

The 21st Century Teen: Public Perception and Teen Reality

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Introduction

Teenagers...what images and words come to mind? If you are like most Americans, the first thoughts will be negative: wild, irresponsible, immoral, violent. For generations Americans have complained about young people, but today the intensity of concern and the level of fear seems deeper than the “when I was young” lessons of our grandparents. Events such as Littleton and Jonesboro are shared national experiences that fuel these deep concerns.

Much of the public’s critique of teens revolves around parents’ perceived inability to be involved with their children and teach them the right values. It is not just the elderly who question the lack of values they see in our youth; parents of teenagers share the same concerns. Teens seem vulnerable to strong external forces: drugs, alcohol, violence, sex, and the media. Without the right values to immunize them from negative influences, teens could fall victim to these pressures.

The public would say that teens are succumbing to these pressures, and absent parents are to blame. But teens and their parents suggest a very different picture of their personal experiences. They report strong teen-parent relationships built on a solid foundation of parental involvement and guidance. Most teens say they highly value honesty and hard work, and are engaged in positive activities such as church and volunteer work. The biggest stresses most of them feel are the pressures to do well in school and get into college.

While the public’s concerns are perhaps exaggerated, they are not unfounded. Too many teens are engaged in dangerous behavior: close to half of 15-17 year olds have had sex; one-fifth see drugs, alcohol and teen pregnancy as a very serious problem for their close circle of friends; and one-fifth know a student who has brought a gun to school.

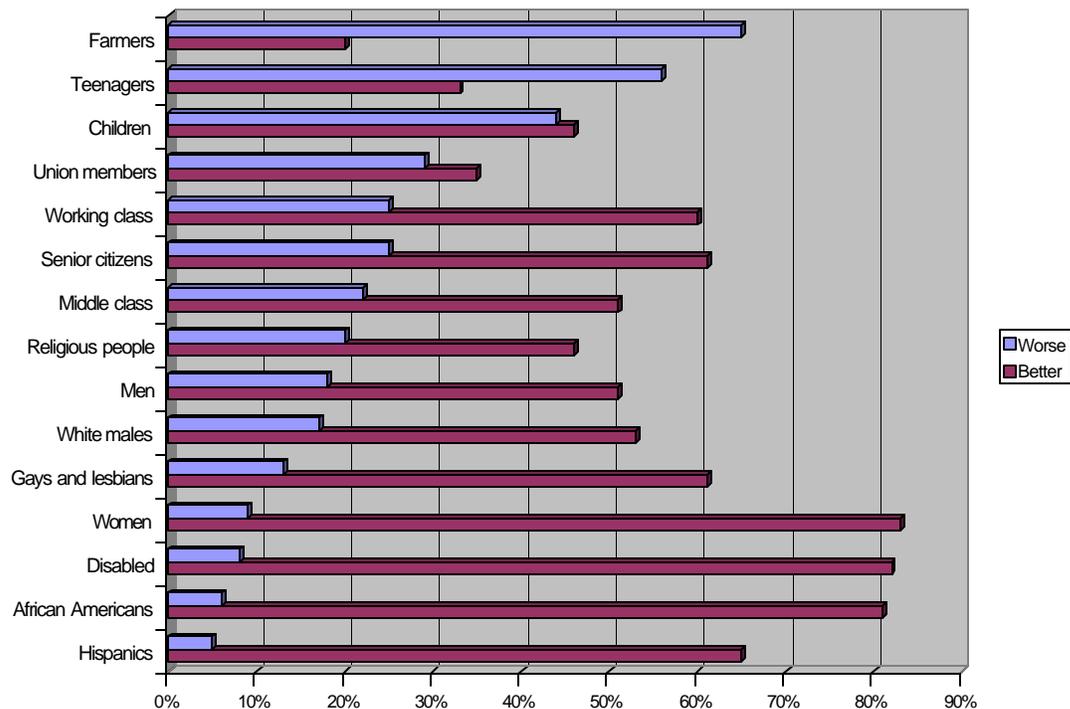
The following report outlines some of the central underpinnings of public opinion regarding teenagers. The first section provides the context or backdrop for public opinion about teenagers: the current mood of the public, their questions about teen values and morals compared to teens’ reported values and experiences, the top problems teens face according to teens, parents, and educators, and parents’ relationship with their teenager. The second section provides greater detail on public opinion in six areas: education, sex, substance abuse, violence, the influence of the media, and juvenile justice.

The Current Environment for Youth

As we begin a new millennium, the mood of the nation is optimistic. Most public opinion polls show high consumer confidence, strong satisfaction with the country, and a belief that the nation is on the right track. At the same time, people are very worried about the nation's youth. "Education" has been consistently ranked as the top issue facing the nation, and the few polls that ask about children and families show a high level of concern for them. With events like Littleton and Jonesboro closing out the century, teens in particular, seem to be in desperate trouble.

As Americans look back on the century, they note that most people in the country are better off today than even in the nostalgic 1950s. However, there are a few for whom life has worsened, with teenagers near the top of the list. People have deep concerns about the status of teens and children, because they fear their lives have become more difficult and troubled than past generations.

Has life gotten better or worse for them since 1950?



Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Assoc., 1546 adults nationwide, April 6 - May 6, 1999.

Furthermore, there is a perceived value divide between adults and younger people. Ask the public for the words that come to mind when they think of teens, and three-quarters (71%) respond with negative descriptions, such as “rude,” “wild,” or “irresponsible.”¹ More adults rate “not learning values like honesty, respect, and responsibility” as a serious problem for kids than drug and alcohol abuse (33% of white adults and 31% of minority adults rate values as a serious problem, compared to 23% and 29% for drugs).²

Only 16% of Americans say that “young people under the age of 30 share most of their moral and ethical values.” This response puts young adults’ values only above homosexuals, welfare recipients, and rich people. Young adults fare better if “shares some values” is included in the comparison.

% Rating Individuals and Groups as Sharing “Your Moral and Ethical Values”³			
	Share Most Values	Share Some Values	Most+ Some
Older Americans	55	37	92
Whites	27	61	88
Blacks or African Americans	21	62	83
Poor people	27	55	82
Baby Boomers	25	49	74
The Democratic Party	21	47	68
<i>Young people under the age of 30</i>	16	52	68
The Republican Party	20	47	67
Immigrants	17	49	66
Hillary Clinton	26	39	65
Al Gore	21	44	65
Rich people	11	50	61
Members of politically conservative religious groups like the Christian Coalition	25	35	60
Bill Clinton	19	40	59
People on welfare	7	49	56
Newt Gingrich	12	38	50
Homosexuals	6	29	35

While some would say that people have always questioned the morals of teenagers, there is evidence that this view is more widely shared today than in past years.

Adults have questioned teens' values for generations and there is certainly a wealth of public opinion data that looks like generational griping. For example, in 1989, adults were asked to compare the youth of the 1980s to teenagers twenty years prior, and adults responded that "today's youth" were much more selfish, materialistic, and reckless than a generation before.

Word apply more to young people in their teens and 20s today, or young people in that same age group 20 years ago?⁴		
	Today	20 Years Ago
Selfish	81	6
Materialistic	79	15
Reckless	73	14
Conformist	42	41
Idealistic	38	49
Patriotic	24	65

A decade earlier, in 1976, only 24% said they had a great deal of confidence in teens "facing up to their own and the country's problems in a responsible way."⁵ Going back one more decade, in 1965, when asked the open-end question "in what ways would you say teenagers are different today than when you were a teenager" overwhelmingly the top response (41%) was "more irresponsible, too wild today, drink too much, more independent, less restricted, freer in actions."⁶ Two-thirds (64%) thought the "teenagers of today (1965) have different attitudes about sex than when you were a teenager."⁷ Even as far back as 1946, 43% felt teenagers were behaving worse than when they were in their teens.⁸

The image of immorality baby boomers created as teens in the 60s and 70s has carried over into their adulthood. When asked how coming "of age in the 60s and 70s at a time of greater sexual freedom, drug use, and social protest" affected the parenting skills of today's parents of teens, the public said it hurt. Forty-three percent think those experiences made them "worse parents because they are less able to provide firm guidance to help teens develop a strong moral base." One-third (32%) think it made them "better parents because they are more sensitive to the problems and temptations of today's teens."⁹

Even simple things can cause people to feel negatively about teens. Fully 89% said it would bother them to hear a teenager use curse or swear words as part of their regular conversation, 68% said it would bother them a great deal.¹⁰

While there is certainly evidence that "teen morals" are an enduring complaint across generations, there has been a significant shift in opinion. The proportion of Americans

who believe that young people today do not have “as strong a sense of right and wrong as they did, say, fifty years ago” has shifted from a minority opinion in the 1950s, to an overwhelming majority today. Today, fully 82% believe that young people do not have as strong a sense of right and wrong, while only 15% believe they do.¹¹ When asked in 1965, the public was divided with 46% saying they do not have as strong a sense of right and wrong, and 41% saying they do.¹² In the prior decade, 1952, a strong majority (57%) believed young people had a strong sense of right and wrong, while only 34% felt they did not.¹³ The definition of right and wrong may be more driven by crime and violence than by sex or drugs. For those people who think life has gotten worse than in the 1950s (30%), the top reason for that view is increased crime and violence (44%) followed by decline in morals (19%) and drugs (10%) with all other responses in the single digits.¹⁴

People are optimistic that teens in trouble can be turned around, but they also believe a child’s core personality is determined in elementary school.

