
Harris Interactive/Kid Power Poll of Youth Marketers

Summary Report

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MARKET RESEARCH

The Harris Poll® PEOPLE

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Thanks!

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Note: If you are a member of the media and wish to interview some of the respondents to this survey (who have provided permission), please contact John Geraci.



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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
■ Description of Project	4
■ Study Methodology	5
■ Summary of Results	6
■ Who Was Interviewed?	13
■ Job Satisfaction	18
■ How Do Those Working in Youth Fields View Today's Youth Generation?	20
■ Views Towards Targeting Young People as Consumers	29
■ How Do Those Working in Youth Fields View the Moral and Ethical Standards of the Youth Marketing Industry?	33
■ How Do Those Working in Youth Fields View the Moral and Ethical Standards of Their Own Organization?	40
■ Views Towards Ratings Systems	47
■ Views Towards Online Privacy and Children	51
■ Views Towards Marketing in Schools	54
■ Views Towards Overweight Children and the Youth Industry's Role and Responsibility	61



Description of Project

- This poll was undertaken by Harris Interactive in conjunction with the Kid Power Exchange. As two organizations that serve the needs of clients in the youth marketing industry, we were interested in gaining a better understanding as to how the industry views itself.
- Children are held special and dear by society, and, youth marketers face a great scrutiny over their practices. Because of this, we felt it would be interesting to see how the industry itself views its own moral and ethical standards and behavior, as well as its role in some important issues facing youth, such as childhood obesity, marketing in school environments, viewpoints towards commercialism and youth, and industry guidelines and regulation.
- An online method was chosen because of its ability to protect the anonymity of respondents and to be able to provide an atmosphere where respondents could provide candid answers to questions on potentially sensitive topics.
- The authors of this poll considered its objectivity to be of paramount importance. Toward that end, it was self-funded, reviewed by individuals not connected with the youth industry for fairness and balance, and undertaken with no strong editorial viewpoint regarding the findings.



Study Methodology

This study was completed as an online interview in February 2004. The interview averaged 30 minutes.

In total 878 interviews were completed. Some questions are based on sample sizes less than 878 due to skip patterns and suspended interviews.

Respondents were recruited for participation from Harris Interactive and Kid Power newsletter distribution lists – lists that contain a broad representation of individuals working in organizations who are concerned with youth.

Respondents were classified into the following groups for analysis:

- **Educational institutions.** Those who work in educational institutions, either K-12 or higher education. These consist primarily of college administrators responsible for marketing their institution to prospective students and academic researchers who study children's issues.
- **Youth marketing.** Those working in companies that market products or services to young consumers.
- **Non-profit organizations.** Those working for foundations, associations, or other non-profits whose mission centers around youth.
- **Market research.** Those who work at market research organizations and who have clients that study youth.
- **Media.** Those working in media organizations that reach young audiences.
- **Advertising/PR.** Those working in agencies that serve clients who seek to target youth.

For some questions, respondents are separated out by their job function and not their employer.

Summary of Results





Summary of Results

The youth marketing industry's practices are coming under increased scrutiny by the media, academics, and government. Issues such as increased commercialism directed towards children, online privacy, marketing in schools, the content of children's media and advertising, and childhood obesity have become part of a national discourse.

There has been a lot of information and misinformation placed into the public debate regarding these issues. One voice that has not been documented is the youth marketing industry itself – a point-of-view that is critical to understand and fundamental to making positive progress on these important issues.

This landmark poll provides an understanding of issues that relate to moral and ethical standards in youth marketing from the viewpoints of those working in youth fields. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to provide this point-of-view.

This study reached 878 respondents from a variety of youth-related fields – educators, youth marketers, non-profit institutions, market researchers, media, and advertising and public relations personnel. The study was conducted online with an assurance of confidentiality, and questions posed were balanced and neutrally worded. The result is a picture of how those working in youth fields view important youth issues.

The issues this study pursued are as consequential as they are complex, and this section provides a short summary of results and implications.

Who participated in the study?

Those working in youth fields are highly educated (92% have a four year degree or more) but few (18%) have specific academic training in working with children. Those working in youth fields are disproportionately female (63%), the average age of respondents was 39, and 57% have children of their own. Most of them didn't actively choose to work in occupations that relate to youth -- two-thirds (66%) tell us they came to work in youth fields out of happenstance. Only about a third actively pursued their current field.



Summary of Results

Are they happy in their jobs?

Those working in youth fields could be described as “moderately” happy with their employment, with those working for academic institutions or non-profit organizations being the most satisfied with their job. All types of employees consider their own job satisfaction to be higher than their coworkers. They also report being happier in their jobs than they perceive others working in youth-related fields, and others working in non youth-related fields.

Viewpoints towards the current youth generation

In an open-ended question, respondents told us that the current youth generation is technically advanced, smart and savvy, and very busy and stressed. The youth industry was far more likely to respond with *positive* descriptors of the current youth generation than *negative* descriptors. They were also likely to respond with descriptors that characterize today’s youth as consumers, more than as children.

It is often said that Generation Y contains the smartest and best-educated group of consumers in history. Respondents agree: they see today’s youth as more powerful, demanding, and savvy consumers than previous generations. At the same time, they characterize young people as disconnected from world events, disrespectful of authority and rules, not nurtured by adults, and as not being as religious as past generations. The perception is that young people have become powerful and smart, but also that something important has been lost along the way.

In a related Harris Interactive study, teenagers describe themselves as a more disaffected group than the youth industry sees them. Where the industry described the generation in terms of their power as consumers, teenagers themselves provided more emotional descriptors – stressed, busy, unsupervised, depressed, angry, and rebellious. The youth industry paints a more sanguine picture of today’s youth than youth themselves construct.

Even though positive towards the current youth generation, the industry does, on the whole, feel that it is a “worse” time to be a kid than it was when they were young. There is a bit of a nostalgic effect in play – the older the respondent, the rosier the childhood they recall. Generations tend to pride themselves on constructing a better world for subsequent generations, and this may be the first time in history where we sense some concern that the world may not be a better place for youth.



Summary of Results

That said, those working in youth fields display a great deal of confidence that the current youth generation will leave a positive legacy for others – particularly in terms of race relations and the environment.

Young people as consumers

Those working in youth fields tend to define the generation as a consumer group. Youth marketers, more so than the other types of respondents, tend to feel that this group comes of age as consumers younger than others.

On average, those working in companies that market products and services to young consumers feel that it is appropriate to begin advertising to children at age 7. This is more than two years before they feel young people can view advertising critically (age 9.1), or when they feel young people can effectively separate fantasy from reality in media and advertising (age 9.3). A stark finding of this project is that those working in youth marketing feel it is appropriate to advertise to children almost five years before they feel that young people can make intelligent choices as consumers (age 11.7). There is a sense of urgency to reach them young, so that they will be familiar with a brand when they do reach an age where they make or influence purchase decisions.

There is a consensus among those working in youth related fields that young people are marketed to in ways they don't even notice. Most feel that companies put pressure on children to pester their parents to buy things and that companies pressure kids to grow up faster than they should. Most also feel that advertising to children begins at too young an age and that there is too much advertising and marketing directed towards children. The concern towards increased commercialism aimed at the young is there; the restraint to stop contributing to this concern is not.

Views toward ethics in the youth marketing industry

Those working in youth fields, on the whole, feel that the ethical and moral standards of the youth marketing industry is on par with the standards of other industries. That said, they do feel that ethical standards in youth marketing are not being maintained at as high a level as they have been in the past. Those working in media, advertising, public relations, and in youth marketing are far more comfortable with the industry's ethical standards than those working in non-profits, market research, or for academic institutions.



Summary of Results

Role models

In an open-ended question, Nickelodeon, Disney, Nike, and MTV were most commonly considered as being role models for youth marketers. An organization was characterized as a role model because of its standards of ethics, its ability to create a deep connection with youth, and its concern for the well being of children. The financial success of the business was not what defined a role model firm – a role model was defined mostly by its sense of ethics. Disney in particular was seen as maintaining high ethical and moral standards.

The ethical standards of their own organization

Although somewhat critical of the youth field as a whole, respondents were positive towards their own organization's ethical standards. Two-thirds (67%) feel their organization has higher moral/ethical standards than other youth-related organizations.

Respondents also felt that their management's sense of ethics is comparable to their own. Most felt that ethical issues inherent in youth marketing can and are discussed openly, were comfortable expressing their views, and report that they are not placed in situations where their personal sense of ethics have been compromised. They tell us that their organization treats young people and parents with respect, and they are proud in how their employer treats young people. A full 78% feel their organization plays a positive role in the lives of children and 74% feel the positives their organization does for children far outweigh any negatives.

Further, few respondents felt that the desire for business or career success gets in the way of acting ethically in their organization. Study results show that those working in youth fields are comfortable and supportive of their organization's practices.

Views towards rating systems

Most respondents concurred that there are shows and movies that young people are likely to watch which contain inappropriate violent and sexual content. The youth field is split as to whether violence in media translates into violent behavior in children.

The youth industry does seem to feel that some sort of protection for content is necessary: just 30% felt that today's children are well equipped to deal with the current media and advertising environment. Just 28% felt that the current ratings systems in place are effective. And, just 24% felt the industry is doing a good job in terms of policing itself in terms of advertising appropriately to children.



Summary of Results

Respondents were critical of all ratings systems, and felt that ratings on video games, TV shows, and music CD's were less effective than ratings on movies or movie rentals.

Those in the youth field also feel that online privacy needs to be protected for children. Four out of five (80%) agree that there should be laws about how companies use information they collect from young people. While 37% were not familiar with the COPPA regulation, those who were aware were apt to say it has been effective in making the cyber world a better place for children.

Marketing in schools

The subject of marketing in school environments tends to bring forth strong reactions. On the whole, reaching young people during school time was not seen as important to those working in youth fields. Even among youth marketers specifically, just 16% felt it was extremely or very important to reach young people in school. This respondent base was split as to whether in-school marketing creates more benefits or negatives.

That said, some ways of reaching young people in schools are seen as more appropriate than others. Sponsoring school sports competitions, providing loyalty programs that reward schools for gathering product labels, purchasing sports equipment with brand names on them, and advertising in school newspapers were all seen as highly appropriate tactics to reach children in schools.

Less appropriate tactics included advertising on school buses, advertising on school book covers, and integrating brands into instructional support material and lessons. Respondents were split as to the appropriateness of book fairs and school vending machine contracts.

Three in four respondents (74%) agreed that we will see increased advertising in schools in the future. Although those working in youth fields do say that school marketing has to be done thoughtfully, they also feel that advertising in schools helps provide schools with needed funds and equipment and keeps many important school programs from being cut.



Summary of Results

Overweight and Obese Youth

There is a high level of awareness among those working in youth fields regarding issues of childhood obesity and nutrition. Half (50%) agree that the issue of overweight youth is an extremely important public health concern, and most also feel that the media has not blown the issue out of proportion.

Youth marketers and advertisers overstate the issue – they tend to say that more than twice as many young people are overweight than the Centers for Disease Control report. In addition, respondents agree that improved nutrition, as well as physical activity, will be needed to solve this problem.

Further, those working in youth fields do not feel that kids themselves can judge what is healthy and nutritious. While parents must play an important role, our respondents also feel that food and restaurant companies play an important role.

And, those working in youth fields are not convinced that food companies are being responsible in how they are addressing issues of childhood obesity, or that the food industry is taking positive steps to deal with this issue. Even though respondents seem negative towards the food industry's efforts, they more likely to place the blame for the obesity issue on parents rather than companies.

Although critical of the industry as a whole, our respondents feel that their own organization contributes positively to the issue of overweight children.

What does the future hold? Those working in youth fields foresee an increase in healthy alternatives being offered to parents and children, and that consumers will react positively to these alternatives. About two in three respondents (66%) agree that there will be increased regulation of the food and beverage industry in the future.

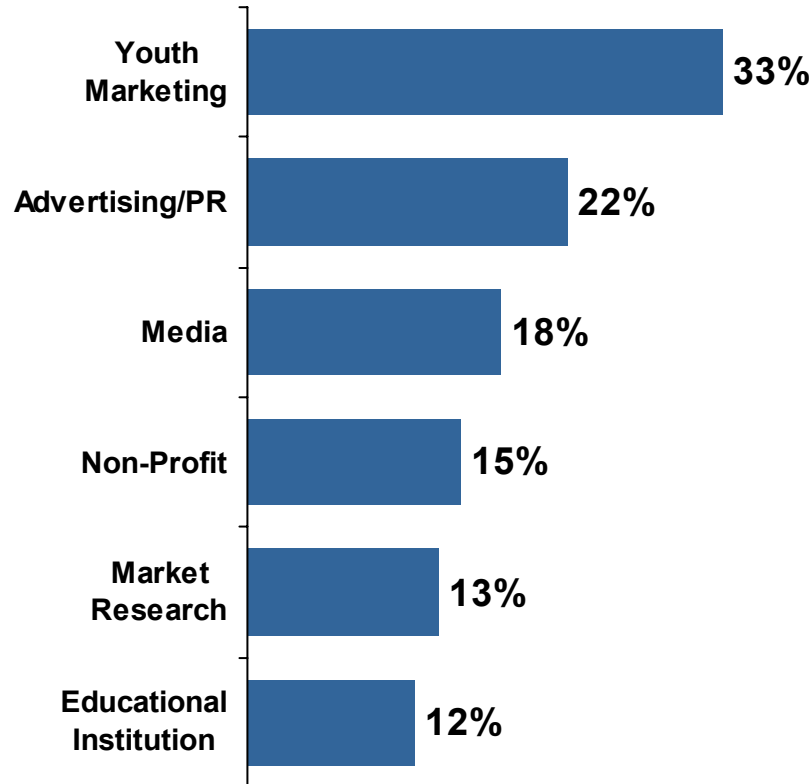
Who Was Interviewed?



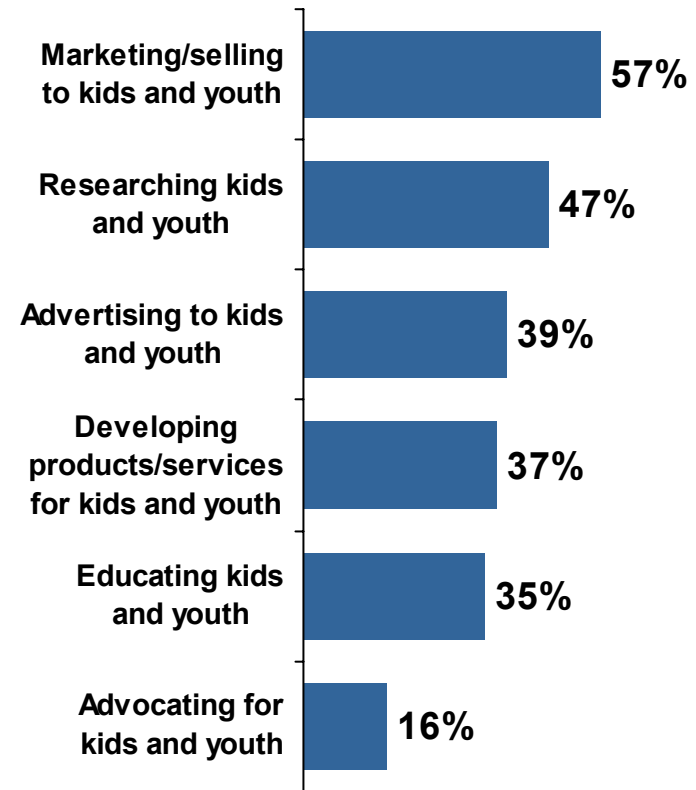


The poll reached a variety of respondents

By Type of Employer



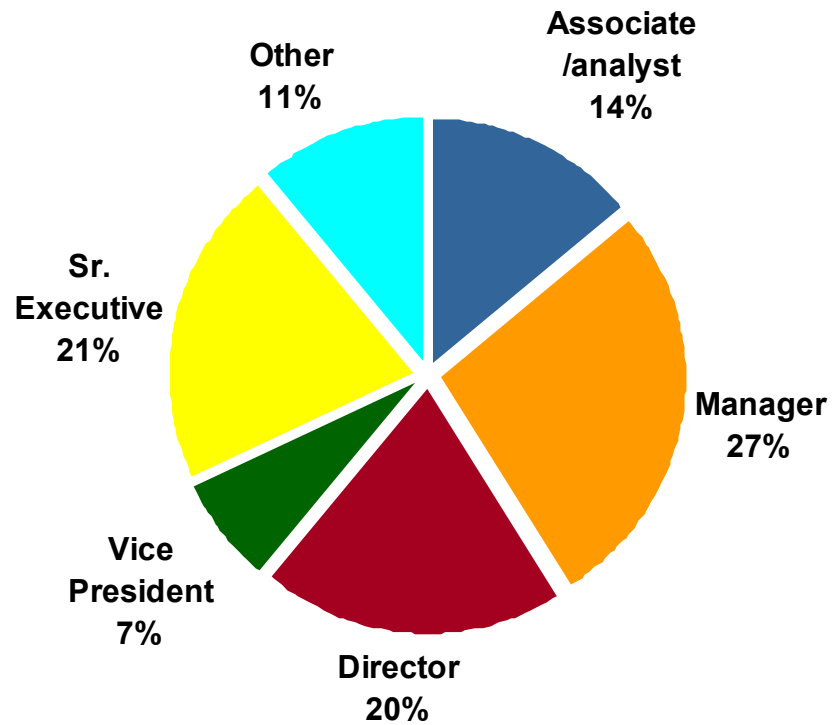
By Organization's Activity



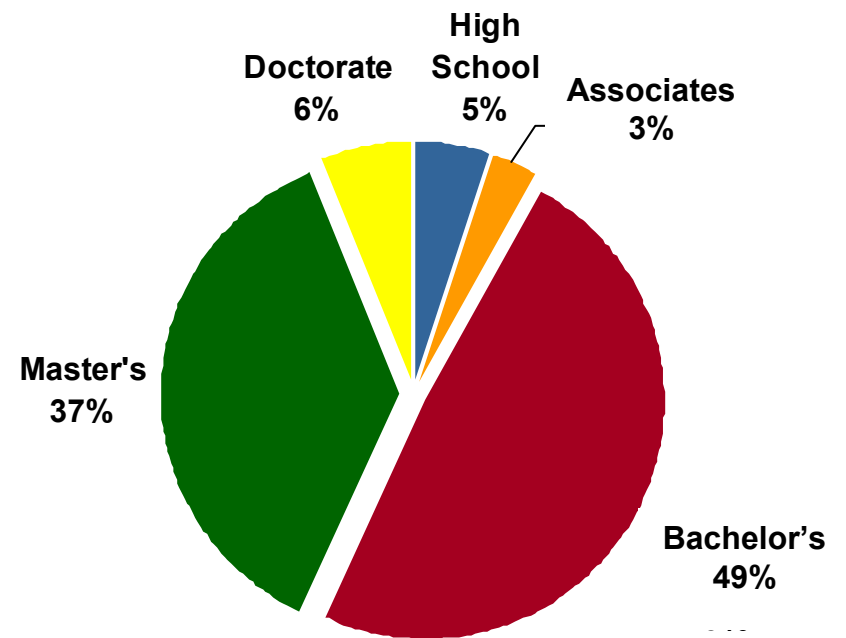


Respondents work at all organizational levels and are highly educated

By Level Within Organization

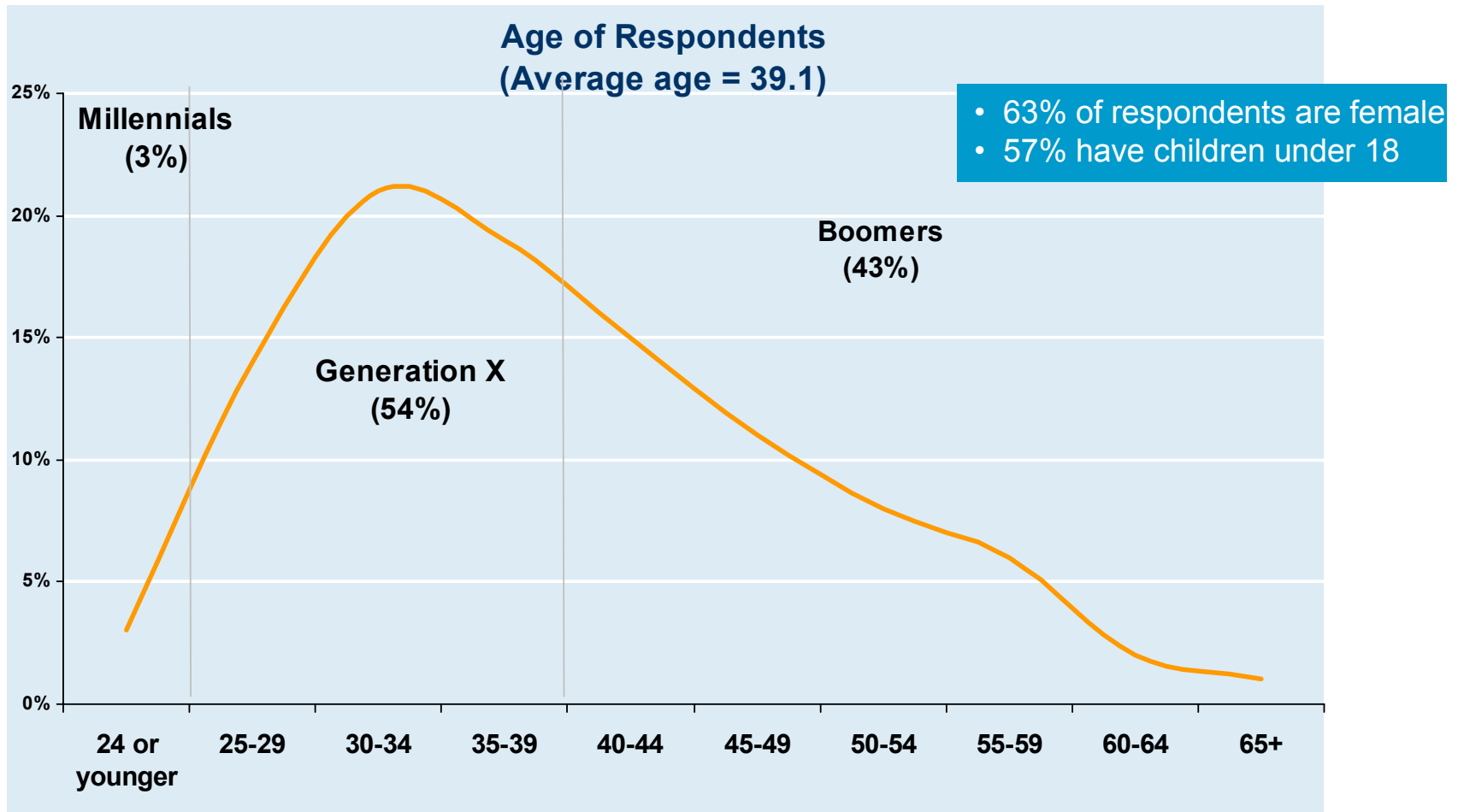


Educational Level of Respondents





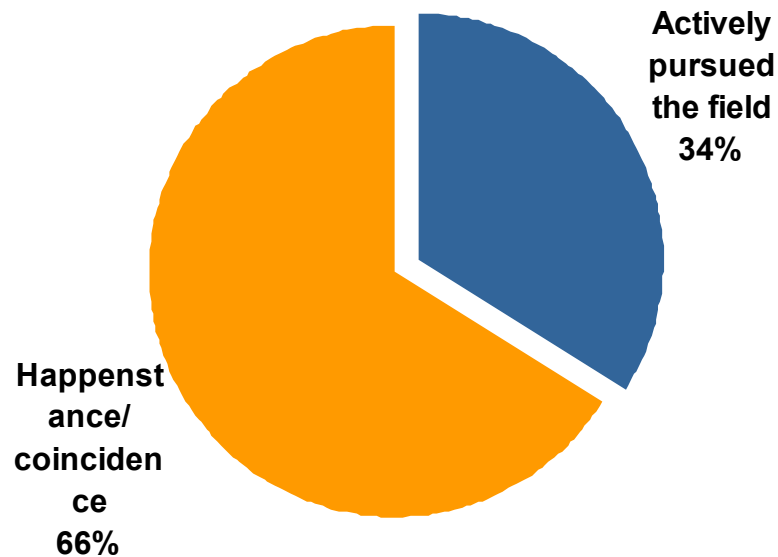
Youth occupations draw mainly Gen Xers and younger boomers





