

What Vermont Teen Girls Say about employment and education



Results from 5th annual statewide survey of Vermont girls in grades 6 through 12

2010

**CREATED BY GIRLS FOR GIRLS AND SPONSORED BY
Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains and Vermont Commission on Women**

Foreword

Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains and the Vermont Commission on Women worked with a panel of girls to create our 5th annual *What Teen Girls Say* statewide on-line survey. This year the topic was employment and education.

The survey of girls in grades 6th through 12th took place from New Year's to Valentine's Day, 2010.

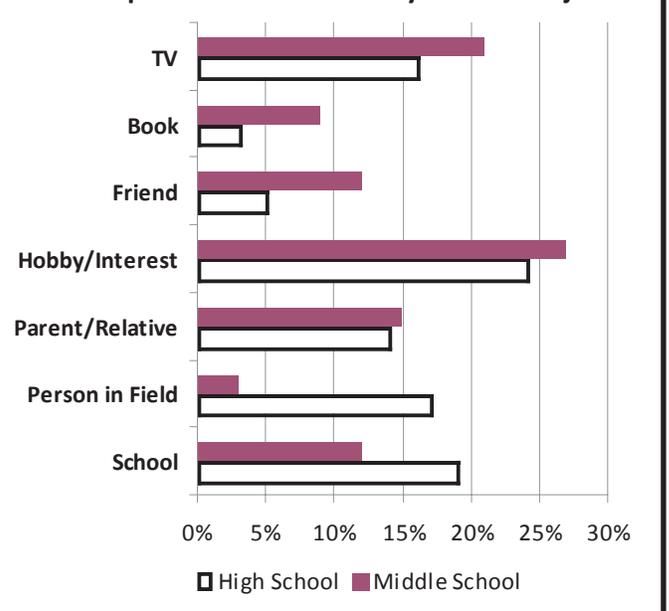
Sixty-nine high school girls and 47 middle school girls from 6 counties filled out the 35 question survey.

Plans for the Future

What or who inspires, influences, and supports my choice?

Over 70% of middle and high school girls report that they know what they want to do after high school. However, they do change their minds. Seventy percent of seniors taking the survey reported that they didn't decide on their current dream job until they were in high school.

What sparked an interest in your dream job?



Middle and high school girls picked very different dream jobs. Middle school girls were most likely to want to go into music, art, dancing, sports, cosmetology or culinary arts as career choices.

High school girls were most likely to choose teaching, social work, environmental science or medicine as career choices.

Between 70 and 80% of the girls surveyed felt that their parents supported their career choices, although middle school girls were twice as likely to NOT have discussed it with their parents.

Realizing the Plan

What do I know or need to know about my choice? What pressures do I face to achieve success?

Motivation Behind Dream Job		
	High School	Middle School
Enjoyment and fulfillment	56%	67%
Doing good and giving back	33%	14%
Money	2%	2%
Balancing work and family life	9%	16%

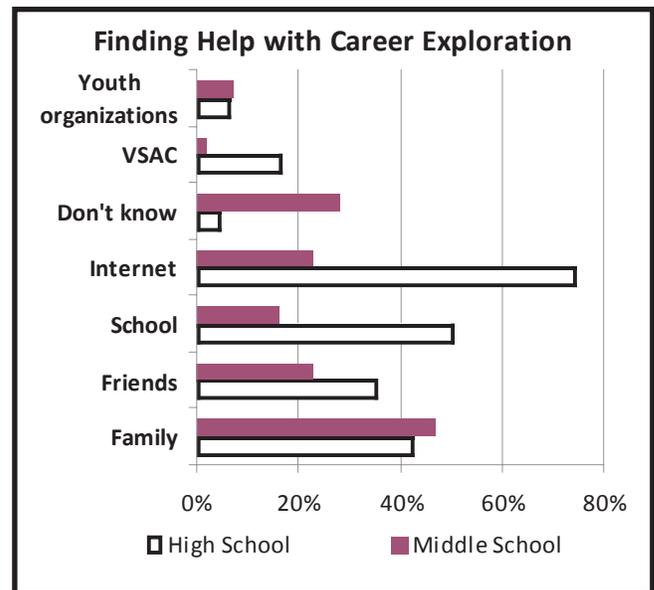
Regardless of their career choice, over 70% of the middle schoolers and 88% of the high schoolers said that they needed further education after high school. Very few said that they didn't need further education or training.

Overwhelmingly girls chose jobs that would bring them enjoyment or fulfillment although high schoolers were more apt to cite doing good or giving back as motivation behind their job choice.

"Of course money is important in choosing a career! We just didn't feel that we could admit that in the survey!"

- high school focus group looking at the survey results

There was almost no mention of nontraditional careers such as construction, the trades, manufacturing, financial services, information technology, or public safety. Very few mentioned traditional women's jobs such as secretarial, child care or nursing.



