



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Adult Little Survey:

Exploring the Value of
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Executive Summary



METHODOLOGY

Between March 3 and April 16 2009, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 200 adults who participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters as “Littles” for at least one year during their childhood. Alumni Littles were sampled from a combination of Harris Interactive’s panel of respondents and Big Brothers Big Sisters lists.

ABOUT BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

Big Brothers Big Sisters helps vulnerable children beat the odds. The organization depends on donations to help recruit volunteers and reach more children. Funding is used to conduct background checks on volunteers to ensure child safety; and provide ongoing support for children, families and volunteers to build and sustain long-lasting relationships. Big Brothers Big Sisters is proven to improve children’s odds for succeeding in school, behaving nonviolently, avoiding drugs and alcohol, and breaking other negative cycles. Headquartered in Philadelphia and with nearly 400 agencies across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves more than a quarter million children. For further information on how Big Brothers Big Sisters is changing how children grow up in America go to BigBrothersBigSisters.org.

About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive is one of the largest and fastest-growing market research firms in the world. The company provides innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions which lead to measurable and enduring improvements in performance. Harris Interactive is widely known for The Harris Poll®, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls and for pioneering online market research methods. The company has built what it believes to be the world’s largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its North American, European and Asian offices, and through a global network of independent market research firms. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com.

Background

Big Brothers Big Sisters believes one of the most effective strategies for building its nationwide network of support is to maintain on-going communication with its alumni. Therefore, Big Brothers Big Sisters commissioned Harris Interactive to contact a group of adults who had been Littles for over a year to ask questions about their experience as Littles and about their well-being as adults.

Objectives

Specifically, the survey conducted by Harris Interactive sought to:

- Gauge the extent to which Adult Littles felt their Big Brothers Big Sisters' experience to be important and to learn whether they feel Big Brothers Big Sisters made a difference in their lives;
- Understand various aspects of adult Littles' childhood; and
- Determine productivity and success of Adult Littles in today's society.

How the Survey Was Conducted

Sample

- 200 Adult Littles (alumni) with one or more years of participation in Big Brothers Big Sisters
- These alumni were targeted because our goal was to determine the perceptions and well-being of alumni who had had substantial involvement with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Those surveyed

- 109 Alumni were sampled from Harris Interactive's panel of double opt-in online respondents, called the Harris Poll Online panel.
- 91 Alumni were sampled from lists provided by Big Brothers Big Sisters consisting of names provided by 119 of our agencies across the country, as well as people who self-identified as alumni through our e-newsletter subscriber list or the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America website.

Survey

- 12-minute Online Survey (approximately 50 questions)

Key Findings

Overall

- Overall surveyed Adult Littles believe that having been a Little was very important to them and contributed significantly to the person they are today. They report having been in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program as a child resulted in genuine, positive outcomes.
- Confirming that long and enduring mentor relationships are possible and important, nearly half were in matches of more than three years and a large percentage remain in touch with their Big today.
- As shown in previous Big Brothers Big Sisters' research, this survey indicates that longer matches have greater outcomes. In the survey, Littles in matches of more than three years reported more positive outcomes than those matched for less than three years.

Value of Big Brothers Big Sisters

Large majorities of Adult Littles reported important benefits associated with participation in Big Brothers Big Sisters, as evidenced by their descriptions of the influence program participation had on their lives and their perceived success compared to peers not in the program.

- When asked to describe in their own words the value of being involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program as a child, the responses were overwhelmingly positive.
 - 64% said that their relationship with their Big was extremely important or very important with only 2% saying that the relationship was not important at all. 47% were matched for three or more years. 64% of Littles are still in touch with their Bigs and of these 75% have a close relationship with him/her.
 - When asked to describe the impact of having a Big Brother or Big Sister in their life, having someone in their life that provided guidance and individual attention was most frequently mentioned (49%). Many also mentioned the overall positive impact (38%) and some specifically mentioned that it helped them to become a better person (18%), and to change their life (12%).
- Over six in ten (62%) alumni consider themselves to be more successful than their peers who weren't involved in the program.

