

# Trends & Tudes<sup>SM</sup>

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Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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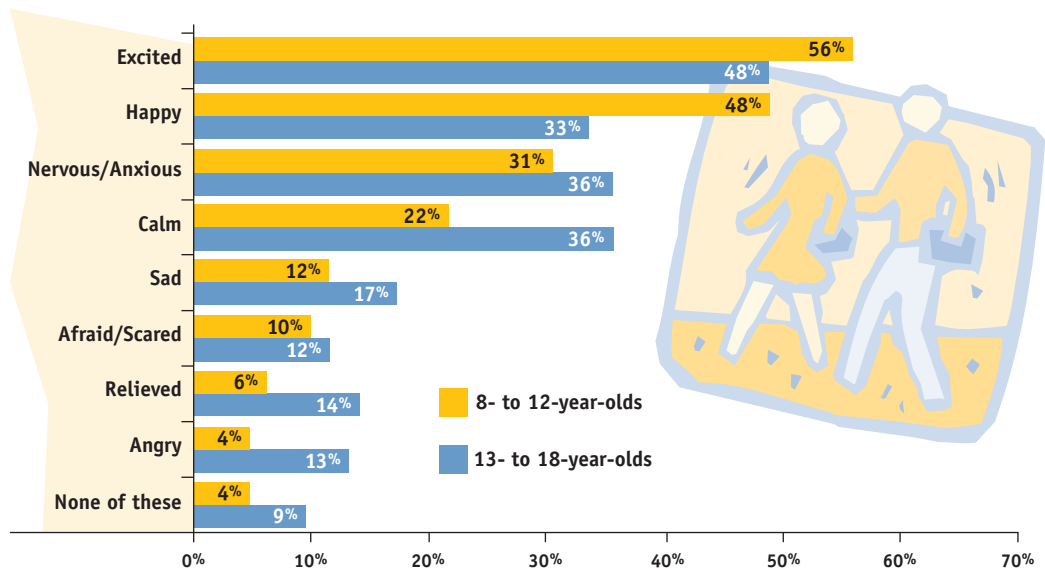
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## Back to School: A Time of Emotion and Resolve

Summer is over and a new school year has begun. For this back-to-school issue of Trends & Tudes, we thought we'd examine how kids and teens approach this time of year. How do they feel about going back to school? What are their goals for the coming year? What's on their shopping lists?

The predominant feeling among kids and teens about going back to school is one of excitement and happiness. Half of 8- to 17-year-olds (52%) are excited and four in 10 (40%) are happy about going back to school. However, teens are more likely than younger children to have mixed feelings about the new school year. Teens are less likely than tweens to feel happy (33% vs. 48%) and more likely to feel angry (13% vs. 4%) about returning to school. Teens and tweens are equally likely to feel nervous or anxious at this time of year.

**TABLE 1**  
How do you feel about going back to school this fall?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> – July 2003

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YOUTH AND EDUCATION  
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## Editorial: Our Take On It

by Dana Markow

Director, Youth and Education Research

Recently, I was exploring the Harris Interactive archives of public opinion polls conducted over the past 40 years. I came across a report titled *Children's Needs and Public Responsibilities: A Survey of American Attitudes About the Problems and Prospects of American Children*. Harris Interactive conducted this survey in 1986 on behalf of Group W (Westinghouse Broadcasting Company), and it is notable for being the first national survey of public attitudes toward the problems of children in the United States. Nearly a generation has passed since the study was conducted, and I was curious to examine Americans' views on issues affecting children at that time, particularly in the area of education.

The study included the views of both parents and people without children in their household. They were asked for their evaluation of the current state of problems facing children and how this compares to the problems faced by children when they were growing up. The study revealed that the American public in 1986 had significant dissatisfaction and concern regarding how children's needs were being addressed.

