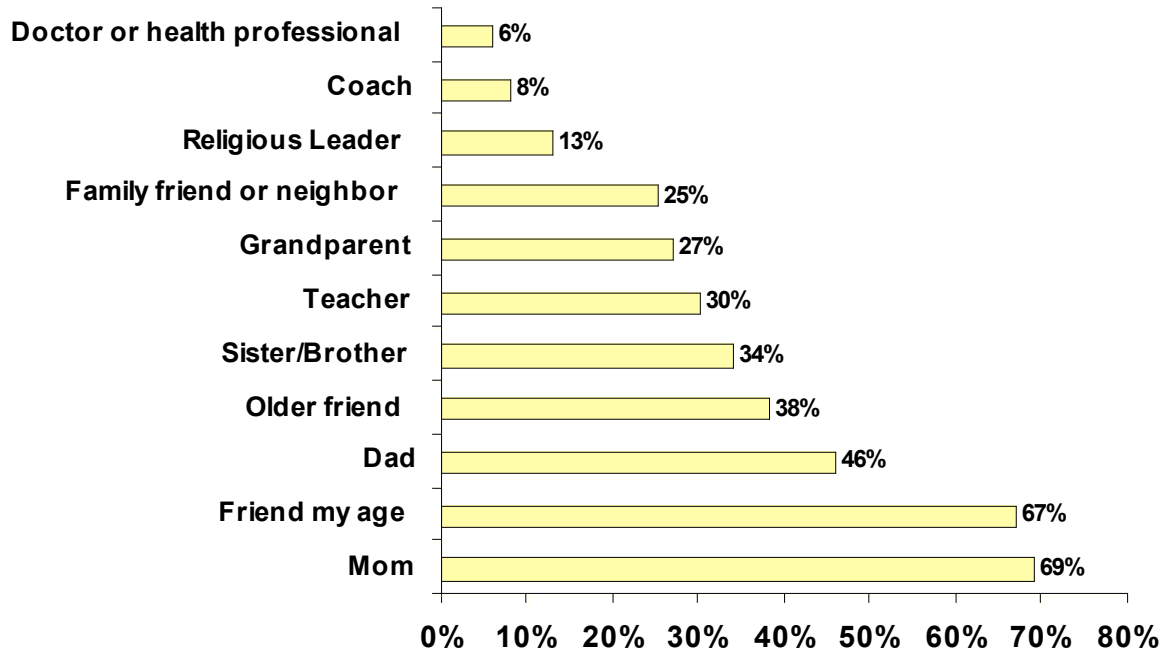


Figure 3.3

**When you need some advice or help, whom do you go to?**

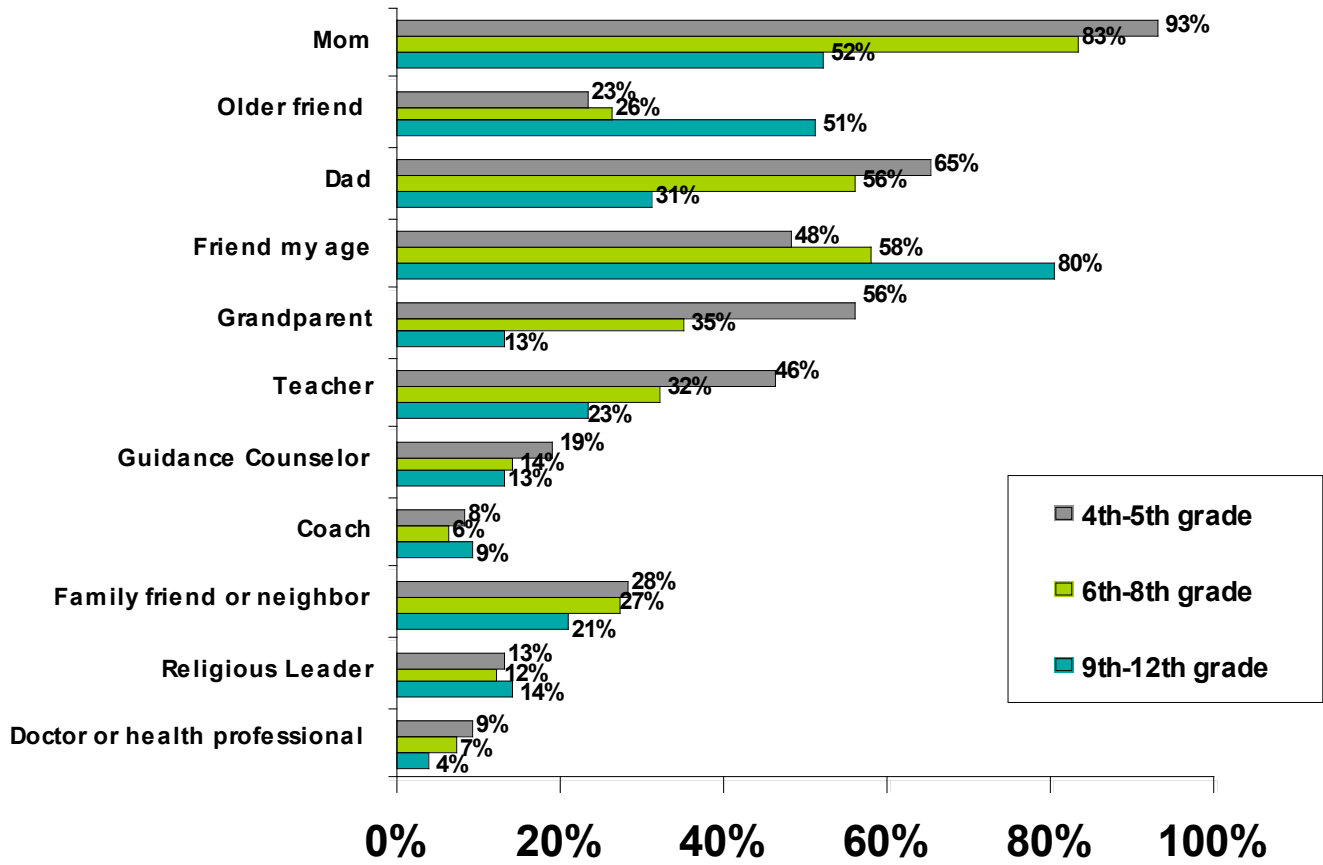


Figure 4.1

**Top two box: Strongly/Somewhat agree**

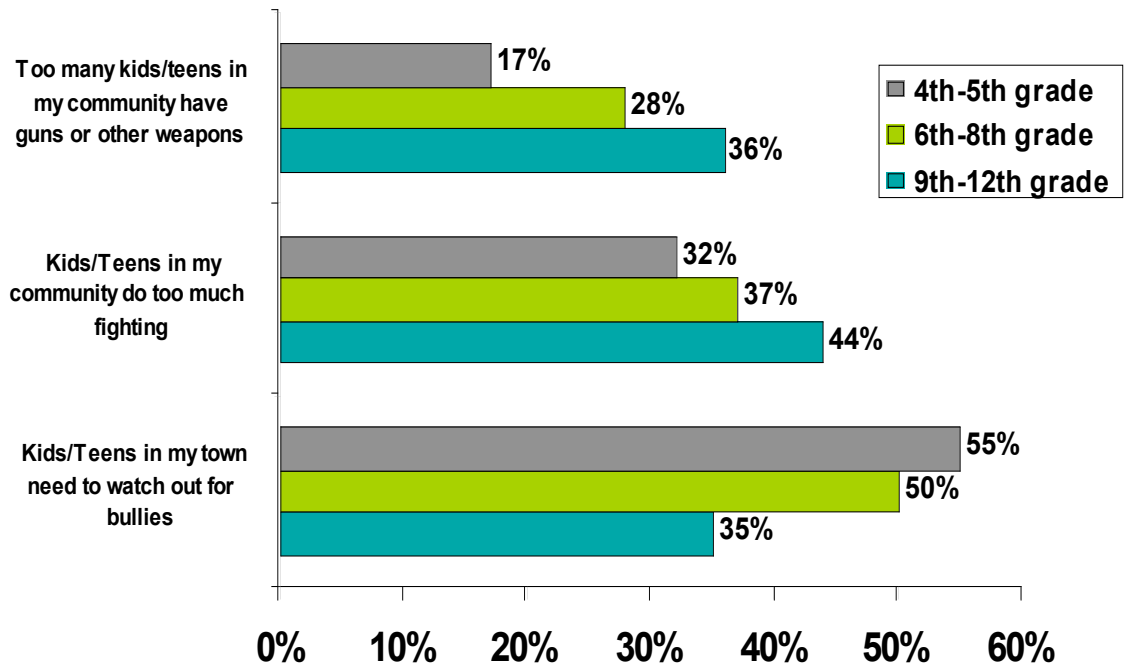


Figure 4.2

