

# RoperASW

THE POWER OF INTELLIGENCE IN ACTION

## *Pre-Teen Girls' and Boys' Self-Esteem and Concerns for the New School Year*

PREPARED FOR:

**Uniquely ME!, Girl Scouts,  
Unilever, and Burson-Marsteller**

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**NOP World**

United Business Media

## Background and Objectives

Girl Scouts and Unilever have developed Uniquely ME!, a program designed to foster self-esteem in adolescent and pre-adolescent girls. To support this effort, Roper ASW was commissioned by Girl Scouts and Unilever to conduct research among pre-teen girls and boys across the nation in order to investigate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with various aspects of their lives, particularly any concerns they have for the upcoming school year.

Specifically, the research explored:

- Pre-teens' concerns for the new school year
- Pre-teens' satisfaction with themselves overall
- Pre-teens' relationships with the key adults in their lives
- Perceived gender differences in various school-related activities



## Methodology

RoperASW conducted this study via telephone from July 22 through August 4, 2003. A total of 804 interviews were conducted among children ages 8-12, 401 girls and 403 boys. The sample was drawn from a random, national sample of households identified as having children in the target age group. Age, gender, and geographic information were collected. The margin of error for the complete sample is +/- 4 percentage points.

The sample breaks out as follows:

	<b>Sample Size</b>
<b>Total Pre-Teens</b>	804
Girls	401
Boys	403
Girls and Boys ages 8-9	339
Girls and Boys ages 10-12	465



## Highlights

- Overall, pre-teen girls are teeming with confidence—more than 80% of girls 8-12 say they like themselves a lot. Although most girls are highly satisfied with the social and academic aspects of their lives, for many their looks are a major source of dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction with looks, however, is not just an issue among girls. Boys are almost as likely as girls to be troubled by their appearance.
- For the vast majority of pre-teen girls, their relationships with adults are major confidence boosters. Relationships with adults are equally important to the self-esteem of boys.
- According to the majority of pre-teens, boys and girls do most things equally well. However, even though most girls reject the notion that boys are better at sports than girls are; about one-fourth of girls still think boys are better on the playing field. In contrast, about one in ten boys say girls outthink boys in the classroom.
- As pre-teen girls prepare to face a new school year, more are worried about making the grade than being cool or making new friends. A majority of pre-teen girls say they are worried about having harder homework and getting good grades in the new school year, compared with less than one-third who say they are worried about making new friends or being cool. Boys tend to share girls' anxiety about academic issues. It is worth noting, however, that fitting in with others is more likely to be a back-to-school worry among girls than among boys.
- Boys and girls share back-to-school concerns about peer pressure. This issue, however, is particularly likely to cause back-to-school jitters among younger pre-teens. Although 40% of pre-teens overall are worried about other kids trying to get them to do things that they shouldn't, 51% of 8-9 year olds are worried about this issue.



## Findings

### **As pre-teens prepare to face a new school year, more are worried about making the grade than being cool or making new friends**

- Almost seven in ten pre-teens say they are “worried” about having harder homework, six in ten are “worried “ about getting good grades, and four in ten are “worried” about having a new teacher.
- In turn, approximately four in ten pre-teens are worried about making their parents proud of them (43%).
- The majority of pre-teens say they are “not at all worried” about having cool clothes (80%) or being cool (73%) and making new friends (73%). Indeed, only 4% of pre-teens say they are “very worried” about any of these issues.

### **About 40% of pre-teens feel anxious about being pressured at school to do things they shouldn't**

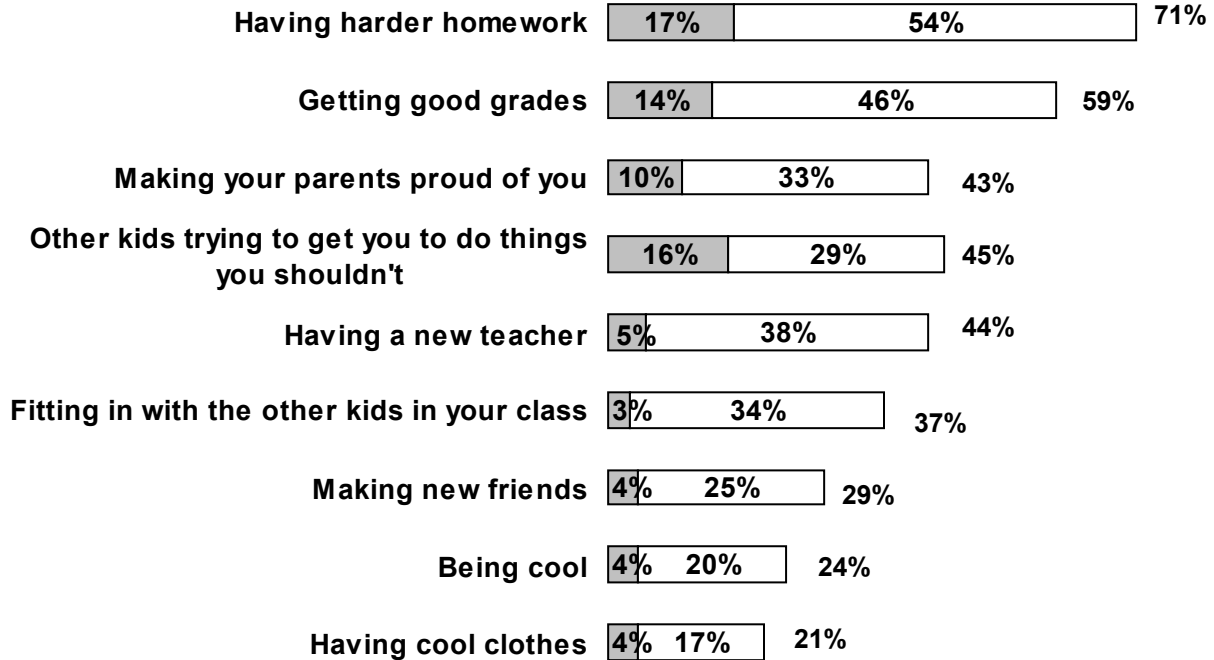
- Four in ten (42%) are worried about other kids trying to get them to do things they shouldn't; 15% say they are “very worried.”
- Pre-teens report that harmful peer influences are among the top three concerns they are “very worried” about.



