

Trends & TudesSM

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

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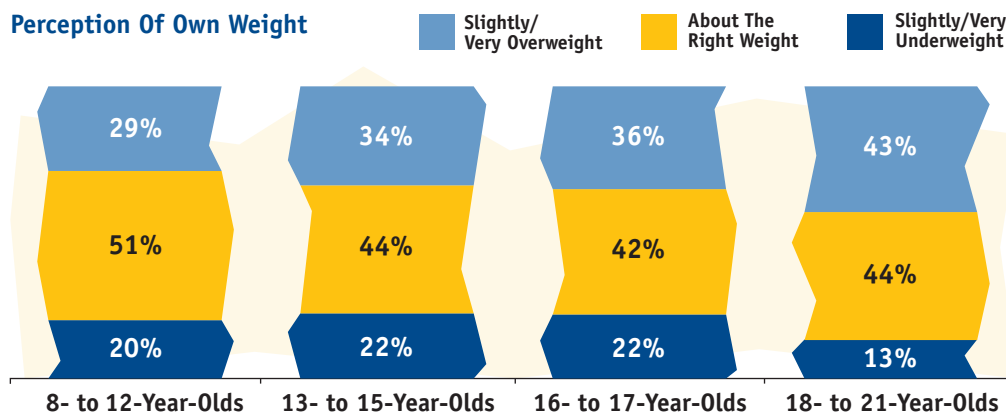
Obesity, Nutrition and Physical Activity

In 2002, our inaugural issue of Trends & Tudes addressed the topic of “Physical Activity and Generation Y”. Since that time, the topic of childhood obesity has gained even more prominence in the public’s awareness and as a focus of both market and academic research. Much of this concern is prompted by the CDC’s finding that, today, 15% of children ages 6 to 18 are overweight; and the prevalence of overweight children in the U.S. has increased sharply since the 1980’s when only 6% of children were overweight.¹

Children today are aware of their weight, and a large portion count their weight as one of their concerns. According to this year’s Harris Interactive YouthPulseSM, our annual survey of children’s lifestyles, 40% of 8- to 21-year-olds worry about their weight. More children worry about their weight than worry about getting in a car accident (35%), getting cancer (31%), being beaten up or attacked at school (20%) or having problems with drugs or alcohol (12%). Concerns about weight increase sharply from the tween to teen years. One-quarter (27%) of 8- to 12-year-olds worry about their weight, compared to 46% of 13- to 17-year-olds and 48% of 18- to 21-year-olds. Worries about weight have stayed at about the same levels as in 2002, when 43% of children and young adults reported that they worry about their weight. As in 2002, girls today are more likely than boys to worry about their weight.

Similarly, the number of children describing themselves as overweight has not changed in the past two years. One-third (35%) of youth 8- to 21-years-old describe themselves as overweight, including five percent who say they are very overweight. One change since 2002 is that two years ago, girls were twice as likely as boys to describe themselves as very overweight (6% vs. 3%). Today, these levels are the same.

Perception Of Own Weight



Source: Harris Interactive YouthPulseSM Survey conducted in July 2004. Base: 8- to 18-year-olds (n=2,148).

¹America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2003, Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

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YOUTH AND EDUCATION
The Harris Poll[®] PEOPLE

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Editorial: Our Take On It

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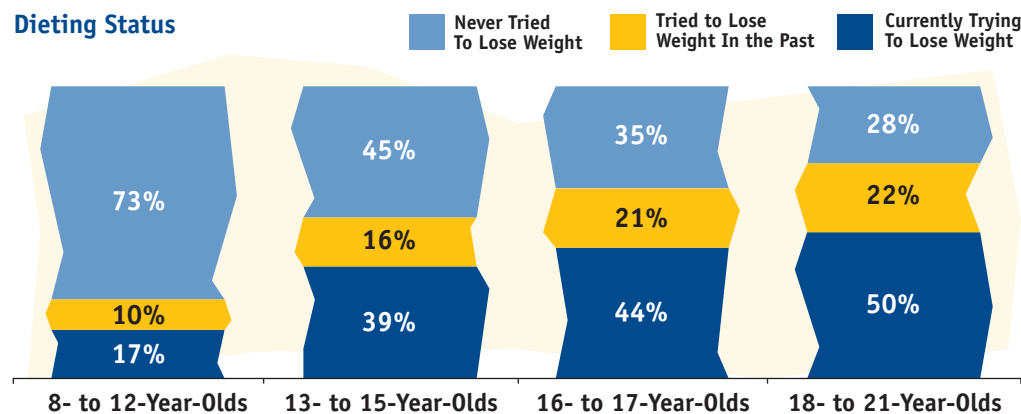
As we enter our third year of producing this newsletter, we took a little time to look back through our previous editions. We've tried to cover a variety of topics that are of interest to youth marketers and researchers. We keep a close eye on studies that are released regarding kids and youth as well as media stories on youth marketing. We attend most youth marketing conferences and speak at many of them. And, while many topics garner substantial interest in the youth field, none has quite captured the attention that the issues of childhood physical activity, nutrition, and obesity have over the past few years.