### How often do you do each of these after school?

% saying “all the time/sometimes”

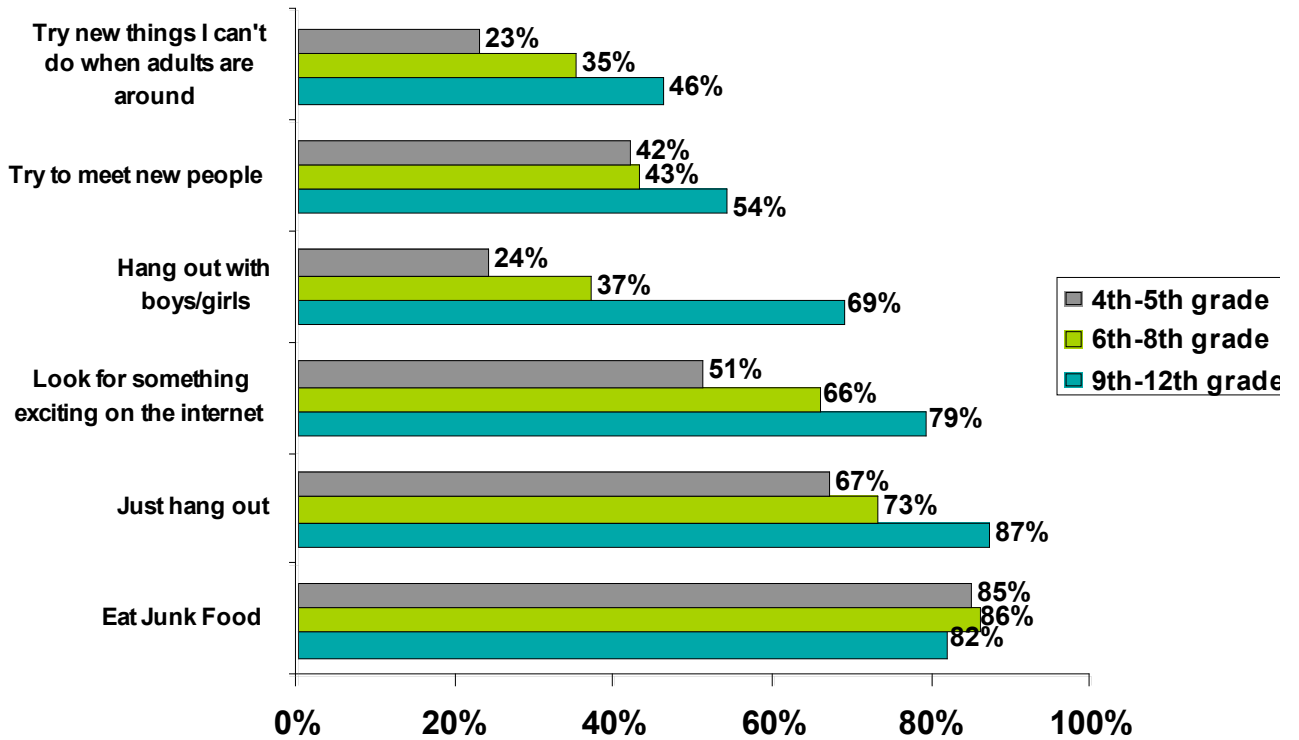




Figure 5.1

**Teens are more likely to recognize the need to pay attention to health – yet least likely to feel they’ve gotten a healthy start.**

