

CHAPTER 10

Perceptions of School and Community

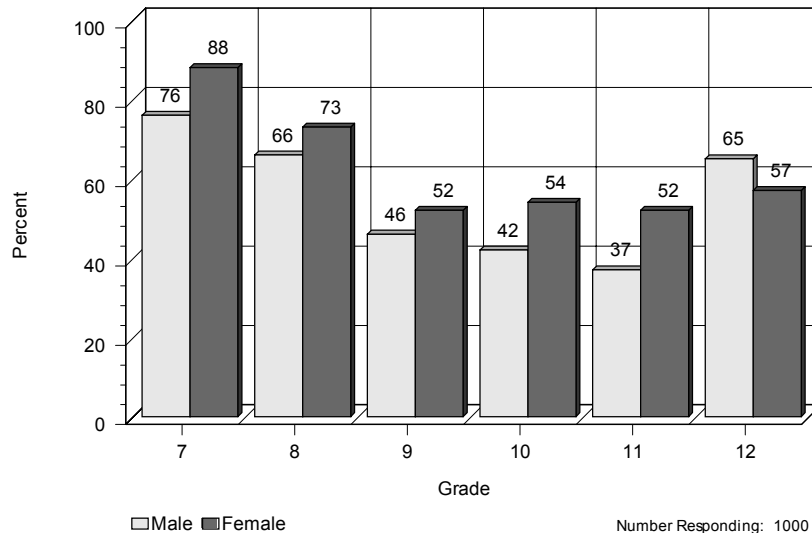
Adolescents spend an increasingly greater amount of time away from home as they get older. A majority of their time is spent in school and in the broader community. It is important for adolescents to be connected to these environments and to feel there are meaningful opportunities for them to explore and practice their emerging abilities. Adolescents are more at risk for problem behaviors if they have low grades and/or drop out of school. In New Hampshire, almost 1 in 10 teens over the age of 15 is not in school, at work, or in the armed services (Terry & Hall, 1996). These teens are called “idle teens.”

Likewise, adolescents with a large amount of free time may be more vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviors such as drug use and early sexual intercourse. Knowing adolescents’ perceptions of their school and community can help adults better understand teen motivations and behaviors. For example, adolescents who are more committed to school and involved in prosocial activities are less likely to engage in risky behaviors because they perceive there is more to lose from such behaviors (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Dryfoos, 1990; Elster, Lamb and Taverne, 1987; Mensch and Kandel, 1988).

Perceptions of School

We asked local students to respond to the statement “*I enjoy going to school.*” Fifty-eight percent (58%) of all local youth “*agreed*” or “*strongly agreed*” they enjoyed going to school. Overall, females reported more agreement with the statement than males (males, 54%; females, 62%). With regard to school level, junior high school students reported they enjoyed school more than high school students (junior high school, 76%; high school, 50%). Figure 10-1 shows the responses by grade and gender.

Figure 10-1: Enjoy Going to School
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)



Note: Due to rounding, some graphs may not total 100%.

Figure 10-2 displays the percentage of students by grade and gender who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “The rules in my school are enforced fairly.” Overall, 56% of students reported they felt the rules were enforced fairly. More junior high school students (69%) than high school students (50%) reported they felt this way.

Figure 10-2: School Rules Enforced Fairly
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)

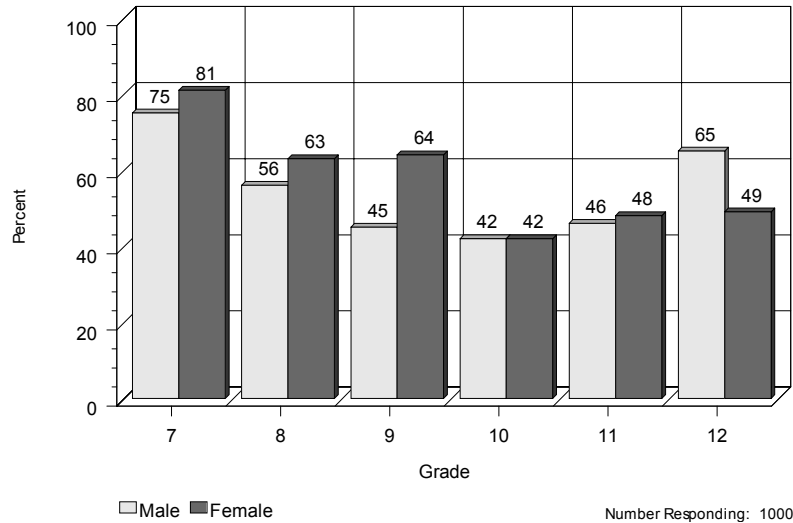
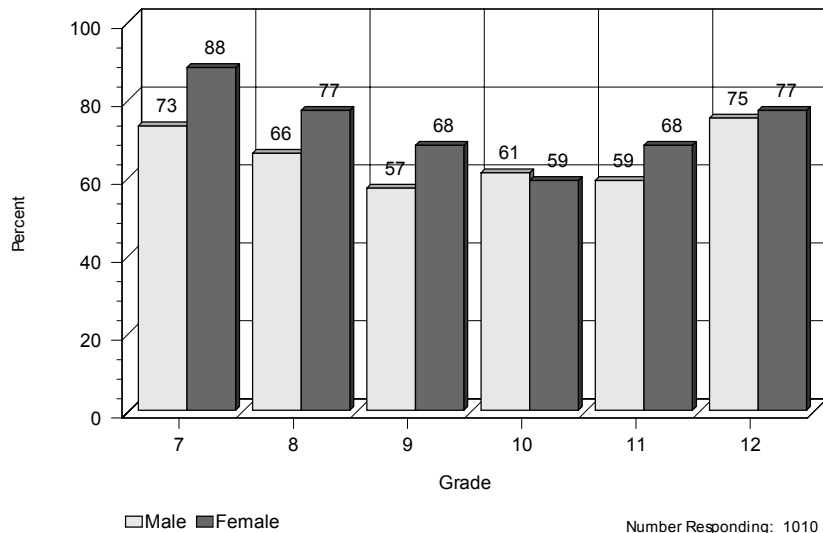


