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## CHAPTER 10

# Perceptions of School and Community

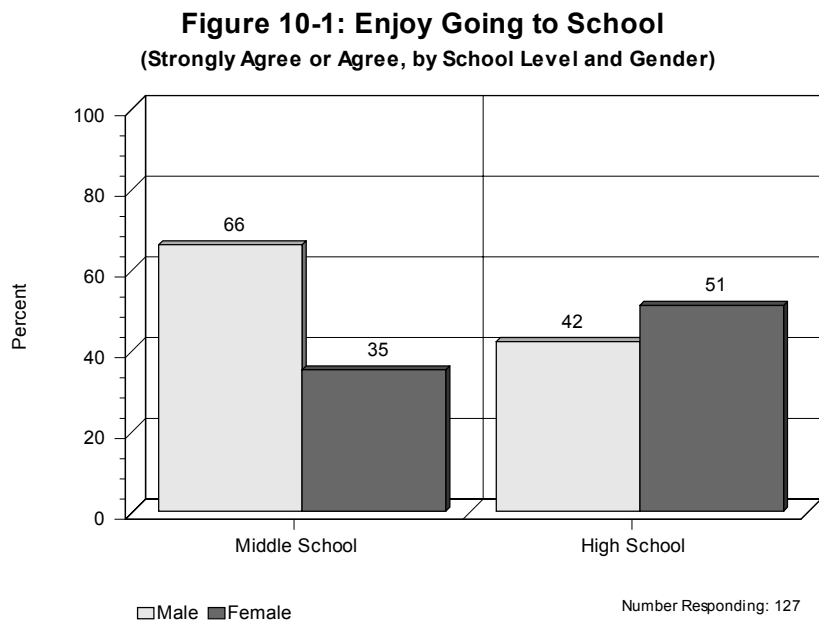
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Adolescents spend an increasingly greater amount of time away from home as they get older. A majority of their time is spent in school and in the broader community. It is important for adolescents to be connected to these environments and to feel there 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 are 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).

### Perceptions of School

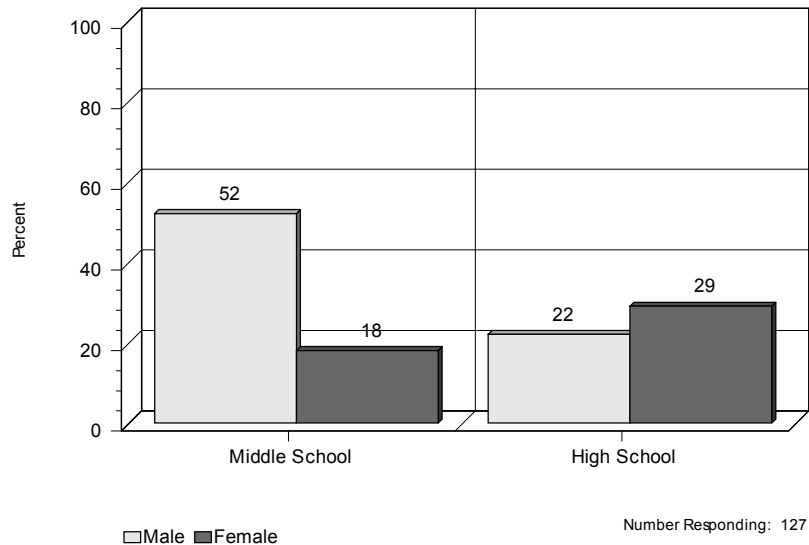
We asked students to respond to the statement “*I enjoy going to school.*” Fifty percent (50%) of all youth checked “*agree*” or “*strongly agree*” (middle school, 54%; high school, 47%). Overall, similar percentages of males and females agreed with this statement (males, 52%; females, 47%). Figure 10-1 shows the responses by school level and gender.



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

Figure 10-2 displays the percentage of students by school level and gender who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “The rules in my school are enforced fairly.” Overall, 31% of students reported they felt the rules were enforced fairly (males, 35%; females, 26%; middle school, 39%; high school, 26%).

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



Students were also asked whether or not they believed they were getting a “good, high quality education at my school.” Figure 10-3 shows that seventy-four percent (74%) of students checked “agree” or “strongly agree” (males, 72%; females, 76%; middle school, 78%, high school, 72%).