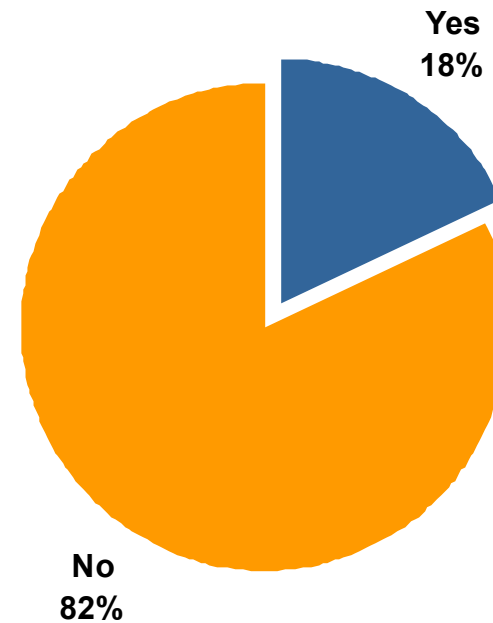
Most came to work in this field by chance

How did you come to work in a youth-related field?



Those working for educational institutions or non-profit organizations were more likely than others to have actively pursued a youth field.

Do you have specific educational training in working with children?



85% have experience working in non-youth related fields.

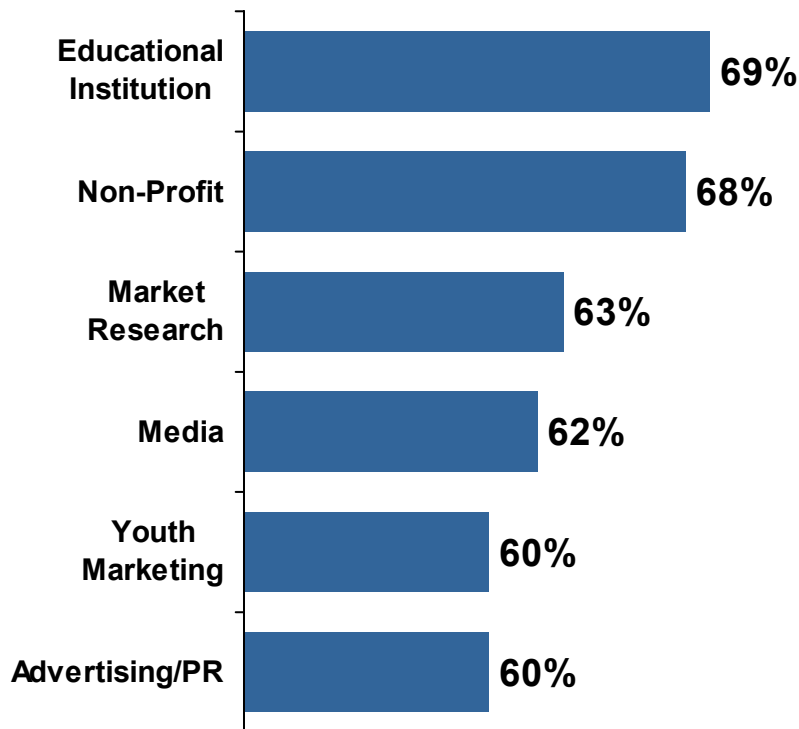
Job Satisfaction



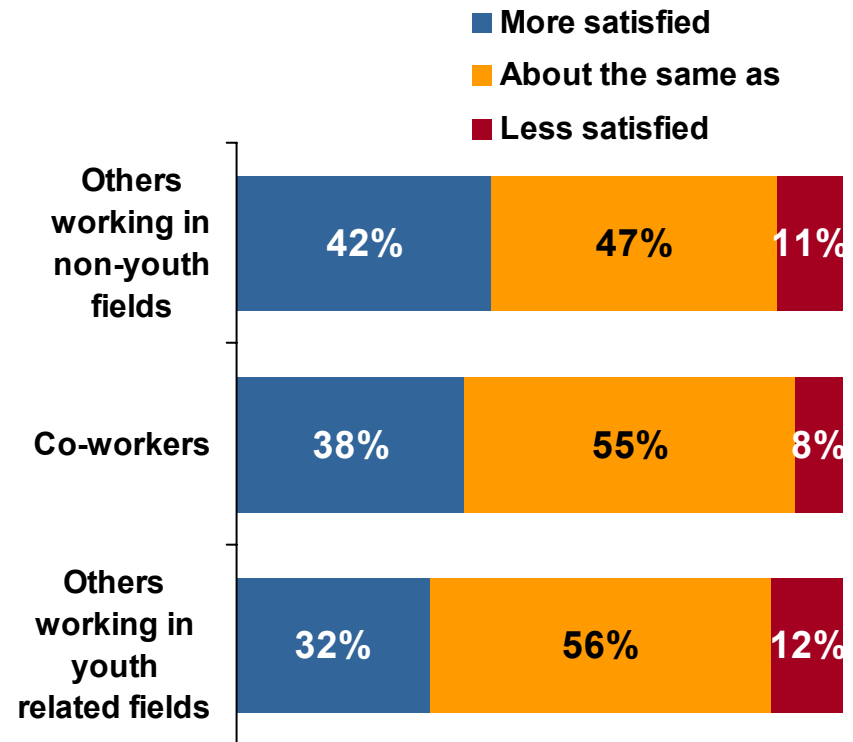


High level of job satisfaction among those working in youth oriented occupations

% Highly Satisfied with Job
(Rated Satisfaction as 8+ on 10 point scale)



How would you compare your own job satisfaction with ...?



"As someone involved in marketing to youth I often find myself self-conflicted, but that is part of what makes the field challenging and interesting."

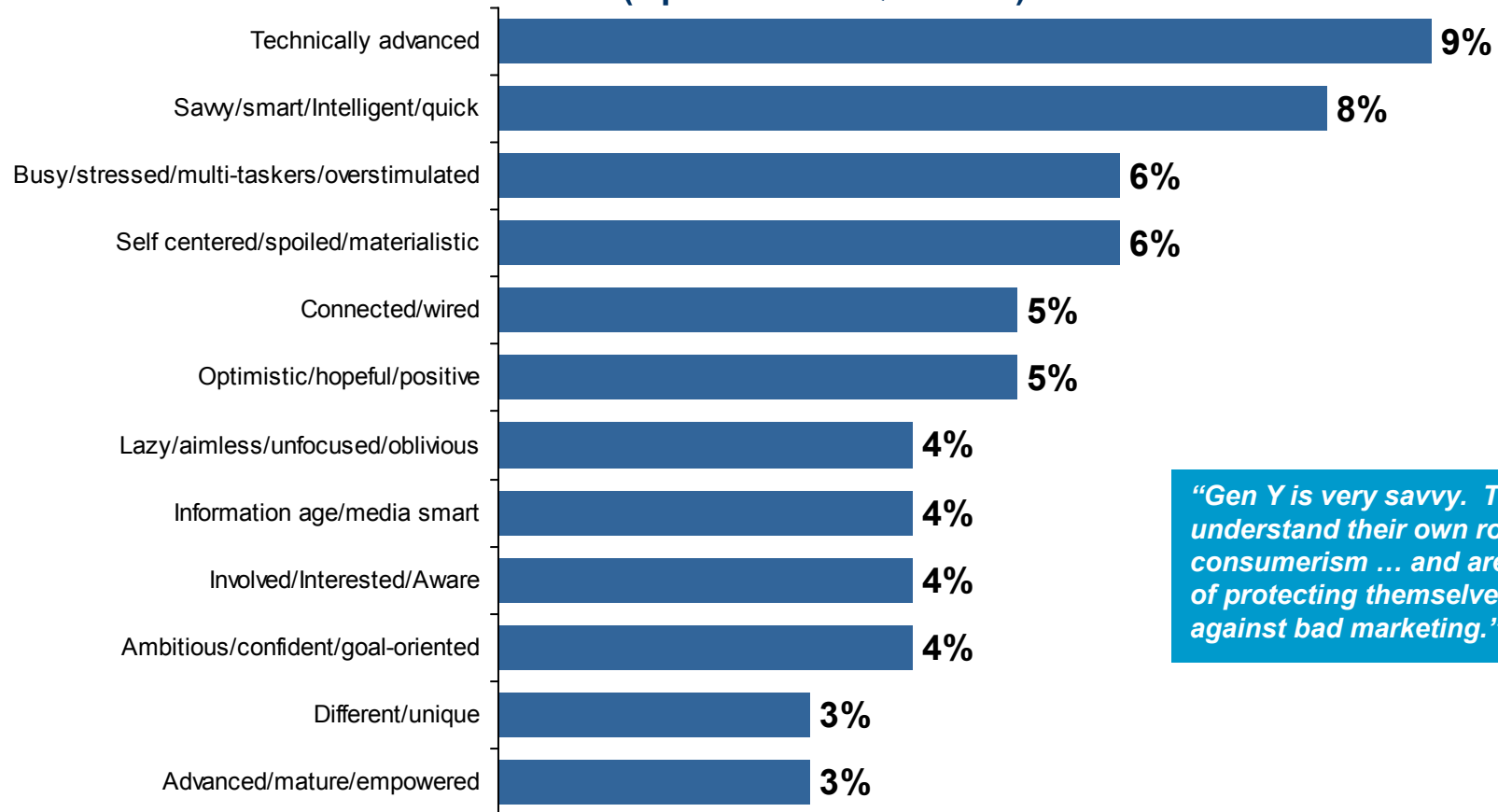
How Do Those Working in Youth Fields View Today's Youth Generation?





Those working in youth fields characterize the generation as technically advanced, smart, yet busy

Which one adjective do you feel best describes this generation, especially compared to previous generations of young people?
(Open-Ended Question)

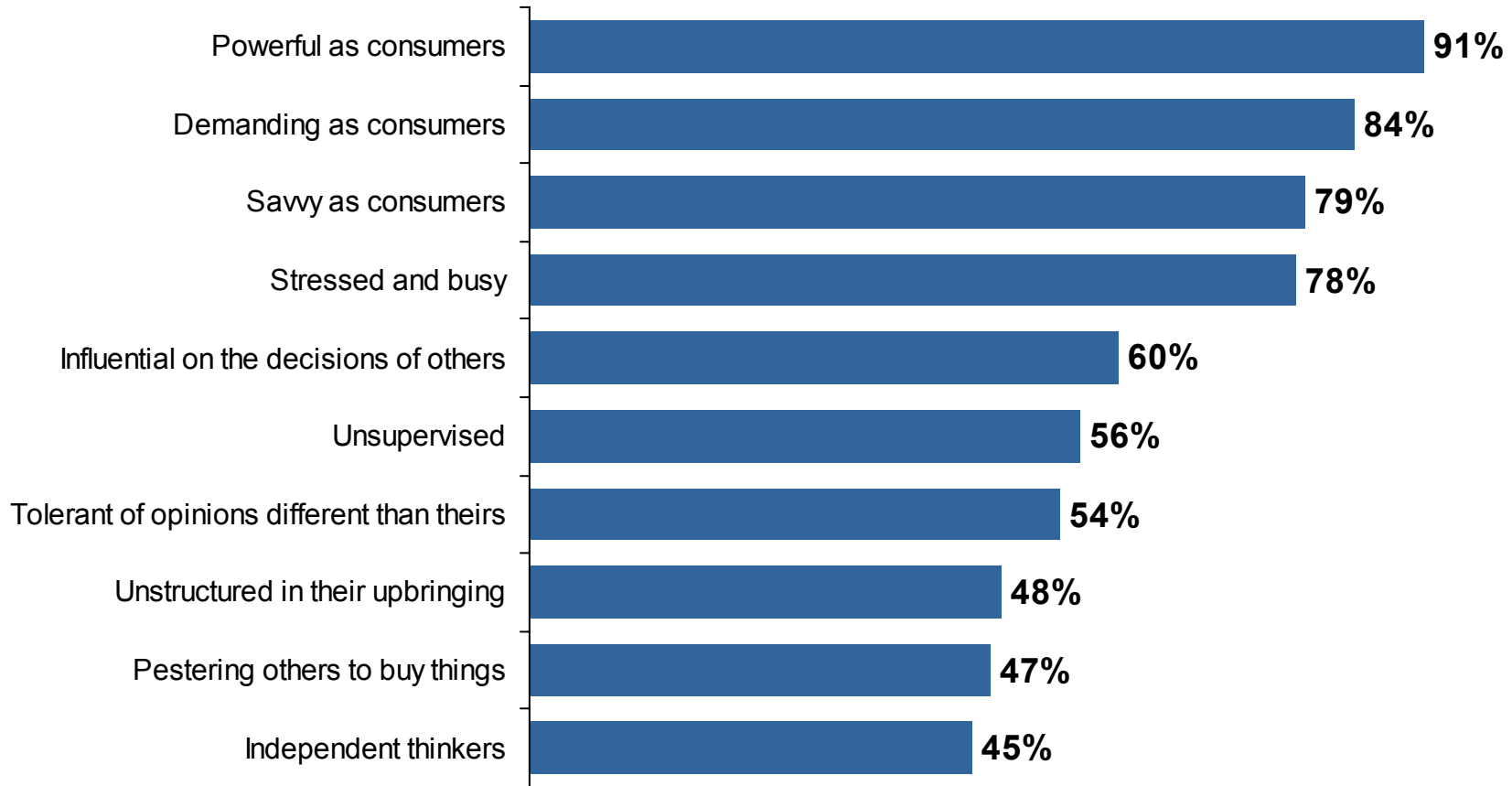


“Gen Y is very savvy. They understand their own role in consumerism ... and are aware of protecting themselves against bad marketing.”



Respondents characterize today's youth as more powerful, demanding, and savvy than previous youth generation

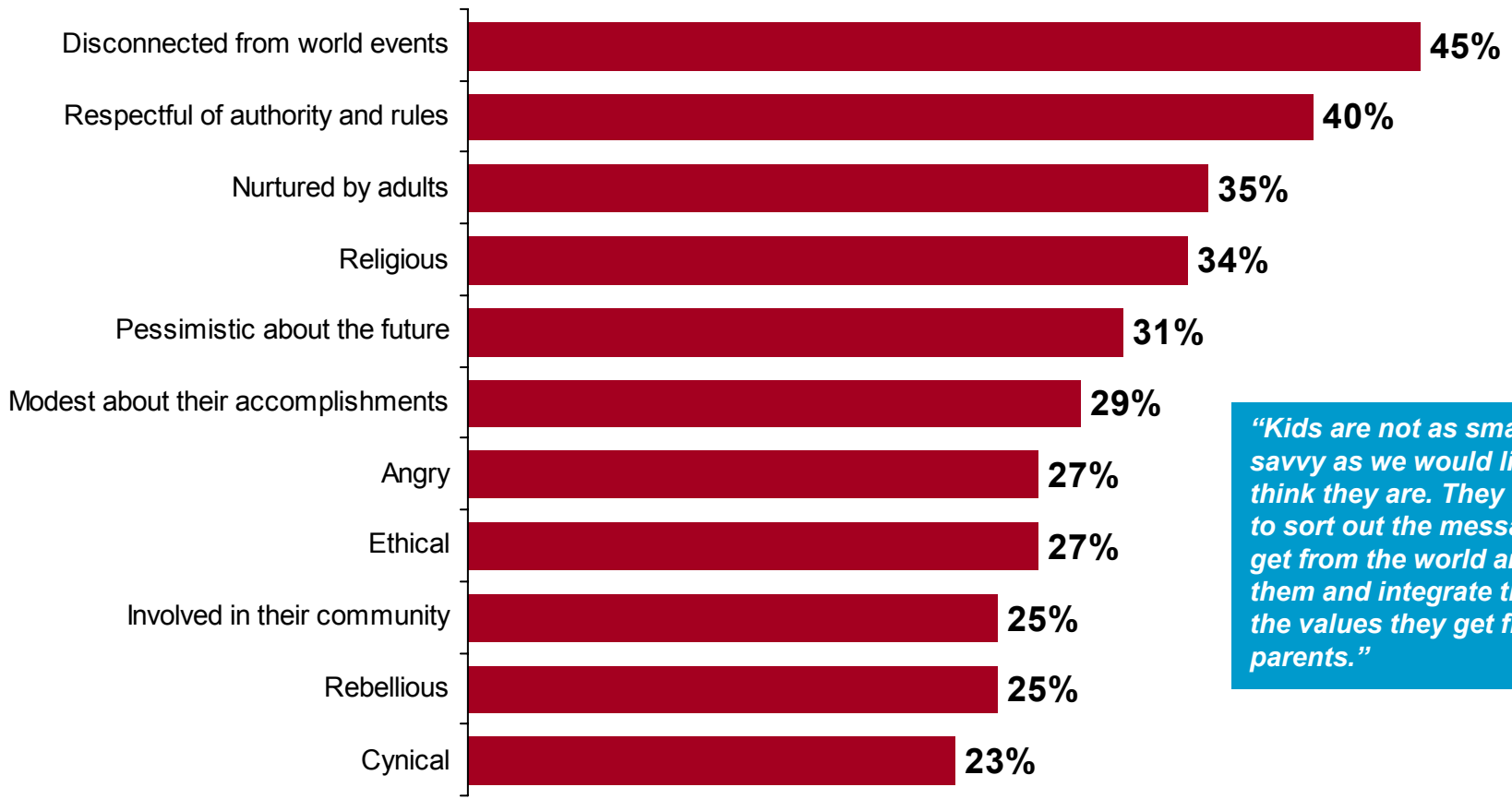
% Saying word/phrase describes today's youth generation MORE than young people 10-15 years ago (Top 10 responses shown)





Respondents also see today's youth as more disconnected from world events and less respectful of authority

% Saying word/phrase describes today's youth generation LESS than young people 10-15 years ago (Top responses shown)

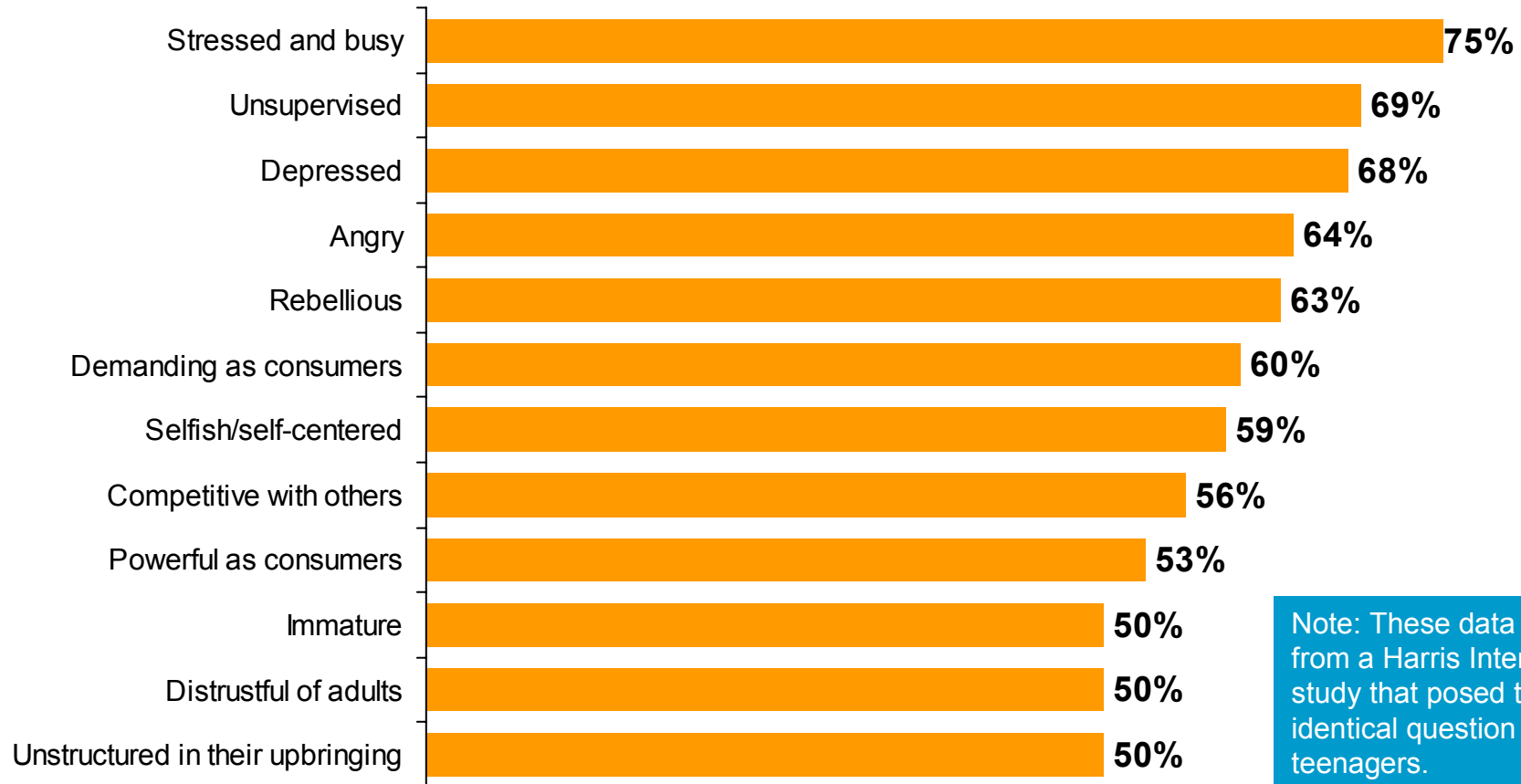


"Kids are not as smart and savvy as we would like to think they are. They need time to sort out the messages they get from the world around them and integrate them with the values they get from their parents."