Fully 85% of Americans believe that it is not too late to change the behavior of 16 or 17 year olds with emotional and behavioral problems. Importantly, both parents and non-parents agree at the same level.¹⁵ However, this does not mean that they see teens as completely malleable in values or personality. A majority believes that grade school has more influence than high school on the kind of person a child will be when grown (57% point to grade school, 27% high school).¹⁶

While adults have serious reservations about American youth, the reality is that teens place high value on honesty and hard work, and the vast majority are thinking and planning seriously for the future.

Teens place the most importance on the values of “being honest” (8.6 on a 10 point scale), “working hard” (8.4), “being a good student” (7.9), and “giving time to helping others” (7.6%). However, they believe those are not the same values their peers share. When asked what qualities are important to being admired and popular, “having lots of friends” was at the top (7.6), followed by “being honest” (7.2), and “being a great athlete” (6.9).¹⁷

Teens care about their future and spend a significant amount of time planning for it. Fully 84% of high school students plan to attend a four-year college.¹⁸ Three-quarters (78%) say they have spent at least a “fair amount of time” thinking about their life after high school, and 84% have thought at least “fairly seriously” about the type of career they would like to pursue. They believe “when it comes to setting goals, it’s better to aim high and have big ambitions so that you challenge yourself” (79%), rather than “play it safe and not set your sights too high so that you’re not disappointed” (19%). Three-quarters (76%) believe “the future looks promising because I feel pretty confident that things will work out for me” while 21% are “worried about the future because I’m not sure how well things will work out for me.”¹⁹ Lastly, if they could choose one title for themselves under their senior class picture, a majority would choose “most likely to succeed” (54%).²⁰

Furthermore, most teens are engaged in positive activities and have a good outlook on life.

Majorities of teens volunteer, go to church weekly, read the newspaper and attend cultural events.

Activities Among Teens²¹

Have attended a cultural event or visited a museum in the past year	74%
Took algebra in the eighth grade	61%
Read the newspaper twice a week or more	58%
Go to church or synagogue once a week or more	55%
Participate in an after-school activity other than sports	54%
Volunteer for a community organization	52%
Have had a teacher who changed your life	49%
Currently work ten hours a week or more at a paying job	45%
Received at least one varsity letter	40%

Emotionally, most students feel happy and confident most of the time. A majority say they feel happy (75%), cared about (79%), confident (65%), motivated (52%) and fortunate (60%) “most of the time.” The negative emotions they feel are bored (23% most of the time, 34% some of the time), worried (14%, 34%), and angry (7%, 30%). A majority almost never feels lonely (53%) or depressed (50%).²²

Top Problems

Teens and their parents agree on the top problems teens face: drugs, social pressures, crime and violence.

Both teens and their parents place the same emphasis on drugs (23% of teens and 21% of parents of teens volunteer “drugs” when asked for the most important problems facing teenagers). Parents place much more emphasis than teens on social pressures (29% of parents, 18% of teens), while teens put slightly more emphasis on crime and violence (18% of teens point to crime and violence either in school or generally, compared to 12% of parents).

What Teens and their Parents See as the Most Important Problems Facing Teenagers (Open-end)²³		
	Teens	Parents of Teens
Drugs	23	21
Social pressures/popularity/fitting in	18	29
Crime and violence in school	13	8
Doing well in school	6	5
Other crime and violence	5	4
Sexual issues	3	3
Getting into college	2	1
Jobs/economic opportunity	1	1
Getting along with parents/problems at home	1	2
Lack of money	1	-
Lack of a quality education	1	2
Declining moral standards/immorality	1	5
Lack of religion/spirituality	-	1
Other	11	12
Don't know	16	6

As will be outlined later in this report, when asked to rate the severity of multiple problems, drugs drops in priority.

Crime and violence leapt into the top concerns for teens in 1999, even as crime as dropped as a concern for the nation overall.

Comparing open-end questions asked of teens in the summer of 1998 and 1999 indicates that crime and violence jumped from less than ten percent of mentions in 1998,²⁴ to 18% of mentions in 1999.²⁵ When asked for their top concern, crime and violence increased from 30% listing it as their top concern in 1998 to 40% in Spring 1999.²⁶

This rising concern among teens is occurring even as concern about crime generally is on a downward trend. Nearly half of Americans (48%) say there is less crime in their local area compared to the year prior – the highest this response has been since Gallup first

started asking the question in 1972. One-third (35%) believe there is less crime in the United States compared to the year prior – the highest since Gallup first started asking this question in 1989.²⁷

While teens and their parents point to the same areas of concern, teens and educators point to different problems. Teens point to drugs, but educators point to problems at home. In rating a series of pressures, teens point to getting good grades and college as their biggest pressures.

Teachers and school principals believe the top problem facing teenagers is getting along with their parents or other problems at home while less than two percent of teens mention home as a problem. Teens’ top-mentioned problem, drugs, is third in educators’ priority. Interestingly, younger and older teens respond similarly except in one area. Older teens are significantly more likely to point to sexual issues as a problem teens face.

What Teens and Secondary School Teachers and Principals See as the Most Important Problems Facing Teenagers (Open-end)²⁸				
	Teens 12-14	Teens 15-17	Teachers	Principals
Drugs	29	28	18	18
Social pressures	18	14	20	20
Crime and violence in school	6	4	4	2
Doing well in school	9	7	5	6
Other crime and violence	4	4	4	3
Sexual issues	4	10	2	1
Getting into college	2	4	1	1
Jobs/economic opportunity	1	2	3	5
Getting along w/ parents/home problems	1	2	24	27
The quality of education	-	-	4	3
Declining moral standards/immorality	-	-	9	7
Other	9	14	4	3
Don't know	17	12	3	2

When they think about their close group of friends, teens are most likely to see “drugs and alcohol” as a “very serious problem” for them (23%), followed by “unwanted pregnancy” (18%), and “violence in school” (17%). While third overall, violence in school is the biggest problem African American students identify. Teens are least likely to point to “not having an adult to talk with about problems and decisions” (12%) as an issue.

Importantly, these are low percentages in most instances. The biggest pressures they feel are very different from what is talked about on the nightly news. The biggest pressures these teens feel is the “pressure to get good grades” (44%), “pressure to get into college” (32%), and the “pressure to fit in socially” (29%). Interestingly, the pressure to get good grades is felt equally by those who receive high grades (48%) and those who receive lower grades (46%).²⁹

Relationship with Parents

While the public tends to blame parents, the reality is that most parents have open, trusting relationships and a solid bond with their teenage children.

The public believes parents are less involved in their children's lives than in past years. Fully 86% of adults believe teenagers today get less supervision than their own generation did.³⁰ Furthermore, while in 1997 the public was equally likely to blame kids' problems on social/economic pressures as well as irresponsible parents (41% and 44% respectively), in the improved economy, they are more likely to blame parents (37% blame social/economic pressures, 49% parents).³¹

Though both parents and non-parents point to lack of parental involvement as a problem, there are several indications in public opinion data that parents are deeply involved in their teen's lives, and that teens recognize and appreciate their parents' involvement.

1st Indicator – Open Dialogue on Tough Subjects

On difficult subjects like alcohol, dating, drugs, and sex, three-quarters of teens report they have had discussions with their parents.³² Three-quarters (72%) have learned about pregnancy from their parents (36% have learned “a lot”) followed by teachers, school nurses, or classes at school (69%, 40% a lot). When asked whom they would most trust for complete and reliable information on birth control, a majority chose parents (55%). Of those who have had sex, 65% say they think their parents know they have.³³

When asked who they most rely on for making important decisions or for facing problems, parents are the top choice (63% of teens rely on them “a lot,” 16% rely on them “a fair amount. Nearly all (90%) feel comfortable (64% very comfortable) talking with their parents about how they are doing in school, and 77% (42% very) feel comfortable talking with them about their social life.³⁴

Mothers, in particular, have strong relationships with their children. On a series of indicators (ability to confide in, get along with, like, respect, etc.) teens rate their mother higher than any other family member.³⁵ Two-thirds of 10-15 year olds (64%) say they can “always” or “usually” talk it over with their mother when something is bothering them, compared to 37% who would say the same of their father.³⁶

2nd Indicator – Guidance and Support

A majority of teens feel they have “had as much support and guidance as they need” in most areas, and feel confident they are making the right decisions in these areas. If they want more guidance, it is in planning for their future or handling emotions, not dealing with drugs or alcohol. They feel particularly well guided in how to handle drugs (77% have as much support as needed, 73% feel very confident they are making the right decisions), drinking (76%, 69%), and “which group of kids to hang out with” (74%,