Top two box: Strongly/Somewhat agree

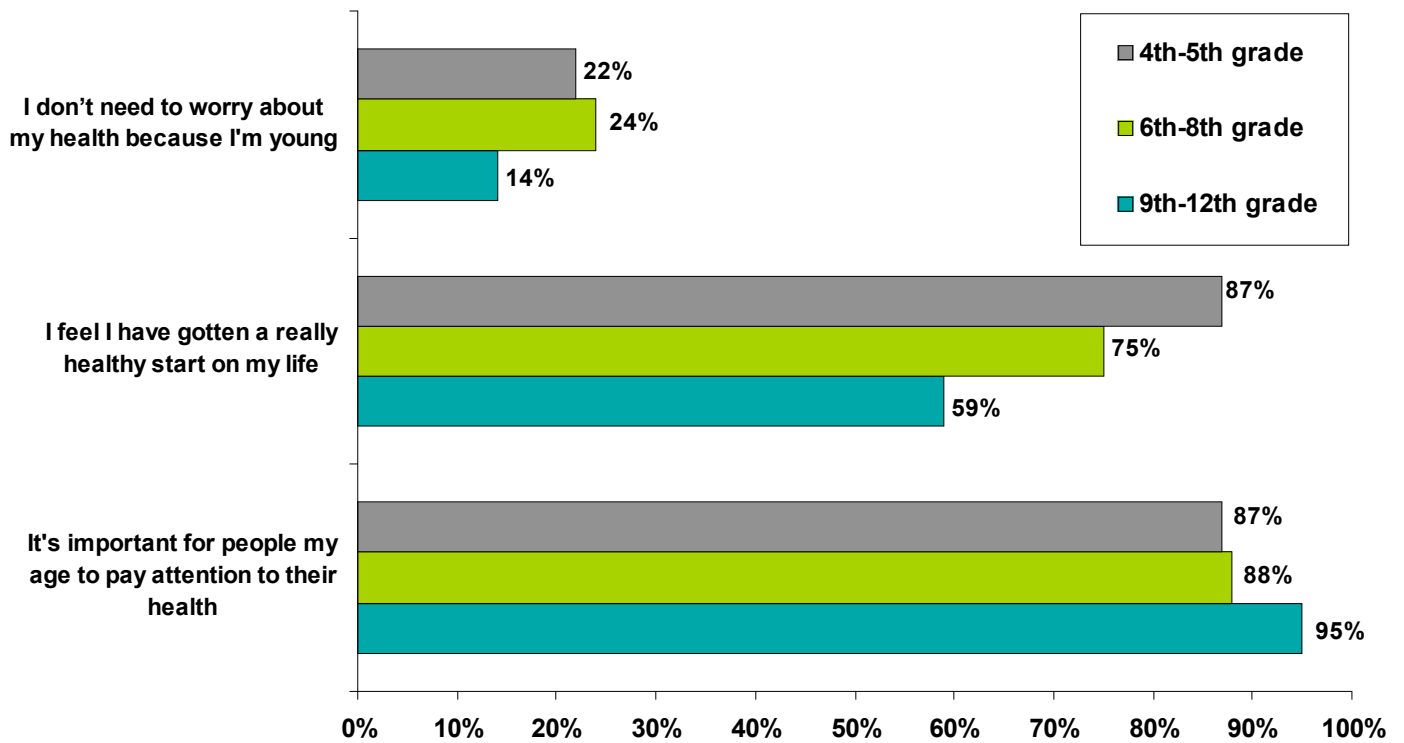


Figure 5.2

**Teens are more likely to suggest “Looking Good”, though most agree being healthy is about “Feeling Good.”**

**Which one of the following do you think is a bigger benefit of being healthy?**

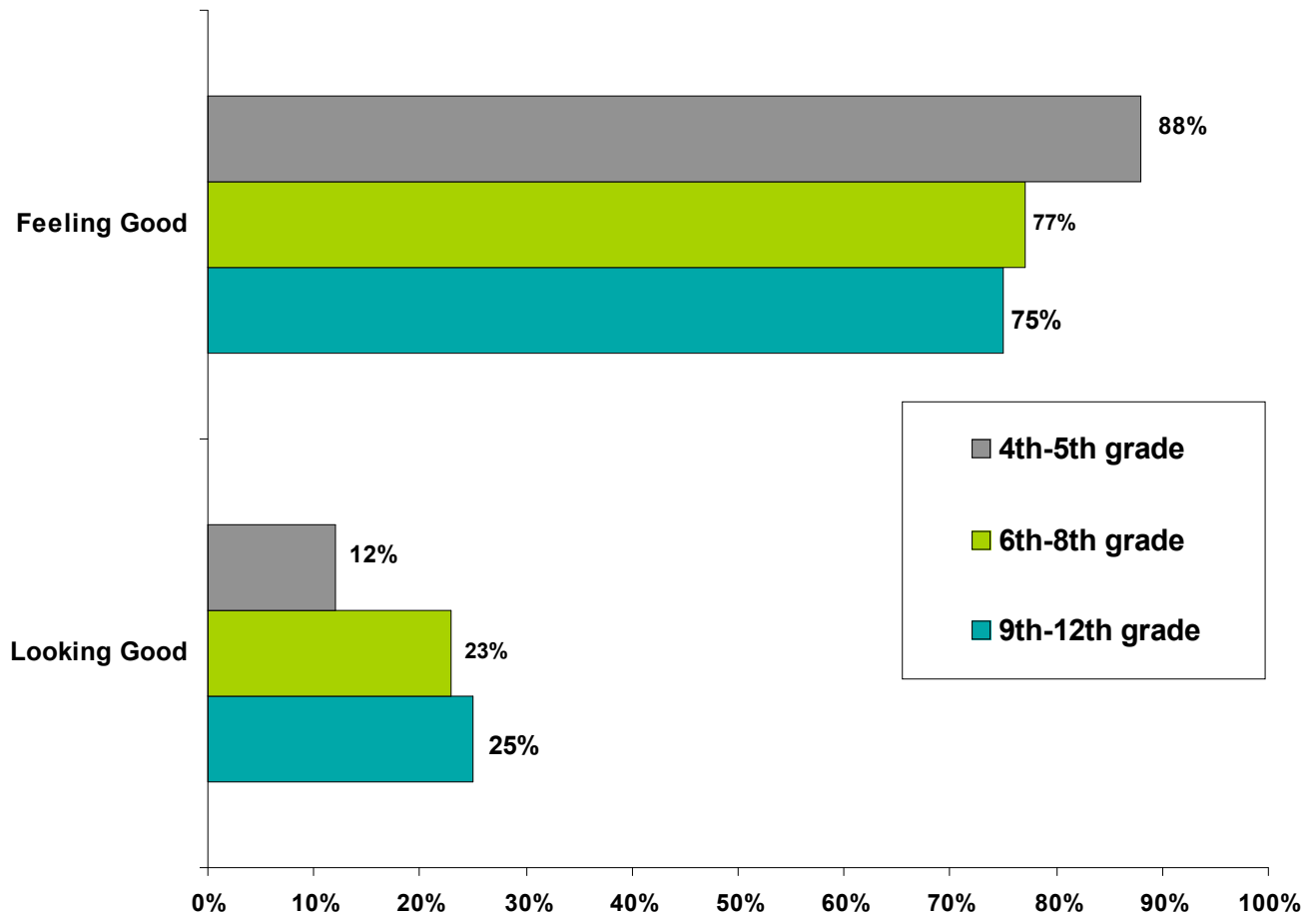