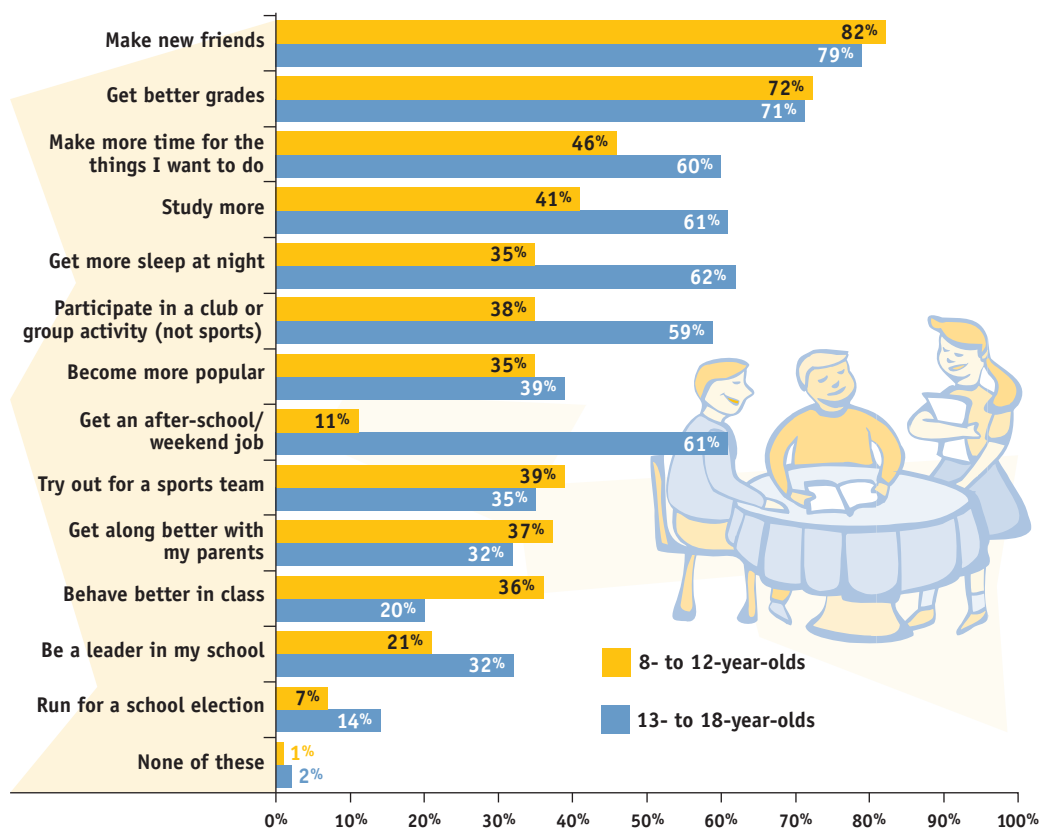
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## New (School) Year's Resolutions

The importance of school in students' social and educational lives can be seen in their plans for the upcoming year. Eight in 10 (81%) 8- to 17-year-olds want to make new friends, and seven in 10 (71%) want to get better grades this coming school year. The hectic nature of teenagers' lives today is seen in both the number of items on the majority of their to-do lists and also in the nature of the items on those lists. Most teens are approaching the new term with goals for making new friends, getting better grades, studying more, participating in a club or group activity, and getting a job. And teens themselves attest to the effects of this busy schedule in their other desires for the school year: getting more sleep at night (62%) and making more time for the things they want to do (60%).

**TABLE 2**  
Which of the following do you want to do this coming school year?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> – July 2003

Boys and girls have similar goals in terms of making new friends and getting better grades. However, girls are more likely than boys to want to study more (57% vs. 47%), to want to participate in a club or group activity (57% vs. 41%) and to want to get along better with their parents (39% vs. 31%). As for wanting to behave better in class, more boys have this on their to-do list than girls (31% vs. 23%). This is also a more common goal among tweens (36%) than teens (20%).

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Three-quarters of Americans felt that problems affecting children had grown worse compared to when they were children.

Their views on the status of American education was slightly less damning but still not rosy. Overall, only half of Americans felt that the quality of education in the United States was better than when they were growing up. In several key areas, less than half of the public believed that schools, parents and society were meeting their responsibilities to children. Only four in 10 Americans believed that most children got a good education (40%), that schools were doing a good job of meeting their responsibilities to children (43%), or even that parents were doing a good job in meeting these responsibilities (43%). And only three in 10 said that the federal government was doing a good job of meeting its responsibilities to children. The public endorsed several remedies to improve the quality of education in American schools. A majority of the public believed that it was very important to not pass poor performing students to the next grade (78%), to increase the use of discipline in the classroom (67%), to spend more money on teachers (63%) and to reduce class size (59%).