Teens describe themselves as more stressed, unsupervised, and depressed than previous generation

**% TEENS saying word/phrase describes today's youth generation
MORE than young people 10-15 years ago
(Top 10 responses shown)**

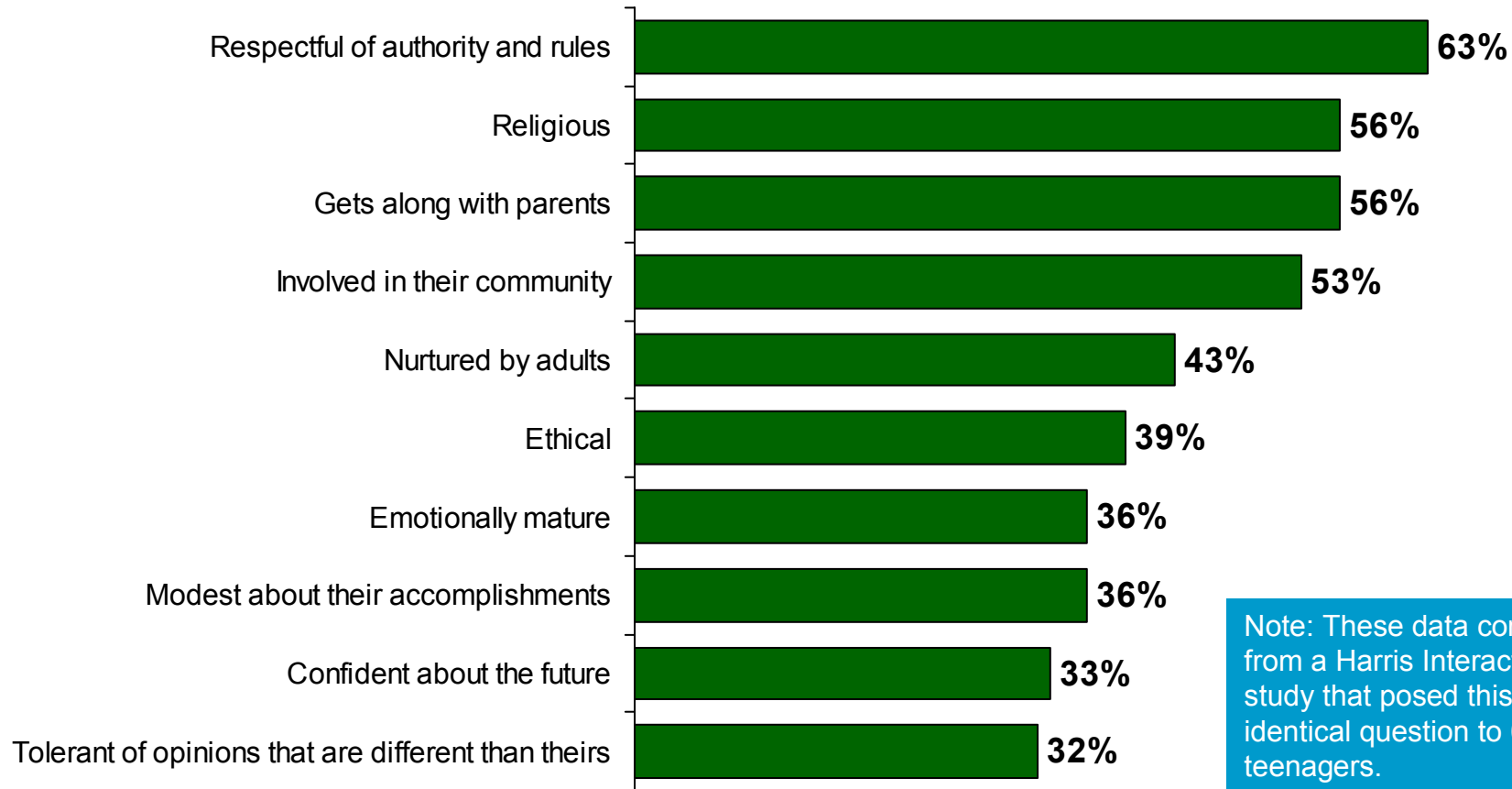


Note: These data come from a Harris Interactive study that posed this identical question to 643 teenagers.



Teens describe themselves as less respectful of authority, less religious, and less likely to get along with parents

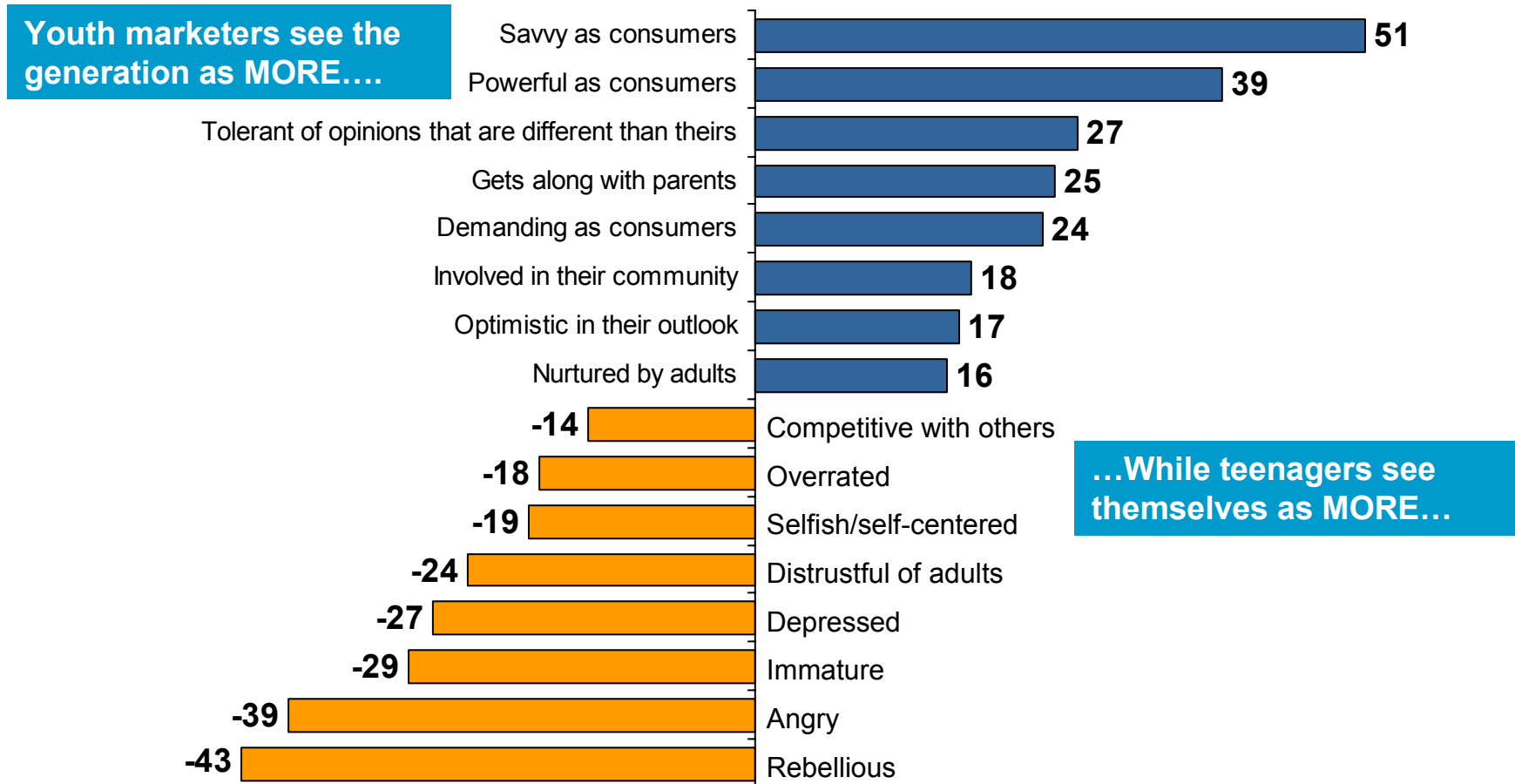
**% TEENS saying word/phrase describes today's youth generation
LESS than young people 10-15 years ago
(Top 10 responses shown)**





Youth industry views young people as more powerful and savvy as consumers than teens see themselves; teens see themselves as more rebellious and angry than the youth industry views them

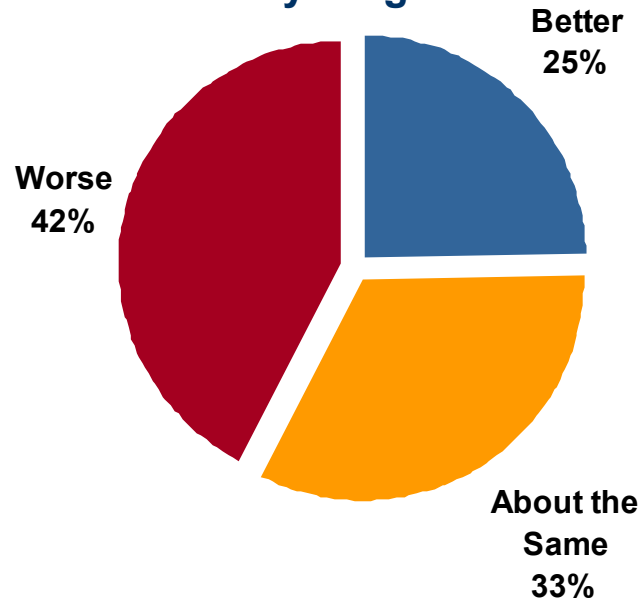
Words/Phrases Garnering the Most Disagreement Between Those Working in Youth Industry and Teenagers



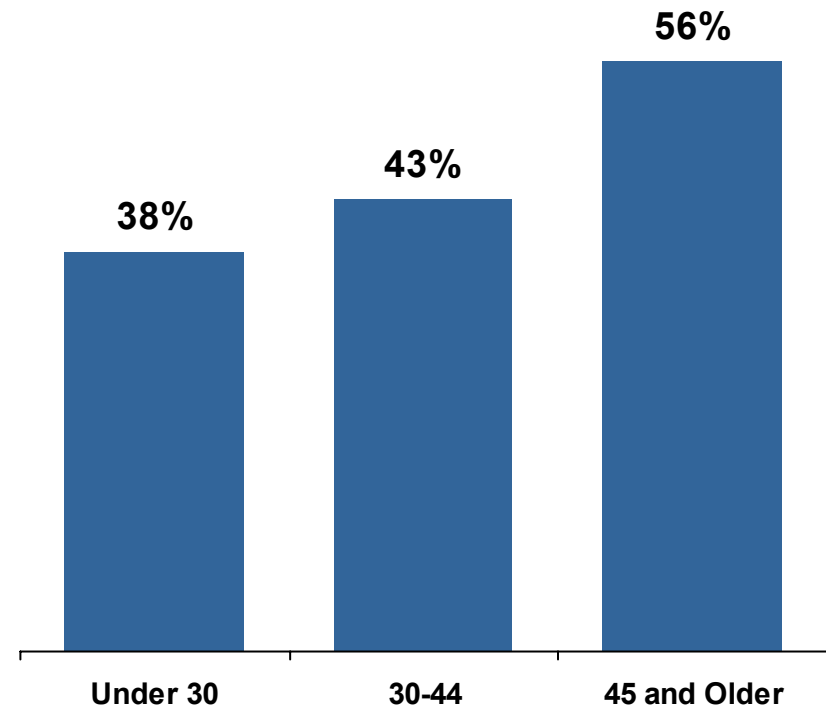


Overall, those working in youth fields think it is worse to be a kid today than when they were young

Do you think it is better, worse, or about the same to be a kid today than when you were young?



% Saying "Worse" by Age of Respondent

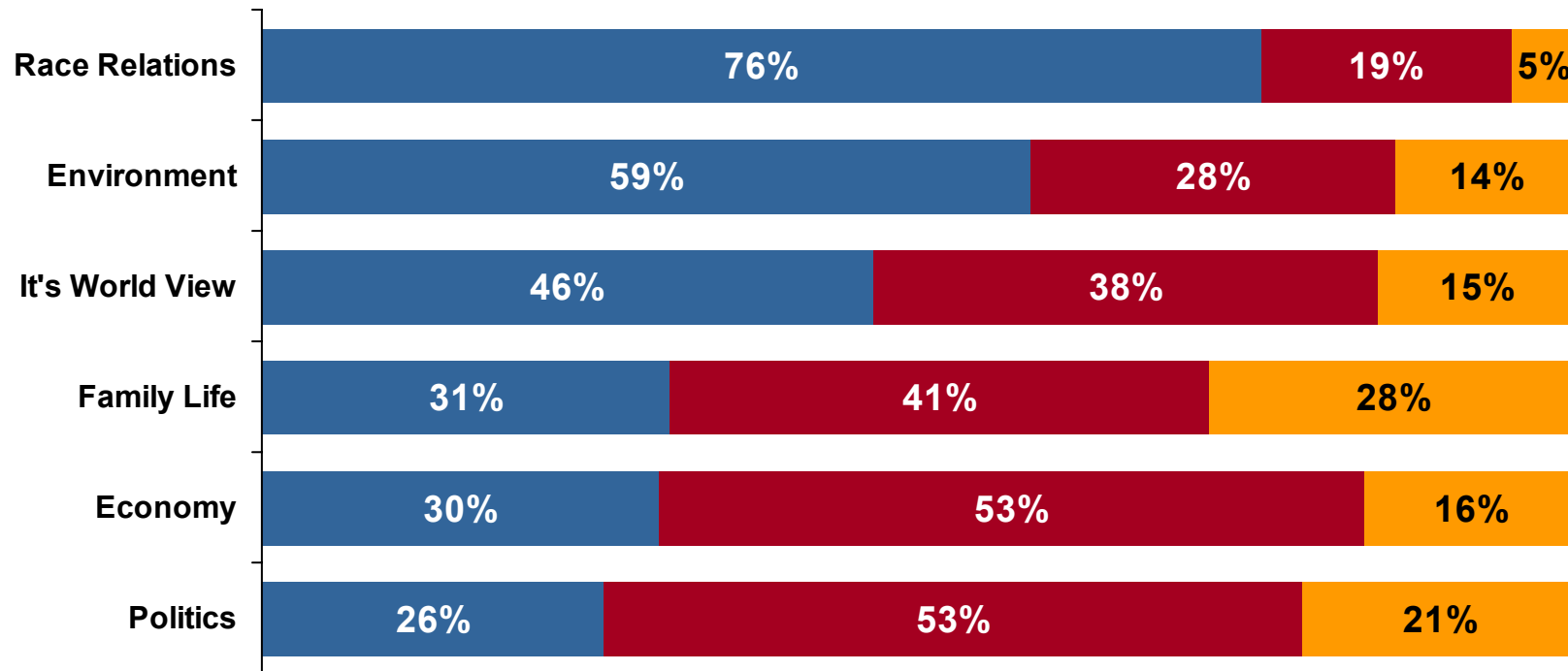




Respondents feel Gen Y will leave a positive legacy in terms of race relations and the environment

Do you feel that Generation Y will leave a more positive legacy or a more negative legacy compared to previous generations in terms of ...?

■ More Positive Legacy ■ About the Same Legacy ■ More Negative Legacy

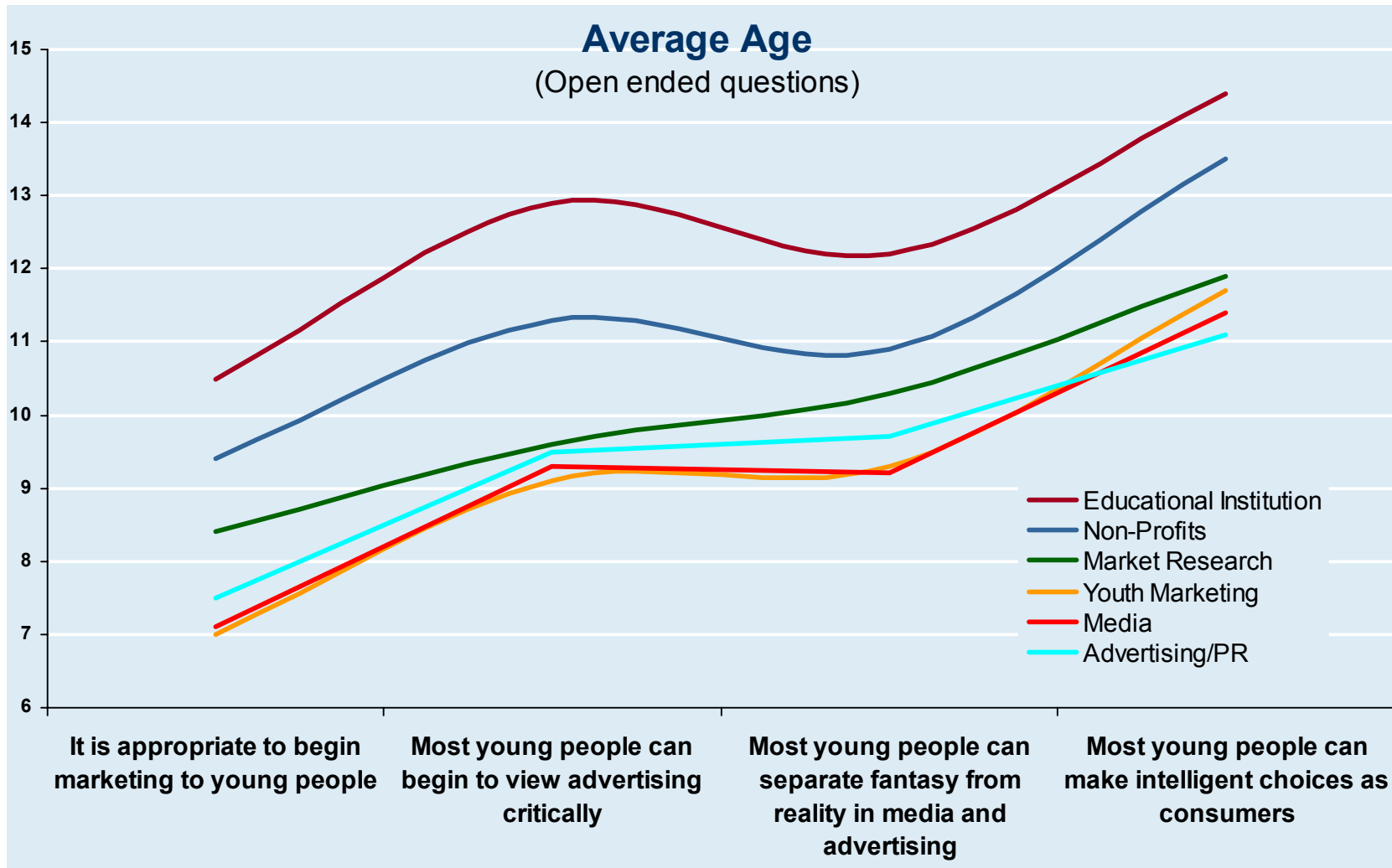


Views Towards Targeting Young People as Consumers





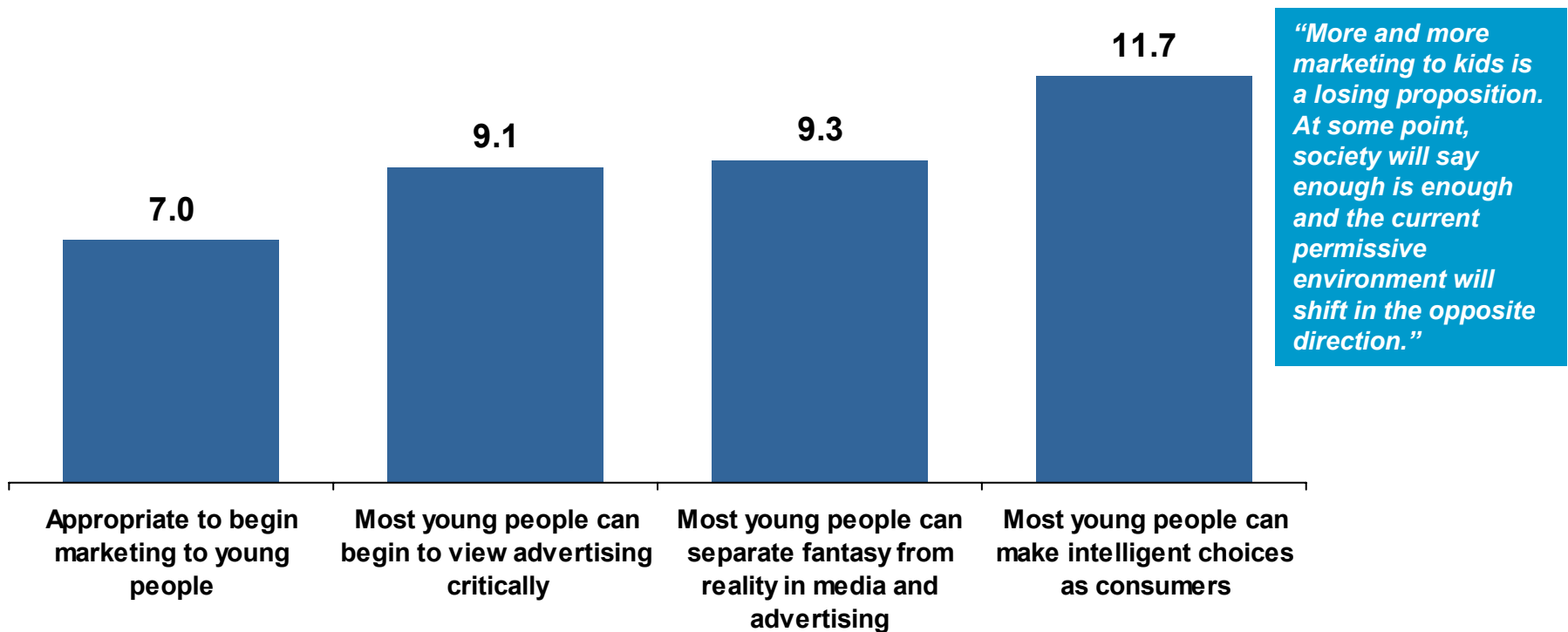
Youth marketers tend to feel that consumers “come of age” younger than others working in youth fields





