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UNION  
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Highlights  
 The State of the Kid



2010 SURVEY RESULTS

# Introduction



Last year, our first State of the Kid report shared our readers' perspectives on school, home life, and growing up today. This year, we wanted to follow up on things we learned last year. Now that we know that kids believe they get to spend enough time with their parents, we wondered what activities they were most enjoying during that family time. We also wanted to dig deeper into some of their dreams and expectations for the future. We wondered what they aspired to do as adults, what they thought the world will be like, and what new technologies will affect their lives.

At *Highlights*, we receive and answer more than 60,000 letters from kids each year. For us, it is the most important way we stay connected to the experience of childhood today. We are honored by the trust kids put in us when they share their problems, dreams, hopes, and ideas. We are glad for this opportunity to share their confidence with you and hope you enjoy what they have to say.



**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—a 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. The Global 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.

**Andy Boyles** is the science editor at *Highlights* magazine and its trade book division, Boyds Mills Press. He used to write about psychiatry and molecules at medical centers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Galveston, Texas. But he doesn’t have to do that anymore—not since he joined *Highlights* sixteen years ago. For both *Highlights* and Boyds Mills Press, Andy works to acquire articles and books that help kids develop a deep, lasting connection with nature and show that science is an ongoing, self-correcting process as opposed to a collection of facts. Andy is a member of the National Association of Science Writers, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Science Teachers Association.

**Dr. Istar Schwager**, President of Creative Parents, Inc. and founder of CreativeParents.com is a columnist and consulting editor for Highlightsparents.com. She holds a doctorate in educational psychology and has been advisor and consultant to numerous award-winning children’s and parenting media companies and programs.

