

We Give Books Poll on Reading and Giving



Summary

Although much has been written about philanthropy and many polls have been conducted about giving, there is little information about the specific day-to-day child-rearing practices that influence whether children become charitable teens and adults.

The “We Give Books Poll on Reading and Giving,” which surveyed parents and teens nationwide, is the first to connect the dots between daily parenting practices and raising children who become charitable, “giving,” teenagers. It was conducted by Harris Interactive Service Bureau from March 30, 2010, to April 5, 2010, and commissioned by the Pearson Foundation and Penguin Group to more thoroughly examine the range of parenting practices that have an impact on future philanthropy.

The definition used for “teen givers” is designed to differentiate those who occasionally volunteer their time from those who volunteer frequently and (at least once a week) help raise money for a cause, donate money to a cause, or help bring people together for a cause. This survey topline provides an analysis on two levels:

- Teen givers versus other teens, to isolate variables associated with giving; and
- All parents, to compare their answers to teen givers.



Key Findings

The parenting practices identified in the “**We Give Books Poll on Reading and Giving**” are highly instructive and the first to link daily, simple parenting techniques to charitable teens. In addition, the poll reveals interesting insights into parents’ attitudes and behaviors.

Ninety percent of all parents say it is important to raise children to become charitable adults. However, the majority of parents do not appear to use the specific practices identified in the poll. **There is a large gap between what parents say they want to do and what they may know how to do.**

A top ten list of basic parenting practices emerged that differentiates “giving teens” from “non-giving” teens. “Giving teens” report their parents did the following on a frequent basis.

1. *Explained how I can help other people by my actions.*
2. *Encouraged me to speak up in family discussions.*
3. *Spoke to me about the volunteering and charity they do.*
4. *Supported me on things I cared about.*
5. *Told me why they were proud when I did good things.*
6. *Encouraged me to be my own person.*
7. *Set goals for me to achieve.*
8. *Spoke to me about the way my actions made other people feel.*
9. *Taught me to always consider other people’s views.*
10. *Explained the importance of giving to others.*

“Talking the Walk” and “Walking the Talk”: What giving teens say and what parents discuss

The poll shows parents’ own contributions and charity are important, but the poll also reveals the necessity of parents’ talking to their children about what they are doing and why they are doing it, and what the potential impact is.

“Giving teens” were much more likely than other teens to know that their parents cared deeply about donating their resources and time to help others. **Indeed, teens stated that parents were**

their greatest influence in motivating them to give back and be charitable.

Yet the poll shows that only 34% of parents think that “it is very important for their children to give time and resources to others.” There is clearly a disconnect between what parents want for their children (in raising charitable adults) and the realization that charity/giving behavior must be emphasized early.

The influence of reading: What giving teens say and what parents think

Reading appears to have an impact on teens’ later interests in charity and helping others. Children who were read to daily said that reading helped them understand how they could make a difference and were more likely to be identified as giving teens. Yet, although nearly all parents (84%) realize the importance of reading for school performance, not many parents understood the value of reading in helping to shape charitable “giving teenagers.”

The importance of responsibility: What giving teens say and what parents do

The majority of parents said they gave their children household chores. But what differentiated giving teens from non-giving teens was that giving teens were more likely to have paying jobs and the responsibility of helping neighbors.

Poll Results

A. Day-to-day Practices

B. Importance of Responsibility

C. Donating

D. Voicing Opinions and Concerns

E. Reading

F. Methodology

A. Day-to-day Practices

Frequent communication concerning children's opinions and behaviors is essential.

Certain day-to-day techniques are strongly correlated with teens who report being charitable and who place importance on volunteering and giving back to others.

Interestingly, results show that it is important for children to not only see that parents are giving, but for parents to also explain why they are giving and how these actions have an impact on the lives of others.

Results also show that frequency of communication is critical. It is not just about what child and parent are communicating, but how frequently they are practicing engaging in meaningful dialogue.