65%). When they look to their future, they feel they are making the right choices, but would like more support and guidance about those choices. They would like more guidance about: “going to college” (36% want more support, 64% are making the right choices), “what kind of career or job to pursue after school” (39%, 50%), “which courses to take in school” (35%, 49%), and “how much effort you put into your schoolwork (33%, 48%).³⁷

While most feel they are making the right decisions in “handling sex and dating relationships” (58%), 29% could use more guidance. What they most need guidance in and feel the least confident about are “dealing with emotions like anger, frustration, and loneliness” (40% want more support, only 40% feel very confident they are making the right decisions).³⁸

3rd Indicator – Knowledge of Daily Life

Parents are confident they know what their teenager is up to, and if they are keeping a secret, they are harmless secrets. Nearly half (45%) of parents are “very confident” that they know what their teenager is doing when they are not with him or her, while almost all the rest are “somewhat confident” (50%). Furthermore, while three quarters (75%) recognize that their teenager probably keeps secrets from them, only 29% of those parents believe they are the types of secrets parents should know about, while 60% think they are they types of things they do not really need to know.³⁹

A majority (60%) of parents of teenagers say they “always” know who their teen is spending time with, and 73% say their teen “always” tells them where they are going. Nearly all (90%) feel their teen would confide in them or the other parent if they had a serious problem.⁴⁰

Nearly all parents (92%) approve of their teen’s friends, and 60% strongly approve of them. Not only do they know their child’s friends, a majority (51%) say that within the past month they have talked to the parents of 4 or more of their teen’s friends (only 7% say they have not talked with any).⁴¹

4th Indicator – Involvement

Most parents have solid relationships with their teens. Fully 81% of parents say their relationship with their teen is excellent or very good. Only 12% say the statement “you don’t feel that you know your teen” is always or often true and only 6% say the statement “you feel shut-out by your teen” is always or often true.⁴²

Today’s parents are increasingly involved with their children and desire to do even more than they are doing. Three-quarters (74%) of parents say they are more involved in their children’s education than their parents were, and 71% wish they could be doing even more.⁴³ Additionally, one-fifth (21%) of all adults say they are involved with a youth group.⁴⁴

These indicators of positive, trusting relationships do not mean that adolescence is an easy time for families. Fully 72% believe the high school years will cause them the most worry. A plurality of parents believes that the elementary school years will be their favorite school time (46%) followed by the high school years (33%).⁴⁵

Issue Focus

Education

“Lack of parental involvement” is rated as a “major problem” by more people than any other problem facing schools, including drugs, discipline, crowding and violence. The public rates every problem higher for the nation’s schools than community schools.

While not specifically asked about high schools, a number of the problems (drugs, violence, etc.) that people see in their local public schools as well as schools in the nation as a whole, suggest that people are thinking of high school age students. As the following table outlines, the public deems the nation’s schools in worse shape than schools in their own community. The nation’s schools fare particularly poorly on discipline (ranked third for community schools, second for national schools) and violence (ranked fifth for community schools, fourth for national schools).

Percent Saying Each is a “Major Problem” in Public Schools in Their Community and in the Nation as a Whole⁴⁶		
	Community’s Schools	Nation’s Schools
Lack of parental involvement	55	78
Student use of alcohol or illegal drugs	51	69
Students who are undisciplined and disruptive	50	73
Overcrowded classrooms	47	61
Violence and lack of school safety	35	64
Inequality in funding among school districts	34	51
Lack of adequate academic standards	32	50
Poor school administration	27	42
Poor quality teachers	26	34
Lack of computers and technology	24	30
Public school facilities that are unsafe or unhealthy	21	37
Discrimination against children because of race or gender	18	33

Whether they are rating schools nationally or in their own community, non-parents are much harsher in their assessment of schools than parents, in nearly every area. Parents and non-parents also prioritize the problems somewhat differently.

In rating schools in their community, parents and non-parents have distinctly different views and priorities. Non-parents are harsher in their judgment in almost every area. The highest proportions of non-parents point to parental involvement, drugs, and discipline as major problems. Parents place overcrowded classrooms in their top three

concerns with drugs and parental involvement, followed by discipline. Furthermore, inequality in funding is a major issue for parents, but a middling concern for non-parents.

Percent Saying Each is a “Major Problem” in Public Schools in Their Community⁴⁷		
	Non-Parents	Parents
Lack of parental involvement	60	43
Student use of alcohol or illegal drugs	54	44
Students who are undisciplined and disruptive	54	40
Overcrowded classrooms	49	44
Violence and lack of school safety	37	31
Lack of adequate academic standards	33	27
Inequality in funding among school districts	32	36
Poor school administration	30	23
Poor quality teachers	29	21
Lack of computers and technology	24	24
Public school facilities that are unsafe or unhealthy	23	18
Discrimination against children because of race or gender	18	18

Generally, non-parents also have harsher judgments than parents in rating the nation’s schools with three exceptions. Parents rate three areas as a higher concern than non-parents do: overcrowding, inequality in funding, and lack of technology.

Percent Saying Each is a “Major Problem” in Public Schools in The Nation⁴⁸		
	Non-Parents	Parents
Lack of parental involvement	82	68
Students who are undisciplined and disruptive	74	71
Student use of alcohol or illegal drugs	73	62
Violence and lack of school safety	63	63
Overcrowded classrooms	59	64
Lack of adequate academic standards	53	46
Inequality in funding among school districts	49	54
Poor school administration	43	41
Public school facilities that are unsafe or unhealthy	37	36
Poor quality teachers	35	33
Discrimination against children because of race or gender	32	33
Lack of computers and technology	29	32

Students see a very different set of issues facing high schools. Across race, high school students point to mild social pressures and behavioral problems over drugs and violence. While a quarter (26%) of African American students see drugs and violence as very serious problems facing their school, even higher proportions see vanity, disruptive students, cheating, and promoting kids who are not ready, as serious problems. Without losing the emphasis in fixing problems of drugs and violence, educational quality needs to be central in the school debate.

Students' Views of the Problems Facing High Schools by Race of Student⁴⁹ (% Very Serious)			
	White	African American	Hispanic
Students pay too much attention to what they're wearing and what they look like	31	51	41
Too many disruptive students	27	41	36
Students cheat on tests and assignments	23	39	31
Too many students get away with being late to class and not doing their work	17	27	29
The school fails to challenge students to do their best	15	27	26
The textbooks and equipment are out of date	13	22	22
Too much drugs and violence in school	19	26	19
Classes are too crowded	16	26	25
Too many kids get passed to the next grade when they should be held back	15	33	21
Too many teachers are doing a bad job	11	24	17
Not enough emphasis on the basics, such as reading, writing, and math	9	25	19
The school building is old and run down	11	19	18

Interestingly, while it is rated lowest by African American students, and second lowest by white and Hispanic students, addressing decaying school buildings has become a high priority among adults. "Fixing run-down schools" is the strongest priority for funds (80% strongly favor), even over reducing class size (69%), more computers (61%), teacher pay (60%), and increased security (53%). A majority of both parents (59%) and non-parents (53%) are willing to pay as much as \$500 per year in increased taxes to pay for these changes. This show of support is particularly compelling since this high level of response was after respondents were given options to support \$100 (9% favor giving \$100 but not \$200), and then \$200 (20% favor paying \$200, but not \$500).⁵⁰

In addition to being willing to increase taxes, parents demonstrate the high importance they place on education by taking educational quality into account when choosing where they will live. Their definition of a quality education includes safety.

Parents prioritize their child’s education. Three-quarters would rather have a small house in a town with excellent schools (75%) than a large house in a town with average schools (23%). However, part of their definition of excellent schools may include their perception of the school’s safety, since they will sacrifice academics for a drug and alcohol-free environment. Two-thirds (62%) of parents would choose to live in a town with little crime and low teen drug and alcohol use but with a lower than average quality school system, over a town with one of the best school systems, but with more of a crime and drug problem for children (35%). However, people take this commitment only so far with most willing to tolerate and “average” drug and crime problem. A majority would rather buy a large house in a town with an average drug and crime problem for youth (54%) than rent an apartment in a town with a low crime rate and no drug problem for youth (44%).⁵¹

Americans expect schools to do more than just teach reading, writing and arithmetic. They also expect schools to teach teens a variety of life skills.

Computer training, seen as a necessary job skill, tops the list of areas of instruction that the public believes should be required in high school. In addition, majorities support a wide range of life skill instruction including drug and alcohol abuse prevention, sex education, environmental issues, race relations and parenting.

Areas of High School Instruction that Should be Required⁵²

Computer training	83% “should be required”
Drug and alcohol abuse prevention	76%
Driver education	69%
Sex education	60%
Environmental issues and problems	58%
Race relations	56%
Parenting training	52%
Character education	48%
The theory of evolution	28%
The theory of creationism	25%
Teaching homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle	6%

The job market is changing, and the public wants schools to adapt. The public points to changing technology and communication as influences that young people need to be able to master to succeed in today’s world.