**Figure 10-3: Good Quality Education**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level and Gender)

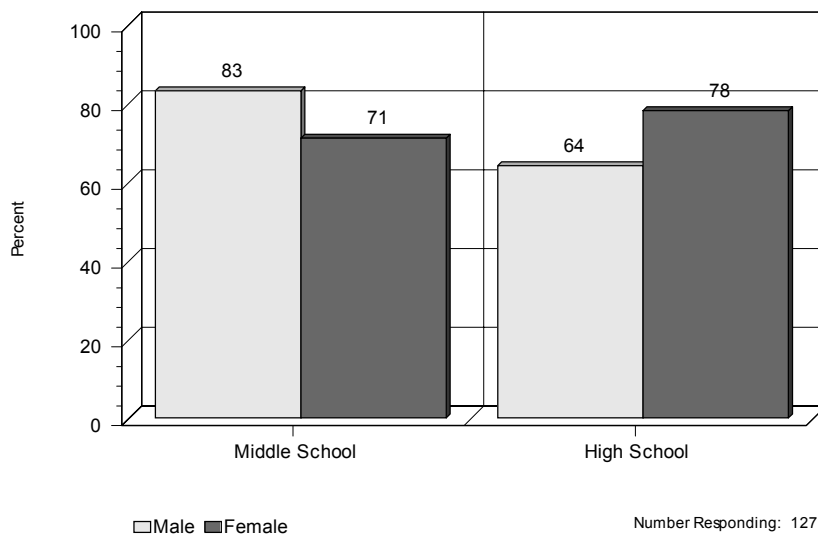
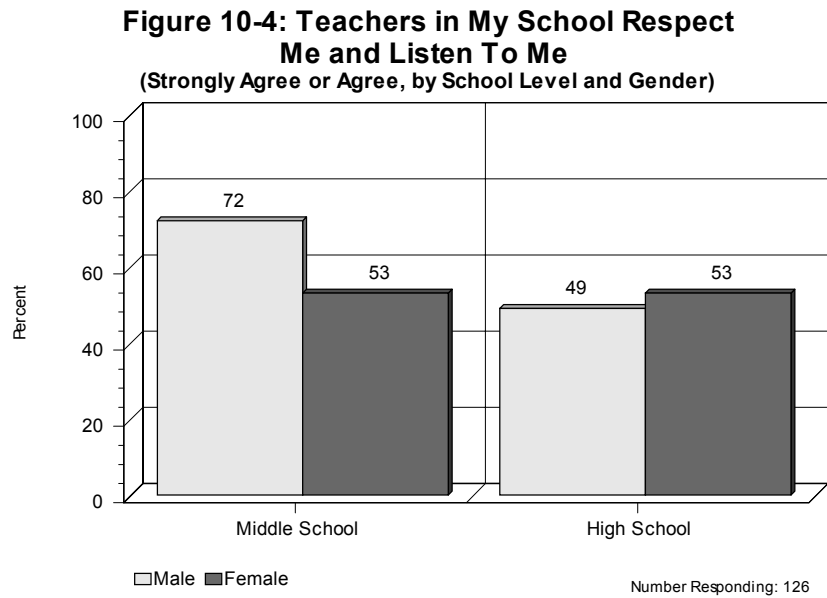
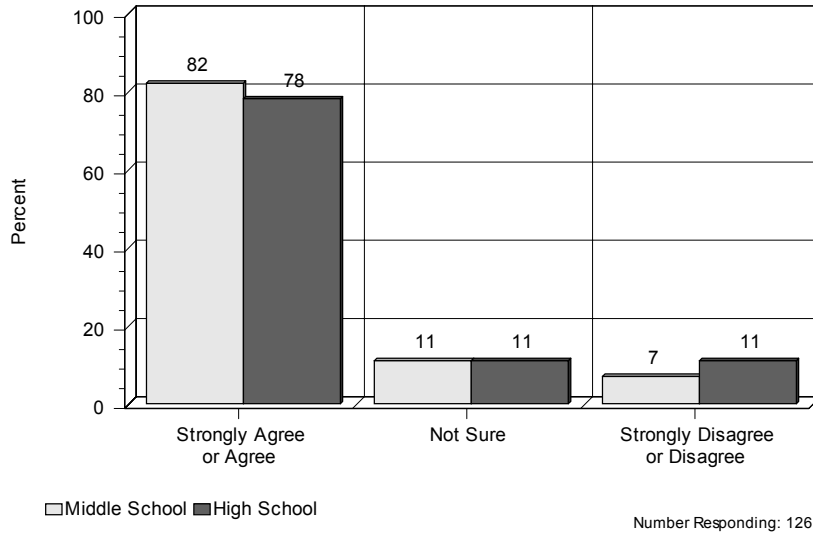


Figure 10-4 shows responses to the statement “*Teachers in my school respect and listen to me.*” Fifty-six percent (56%) “*agree*” or “*strongly agree*” with this statement (males, 59%; females, 51%; middle school, 65%; high school, 51%).

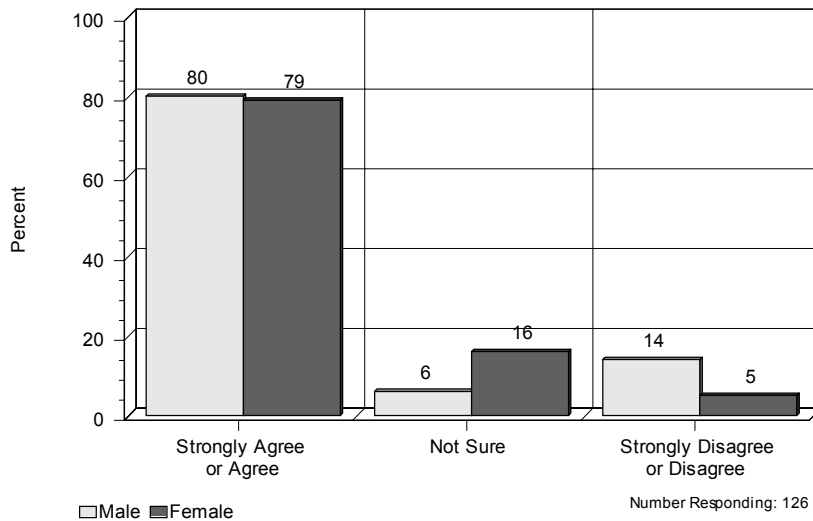


Attendance Students were asked if they believed in having good attendance and in being on time was important for their success in school and at work. Figures 10-5 and 10-6 shows that the majority of students believe it is important.