## Girls' Concerns for the New School Year

Base: Girls ages 8-12 (n=401)

Very worried  A little worried



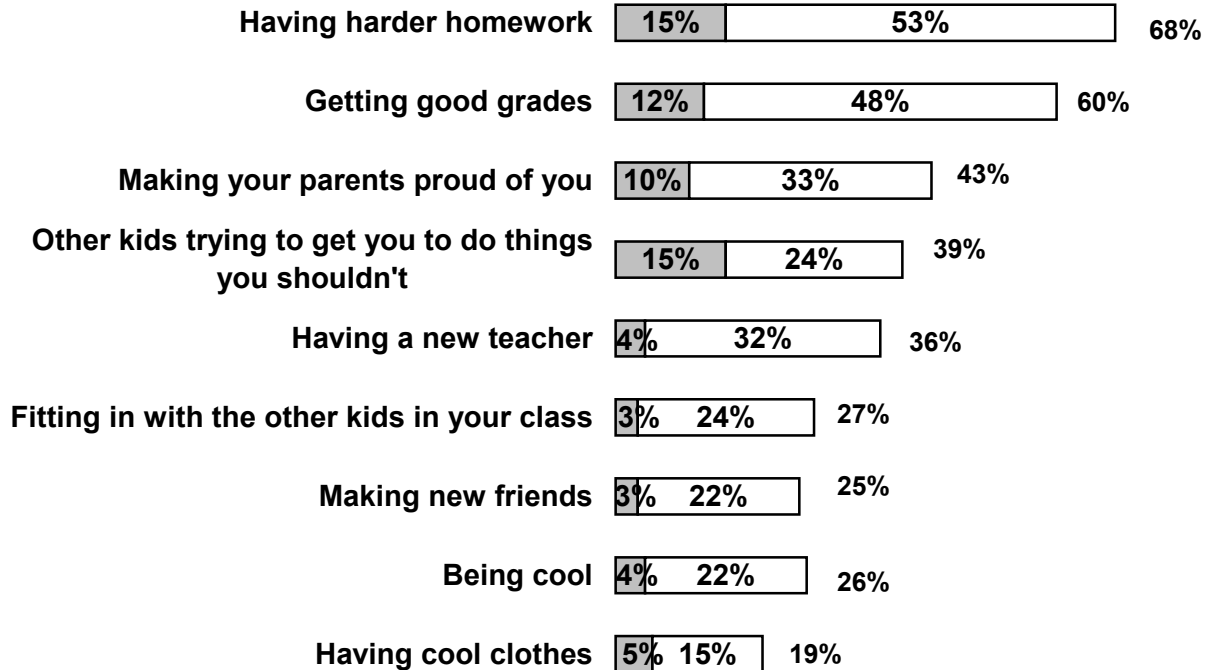
Q2 "When you think about starting a new year at school, would you say you are very worried, a little worried, or not at all worried about...?"



## Boys' Concerns for the New School Year

Base: Boys ages 8-12 (n=403)

Very worried  A little worried



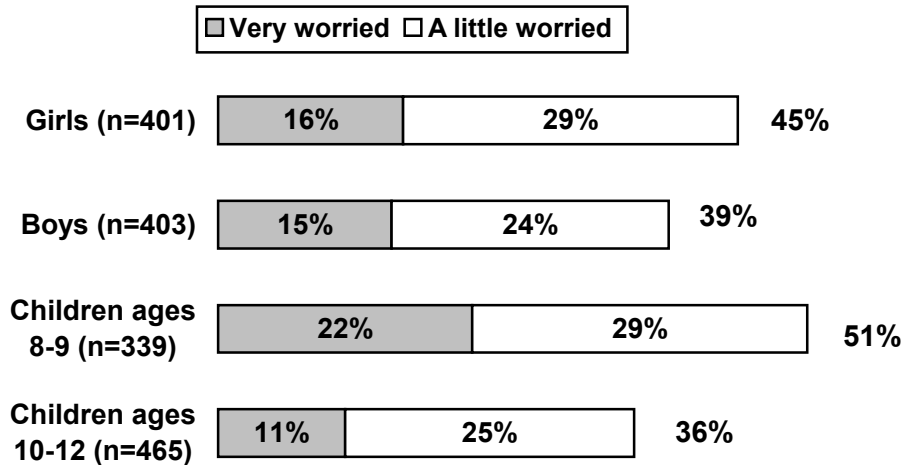
Q2 "When you think about starting a new year at school, would you say you are very worried, a little worried, or not at all worried about...?"