Two-thirds (69%) believe there has been a “great deal of change” in what today’s young people need to learn before they graduate from high school, and computers are the top change they point to (36%).⁵³ The basics are universally seen as important to get ahead, followed by good work habits. But the ability to communicate well and use technology have been added to the “basic” skills needed to succeed.

%Very Important Skills for Young People to Get Ahead⁵⁴

Having good basic reading, writing, and math skills	99% very important
Having good work habits, such as being responsible, on time, and disciplined	98%
Having good communications skills	89%
Knowing how to use computers and up-to-date technology	80%
Knowing how to speak a foreign language	28%

Changes in technology and communications have more of an influence on the job force of the future than the trends toward job insecurity or globalization.

% Great Deal of Influence on the Future of Young People⁵⁵

The growing importance of computers and up-to-date technology	77% great deal
More sources of information and more ways to communicate information	60%
Less job security and more downsizing	50%
The growth of the global economy	49%
Diversity in the workforce	39%
The declining number of manufacturing jobs	38%

Employers hold negative views of the emerging workforce. They do not see a high school diploma as evidence a student has learned the basics, and few rate recent job applicants as having good basic skills. In fact, 64% of them believe graduates from public schools lack the skills needed to succeed in the work world. ⁵⁶

Parents and teachers disagree with professors and employers about the value of a high school diploma. Most parents and teachers still see it as evidence of having learned the basics, while professors and employers disagree.

Value of a High School Diploma⁵⁷				
	Parents	Teachers	College Professors	Employers
A high school diploma is no guarantee that a student learned the basics	31%	23%	73%	59%
A high school diploma means a student has at least learned the basics	63%	76%	27%	39%

Note: “Teachers” are k-12.

Additionally, few professors or employers rate their recent students or job applicants as having good basic skills.

Rate Skills of Recent Job Applicants/Students⁵⁸ (% Excellent/Good)		
	College Professors	Employers
Rate basic math skills	16%	31%
Rate ability to write clearly	16%	20%
Rate grammar and spelling	22%	18%

Sex

Ask people what comes to mind when they think of teenagers, and sex is high on the list. Americans continue to be concerned about teen pregnancy, but at much lower levels than in the 80s. They believe teenagers are having sex, and place the blame on declining morals and the media.

When asked at what age they think most young people first have sex, nearly two-thirds (62%) think most young people have sex by the age of 15, and 85% have sex by the age of 17.⁵⁹ This figure is exaggerated according to 15-17 year olds, 42% of whom say they have had sex.⁶⁰

At what age do you think most young people have sexual intercourse for the first time?

12 or younger	15%
13	11%
14	15%
15	21%
16	17%
17	6%
18 or older	5%

Two-thirds (68%) of adults believe teen pregnancy is a major problem facing our country.⁶¹ While high, this response is down significantly from the mid 1980s when it stood at 84%.⁶² Teens verify that teen pregnancy is a reality. Three-quarters (76%) of teenagers know someone their age who has gotten pregnant.⁶³

The causes of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are declining moral values and the media.

Like so many issues facing teens, the public places blame on a general decline in morality (65% say it contributes “a lot”), and point to the media for promoting casual sex.⁶⁴

Contributes “A Lot” to Unplanned Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Disease

A decline in moral values	65%
Too much casual sex in the movies and on TV	55%
Poverty and poor education	46%
A lack of openness about sex and sexual issues	35%
Inadequate sex education in the schools	32%

Sex education is no longer a controversial issue for the public. The public overwhelmingly supports sex education in high school and junior high, and rejects the argument that education encourages sex. The new controversy is whether or not schools should actually distribute birth control.

People want an open dialogue about sex to provide teens with the information and guidance they need to make wise decisions. Parents are leading the way, with 79% of them saying they are more open with their children about sex than their parents were with them.⁶⁵ Fully 83% of adults believe that “whether or not young people are active they should be given information to protect themselves” while only 14% believe that this

information only “encourages them to have sex.”⁶⁶ The public supports sex education courses for high school age students (85% support) and junior high school age students (76%) but not elementary school students (35%).⁶⁷

While they support education, the public is divided on whether or not “high school nurses or health clinics should provide young people with condoms and other forms of birth control if students ask for them.” By a narrow 50% to 46% margin adults surveyed think they should, but parents think schools should by a higher 54% to 43% margin.⁶⁸ In a 1998 survey, 57% thought high school health clinics should provide young people with birth control if students ask for them.⁶⁹

Nearly every secondary school provides a sex education course, but the dialogue continues on the local level about what the curriculum should include.

Though the public overwhelmingly supports sex education, the dialogue has not stopped. Nearly half (48%) of principals report having had at least one discussion in a public meeting about sex education over the past couple of years.⁷⁰

Nearly every secondary school (95%)⁷¹ teaches sex education, but they differ on the course content. A majority (58%) of schools teach that “young people should wait to have sex, but if they don’t they should use birth control and practice safer sex.” Thirty-four percent (34%) teach that “young people should only have sex when they are married.”

Sex education content is influenced locally. A majority of secondary school principals (57%) say their “local government or school district” has a great deal of influence in deciding what topics the sex education curriculum covers. This compares with 27% who say their state government has a great deal of influence, and only 8% who say the federal government’s abstinence-only funds have a great deal of influence.⁷²

Furthermore, those directly involved with a school have influence in determining sex education content. Principals state that those who are the most involved in determining the sex education curriculum are teachers (57% very involved), school board and school administrators (39%), parents (23%), other community members (15%), religious leaders (11%), students (8%), and politicians (6%).

Though the dialogue continues in the schools, the public has a fairly broad definition of what they believe should be taught. They believe high school sex education should teach the basic facts of human reproduction (94%), and tell young people who are sexually active to use condoms (92%). They also support, but at lower levels, discussing how to talk about sex with a partner (74%) and discussing how to know when you are ready to have sex (74%). At the same time, two-thirds (68%) think these courses should also tell young people not to have sex before marriage.⁷³

Though the public knows teens are having sex, and supports sex education in the schools, this is not an endorsement of sex for teens. They want teens to wait.

Fundamentally, 71% of adults believe it is “always wrong” for teens to have sex before marriage. This response has hovered in the high 60s throughout the 1980s and 1990s, reaching a high of 71% in 1998, and a low of 66% in 1986.⁷⁴

Substance Abuse

As noted earlier, teens and parents volunteer “drugs” as the top problem facing teenagers. However, deeper probing of this question indicates that few believe the problem is widespread at their own school, and even fewer see it as a crisis.

While a majority of parents (58%) and nearly half of teens (45%) think the use of illegal drugs at their schools is “somewhat of a problem” few think the problem is “very widespread” (13% of parents and 19% of teens). Parents are split about whether or not it is a serious problem, while two-thirds of teens do not think drugs are much of a problem at their school. Fifty-two percent of parents think this problem is a crisis (8%) or serious problem (44%) while 47% think it is a “minor problem” (43%) or “not a problem” (4%). Teens, on the other hand, think it is a “minor problem” (51%) or “not a problem” (14%), while far fewer think it is a crisis (6%) or serious problem (28%).⁷⁵

One study suggests that 20% of 12-17 year olds are at high risk of substance abuse; 40% are at moderate risk, 40% low risk.⁷⁶ Level of risk in this study was determined by the prevalence of illegal drugs in a teen’s life, including: friends’ usage of alcohol and drugs, ability to purchase marijuana, their own past smoking, drinking and use of marijuana, and a teen’s own assessment of their likelihood of future illegal drug use.

While there are several influences on teens’ attitudes toward drugs, most believe teens have the strongest influence on each other.

Two-thirds (68%) of parents believe teens start using illegal drugs because they want to do what their friends do.⁷⁷ The public thinks teenagers have the most influence on each other’s drug attitudes, followed by the media, and then parents.

% Great Deal of Influence on Attitudes of Children and Teenagers Toward the Use of Drugs⁷⁸	
Other children and teenagers	74
The entertainment industry including television, movies, and music	63
Parents	58
Professional athletes	51
Organized religion	31
School-based prevention and education programs	30
Public service advertising on TV and radio against drug use	26

The public supports a variety of actions to address the drug problem, with punitive action topping the list. They want to prevent young people from starting with drugs, and severely punish those who do use drugs.

The public supports a variety of both punitive and preventive actions to address the drug problem. On the preventive side, they support increasing anti-drug education in the schools (45% *strongly* favor), job training programs for at-risk youth (32%), and community based anti-drug programs (31%). Once a person becomes involved with drugs, they want punishment over rehabilitation. They support stronger criminal penalties for possession and sale (49%) and more funding for police to arrest users and dealers (38%), over increased funding for drug treatment (only 19% *strongly* favor). In fact, more people *strongly* support the death penalty for drug smugglers (22%), than support drug treatment funding.⁷⁹ A note of caution: since users and dealers were combined in the questions regarding punitive actions, it may be that what is driving this punitive opinion is the public’s feelings toward dealers rather than users.