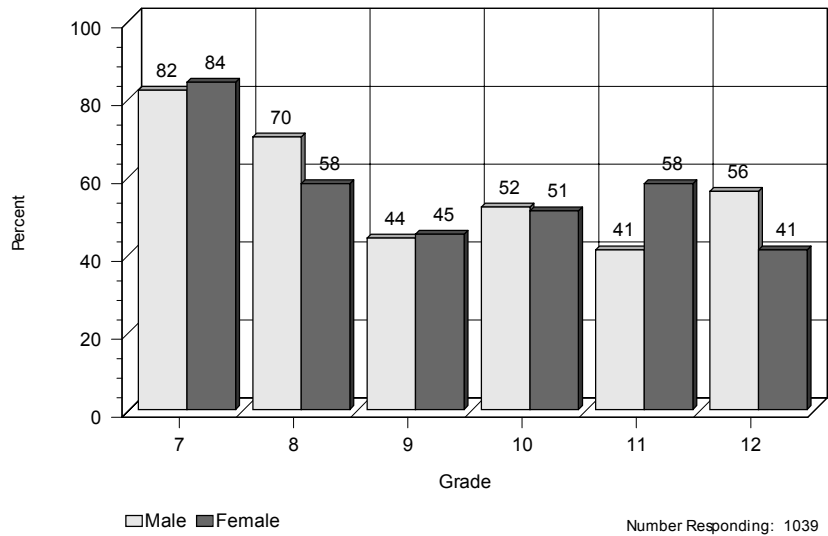
Figure 10-3 displays the percentage of students by grade and gender who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “Teachers and administrators at my school respect me.” Overall, 69% of students reported that they agreed with this statement. More junior high school students (77%) than high school students (65%) reported they felt this way.

Figure 10-3: Teachers and Administrators Respect Teens
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)



Students were also asked whether or not they felt they were getting a “good, high quality education at my school.” Fifty-six (56%) of students “agree” or “strongly agree” with that statement (junior high school, 73%; high school, 48%; males, 56%; females, 56%). Figure 10-4 shows the responses by grade and gender.

Figure 10-4: Good Quality Education
 (Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)



Teacher Expectations. Figures 10-5 and 10-6 show teens' perceptions of their teachers' expectations. The majority of students (58%) believe their teachers encourage them to do and be the best they can. More junior high students feel this way than high school students. More males than females reported their perception that teachers do not expect them to accomplish anything.

Figure 10-5: Perceptions of Teacher Expectations (By School Level)

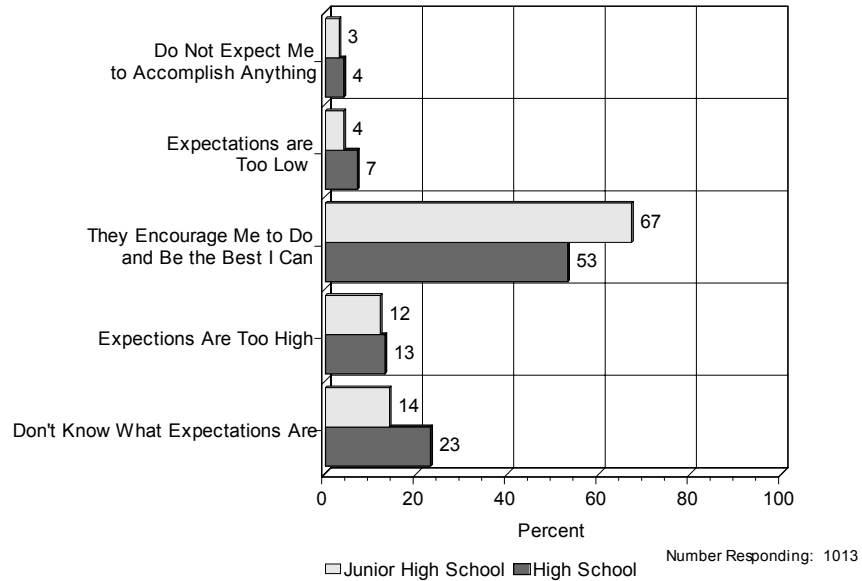
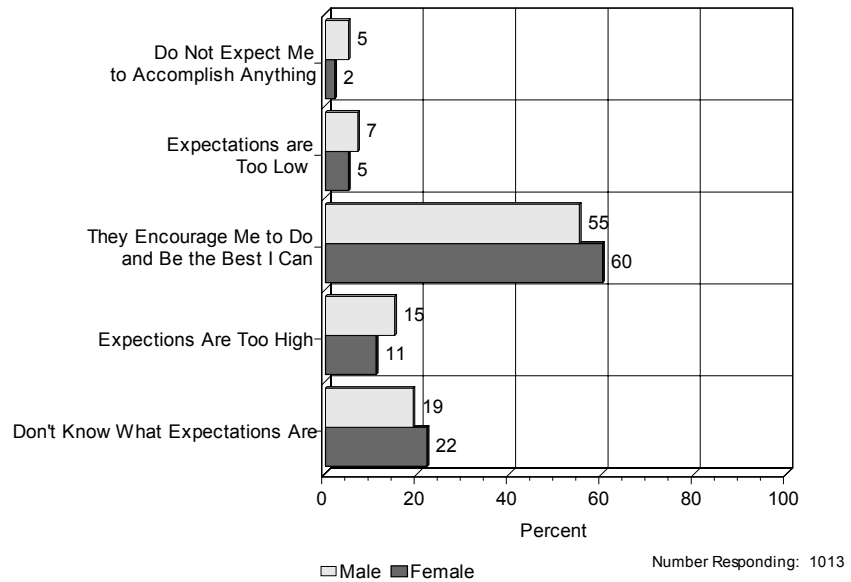