Teens

The Top Ten List

The top ten parenting techniques that separate giving from non-giving teens are as follows (percentages are based on things parents "frequently" did, as reported by teens):

1. ***Explained how I can help other people by my actions.*** Teen givers (33%) were much more likely than other teens (19%) to report having parents who taught them this.
2. ***Encouraged me to speak up in family discussions.*** Teen givers (36%) were much more likely than other teens (21%) to report having parents who did this.
3. ***Spoke to me about the volunteering and charity they do.*** Teen givers (21%) were three times more likely than other teens (7%) to report having parents who did this.
4. ***Supported me on things I cared about.*** Teen givers (47%) were much more likely than other teens (33%) to report having parents who did this.
5. ***Told me why they were proud when I did good things.*** Teen givers (52%) were much more likely than other teens (35%) to report having parents who did this.
6. ***Encouraged me to be my own person.*** Teen givers (51%) were much more likely than other teens (33%) to report having parents who did this.
7. ***Set goals for me to achieve.*** Teen givers (37%) were much more likely than other teens (22%) to report having parents who did this.
8. ***Spoke to me about the way my actions made other people feel.*** Teen givers (33%) were much more likely other teens (19%) to report having parents who taught them this.
9. ***Taught me to always consider other people's views.*** Teen givers (35%) were much more likely than other teens (19%) to report having parents who did this.
10. ***Explained the importance of giving to others.*** Teen givers (35%) were nearly twice as likely as other teens (17%) to report having parents who taught them this.

Parents

The majority of parents do tell their children when they are proud of them. Parents also say that they support their children when they care about something. However, large majorities of parents – in some cases very large – do not implement day-to-day parenting techniques that strongly correlate with raising giving teens.

Although 90% of all parents say that they want to raise children who are charitable, of the top ten day-to-day parenting techniques that separate giving teens from other teens, the majority of parents surveyed say they were doing only two of them.

Clearly, there is a large gap between what parents say they want to do and what parents know about how to do it.

Among the top ten practices, parents are doing the following:

1. 62% frequently told their children why they were proud when they did good things (38% didn't).

2. 55% frequently supported their children on things their children cared about (45% didn't).

But, large majorities of parents are NOT doing these:

3. Only 29% of parents frequently explained the importance of giving to others.
4. Only 36% frequently taught their children to always consider other people's views.
5. Only 26% frequently set goals for their children to achieve.
6. Only 36% frequently encouraged their children to speak up in family discussions.
7. Only 37% frequently talked to their children about the way their children's actions made other people feel.
8. Only 37% frequently explained to their children how they can help other people by their actions.
9. Only 20% frequently spoke to their children about the volunteering and charity that they do.
10. Only 49% frequently encouraged their children to be their own person.

B. Importance of Responsibility

Teens

Ensuring children take on responsibility appears to impact later giving behaviors.

When asked if parents gave them specific responsibilities or chores, 83% of all teens responded "yes." "Teen givers," however, were much more likely than other teens to take on these specific responsibilities:

- Teen givers (29%) were more than twice as likely as other teens (13%) to have a *paying job*.
- Teen givers (31%) were more than twice as likely as other teens (15%) to *help neighbors*.

Parents

Although 89% of parents said they gave their children specific responsibilities or chores, only a small percentage of *parents gave children the specific responsibilities that may later increase giving behavior*.

- Only 13% of parents made a *paying job* a responsibility.
- Only 26% of parents made *helping neighbors* a responsibility.

C. Donating

When it comes to charity and philanthropy, parents are the top influencers. Among "all" teens, parents were ranked as the number one influence when it came to decisions related to giving back or becoming charitable. Fifty-nine percent of parents believed they could have a great deal of influence on whether their children became charitable adults.

Teens

One of the most important factors in raising "givers" is that children KNOW their parents believe deeply about giving back.

Teen givers hold vastly different attitudes about giving compared to other teens. They care about giving and so do their parents, whom teen givers cite as an influence.

- Teen givers (42%) were much more likely than other teens (15%) to say that their parent cared a great deal whether or not they donated their time and resources to others.
- Teen givers (66%) were much more likely than other teens (27%) to say that it was very important to them to donate time and resources to help others.
- Teen givers (33%) were much more likely than other teens (14%) to say it was very important to their parents to donate their time and resources to help others.

