



2011 Report



Introduction

In the 1940s, *Highlights* Founders Garry and Caroline Myers selected their most experienced editors for a job they considered one of their most important: answering children’s mail sent to the magazine. Today, *Highlights* editors continue that tradition by personally answering more than 55,000 letters and emails from children annually. We consider it an honor that kids share with us what they think, feel, believe, worry about, hope for, and imagine.

I believe that really listening to children is one of the most powerful things we—as parents, mentors, and educators—can do for them and also for ourselves. Learning their perspective is essential to finding the best ways to serve them. Even after years of responding to letters, I am still frequently surprised and enlightened by our readers. They are our partners as we strive to help them grow to be their best selves—curious, confident, creative, and caring.

In our annual State of the Kid survey, we give kids a national platform to share their thoughts. The past two years, we asked kids many questions about themselves and their preferences, worries, and aspirations. This year, the issues we asked them to comment on—bullying, their parents’ worries, and gender roles—speak to how they view and interact with others. Our hope is that adding kids’ voices to the conversation about these topics will enrich and deepen the dialogue and help all of us who work to make children’s lives better.



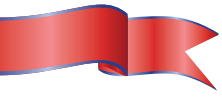
Christine French Cully
Editor in Chief
Highlights for Children



Contributor Bios

Amy Lupold Bair, blogger, social-media marketer, and mom, is the founder of Resourceful Mommy Media. In 2008, Amy burst onto the social-media scene, inventing the Twitter Party hashtagged social event with panelists and a conversational theme catering to the needs of clients ranging from e-commerce start-ups to nationally recognized trusted brands. From her own successful relationships with public relations firms and companies, Amy developed a network for fellow bloggers in early 2009. Her “eGlobal Influence Network” has grown to include nearly 1,000 social-media-savvy bloggers. Utilizing her proximity to the nation’s capital, Amy continues to work with powerful Washington, D.C., firms to implement public-service and socially responsible campaigns and events. A former English teacher and a writer at heart, Amy continues to blog on her personal site, ResourcefulMommy.com.

Deborah J. Holliday, MSW, is an active advocate in her community and works with New Jersey nonprofits to bring a statewide awareness to the issue of bullying in schools, neighborhoods, and the workplace. She is the featured spokesperson for the bullying awareness campaign Education >Empowerment >Empathy that is sponsored by BullyAlarm.com, a New Jersey nonprofit. Her collaborative efforts with BullyAlarm.com are aimed at creating a model program in New Jersey that produces positive outcomes and will ignite a national conversation on the issue of bullying. Deborah received her bachelor of arts degree from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, and her masters in social work from Monmouth University. Deborah is a member of the National Association of Social Workers and the North American Association of Christians in Social Work.



What does it mean to bully someone?

In 2011, everyone—from schools to parents to cartoons—was talking about bullying. But are we all talking about the same thing? That’s what we hoped to find out from kids. And, indeed, we discovered an interesting difference between the way kids ages 2–8 define bullying and the way kids 9–12 do. The younger age group was significantly more likely to describe it simply as “being mean” (48%) compared with the older group (34%). Older kids were more likely to include a nuance, such as that the behavior is unprovoked, repetitive, or intense.

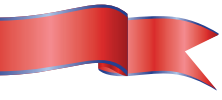


“Young people often define bullying behavior in terms of their emotional responses, while adults tend to identify outward behaviors. The key to real social change is that kids and adults have the same standards of what bullying looks like!”

–Deborah Holliday, MSW

“We’ve come a long way from when the saying ‘sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me’ was popular. I find it encouraging that children believe that being hurt emotionally is just as much a part of bullying as being hurt physically.”

– Amy Lupold Bair



What does it mean to bully someone?





What does it mean to bully someone?

Ages 2 to 8

What does it mean to bully someone? To ~~to~~ feel angry and
to ~~to~~ be mean.

What does it mean to bully someone? To be bossy

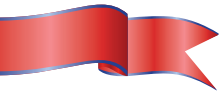
What does it mean to bully someone? To be
mean to someone.

What does it mean to bully someone? Boast, Bragg, do something
the person does not like.

What does it mean to bully someone? To Bully means to beat
up or hurt someone

What does it mean to bully someone? not hise

What does it mean to bully someone? It means to tell
people what to do.



What does it mean to bully someone?

Ages 9 to 12+

What does it mean to bully someone? It's when you be
mean to someone and you do it every
day.

What does it mean to bully someone? To repeatedly hurt or
embarrass someone on purpose

What does it mean to bully someone? to physically or
emotionally hurt someone.

What does it mean to bully someone? To bully someone means
that they just want to hurt you for no apparent
reason.