Almost 30% of middle schoolers were unsure of the educational requirements for their dream jobs or where to go to find help with career exploration.



"I am bound and determined to do what I want and get a great job in my future; I am hoping for the best."

- freshman, BFA - Fairfax

"I think a major part of my determination and goal setting has come from the relationship that I have with my mom. She's incredibly supportive and one of my best friends. We built the relationship ourselves because she always let me be who I was and wanted to be, stood by me through my mistakes and let me learn for myself - a major factor in who I am today."

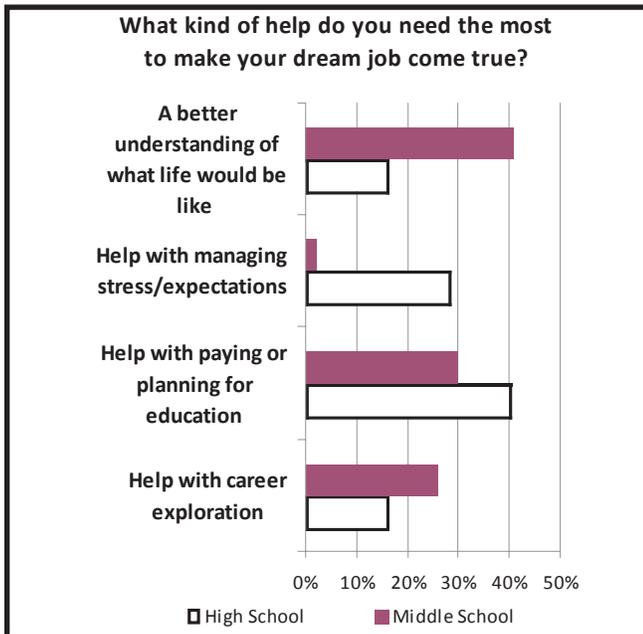
- senior, Mt. Mansfield Union

Both middle and high school girls overwhelmingly reported that money for college might get in the way of achieving their dream jobs or careers. Over 20% reported that friends might get in the way but very few felt that sexism would be a barrier.

***"To do something I love and get paid for doing it! I just don't know what I love."
-junior, Essex***

Only 22% of middle schoolers thought that their school offered classes or help with career exploration.

Only 66% of high schoolers reported that their school offered classes or individual help with career exploration.

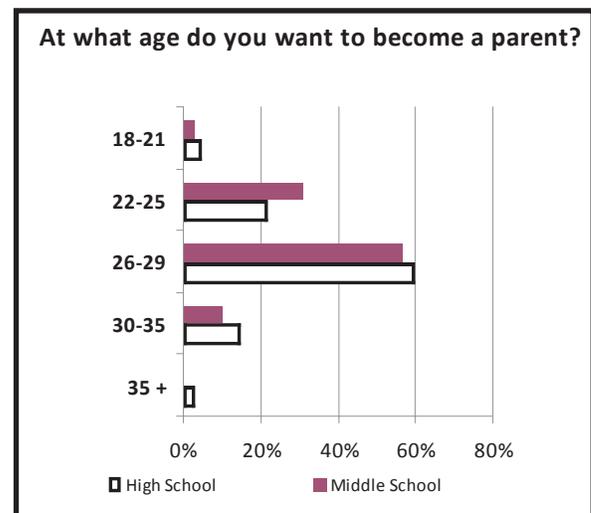
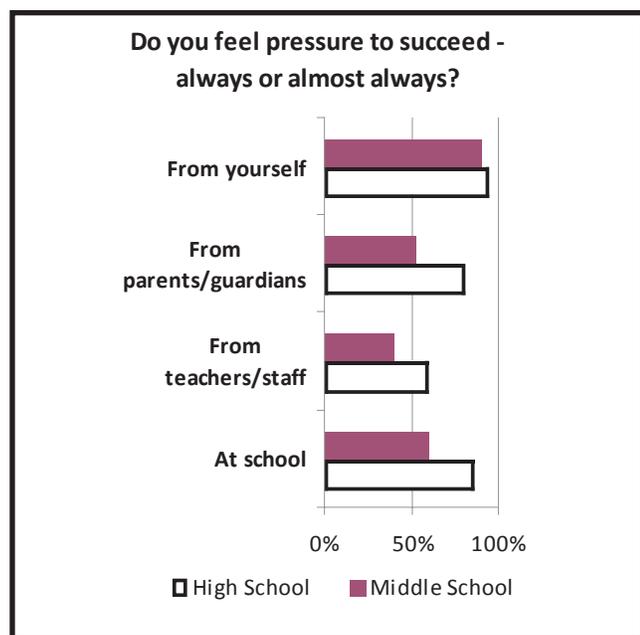


Balancing work and life

How would parenting change my work-life?