Youth marketers feel it is appropriate to begin marketing to young people years before they can view advertising critically or make intelligent choices as consumers

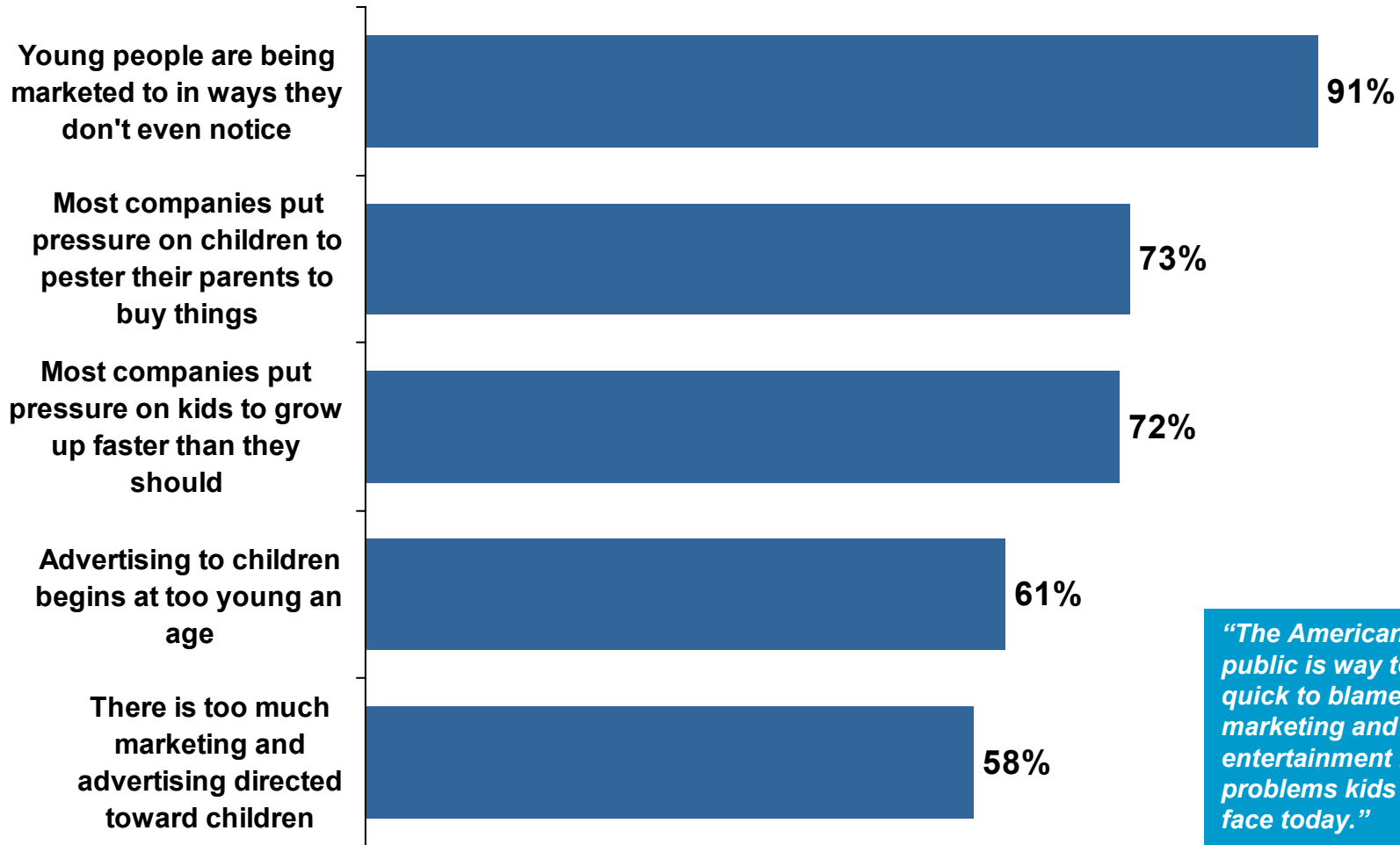
At what age do you feel ...?
(Average response shown - YOUTH MARKETERS ONLY)





The youth industry feels that there is a lot of pressure being placed on young people as consumers

% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement



"The American public is way too quick to blame marketing and entertainment for problems kids may face today."

How Do Those Working in Youth Fields View the Moral and Ethical Standards of the Youth Marketing Industry?



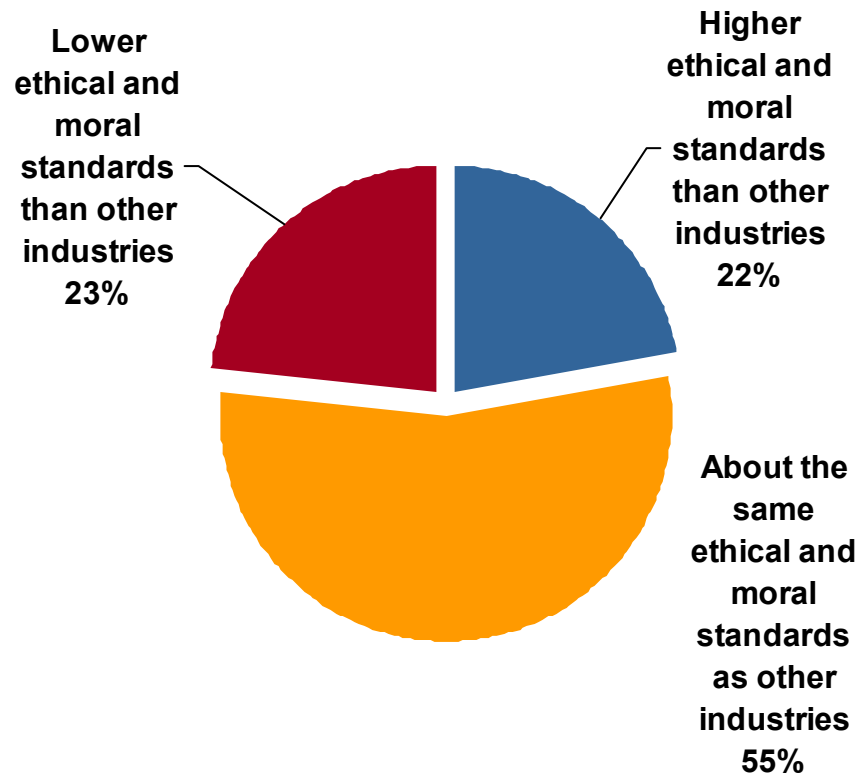
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Youth field feels its moral and ethical standards are on par with other industries

Does the youth marketing field maintains ...?

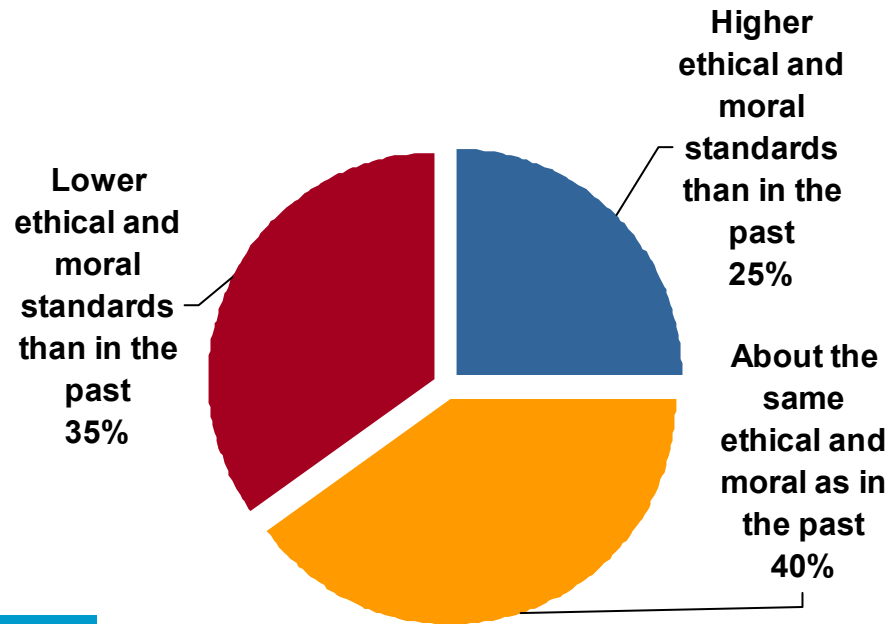


"The bottom line is profits is not a dirty word, but ethics in selling to kids, tweens, and teens could be vastly improved."



However, many feel ethical and moral standards are lower than they were in the past

Does today's youth marketing field maintain ...?



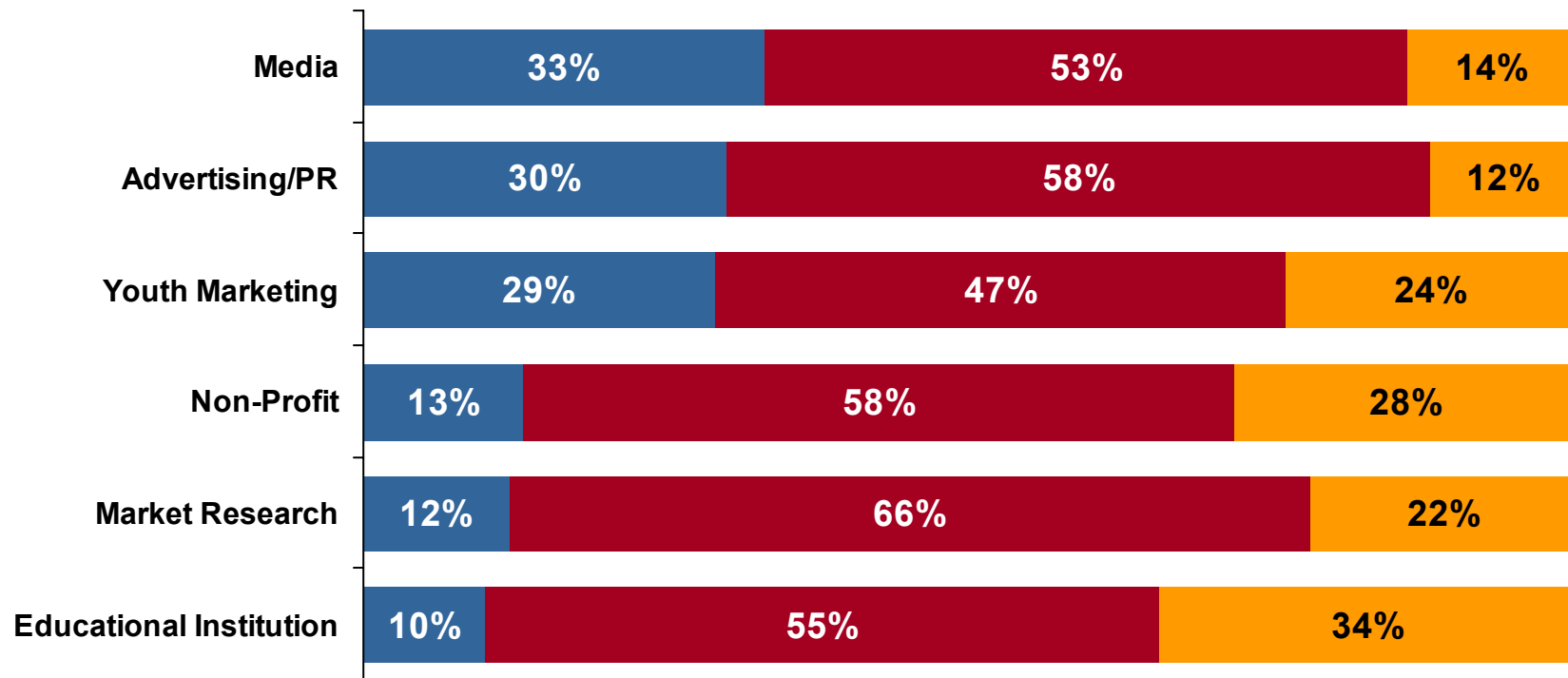
"Our industry needs to be much less defensive or we invite regulation. Too often we put our own business needs ahead of the needs of children and the two don't need to be exclusive."



Non-profits, research firms, and educational institutions are less positive about youth marketing field's ethical/moral standards

Does the youth marketing field maintains higher/lower or about the same ethical and moral standards as other industries?

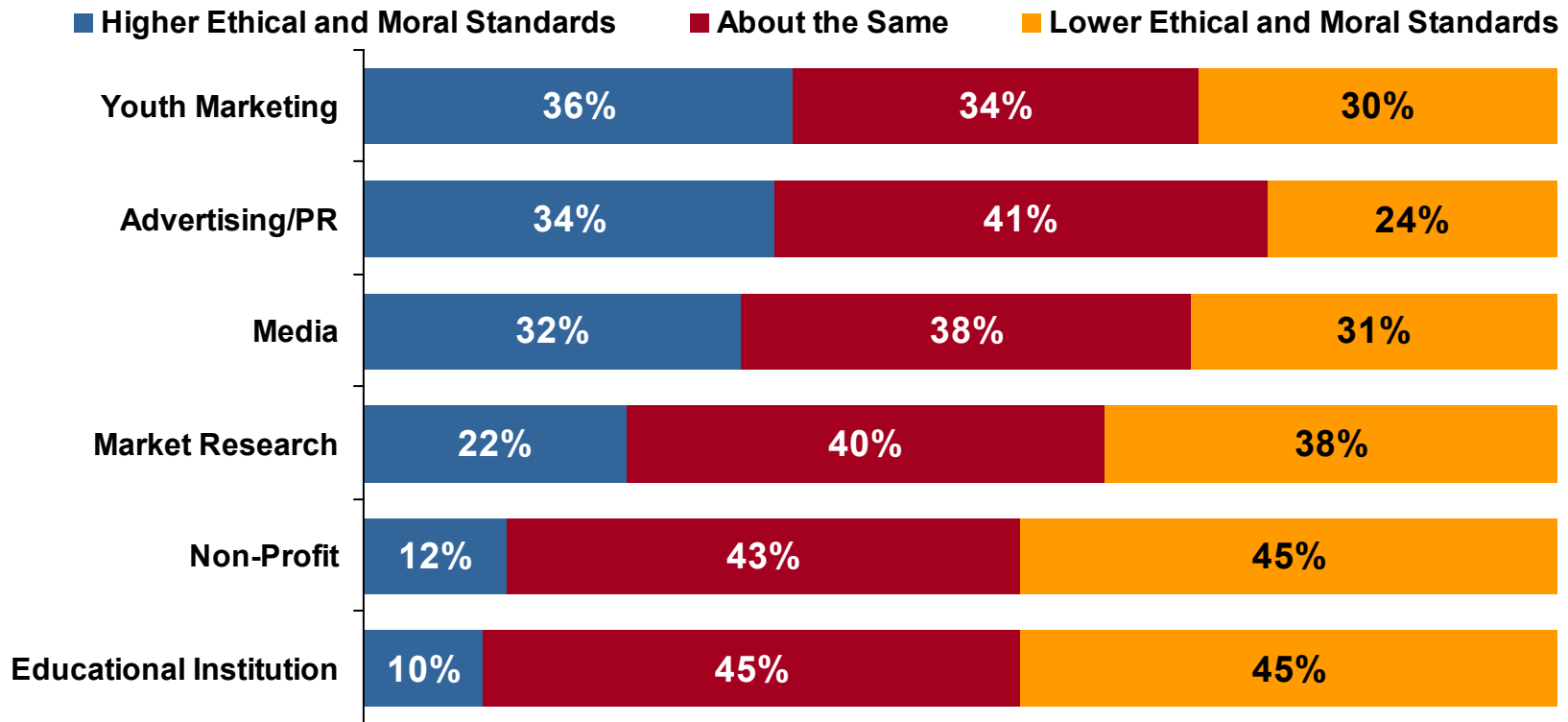
■ Higher Ethical and Moral Standards ■ About the Same ■ Lower Ethical and Moral Standards





Most feel that ethical standards are about the same or lower than in the past

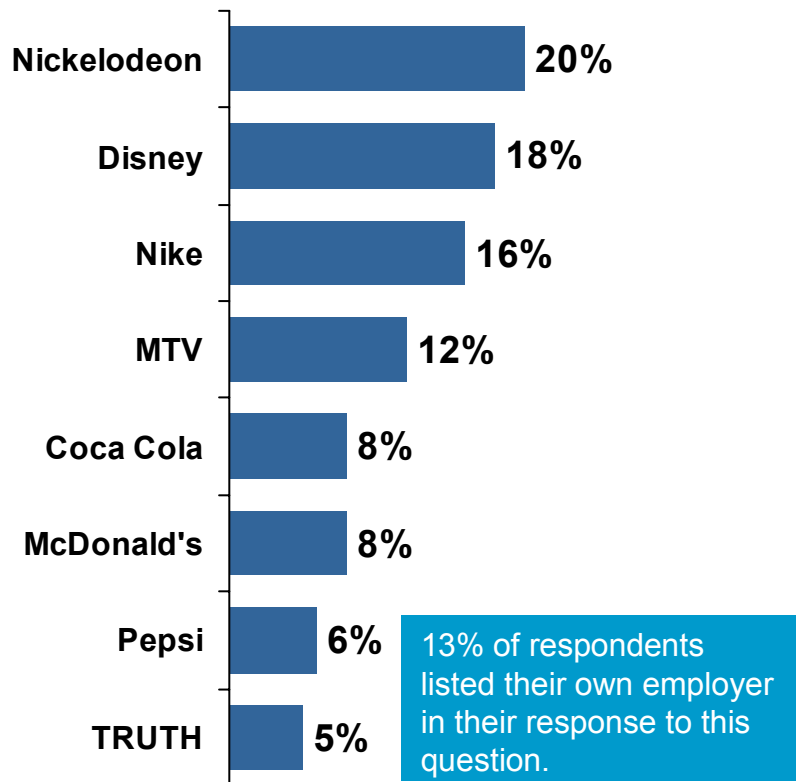
Does the youth marketing field maintains higher/lower or about the same ethical and moral standards than the youth marketing field in the past?