**Figure 10-5: Teens Who Believe Good Attendance is Important For Success in School and At Work (By School Level)**

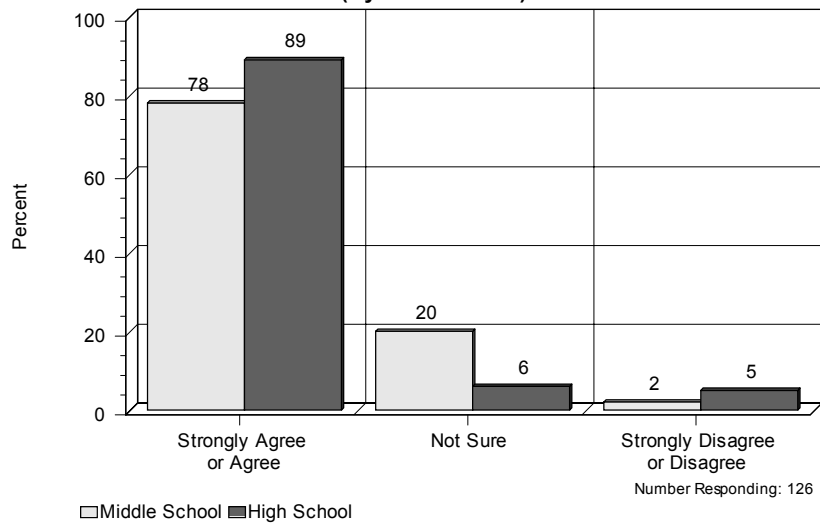


**Figure 10-6: Teens Who Believe Good Attendance is Important For Success in School and At Work (By Gender)**

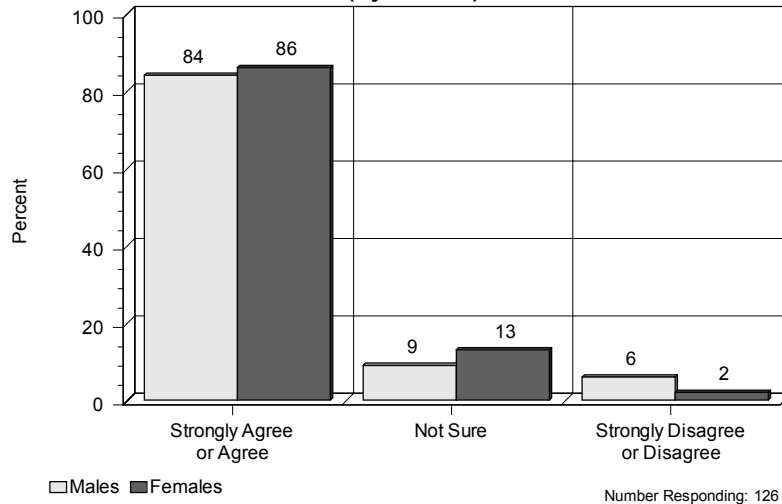


Figures 10-7 and 10-8 show that more than four of five (84%) teens “agree” or “strongly agree” their parents believe it is important for them to have good attendance and be on time to school.

**Figure 10-7: Teens Whose Parents Believe it is Important For Them to Have Good Attendance and Be on Time to School (By School Level)**

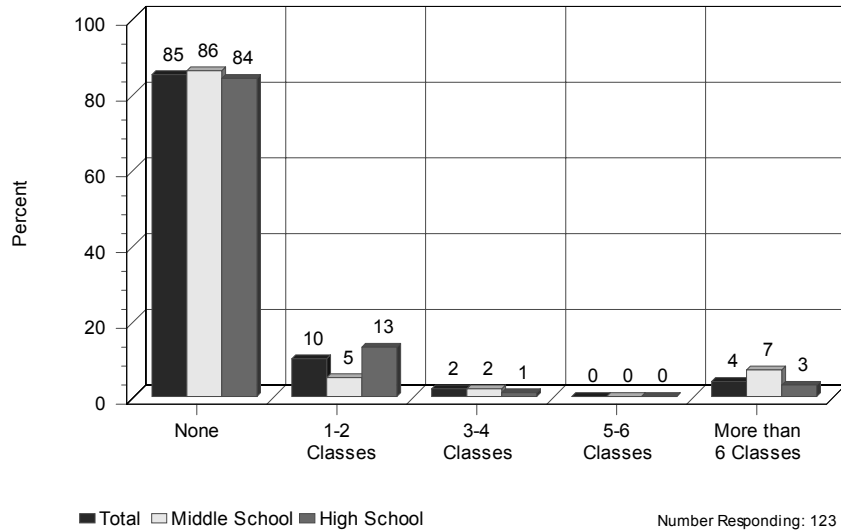


**Figure 10-8: Teens Whose Parents Believe it is Important For Them to Have Good Attendance and Be on Time to School (By Gender)**

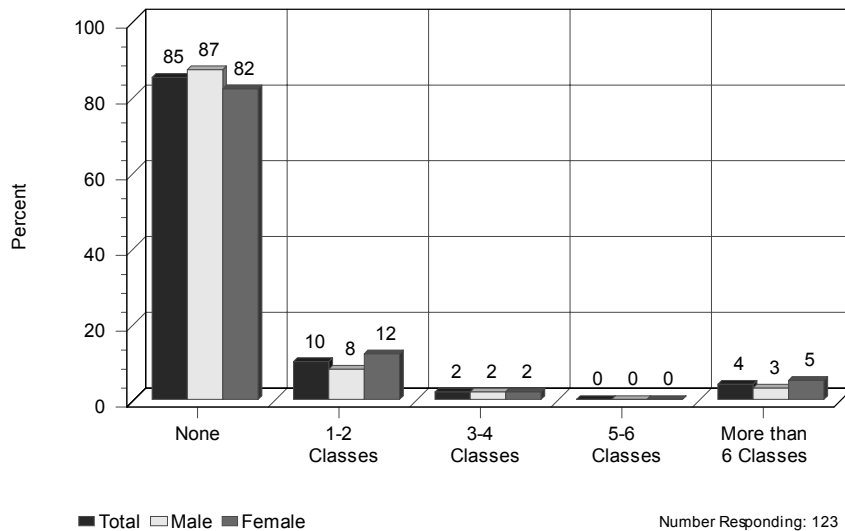


Students were asked how many classes they cut or missed without an approved excuse in the past month. Overall, 15% of teens reported they had unexcused absences in the past month (males, 14%; females, 16%). Figure 10-9 shows the responses by school level. Figure 10-10 shows the responses by gender.

