

Happy Canadian teenagers shed angry, rebellious image ; Dennis Bueckert The Canadian Press; ; Spectator (Hamilton, Ont.) ; 07-05-2004 ;

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Happy Canadian teenagers shed angry, rebellious image

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The kids are all right. At least, most of them seem to be, says a study conducted for Health Canada.

Most of the teens interviewed last year said they enjoy school, get along with their parents, like to meet new people and don't often get depressed. Almost 60 per cent said they work part-time. But the survey also shows Canadian youth like to take risks. About a third have tried marijuana more than once, and one in 10 has tried magic mushrooms. Usage of other drugs was low: 4 per cent said they had tried ecstasy; 3 per cent had tried crack cocaine or glue-sniffing; 2 per cent, crystal meth; 1 per cent, heroin.

The study contradicts the image of surly adolescents locked in universal war with the authority figures in their lives.

"Overall, Canadian teens perceive themselves having a good relationship with their parents," says the study conducted by GPC Research of Ottawa. "Most teens do not want to disappoint their parents."

Most (82 per cent) say they feel part of the school they attend and participate in extracurricular activities (70 per cent). But boys are less likely than girls to enjoy school (66 versus 77 per cent).

More than two-thirds of teens said their parent or guardian takes a lot of interest in their school work.

There were worrisome findings, too.

More than half, 55 per cent, said they have a hard time concentrating, 51 per cent said they get bored easily and 63 per cent worry a lot about their future.

Some of the results seem contradictory. A great majority of teens (79 per cent) say they are more leader than follower, yet an almost equal percentage say, "I usually go along with my friends even if it doesn't feel quite right."

The teens saw cigarettes as being more harmful than marijuana, and alcohol as being the least harmful. One in five drink alcohol regularly, with rates somewhat higher in Quebec.

Girls were more likely than boys to consider it dangerous to body surf in a mosh pit and rollerblade on a half pipe without a helmet.

When asked about different information sources, 80 per cent believed what they were told in health classes, 72 per cent mentioned teachers and 71 per cent the police. Parents were considered reliable by 69 per cent.

Media sources were less trusted. Forty-six per cent believed what they read about drugs in magazines or newspapers and 44 per cent believed TV programs.

Despite that skepticism, teens spent 63 per cent watching two or more hours of TV daily and 13 per cent watched five or more hours daily.

Ten per cent of respondents said they surfed the Internet for five or more hours daily. About a third said they surfed for an hour a day, 17 per cent said they surfed two hours and 15 per cent said three or four hours.

Seventy per cent of teens were living with both parents, 19 per cent were living with just their mother and 5 per cent with just their father.

Rates of depression were higher in single-parent homes (18 per cent versus 12 per cent).

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