



2007

Executive Summary:

JA Worldwide/Deloitte Teen Ethics Survey

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In alarming numbers, teenagers who think they are fully prepared to make ethical decisions are also driven by the pursuit of success to cheat, by time constraints to plagiarize, and by vengeance to inflict physical violence. This paints a disturbing picture for employers who will be relying on this age group to fill the pipeline in their future workforces.

The fifth annual JA/Deloitte Teen Ethics Survey found that while most teens (71 percent) feel *fully prepared* to make ethical decisions in the workplace, nearly 40 percent of those young people believe that lying, cheating, plagiarizing, and violence are sometimes necessary to succeed in school.

For those who believe past behavior is a good indicator of future behavior, the business community cannot look the other way while significant numbers of teens today embrace movable ethical lines and exhibit troublesome decision-making abilities that could have dire consequences in the professional world.

Rationalization and Pressure

The significant gap between adolescents' perceived readiness to make ethical decisions in the workplace and their actual behaviors today represents a worrisome trend. Not surprisingly, teens who endorse lying, cheating, plagiarizing, and violence tend to rationalize their actions. For example, 54 percent justify cheating on a test due to a personal desire to succeed and teens who think violence is acceptable on some level cite settling an argument (27 percent) and revenge (20 percent) among their justifications.

These tendencies are more pronounced among teens who feel overwhelming pressure to succeed: of the teens who think cheating is acceptable on some level, 54 percent think a personal desire to succeed is justification — that number climbs to 66 percent among students who feel overwhelming pressure to succeed. Of teens who think plagiarism is acceptable, 37 percent cite a personal desire to succeed as justification — that number climbs to 51 percent among students who feel overwhelming pressure to succeed.

“ The high percentages of teenagers who freely admit that unethical behavior can be justified is alarming...It suggests an attitude of ethical relativism and rationalization of whatever actions serve one's immediate needs and purposes. This way of thinking will inevitably lead to unethical if not illegal actions that will damage individual lives and ruin corporate reputations. ”

— Dr. David Miller
Yale Center for Faith and Culture

Ambiguity in Cyberspace

The internet adds a layer of confusion when it comes to ethical decision-making. Many teenagers fail to see the interconnectedness of their personal, academic, and virtual (online) lives, and the ways unethical behavior transcends the perceived boundaries. In significant numbers, they believe that online behavior should not have “off line” ramifications.

- More than half (57 percent) of all teens surveyed said it is not fair for employers to make hiring/firing decisions based on material they have posted to the internet, and another 19 percent weren't sure if it was fair or not.
- Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) said they would change something on their websites or blog postings if they knew a potential employer was looking at it, and another 17 percent said they weren't sure if they would or not.
- Nearly half (47 percent) believe it's acceptable on some level to download music without paying for it, but only five percent believe it's okay to steal something from a store.

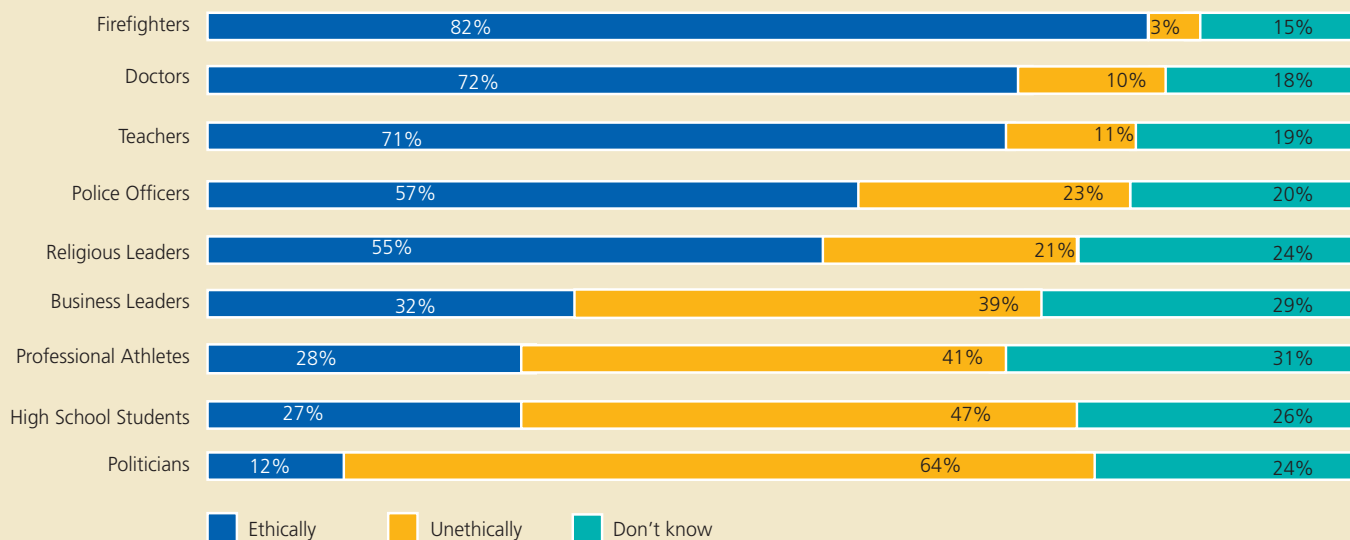
Considering all the rules that should not be broken at school (cheating, stealing, lying, behaving violently, etc.), in a typical school year, how often do you feel you have to break any of those rules to succeed in school?

Never	Some-times	Often	Always	Not Sure
61%	34%	3%	1%	0%

How often do you consider the following activities acceptable?