Figure 5.3

**Teens experience more stress and engage in more risky health behavior**

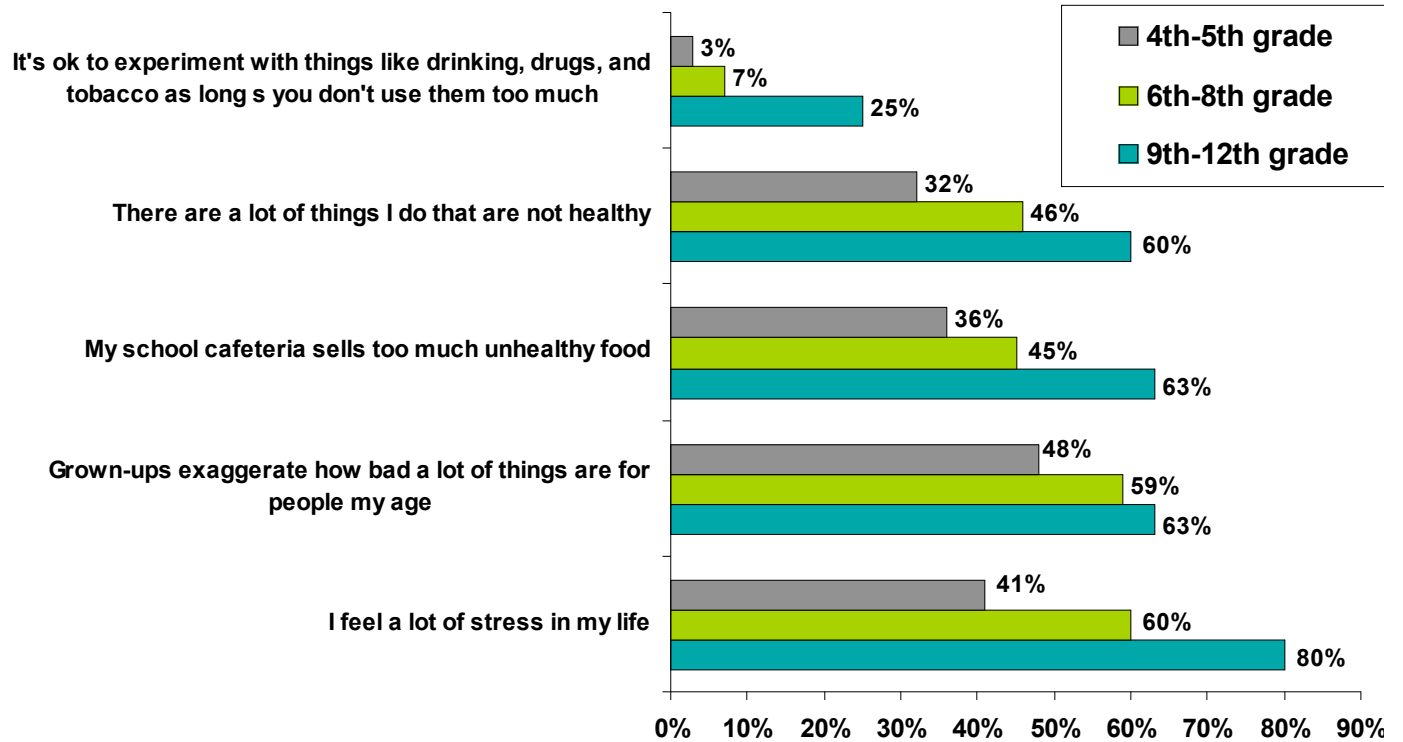


Figure 5.4

Among Total Respondents:

**In your community, do kids/teens put a lot of pressure on other kids/teens to...?**

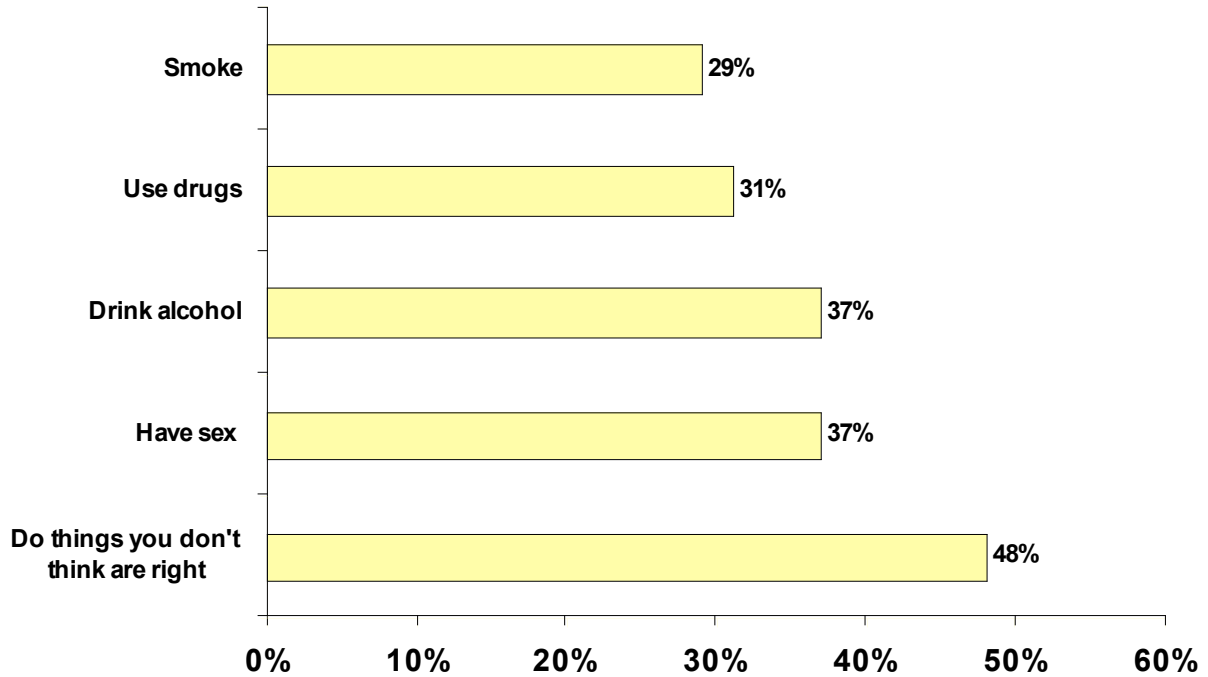


Figure 5.5

Among Total Respondents:

**What kinds of health topics do you need more information about?**

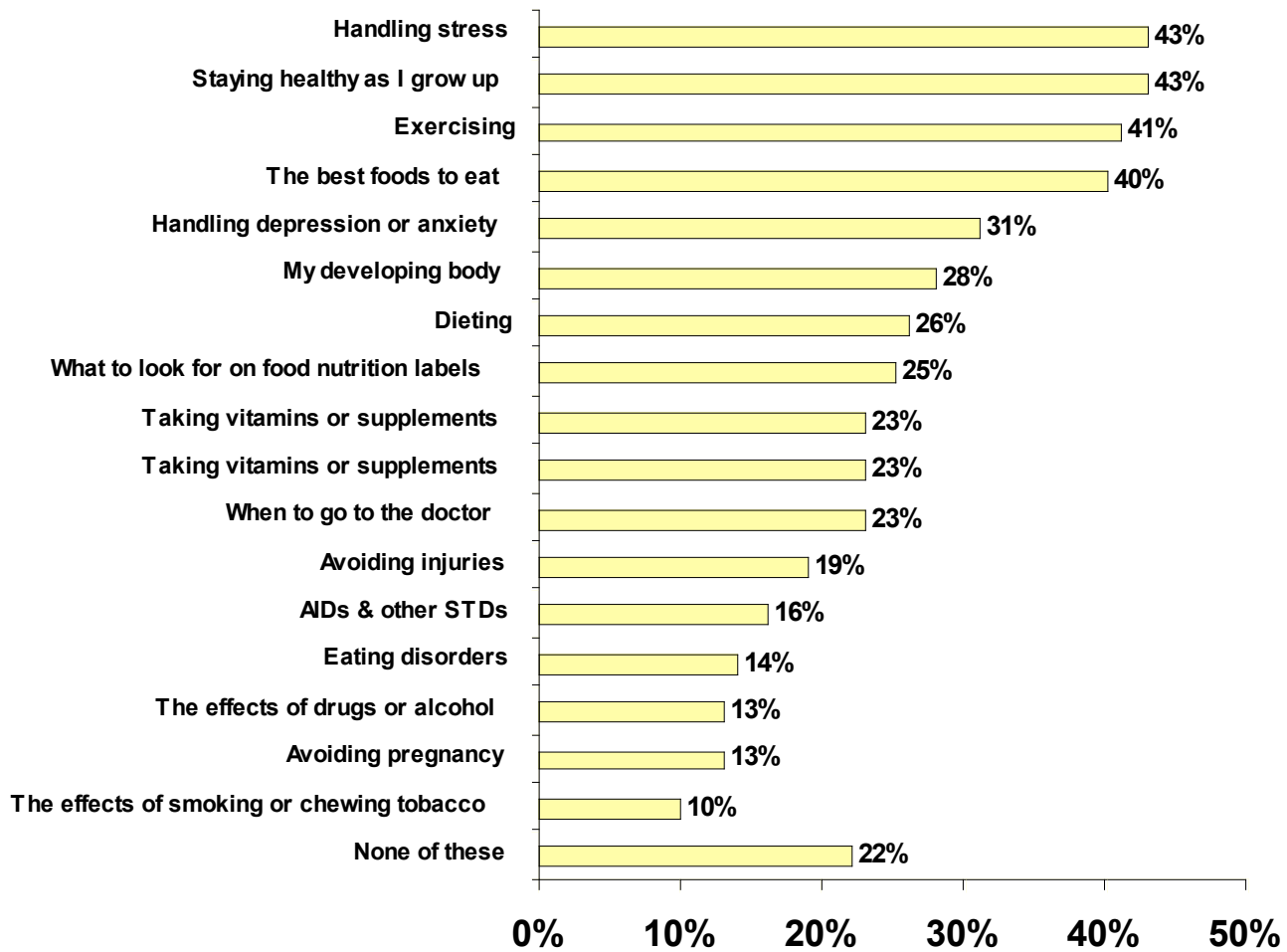


Figure 6.1

**The American Dream is alive and well for today's generation of kids.**

Strongly/somewhat agree:	<u>Total Kids</u>
I have goals that I want to reach in my life	95%
My success depends on how hard I work	92%
I'm confident that I'll be able to find a good-paying job when I'm an adult	88%
I am learning skills now that will help me be successful in life	87%
In America, kids can grow up to become anything they want	80%
I'm looking forward to being on my own	76%
I wish I had a chance to see how people work in the real world	71%
You don't have to go to college to be successful	45%
I don't know if I'll be able to reach my goals	42%

Figure 6.2

**Younger kids are especially optimistic about hard work and a successful future; Teens are especially eager to be on their own.**