# What job would you most enjoy doing when you grow up?

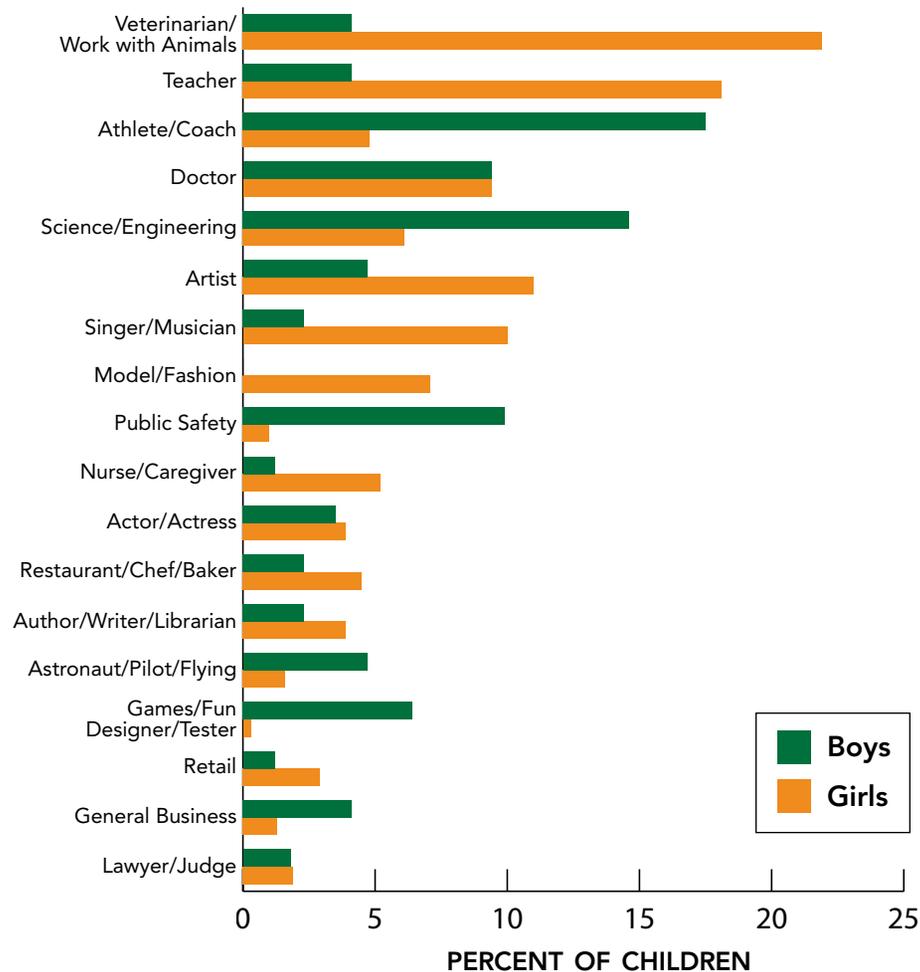
## Career Choice

BY GENDER



Early career aspirations are often limited by what kids know; the careers they've seen depicted in movies, magazines, and books; and their exposure to adults who do those jobs. But these aspirations also reflect kids' sensibilities about what roles have worth, and also can give adults insight into where they place value when talking to kids about careers.

There were significant differences between boys and girls when they responded to our question. The most popular response from boys was athlete or coach (18%). The highest number of girls (22%) responded they'd like to be a veterinarian or work with animals. Becoming a doctor, a scientist, or an engineer or working in public safety rounded out the boys' top five responses. Girls dreamed of becoming teachers, artists, singers, doctors, and models.



# What do you like best about yourself?

On of the most important things children do as they mature is form a self-image by learning to value their talents and attributes. How they evaluate themselves is often influenced by those close to them, like family, teachers, and friends, but can also be affected by the cultural depictions they encounter in music, magazines, television, and popular culture. *Highlights* has long believed that children learn best through positive example, which is one reason why, in the fictional and nonfictional stories we share with our readers, *Highlights* depicts characters who are creative, confident, curious, and caring.

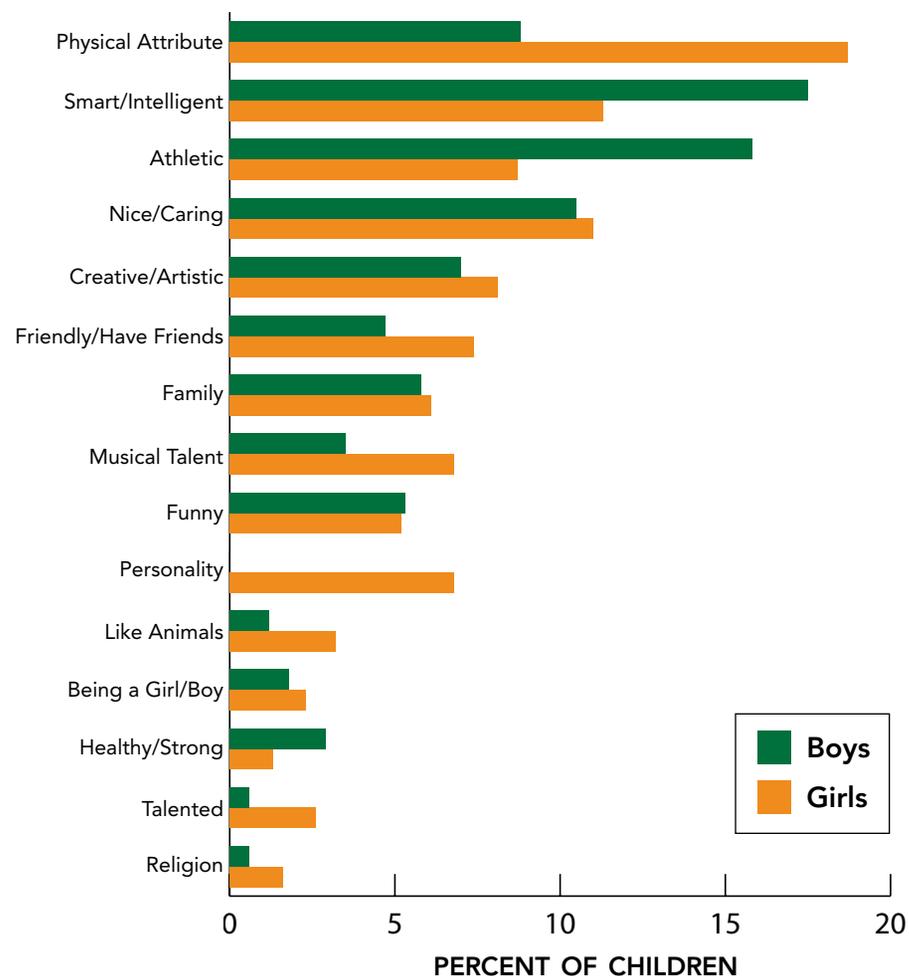
When we asked kids to name something they liked best about themselves, more than twice as many girls (19%) than boys (9%) named a physical attribute. The top response from boys was their intelligence (18%). This increased body awareness among girls did not surprise us. *Highlights* editors often hear from our female readers about body image issues. Perhaps demonstrating the increasing focus on the body by younger kids, respondents ages 3–8 were just as likely to respond with a physical attribute as those ages 9–12.

