

The Ethics of American Youth – 2008 Summary

Josephson Institute, Center for Youth Ethics

OBJECTIVE:

The survey was conducted amongst nearly 30,000 high school students to find out about their personal as well as academic ethics.

METHODS USED:

29,760 students from various high schools (both private and public) were given a questionnaire in class.

KEY FINDINGS:

- **STEALING:**
 - One in three boys (35%) and one in four girls (26%) – total 30% overall – admitted to stealing from a store.
 - Students who attend private secular and religious schools are less likely to steal (19%) as compared to students from non-religious schools (21%).
 - Honors students and students involved in school related and youth activities were less likely to steal, but still one in five such students admitted to stealing something.
 - 23% students said they stole something from their parents while 20% students admitted to stealing something from a friend.

- **LYING:**
 - More than 2 of 5 students (42%) said they sometimes lie to save money. The male-female difference was quite significant with 49% males and 36% females admitting to the above fact.
 - 39% of private religious school students admitted to lying as compared to 35% students of non-religious schools.
 - Students attending a religious school (83%) were more likely to lie to a parent about something significant as compared to students attending non-religious schools (78%).

- **CHEATING:**
 - 64% students cheated on a test in school. 38% students cheated in more than one test. There was no gender-difference regarding this statistic.
 - Students who attend a religious school (63%) are more likely to cheat on an exam as compared to students who attend a non-religious school (47%).
 - Taking geographical statistics into account, 70% students in the southeast admitted to cheating, 64% in the west, 63% in the northeast and 59% in the mid-west.
 - 36% students said that they used the internet to plagiarize an assignment for class.

- At least 26% survey respondents admitted that they lied on at least one or two questions on the survey.

- 93% students were satisfied with their personal ethics and character.

CONCLUSION:

It is quite clear that the survey reveals an alarming situation that is going on amongst high school students. A similar survey was conducted in 2006 and comparing both surveys, it can be seen that the number of students who will steal, lie or cheat is growing. Educationists believe that greater competition and peer pressure are the reasons for ethics taking a back seat amongst a bunch of high-school students around the country.

LINKS:

[Josephson Institute](#)

[Survey Details and related PDFs](#)