Top two box: Strongly/Somewhat agree

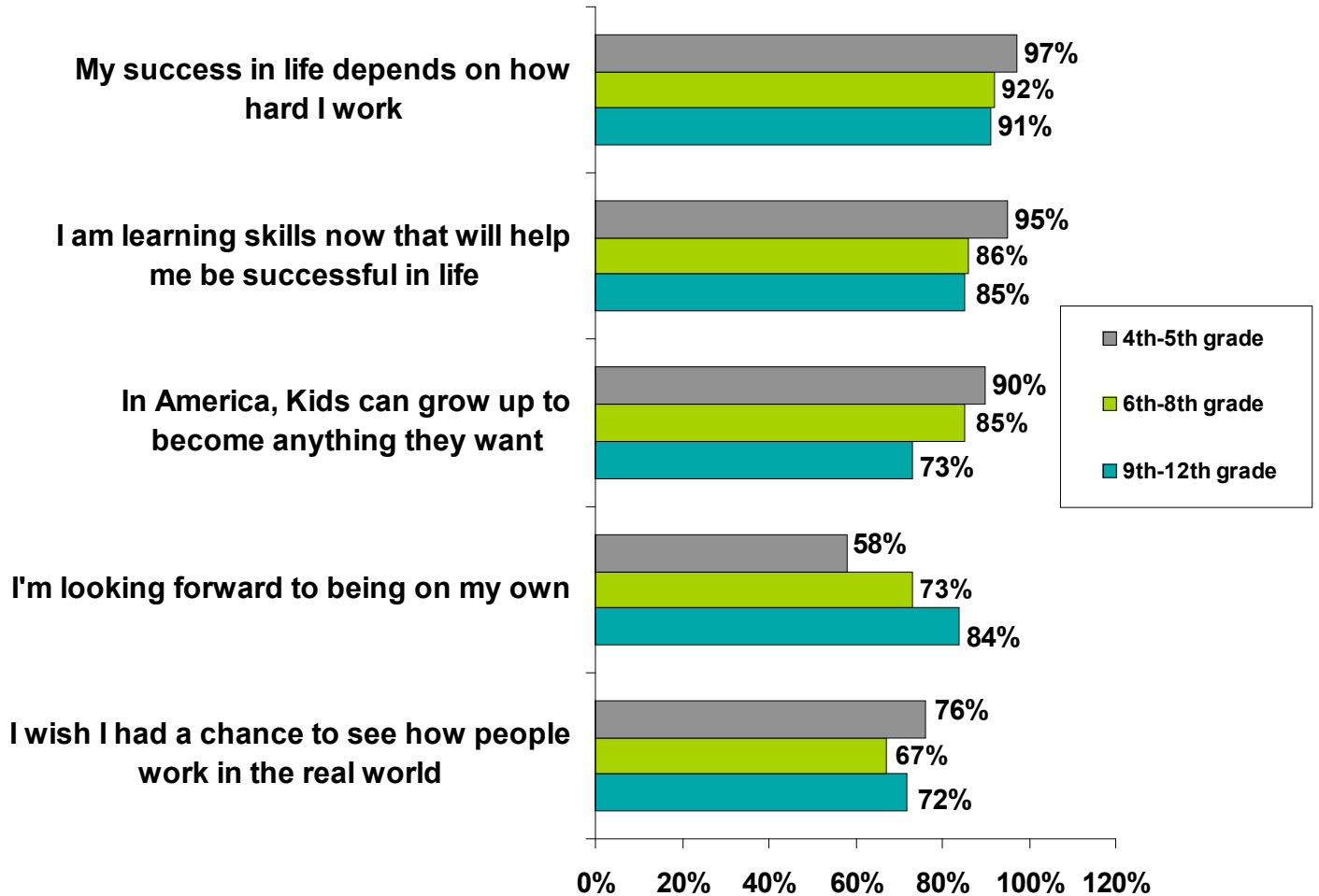


Figure 6.3

Among Total Respondents:

**Which of these skills do you personally need more experience with to become successful in life?**

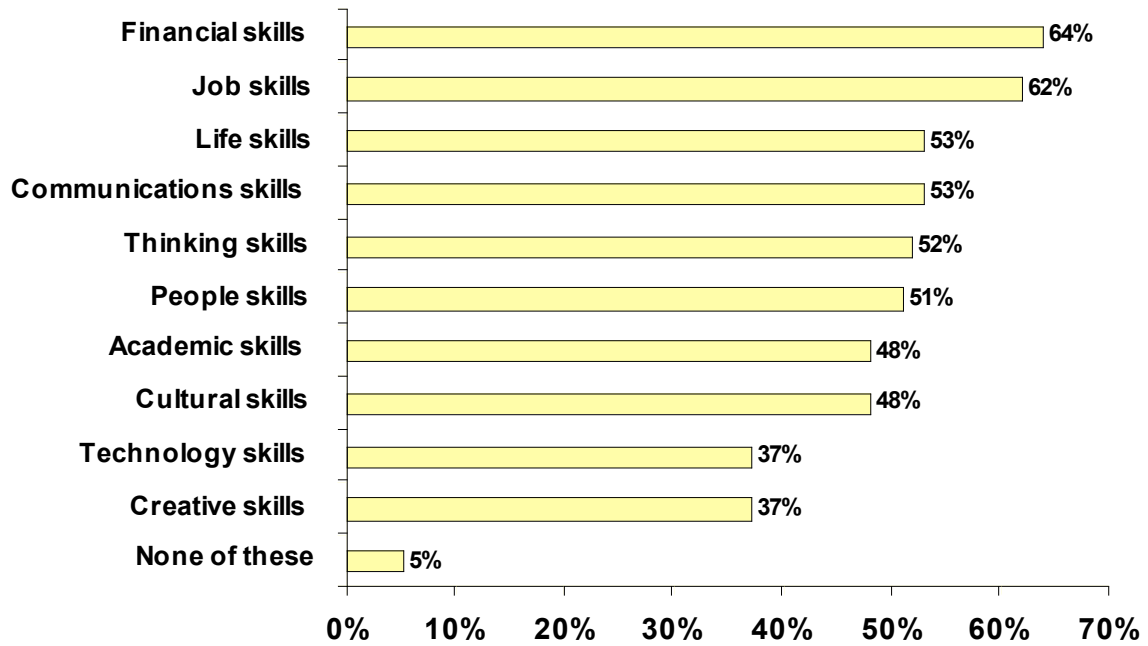




Figure 6.4

Among Total Respondents:

**Which 3 of the following are doing the best job teaching you the skills you will need to be successful in life?**

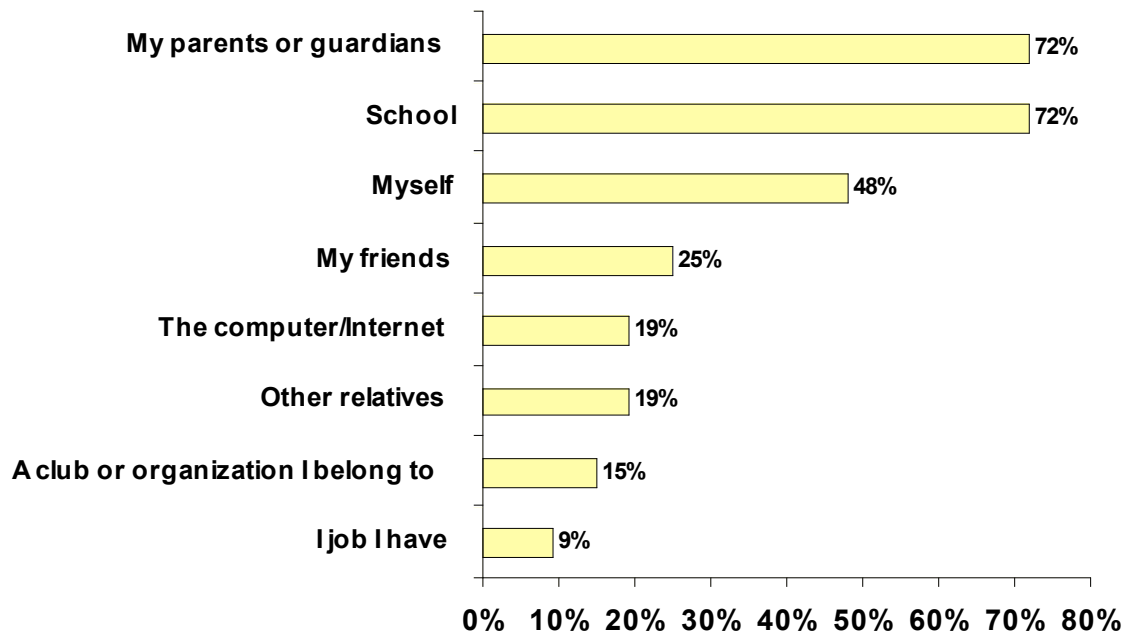


Figure 6.5

**Which 3 of the following are doing the best job teaching you the skills you will need to be successful in life?**

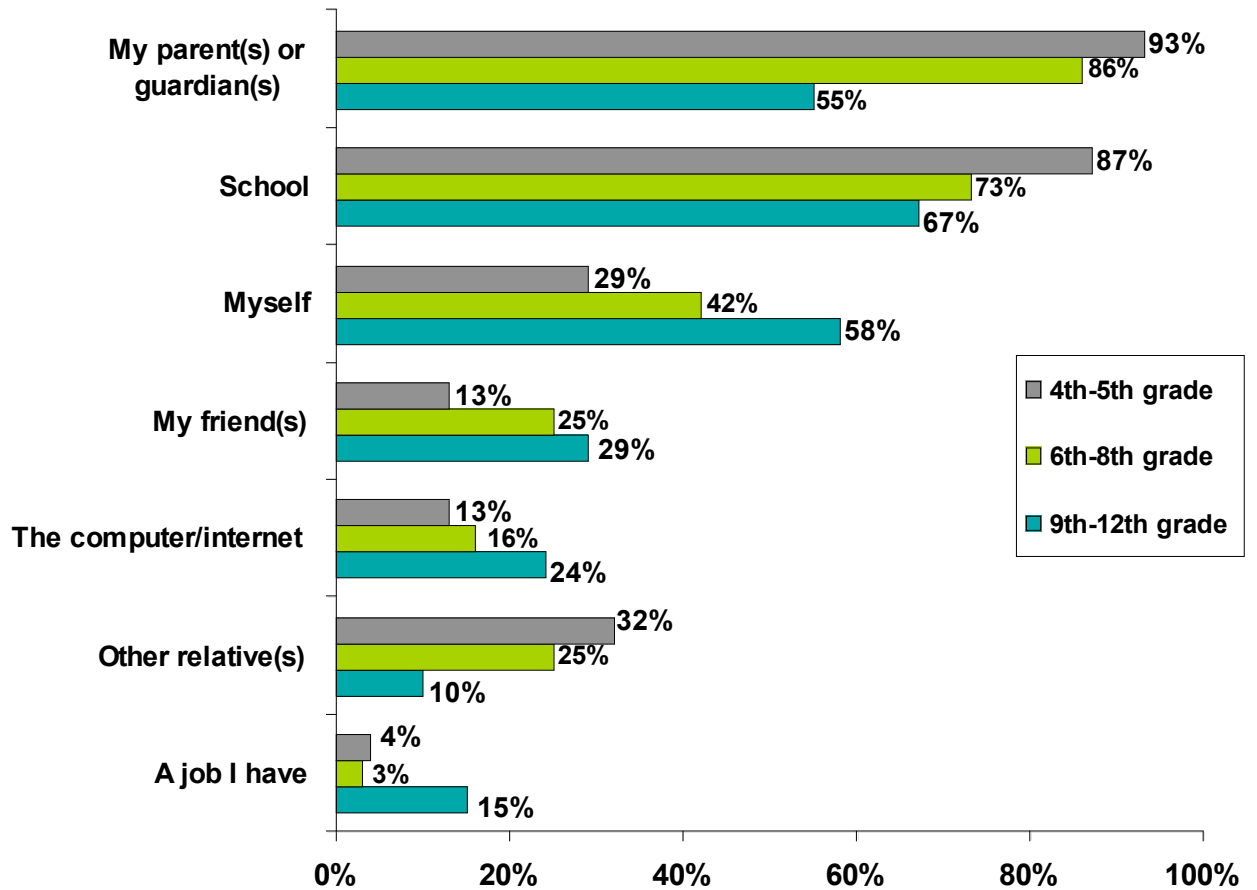
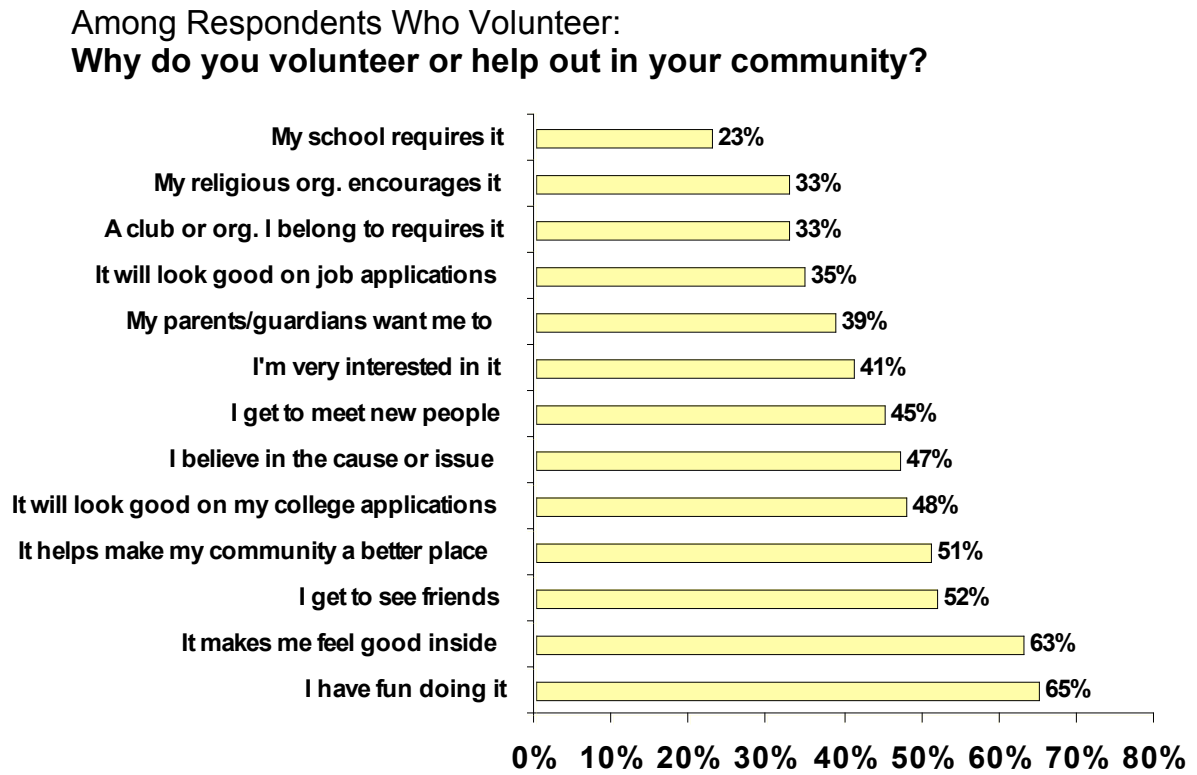


