

Trends & Trends

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Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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The Family CIO: Teens and Technology

Generation Y didn't have to learn about technology – their formative years have been replete with access to computers and gadgets. But, how essential is technology to their lives?

Young people are the acknowledged leaders of the new economy and they know it! We find that boys seem to adopt new devices and gadgets before girls, and that teens lead adults in many technological adoptions. Above all, technology has created a 'Geek is Chic' attitude – it is now socially acceptable to be smart and techy.

Young people like to think they are always on the edge of new technological adoption. 30% of 13-24 year olds say they are among the first to check out a new electronic device or gadget. The "tech innovators" are overwhelmingly male, although technological innovation diffuses quickly to girls as well. Age does not seem to predict how innovative a young person is in adopting new technology – tweens are just as likely to be early adopters as college-aged young adults.

Which best describes you? (13-24 year olds)

Tend to wait a long time to try new technology

23%

First to check out a new device or gadget

30%

47%

Wait until others try new technology, then try it

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YOUTH & TEEN

Harris Heritage. Interactive Power.

Source: Harris Interactive YouthPulseSM

Editorial: Our Take On It

by John Geraci

VP Youth & Education Research

Today's youth are immersed in technology, but technology has become something more than just a product that fulfills a need for them. Gen Y has embraced technology not just for what it can do, but also for the simple fact that it is **theirs**. They feel they understand it better than adults. Technology helps to define their generation.

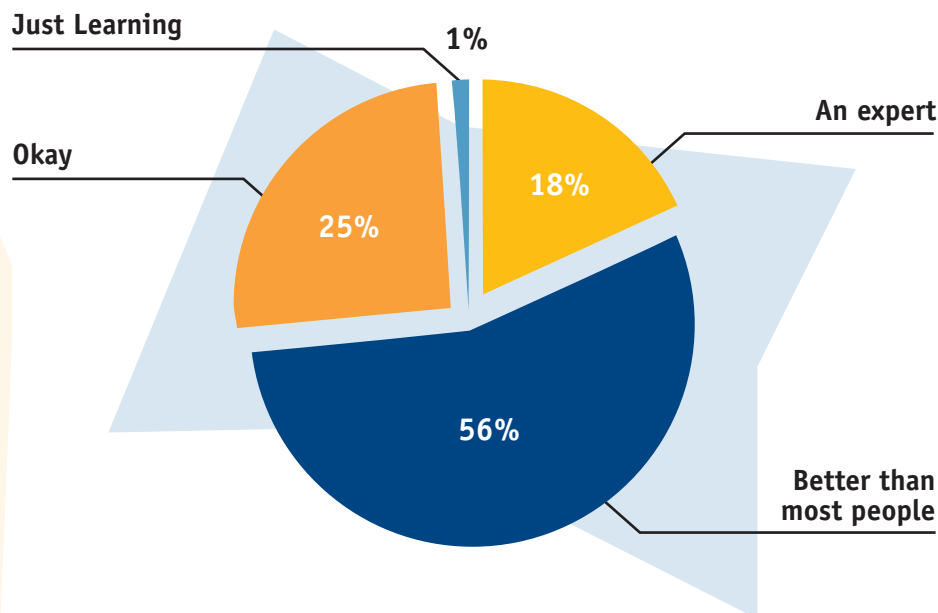
This said, our clients are sometimes surprised to hear that tweens and teens do not really live in a virtual world – they live in a real world. Young people are more likely to learn about new products from face-to-face and telephone contact with friends than by instant messaging or Internet research. At any given moment, a teenager is 3-4 times more likely to be watching TV than to be using a computer. They use the Internet, on average, a little more than 4 hours a week. And, more and more, they are telling us that Mom and Dad have “wised up” and have quickly learned about new technologies themselves. Mom and Dad are encroaching on their technological turf.

The “digital divide” is a fundamental challenge for marketers who want to understand young people and also for advertisers who want to reach them with online advertising. And, it is of obvious concern to policy makers, who worry about some children being left behind in the information economy.

Generation Y certainly has a high opinion of their computer skills. In fact, we like to say that it has always been the case that young people think they know things that adults do not. The difference is that with computers and technology we are experiencing the first time that adults tend to agree with them!

Among 8-12 year olds, 37% feel they are an expert or better than most people on the computer. This grows to 74% of 13-24 year olds. Technology self-confidence is on the rise – these numbers have risen significantly in the past year. Boys are slightly more self-confident in their computer literacy than girls.