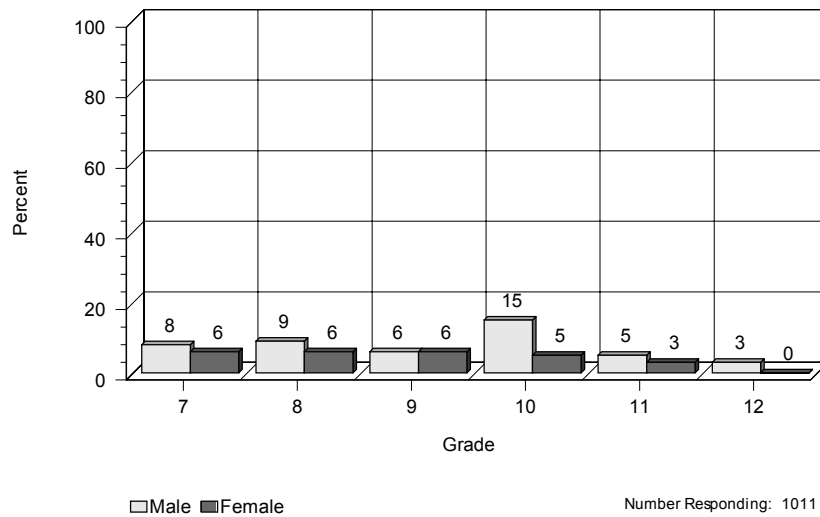
Figure 10-6: Perceptions of Teacher Expectations (By Gender)



Future Plans and Career Plans

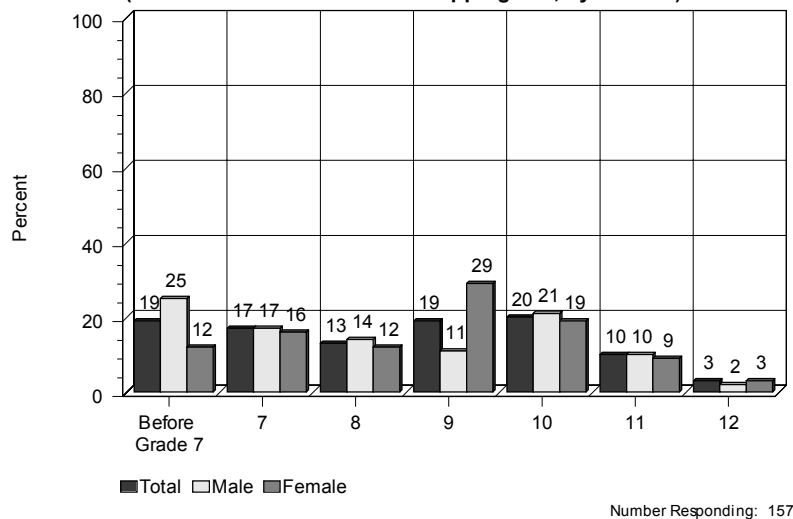
When students were asked if they felt they would drop out of school before completing high school, 6% answered “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” (junior high school, 7%; high school, 6%; males, 8%; females, 4%). Of course, those high school students who have already dropped out are not reflected in these percentages. Figure 10-7 shows those who “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” they will drop out before they complete high school by grade and gender.

Figure 10-7: Teens Who Feel They Will Drop Out Before They Complete High School (Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)



We also asked youth “*If you have seriously considered dropping out of school, at what grade level did you first feel this way?*” Figure 10-8 shows this information broken down by gender.

Figure 10-8: At What Grade Teens First Considered Dropping Out (Of Those Who Considered Dropping Out, by Gender)



Students were asked, “If you are having trouble with school, how often do you go to someone for help (for example, not understanding a teacher or school work assignments)? Figure 10-9 shows the responses by school level. Figure 10-10 shows the responses by gender. Junior high students were more likely (“often” or “very often”) than high school students to ask for help (junior high school, 36%; high school, 25%). Also a greater percentage of females than males reported that they would ask for help (“often” or “very often”) (males, 25%; females, 32%).

Figure 10-9: How Often Teens Ask For Help When They Are Having Trouble in School (By School Level)

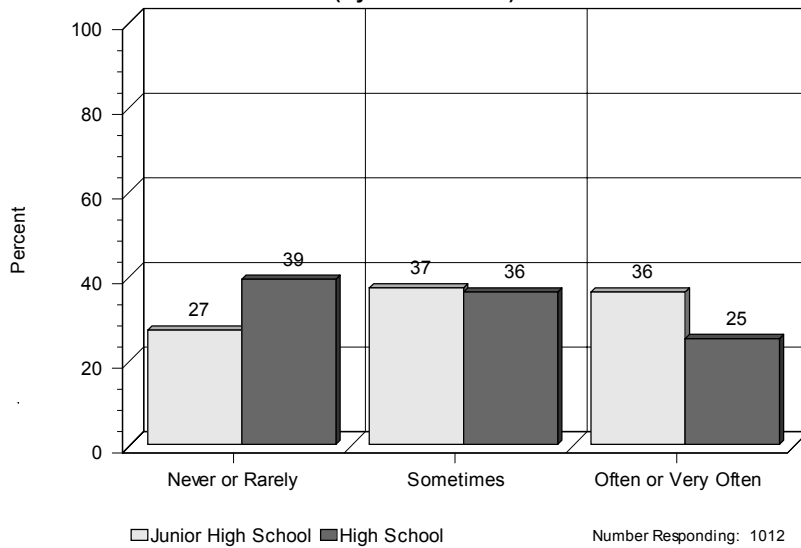


Figure 10-10: How Often Teens Ask For Help When They Are Having Trouble in School (By Gender)