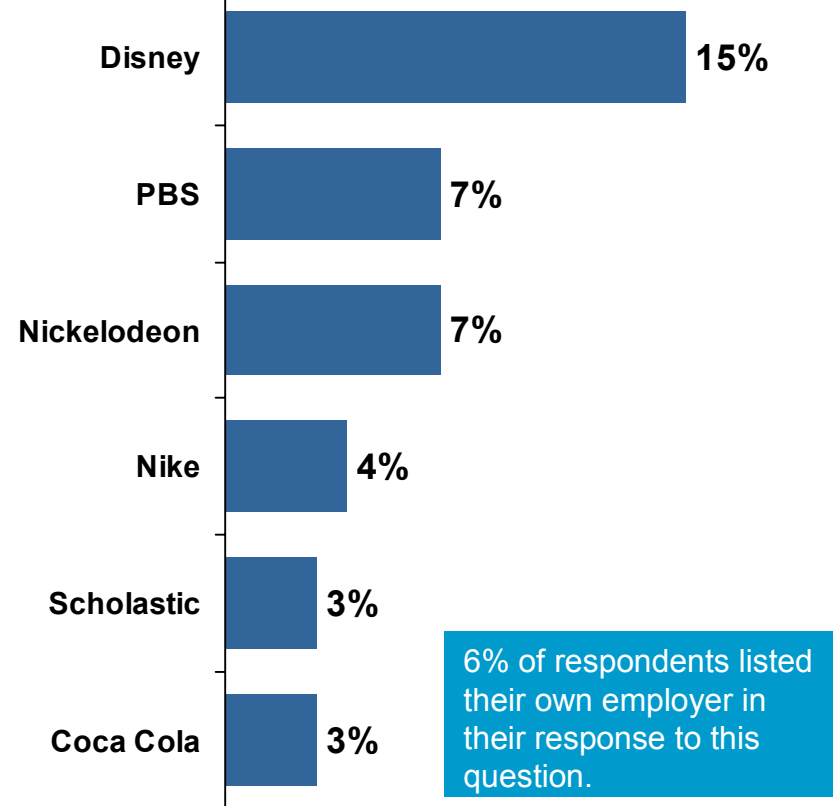


Nickelodeon, Nike, and Disney are seen as role models by those employed in youth fields

Which organizations/firms do you consider to be role models in youth marketing?
(Open Ended Question)



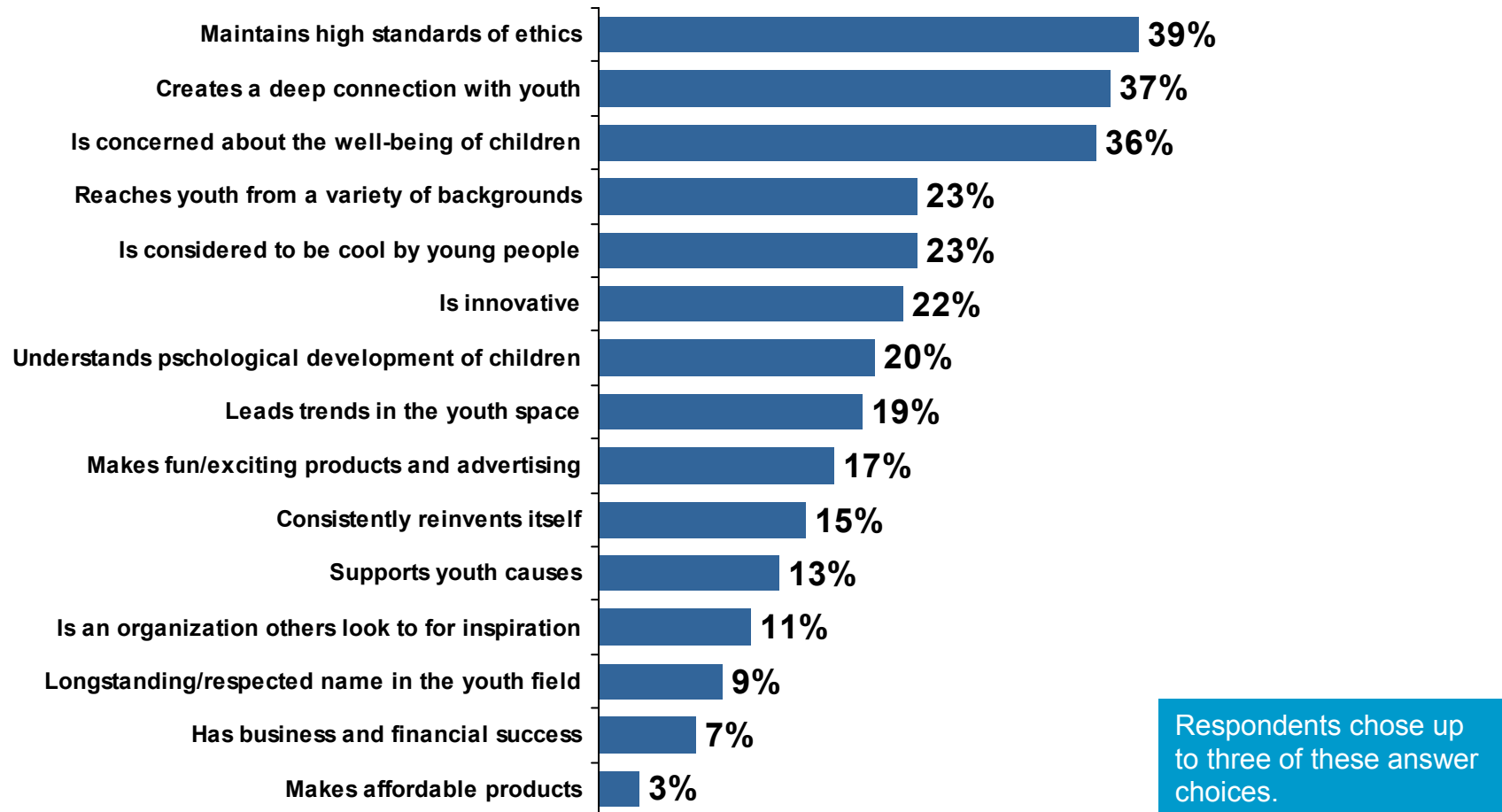
Which one firm maintains the highest moral and ethical standards when it comes to marketing to youth?
(Open Ended Question)





Ethical standards, deep connections with youth, and concern about the well-being of children makes a firm a role model

% Saying Trait is One of Three Most Important Traits for an Organization to be a Role Model in Youth Marketing



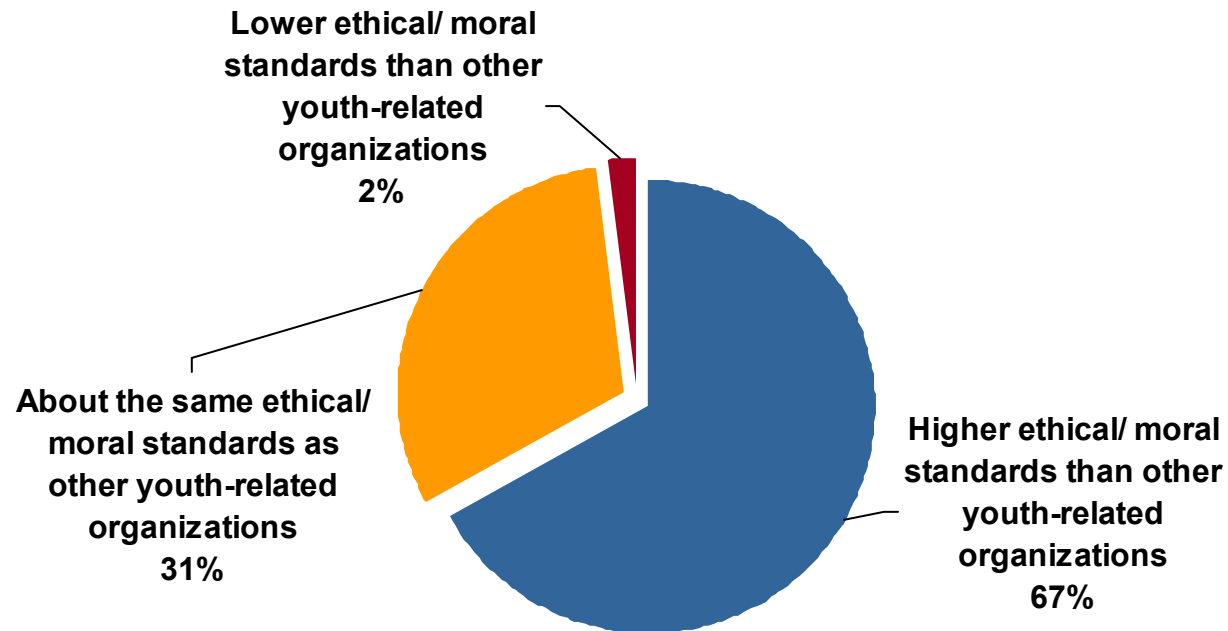
How Do Those Working in Youth Fields View the Moral and Ethical Standards of Their Own Organization?





Two-thirds of respondents feel that their employer maintains higher standards than others in youth fields

How would you rate your **CURRENT EMPLOYER'S** ethical and moral standards?

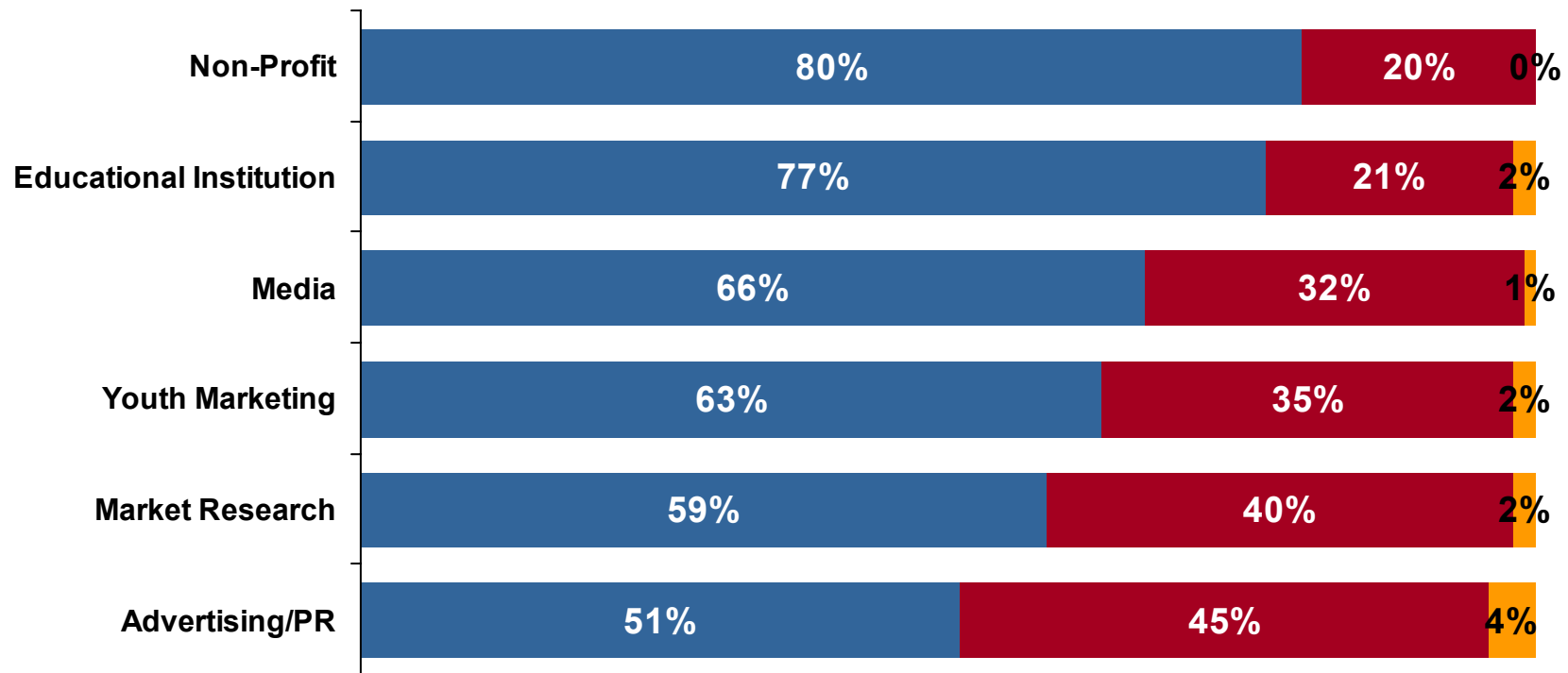




Non-profits and educational institutions feel strongly about the ethical standards of their employer

How would you rate your **CURRENT EMPLOYER'S** ethical and moral standards?

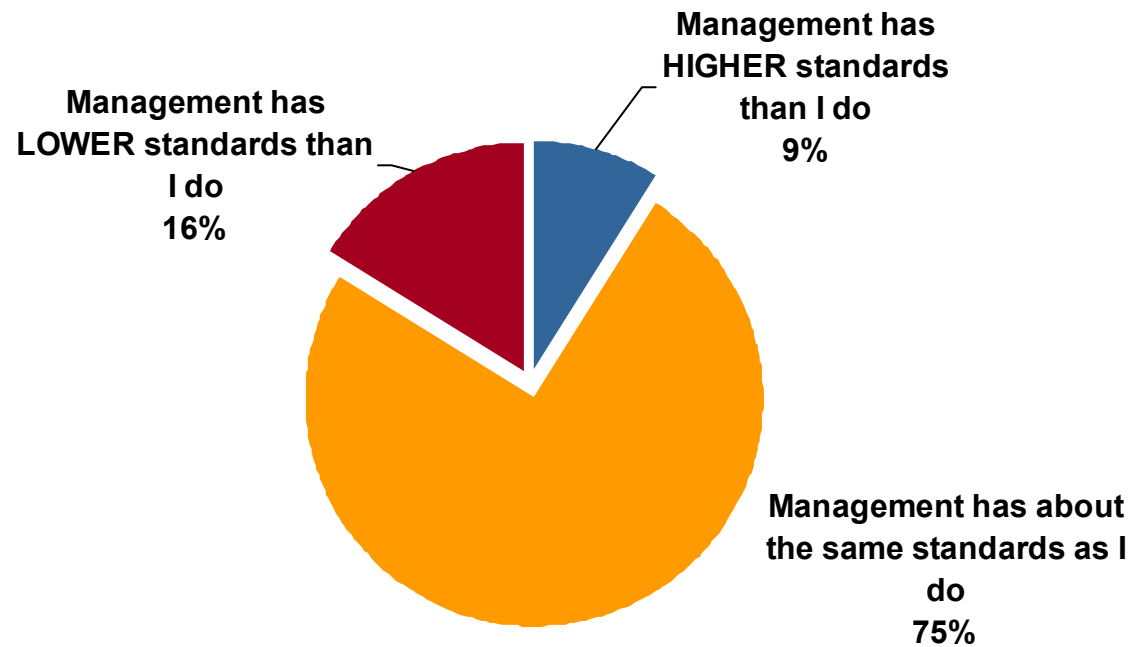
■ Higher Ethical and Moral Standards ■ About the Same ■ Lower Ethical and Moral Standards





Most feel that their management's sense of ethics parallels their own

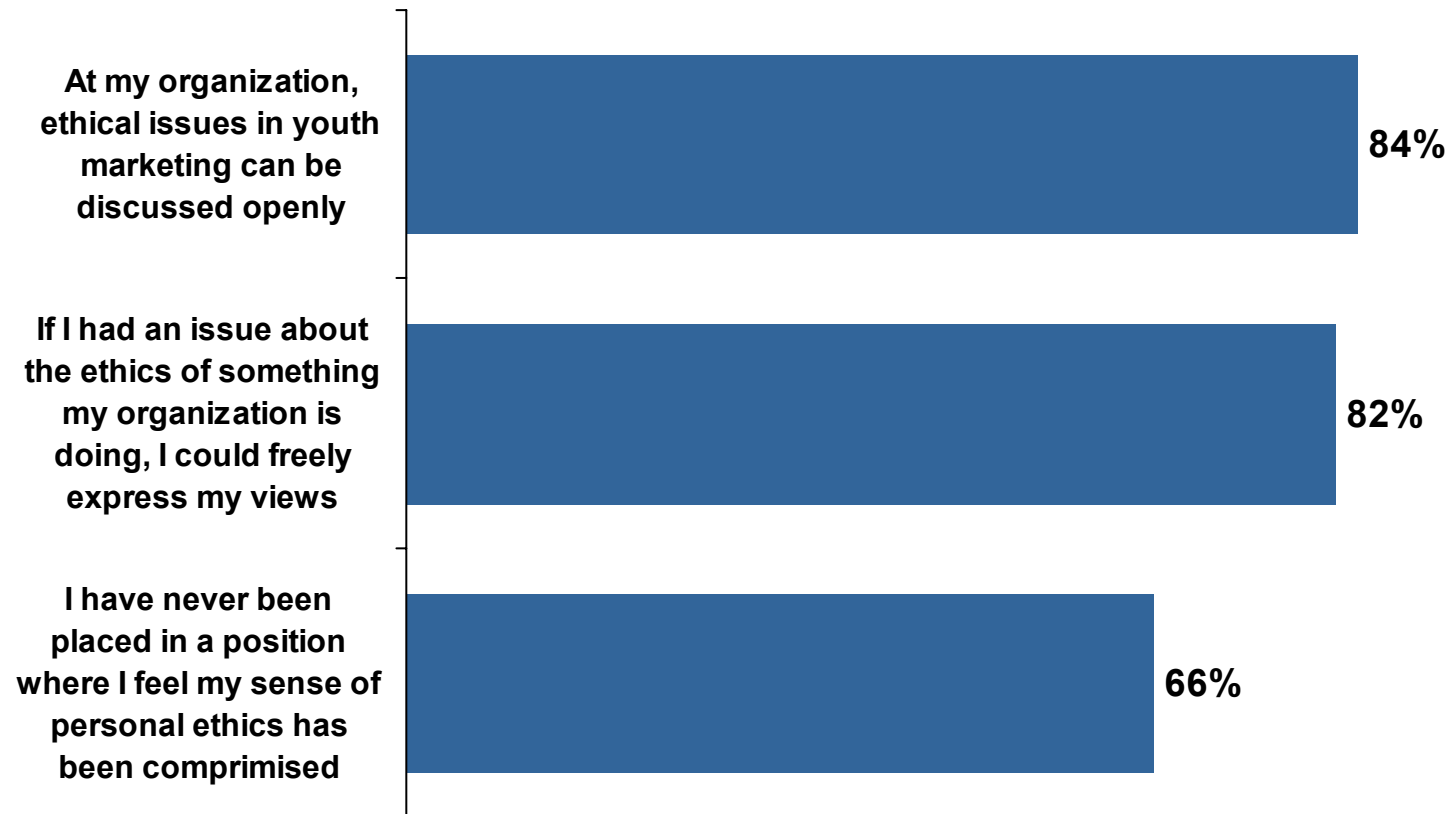
How would you rate your own, personal sense of ethics, compared to your management's?





Those working in youth fields feel that ethics are discussed openly in their organizations

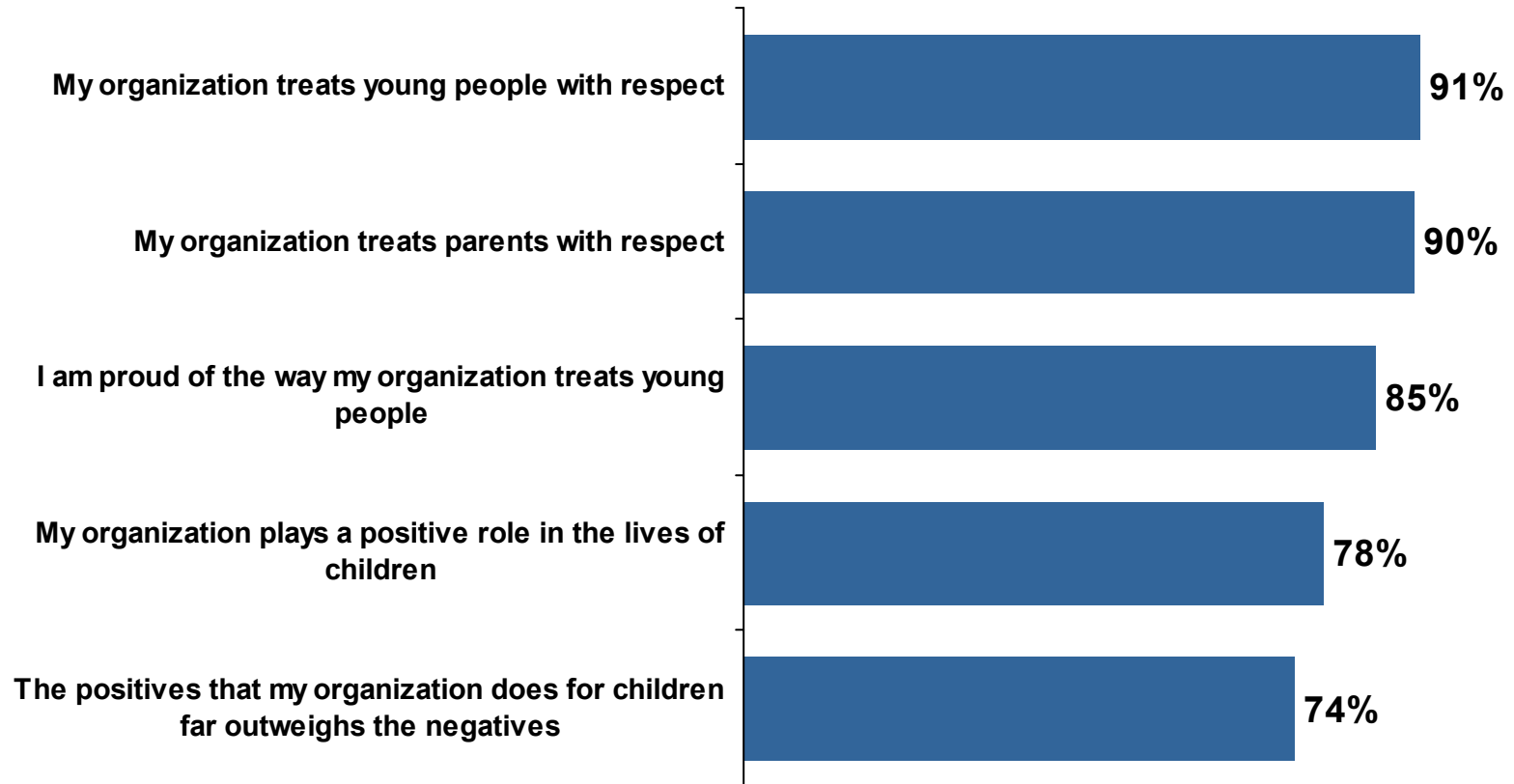
% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement





Most working in youth organizations feel that their employer respects children and parents