## Fitting in and peer pressure are particularly likely to cause back to school jitters among younger pre-teens

- The majority of children interviewed ages 8-9 (51%) say they are worried about “other kids trying to get [them] to do things [they] shouldn’t” and one-fifth say they are “very worried.”
- Younger children are twice as likely as older children to say they are “very worried” about peer pressure.

### Children’s Concerns about Peer Pressure



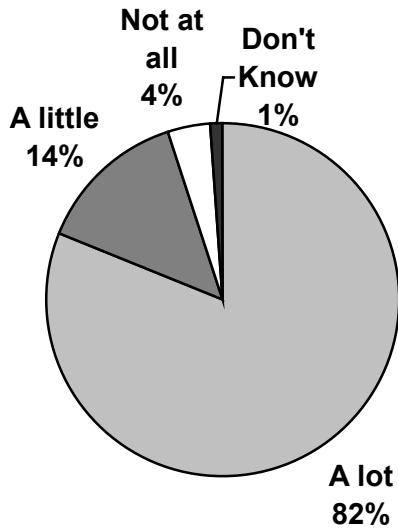
Q2 “When thinking about starting a new year at school, would you say that you are very worried, a little worried, or not at all worried about ‘other kids trying to get you to do things you shouldn’t’?”

Today's pre-teens are teeming with confidence--more than 80% say they like themselves a lot

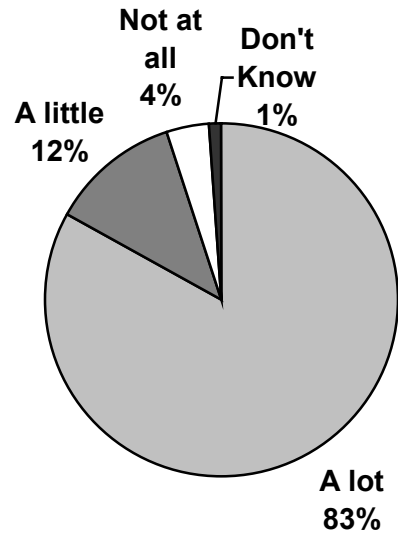
- Eight in ten pre-teen girls and boys say they like themselves "a lot" (82% of girls and 83% of boys).
- However, almost two in ten pre-teens are only a little satisfied or are not satisfied at all with themselves.

### Children's Satisfaction with Themselves Overall

Base: Girls ages 8-12 (n=401)



Base: Boys ages 8-12 (n=403)



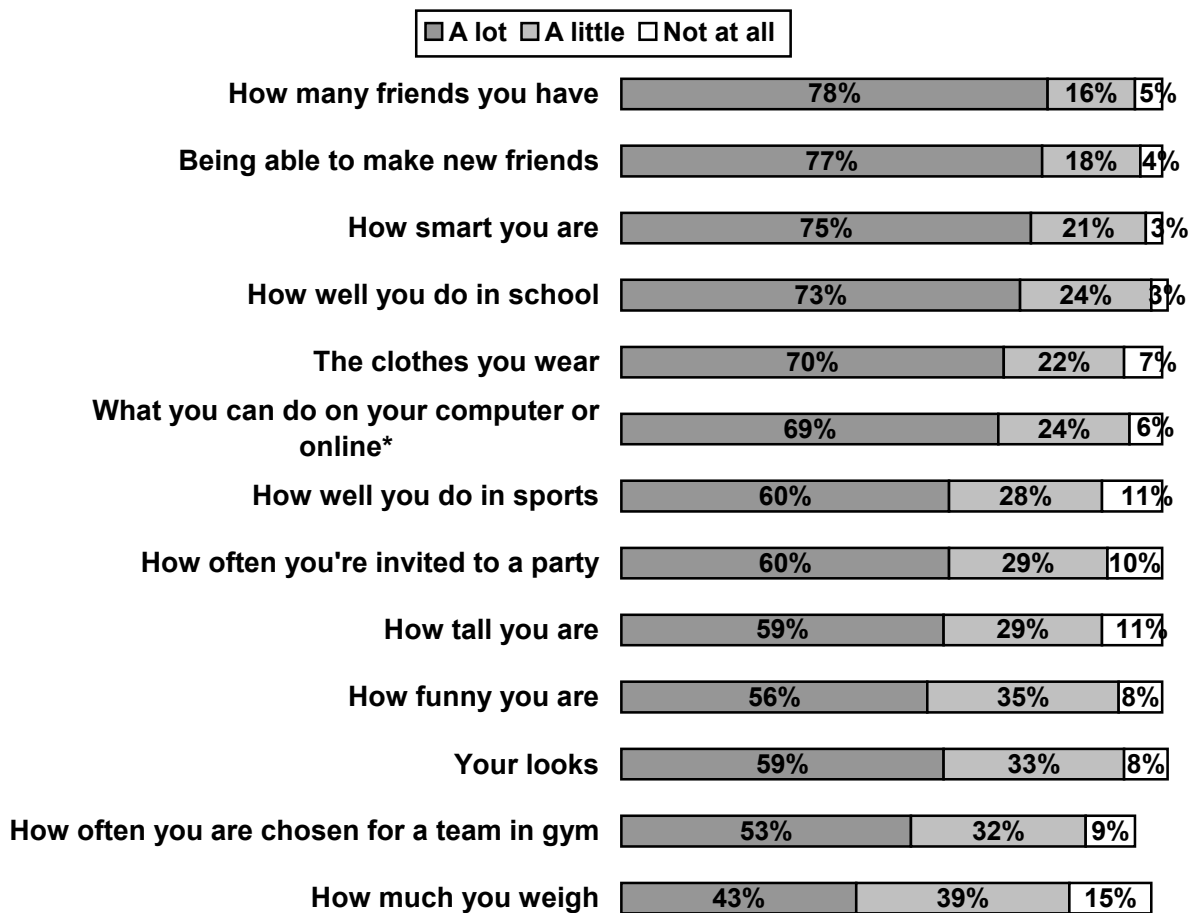
Q3 "In general, do you like yourself as you are a lot, a little, or not at all?"