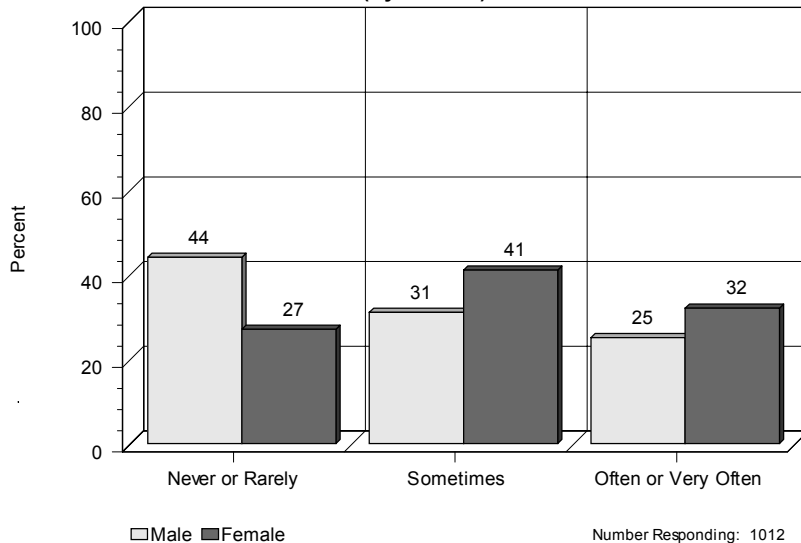


Figure 10-11 shows the future plans junior high school students have for after high school graduation. Figure 10-12 shows the same plans for high school students. Sixty percent (60%) of high school students think they will “Go to a 4-year college or university”. More high school males than females chose vocational or technical school as a future option (males, 13%; females, 4%). More high school females than males thought they would attend a 4-year college after high school (males, 53%; females, 65%).

Figure 10-11: Future Plans After High School
(Junior High School Students, by Gender)

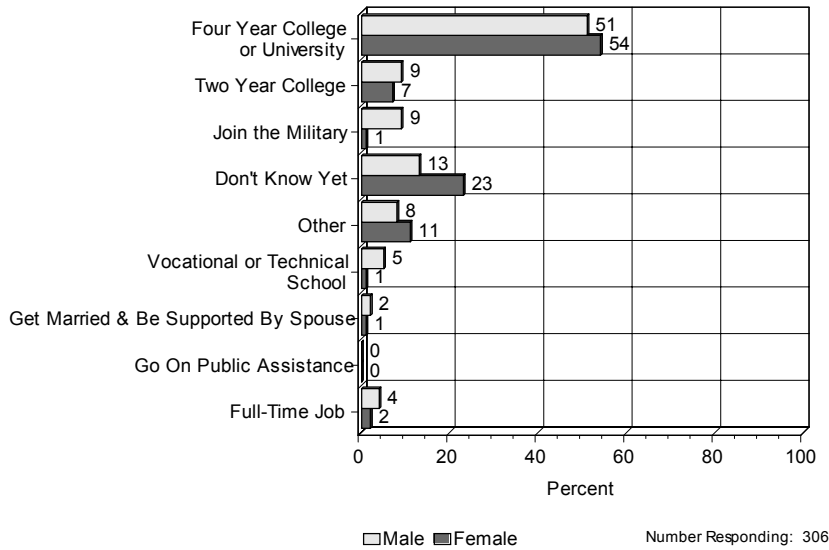
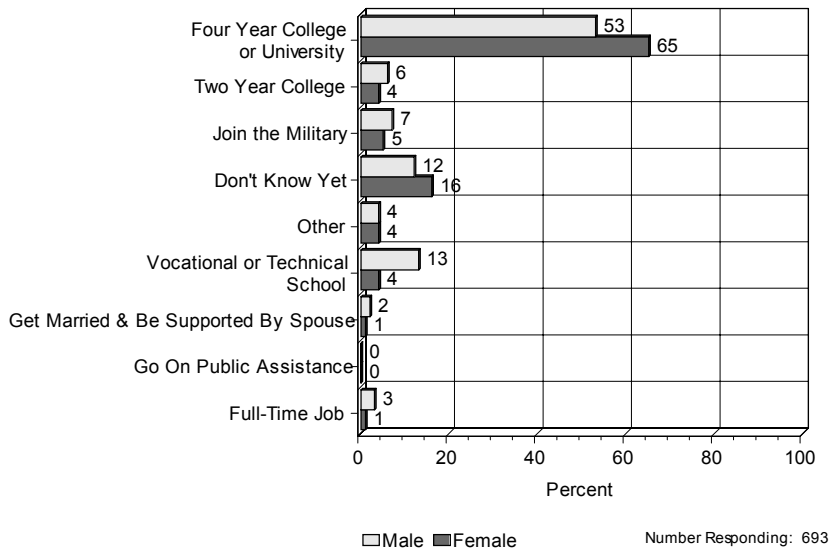


Figure 10-12: Future Plans After High School
(High School Students, by Gender)



Local youth were asked, “Of the following ways to learn about careers, which **one** would you prefer?”. The greatest percentages of students regardless of age or school level chose mentoring/apprenticeship as the preference. Figure 10-13 shows responses by school level. Figure 10-14 shows responses by gender.