“We need to consider what messages we adults are sending little girls about what’s really important. We’d be doing little girls a big favor by complimenting them more for their abilities, hard work and accomplishments than for how they look.” ~ **Istar Schwager, Ph.D.**



## Best Attribute

BY GENDER

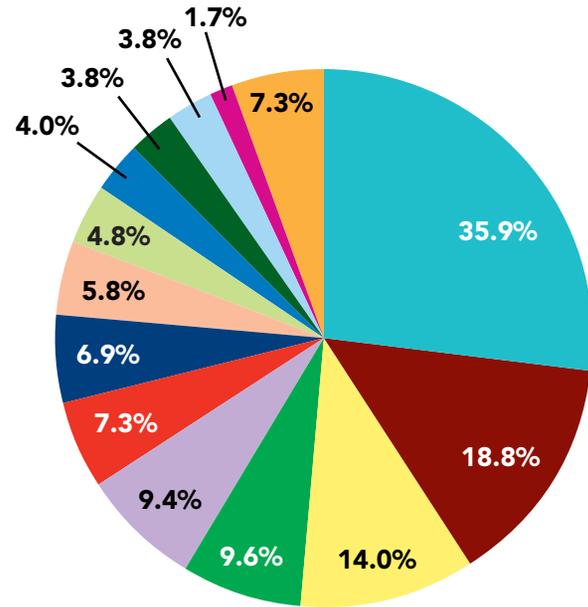


# What do you like to do when you spend time with your parents?

## Favorite Family Activities



In last year's survey, *Highlights* learned that the majority of kids think they do get to spend enough time with their parents. This year, we followed up to learn what kids most enjoyed doing during family time. Not surprisingly, the highest number of kids (35%) reported that playing—whether with board games or make-believe—was their favorite thing to do with their parents. The second most commonly mentioned activity was watching movies or TV together (19%). Cooking and eating together was the fourth-highest response (10%). Kids also reported enjoying doing things outdoors, sporting events, cuddling, and reading together as positive family experiences.



- Play/Play Games/Video Games
- Watch Movies/TV
- Outdoor Activity
- Cook/Eat Together
- Talking/Chatting
- Swimming
- Sports/Sporting Events
- Shopping
- Snuggle/Cuddle
- Amusement Park/Fun Center
- Travel/Vacation
- Read Together
- Arts/Crafts
- Other