Strongly Favor Anti-Drug Proposals⁸⁰

Making the criminal penalties more severe for the possession and sale of drugs	49% strong
Increased emphasis on anti-drug education in the public schools	45%
Increased funding for police to arrest local drug users and dealers	38%
Increased funding of job training programs for youth at risk of getting involved with drugs	32%
Increased funding for community-based anti-drug education programs	31%
Use of U.S. military in U.S. cities and on the U.S. border to reduce the sale and use of drugs	30%
Increased use of mandatory drug testing in the workplace	27%
Surprise searches of lockers or personal property of high school students suspected of carrying illegal drugs	25%
Passage of a law requiring the death penalty for anyone convicted of smuggling a large quantity of drugs into this country	22%
Use of U.S. military and drug enforcement advisors in foreign countries to help fight and arrest drug traffickers	22%
Increased funding for drug treatment facilities	19%
Mandatory drug testing of high school students	19%
Use of U.S. military forces inside other countries to help fight or arrest drug traffickers	16%
Increased U.S. aid to farmers in foreign drug-producing countries to make them grow crops other than drugs	15%
Increased U.S. financial aid to foreign governments to help them fight or arrest drug traffickers	11%
Legalization of all drugs	5%

While government action is in the middle of the supported actions listed above, this same survey found that two-thirds believe the government needs to be doing a lot more to reduce the supply of drugs. Even though people want increased government action and stronger punishment, when asked to choose just one that would most reduce the drug problem, people chose “educating young people” (40%).⁸¹

Saying “A Lot More” Needs to be Done in Anti-Drug Effort Areas⁸²

Government efforts to reduce the supply of drugs coming into the United States	66% a lot more
Law enforcement efforts to punish and convict people for the use and sale of illegal drugs	58%
Education and prevention programs to keep young people off illegal drugs	54%
Treatment programs to help drug addicts get off illegal drugs	43%

Furthermore, perceptions regarding efficacy may be reducing support for government action. The public is divided about whether or not the government can do anything to win the war on drugs. While 44% believe “if the president and Congress were serious about reducing illegal drug use by teens, a war on drugs could be won,” a majority (52%) believe “we are unable to win a war on drugs regardless of what the president and Congress do.”⁸³

Among the strongest supporters of tough action are teenagers themselves.

More than three-quarters of teens support a zero tolerance policy toward drugs, and a majority of older teens support random locker searches and security guards in schools. These levels of support by teens are higher than those expressed by educators. The public is even more supportive of zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol (90%).⁸⁴

% Supporting Action to Eliminate Drugs from Schools⁸⁵				
	Age 12-14	Age 15-17	Teachers	Principals
A zero tolerance policy under which any student caught with drugs would be expelled from school	88	79	64	71
Random locker searches at your school for drugs and drug paraphernalia	40	53	44	47
Security guards or police patrolling the hallways	35	53	35	13
Drug testing of student athletes	20	44	9	6
Drug testing of all students	6	7	3	5

Violence

Youth violence has been a concern for several years, but Littleton focused the nation’s attention on this issue. Littleton was the most watched story in the month of May, and parents across the country talked with their children about the tragedy.

In the month of May, “continuing coverage of the aftermath of the violence at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado” was the most watched news story, with 82% saying they followed it “very” or “fairly closely.” This was followed by the NATO air strikes in Kosovo (80%), proposals for stricter gun control laws (75%), tornadoes in Kansas and Oklahoma (68%) and the White House summit on preventing youth violence (48%).⁸⁶ Fundamentally, the public sees this not as an isolated incident, but rather an indication “that there is something seriously wrong in the country today” (79%)⁸⁷

This tragedy created a dialogue about violence. Within a few days of the incident, 81% of parents of school age children talked with their child about Littleton, and 37% of them stated that their child’s school held counseling sessions about it.⁸⁸

It also affected perceptions of personal safety among teens and parents. There was a drop in agreement with the statement “always feel safe in my school” from 44% in 1998 to 37% in 1999 right after Littleton.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Littleton is probably the reason why fears of crime and violence increased from 30% of teens listing it as their top concern in 1998 to 40% in Spring 1999.⁹⁰ Parents’ fears for their child’s safety at school jumped from 37% fearing for their child’s safety in 1998, to 55% on April 21, 1999. Even by August of 1999, 47% of parents said they fear for their child’s safety at school.⁹¹

The public sees several contributors to youth violence. Availability of guns and parental supervision are seen as most responsible, but the public also has high levels of blame for the media and peers.

Right after Littleton, the public placed the most blame for “shootings like Littleton” with the availability of guns in American society. A majority placed “a great deal of blame” on parents, followed by television.

% Great Deal of Blame for Causing Shootings Like Littleton⁹²

Availability of guns	60% great deal of blame
Parents	51%
TV programs, movies and music	49%
Social pressures on youth	43%
Media coverage of similar incidents	34%
The Internet	34%
Schools	11%

By June, lack of adult supervision moved ahead of handgun availability in contributing to violence.

% Contributes “A Lot” to Violence in Society⁹³

Lack of adult supervision of children	90% contributes a lot
Easy availability of handguns	65%
Television	58%
Movies	57%
Video games	47%
Local TV News reports	39%

Similarly, right after Littleton people placed a higher level of blame on the media, while by August primary blame was solidly placed at parents’ feet.

Which is the main reason kids commit acts of violence?

April 1999⁹⁴

Poor upbringing by parents	36%
Violence in television and movies	34%
Peer pressure	15%
Genetic tendencies toward violence	5%

August 1999⁹⁵

Poor upbringing by parents	52%
Violence in television and movies	17%
Peer pressure	17%
Availability of guns	8%
Genetic tendencies toward violence	3%

But as the following tables outline, the public sees lots of shared responsibility for the level of teen violence in America.

% Very Responsible for Current Amount of Violence Among Teens⁹⁶

Information on buying guns and making bombs on the Internet	56% very
Availability of guns	49%
The depiction of violence in the movies	41%
The depiction of violence on the Internet	40%
The depiction of violence in video games	39%
Violent lyrics in music	36%

Very Important Reason for Increased Violence in the Nation's Public Schools⁹⁷

A breakdown in the American family	76% very
Increased use of drugs and alcohol among school-age youth	74%
Easy availability of weapons	72%
Growth of youth gangs	71%
Schools do not have the authority to discipline that they once had	69%
Inability of school staff to resolve conflicts between students	64%
Increased portrayal of violence in the media	62%
Trying to deal with troubled or emotionally disturbed students in the regular classroom instead of in special classes or schools	61%
Shortages in school personnel	55%
Cutbacks in many school support programs	54%
A school curriculum that is out of touch with the needs of today's students	50%
Increased cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity among the public school student population	41%
Increased poverty among parents	39%

In analyzing shifts in response to the set of questions directly above, the lesson of Littleton was the importance of paying attention to disturbed kids. The numbers that grew in importance since 1994 were: trying to deal with troubled or emotionally disturbed students (+10), cutbacks in many school support systems (+9), a breakdown in the American family (+6), inability of school staff to resolve conflicts (+5), and schools not having authority to discipline (+4).

While the public places parents at the forefront of responsibility for troubled youth, most also believe there can be extenuating circumstances.

Though people point to lack of parental supervision as a cause of youth violence, they also believe that “there are some teens who are such trouble that even parents who give them enough attention can’t control them” (86% yes).⁹⁸ This may explain why right after Littleton nearly half (48%) were unsure whether or not criminal charges should be filed against the parents of the perpetrators. The remainder is split between those who thought they should (25%) and should not (26%).⁹⁹ Most assume, at the least, that the parents did not watch these children closely enough. Right after the shooting, 70% said that “lack of oversight of these kids by their parents” contributed “a lot” to the incident, followed by “the availability of guns” (67% “a lot”).¹⁰⁰

Parents and non-parents disagree on how much blame should lie with parents for a child in trouble. Non-parents agree by a 9 point margin that “parents are to blame when their child breaks the law” while parents disagree by the same margin.¹⁰¹ This does not mean that parents do not hold other parents blameless. Even a majority of parents of teenagers (51%) think that “very few parents really know what their teens are up to.”¹⁰²

Kids differ with adults on both the problems and the solutions to Littleton. They do not blame parents and do not look to them to solve the problem.

Why did the shooting tragedy at Columbine happen?¹⁰³		
	Teens	Adults
Peer issues	40%	-
Personal problems	16%	11%
Warning signs ignored	7%	-
Parents/family	4%	45%
Lack of morals/religion	-	8%
Media violence	-	6%

What could be done to keep it from happening?¹⁰⁴		
	Teens	Adults
Better security	24%	16%
Counseling and communication	18%	6%
Getting Along, Tolerance	18%	-
Awareness	10%	-
Parental involvement/responsibility	-	32%
Better gun control	-	12%

Since the public blames gun availability and troubled youths, the solutions they point to center on gun control and counseling. Even though they blame parents as well, they are less enthusiastic about penalizing parents.

Littleton caused the public to agree that America needs to focus on youth. The top solution they point to is paying attention to teens and their problems.