What does it mean to bully someone? You bully someone
when you're PURPOSELY doing it MORE THAN
ONCE.

What does it mean to bully someone? to hurt or make them
sad every day or when they want.



Have you ever bullied someone else? Have you ever been bullied?

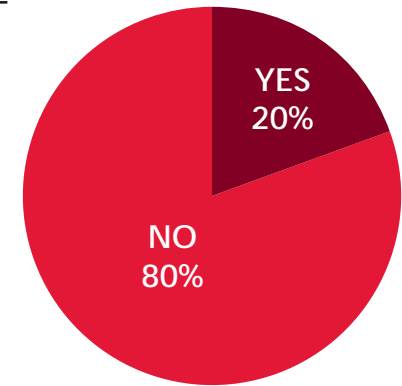
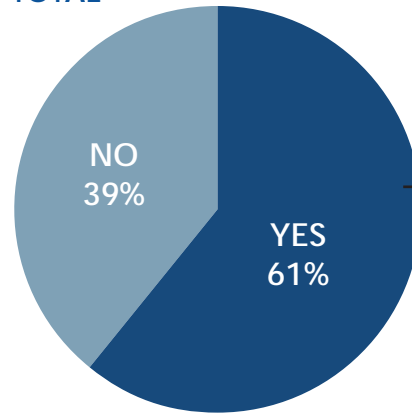
Not surprisingly, far more children believed that they have experienced bullying (61%) than think they have bullied others (14%). Children who had been bullied themselves (20%) were much more likely than those who hadn't (5%) to say that they have bullied someone else.

This data is an accurate reflection of the national average in that 60–80% of all school children report being bullied. It is interesting to note that children who had bullied someone else were also more likely to report being bullied. This is an indicator of our cultural need to accurately identify bullying behavior and provide proper reporting tools, since a large number of incidents go unreported due to this lack of infrastructure."

–Deborah Holliday, MSW

Have you ever been bullied?

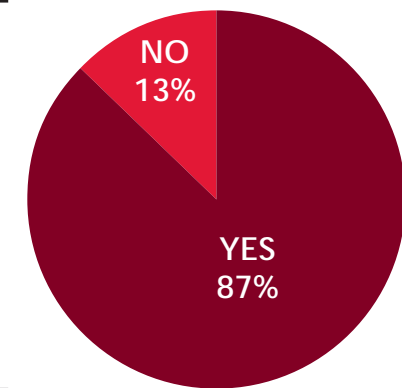
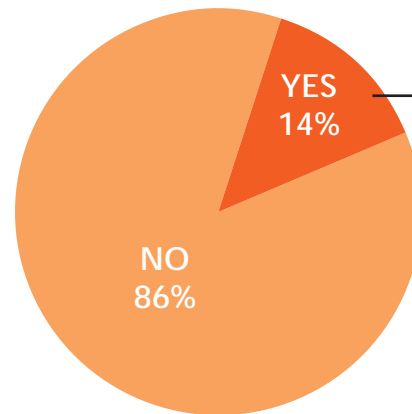
TOTAL



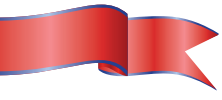
20% of children who report being bullied also report bullying someone themselves.

Have you ever bullied someone else?

TOTAL



87% of children who report bullying someone else also reported being bullied themselves.