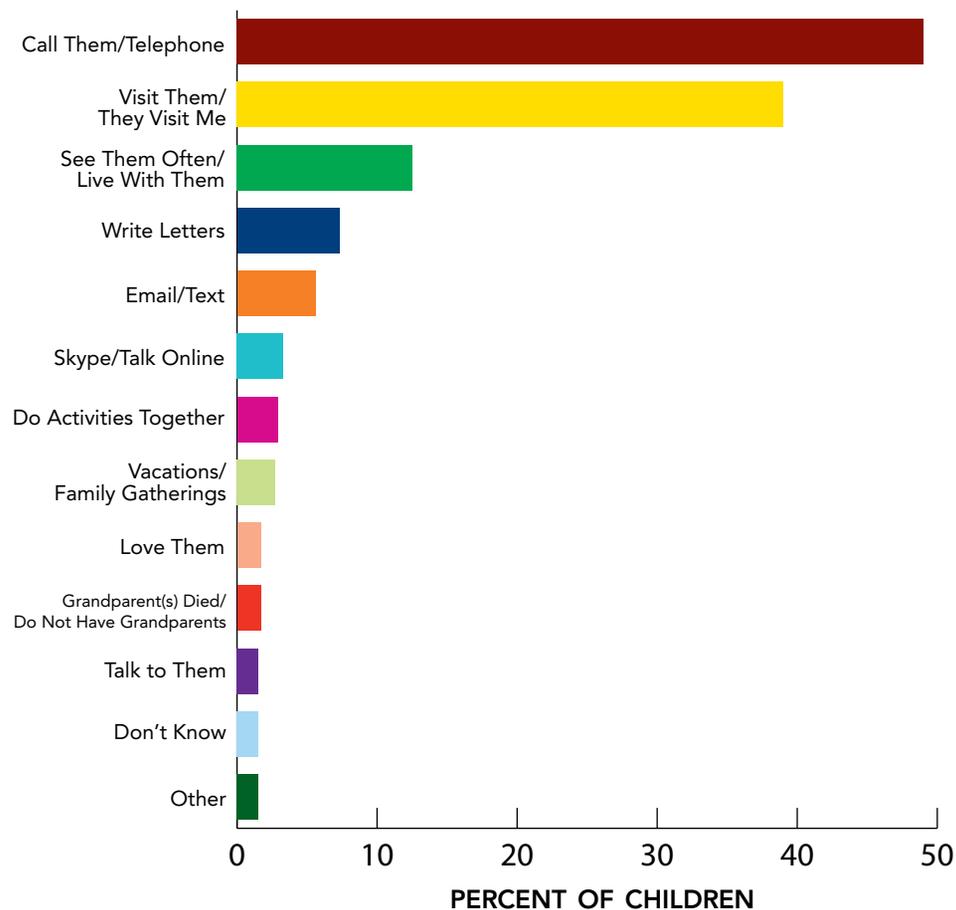
“Three cheers for board games! Kids need face time with their parents, and playing board games fosters social interaction, negotiation, healthy competition, problem-solving and laughter.”  
**~ Istar Schwager, Ph.D.**

# How do you stay in touch with your grandparents?

## Communication with Grandparents



The majority of respondents did have living grandparents. Among those that did, talking on the phone (49%) and visiting them or having them visit (39%) were by far the most common methods of staying connected. Somewhat surprisingly, postal mail did have a slight edge on e-mail when kids reported that they stay in touch via written correspondence.” And some kids with tech-savvy grandparents reported that Internet video, or Skype, was their preferred way to stay in touch.



“One of my biggest concerns when having children was that they wouldn’t get to know their grandparents who all live at least one state away. We have made it a priority in our family to keep these cross-generational relationships strong. It sounds like most families have made this a priority as well!” ~ **Amy Lupold Bair**

# If you could change one thing in the world, what would you change? Why?

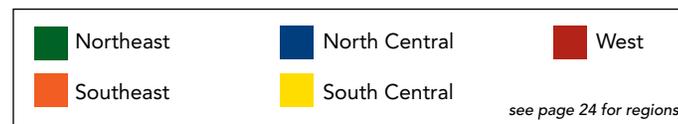
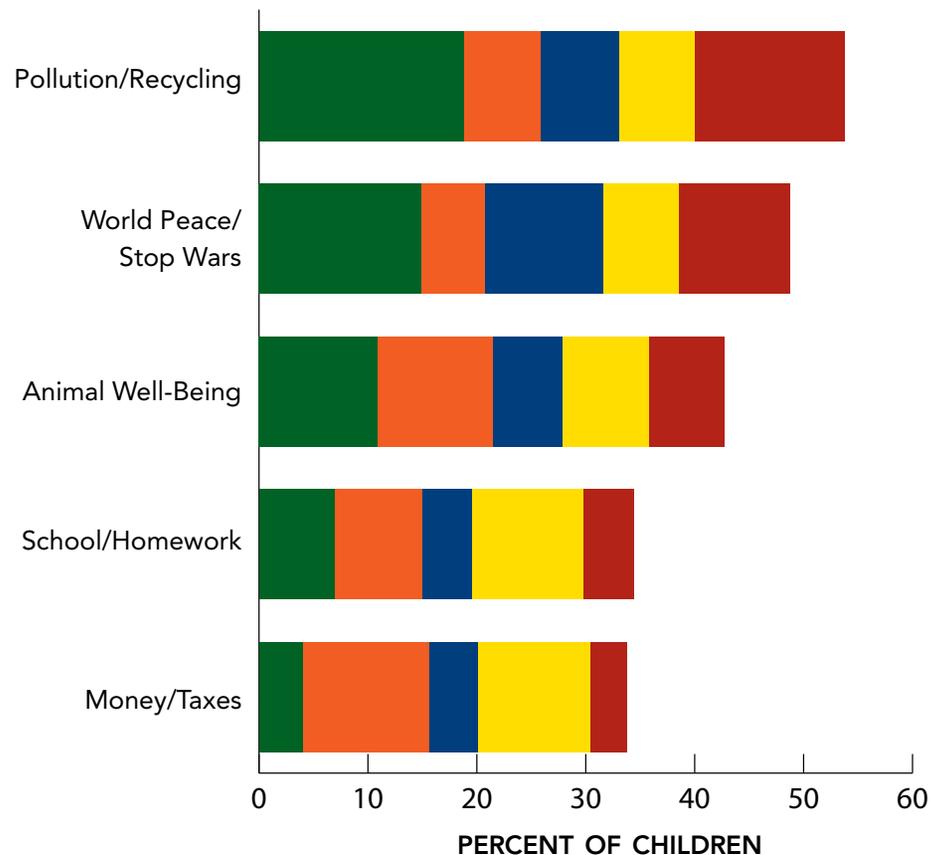