% Very Important for the Country¹⁰⁵

Pay more attention to teenagers and their problems	89% very important
Pass stricter gun control laws	64%
Reduce violence in the media	61%

When allowed only one choice, half say that we as a society need to start “paying more attention to kids’ anti-social attitudes and behaviors” (49%) over increasing school security (21%), reducing violence in popular entertainment (14%) or passing stricter gun control laws (11%).¹⁰⁶

There are a variety of measures the public believes will be very effective in stopping youth violence. They see gun control and counseling as most effective, and even though they think lack of parental involvement is a cause of youth violence, they are less enthusiastic about punishing parents.

% Very Effective in Stopping Violence in High Schools and Middle Schools¹⁰⁷

Stricter gun control laws for teenagers	62% very effective
Increased counseling for teenagers	60%
Metal detectors in schools	53%
Stricter regulation of violence on TV and in movies	52%
Restrictions on what is available to teenagers on the Internet	50%
Holding parents legally responsible for crimes their children commit with their parents' guns	47%
School dress codes	36%
Random body searches of students	34%
Stiffer penalties for parents whose children commit crimes	34%

Most teens and parents report that their school already offers effective counseling, and tries to identify troubled students. Even higher numbers believe schools should do these things even if they are not currently doing them.

Security Measures Schools Currently Take¹⁰⁸		
	Teen	Parent
Offer effective counseling & other assistance to troubled students	88%	80%
Have police officers or armed security guards on patrol at school	61%	50%
Try to identify troubled students who may be prone to violence	55%	56%
Conduct random searches of students' lockers	51%	49%
Conduct random searches of students themselves	25%	21%
Have metal detectors at school entrances	5%	5%

Security Measures Schools Should Take¹⁰⁹		
	Teen	Parent
Offer effective counseling & other assistance to troubled students	98%	97%
Try to identify troubled students who may be prone to violence	93%	97%
Have police officers or armed security guards on patrol at school	69%	65%
Conduct random searches of students' lockers	68%	81%
Have metal detectors at school entrances	50%	59%
Conduct random searches of students themselves	50%	56%

A majority (56%) think there are not enough places for teens to go to help them stay out of trouble, and 51% think there are not enough places that provide treatment and counseling for teens who get into trouble. They look to church and community

organizations to provide more places (32%), followed by state and local government (19%) and the federal government (7%).¹¹⁰

Students and parents agree that their high school does not have a serious problem with violence. However, students are more likely than their parents to report feeling safe and to see their school as having strong security measures. At the same time, students are more likely than their parents to know troubled or gun-toting students.

Right after Littleton, students and parents agreed about the seriousness of the problem of violence at their high school (only 23% of both students and parents thought violence was a “very” or “somewhat serious” problem at their high school). However, many more students reported feeling safe (42% of students felt “very safe” compared to only 27% of adults). Students also rated their school’s security precautions higher than parents (71% of students gave their school an “excellent” or “good” rating, compared to only 61% of parents. Only 12% and 9% rate the security precautions as “excellent.”) A majority of students (57%) think their school is doing enough to prevent violence, while only 45% of parents feel the same way.

While parents seem to be more concerned about safety, students are actually much more aware of problematic activity in their schools. Forty percent (40%) of teens can think of students in their school who are troubled enough to do something like Littleton (compared to only 23% of parents). Forty percent (40%) report there is a group of students at their school who seem to be especially troubled and prone to violence (compared to 24% of parents). And 20% know a student who has brought a gun to school (compared to 13% of parents).¹¹¹

While few thought it was “very likely” that a similar incident could happen at their school (9% of students, 11% of parents), nearly half of parents thought it was at least “somewhat likely” (48% “very” or “somewhat likely”), compared to 40% of students.¹¹² This compares with a high level of likelihood reported by adults generally. A different poll asked this question at the same time of all adults, and 30% said it was very likely, 38% somewhat likely.¹¹³

Finally, as with many other issues, many see this as a problem beyond society’s or government’s ability to control.

While a majority (53%) believe that “government and society can take action that will be effective in preventing shootings like the one in Colorado,” a significant minority (43%) believe “shootings like the one in Colorado will happen again regardless of what action is taken by government and society.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the public is cynical about government’s genuine desire to do anything about youth violence. Nearly half (46%) feel the youth violence summit in Washington was a way for the White House to use this problem for its own political purposes, while 37% feel it was a serious attempt to learn more about this problem and help find solutions.¹¹⁵

Media

People are now far more concerned with television violence than with sex on television. Across party lines, people are calling for changes in the media.

People are more concerned about violence on television (44%) than sexual situations (22%), or profane language (23%).¹¹⁶ The public sees a direct link between violence in the media and a violent American culture. Two-thirds (67%) think that “violence in entertainment makes teens act more violently” (with this view held consistently across party lines).¹¹⁷

When people think of violence on television, they are including news coverage in that critique: 70% believe that there is too much violence in television programs, and 63% believe there is too much violence on TV news. While they are concerned about all forms of media, the public is most concerned about what children see and hear on TV (39%) and the Internet (36%), over video games (14%) and movies (7%).¹¹⁸

Three-quarters (73%) strongly agree there should be efforts to reduce the amount of violence in music and on TV.¹¹⁹ Nearly half the public believes that several in the entertainment industry need to work to reduce teen violence.

Needs to Make Major Changes in Policies in Reduce Teen Violence¹²⁰

The movie industry	48% major changes
The television industry	51%
The popular music industry	43%
Computer games manufacturers	52%
Internet service providers such as America Online	47%
Gun manufacturers and the NRA	46%

Importantly, the public agrees on the importance of taking action across party lines. Two-thirds (64%) think legislation to “restrict access that teenagers have to video games, movies, and other entertainment containing violent and sexually explicit material” is necessary (consistent across party identification). Furthermore, 67% favor a federal investigation into the “marketing of violent films, video games, and music” (with the strongest support by Democrats).¹²¹

Even so, when given a choice, a majority would leave it to parents to supervise the entertainment their child has access to (54%), rather than pass laws banning teen access (25%), or relying on the entertainment industry to reduce violence (19%).¹²² This opinion is driven in part by a fundamental belief in freedom of speech. The public is divided about whether “government should pass laws to limit violence in movies, television, and video games” (50%), or whether “government should not decide the *content* of movies, television, or video games” (46%).¹²³

Today, nearly every home has a television. Increasingly, every home with a child has a computer. Fully two-thirds of homes with children have a computer, and most of them have online access.

In homes with children 2-17 years old, 68% have a computer in the home, and 41% have online access. Computers are nearly universal among higher income homes (94% of homes earning \$75,000+ have a computer, 72% have online access), but even among homes earning under \$30,000, 41% have a computer in the home and 15% have online access.¹²⁴

About one-third (30%) of 10-17 year olds say they watch shows their parents wouldn't approve of, while 24% of parents say they watch inappropriate programs "a great deal" or "some of the time." Adolescents say they are most likely to be watching "cartoons or kids' shows" (75%), "MTV" (57%), "TV Talk shows" (47%), "shows on PBS" (44%), and, lastly, "tabloid news shows" (29%).¹²⁵

One-quarter (25%) of 10-17 year olds have a "very" or "mainly" positive view of children's television, compared to only 14% of parents (and only 10% of parents of 12-17 year olds). Even so, a majority of parents of 12-17 year olds (53%) think television does "more good than harm." While parents of younger children are most concerned about the influence of television, parents of 12-17 year olds are concerned about the influence of a variety of media. They are most likely to point to television as their biggest media concern (30%) closely followed by the Internet (27%) and then music lyrics (21%).¹²⁶

Punishment

In theory, most people believe the role of juvenile justice is to rehabilitate. However, public opinion data also demonstrates that people support harsh penalties for youth in trouble.

While a majority (53%) believes the purpose of criminal penalties for adults is to punish, only 31% believe that is the purpose of juvenile penalties. Instead, half see the purpose of juvenile justice to train, educate and counsel.

Most Important Purpose of Criminal Penalties¹²⁷		
	For Adults	For Juveniles
Give offenders the punishment they deserve	53	31
Train, educate, and counsel offenders	21	50
Discourage others from committing crimes	13	15
Separate offenders from society	13	4

Even so, strong majorities support very harsh penalties for a variety of criminal offenses by juveniles.

