



4-H National Youth Survey on Leadership

Survey Overview

National 4-H Council and Harris Poll conducted 1,501 interviews online from February 2 - 17, 2016, averaging approximately 23 minutes in length. Qualified respondents were residents of the U.S, balanced across the four regions where 4-H operates (Northeast, North Central, Southern and Western regions), in grades 9th to 12th, ranging in age from 13 to 19, balanced by gender across grade, balanced across race and ethnicity to ensure representativeness and ability for sub group analysis. The data were weighted to ensure that relevant demographic characteristics of the sample matched the 13 to 19 year old population in the U.S. The data were also weighted to key attitudinal and behavioral measures that we have determined are indicators of one's likelihood to be online, be a member of an online survey panel and complete an online interview. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole percent. Differences in the sums of combined categories/answers are due to rounding.

National 4-H Council engaged Oregon State University professor and Extension specialist Mary Arnold as a consultant on the survey to review the survey questionnaire and assist with analyzing the results. 4-H youth leaders were also engaged to inform the topics selected for the survey instrument and to participate in a focus group to discuss implications of the survey findings.

Survey Findings

Today's Youth to Today's Leaders: We Can Do Better

- Two-thirds of America's youth say they are more confident in the next generation of leadership than in current leaders.
- This is especially true for government and entertainment leaders, who most youth (more than half) rate as "weak" in their leadership performance. Overall, youth explained they see many leaders as weak because they:
 - Haven't accomplished what they promised
 - Don't work collaboratively;
 - Doesn't have a clear vision;
 - Don't solicit input from diverse perspectives; and
 - Haven't succeeded in bringing new solutions or innovative ideas.
- Most youth (81%) see today's leaders as more concerned with their own agendas than with achieving the overall goals of the organizations they serve.



- Ninety percent (90%) of youth are concerned about the future leadership of America, and most (66%) say they have more confidence in the next generation of leaders than in leaders they see today.

Looking Ahead: Youth Most Concerned about Education, Jobs and the Economy

- The issues today's youth say are most important to them include:
 - #1 – Education and the Cost of College
 - #2 – Jobs & The Economy
 - #3 – Terrorism
 - #4 – Bullying
 - #5 – Racial Equality
 - #6 – Environmental Issues
- Among the top 3 most important issues (Cost of College, Education and the Economy), approximately half of youth feel leaders are doing a “poor” job.

Youth Want a Say and Want to Lead – For Others, Not For Themselves

- When it comes to their personal role in addressing key issues, most youth (88%) say they believe they can make a difference, they see themselves as leaders (74%) and they feel a responsibility to lead (73%).
 - Youth want to lead for others, not for themselves. For those youth who are leading, the top three reasons they want to lead are to: 1) to help others; 2) help make the world a better place; and 3) improve their community. Less than 25 percent of youth said they wanted to lead in order to make more money or to impress their family and friends.

Youth to Adults: Believe in Us, Empower Us and Give Us Opportunities

- Most youth feel highly motivated to lead and say they have good role models. They (71%) see leadership as something they can practice and work at to be a leader.
- However, only one in three young people says they have the *skills* they need to be prepared to lead. Half of all high school students report they are not prepared to lead in their life after high school – for college or career.¹
- Also, many don't feel encouraged by the adults in their lives – with more youth (86%) saying adults recognize the negative in their generation than youth saying adults recognize the positive.
- Youth are looking for more motivation and more opportunities from the adult leaders in their lives. To be better prepared, youth are looking for more hands-on leadership opportunities and mentorship. Specifically, youth most commonly cited the following as the things they need to help them grow as a leader:
 - #1 – Experience in leadership positions (54%);
 - #2 – Programs to help build confidence (45%);
 - #3 – Encouragement to lead regularly (45%); and
 - #4 – Real-life leaders to shadow (40%) and serve as personal mentors (40%).

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¹ <http://www.achieve.org/rising-challenge-powerpoint>