Children today are highly aware of the challenges we face both domestically and as a global community. Among the 60,000 letters sent to *Highlights* each year, many of them detail kids' worries for the environment, the economy, and our country, but many also include their ideas and optimism for creating a better world. This awareness of the world around them was reflected in children's responses to our question about improving our world. Among the most common things they would change were pollution (11%), ending war (10%), and protecting animals better (9%).

There were some regional variances in kids' concerns. Comments related to pollution were predominant in the northeast (19%) and the west (14%), while money issues were predominant in the southeast (12%) and south central (10%) regions. Some children (4%) responded that they would change the most recent oil spill disaster, and this concern was expressed most strongly, naturally, in the south central region. These differences are further demonstration of how carefully kids monitor the world around them.



"Our children are setting the example for us when it comes to caring for the earth. My own children point out ways that we can be better about recycling. I hope this remains a priority for our children as they become adults." ~ **Amy Lupold Bair**



## If you could change one thing...

SAMPLE RESPONSES



Save the Earth by not polluting.

I would change cigarette factories into candy factories because cigarettes are very, very bad for you and candy is sooo delicious.

I would change the oil spill in the gulf of Mexico because I think that it will cause fish and other animals ~~to~~ like birds to die.

I would change a horse to a unicorn because a horse can't fly but a unicorn can and a horse don't have a horn and a unicorn does.

People don't throw trash everywhere because it hurts the earth.

I would change the Statue of Liberty to a Godzilla statue because it will be my world.

Everything costed a penny because everyone could get everything they want.

To not have a war because lots of people get killed or hurt.

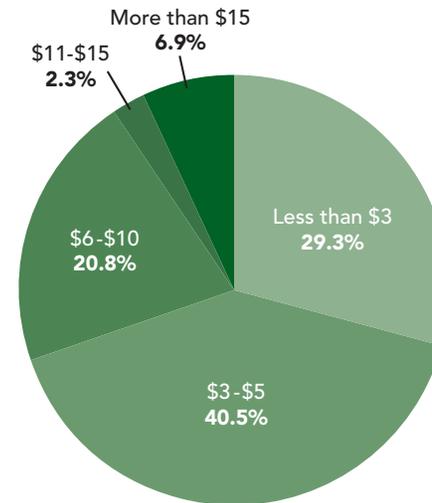
## Do you get an allowance? Do you earn it? How much do you get per week?

### Allowance Per Week



While the majority of kids (60%) report that they do get an allowance, those who do report that the amount is most commonly (41%) between \$3 and \$5 per week. While there were no significant demographic differences, kids in the west region (67%) appeared to be the most likely to receive an allowance, while kids in the north central region (52%) were the least likely.