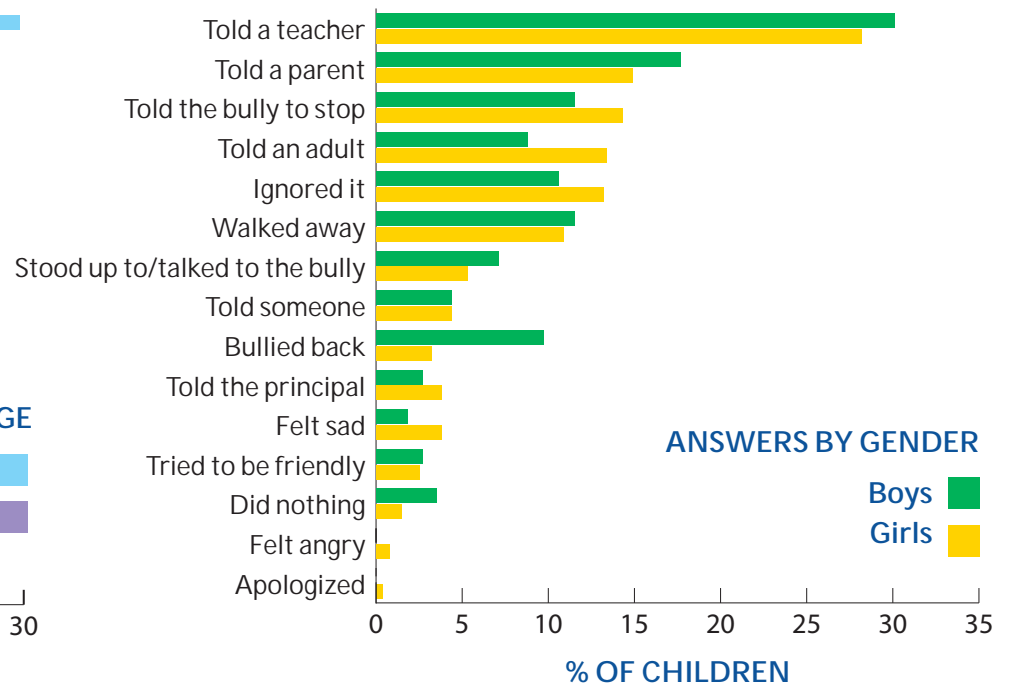
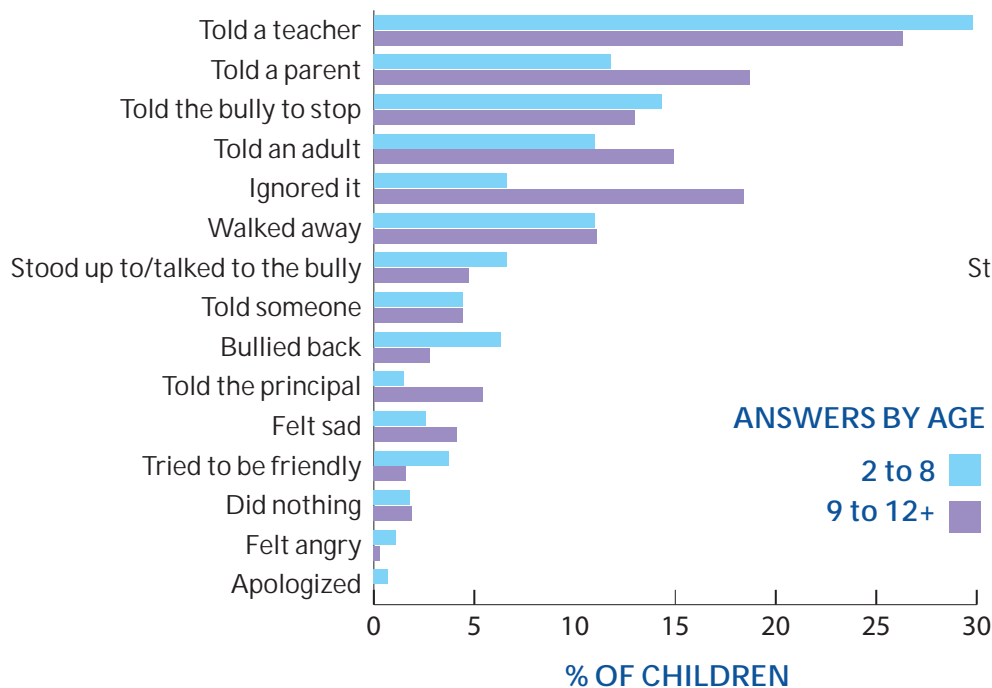


If you have been bullied, how did you deal with it?

The most common response to our question was that they told a teacher (28%). Telling a parent (15%) or an adult (13%) was also named frequently; however, 81 kids (14%) said they tried to handle it themselves by telling the bully to stop. Boys were significantly more likely than girls to say that they bullied the person back, while girls were more likely to say that they told the bully to stop or ignored the bully. Younger kids were more likely than older kids to say that they bullied back or tried to be friendly, while older kids were much more likely to tell a parent or an adult or to ignore it.

“Just as when I was a kid and again when I was a teacher, school appears to remain the number one place where children are feeling bullied. As a parent, I know I’ve got to encourage my children to report these incidents to their teachers when and where they happen. I’d love to see more kids feel empowered to go to a teacher or other staff member for help.”

– Amy Lupold Bair





If you have been bullied, how did you deal with it?

Yes, I have been dealing with it by being nice.

I said, "STOP! I don't like that." and walked away.

there was two boy that were picking on me so I push one of them and the other fainted. And we all got in trouble.

I told my mom, my mom told my teacher, and the bully got in trouble.

i told them how would you feel if it was you.

I got bullied once. The person kept teasing my friends and I. I decided to stand up to them and put a stop to it.

I did not tell an adult or teacher. I was scared. I don't know why.