Our youth research team conducted our first study on issues of childhood obesity in 1997. What we found at that time was that although there was considerable evidence that there was a burgeoning epidemic, there was scant recognition of the issue by the public or youth marketers. Academic researchers had begun to write about the epidemic in earnest, and most of their articles centered on physical activity causes and not nutritional causes. In short, academics had been publishing

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The past two years has seen an increased emphasis in the media on nutrition and diets, especially with the popularity of low carbohydrate diets such as Atkins® and The South Beach Diet™. Our YouthPulse survey results indicate that by the teen years, the majority of children have tried to lose weight at some point in their lives.

Dieting Status

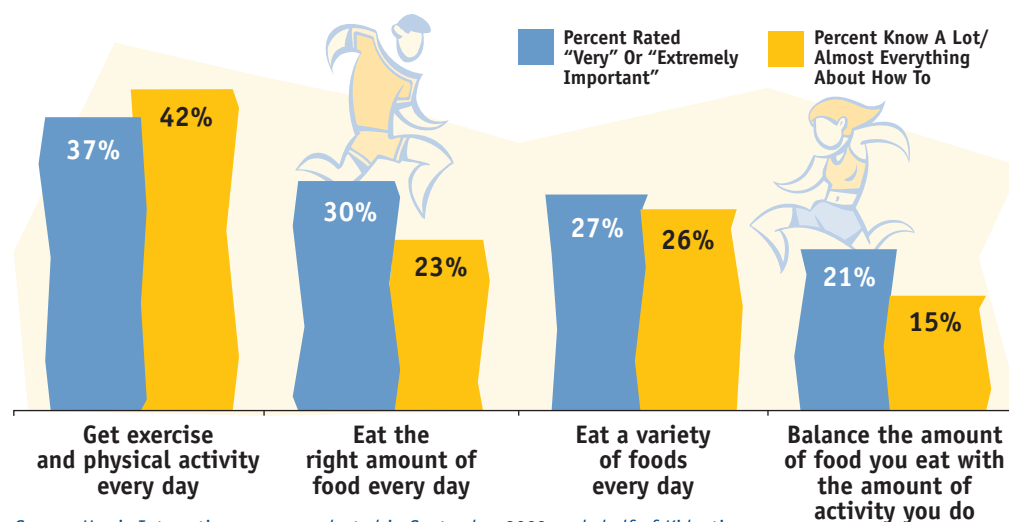


Source: Harris Interactive YouthPulse™ Survey conducted in July 2004. Base: 8- to 18-year-olds (n=2,148).

Findings such as these indicate that the tween years are an important transitional time in attitudes and behaviors regarding nutrition and physical activity. Recently, this age group was the focus of a survey Harris Interactive conducted on behalf of Kidnetic.com and the International Food Information Council Foundation (IFIC). Kidnetic.com is a healthy eating and active living Web site for kids ages 9- to 12-years-old and their families. The site is intended to encourage kids and their parents to begin the process of behavior change toward healthy lifestyles. The online survey interviewed 9- to 12-year-old children and their parents on their attitudes and behaviors regarding eating, nutrition and exercise.

The survey results indicated that tweens' attention is more focused on physical activity than on nutrition. More tweens rate getting exercise and physical activity every day as very or extremely important than say eating the right amount or a variety of foods every day is that important. They also report to have a greater knowledge of how to get the right amount of exercise than to get the right nutrition.

Attitudes And Behaviors Regarding Eating, Nutrition And Exercise



Source: Harris Interactive survey conducted in September 2003 on behalf of Kidnetic.com and the International Food Information Council Foundation. Base: 9- to 12-year-olds (n=1,196).

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on the issue, but the public had not yet become aware.

What a difference a few years can make. In a short period of time, we have seen a proliferation of stories and studies on children and weight. The International Food Information Council Foundation has tracked the growing media coverage of the obesity issue since 1999. The number of stories has grown geometrically, from 395 stories in the 12 months ending in September 30, 2000 to 4,767 stories for the 12 months ending September 30, 2003.

There is not much debate over whether a problem with childhood obesity exists, yet there are many opinions on its underlying causes, responsibilities, and solutions. And, we have seen the public discourse move to be more and more focused on nutrition and less on physical activity.

At the same time the debate has shifted to a nutritional discussion, we've also seen it become more passionate. While most people can agree that today's young people need more exercise, there continues to be a lack of consensus on nutrition. The parties to the debate often have strong opinions about nutrition, which remains a complicated science. Not to mention that food evokes charged emotions related to rewards, punishment, family dynamics and cultural heritage.

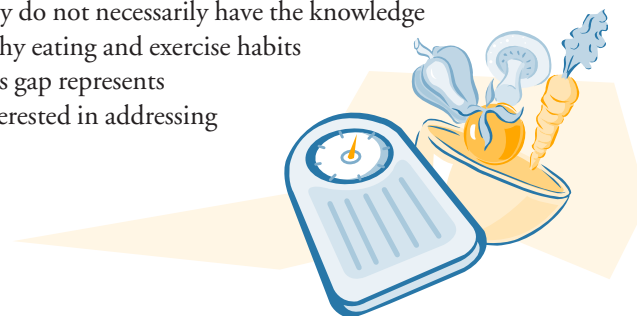
This would be an easy debate to have if the causes of obesity were clear. But the obesity epidemic has developed through

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Conclusion

Tweens and teens have an awareness and concern of the obesity issue, manifested in the finding that large segments of this population are worried about their weight and have tried to lose weight. However, they do not necessarily have the knowledge about what constitutes healthy eating and exercise habits or how to acquire them. This gap represents an opportunity for those interested in addressing the childhood obesity issue.