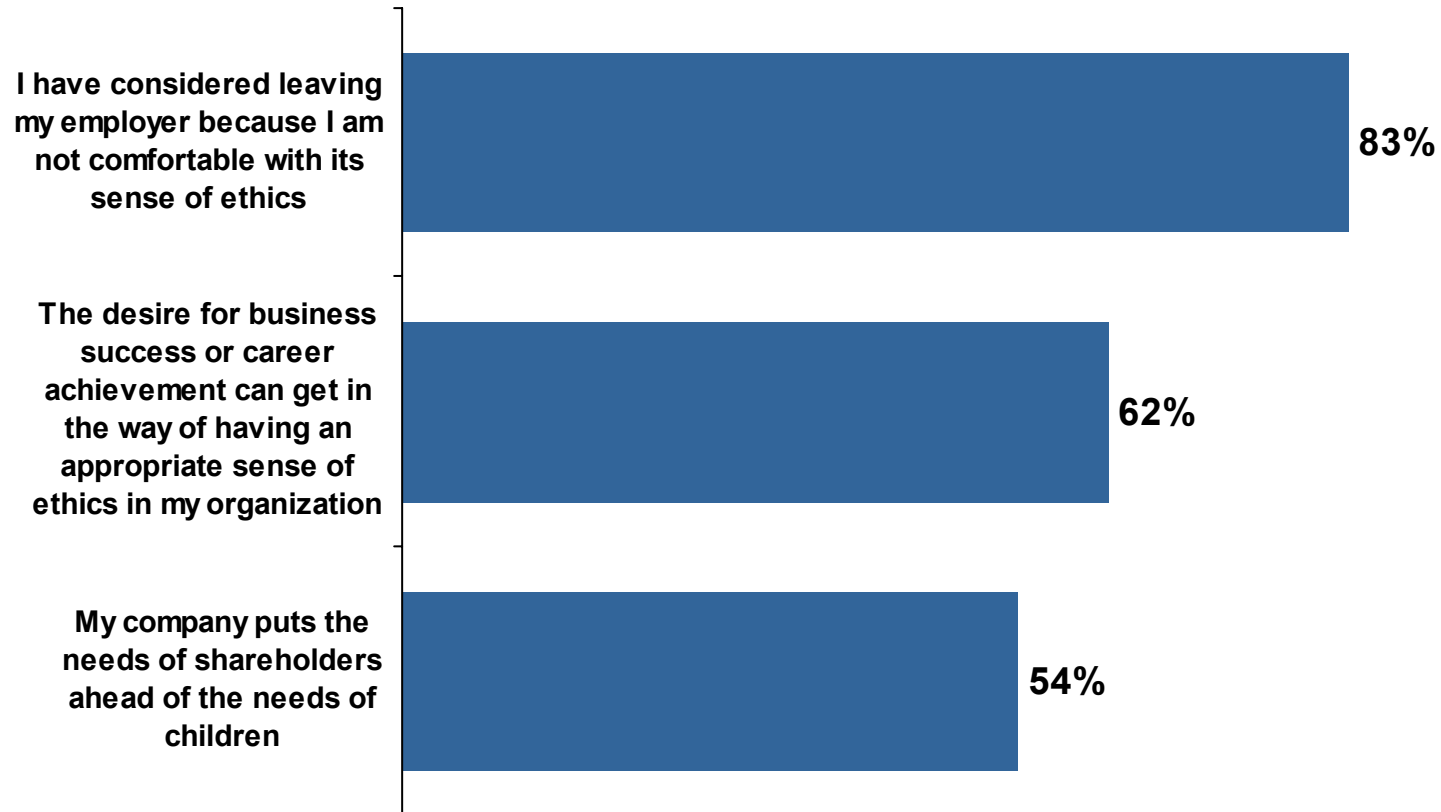
% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement





Most feel that financial pressures do NOT create pressure to act unethically in their organizations

% Disagree/Strongly Disagree with Statement



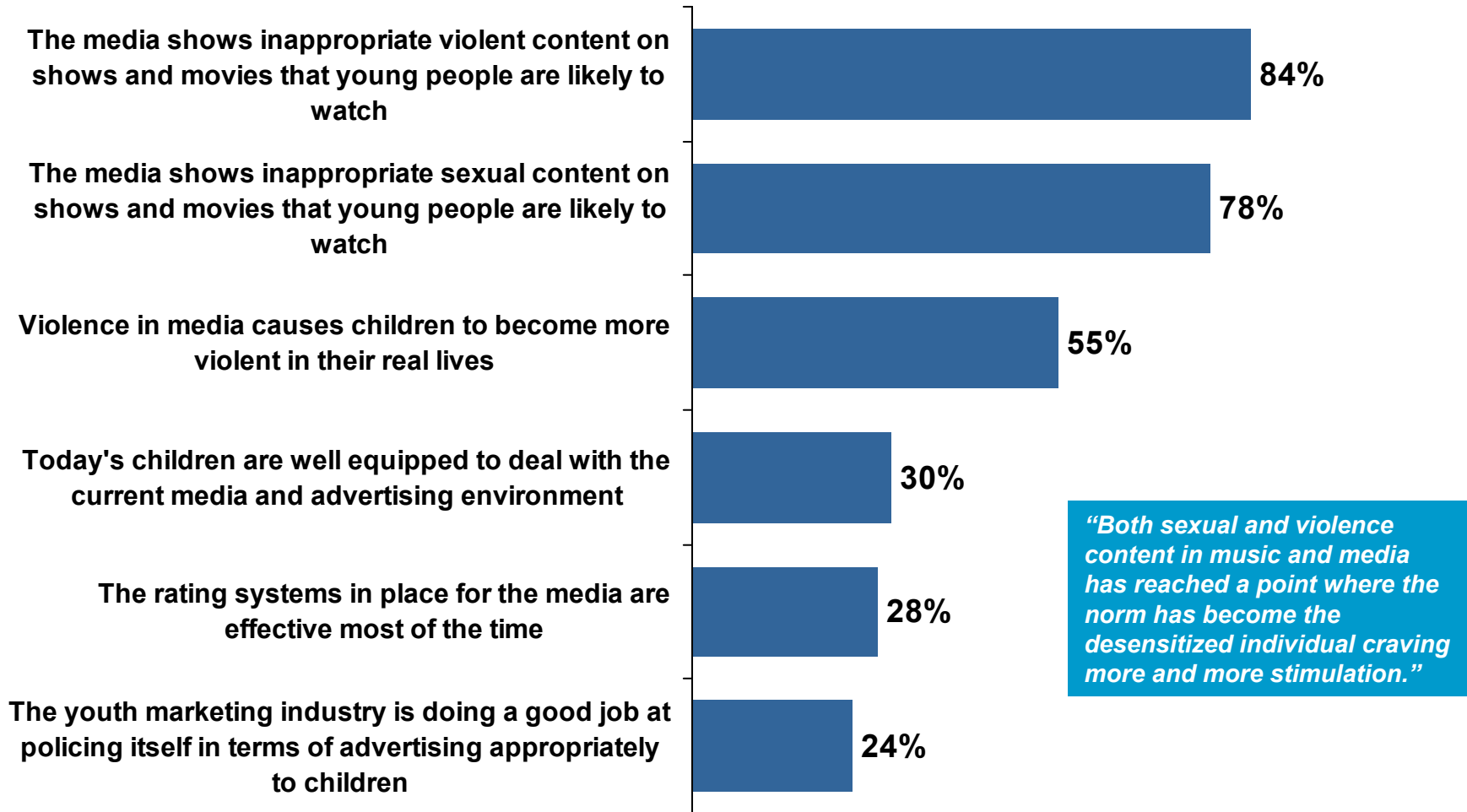
Views Towards Ratings Systems





The youth industry feels that inappropriate content is being shown to children and that rating systems are ineffective

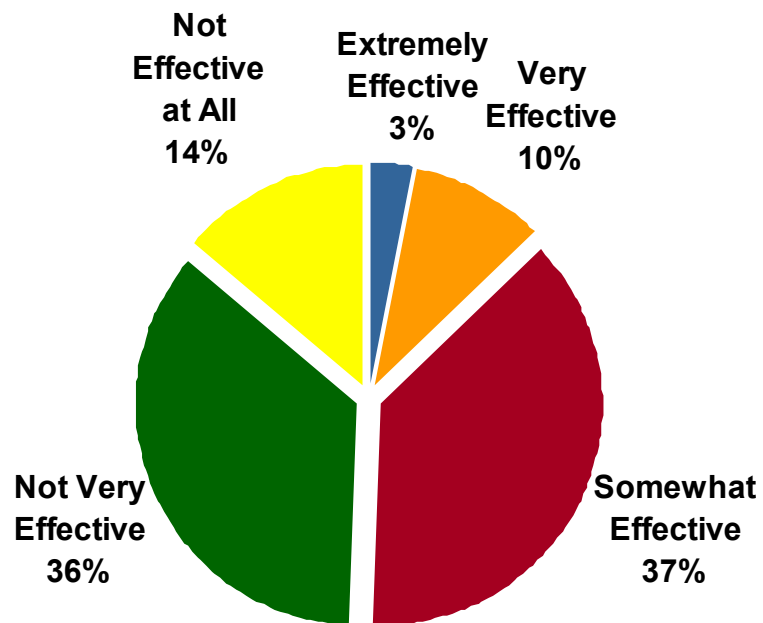
% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement



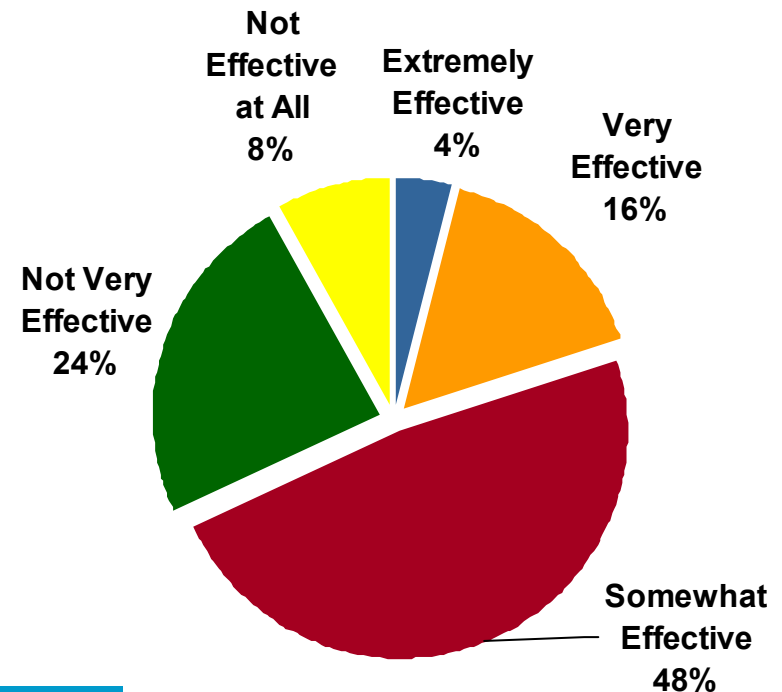


Industry perceptions of video game ratings and movie ratings

How effective are the rating systems in place on VIDEO GAMES?



How effective are the rating systems in place on MOVIES/MOVIE RENTALS?

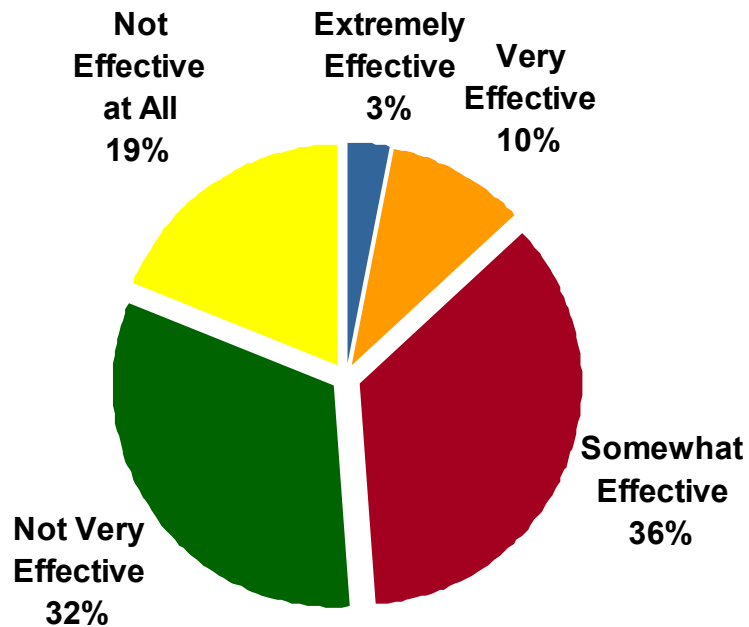


"A video game doesn't have to be violent to appeal... it is just harder to find an alternative, so not enough people try."

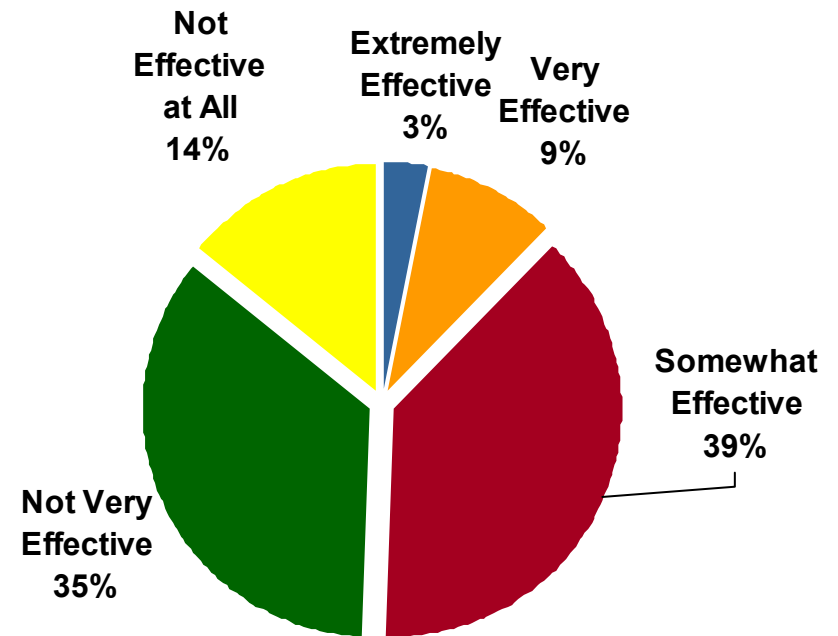


Industry perceptions of TV ratings and music ratings

How effective are the rating systems in place on TELEVISION SHOWS?



How effective are the rating systems in place on MUSIC CDs?



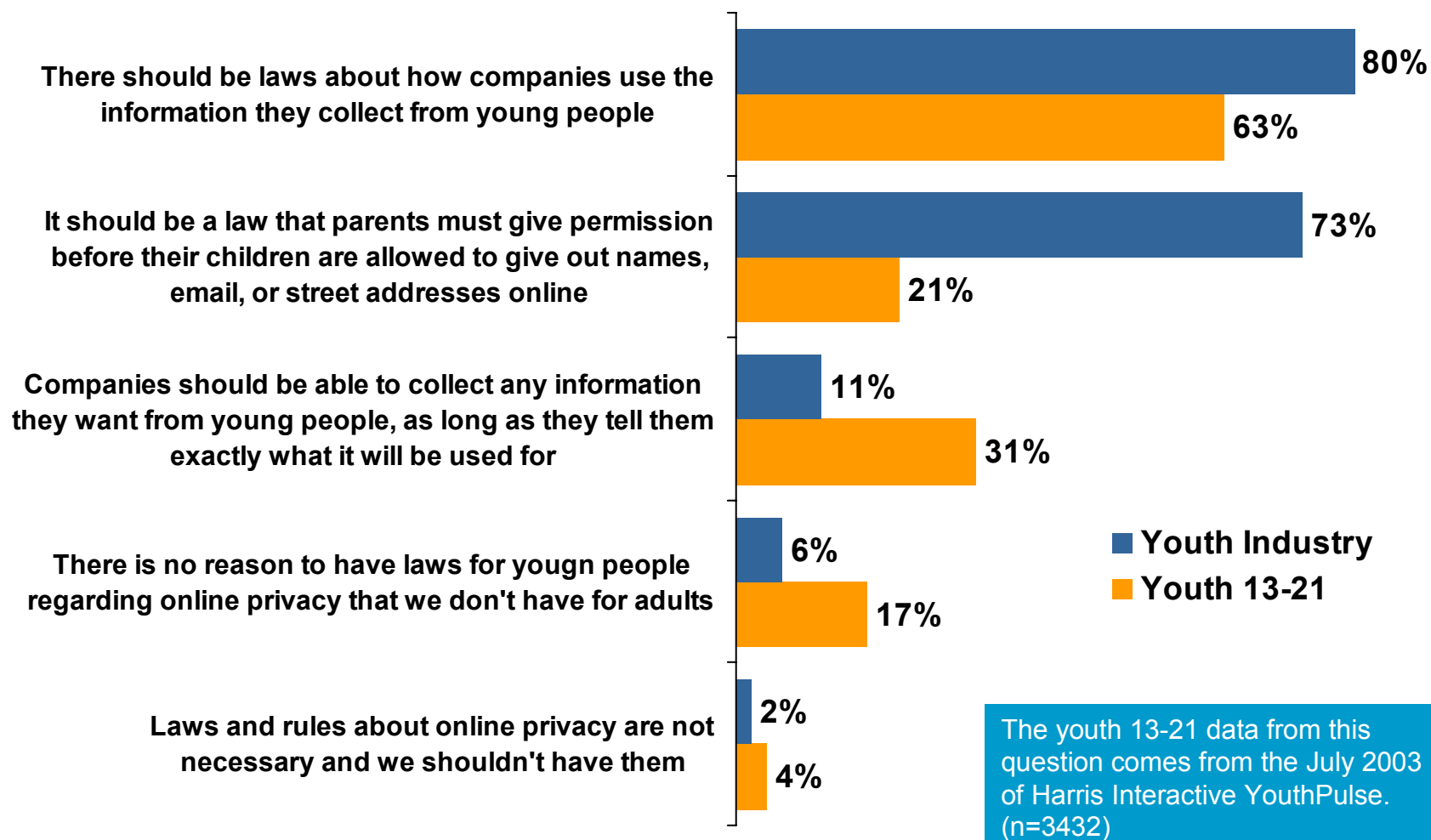
Views Towards Online Privacy and Children





Those working in youth industries sense a greater need to protect online privacy of young people than young people themselves

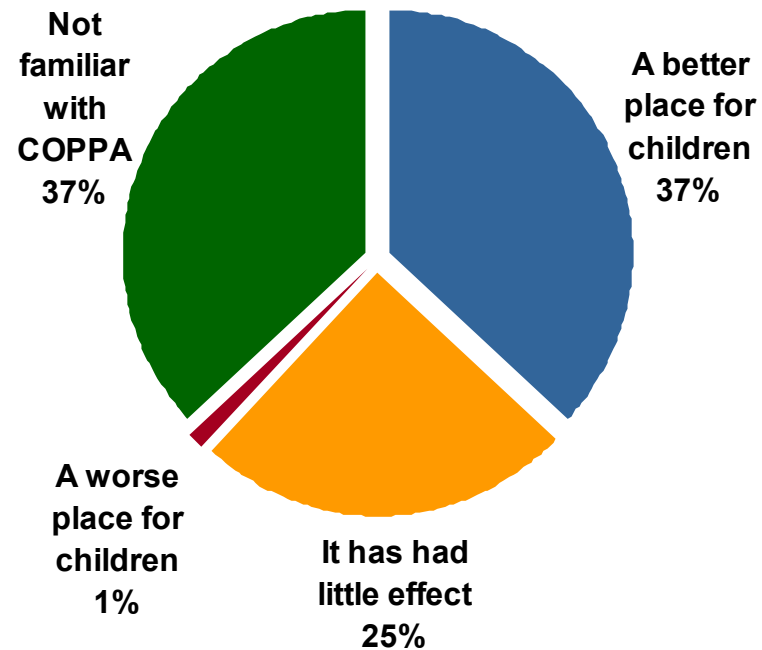
% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement





Awareness of COPPA is low within youth fields; those who are aware feel it has made the world a better place for children

Has the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act made the world ...?



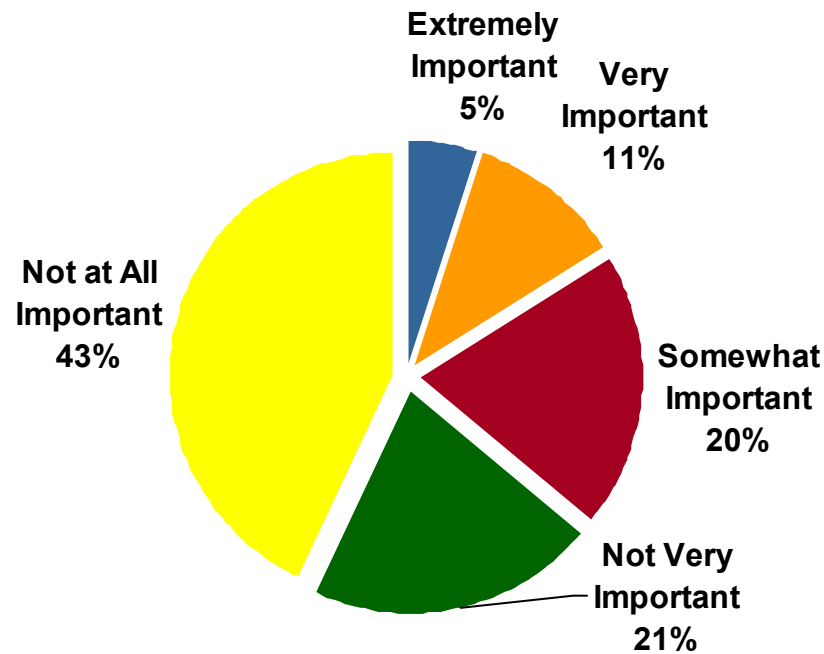
Views Towards Marketing in Schools



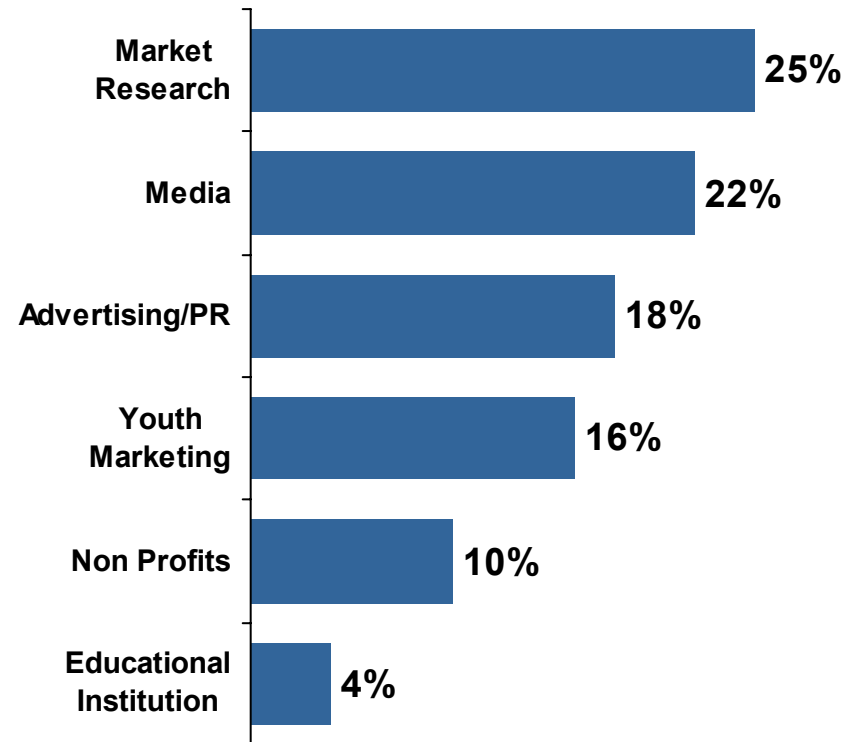


Reaching youth during school time is not seen as important to those working in youth industry

How important do you feel it is for marketers to be able to reach children during school time?