**Although most girls are highly satisfied with the academic and social aspects of their lives, for many their looks are a major source of dissatisfaction.**

- Girls are most satisfied with their social and academic traits including: their performance in school, their ability to make new friends, their intelligence, and how many friends they have.
- However, girls are least satisfied with their physical features.
- Over half of girls surveyed say they like how much they weigh only “a little” or “not at all.” Fifteen percent are completely dissatisfied with their weight.
- Four in ten are dissatisfied with their height and their overall appearance.

### Girls’ Satisfaction with Specific Characteristics

Base: Girls ages 8-12 (n=401)



\* 97% have access to a computer at home and/or at school

\*\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to exclusion of don't know/no answer responses

Q4 “How much do you like the following things about yourself?”

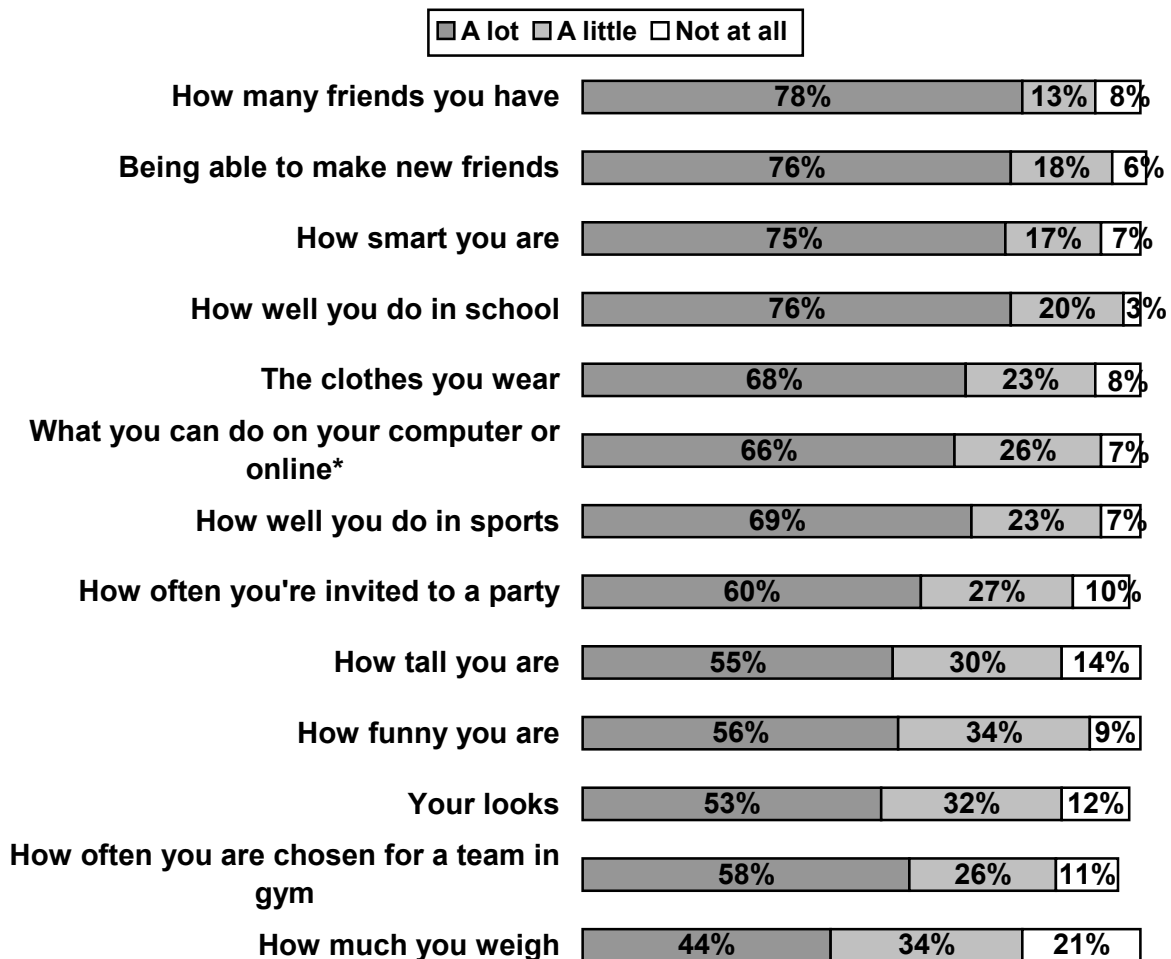


## Boys are as troubled by their appearance as girls are

- Pre-teen girls are not the only ones dissatisfied about how they look. The majority of boys also say that they like how much they weigh “a little” or “not at all”