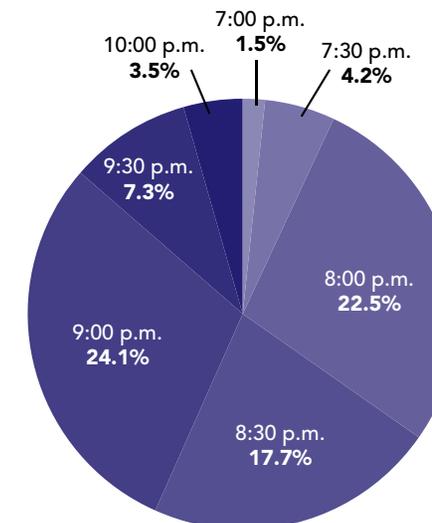
Perhaps reflecting changing mores about allowances, kids not only reported earning less than their counterparts in studies a decade ago, but they were also more likely to report that they did chores in exchange for the allowance. The vast majority (92%) said they earned their allowance.



## On school nights, what is your bedtime?

### Bedtime

Overall, 9 p.m. was the most common bedtime (24%), with the percentage being much higher among the 9–12 age group. On the other hand, 8 p.m. was the second-most common bedtime, with this time being more common among the 3–8 age range.



# What new inventions will happen in your lifetime?

## New Inventions SAMPLE RESPONSES



We love to hear what kids think about the future. How will the world be different? When we asked kids what new inventions will happen in their lifetime, the highest percentage of kids (18%) predicted that, during their lifetime, there will be flying cars. In combination with other types of new cars, differently powered cars, or cars with special abilities, cars in general received a total of more than 27% of responses! Perhaps this is an indicator of how much time kids spend in cars!

“A child’s understanding of the world begins with the immediate surroundings. That’s a simple but important insight, and it applies to nature as well as to technology. Learning how the family car works is a profound experience because the car is right there, functioning (or not) in the real world. If you run out of gas, you see the effect immediately. And new and interesting improvements are being made to cars all the time. Who is developing the cars of the future, and how are they doing it? Many scientific principles are at work in the gadgets and machines around us. It’s a world of exciting knowledge waiting to be opened—a world that adults and children can explore together.”

~ Andy Boyles



What new inventions will happen in your lifetime?

Jetpack shoes, flying cars, robots to take care of people, walking beds, talking tools, and super powers.

What new inventions will happen in your lifetime?

Portal to Jupiter (because Jupiter is my favorite planet)

What new inventions will happen in your lifetime?

Robots will become very common.

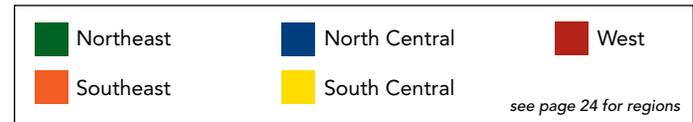
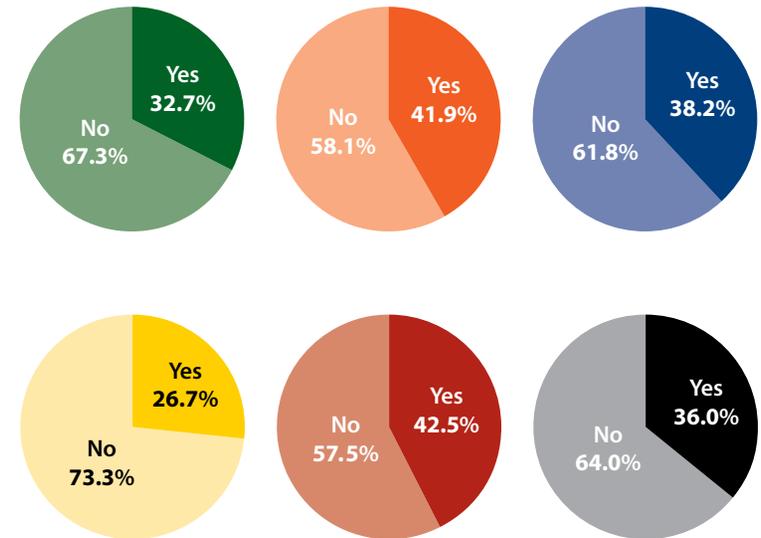
What new inventions will happen in your lifetime?

I want to invent a spoon that has 3 parts so you could eat 3 foods at once.