In 1994, when a teen in Singapore was sentenced to 6 lashes with a cane for vandalism – a majority (51%) thought that punishment was “acceptable and appropriate.”¹²⁸ This response was, in many ways, a throw back to earlier times. In 1954, when people were asked to look back at their own teenage years for the punishment that worked best for children who refused to behave, the top response was “whipping” (40%).¹²⁹

Though most of the public distinguishes between juvenile and adult criminal treatment, the public is increasingly willing to treat juveniles as adults. Right after the Jonesboro shooting, a majority (58%) believed that 13-year-olds accused of committing a violent crime should be tried in the same court as adults. Nearly as many (54%) thought they should be punished in the same way as adults.¹³⁰ By 1999, this figure dropped 6 points to 50% saying they believe juveniles age thirteen and under who commit murder should be tried as adults.¹³¹

But the line is not drawn at murder. Most Americans agree (87% agree, 33% strongly) that a juvenile charged with a serious violent crime should be tried as an adult. Nearly as many believe a juvenile who is charged with selling illegal drugs should be tried as an adult (70% agree, 18% strongly). Even 63% agree (16% strongly) that a juvenile charged with a serious property crime should be tried as an adult.¹³²

In fact, Americans are increasingly willing to put a teenager to death. Just after Littleton, 75% of adults agreed that “teens who kill other teens should face the possibility of the death penalty.”¹³³ This support for putting a teen to death is occurring even while, according to Gallup trends, support for the death penalty overall is at its lowest level in nearly 20 years:

	% Favor the Death Penalty	
	Generally	For Teen/Under 21
February 2000 ¹³⁴	66%	NA
1999	71%	NA
1994	80%	61%
1985	72%	NA
1972	50%	NA
1965	45%	21%
1957	47%	12%

There may be an age limit, however. Two-thirds (68%) oppose “lowering the age at which the death penalty can be applied to juveniles under the age of fourteen.”¹³⁵

People want to hold parents accountable in some way, but do not necessarily want to press criminal charges.

After Littleton, a majority (51%) felt parents of teens who kill teens should face some legal responsibility.¹³⁶ Furthermore, 61% believe parents should be held legally accountable in some way for crimes committed by their school age children.¹³⁷ However, only 39% believe parents should face charges if their child under 18 commits a crime with a gun.¹³⁸

¹ “Kids These Days ’99,” sponsored by Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Ad Council, conducted by Public Agenda, 1005 adults nationally (including 384 parents of children under 18), and 328 teens, December 1-8, 1998.

² “Kids These Days ’99,” sponsored by Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Ad Council, conducted by Public Agenda, 1005 adults nationally (including 384 parents of children under 18), and 328 teens, December 1-8, 1998.

³ “The 1998 National Survey of Americans on Values,” sponsored by the *Washington Post*/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University, conducted by Chilton Research, 2025 adults nationally, July 29 – August 18, 1998.

⁴ Gallup Poll, by the Gallup Organization, 1249 adults nationwide, June 15-18, 1989.

⁵ Sponsored by Potomac Associates, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1071 adults nationally, June 1976.

⁶ The Gallup Organization, 1620 adults nationally, personal interviews, Feb 1965.

⁷ The Gallup Organization, 1620 adults nationally, personal interviews, Feb 1965.

⁸ The Gallup Organization, 1500 (approximate) adults nationally, August 30-September 4, 1946.

⁹ Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 751 adults nationally, April 29-30, 1999.

¹⁰ ABC News Poll, 612 adults nationally, Dec 1-3, 1995.

¹¹ The Shell Poll, sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1277 adults nationally, March 16-20, 1999.

¹² Sponsored by the Catholic Digest, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 2783 adults nationally, Nov. 1965.

¹³ Conducted by Ben Gaffin and Associates, 2987 personal interviews with adults nationally, June – July 1952.

¹⁴ “The People and the Press 1999 Millennium Poll” sponsored by the Pew Research Center, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1546 adults nationally, April 6 – May 6, 1999.

¹⁵ CBS News Poll, 878 adults nationwide, April 13-14, 1999.

¹⁶ Sponsored by Time/CNN, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, 1031 adults nationally, June 9-10, 1999.

¹⁷ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.

¹⁸ “High School Students Say No to Teaching Careers,” sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, conducted by Hart Research Associates, 501 high school students, grades 10-12, May 17-18, 20-24, 1999.

¹⁹ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.

²⁰ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.

²¹ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.

²² “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.

²³ “Back to School 1999 – National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse V: Teens and Their Parents,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company and QEV Analytics, 200 teens nationally, 1000 parents of teens nationally, May 8 – June 23, 1999.

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- ²⁴ “1998 CASA National Survey of Teens, Teachers and Principals,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company, 1000 teens nationally in June – July 1998, 345 middle school teachers, 478 high school teachers, 822 principals of middle or high schools, May – June, 1998.
- ²⁵ “Back to School 1999 – National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse V: Teens and Their Parents,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company and QEV Analytics, 200 teens nationally, 1000 parents of teens nationally, May 8 – June 23, 1999.
- ²⁶ “The State of Our Nation’s Youth 1999-2000,” Sponsored by the Horatio Alger Association, conducted by NFO Research, 1327 teens age 14-18 years old, self-administered mail survey, April 22 – May 25, 1999.
- ²⁷ Gallup Organization trends, 1013 adults nationwide, October 23-25, 1998.
- ²⁸ “1998 CASA National Survey of Teens, Teachers and Principals,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company, 1000 teens nationally in June – July 1998, 345 middle school teachers, 478 high school teachers, 822 principals of middle or high schools, May – June, 1998.
- ²⁹ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.
- ³⁰ Conducted by CBS News, 731 adults, May 1-2, 1999.
- ³¹ “Kids These Days ’99,” sponsored by Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Ad Council, conducted by Public Agenda, 1005 adults nationally (including 384 parents of children under 18), and 328 teens, December 1-8, 1998.
- ³² Sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1510 teenagers age 12-18 years old, March 28 – May 5, 1996.
- ³³ Sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1510 teenagers age 12-18 years old, March 28 – May 5, 1996.
- ³⁴ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.
- ³⁵ “The State of Our Nation’s Youth 1999-2000,” Sponsored by the Horatio Alger Association, conducted by NFO Research, 1327 teens age 14-18 years old, self-administered mail survey, April 22 – May 25, 1999.
- ³⁶ “Talking with Kids about Tough Issues,” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 348 children aged 10-15, September 15 – October 13, 1998.
- ³⁷ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.
- ³⁸ “Teens Under Pressure, Coping Well,” sponsored by Shell Oil, conducted by Hart Research, 1015 high school students, June 8-29, 1999.
- ³⁹ CBS News, 731 adults nationally, May 1-2, 1999.
- ⁴⁰ CBS News, 731 adults nationally, May 1-2, 1999.
- ⁴¹ “Back to School 1999 – National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse V: Teens and Their Parents,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company and QEV Analytics, 200 teens nationally, 1000 parents of teens nationally, (this statistic is based on the parent sample alone), May 8 – June 23, 1999.
- ⁴² “Back to School 1999 – National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse V: Teens and Their Parents,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company and QEV Analytics, 200 teens nationally, 1000 parents of teens nationally, (this statistic is based on the parent sample alone), May 8 – June 23, 1999.
- ⁴³ “Playing Their Parts: Parental Involvement in Public Schools Survey,” conducted by the Public Agenda Foundation, 1220 parents of children in public school, December 10-20, 1998.
- ⁴⁴ The People and the Press Political Typology Survey, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 3973 adults nationally, July 14 – September 9, 1999.
- ⁴⁵ “Playing Their Parts: Parental Involvement in Public Schools Survey,” conducted by the Public Agenda Foundation, 1220 parents of children in public school, December 10-20, 1998.
- ⁴⁶ NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Education Survey, conducted by ICR, 1422 adults nationally, June 25 – July 19, 1999.

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- ⁴⁷ NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Education Survey, conducted by ICR, 1422 adults nationally, June 25 – July 19, 1999.
- ⁴⁸ NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Education Survey, conducted by ICR, 1422 adults nationally, June 25 – July 19, 1999.
- ⁴⁹ Conducted by Public Agenda, public high school students (669 white, 200 African American, 200 Hispanic), October 29 – November 20, 1996.
- ⁵⁰ NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Education Survey, conducted by ICR, 1422 adults nationally, June 25 – July 19, 1999.
- ⁵¹ “Best Place to Raise a Family Survey,” sponsored by Reader’s Digest, conducted by the Institute for Social Inquiry at the University of Connecticut, 1009 parents of children under 18, December 2 – 16, 1996.
- ⁵² Conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1028 adults nationally, August 24-26, 1999.
- ⁵³ “Education Technology Survey” sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, conducted by Hart Research Associates, 1012 registered voters nationally, May 29-31, 1997.
- ⁵⁴ “Education Technology Survey” sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, conducted by Hart Research Associates, 1012 registered voters nationally, May 29-31, 1997.
- ⁵⁵ “Education Technology Survey” sponsored by the Milken Family Foundation, conducted by Hart Research Associates, 1012 registered voters nationally, May 29-31, 1997.
- ⁵⁶ Conducted by Public Agenda, 708 parents of children in public school, 700 public school teachers, 252 employers of recently graduated students, 257 college professors who teach freshmen and sophomores, October-November, 1998.
- ⁵⁷ Conducted by Public Agenda, 708 parents of children in public school, 700 public school teachers, 252 employers of recently graduated students, 257 college professors who teach freshmen and sophomores, October-November, 1998.
- ⁵⁸ Conducted by Public Agenda, 708 parents of children in public school, 700 public school teachers, 252 employers of recently graduated students, 257 college professors who teach freshmen and sophomores, October-November, 1998.
- ⁵⁹ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁶⁰ Sponsored by Kaiser Family Foundation, MTV, and Teen People, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 400 teenagers age 15-17, March 24 – April 14, 1998.
- ⁶¹ Sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 3884 adults nationally, July 7 – September 19, 1999.
- ⁶² Conducted by the Roper Organization, 1993 adults nationally, personal interviews, February 8-22, 1986.
- ⁶³ Conducted by CBS News, 1047 10th graders, September 2-10, 1997.
- ⁶⁴ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁶⁵ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁶⁶ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁶⁷ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁶⁸ NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Education Survey, conducted by ICR, 1422 adults nationally, June 25 – July 19, 1999.
- ⁶⁹ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁷⁰ “National Survey of Public Secondary School Principals: The Politics of Sex Education,” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 313 principals of middle, junior, and senior public high schools, March 15 – May 13, 1999.