- One-fifth of boys say they are completely dissatisfied with their weight and fourteen percent say they are completely dissatisfied with their height.
- Only a slight majority of boys say they like their looks “a lot.”

### Boys’ Satisfaction with Specific Characteristics

Base: Boys ages 8-12 (n=403)



\* 97% have access to a computer at home and/or at school

\*\* Percentages may not add to 100% due to exclusion of don’t know/no answer responses

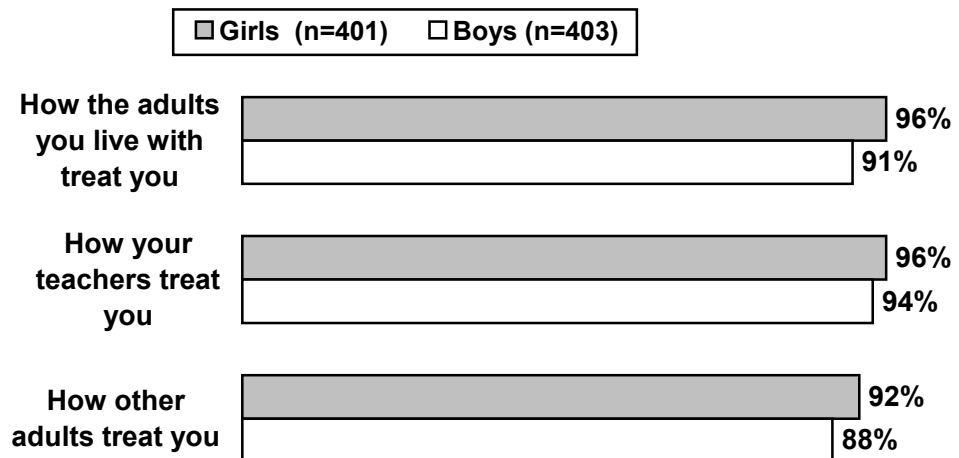
Q4 “How much do you like the following things about yourself?”

## For the vast majority of pre-teens, their relationships with adults are major confidence boosters

- Approximately nine in ten or more pre-teens say that how they are treated by adults – be it the adults in their household, their teachers, or other adults – makes them feel good about themselves.

### Children's Relationships with Adults

% saying makes you feel good about yourself



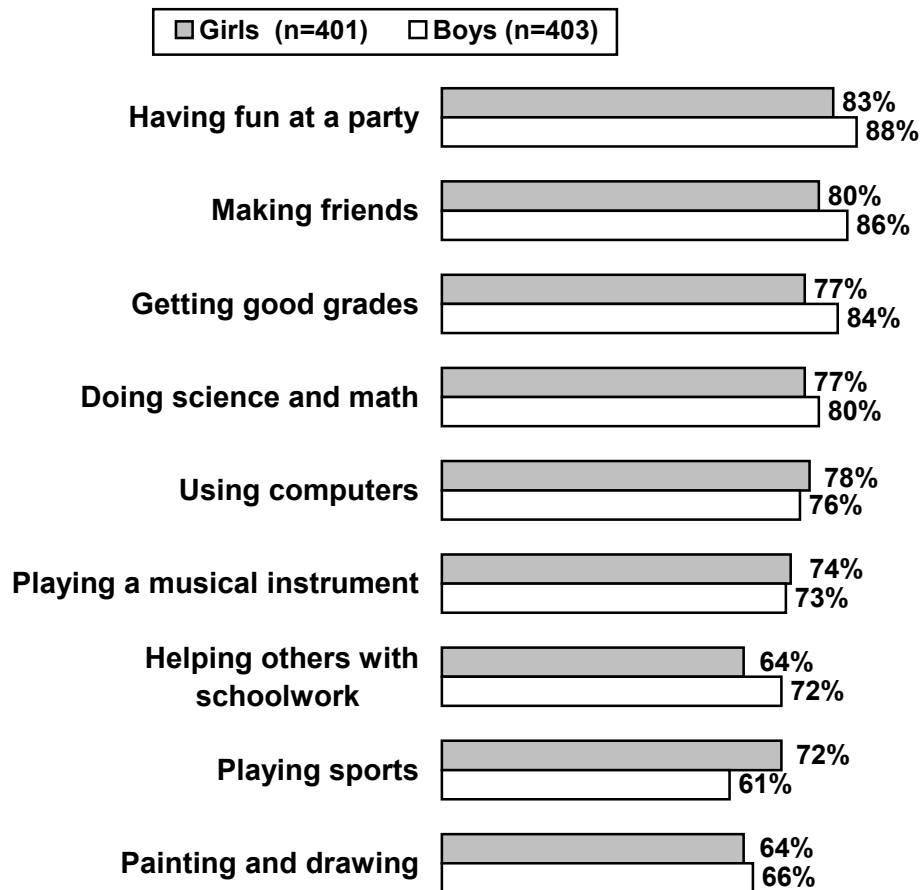
Q5 "Does...make you feel good about yourself or bad about yourself?"