More specifically, alumni report that having a Big played an important role in who they are today by positively influencing their self-confidence, providing stability, changing their perspective on life and pushing them to set higher goals than they would have.

- Almost all (90%) agree their Big made them feel better about themselves, with about half (52%) strongly agreeing. Further, 85% say having been a Little helped them to have confidence in their abilities.
- Large majorities of adult Littles say their Big provided stability when they needed it (90%) and changed their perspective on what they thought possible in life (81%). Three-quarters (77%) set higher goals than they would have on their own because of their Big.
- Overcoming problems with courage, honesty, being a team player, and respecting others are all character traits that alumni say were also positively influenced by having been a Little.

Being in the program also taught Littles new things, influenced aspects of their education, and helped them to make better decisions overall.

- Alumni surveyed said they learned right from wrong (76%), the importance of helping others (84%) and other things they would not have otherwise learned (84%) from their Big.
- Bigs also were reported to have had a major influence on the school life of former Littles. Over three-quarters (77%) reported doing better in school because of their Big, almost two-thirds (65%) agreed that their Big helped them reach a higher level of education than they thought possible and half (52%) agreed that their Big kept them from dropping out of high school.
- The overwhelming majority (90%) reported that their relationship with their Big helped in making better choices through their childhood. Nearly as many (86%) said the same about making better choices throughout adult life.

Adult Little Well-Being

Note: The positive conditions below may have been caused by various influences and we should, therefore, not conclude that Big Brothers Big Sisters involvement caused these conditions. Rather, the items below give us a snapshot to better know this group of alumni and suggest the need to conduct future studies to determine Big Brothers Big Sisters' long term effects.

Most former Littles perceive themselves to have strong relationships with others.

- A majority of alumni surveyed reported being extremely or very satisfied with their relationships with friends (72%), family (65%) and spouses (62%).
- Many alumni also reported that they have strong relationships with family (54% strongly agree) and friends (51%).
 - Also, alumni who have children reported feeling either extremely (48%) or very (34%) close to them.

Many of the surveyed Alumni have grown up to become responsible citizens and active members of their community.

- Two-thirds (67%) of surveyed Alumni donate to or volunteer at a religious or charitable organization, about half (52%) volunteer in the community and almost a third (29%) hold some type of leadership position in a community group.
- Almost a quarter (22%) of adult Littles have participated in a service program like AmeriCorps. Further, 21% of alumni have served in the military.
- Almost half of surveyed Alumni reported being satisfied with their volunteering (46% extremely/somewhat satisfied) and community engagement (42% extremely/somewhat satisfied).

When it comes to overall satisfaction with life, Adult Littles surveyed are content.

- Approximately two in three (64%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with life.
- A large majority (86%) of alumni agree that they lead a fulfilling life and 41% strongly agree with this statement.

A large number of Adult Littles surveyed have reached a significant educational milestone--a 4 year degree. They have reached higher levels of education than their parents. Those in longer matches have higher college graduation rates.

- Many alumni reported having achieved higher levels of education than their parents. 42% of Adult Littles earned a four-year college degree or more compared to 22% of their fathers and 25% of their mothers.
- Those in matches over three years have a higher rate of attaining a 4-year degree--52% vs. 34% of those in matches less than three years.

The majority of surveyed alumni are satisfied with their work and financial situation, and perceive themselves to have achieved high levels of success as compared to their peers growing up.

- 62% of Alumni perceive themselves to have achieved a higher level of success than their peers who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters growing up.
- Over half (54%) of alumni are extremely or very satisfied with work. Further, four in ten (38%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with their current financial situation.
- Almost half (46%) of adult Littles say they are better off than the average American household. In fact, almost half (46%) of alumni have a household income of \$75,000 or more.

Proprietary Research Requirements

This research is proprietary and was conducted exclusively for Big Brothers Big Sisters by Harris Interactive. The results pertain to Big Brothers Big Sisters programs and cannot be reproduced without pre-approval of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. For more information please contact Jessica Spikerman-Graham at Jessica.Spikerman@BBBS.org.