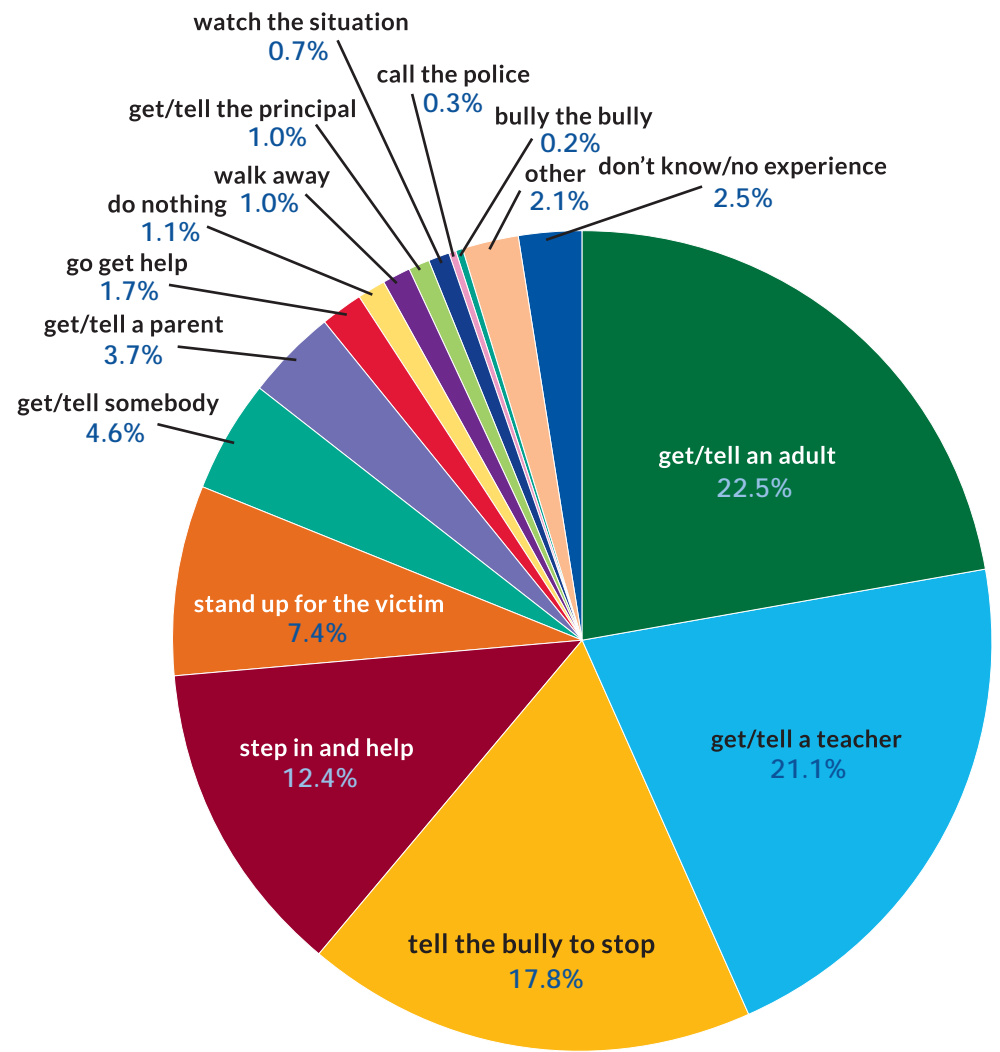
I told adult to make them stop.

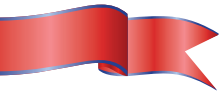


What do you do when you see someone else being bullied?

A high number of responses to this question related to telling someone, such as a teacher, parent, or another trusted adult. The next most commonly mentioned action was to get involved by telling the bully to stop or by stepping in to help. Very few kids (2.1%) admitted that they have walked away or done nothing to help.

“The survey results reveal a statistic that is disturbing. Children who tell adults about bullying said they report to teachers MORE than to parents! It is critical that parents take the lead in securing a safe environment for their children while actively partnering with educators and the community. Adult intervention coupled with an agreed-upon and collaborative strategy is the only possible solution. I am not averse to kids advocating for themselves when bullied, but I am convinced that adult intervention is a key element in true cultural change for the safety of our kids.”
–Deborah Holliday, MSW





Are your parents happy?

We know from the letters that children write us that they are highly aware of and affected by their parents' emotional lives. They look to the adults in their lives to help them understand the world and how they should feel about it.