**Figure 10-9: Classes Teens Cut or Missed Without an Approved Excuse  
(In The Past Month, by School Level)**



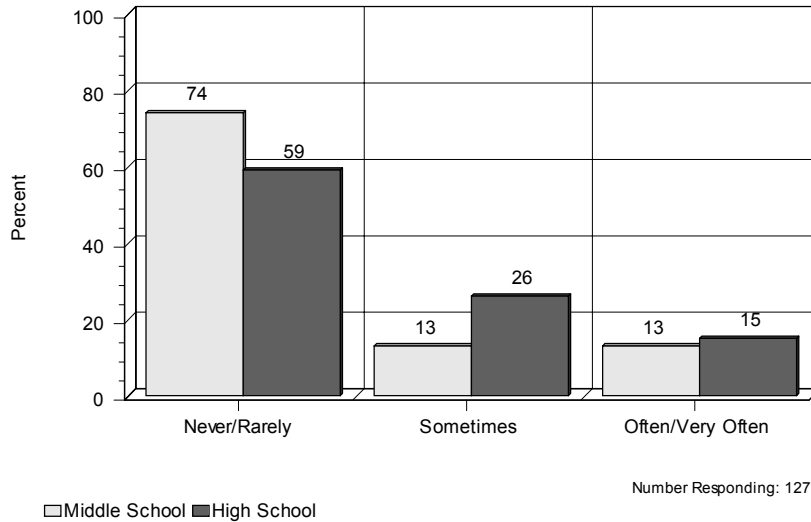
**Figure 10-10: Classes Teens Cut or Missed Without an Approved Excuse  
(In The Past Month, by Gender)**



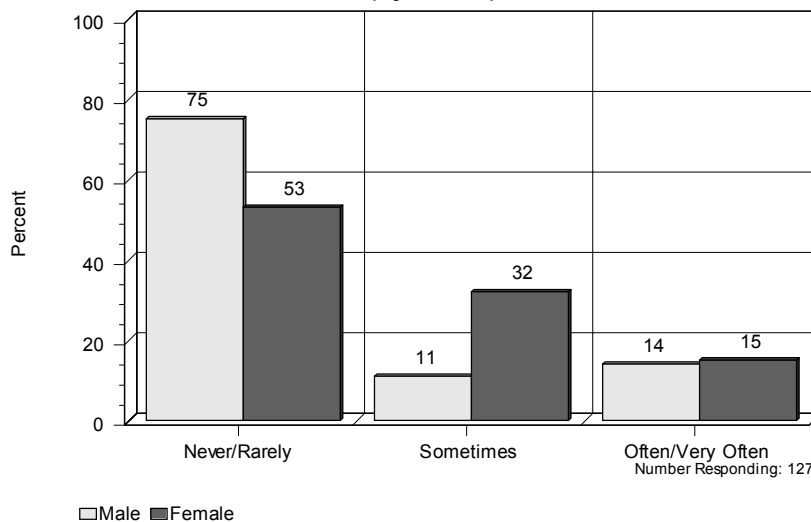
## Student Appearance

Students were asked “Do you gain attention or distract others by your dress or appearance in school? (the way you dress, wear jewelry and/or make-up, do your hair, etc.?)” The vast majority of students (65%) feel that their appearance does not gain them attention or distract others. Responses are shown in Figures 10-11 and 10-12.