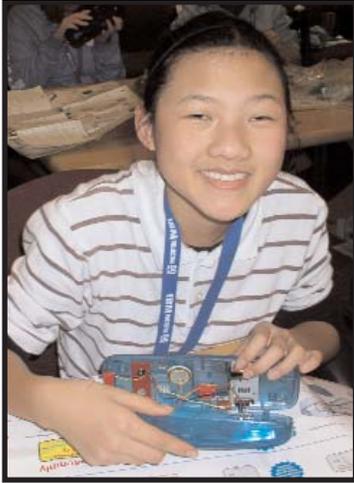
Almost all the girls surveyed said that they wanted to be a parent. The most popular age range to start a family was 26-29. As mentioned earlier, the ability to balance work and family life did not materially affect job choice for either middle or high schoolers. Interestingly it had less effect on the job choices of high school age girls.

Over 90% of the girls reported that they almost always felt self-imposed pressure to succeed. Middle school girls felt much less pressure to succeed from parents, teachers or at school than did high school girls.



"Well, I would probably have to arrange a schedule so I could spend more time with my family. However, being a mother and wife is a part of my dream job."

- junior, Essex



The World of Work

How can I get some work experience?

Overall, 45% of high school girls worked while only 25% of middle school girls said that they worked for money. Very few high school girls said that their paid job was at all related to what they wanted to do after high school.

High school girls who worked reported good work habits: 93% said that they almost never arrived late without calling and 60% reported that they almost always arrived early for work. However they were much less likely to ask for more responsibility (50%) and almost never asked for a raise (90%).

“In 7th and 8th grade I did a project researching a career I was interested in and interviewing someone in that field. This gave me a good idea of what the career really entailed on a day to day basis and showed me what direction my interests were taking me.”

- junior, Essex

Overwhelmingly middle and high school girls want the opportunity to spend time with someone working in their job or career choice to see what it is like. High schoolers were clearer about wanting credit for job shadowing. Only 20% of high school girls surveyed had had an internship.

Work Experience		
	High School	Middle School
Has had volunteer experience	73%	44%
Volunteer experience related to dream job	36%	4%
Has tried an internship	20%	0%
Would like to job shadow	96%	90%
Would like school credit for job shadowing	93%	74%

Vermont: Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Do I plan my future in Vermont?

“I want to see the world.”

- junior, St. Johnsbury

“I love VT and living in a community where everyone knows each other and looks after one another and I can't give up snow!”

- junior, Essex

Overwhelmingly both middle school and high school girls plan to leave Vermont for college and not return after college to work in Vermont. However, over 63% imagine returning to live in Vermont at some point.

Plans for the Future		
	Yes	No
Attend college/get training in VT	25%	75%
Stay in VT	30%	70%
Return to VT after college to work	31%	69%
Return at some point	63%	37%

“It is where I was raised and I love being here.”

- junior, Middlebury

“I want to experience other states as well and have more opportunities.”

- 7th grader, home schooled

“I think VT is a great place and I want to stay here forever!”

- 8th grader, Berkshire elementary

“There aren't many jobs in VT for my field (neonatology).”

- sophomore, Mt. Anthony

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Recommendations

Girls tend to choose careers based on what they know or observe and what they like to do. Middle school girls' aspirations differ widely from those of high school girls.

Parents and schools should introduce girls to a wide variety of careers starting in middle school.

Community members should reach out to middle and high school students either through job shadowing, career fairs, or classroom visits to help girls develop an understanding of what day-to-day work is like in a variety of fields.

Money should not be a taboo subject.

Although high school girls surveyed ranked fulfillment and giving back to the community most important, having enough money to live decently is an unspoken issue for them.

Parents should talk with their daughters about family finances and the cost of higher education starting in middle school.

Girls should feel comfortable discussing money concerns with parents or other adults.

Schools should teach students about what it costs to live and whether they can support themselves and/or a family on their career choice earnings.

Vermont girls want to leave the state because of a perceived lack of jobs in their chosen field.

Educators and parents should encourage exploration of careers where there are projected job shortages in Vermont.

Employers need to make these fields more accessible and attractive to girls.



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Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains is one of 112 councils chartered by Girl Scouts of the USA, the world's leading organization dedicated solely to girls, where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success. In partnership with caring adults, girls develop qualities to serve them all their lives: strong values, social conscience, and conviction about their potential and self-worth.



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The Vermont Commission on Women (VCW) is a non-partisan state agency dedicated to legislative, economic, social, and political fairness. Launched in 1964 by a call to action from President John F. Kennedy, VCW is charged with reducing discrimination and encouraging opportunities for women. Volunteer commissioners and representatives from organizations concerned with women's issues guide VCW's public education, coalition building, and advocacy efforts.