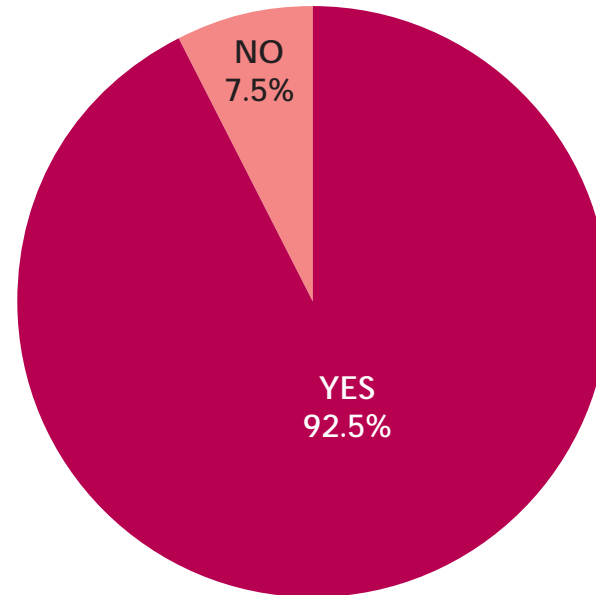


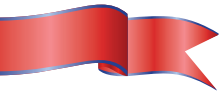
"Who knew that kids thought about their parents' happiness? I love it! As parents, we certainly find ourselves focusing on our children's wants and needs, so it is actually pretty cool to see that they've got us in mind as well."

– Amy Lupold Bair

For parents, being aware of the powerful effect their state of mind has on children can be anxiety-inducing in itself! The good news is that the overwhelming majority of kids (92.5%) reported that they think their parents are happy. Indeed, this is close to the data of Gallup surveys that ask adults the same question about their own happiness.

Are your parents happy? TOTAL





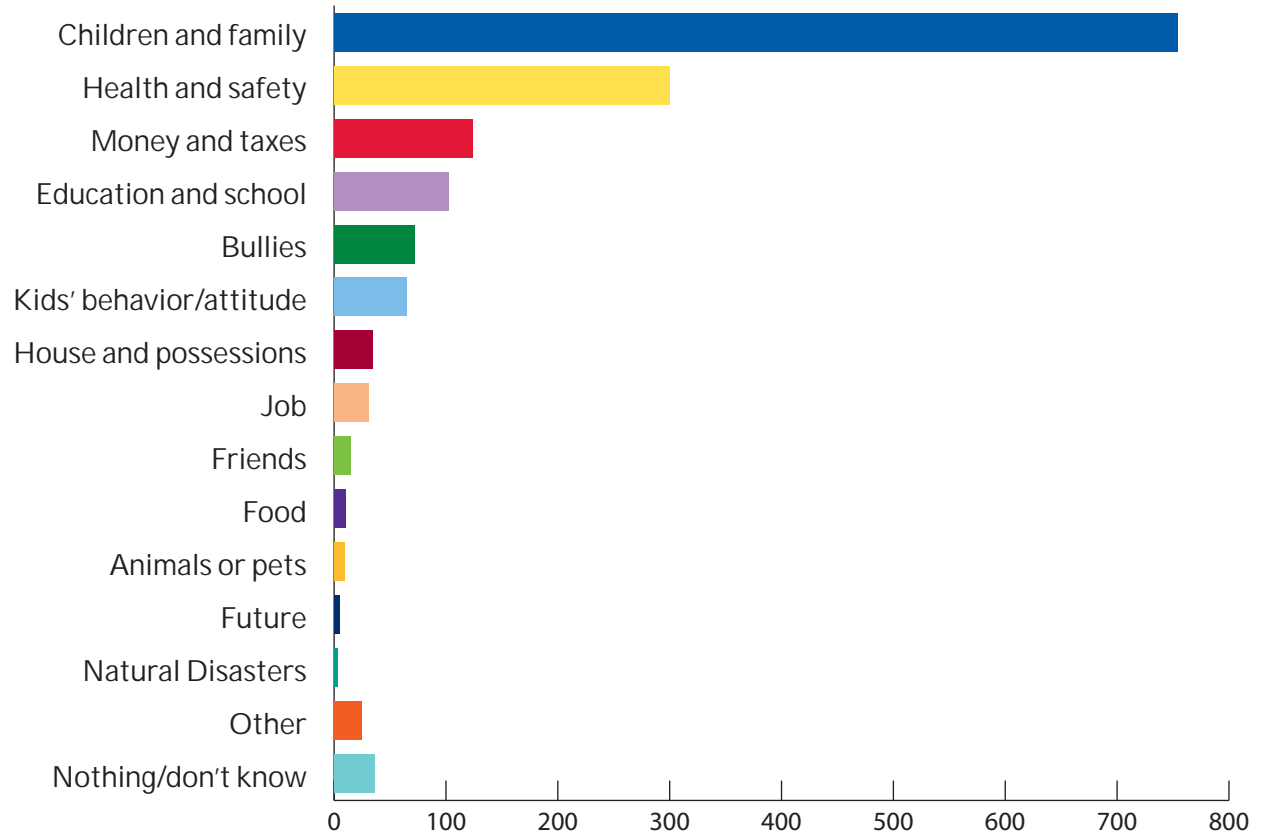
What do you think your parents worry about most?