**Figure 10-11: Teens Who Gain Attention or Distract Others by Their Appearance In School (By School Level)**

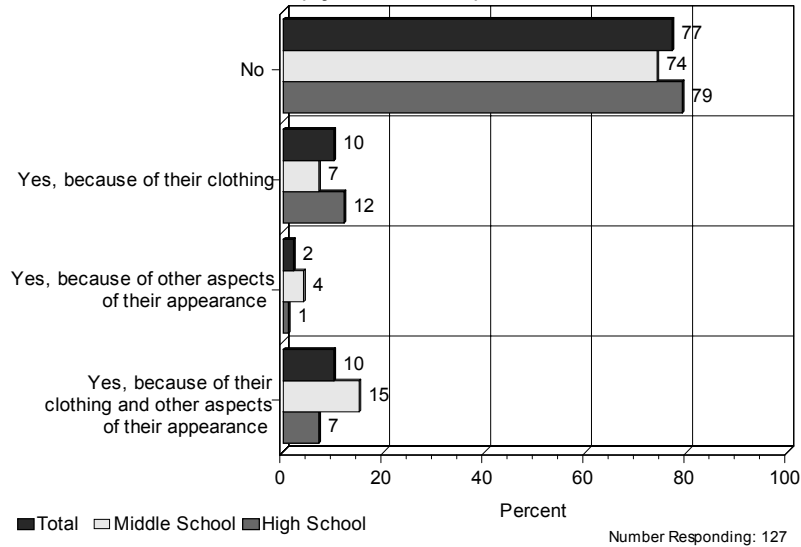


**Figure 10-12: Teens Who Gain Attention or Distract Others by Their Appearance In School (By Gender)**

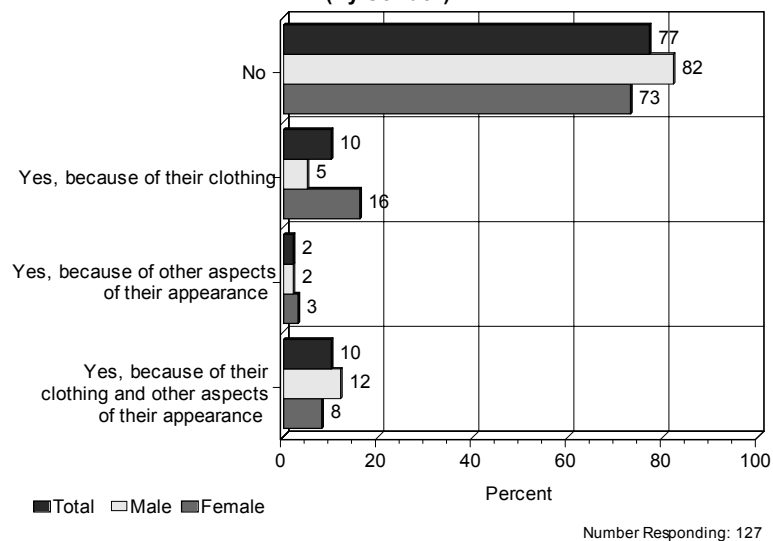


Figures 10-13 and 10-14 show the responses to the question “Have you ever been uncomfortable because of another student’s appearance?” The majority of students have not been uncomfortable because of another student’s appearance. Similar percentages of males and females reported this.

**Figure 10-13: Students Who Have Been Uncomfortable Because of Another's Appearance (By School Level)**

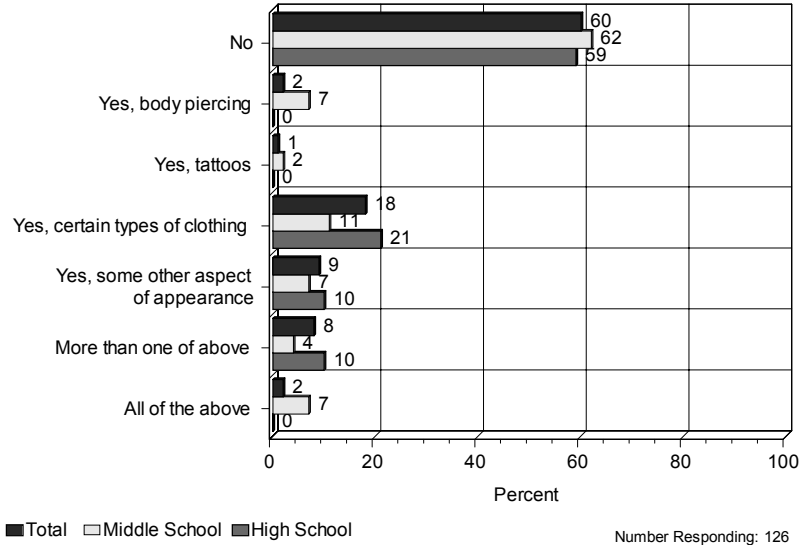


**Figure 10-14: Students Who Have Been Uncomfortable Because of Another's Appearance (By Gender)**

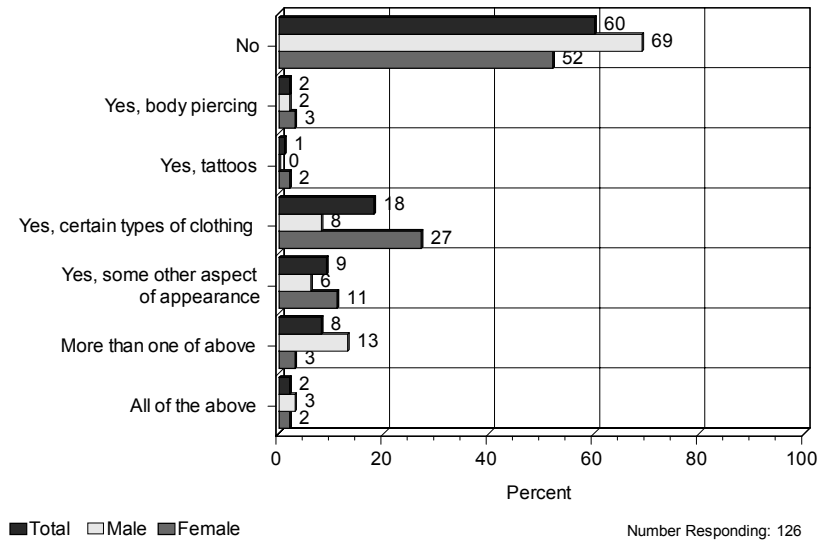


Students were asked “Are there any aspects of one’s appearance that you think are **not** okay for a public school setting?” Figure 10-15 shows that 18% of teens felt certain types of clothes (such as very short skirts or shorts, tank tops, hats, gothic or punk clothes, etc.) were not okay. Figure 10-16 shows that a greater percentage of females than males reported certain types of clothing were not okay for public school (males, 8%; females, 27%).

**Figure 10-15: Any Aspects of Appearance Not Okay for Public School (By School Level)**



**Figure 10-16: Any Aspects of Appearance Not Okay for Public School (By Gender)**



## Future Plans and Career Plans

When students were asked if they felt they would drop out of school before completing high school, 8% answered “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” (middle school, 9%; high school, 8%). A greater percentage of males than females reported that they would probably drop out of high school (males, 13%; females, 3%). Of course, those high school students who have already dropped out are not reflected in these percentages. Figure 10-17 shows the responses by school level and gender.