	Never	Some-times	Often	Always	Not Sure
Cheating on a test	75%	21%	2%	1%	1%
Stealing something from a store	95%	4%	1%	0%	0%
Illegally downloading music (downloading without paying for it)	50%	28%	11%	8%	3%
Behaving violently towards another person	77%	21%	2%	0%	1%
Plagiarizing	84%	13%	1%	1%	2%
Lying to a parent or guardian	40%	52%	6%	1%	1%

Do you think the majority of people in the following groups behave ethically or unethically?



Do As I Say, Not As I Do

Some teens tend to become deflectional when assessing their own ethical boundaries, operating under a “do as I say, not as I do” mantra. Nearly a quarter of teens who say they lied to parent or guardian in the last year *also* believe that lying is never acceptable. Similarly, a quarter of teens who plagiarized or cheated in the last year don’t condone these actions. And, despite self-confidence in their personal ethical preparedness, teens seem skeptical of the behavior of their peers. In fact, when asked to rank the behavior of various groups, they ranked their peer group second to last, only behind politicians.

Looking Ahead

To help teenagers learn how to make ethical decisions in school and eventually in the workforce, Junior Achievement and Deloitte are collaborating on a \$2 million project. The “Excellence through Ethics” program provides age-appropriate training in ethical decision-making to students beginning in the fourth grade. Junior Achievement and Deloitte have also launched “JA Business Ethics,” a new program designed specifically for high school students. Using hands-on classroom activities and real-life scenarios, the curriculum will enhance students’ abilities to handle difficult situations and make the right choices, laying the groundwork for a more ethically prepared future workforce.

“It’s sobering when teens who say they are fully prepared to make ethical decisions on the job also say they need to cheat to fulfill their personal ambition, to plagiarize because they don’t have enough time, or to physically harm another because they’ve had an argument. These indicators do not bode well for the coping strategies of society’s future workforce, so the Junior Achievement-Deloitte training in ethical decision-making is the best investment we could make.”

— Ainar D. Aijala, Jr.
Global Managing Partner, Consulting,
Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and
Chairman of JA Worldwide

“Integrity and trust are the cornerstones of all human relationships and great societies. As today’s teens enter tomorrow’s workforce, it’s imperative that they learn how to make decisions that are both ethical and appropriate. Teaching these lessons is the responsibility of a society. It is up to businesses, educators and parents to provide the tools as well as the framework for why these cornerstones exist. No society can afford to become lax where ethics are concerned.”

— Sean C. Rush
President and CEO of JA Worldwide

Visit www.ja.org/ethics to download “Excellence through Ethics” lessons free of charge, and for more information on how to bring JA Business Ethics to your school. For additional data, and more information on Deloitte’s commitment to ethics education and community involvement, visit www.deloitte.com/us/community.

Why do you* think these activities are acceptable? Select all that apply.

Cheating on a test (base=182)	
Personal desire to succeed in school	54%
To help a friend	39%
Pressure from parents to succeed in school	35%
Everyone else does it	18%
Peer pressure	17%
Thrill of possibly not getting caught cheating	9%
Some other reason	15%
I don't know	9%

Stealing from a store (base=37)	
Didn't have enough money to pay	32%
To help a friend or family member	22%
Peer pressure	22%
Thrill of possibly not getting caught stealing	19%
Everyone else does it	5%
Pressure from parents	0%
Some other reason	22%
I don't know	14%

Illegally downloading music (base=367)	
Didn't have enough money to pay	40%
Everyone else does it	34%
To help a friend or family member	10%
Thrill of possibly not getting caught	2%
Peer pressure	2%
Desire to be popular in school	2%
Some other reason	33%
I don't know	17%

Behaving violently towards another person (base=171)	
Defend myself	77%
To help a friend	27%
Settle an argument	27%
Revenge	20%
Gain respect of other kids	8%
Be feared by other kids	8%
For a thrill	5%
Peer pressure	2%
Some other reason	12%
I don't know	5%

Plagiarizing (base=119)	
Not enough time to do the assignment	49%
Personal desire to succeed in school	37%
Pressure from parents to succeed in school	25%
Everyone else does it	18%
Thrill of possibly not getting caught plagiarizing	8%
Peer pressure	6%
Some other reason	16%
I don't know	13%

Lying to a parent/guardian (base=438)	
To help a friend	19%
Everyone else does it	8%
Peer pressure	7%
Thrill of possibly not getting caught lying	6%
Revenge	5%
Desire to be popular in school	3%
Some other reason	61%
I don't know	22%

*respondents include only those who responded "sometimes," "often," "always," or "not sure" when asked how often the activity was acceptable

Methodology

This Junior Achievement/Deloitte Teen Ethics Survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Junior Achievement between September 19 to September 26, 2007 among 725 U.S. 13-18 year olds. 13-17 year old results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, parental education, urbanicity, and region. 18 year old results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region, and household income. Harris Interactive was responsible for the data collection and Junior Achievement/Deloitte were responsible for the analyses of the data.

With a pure probability sample of 725 one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/-4 percentage points. Sampling error for data based on sub-samples may be higher and may vary. However, this does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which 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 those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the U.S. 13-18 year old population. 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.

About JA Worldwide® (Junior Achievement)

JA Worldwide is the world's largest organization dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy. Through a dedicated volunteer network, JA Worldwide provides in-school and after-school programs for students in grades K-12. JA Worldwide offers educational programs that focus on three key content areas: entrepreneurship, work readiness, and financial literacy. Today, 140 individual area operations reach more than four million students in the United States, with an additional 4.3 million students served by operations in 114 other countries worldwide. For more information, visit www.jag.org.

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