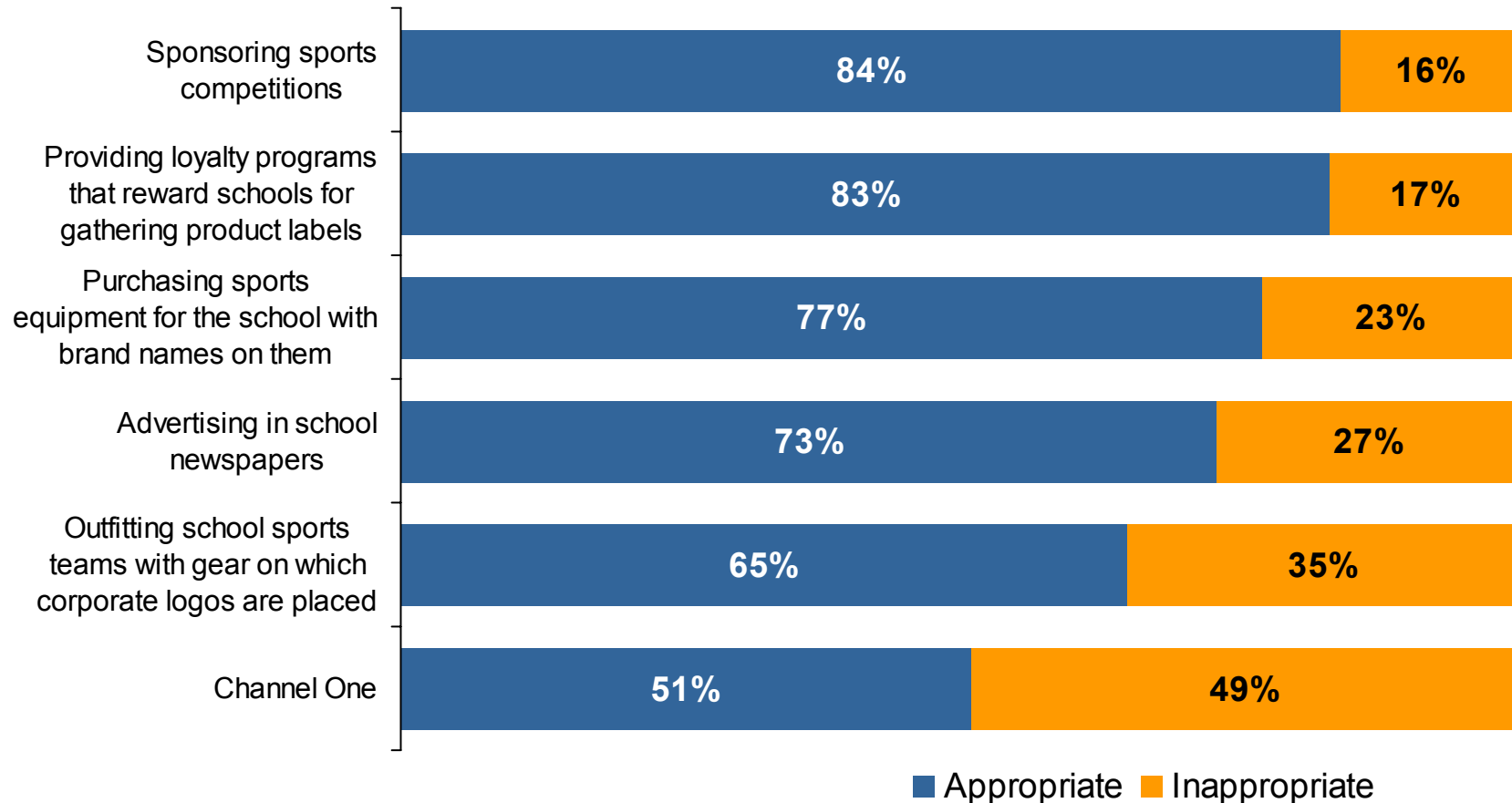
% Saying Extremely/Very Important





Most appropriate ways to market in schools are sponsoring sports, loyalty programs, and buying sports equipment

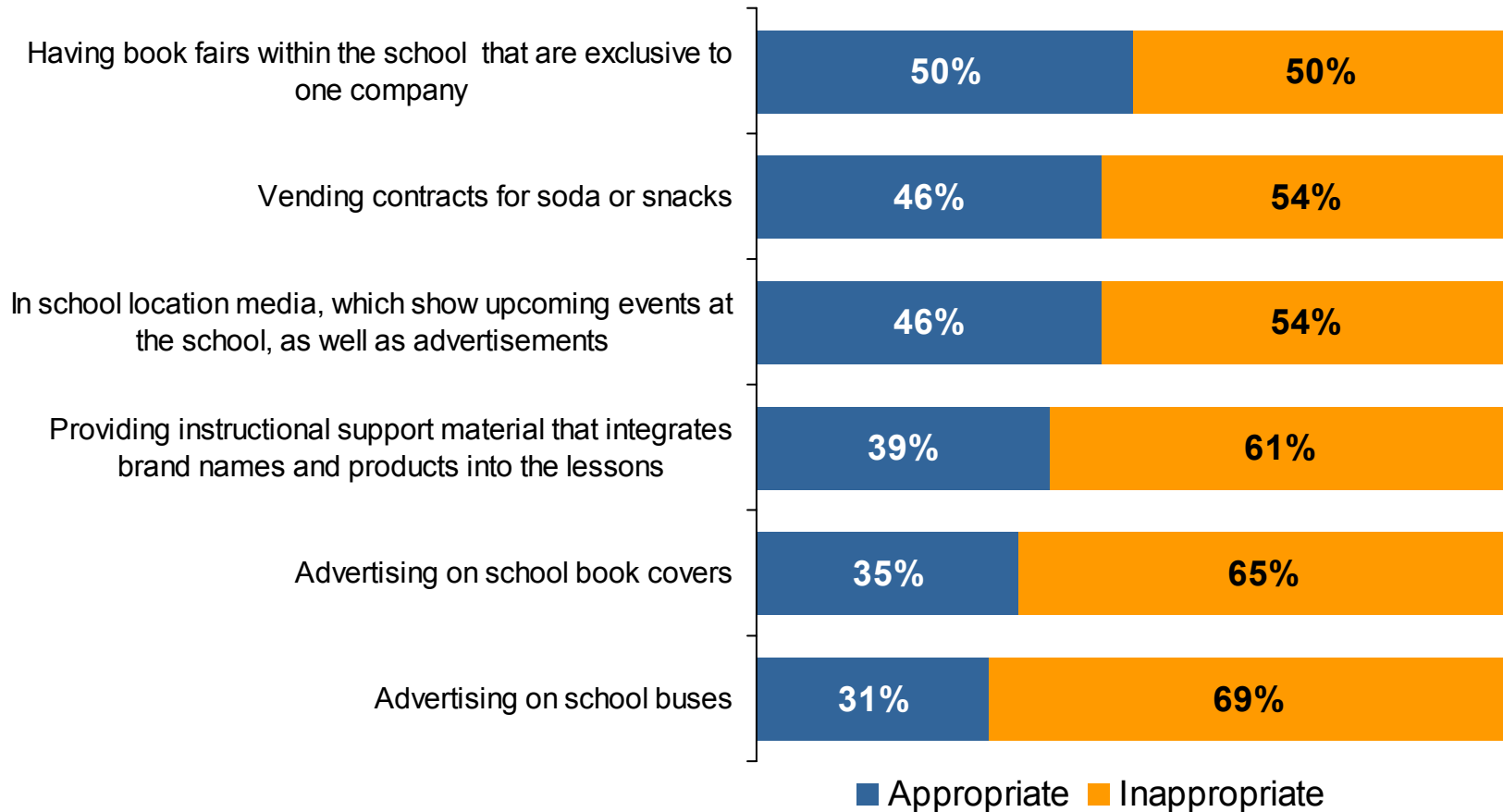
Do you feel this is an appropriate or inappropriate way to reach children in school environments?





Least appropriate ways to market in schools are advertising on buses, book cover programs, and integrating brands into lessons

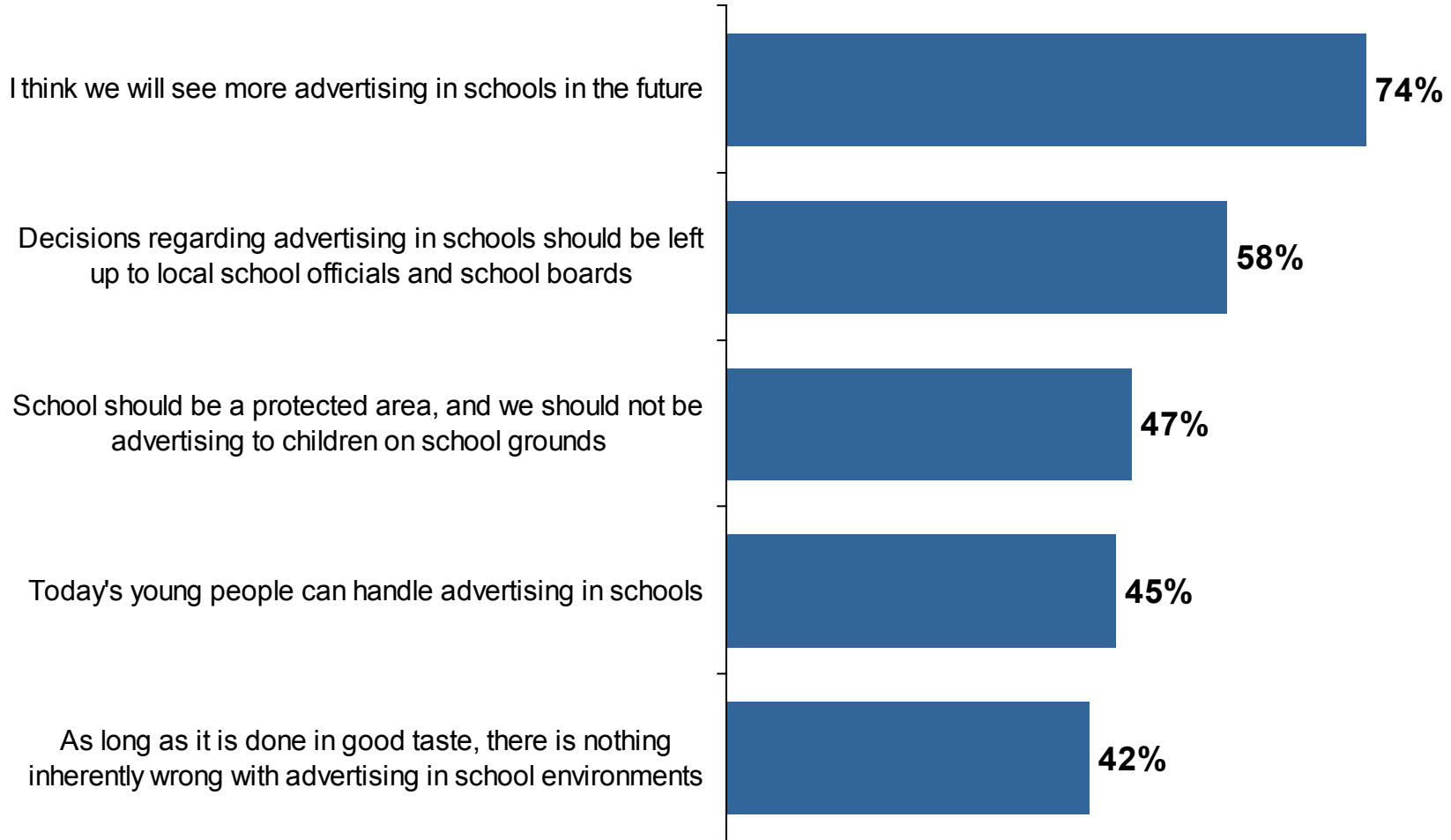
Do you feel this is an appropriate or inappropriate way to reach children in school environments?





There is disagreement as to appropriateness of advertising in schools; most feel advertising in schools will increase in future

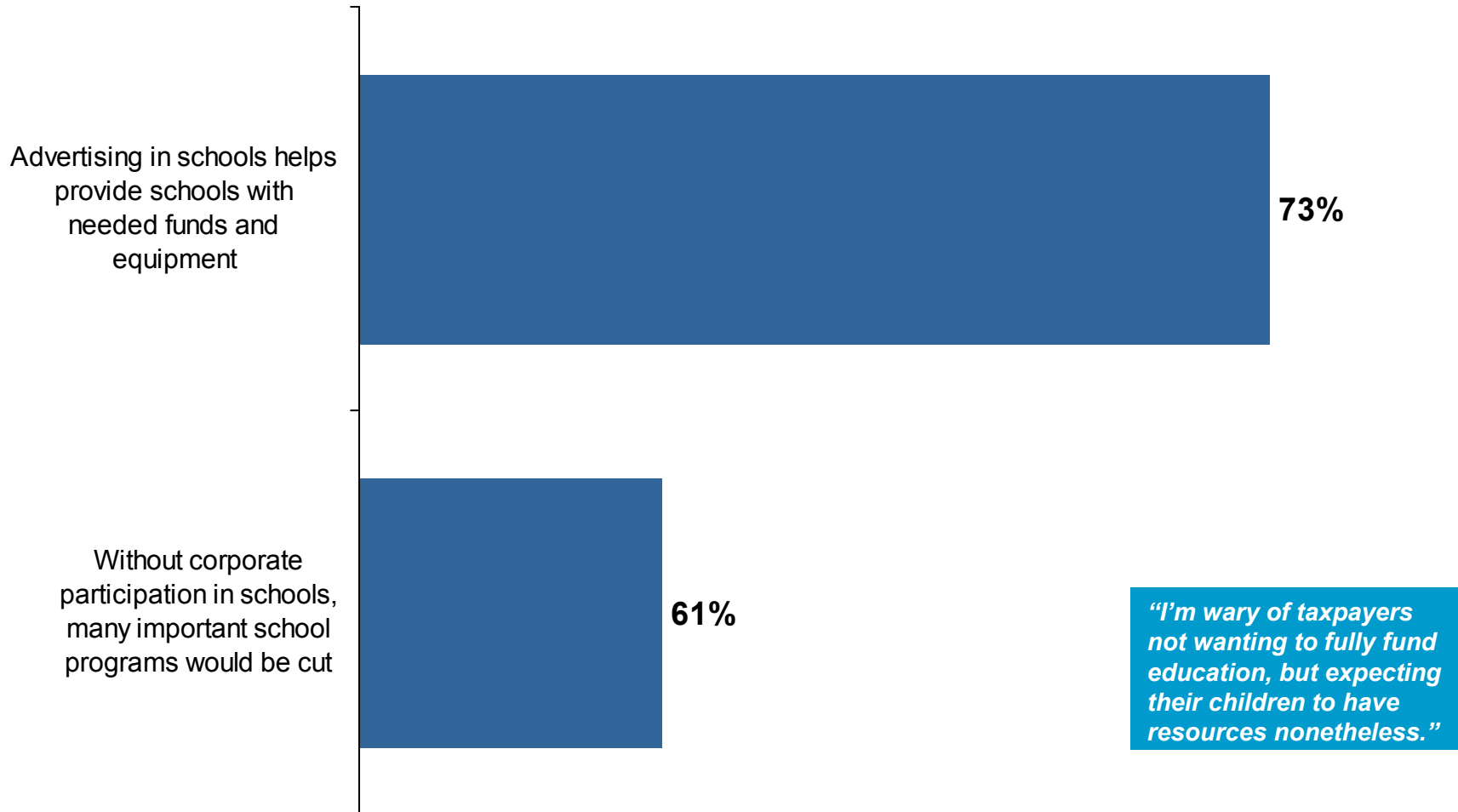
% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement





Advertising in schools provides needed funds and important school programs would be cut without corporate participation, according to those working in youth fields

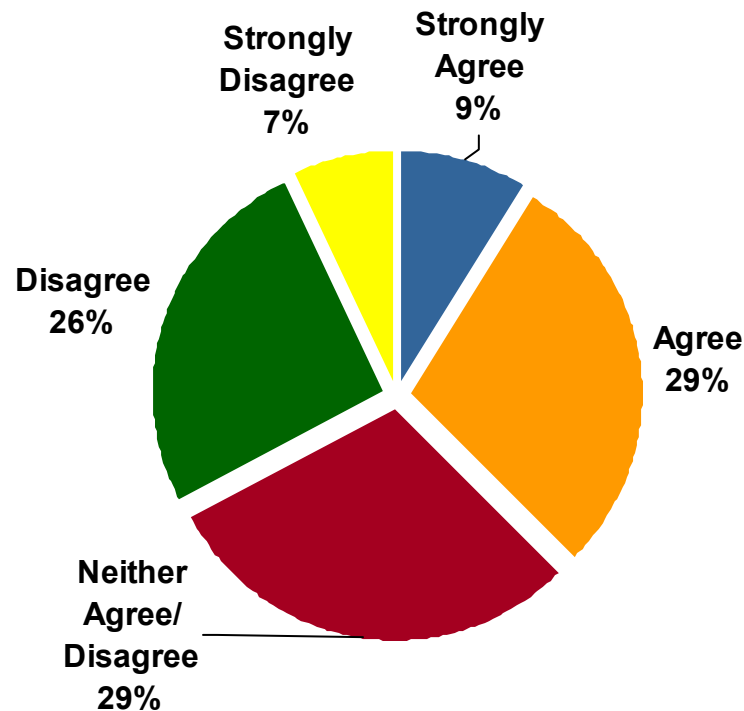
% Strongly Agree/Agree with Statement





Those working in youth fields are not in agreement as to whether positives of school marketing efforts outweigh negatives

The benefits that schools receive from in-school marketing programs far outweigh the negatives.



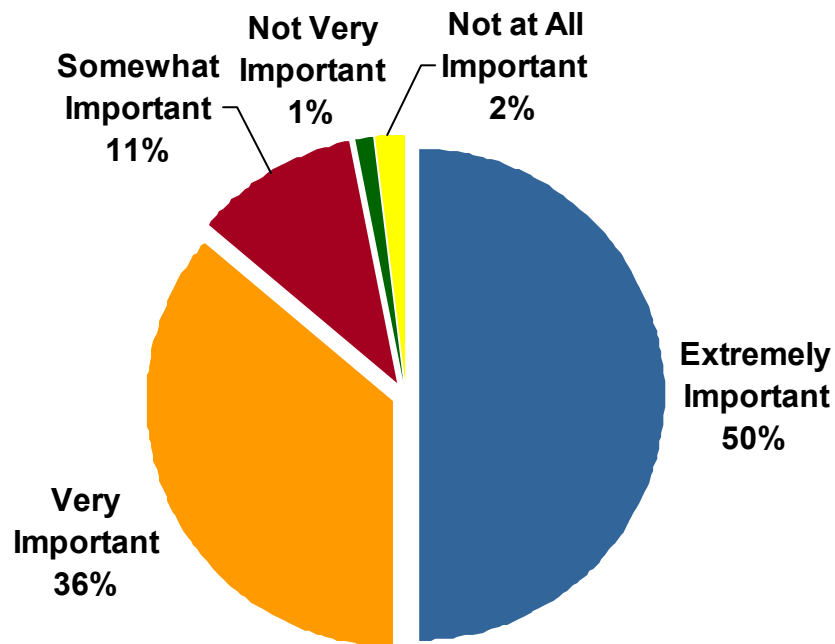
Views Towards Overweight Children and the Youth Industry's Role and Responsibility



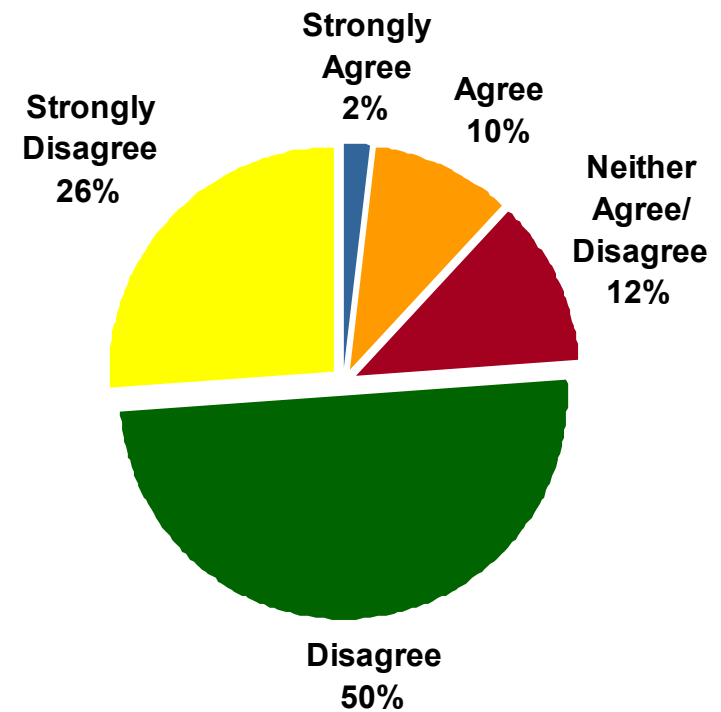


Overweight youth is seen as a major public health concern by those working in youth fields

How important is the issue of overweight youth as a public health concern?



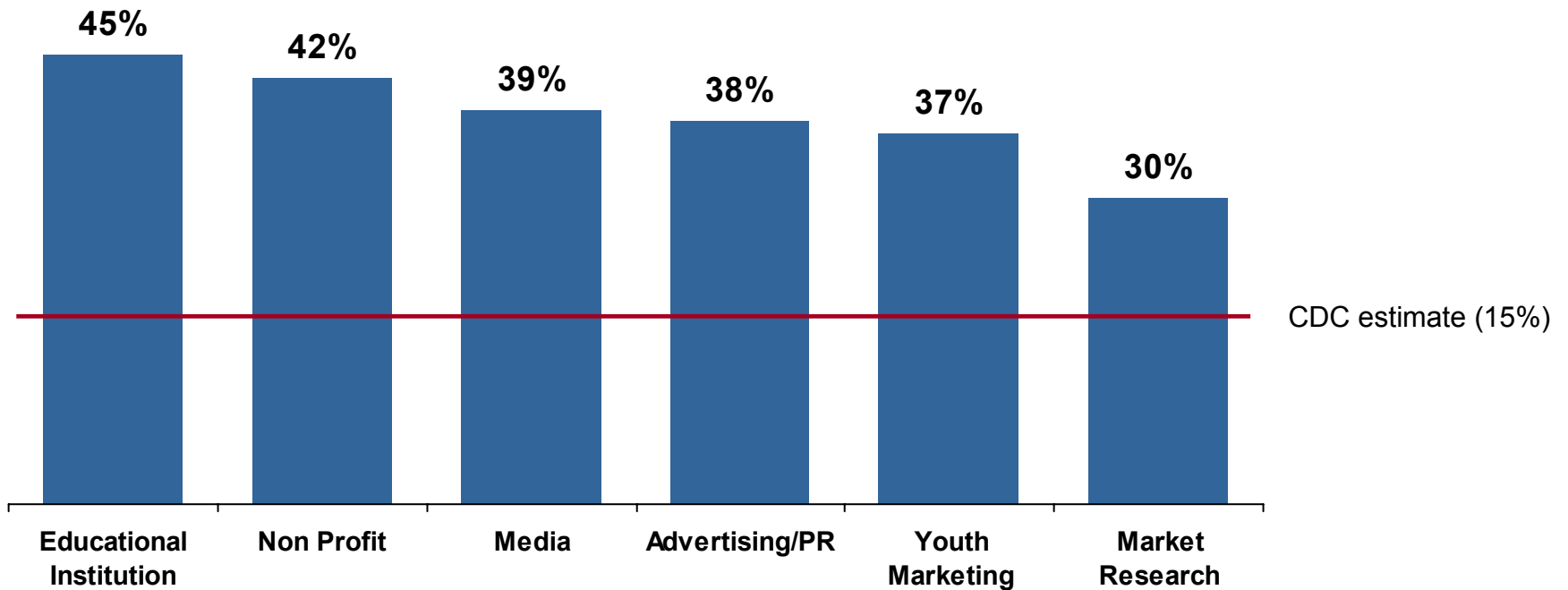
The issue of overweight/obese children is not as big a concern as the media seems to indicate it is (% Agree/Disagree)





Youth industry tends to overstate the percentage of children who are overweight

In your opinion, what percentage of children in your country are overweight?
(Average Response Shown)

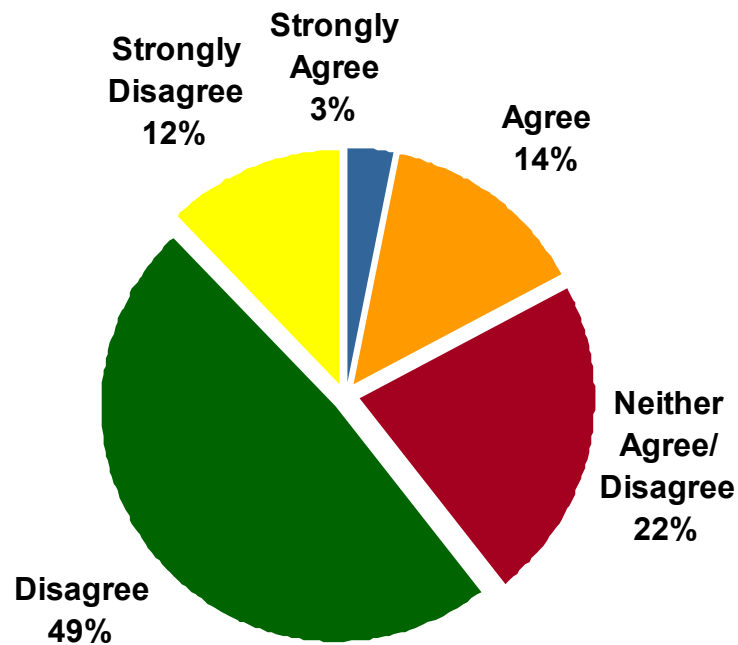


According to the CDC, 15% of children aged 6-19 are overweight in the US.



Most feel that improved nutrition will be needed to solve the issue of overweight youth

The answer to the issue of overweight children is in increased exercise, not in improved nutrition
(% Agree/Disagree)

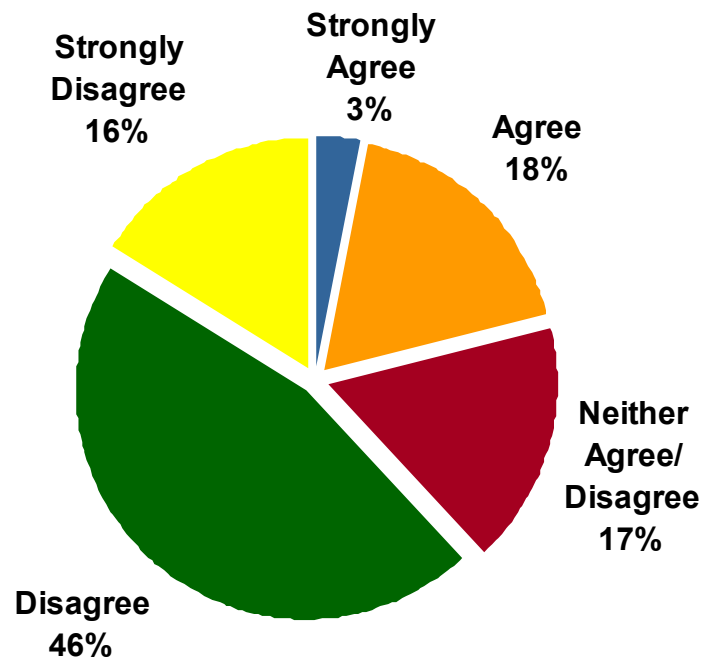


"I believe marketers have a responsibility to help educate parents and children about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity."



Those working in youth fields do not feel that kids themselves can judge what is healthy and nutritious

Most kids and youth have a good understanding of what is healthy and nutritious and what is not
(% Agree/Disagree)

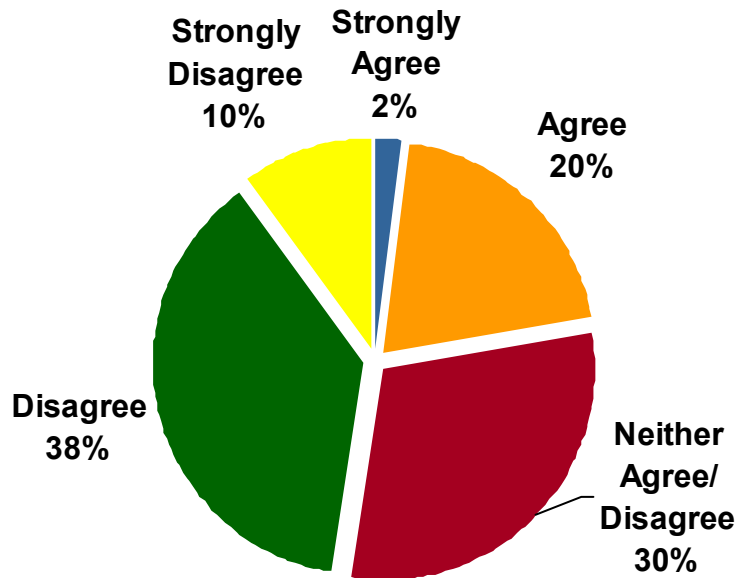


“This industry can play a major role in preventing childhood obesity by being proactive in creating and marketing healthier products.”

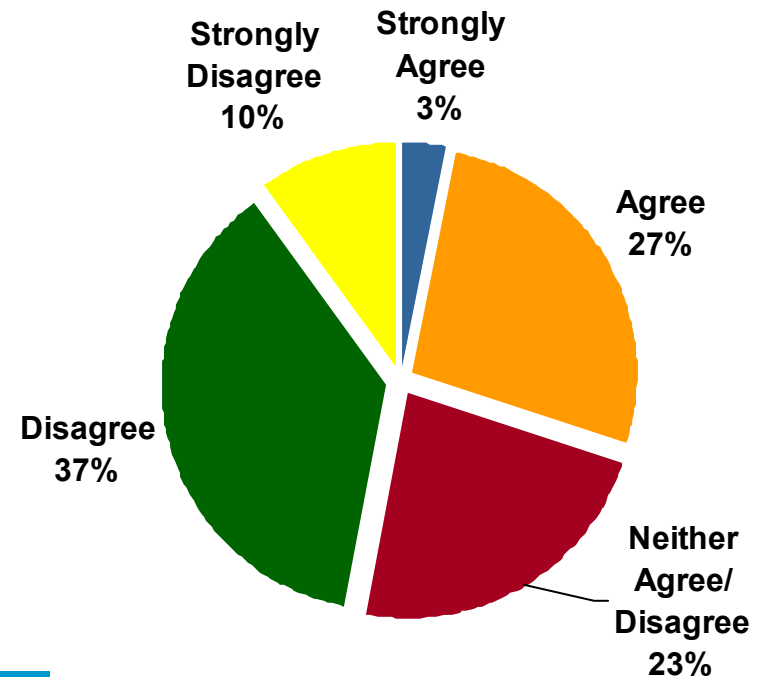


Those working in youth fields are not convinced that food companies are being responsible or taking positive steps on the issue of overweight children

The youth industry is being responsible in how it is addressing the issues of children being overweight/obese
(% Agree/Disagree)



The food and beverage industry is taking positive steps to deal with the issue of overweight/obese children
(% Agree/Disagree)

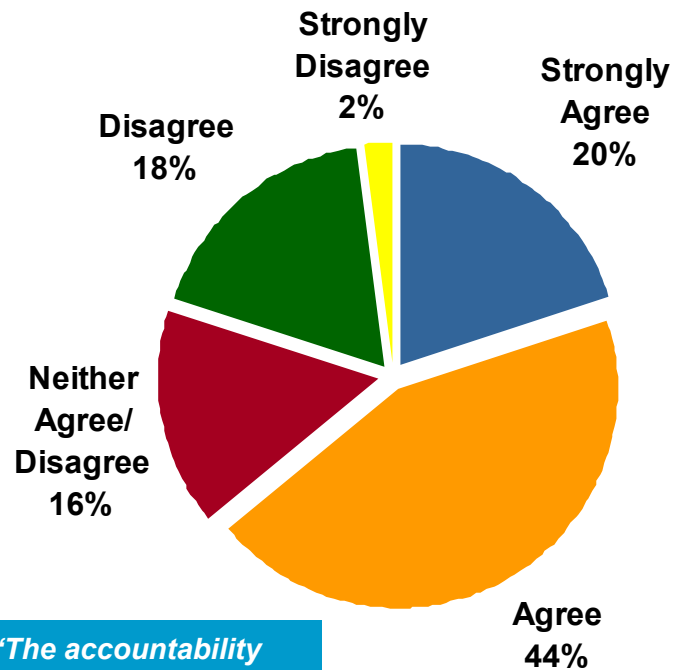


"It is easy for us as marketers to say that the blame lies only with parents ... we should all stand up and demand that we, as much as parents, start to take responsibility for our actions. We are not evil, but we cannot turn a blind eye."



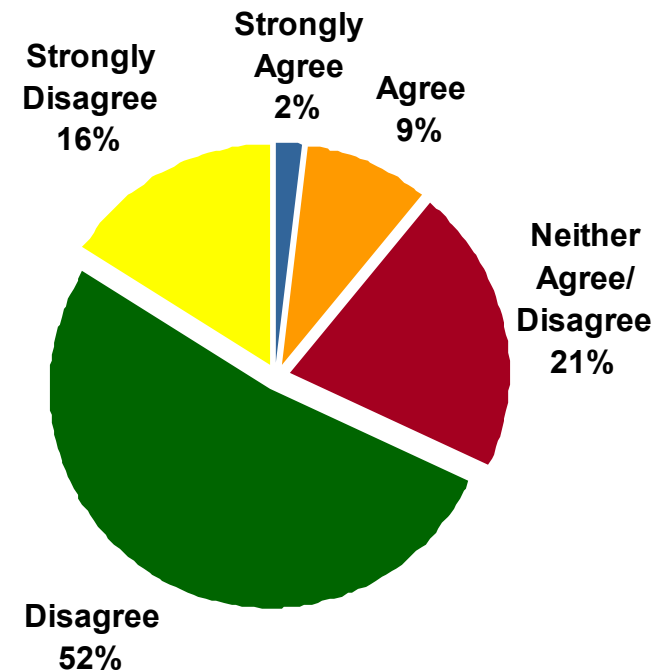
Those working in youth fields are more likely to place blame on parents than on the food industry

The responsibility for the obesity issue should be placed primarily with parents
(% Agree/Disagree)



"The accountability for kids diets should be shared 75/25 between parents and external forces."

The responsibility for the obesity issue should be placed primarily with food companies
(% Agree/Disagree)

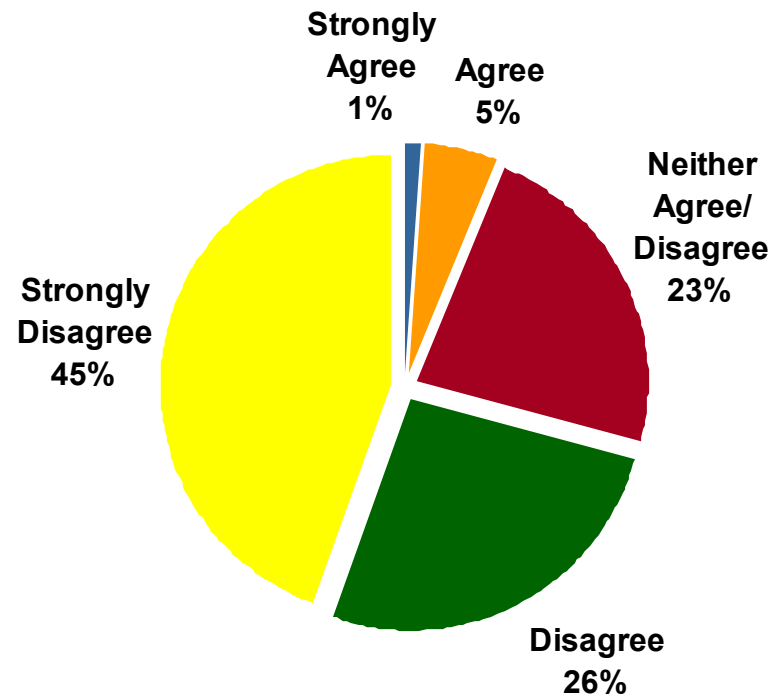


69% agreed that health and well-being should be a matter of personal responsibility.



Most feel that their organization is not a negative factor in the issue of overweight/obese children

My organization contributes negatively to the issue of overweight and obese youth
(% Agree/Disagree)

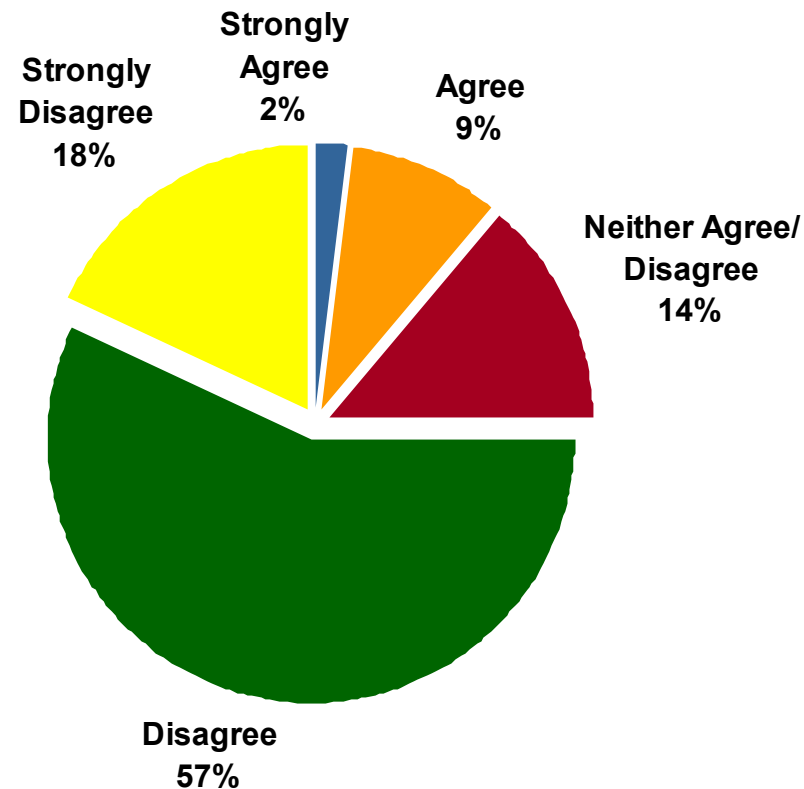


"We all know that personal responsibility is the cornerstone to healthy eating. However, no one in their right mind would deny the fact that kids today are bombarded with images that encourage them to make inappropriate choices."



Those working in youth fields feel that consumers will buy healthy food alternatives

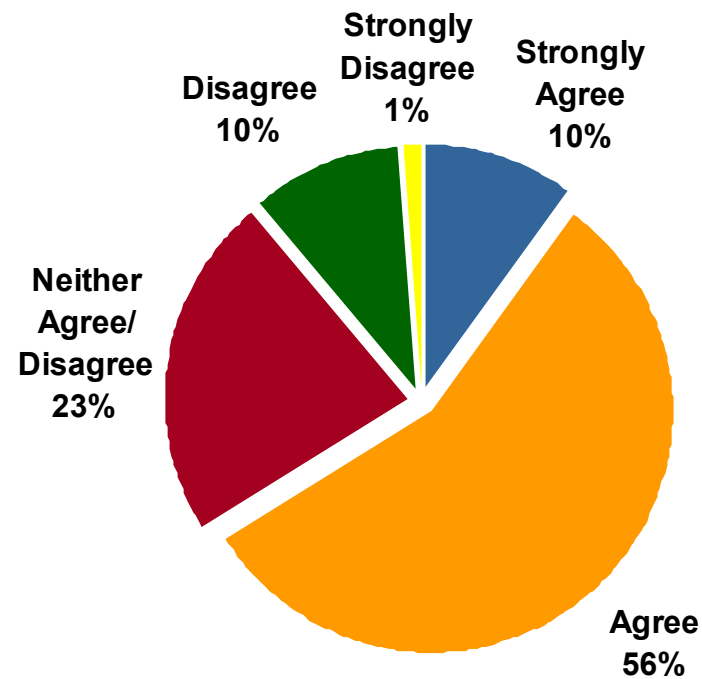
Providing healthy food alternatives for children won't work, as consumers won't buy them
(% Agree/Disagree)





Those working in youth fields foresee increased governmental regulation of the food and restaurant industry

I expect there will be increased governmental regulation of the food and restaurant industry
(% Agree/Disagree)



“More governmental regulation is not the answer, but if companies don’t begin to abide by a code of ethics, it is inevitable.”

“The resources that many of these companies command are enormous and they could find a solution to this issue if they focused their energy that way.”



Harris Interactive Youth Research

- The Harris Interactive youth and education team conducts a wide range of research on youth, family, and educational research issues.
 - **Online Custom Research:** We conduct dozens of studies on a variety of issues: ad tracking, concept testing, new products, website evaluations, and custom research.
 - **Online Qualitative:** Moderated chat sessions, bulletin boards, parent-child interviews.
 - **Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM:** Our monthly omnibus of young people aged 8 to 18. A great way to get quick answers to just a few research questions.
 - **360 Youth/Harris Interactive CollegeExplorerSM:** An annual study of college students of all types - full/part time, 2 year/4 year, etc.
 - **Traditional methods:** We field many studies using telephone, central location, and mail research methodologies.
 - **In-school research:** For foundations and media, we conduct in-school research utilizing a sophisticated sampling method.
- Want to receive **Trends & 'Tudes**, our free monthly newsletter? Contact us at 585.214.7444.

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