## According to the majority of pre-teens, boys and girls do most things equally well

- Three fourths or more of pre-teens interviewed say that both genders are equal with respect to having fun at a party, making friends, and getting good grades.
- Particularly noteworthy is that approximately three-fourths of pre-teens say that both boys and girls are good at doing science and math and using computers, activities we generally think of as male-dominated.

### Activities Both Genders Perceived Good At

% saying boys and girls are both good at it



Q6 "For each activity, please tell me if you think it is something that girls are better at, something boys are better at, or something girls and boys are both good at?"

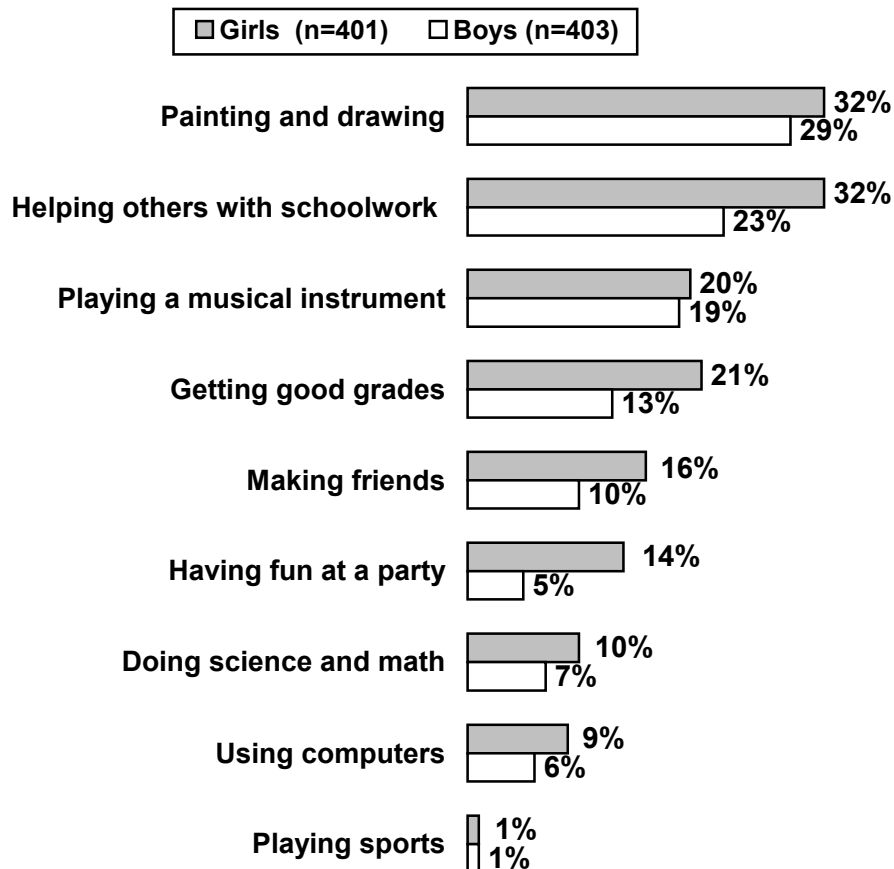


## Although most girls reject the notion that boys are better at sports than girls are, about one-fourth of girls still think boys are better on the playing field

- Though the majority of pre-teens say that girls and boys are both good at many activities, the one area they both perceive a male superiority is sports.
- One-fourth (27%) of girls believe that boys are better at playing sports, while only 1% of girls believe that girls are better at it.
- Younger girls, 8-9 years old, are even more likely to say that boys are better at playing sports (32% vs. 23% of girls ages 10-12).
- Almost four in ten boys (38%) believe that boys are better at playing sports and only 1% of boys say that girls are better at it.