Recent Research for Public Release

A Change from Active to Passive Leisure Time Activities May Be Contributing to the Obesity Epidemic, Two Polls Show

A recent Harris Interactive survey throws fresh light on the causes of the nation's "obesity epidemic." Increasingly, the nation's favorite pastimes require little or no exercise. And the proportions of the public whose favorite activities involve exercise have been decreasing.

Since 1995, Harris Interactive has asked a nationwide cross section of adults to name their two or three favorite leisure time activities. Eight years ago, 38% of all the replies involved activities that required exercise including fishing, gardening, playing sports, swimming, walking, hunting, bicycling, hiking, running or dancing. Now only 29% of the replies involve exercise. A higher proportion of our favorite activities can now be accomplished while sitting.

These are the results of a Harris Interactive nationwide telephone survey of 1,017 adults conducted between October 14 and 19, 2003.

Some examples of favorite pastimes that have declined that do require some exercise (if not necessarily a great deal) are gardening (down from 9% to 6%), team sports (from 9% to 6%), walking (from 8% to 4%), swimming (from 7% to 2%), bicycling (from 4% to 2%), running (from 2% to 1%), and bowling (from 4% to 1%).

A 20-Year Trend

Harris Interactive has been tracking the public's weight annually for 20 years. By our measures, in 1983, 58% of all adults over 25 were overweight. That number – using the identical measures – had risen to 80% last December. And the proportion of adults over 25 who were 20% or more over their recommended weight, a reasonable definition of obesity, had increased from 15% to 33% over the last 20 years.

More information is available at:

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=724>

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many events over an extended period of time – some driven by parents, some by evolutions in culture, and some by marketers. There have been slight reductions in activity made possible by an increasingly mechanized society, less emphasis on physical education in schools, and a change in overall lifestyles that have made nutritional choices challenging. There have been governmental policy changes, changes in parental oversight and focus, and an increased level of marketing directed to children. The fact is there is no objective way to determine the relative contribution of hundreds of potential causes of this epidemic.

There are unlikely to be quick and easy solutions. Just as there have been many different causes to the obesity solution, there is probably not going to be a singular solution. We feel the epidemic will be reversed through many small efforts – food companies making their products healthier, parents paying a bit more attention to diet and physical activity, the government encouraging young people to exercise, etc.

We expect to continue doing polls and research studies on issues of physical activity and nutrition among youth – to chart the debate and our progress towards a more fit youth generation.

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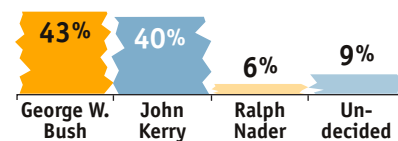
Harris Heritage. **4** Interactive Power.

Election Update

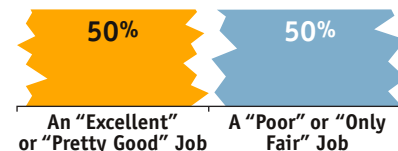
Through the Presidential election in November, Harris Interactive will report on the election poll we are conducting among 8- to 18-year-olds.

In July 2004, this study found that if the election were held today and these respondents could vote, 43% would vote for George W. Bush, 40% for John Kerry, 6% would vote for Ralph Nader and 9% would be undecided. fifty percent said that President Bush is doing an excellent or pretty good job as president, and 50% said that he is doing a poor or only fair job.

Presidential Candidate Preference Among 8- to 18-Year-Olds



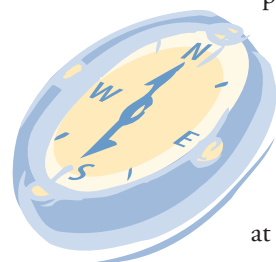
Satisfaction with President's Performance Among 8- to 18-Year-Olds



360 Youth College Explorer

Powered by Harris Interactive is Now Available!

You can now subscribe to 360 Youth College Explorer, the annual study of college students powered by Harris Interactive. This is the only study of its kind to provide marketers with insights about the entire college market of 18- to 30-year-olds, including: full- and part-time students, students at 2- and 4-year institutions, and undergraduate and graduate students. This year's topics cover income and spending, financial services, online behavior, technology and wireless, entertainment, food and dining, and much more. Contact us at 877.919.4765 or info@harrisinteractive.com for details.



The 2004 Wave Of YouthPulseSM

YouthPulse, Harris Interactive's lifestyle and attitude study of 8- to 21-year-olds, will be available September 1 on a subscription basis. YouthPulse provides important insights to youth marketers and can help connect your organization with the Millennial generation. Contact us at 877.919.4765 or info@harrisinteractive.com for details.

Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp.

Contact Us

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