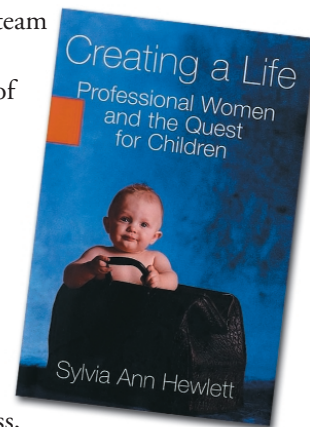
How well do you use a computer? (13-24 year olds)



Recent Research for Public Release

From time-to-time, the Harris Interactive youth and education team is fortunate enough to work with leading foundations and non-profit organizations, and we often are able to release the results of these studies publicly.

Harris Interactive recently completed a study on behalf of the National Parenting Association. This study is widely cited in *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children* by Sylvia Ann Hewlett. The book explores family issues facing professional women – 33% of professional women are childless at age 40 compared to 25% of professional men. Our survey showed that only 14% of these women planned in advance to be childless – professional women have not chosen to be childless, but career pressures have caused many of them to be.



Sylvia's book does an excellent job of showing the tradeoffs between career and family that women face. We would highly recommend it!

Schools hold perhaps the greatest chance to truly level this divide among the young. E-rate funding has wired virtually every school in America, but large divides still exist in the nature of the access that kids really have at schools. There is an Internet "wire" leading into almost all US schools, but what that wire is connected to varies dramatically, which can lead to differential opportunities.

Most evidence points to the divide closing a little each day among the young. The federal government has recognized this as an important issue. We look forward to the day that broad-band connections are as pervasive as the telephone, and "wired" youth and "all" youth will be the same.

Contact Us:

To discuss this newsletter or your upcoming research project, call **Larry Brown**
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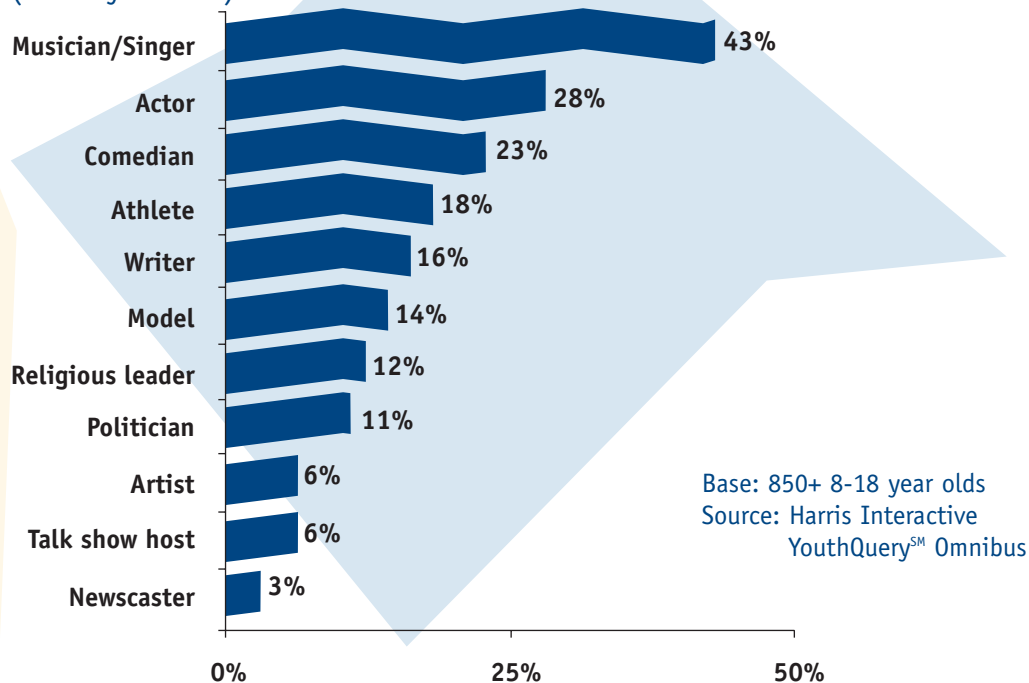
Ask a Question...

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question into our upcoming YouthQuerySM youth omnibus. Just send us an email with your suggestion and we will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next edition of this newsletter.

...Get an Answer

Rochelle Wainer from Pepsi submitted the following question...

If you could have anyone over to dinner, who would it be? (13-24 year olds)



You're Invited...

August 27 and 28, from 3:30pm – 5:30pm Eastern time.

A digital town hall meeting:

"How has September 11, 2001 changed the lives of America's teenagers?"

- How have teens reacted to 9/11? Has it affected them emotionally? Spiritually?
- How have their relationships with parents, friends and their community changed?
- How has 9/11 affected teenagers as consumers?

The meeting will be moderated by our youth research experts. Teen participants will be recruited from the Harris Poll Online database.

This session can be viewed live, worldwide from any computer with an Internet connection. Or, come join us in our NYC offices for a group viewing and discussion of the proceedings.

Please RSVP! There is no charge, but you need to sign up to observe. Contact **Larry Brown**, Manager of Client Development, at 585.214.7135.