This study has yet to be repeated (though we would welcome the opportunity!), but in the intervening years *The Harris Poll*® has tracked the prominence of the issue of education in the public's consciousness.

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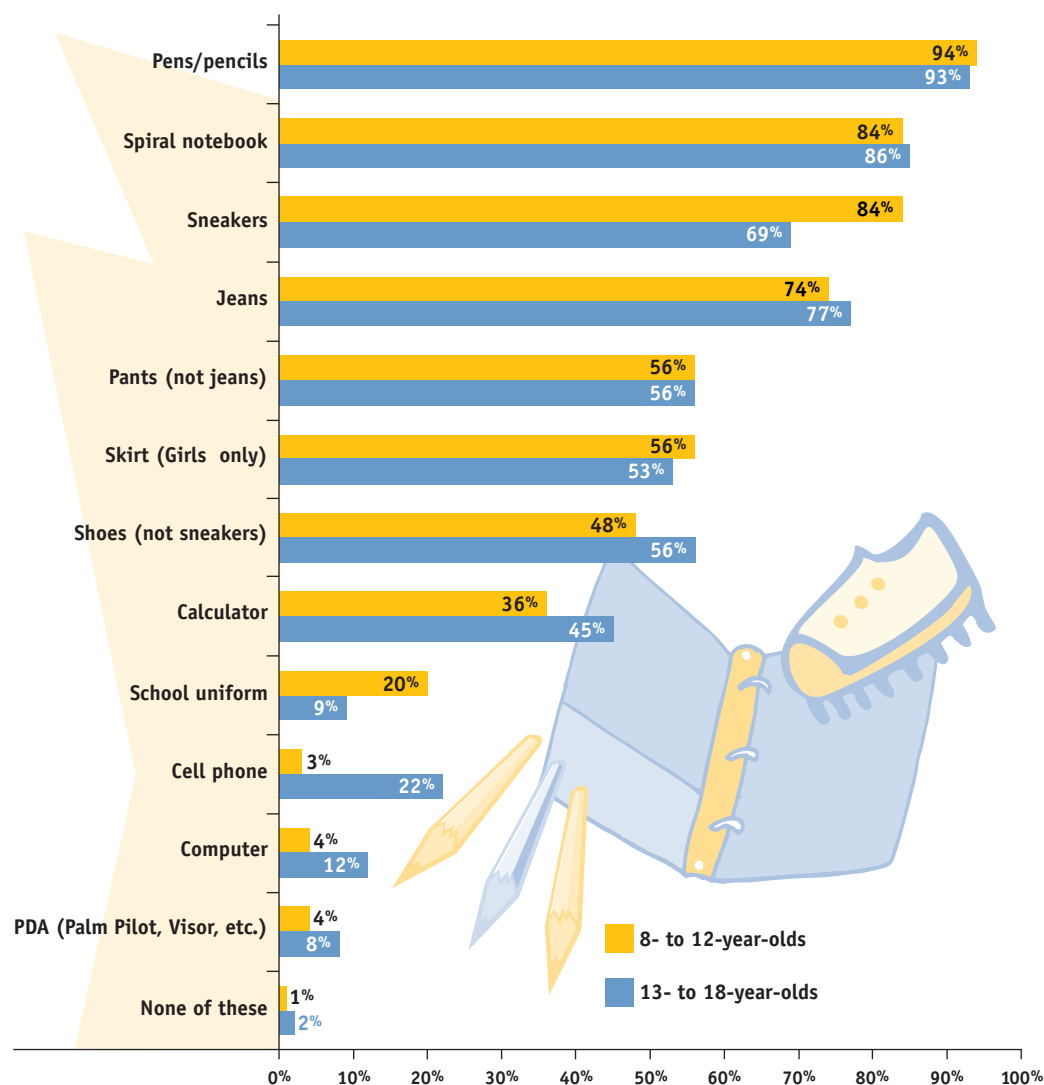
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## What's In Their Backpacks?

Shopping is on students' back-to-school to-do lists as well. Perennial back-to-school items such as pens and spiral notebooks still top students' shopping lists. But for a substantial number of students, particularly teens, these lists also include calculators, cell phones and computers. Teens are more likely than tweens to plan on buying for the school year a calculator (45% vs. 36%), a cell phone (22% vs. 3%), a computer (12% vs. 4%) and a personal digital assistant (PDA) (8% vs. 4%).

New clothes are prominent items on students' shopping lists. One in five tweens (20%) plan on buying a school uniform – more than twice the number of teens (9%). Tweens are more likely than teens to favor sneakers (84% vs. 69%) while the reverse holds true for other types of shoes (48% vs. 56%). Girls are more likely than boys to plan on purchasing several items, including sneakers (80% vs. 72%), jeans (82% vs. 70%), and other shoes (66% vs. 39%).

**TABLE 3**  
Which of the following do you plan on buying for this coming school year?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> – July 2003, 8- to 18-year-olds

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A Harris Poll from this past June revealed that 29% of Americans think that education should be the highest priority for future growth – second only to health care (34%). Also in the June poll, the public included education among the top three issues of most importance for the government. Education's ranking in the list has fluctuated over the past 10 years. It peaked in 2000, but showed a drop in the mid-90s when health care and crime were more prominent.

The issue of education receives perennial attention in each White House's domestic policy agenda. Interestingly, both the 1986 survey and the most recent Harris Polls occurred in the context of major programs to improve education in the United States. The 1986 survey was conducted a few years after the release of the landmark report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, which documented declines in American educational performance. Current research on education is done in the context of the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act. It will be interesting to see the impact of this legislation on the public's assessment of education in general and on the government's performance as we move into the 2004 election year.

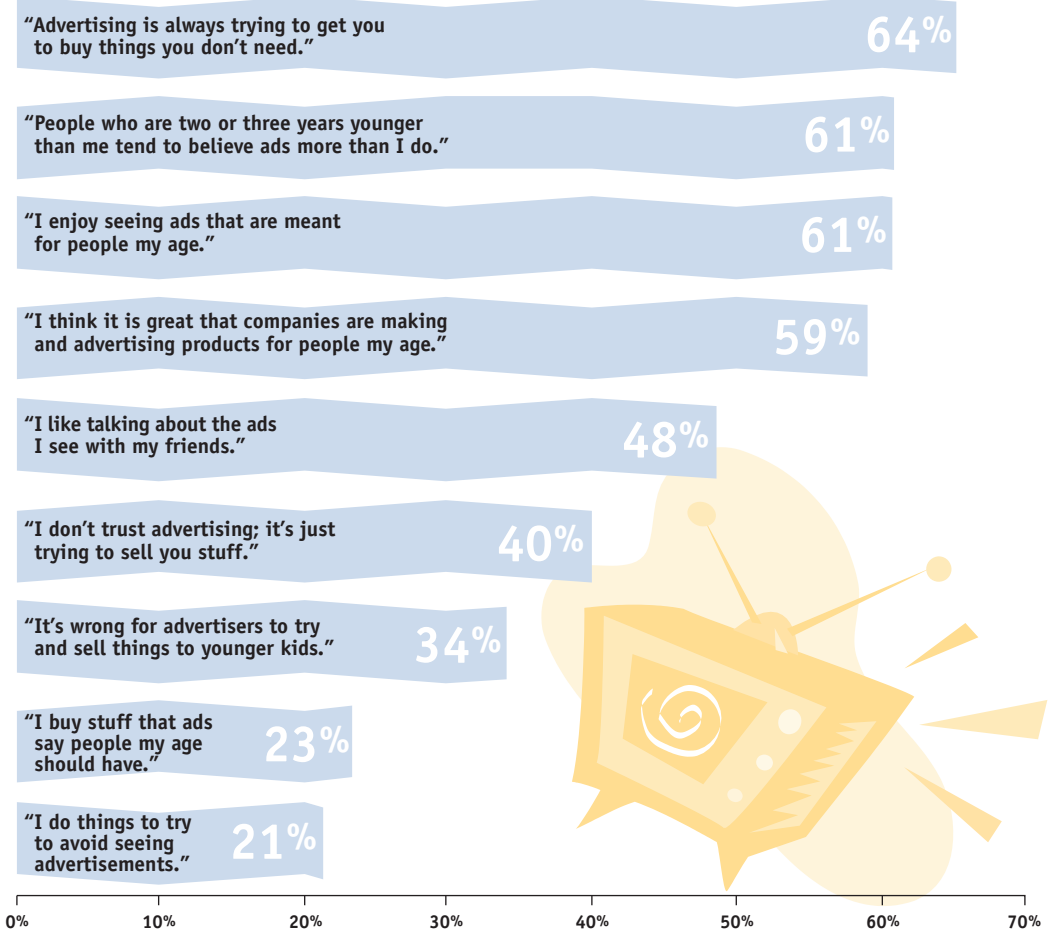
## Ask a Question...