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- ⁷¹ “National Survey of Public Secondary School Principals: The Politics of Sex Education,” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 313 principals of middle, junior, and senior public high schools, March 15 – May 13, 1999.
- ⁷² “National Survey of Public Secondary School Principals: The Politics of Sex Education,” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 313 principals of middle, junior, and senior public high schools, March 15 – May 13, 1999.
- ⁷³ “Americans on Sex and Sexual Health Survey” sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and ABC Television, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1204 adults nationally, April 24 – May 10, 1998.
- ⁷⁴ “General Social Survey 1998” conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, 2832 adults nationally, personal interviews, February 1 – June 19, 1998.
- ⁷⁵ ABC News/Washington Post Poll, 441 parents and 441 teens from the same household, February 24, 1997.
- ⁷⁶ “Back to School 1999 – National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse V: Teens and Their Parents,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company and QEV Analytics, 200 teens nationally, 1000 parents of teens nationally, (this statistic is based on the teen sample alone), May 8 – June 23, 1999.
- ⁷⁷ “Attitudes on Substance Abuse and Addiction,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company, 1166 parents of teenagers nationally, July, 1996.
- ⁷⁸ CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1020 adults nationally, September 14-17, 1995.
- ⁷⁹ CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1020 adults nationally, September 14-17, 1995.
- ⁸⁰ CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1020 adults nationally, September 14-17, 1995.
- ⁸¹ CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1020 adults nationally, September 14-17, 1995.
- ⁸² CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1020 adults nationally, September 14-17, 1995.
- ⁸³ Sponsored by the Family Research Council, conducted by the Polling Company, 1000 registered voters nationally, February 8-10, 1999.
- ⁸⁴ Sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1103 adults, May 18-June 11, 1999.
- ⁸⁵ “1998 CASA National Survey of Teens, Teachers and Principals,” sponsored by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, conducted by the Luntz Research Company, 1000 teens nationally in June – July 1998, 345 middle school teachers, 478 high school teachers, 822 principals of middle or high schools, May – June, 1998.
- ⁸⁶ The Kaiser/Harvard Health News Index, done in consultation with the Pew Center for The People and The Press, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1000 adults nationally, June 11-16, 1999.
- ⁸⁷ CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 659 adults nationally, April 21, 1999.
- ⁸⁸ Gallup Poll conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1073 adults nationally, question asked of the 30% with school age children, April 26-27, 1999.
- ⁸⁹ “The State of Our Nation’s Youth 1999-2000,” Sponsored by the Horatio Alger Association, conducted by NFO Research, 1327 teens age 14-18 years old, self-administered mail survey, April 22 – May 25, 1999.
- ⁹⁰ “The State of Our Nation’s Youth 1999-2000,” Sponsored by the Horatio Alger Association, conducted by NFO Research, 1327 teens age 14-18 years old, self-administered mail survey, April 22 – May 25, 1999.
- ⁹¹ Gallup Organization trends, 388 k-12 parents, August 24-26, 1999.
- ⁹² Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, 659 adults nationwide, April 21, 1999.
- ⁹³ The Harris Poll, conducted by Louis Harris & Associates, 1006 adults nationwide, June 10-15, 1999.
- ⁹⁴ Sponsored by Newsweek, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 757 adults nationally, April 21-22, 1999.
- ⁹⁵ Associated Press Poll, conducted by ICR, 1016 adults nationwide, August 20-25, 1999
- ⁹⁶ CNN/Time Poll, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, 1031 adults nationwide, June 9-10, 1999.
- ⁹⁷ Conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1025 adults nationally, May 7-9, 1999.

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- ⁹⁸ Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 751 adults nationwide, April 29-30, 1999.
- ⁹⁹ The Gallup Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 1073 adults nationwide, April 26-27, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁰ Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 757 adults nationwide, April 21-22, 1999.
- ¹⁰¹ The Gallup Organization, 1011 adults nationally, November 18-21, 1999.
- ¹⁰² Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 751 adults nationwide, April 29-30, 1999.
- ¹⁰³ Conducted by the Gallup Organization, 403 youth age 13-17, May 5-7, 1999, and 1073 adults nationally, April 26-27, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁴ Conducted by the Gallup Organization, 403 youth age 13-17, May 5-7, 1999, and 1025 adults nationally, May 7-9, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁵ Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 751 adults nationwide, April 29-30, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁶ Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 757 adults nationwide, April 21-22, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁷ Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, 659 adults nationwide, April 21, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁸ ABC News/Washington Post Poll, conducted by ICR, 500 high school teenagers and 522 parents of high school teenagers nationwide, April 22-25, 1999.
- ¹⁰⁹ ABC News/Washington Post Poll, conducted by ICR, 500 high school teenagers and 522 parents of high school teenagers nationwide, April 22-25, 1999.
- ¹¹⁰ Newsweek, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 751 adults nationally, April 29-30, 1999.
- ¹¹¹ ABC News/Washington Post Poll, conducted by ICR, 500 high school teenagers and 522 parents of high school teenagers nationwide, April 22-25, 1999.
- ¹¹² ABC News/Washington Post Poll, 500 high school teenagers and 522 parents of high school teenagers nationwide, April 22-25, 1999.
- ¹¹³ Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, 659 adults nationwide, April 21, 1999.
- ¹¹⁴ Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, 659 adults nationwide, April 21, 1999.
- ¹¹⁵ Newsweek Poll, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 405 adults nationally, May 13-14, 1999.
- ¹¹⁶ Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization, 839 adults nationwide, September 10-14, 1999.
- ¹¹⁷ CNN/Time Poll, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, 1031 adults nationwide, June 9-10, 1999.
- ¹¹⁸ Sponsored by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 1179 adults nationwide, May 12-16, 1999.
- ¹¹⁹ “Kids and Violence Survey,” sponsored by Family First, conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide, 1010 adults nationally, September 11-17, 1998.
- ¹²⁰ Newsweek, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, 669 adults nationally, May 6-7, 1999.
- ¹²¹ CNN/Time Poll, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, 1031 adults nationwide, June 9-10, 1999.
- ¹²² CNN/Time Poll, conducted by Yankelovich Partners, 1031 adults nationwide, June 9-10, 1999.
- ¹²³ NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll, conducted by the polling organizations of Hart and Teeter, 2011 adults nationwide, June 16-19, 1999.
- ¹²⁴ “Media in the Home 1999,” sponsored by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide, 1269 parents of 2-17 year olds, 303 interviews with their children age 10-17, April 20 – May 18, 1999.
- ¹²⁵ “Media in the Home 1999,” sponsored by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide, 1269 parents of 2-17 year olds, 303 interviews with their children age 10-17, April 20 – May 18, 1999.
- ¹²⁶ “Media in the Home 1999,” sponsored by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, conducted by Roper Starch Worldwide, 1269 parents of 2-17 year olds, 303 interviews with their children age 10-17, April 20 – May 18, 1999.
- ¹²⁷ Sponsored by Texas A&M University, conducted by the Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M University, 1005 adults nationally, June 6-26, 1995.

¹²⁸ NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll, conducted by the Hart and Teeter Research Organizations, 1002 adults nationally, April 30 – May 3, 1994.

¹²⁹ By the Gallup Organization, 1500 (approximate) adults nationally, personal interviews, October 15-20, 1954.

¹³⁰ Conducted by CBS News, 994 adults nationally, March 30 – April 1, 1998.

¹³¹ NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll, conducted by the Hart and Teeter Research Organizations, 2014 adults nationally, December 9-12, 1999.

¹³² Sponsored by Texas A&M University, conducted by the Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M University, 1005 adults nationally, June 6-26, 1995.

¹³³ Sponsored by Fox News, conducted by Opinion Dynamics, 942 registered voters nationally, April 21-22, 1999.

¹³⁴ Gallup Poll by the Gallup Organization, 1050 adults nationally, February 14-15, 2000.

¹³⁵ NCS News/Wall Street Journal Poll, conducted by the Hart and Teeter research organizations, 2011 adults nationally, June 16-19, 1999.

¹³⁶ Sponsored by Fox News, conducted by Opinion Dynamics, 942 registered voters nationally, April 21-22, 1999.

¹³⁷ Conducted by CBS News, 731 adults nationally, May 1-2, 1999.

¹³⁸ Associated Press Poll, conducted by ICR, 1006 adults nationwide, April 28-May 2, 1999.

About the Author

MEG BOSTROM, President of Public Knowledge LLC, has served as a public opinion analyst, advertising agency executive, and political consultant. She holds degrees in both communications and public opinion research.