Figure 10-13: Teen Preferences for Learning About Careers (By School Level)

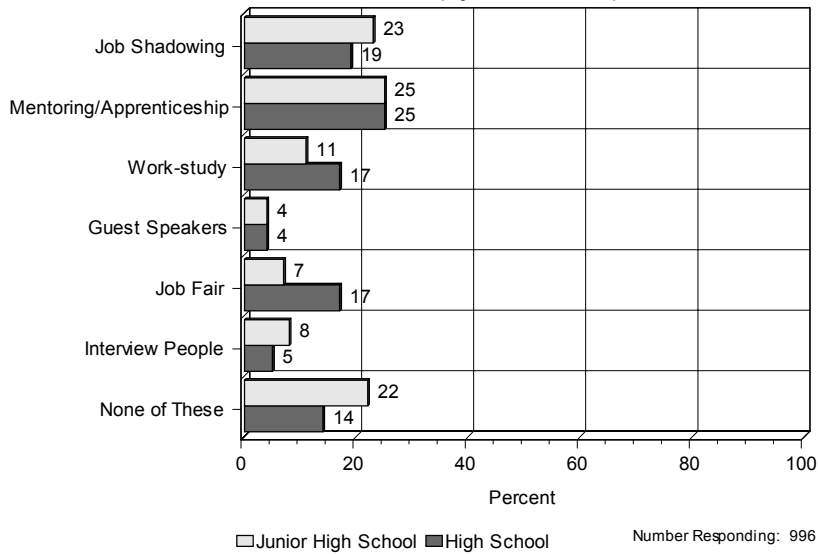
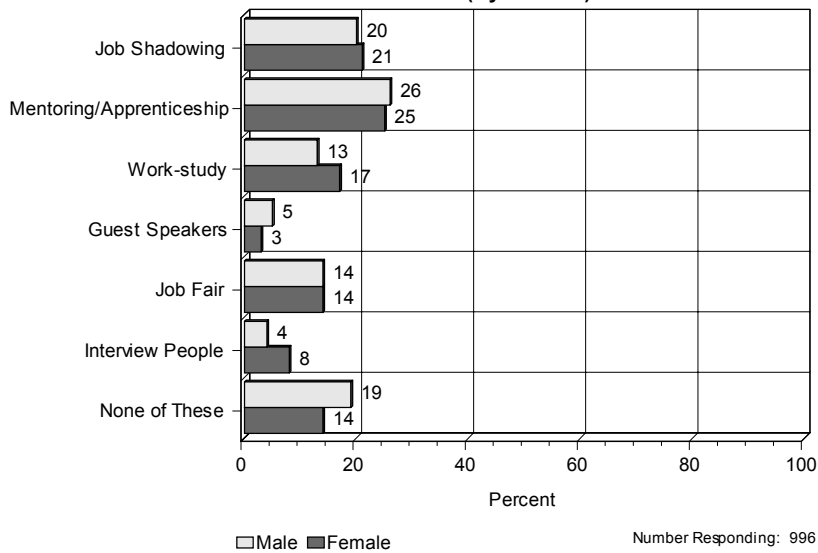


Figure 10-14: Teen Preferences for Learning About Careers (By Gender)



We asked local teens if they felt their school could be doing more to prepare them for the future. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the students responded “yes”. Figure 10-15 shows the responses to this question by school level. Figure 10-16 shows the responses by gender.

Figure 10-15: Teens Who Feel Their School Could Do More To Prepare Them (By School Level)

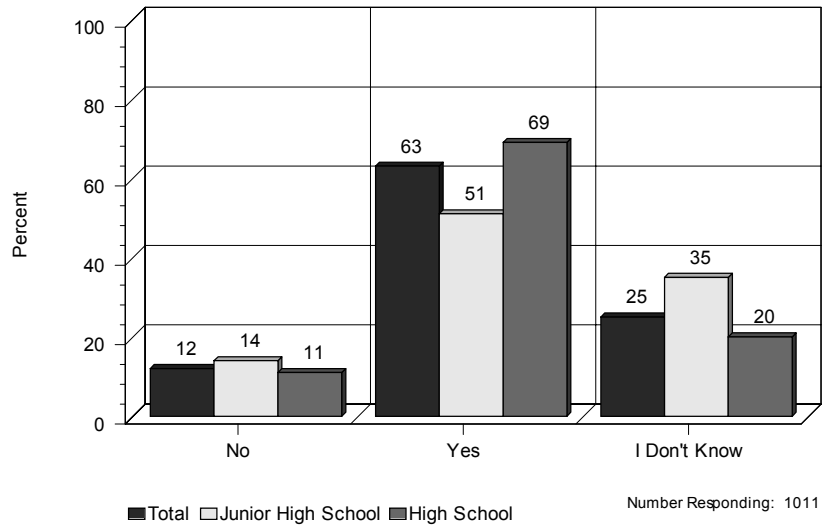
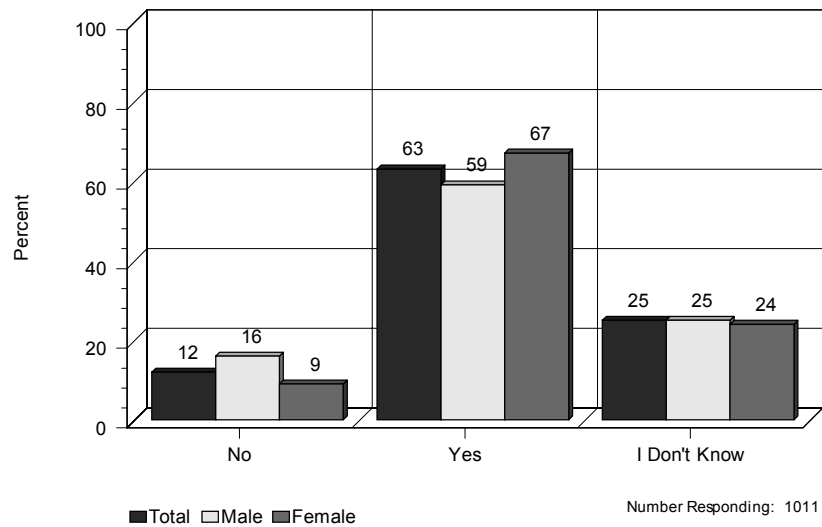
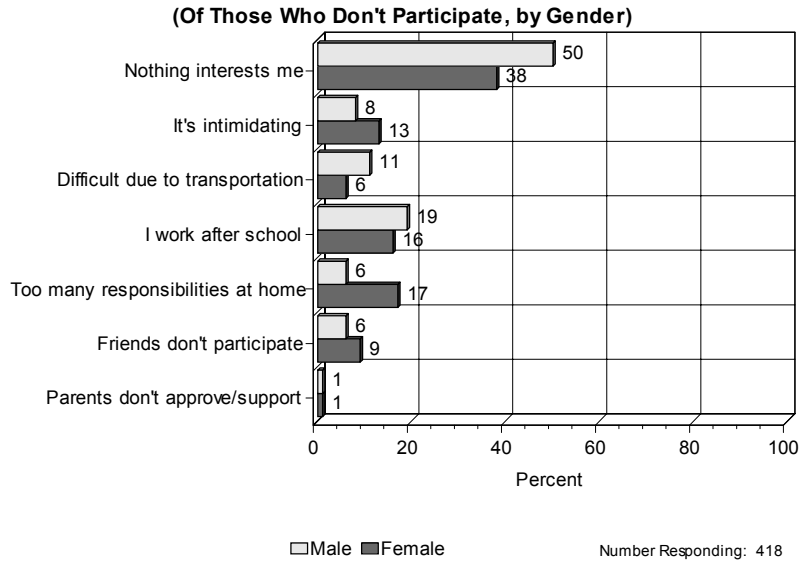