### ...Get an answer

Barbie Clarke from Kids and Youth ([www.kidsandyouth.com](http://www.kidsandyouth.com)), a research company in the United Kingdom, submitted the following question:

### We'd like to understand what 8- to 18-year-olds think about advertising. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

("Agree Strongly/Somewhat")



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> – July 2003, 8- to 18-year-olds

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> youth omnibus. Send your question to [HI\\_Youth\\_research@harrisinteractive.net](mailto:HI_Youth_research@harrisinteractive.net) today. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of *Trends & Tudes*.

## Contact Us

To make suggestions regarding this newsletter or to discuss a business issue involving youth or the people and issues that influence today's youth, please contact our Information Desk at **877.919.4765** or **info@harrisinteractive.com**

## Note to Subscribers

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And, of course, thank you for reading *Trends & Tudes*.

## Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at **http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\_k12.asp**

## Recent Research for Public Release

The Harris Interactive Youth Research team works with media, leading foundations and non-profit organizations. Occasionally, we are able to release the results of the research to the public.

### Born to be Wired: Understanding the First Wired Generation

Recently, Harris Interactive and Teenage Research Unlimited conducted a two-phased research study on behalf of Yahoo! and Carat North America. The results of the study were presented in July at "Born to be Wired: Understanding the First Wired Generation," Yahoo!'s conference for marketers. The study was designed to further explore and understand the media consumption patterns of teens and young adults, and how marketers can best communicate with this group.

The study, which polled more than 2,500 teens and young adults (ages 13 to 24) using both qualitative and quantitative methods, revealed that "control" – the ability to personalize and manage the media experience and content – emerged as the primary reason this group chooses the Internet over other forms of media. Survey findings also showed that teens use the Internet as a "hub" – or primary media – while other media are used as a starting point for the online experience. While other generations are more likely to be wed to a single type of media, the study revealed that today's teens and young adults are not overwhelmed by the abundance of media choices like cable stations, networks, magazines and radio, but rather feel empowered by it and are able to multitask – using more than one form of media at a time – more than any other generation.

More information on this study is available at [http://promotions.yahoo.com/btbw\\_2003](http://promotions.yahoo.com/btbw_2003)

### Race and College Admissions: American Bar Association Poll

A majority of Americans believe that enrollment in the nation's colleges will be so diversified in 25 years that race will not have to be a factor in admissions, according to a study released at the American Bar Association's annual meeting in August. The poll, conducted by Harris Interactive, shows that 70 percent of the public agrees with United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's prediction in a ruling this June that in 25 years it should no longer be necessary to factor race into admissions decisions in order to achieve diversity in higher education.

The survey shows 88 percent believe the nation has made either substantial or some progress eliminating discrimination in public schools in the 50 years since the Supreme Court ruled in the 1954 case of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.

The poll, conducted by Harris Interactive the last weekend in July, questioned 1,011 respondents about several cases in the nation's history involving race and education. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percent.

Complete poll results are available on the American Bar Association's website at [www.abanet.org/media/aug03/harrispoll8\\_03.pdf](http://www.abanet.org/media/aug03/harrispoll8_03.pdf).