The highest number of respondents (77%) thought that their parents worry about them. In fact, the most common verbatim response to this question was “me.” There is no doubt that family interactions color children’s views of their parents, and it is perhaps not surprising that they think their parents’ thoughts and worries are all about them. What children think their parents are worried about for them is even more interesting. A large number of respondents (31%) named their physical safety as their parents’ top concern, many specifically referencing getting kidnapped, hurt in an accident while playing, or being murdered.



Of course, there were kids who thought their parents had concerns outside of their family. Another common response was that their parents worry about money (13%). It would not be uncommon to see this at any time in history, but it is especially understandable today that many kids know that their parents are anxious about making ends meet.

Most Common Responses (TOTAL)



What do you think your parents worry about most?

What do you think your parents worry about most? Me because they love me and sometimes they protect me from bad people.

What do you think your parents worry about most? I think they worry about my safety and losing everything we own. America is in debt.

What do you think your parents worry about most? I think my parents worry about my safety. There is so much danger in this world, they need to protect me!

What do you think your parents worry about most? me and my family being hurt.

What do you think your parents worry about most? That I am safe cuz they adopted me and want to have me safe. getting made fun of because of my disability

What do you think your parents worry about most? If I were taken by someone and if I was badly hurt.

What do you think your parents worry about most? That I might get killed.

What do you think your parents worry about most? Me. They worry about me so much that I get worried about my freedom! I'm not allowed anywhere alone! Oh, and they worry alot about money, 'cause of the recession.

What do you think your parents worry about most? about child abduction.

What do you think your parents worry about most? making sure we have a home & food on the table



What do you think your parents worry about most?

What do you think your parents worry about most? About somebody killing me.

What do you think your parents worry about most? That our house will be taken away

What do you think your parents worry about most? they worry that we're not safe some times. A rule at our house is: You're not allowed to get hurt.

What do you think your parents worry about most? That I might break a limb while playing.

What do you think your parents worry about most? my brother's disease SMA.

What do you think your parents worry about most? I think my parents worry about my safety. Sometimes I do not understand it, but I know that it is for the best.

What do you think your parents worry about most? I think they would worry about me getting hurt or kidnapped most.

What do you think your parents worry about most? Whats happening. Are we okay. When we get sick. What we eat. (My mom worries about me too much on 4-16-2011 When I was reading Highlights she said "Wear your glasses." I was already wearing them?

What do you think your parents worry about most? LOSING someone in my family or something bad happening to their child.



Are there things that boys are better at than girls? Are there things that girls are better at than boys?

In previous State of the Kid reports, we were often surprised to discover differences in the ways boys and girls answered questions. In 2009, we learned that girls were more likely to be asked to do chores; and in 2010 we found that boys were more likely to say that the best thing about them was their smarts. These responses prompted us to explore more directly the issue of how kids view gender roles.

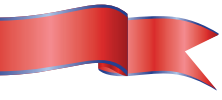


“As much as we work to promote gender equality, it seems that kids are still growing up with messages that boys are better than girls at things like sports and video games. They need to stop by my house where the girls always win at Wii!”

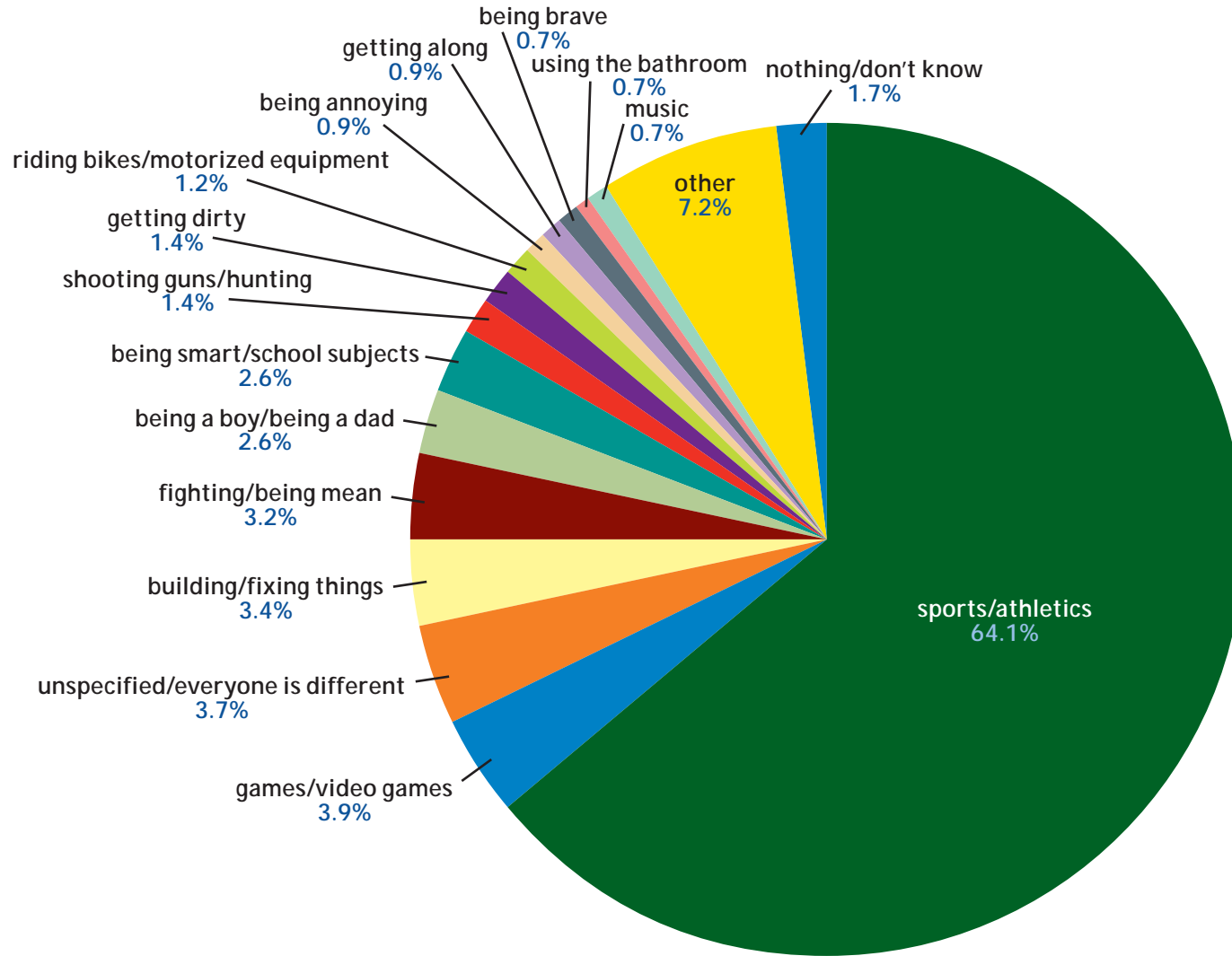
– Amy Lupold Bair

The majority of respondents agreed that there are things girls are better at than boys, and vice versa (although in each case, each gender was more likely to think they were better at some tasks than the other gender). There was a strong consensus from all respondents about what boys are better at doing. The highest response, sports (64.1%), was much higher than the next most common response, video games (3.9%). There was less of a consensus on what girls are better at, and the common answers included fashion/makeup (12.9%), cheerleading/gymnastics (10.2%), school (8.2%), cooking and cleaning (5.1%), and listening (3%).





Are there things that boys are better at than girls?



Are there things that boys are better at than girls?

If yes, what? Why?

boys jump off swings and girls don't.

If yes, what? Why?

Usually, sports. Football because they are usually more athletic. Also, math and science.

If yes, what? Why?

Boys are usually stronger so they are better at moving furniture.

If yes, what? Why?

like lifting stuff and even heavy stuff and strong. because they are stronger and more different than girls

If yes, what? Why?

Shoveling and opening bottles! Because they are strong!?! lol

If yes, what? Why?

Boys are better in sports, wrestling, video games and a lot more

If yes, what? Why?

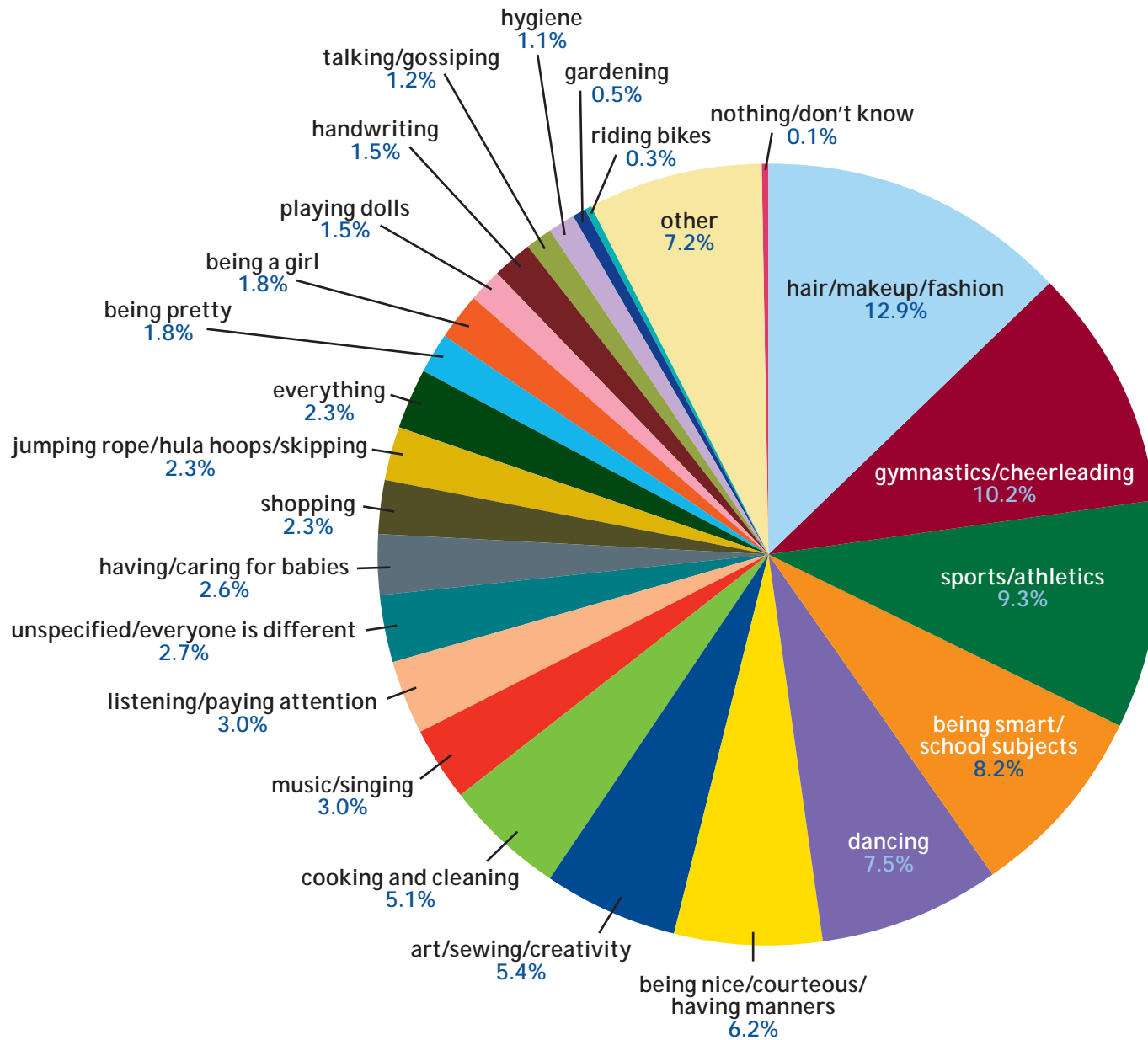
Video games, more than half of the population of human boys are better than them

If yes, what? Why?

Because they get more respect from girls. Girls don't get much respect from boys. (Unless they're your boy friend.) And making friends with girls



Are there things that girls are better at than boys?





Are there things that girls are better at than boys?

If yes, what? Why? In cleaning houses b/c boys don't sweep very well like girls do.

If yes, what? Why? I think girls are kind of smarter, because it seems like guys don't really care about schools. Some guys do care though. I think it's because most people think guys are lazy and play video games most of the time.

If yes, what? Why? Blink. Recent tests have shown that females blink two times as much as men.

If yes, what? Why? Girls are as good at sports as boys. Who ever said girls can't play sports? I sometimes think it's unfair that boys are always the ones playing sports.

If yes, what? Why? Being pretty wearing stuff boys can't wear and wear make up having a lot of pink.

If yes, what? Why? Girls are better at wearing high heels.

If yes, what? Why? Well, to me girls are a lot more mature than boys. And I mean it!! 😊

If yes, what? Why? Girls are better at getting what they want. Girls are better at getting what they want because they are more charming than boys.

Methodology

The purpose of this research was to obtain feedback from readers of *Highlights* magazine about their perspectives on bullying, gender roles, and their parents. The survey was bound into 70,000 subscriber issues of the April 2011 edition of the magazine. Those surveys missing demographic data were excluded.

For each of the open-ended questions in the survey, text analysis was completed to categorize the large quantity of verbatim responses. A total of 995 complete surveys gave a statistical confidence level of 99% +/- 4%, ideal for quantitative purposes.

Thanks

Thanks to the kids who sat down to tell *Highlights* about their lives.