### Activities Girls are Perceived Better At

% saying girls are better at it



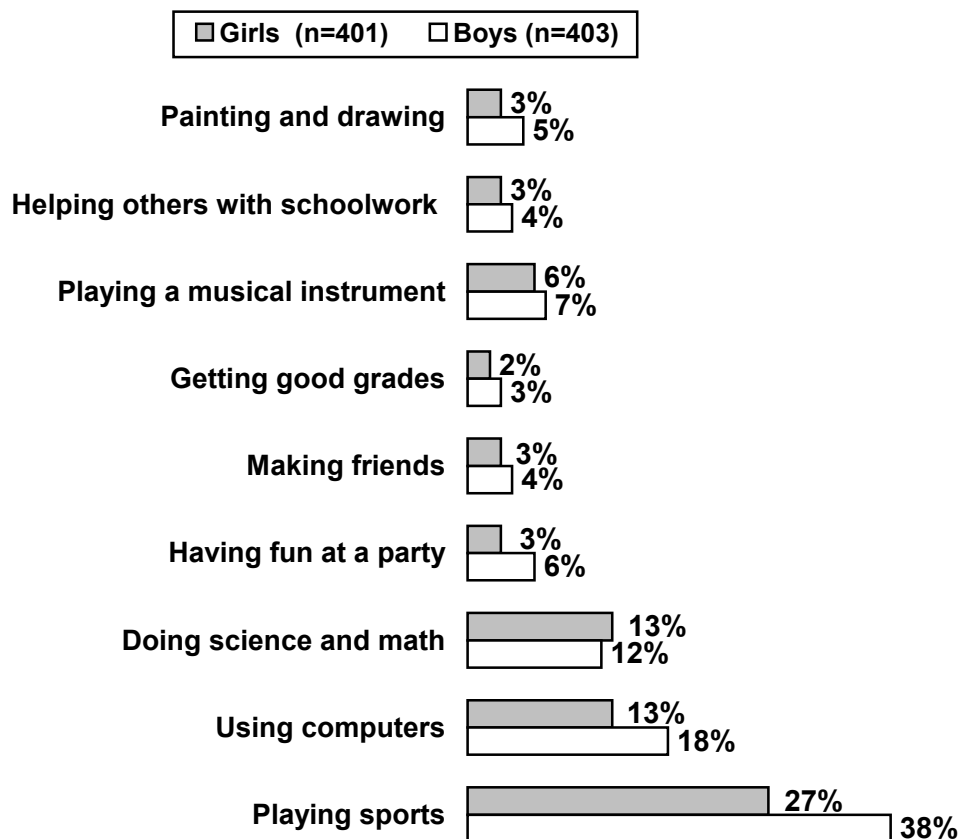
Q6 "For each activity, please tell me if you think it is something that girls are better at, something boys are better at, or something girls and boys are both good at?"

## About 10% of boys say girls outthink boys in the classroom

- Though a large majority of boys (72%) say that boys and girls are both good at helping others with schoolwork, 23% of boys say that girls are better at it, while only 4% say boys are better at it.
- Similarly, 13% of boys say that girls are better at getting good grades compared to only 3% of boys saying that boys are better at it.
- Three in ten girls (32%) believe that girls are better at helping others at schoolwork, while only 3% of girls say that boys are better at it.
- Two in ten girls (21%) say that girls are better at getting good grades and only 2% say boys are better at it.

### Activities Boys are Perceived Better At

% saying boys are better at it



Q6 "For each activity, please tell me if you think it is something that girls are better at, something boys are better at, or something girls and boys are both good at?"

## Appendix

### UNIQUELY ME STUDY

Boy	[ ]
Girl	[ ]

INTERVIEWER: IF IT SOUNDS LIKE A CHILD ANSWERED THE PHONE PLEASE ASK TO SPEAK WITH A PARENT OR SOMEONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD WHO IS AGE 18 OR OLDER.

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from RoperASW, a survey research firm. We are conducting a survey today and would like to ask you a few questions.

INTERVIEWER: IF NECESSARY:

“Please be assured, we are not selling anything, and any answers will be kept strictly confidential.”

S1a. For this study, we are interested in learning a little about families. First, can you please tell me how many children in your household are ... (READ LIST. RECORD ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH. DO NOT ACCEPT A RANGE. RECORD WHOLE NUMBERS)

	#
Under 4 years old	_____
4-7 years old	_____
8-12 years old	_____
13-17 years old	_____
REFUSED	ref

THERE IS NO Q.S2 OR Q.S3 IN THIS SURVEY.  
IF ONE OR MORE CHILD AGE 8-12 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD, CONTINUE.  
ALL OTHERS, THANK AND TERMINATE.

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S3. (IF MORE THAN ONE CHILD AGE 8-12 IN S1a) For the survey today, we're talking with children 8 to 12 years of age about their thoughts on starting the new school year. To know which child I should be speaking with, would you tell me please, of the 8 to 12 year olds who **ARE HOME RIGHT NOW**, how old is the one who had the most recent birthday?

\_\_\_\_\_ (RECORD AGE) (SKIP TO S5)

NONE AT HOME NOW	1	} (SCHEDULE QUALIFIED CALLBACK) (THANK & TERMINATE)
DON'T KNOW	dk	
REFUSED	ref	

S4. (IF ONE CHILD AGE 8-12 IN S1a) For the survey today, we're talking with children 8 to 12 years of age about their thoughts on starting the new school year. Would you tell me please, how old is that child?