Figure 7.1

**Kids clearly say they are committed to altruism**

Strongly/somewhat agree:	<u>Total Kids</u>
I would like to help make the world a better place	94%
Helping others is part of who I am as a person	87%
I can make a difference in the world	86%
It's more important to do things for others than to worry about myself all the time	87%
Sometimes kids/teens have a better understanding of how to fix the world's problems than grown-ups do	77%
Kids/teens care about the issues the world faces as much as adults do	69%
It's not rewarding to volunteer or help out in the community if someone makes me do it	50%
Most community service and volunteer programs are really boring	46%

Figure 7.2



Insert 7.3

**Middle schoolers find volunteer programs especially boring; Compared to younger kids, teens want to do things on their terms.**

Top two box: Strongly/Somewhat agree:

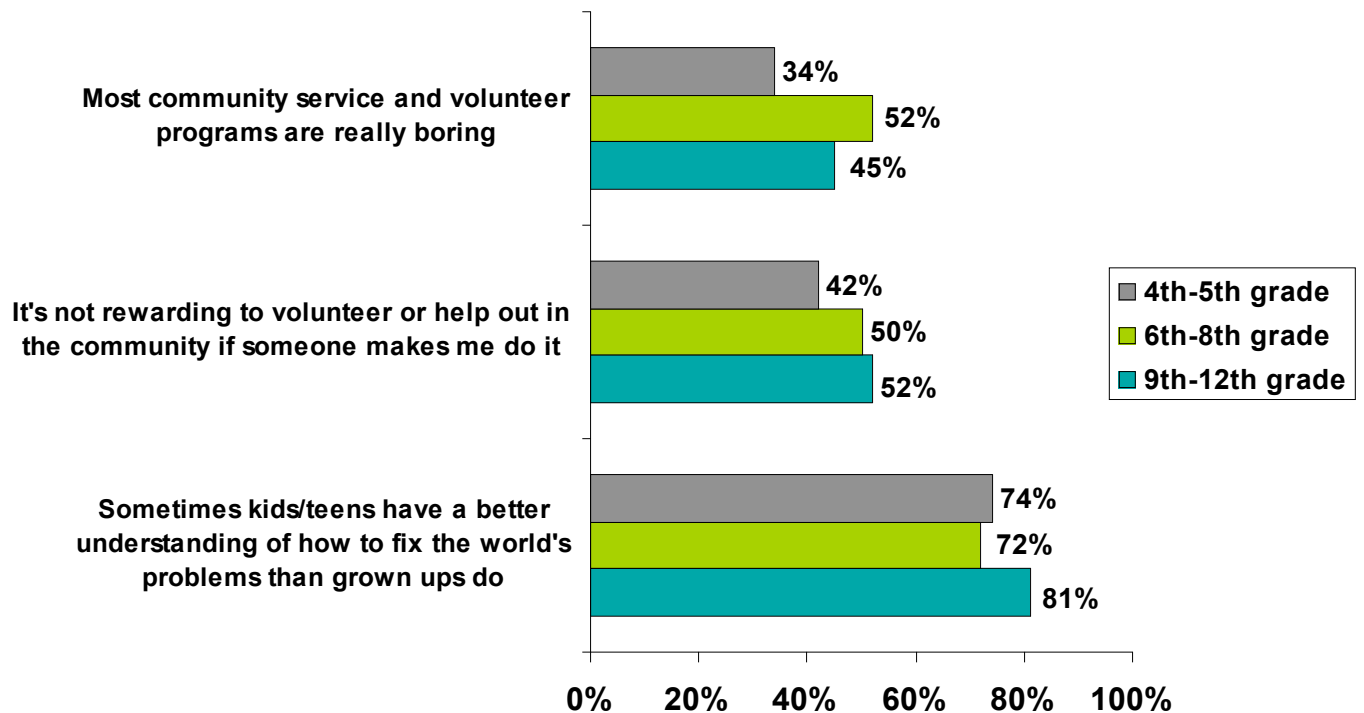


Figure 7.4

Among Total Respondents:  
**Which of the following would get you to help out or volunteer more in your community?**