**Figure 10-17: Teens Who Feel They Will Drop Out Before They Complete High School**

(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level and Gender)

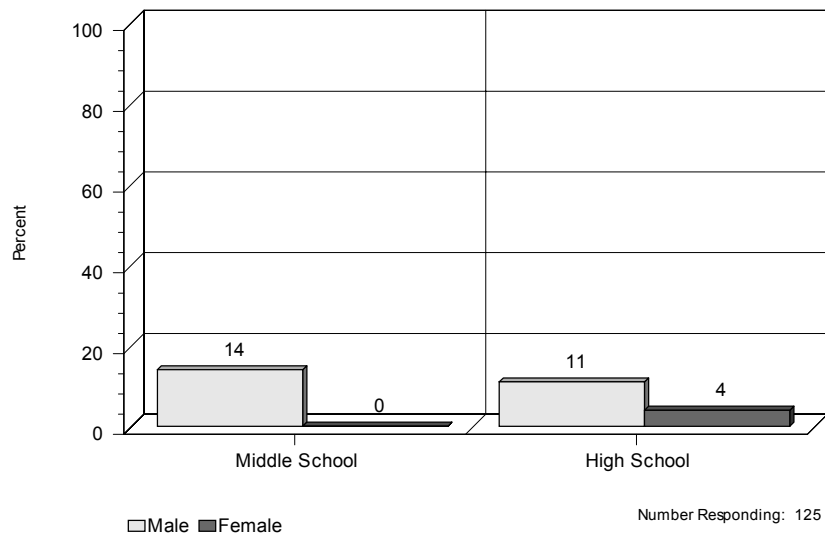
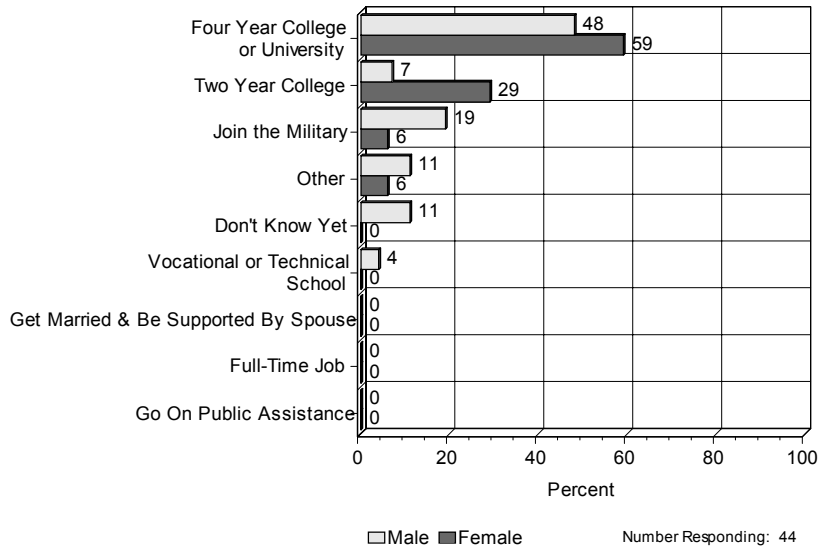
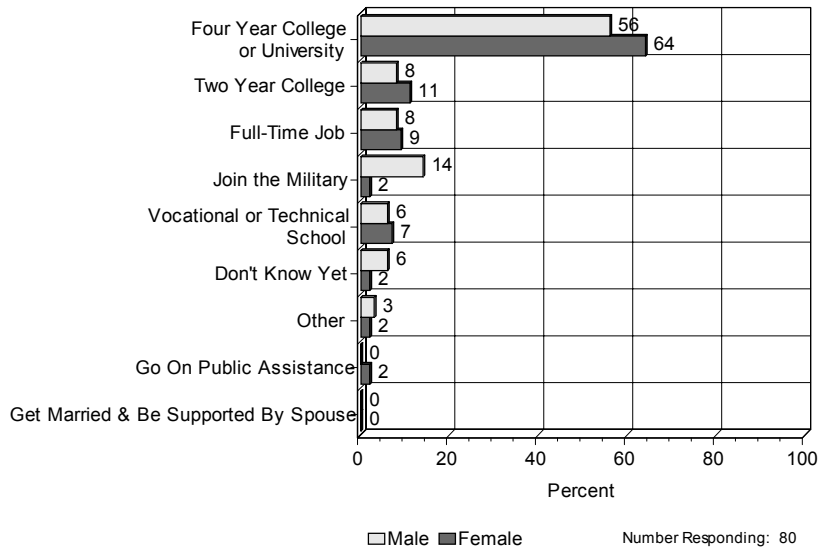


Figure 10-18 shows what middle school teens report their future plans will be. Figure 10-19 shows the same plans for high school students. Sixty percent (60%) of high school students think they will “Go to a 4-year college or university” (males, 56%; females, 64%).

**Figure 10-18: Future Plans After High School**  
(Middle School Students by Gender)



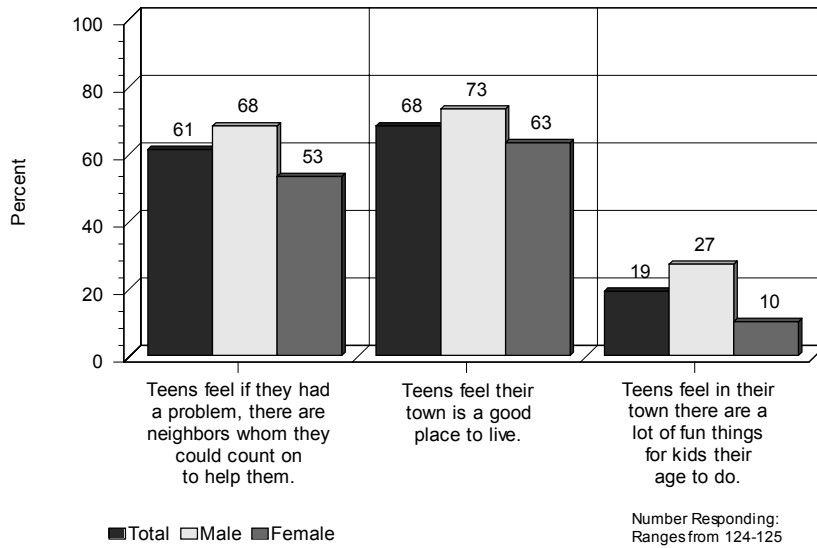
**Figure 10-19: Future Plans After High School**  
(High School Students by Gender)



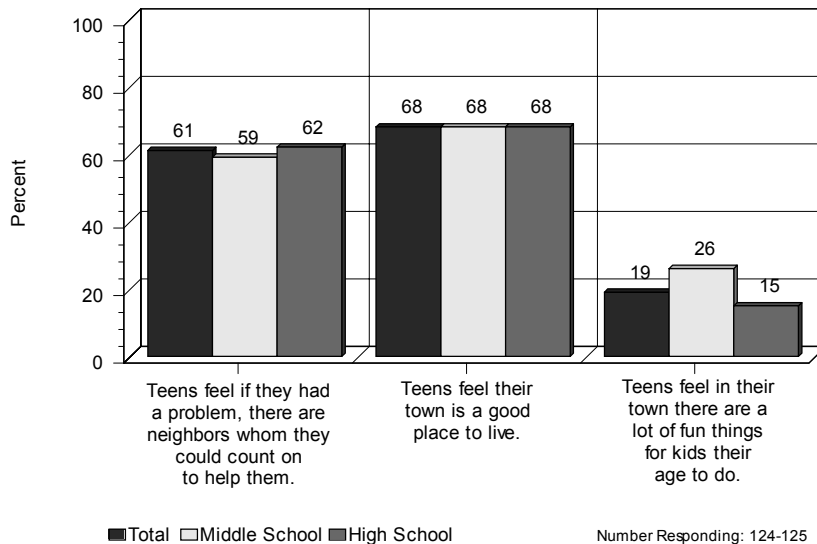
## Perceptions of Community

Neighborhood Support. Figure 10-20 shows what students reported about their community. Sixty-one percent (61%) reported there are neighbors they can count on if they are in trouble and need help. Although 68% felt their town is a good place to live, only 19% thought there are a lot of fun things for kids their age to do. Figure 10-21 shows the student responses by school level.

**Figure 10-20: Neighborhood Support**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)

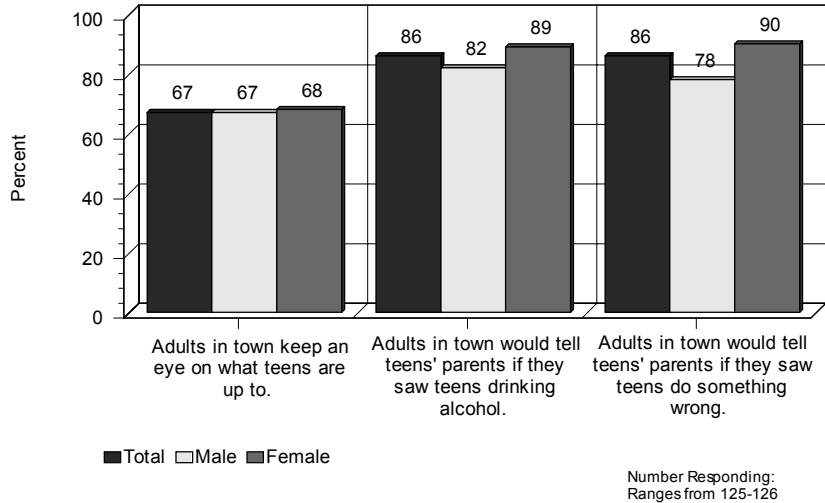


**Figure 10-21: Neighborhood Support**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level)

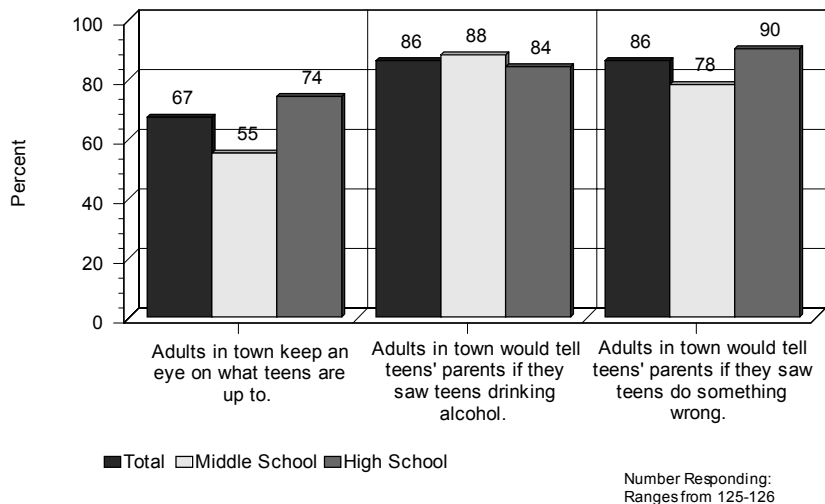


Neighborhood Monitoring. As shown in Figure 10-22, two-thirds of the students reported that adults in town keep an eye on what teens are up to. Over three-quarters (86%) of the students reported that adults in town would tell their parents if they saw teens drinking alcohol. Eighty-six percent (86%) felt that if they were to do something wrong, adults in town would tell their parents. Figure 10-23 shows the student responses by school level.