\_\_\_\_\_ (RECORD AGE)

DON'T KNOW	dk	} (THANK & TERMINATE)
REFUSED	ref	

S5. Is that (INSERT AGE OF CHILD FROM S3 or S4) year old child a boy or a girl?

BOY	1	} (THANK & TERMINATE)
GIRL	2	
REFUSED	ref	

S6. Are you their parent or guardian?

YES	1	(SKIP TO S7)
NO	2	(ASK TO SPEAK TO CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN. USE NEW INTRO BELOW WHEN GUARDIAN ON PHONE)

PARENT OR GUARDIAN NOT AVAILABLE	3	(SCHEDULE QUALIFIED CALLBACK)
REFUSED	ref	(THANK & TERMINATE)

IF NEW ADULT ON PHONE:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from RoperASW, a survey research firm. We are conducting a survey among 8-12 year old children about their thoughts on starting a new school year.



S7. May we have your permission to include the opinions of your (AGE FROM S3 OR S4) year old in our survey?

INTERVIEWER: IF NECESSARY:

"The survey is about starting a new school year and we are only interested in your child's thoughts and feelings."

"We are not selling anything, and any answers will be kept strictly confidential."

"If you would like to listen to the interview while we talk to your child, that would of course be fine, but I can assure you we will not be asking any improper questions."

YES	1	(CONTINUE)
NO	2	} (THANK AND TERMINATE)
REFUSED	ref	

S8. May I speak to that child now?

YES, CHILD BROUGHT TO PHONE	1	(CONTINUE)
NO, CHILD NOT AVAILABLE NOW	2	(SCHEDULE QUALIFIED CALLBACK)
NO	3	} (THANK AND TERMINATE)
REFUSED	ref	

## **BEGIN WITH CHILD:**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I would like to ask you a few questions about your thoughts and feelings on starting a new year at school. There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your opinions.

1. First, can you please tell me, is there a computer you can use either at home or at school?

YES	1
NO	2
DON'T KNOW	dk

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2. I'm going to ask you a few questions about how you feel about starting a new year at school. When you think about starting a new year at school, would you say that you are very worried, a little worried, or not at all worried about . . . (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. RECORD ONLY ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.)

	<u>Very Worried</u>	<u>A Little Worried</u>	<u>Not At All Worried</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Making new friends	1	2	3	dk
Fitting in with the other kids in your class	1	2	3	dk
Having harder homework	1	2	3	dk
Having a new teacher	1	2	3	dk
Getting good grades	1	2	3	dk
Having cool clothes	1	2	3	dk
Making your parents proud of you	1	2	3	dk
Being cool	1	2	3	dk
Other kids trying to get you to do things you shouldn't		1	2	3 dk

3. In general, do you like yourself as you are a lot, a little, or not at all? (DO NOT READ LIST. RECORD ONLY ONE RESPONSE.)

A lot	1
A little	2
Not at all	3
Don't know	dk

4. And, how much do you like the following things about yourself? Do you like (INSERT ITEM) a lot, a little, or not at all? (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. RECORD ONLY ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.)

	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>A Little</u>	<u>Not At All</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
How tall you are	1	2	3	dk
How much you weigh	1	2	3	dk
Your looks	1	2	3	dk
How well you do in sports	1	2	3	dk
How well you do in school	1	2	3	dk
What you can do on your computer or online	1	2	3	dk
How many friends you have	1	2	3	dk
How smart you are	1	2	3	dk
How funny you are	1	2	3	dk
How often you're invited to a party	1	2	3	dk
How often you are chosen for a team in gym	1	2	3	dk
Being able to make new friends	1	2	3	dk
The clothes you wear	1	2	3	dk



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5. Think now about how others treat you. Does (INSERT ITEM) make you feel good about yourself or bad about yourself? (READ LIST. RECORD ONLY ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.)

	Makes You Feel Good About <u>Yourself</u>	Makes You Feel Bad About <u>Yourself</u>	<u>Neither</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
How the adults you live with treat you	1	2	3	dk
How your teachers treat you	1	2	3	dk
How other adults treat you (INTERVIEWER IF NECESSARY: This means adults besides your teachers and the adults you live with.)	1	2	3	dk

6. Now I'm going to read a list of activities that girls and boys your age may do. For each activity, please tell me if you think it is something that girls are better at, something that boys are better at, or something that girls and boys are both good at? How about . . . (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. RECORD ONLY ONE RESPONSE FOR EACH.)

	Girls Are Better <u>At It</u>	Boys Are Better <u>At It</u>	Both Girls & Boys Are Good <u>At It</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Using computers	1	2	3	dk
Playing sports	1	2	3	dk
Getting good grades	1	2	3	dk
Helping others with schoolwork	1	2	3	dk
Making friends	1	2	3	dk
Doing science and math	1	2	3	dk
Having fun at a party	1	2	3	dk
Painting and drawing	1	2	3	dk
Playing a musical instrument	1	2	3	dk

**THAT'S ALL THE QUESTIONS I HAVE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**