Teens who exhibit giving behaviors were more likely than other teens to say their parents talked to them in detail about their volunteer or charitable activities (84% vs. 70%). This includes talking about:

- Why they chose the organization or charity they did (63% vs. 48%), and
- Interesting or compelling stories concerning the people they helped (59% vs. 46%).

Parents

Almost all parents (90%) placed importance on whether their children became charitable adults, but only one third said it is very important for their children to donate their time and resources to help others.

There is a clear disconnect between parents wanting their children to be charitable adults and the understanding that children need to start learning the importance of giving early in life.

- Only 34% of parents said they cared a “great deal” about whether their children donated their time and resources to others.
- Only 34% of parents said it was very important to them that their children donated their time and resources to help others.

D. Voicing Opinions and Concerns

Teens

Teen givers reported that they had a higher comfort level talking with their parents and sharing their opinions and problems in their lives.

Teen givers are much more likely to have open and frank discussions with their parents about things that affect their lives and report that their parents encourage them to do so.

- Teen givers (38%) are more likely than other teens (29%) to say their parents *encouraged them to share their own opinions* “all of the time.”
- Teen givers (73%) are more likely than other teens (65%) to say their parents *encouraged them to share information about their problems and lives.*
- Teen givers (30%) are much more likely than other teens (19%) to say that they *felt “very” comfortable sharing information about their problems and lives* with their parents.

Parents

Although 65% of parents consistently *encouraged their children to share information about their problems and lives*, only 42% of parents say their children felt *“very” comfortable sharing information about their problems and lives* with them when they were growing up.

E. Reading

Teens

Early reading experiences have an impact on teens. Teens who exhibit strong giving behaviors may learn from reading that they could make a difference. Reading daily appears to relate to later teen giving behaviors.

Teen givers (45%) were much more likely than other teens (35%) to say that they were read to as a child on a “daily” basis.

Teen givers were also much more likely than other teens to say that being read to regularly as a child impacted them in positive ways associated with their giving behaviors.

- Teen givers (40%) were much more likely than other teens (26%) to say that parents reading to them helped them *believe I could make a difference.*
- Teen givers (43%) were more likely than other teens (37%) to say that parents reading to them helped them *understand how my actions affect others.*
- Teen givers (56%) were much more likely than other teens (45%) to say that parents reading to them helped them *develop my own values.*

Parents

The majority of parents (84%) clearly understand the value of reading for school performance, but do not make the connection between how much reading imparts lessons about making a difference. Sixty-eight percent of parents believed that there is a “strong” connection between reading to a child and the development of the child’s charitable behaviors.

Giving teens were much more likely to say that being read to as a child helped them believe they could make a difference (40% vs. 26%), while only 43% of parents say this was an impact.

F. Methodology

Definition of Segments

Parents were defined as those with children 18 or younger living at home. *Teens* were defined as children ages 13 to 18. For the purposes of this analysis, we referred to “teen givers” and “other teens.” Their definitions are immediately below.

- **Teen givers:** Teen “givers” were identified based on their response to the following question: “How often (frequently, often, sometimes, rarely, or never) have you done each of the following: volunteered to help others; helped raise money for a cause or an issue; donated money helping those less fortunate than me; and brought friends together to support a cause?”

Teens who had frequently or often “volunteered to help others” and had also frequently or often done one of the other three were designated as “givers.” They comprised 29% of teens.
- **Other teens:** The 71% not defined as givers. Note: this does not mean that they did not volunteer or make charitable contributions; rather, that they fell outside the definition of givers for the purpose of this survey.

Full Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States from March 30, 2010, to April 5, 2010, among 500 parents (with children in the household) and 500 teens 13 to 18 years old. Data for this survey was collected by Harris Interactive Service Bureau (“HISB”) on behalf of the Pearson Foundation and Penguin Group. Results were weighted as needed to reflect the composition of the U.S. adult and teen populations using targets for region, and age within gender.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error that are most often not possible to quantify

or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) database, which includes several million people who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