**Figure 10-22: Neighborhood Monitoring**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)



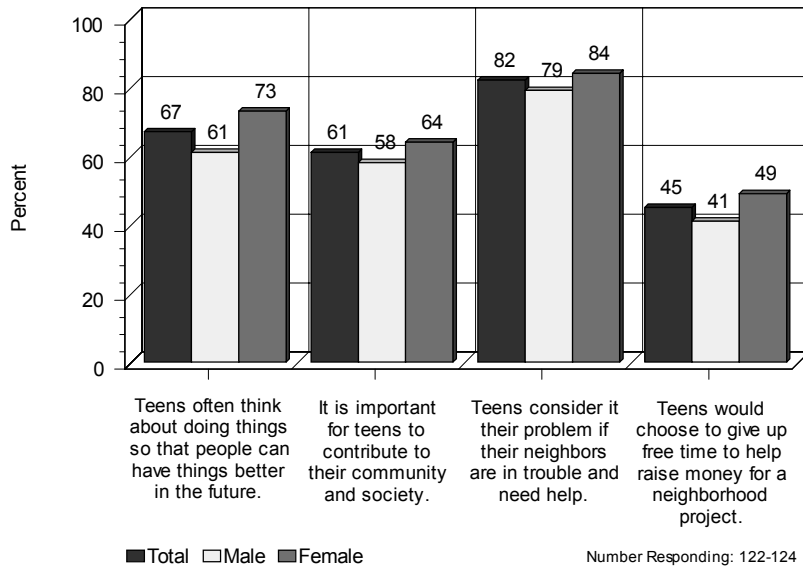
**Figure 10-23: Neighborhood Monitoring**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level)



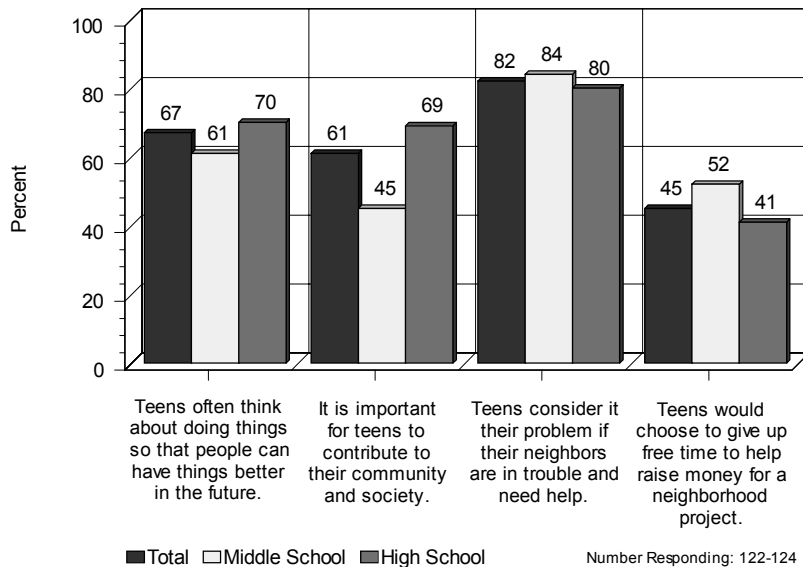
## Social Responsibility

Many teens have a well-developed sense of social responsibility toward their community. Figure 10-24 shows that two-thirds (67%) of students reported they often think about doing things “...so that people can have things better in the future.” Sixty-one percent (61%) of teens said they feel it is important to contribute to their community and society. Four out of five students (82%) said they consider it their problem if their neighbors are in trouble and need help. Forty-five percent (45%) of youth surveyed would give up their own free time in order to help raise money for a neighborhood project. Figure 10-25 shows the results by school level.

**Figure 10-24: Social Responsibility**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)



**Figure 10-25: Social Responsibility**  
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by School Level)



## Presentation Of Comparable Data

In this section, Lin-Wood Cooperative School District data are compared with other data from *Tapping Into Teen Concerns, Perceptions and Behavior: 2000-2001 Multi-Community Report* published by the Teen Assessment Project (TAP).

The *Tapping Into Teen Concerns, Perceptions and Behavior: 2000-2001 Multi-Community Report* is a multi-community report based on ten school districts surveyed from January 2000 through October 2001 (Teen Assessment Project, 2002). These data represent 9458 teens from five different counties around the state – Carroll, Cheshire, Coos, Grafton, and Hillsborough. Due to the nature of this project, however, the survey process is not random. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the population of New Hampshire teens.

**Table 10-1: Perceptions of School And Community  
(Grades 9-12)**

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>TAP<sup>1</sup> Multi-Community 2000-2001 %</b>	<b>TAP Lin-Wood 2003 %</b>
Percent who checked “agree” or “strongly agree” with statement.		
School		
“I enjoy going to school.”	53	50
“I believe I am getting a good, high quality education at my school.”	62	74
“I will probably drop out before I complete high school.”	6	8
Community		
“My town is a good place to live.”	76	68
“In my town there are a lot of fun things for kids my age to do.”	19	19
“Adults in my neighborhood or community keep an eye on what teens are up to.”	52	67
Youth Social Responsibility		
“It is important to me to contribute to my community and society.”	61	61
“I often think about doing things so people can have things better in the future.”	66	67
Teens would choose to give up free time to help raise money for a neighborhood project.	46	45
Teens would consider it their problem if neighbors are in trouble and need help.	79	82

<sup>1</sup> Teen Assessment Project, 2002.