Figure 10-16: Teens Who Feel Their School Could Do More to Prepare Them (By Gender)



The survey asked teens why they don't participate in extracurricular activities. Figure 10-17 shows the responses of those who do not participate. "Nothing interests me." was the most common response, more so from males (50%) than from females (38%). Working after school was also a common reason why both males and females do not participate in extracurricular activities. Almost three times as many females as males reported that they had too many responsibilities at home to participate in extracurricular activities (males, 6%; females, 17%).

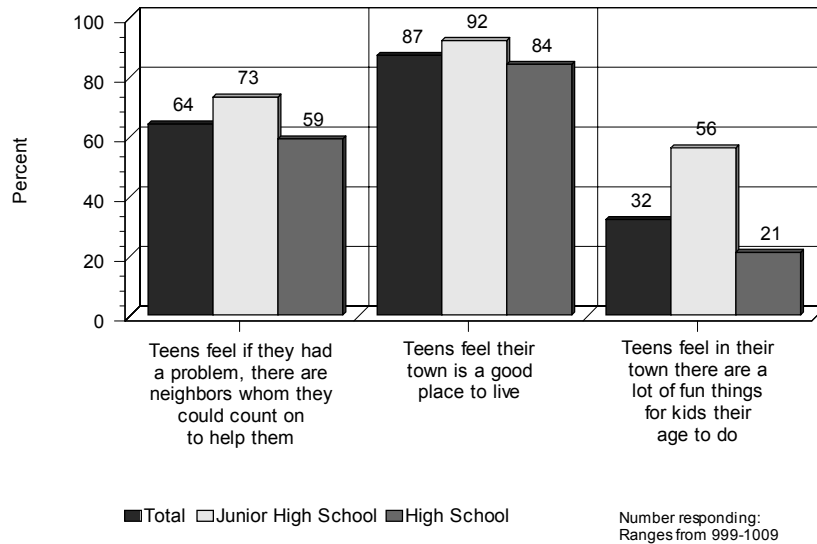
Figure 10-17: Why Teens Don't Participate in Extracurricular Activities



Perceptions of Community

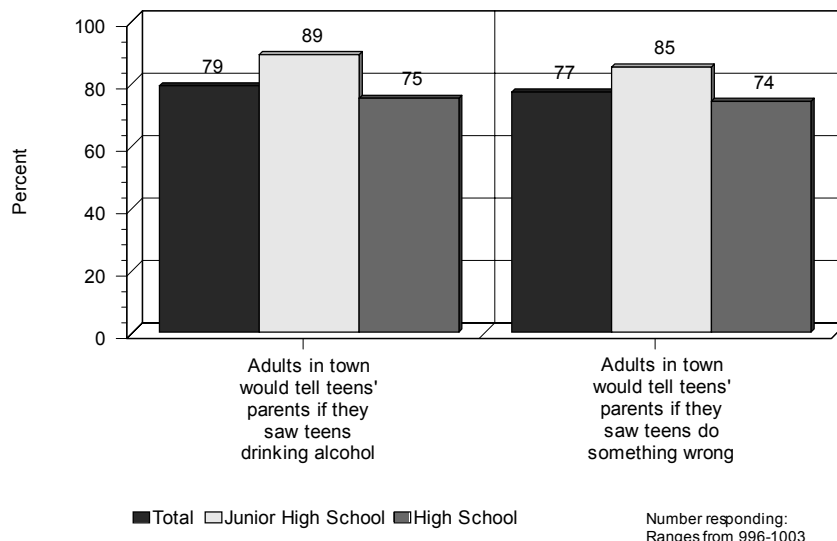
Neighborhood Support. Students told us they felt their community cared about them, and this is seen in Figure 10-18. Sixty-four percent (64%) reported there are neighbors they can count on if they are in trouble and need help. Although 87% felt their town is a good place to live, only 32% thought there are a lot of fun things for kids their age to do. Twice as many junior high school students (56%) as high school students (21%) reported that there were fun things for kids their age to do in their town.

Figure 10-18: Neighborhood Support
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level)



Neighborhood Monitoring. As shown in Figure 10-19, over three-quarters (79%) of the students reported that adults in town would tell their parents if they saw teens drinking alcohol (junior high school, 89%; high school, 75%). Seventy-seven percent (77%) felt that if they were to do something wrong, adults in town would tell their parents (junior high school, 85%; high school, 74%).

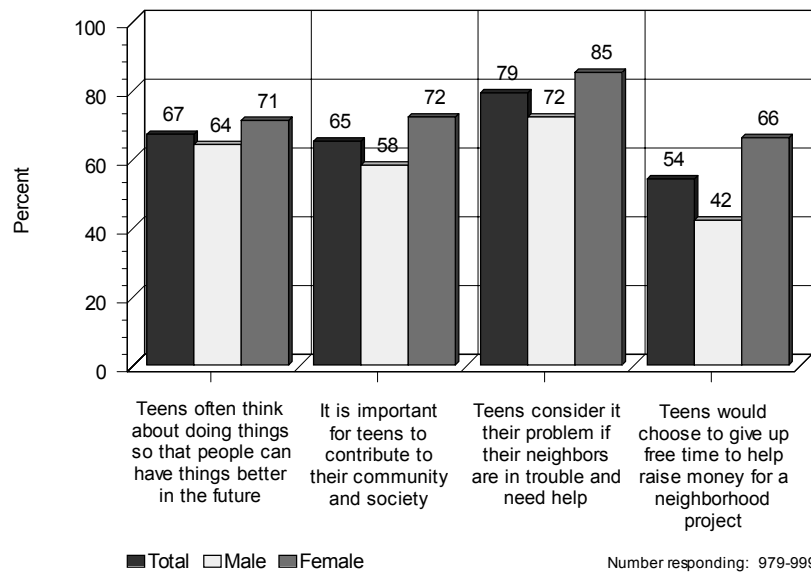
Figure 10-19: Neighborhood Monitoring
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level)



Social Responsibility

Figure 10-20 shows many teens have a well-developed sense of social responsibility toward their community. Almost two-thirds (67%) reported they often think about doing things so that people “*can have things better in the future*” (males, 64%; females, 71%). Sixty-five percent (65%) said they feel it is important to contribute to their community and society (males, 56%; females, 72%). Almost four out of five students (79%) said they consider it their problem if their neighbors are in trouble and need help (males, 72%; females, 85%). Fifty-four percent (54%) would give up their own free time in order to help raise money for a neighborhood project (males, 42%; females, 66%).

Figure 10-20: Social Responsibility
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)



Diversity Issues

We asked local youth to respond to the following statement: *“Sometimes I treat people differently because of their race or the color of their skin.”* Overall, 84% of the students answered that they *“never”* did this. Figure 10-21 shows the responses by school level; Figure 10-22 shows the responses by gender.

Figure 10-21: Teens Who Treat People Differently Because of Their Race or Color of Their Skin (By School Level)

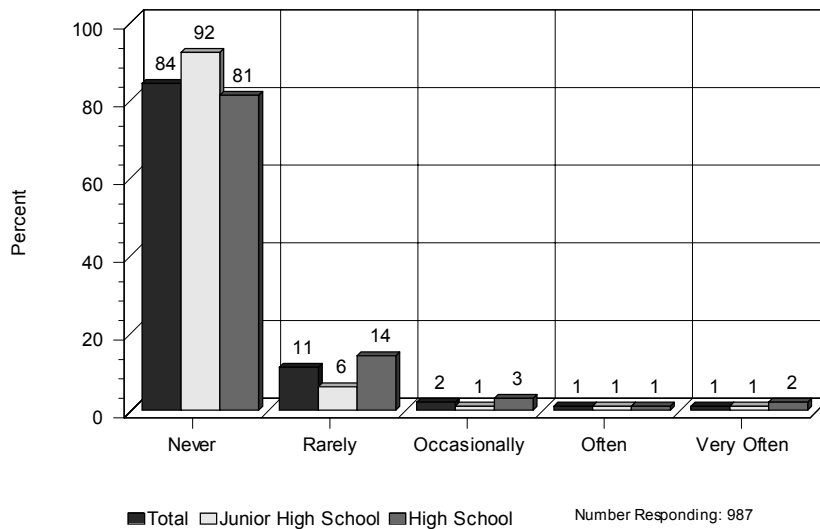
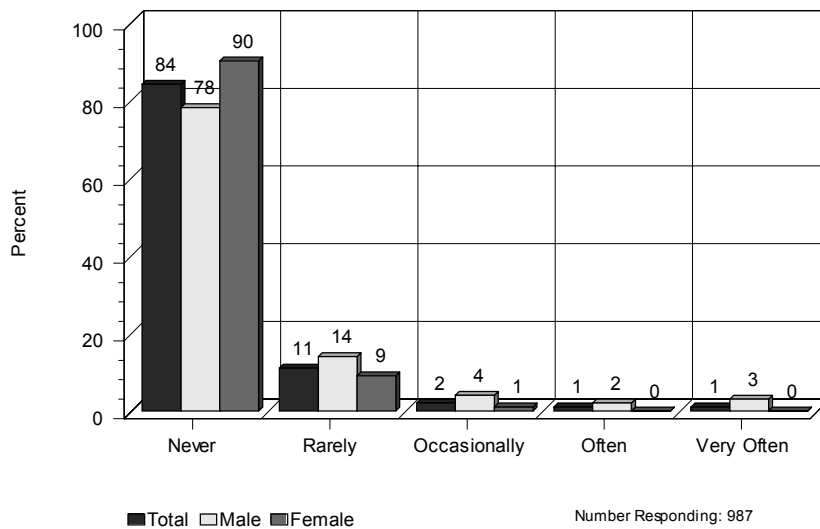


Figure 10-22: Teens Who Treat People Differently Because of Their Race or Color of Their Skin (By Gender)



Volunteer Work

We asked local youth, “Have you ever been involved in any volunteer work?”. Overall, 49% reported they participate in volunteer work. Figure 10-23 shows the responses by school level; Figure 10-24 shows them by gender.

Figure 10-23: Teens' Involvement in Volunteer Work

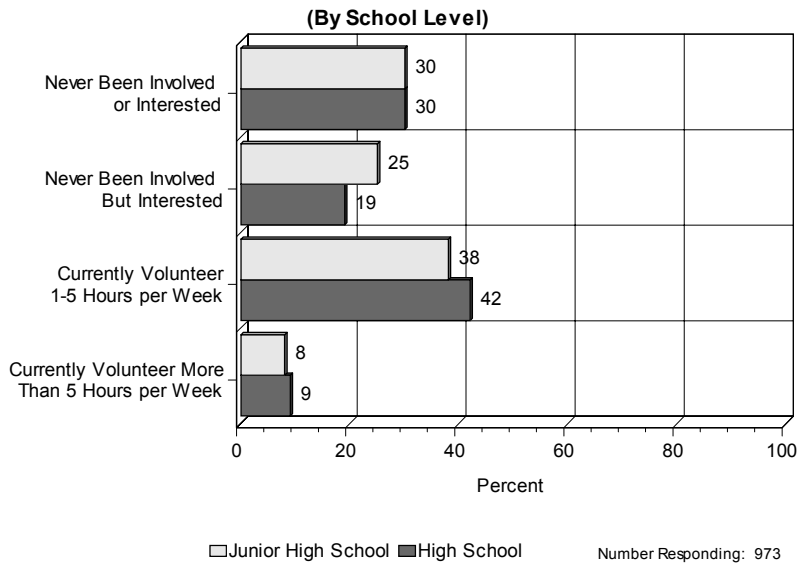
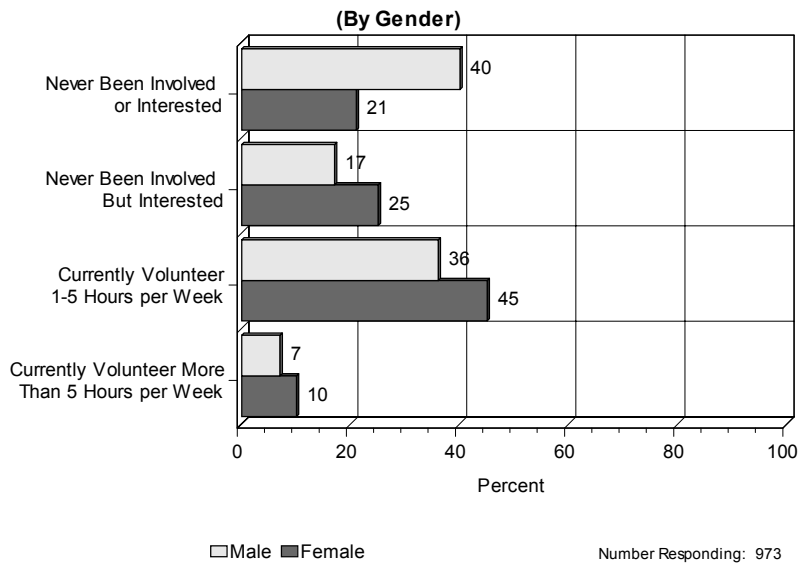


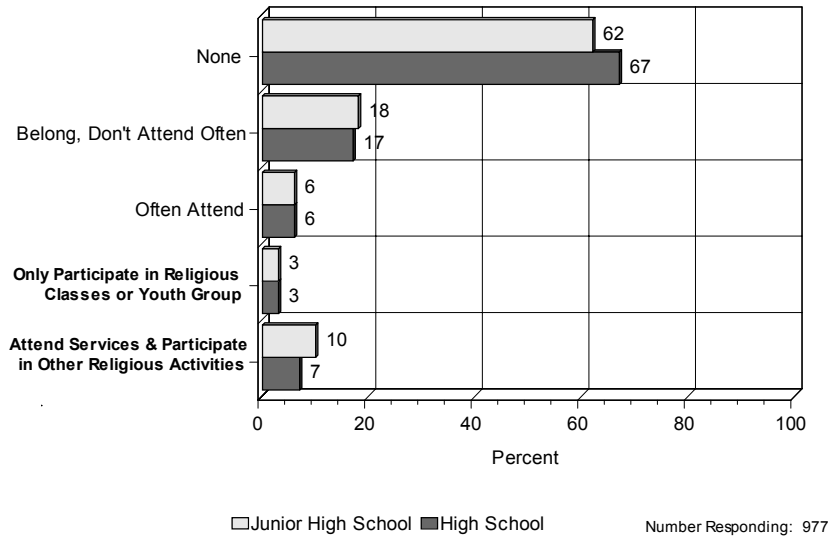
Figure 10-24: Teens' Involvement in Volunteer Work



Religious Activities

We asked local youth, “Do you attend religious services or participate in other religious activities (for example, choir, religious classes, religious youth group)?”. Overall, 35% reported they participate in religious activities. Figure 10-25 shows the responses by school level; Figure 10-26 shows them by gender.

**Figure 10-25: Level of Teens' Religious Activity
(By School Level)**



**Figure 10-26: Level of Teens' Religious Activity
(By Gender)**