# Do you think you'll visit outer space someday?



Since humans started to explore space beyond our planet a generation ago, kids' expectations about their lives began to change. We wondered how many kids today—in a time when we see a contracting space program and less attention on space exploration than in the generation before it—believe that they themselves will visit the stars in their lifetime. We were surprised to find that just over one-third of kids (36%) think they will visit outer space. Boys had a higher tendency (44%) to think so than girls (32%), and kids in the southeast (42%) and west (42%) were the most likely to think they will get to see the stars up close, whereas fewer (27%) kids in the south central region believed they would make it into space.



“Many great scientists began with the dream of going to the Moon or Mars or the stars. Most of them have never left Earth, but have traveled in the imagination, found creative ways to discover new facts about the planets, moons, and even distant stars. The stories of these discoveries can transport kids to exciting places—a solar system where many stars orbit one another, stars shaped like peanuts, and planets that might harbor life. These intellectual adventures feed the imagination and give kids tremendous insight into how we engage in the ongoing, self-correcting process of science.” ~ **Andy Boyles**

# What rule do you wish your parents would change?



A signature of childhood is that someone else is in charge. But we wondered, what if kids got to make the rules? What would they change?

By far, kids had the strongest concerns about their bedtime rule, with many (22%) comments relating to a desire to stay up later. A significant number of kids (10%), however, thought that all of their parents' rules were fair and would not change any. Other commonly mentioned themes were related to cleaning up (9%) and rules related to where and what they ate (9%). A small number of kids (4%) thought they should live with no rules at all.

"Generation to generation, some things never change. The struggle between parents and children over bedtime is one for the ages!"

~ Amy Lupold Bair

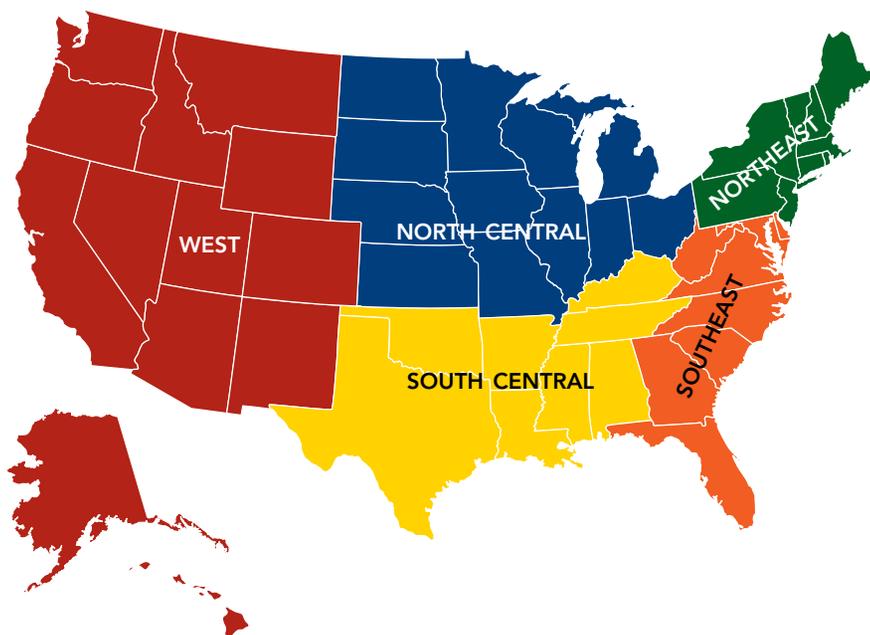


What rule do you wish your parents would change? That after  
I have something sticky I have to brush my  
teeth.

What rule do you wish your parents would change? No Clarinet  
playing in the morning

What rule do you wish your parents would change? I wish  
that they wouldn't change  
anything. I love everything they  
do. just the way they are.

What rule do you wish your parents would change? no feed  
ing the cat pop  
cobra



The purpose of this research was to obtain feedback from readers of *Highlights* magazine about their perspectives on childhood today. The survey was bound into 50,000 subscriber issues of the July 2010 edition of the magazine. Data was collected in the month of June 2010. 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. The statistical confidence level for the results in this survey is 95% +/- 5%.

# Thanks!



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

The State of the Kid would not have been possible without the assistance of:



