

Adult Little Survey: Exploring the Value of Big Brothers Big Sisters



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Report

June 18, 2009

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Background & Objectives

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 study conducted by Harris Interactive study 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)

■ 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.

Key Findings

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.

Key Findings

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.

Key Findings

Value of Big Brothers Big Sisters

- 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.

Key Findings

Value of Big Brothers Big Sisters

- 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.

Key Findings

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.

Key Findings

Adult Little Well-Being

- 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).

Key Findings

Adult Little Well-Being

- 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.

Key Findings

Adult Little Well-Being

- 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.

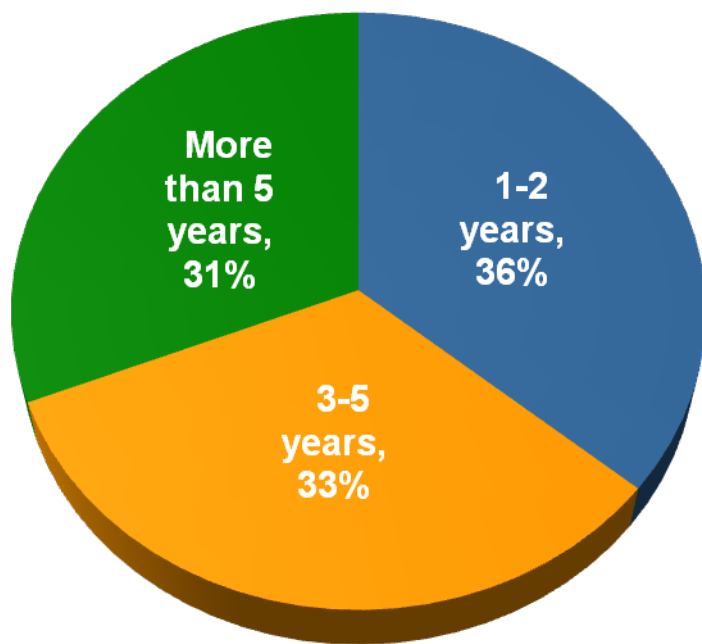
Detailed Findings

Big Brothers Big Sisters Participation

Years in Big Brothers Big Sisters

Alumni spent varying amounts of time in the program with approximately two-thirds (64%) enrolled for 3 or more years. Males and those who were matched with only one Big tended to stay in the program for longer.

Total



**Average Time in Big
Brothers Big Sisters:
4 years**

Sub-groups

	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	6 yrs +
Male	26%	36%	38%
Female	47%	29%	24%
1 Big	34%	21%	45%
>1 Big	38%	46%	17%

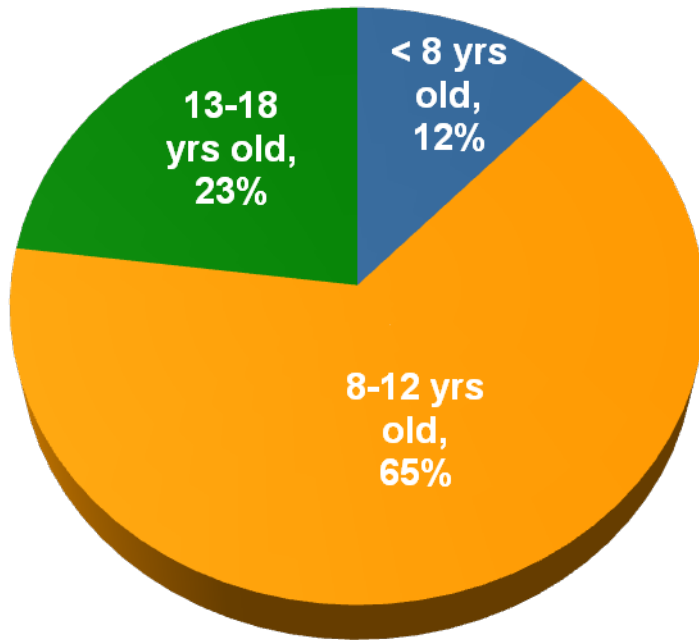
Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)

Q620. For how long did you participate in a Big Brothers Big Sisters program as a Little?

Age Matched

Most alumni were matched around the same age, between the ages of 8 and 12. More recent alumni seem to have been matched at slightly different ages than the older alumni.

Total



Average Age:11

Sub-groups

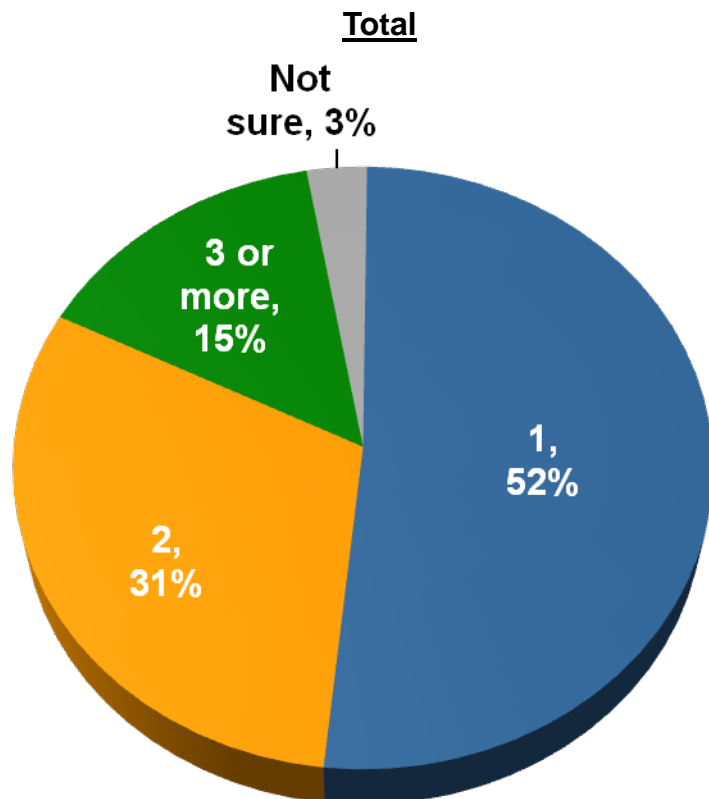
	Age of Match		
Current Age	< 8 yrs old	8-12 yrs old	13-18 yrs old
Age 18-34	15%	59%	26%
Age 35-44	9%	79%	12%
Age 45+*	7%	63%	30%

*Caution: Small base

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q700. At what age were you first matched with a Big?

Numbers of Bigs

Most alumni were matched with only one Big during their time in the program, though almost one in three were matched with two. Females were more likely than males to be matched with two Bigs and males were more likely to be matched multiple times.



Sub-groups

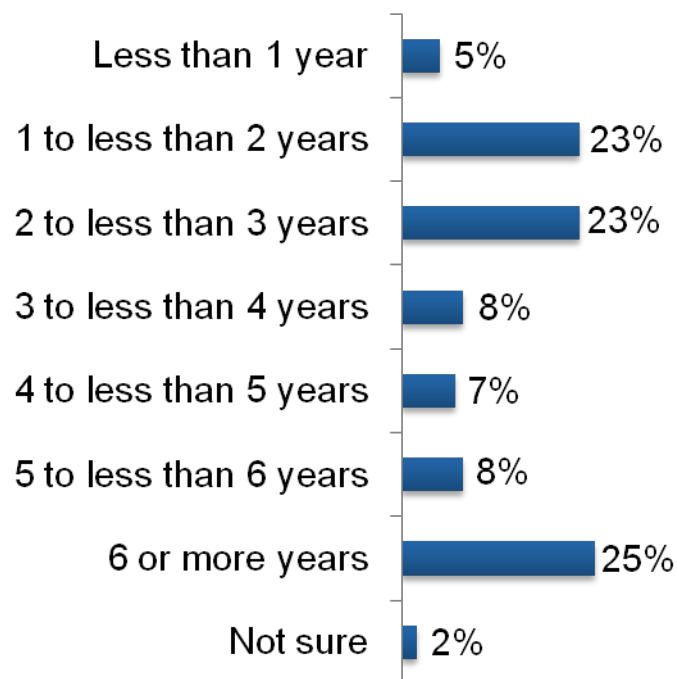
	1 Big	2 Bigs	3+ Bigs
Male	50%	23%	24%
Female	54%	39%	5%

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q710. How many different Bigs were you matched with?

Time Matched

The average match length with a Big was four years; a quarter of adult Littles were matched for six years or more. Approximately six in ten males (57%) and more recent Alumni (60%) were matched for more than three years.

Total



**Average Time
Matched: 4 years**

Sub-groups

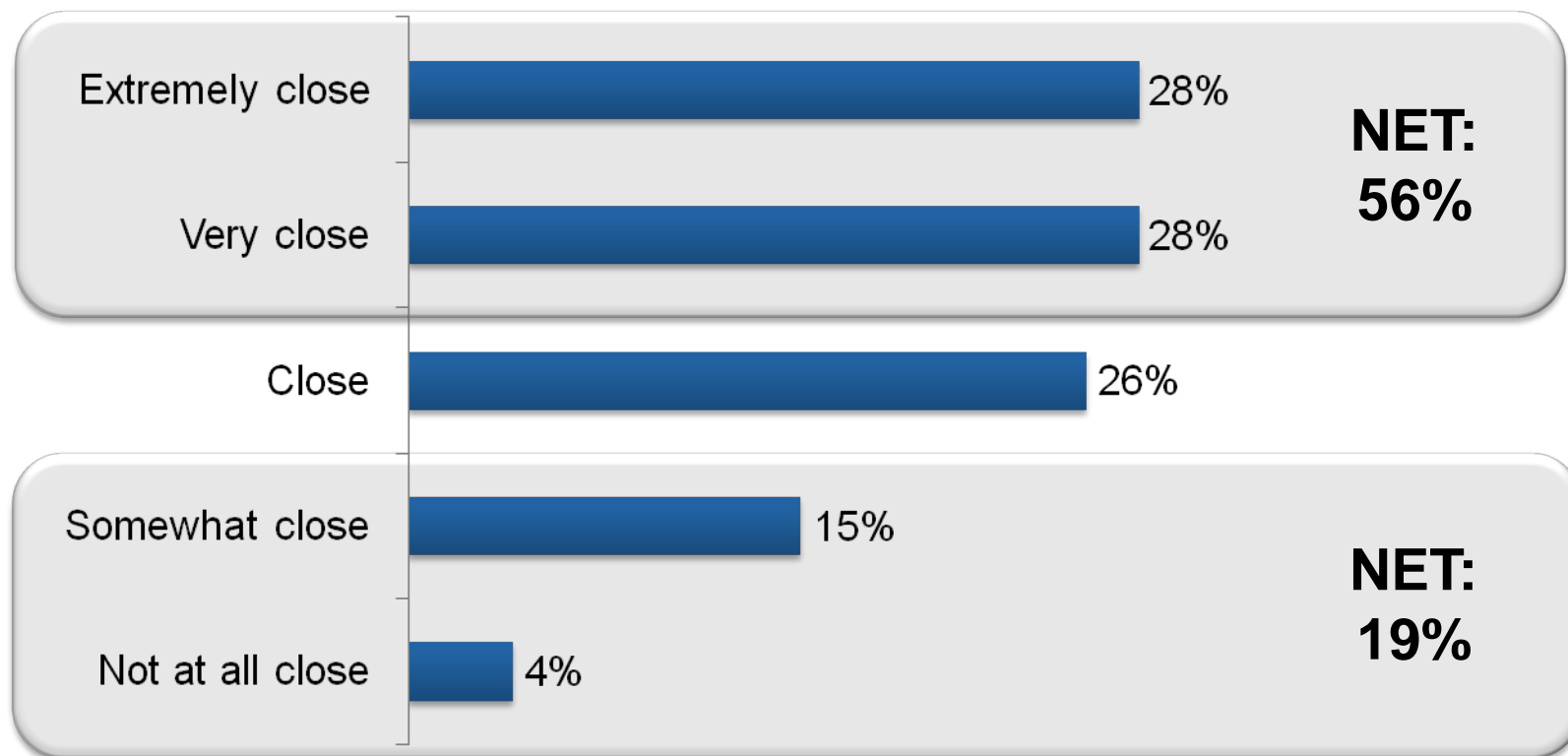
	< 3 yrs	3 yrs +
Male	40%	57%
Female	61%	37%
Age 18-34	37%	60%
Age 35-44	68%	32%
Age 45+*	67%	29%

*Caution: Small base

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q715. How many years were you matched with your Big?

Closeness with Big

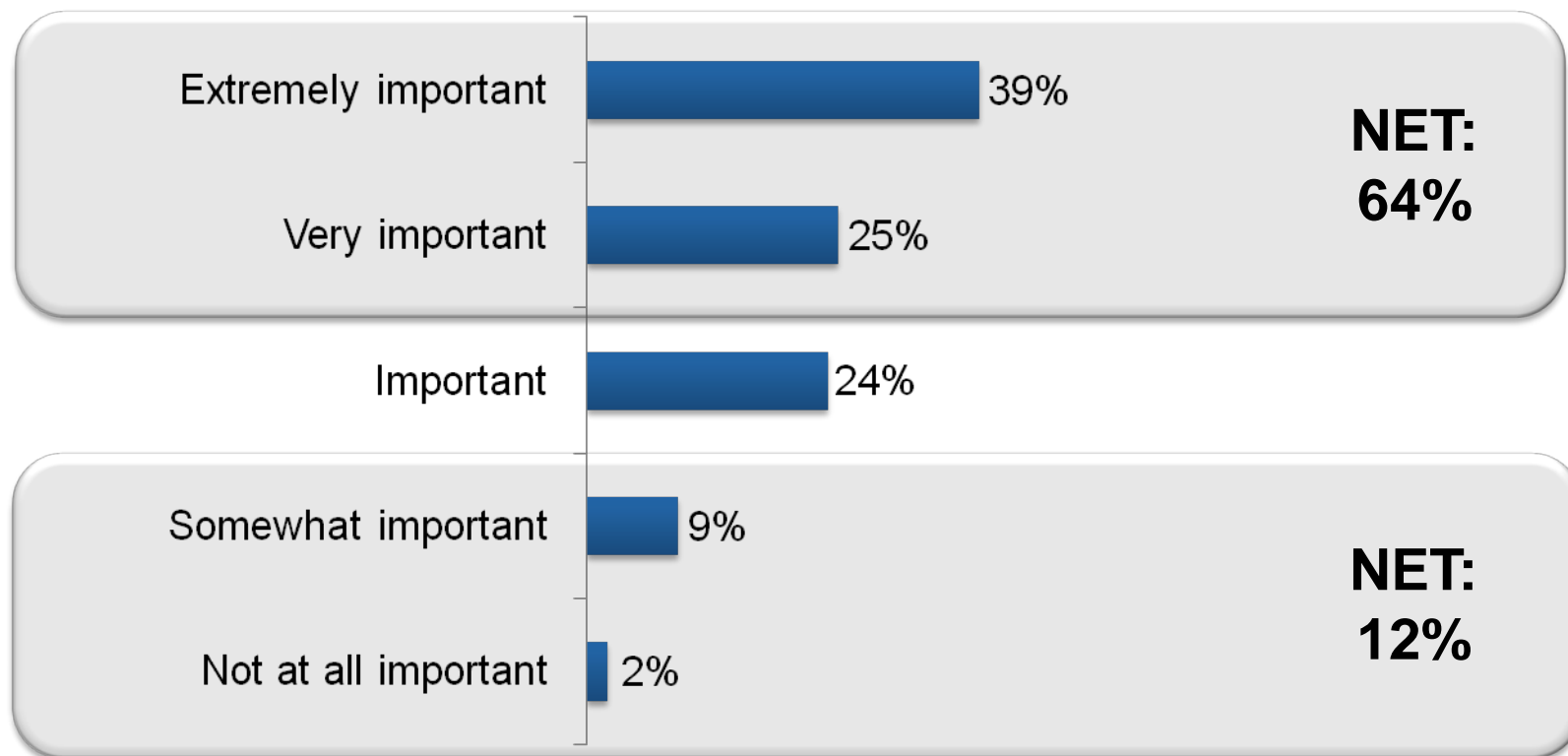
Over half (56%) report that they were extremely or very close with their Big and another quarter say they were close.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q720. During your time in Big Brothers Big Sisters as a Little, please describe your relationship with your Big.

Importance of Relationship with Big

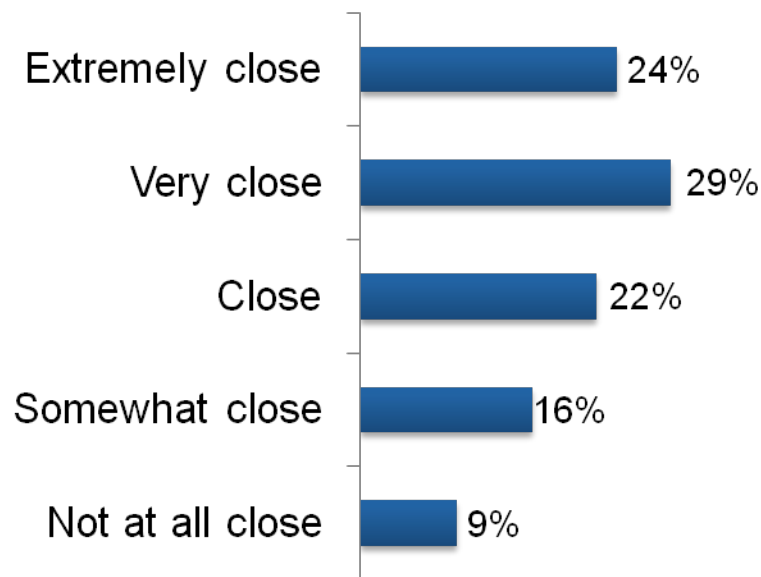
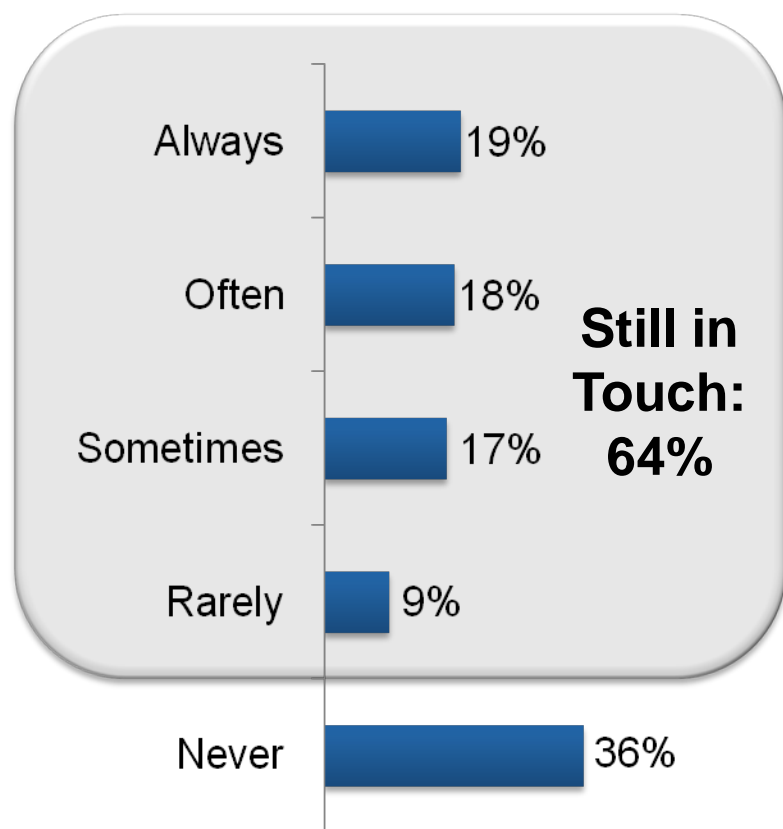
Almost two-thirds (64%) say their relationship with their big was highly important to them personally. Only around one in ten reported low levels of importance.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q725. How important to you personally was your relationship with your Big?

Current Relationship with Big

A majority are still in touch to some degree with their Big and over a third (37%) communicate at least often with them. Further, of those who are still in touch, three-quarters have a close relationship with him/her.



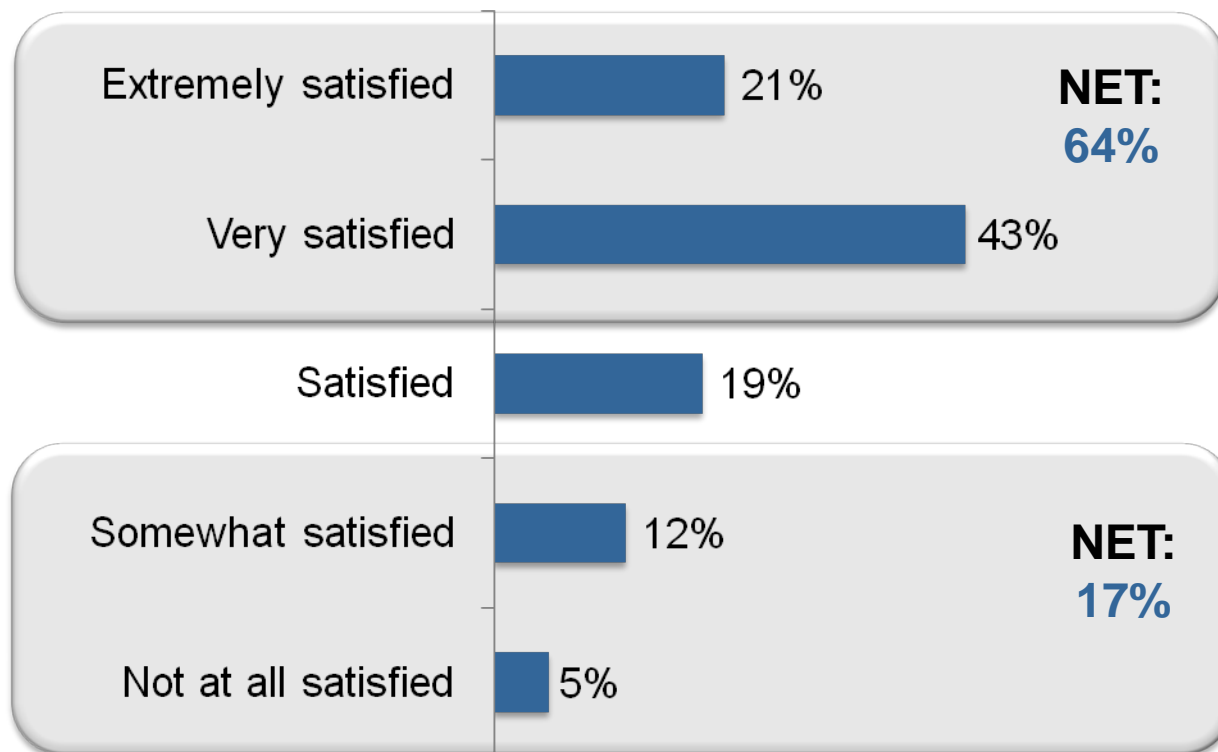
Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q730. About how often are you still in touch with your former Big?

Base: Alumni Still in Touch with Big (n=126)
Q735. How would you describe your current relationship with your Big?

Adult Little Well-Being

Life Satisfaction

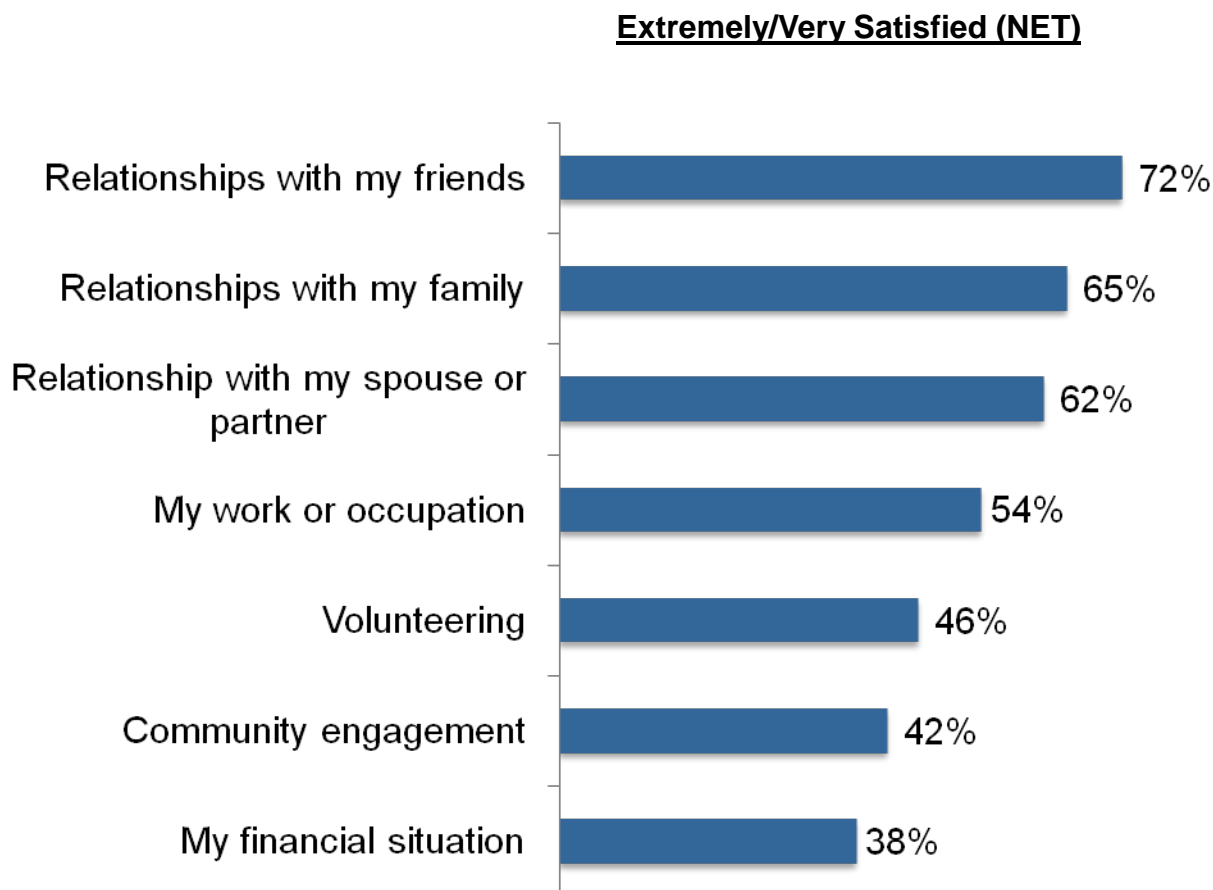
The majority of Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni (64%) are satisfied with their life.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni Answering (n=195)
Q800. How satisfied would you say you are with your life?

Satisfaction with Life Aspects

Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni are satisfied with various aspects of their lives. Almost three-quarters (72%) of alumni are highly satisfied with friend relationships. Further, many alumni (54%) report being satisfied with work.



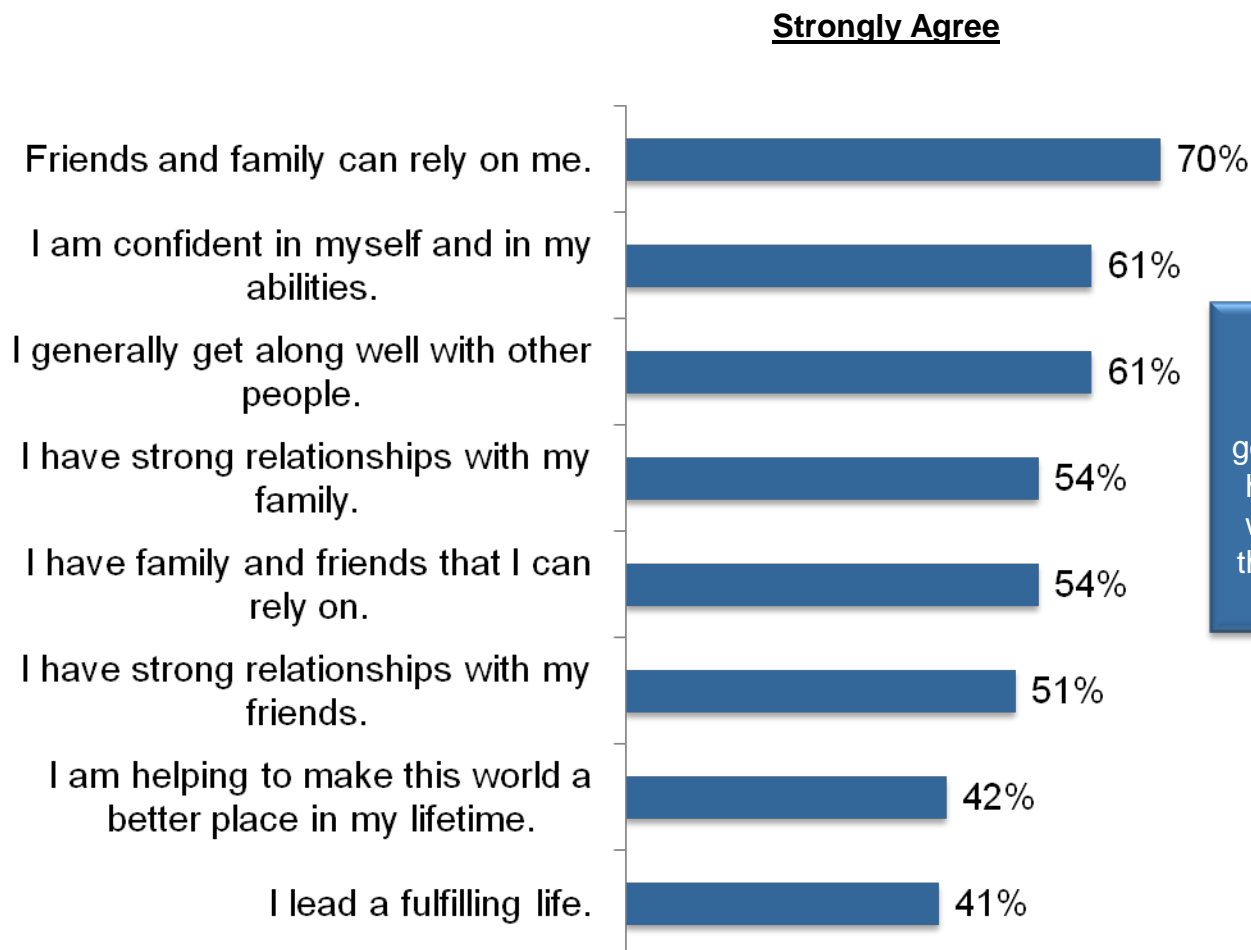
Alumni who had a close relationship with their Big are more likely to be satisfied with various relationships now.

Also, alumni who say their relationship with their Big still helps them make better decisions in their adult life are more likely to be satisfied with most aspects.

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q805. Please indicate your overall satisfaction with the following aspects of your life.

Character Traits

Adult Littles are confident and have family and friends they can rely on. They also report strong relationships and tend to think they lead a fulfilling life.



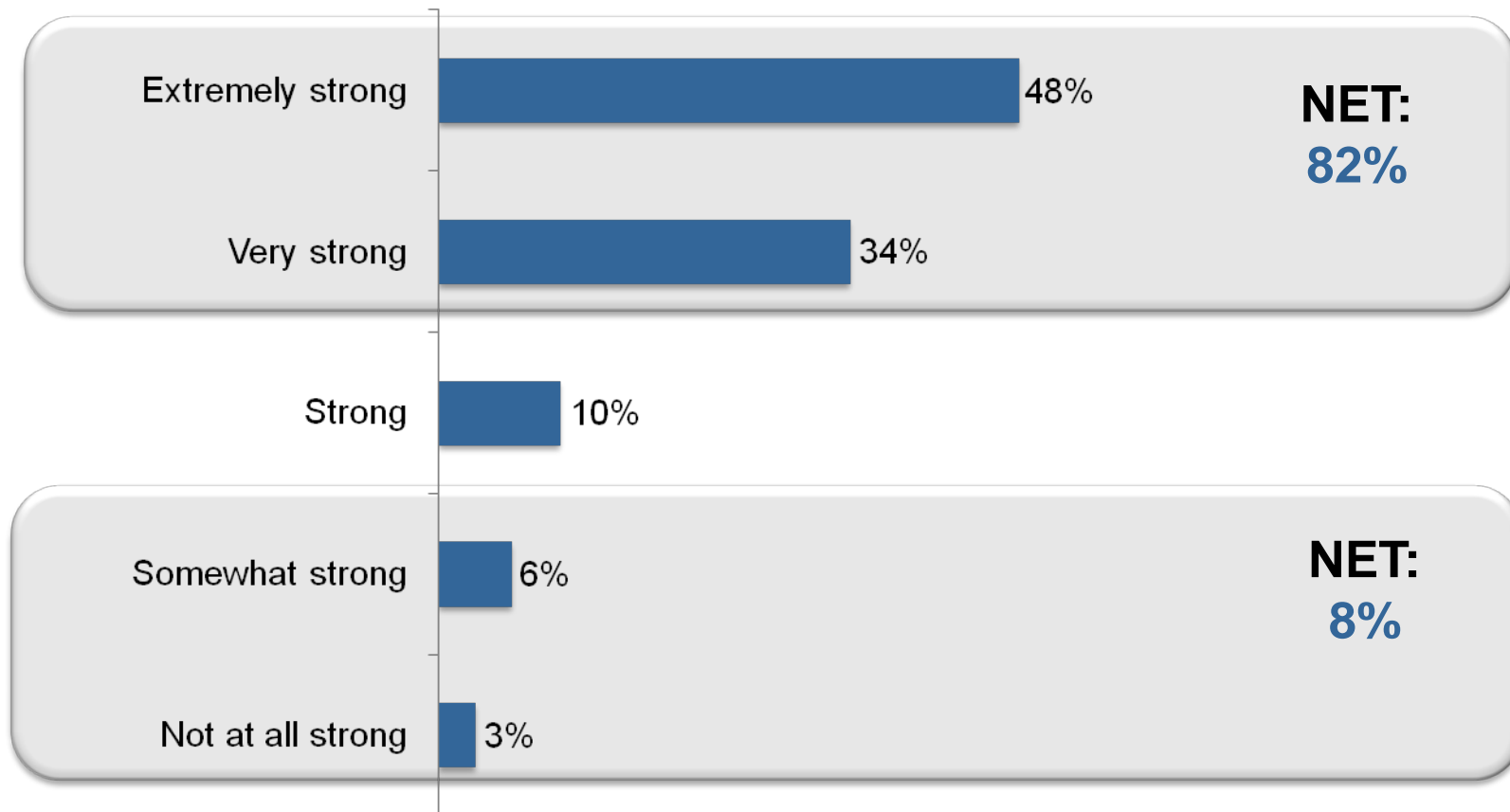
Adult Littles who were matched with their Big for three or more years are generally more confident and have stronger relationships with others as compared to those who were matched for less than three years.

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q810. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Relationship with Children

A large majority of alumni (82%) who have children describe their relationship with their as extremely or very strong.

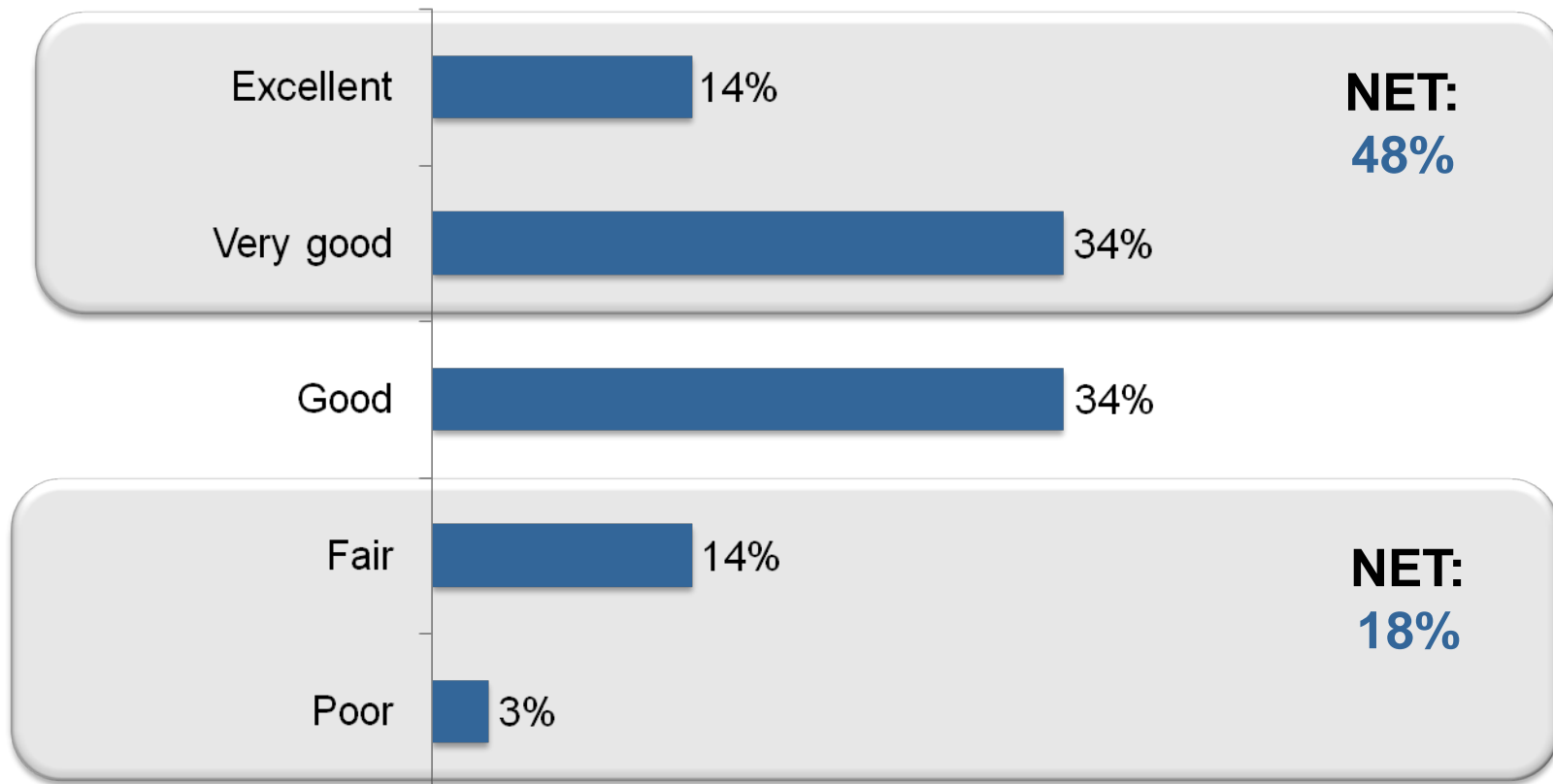
Alumni



Base: Have Children (Alumni: n=101)
Q1115 How would you describe your relationship with your [child/children]?

Health Status

Most Alumni perceive themselves to be healthy. 48% say they are in excellent or very good health with another third saying they are in good health.

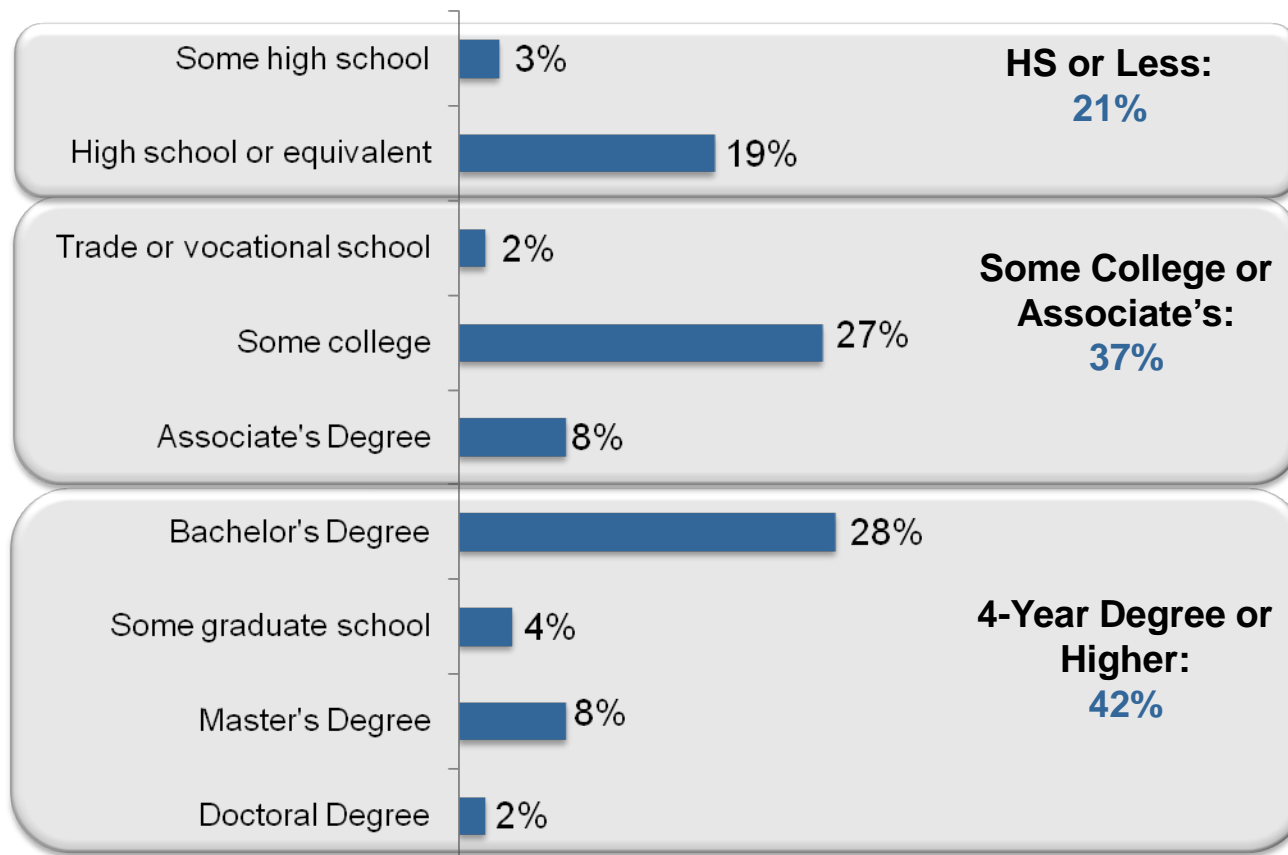


Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni Answering (n=195)
Q815. How would you describe your own health?

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Education Level

Adult Littles report achieving key educational milestone. 42% obtained their Bachelor's Degree or higher.

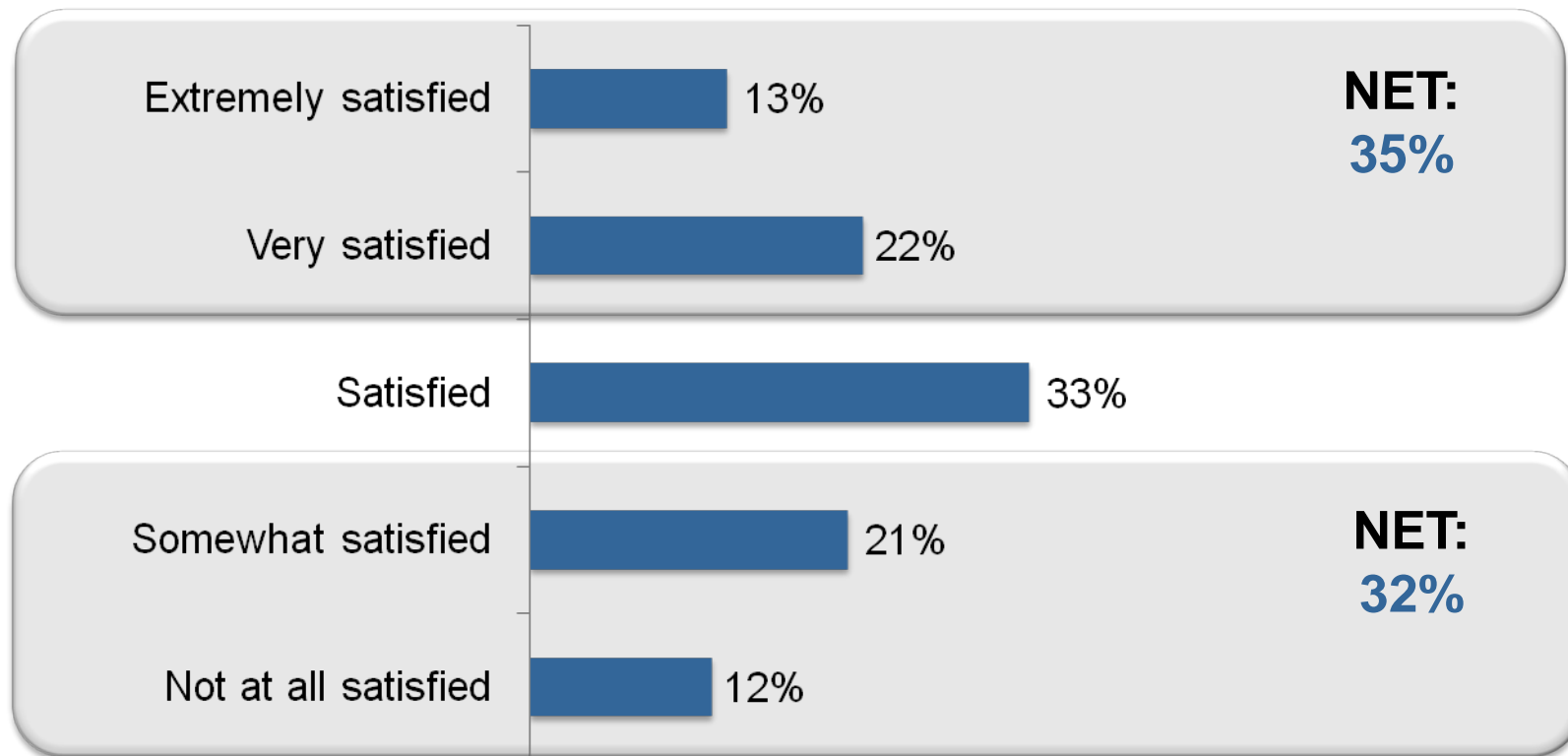


Alumni matched for 3 years or more (52% vs. 34% < 3 years) are more likely to have a 4-year college degree.

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q820. What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Education Satisfaction

Two thirds of Alumni are satisfied with their education level, and another third are not as satisfied with how far they have gone in school.

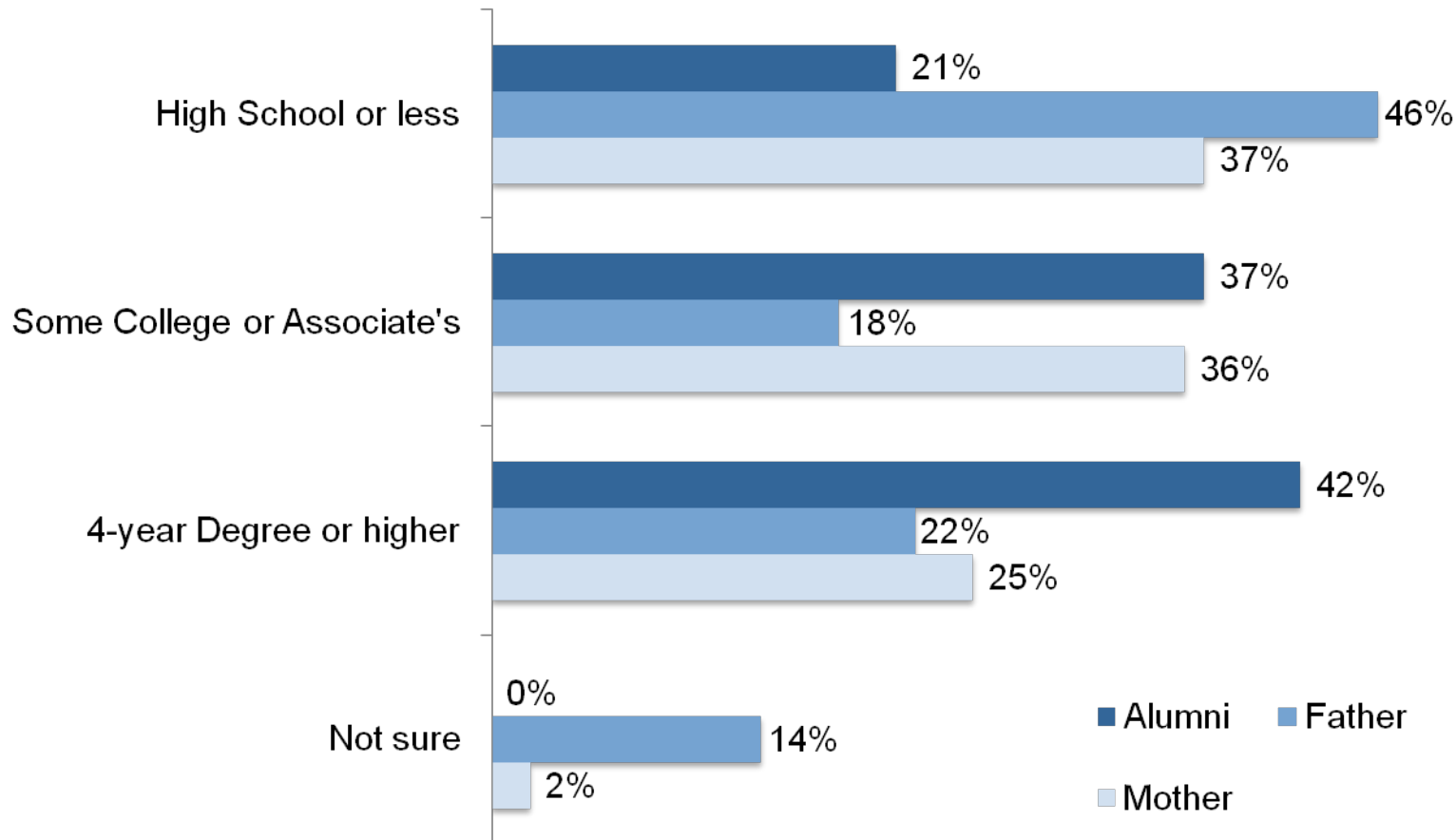


Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q825. How satisfied are you with your current educational level?

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Parents' Education Level

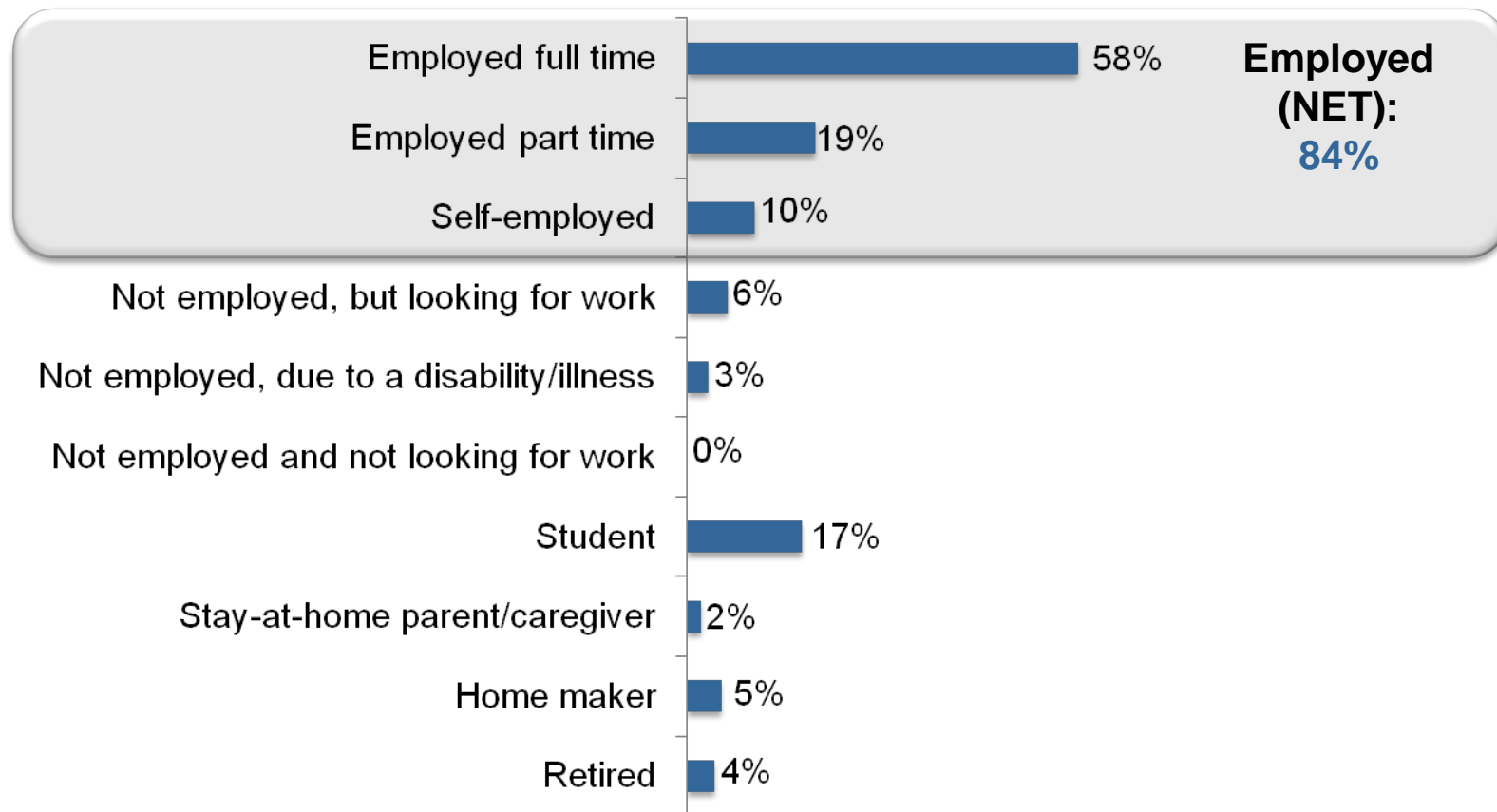
Four in ten (42%) alumni earned a four year degree compared to only about a quarter of their parents.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q820/Q1010/1015 [To the best of your knowledge,] what is the highest level of education [you/your mother/your father] has completed or the highest degree [you/she/he] has received?

Employment Status

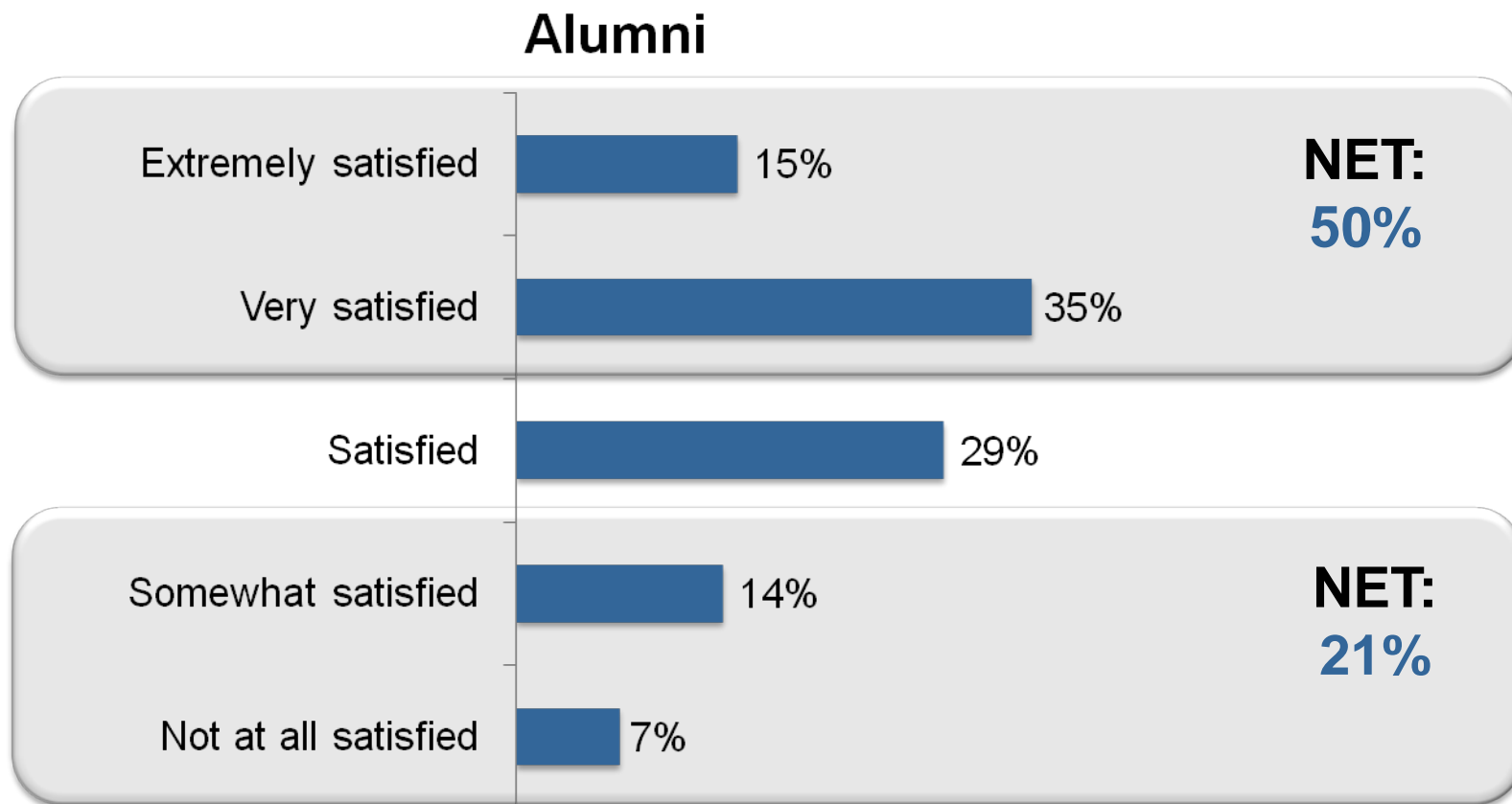
Large majorities of alumni (84%) are employed, and six in ten (58%) have a full-time job.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q830. Which of the following describes your employment status?

Work Satisfaction

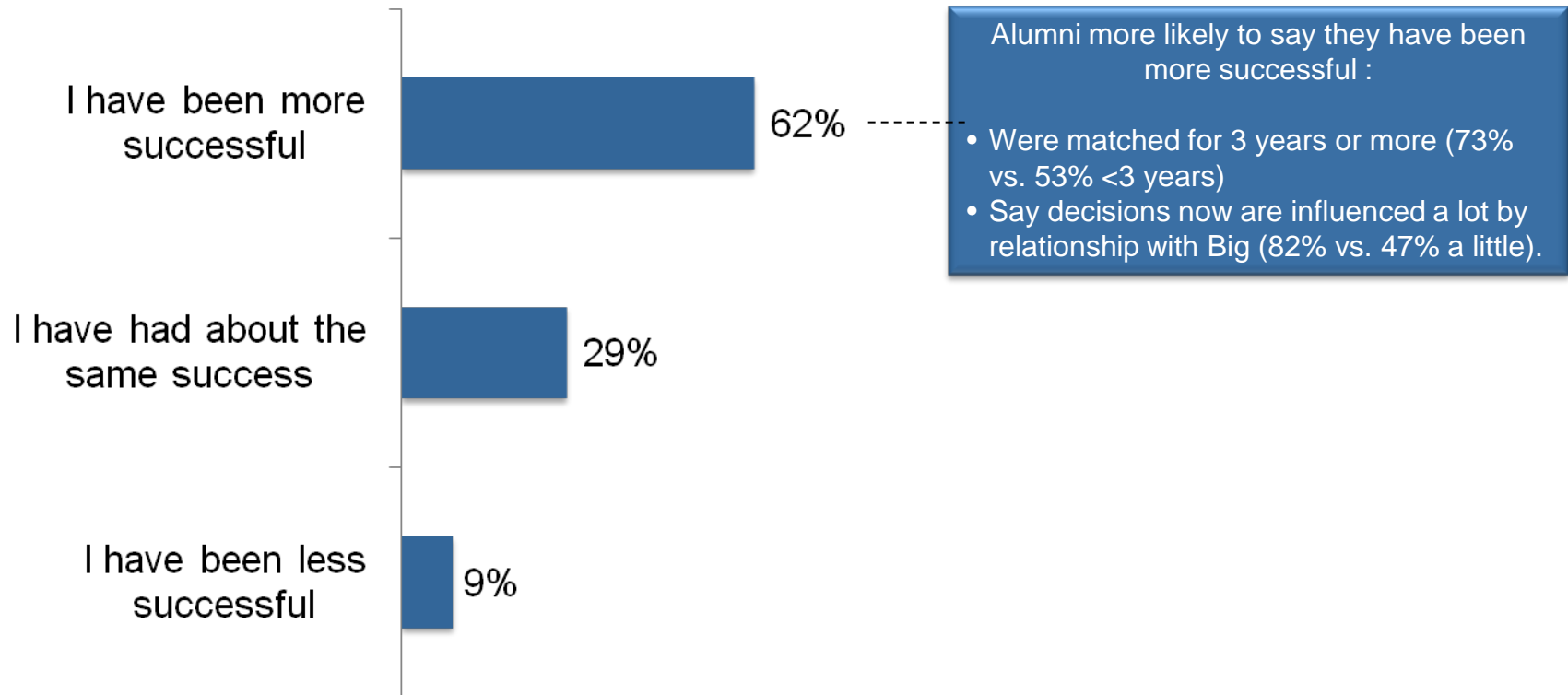
Half (50%) of Adult Littles are highly satisfied with their work.



Base: Employed Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=174)
Q840. How satisfied are you with your work or occupation?

Comparison to Success of Peers

A majority of alumni (62%) perceive themselves to have achieved a higher level of success than their peers who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters.

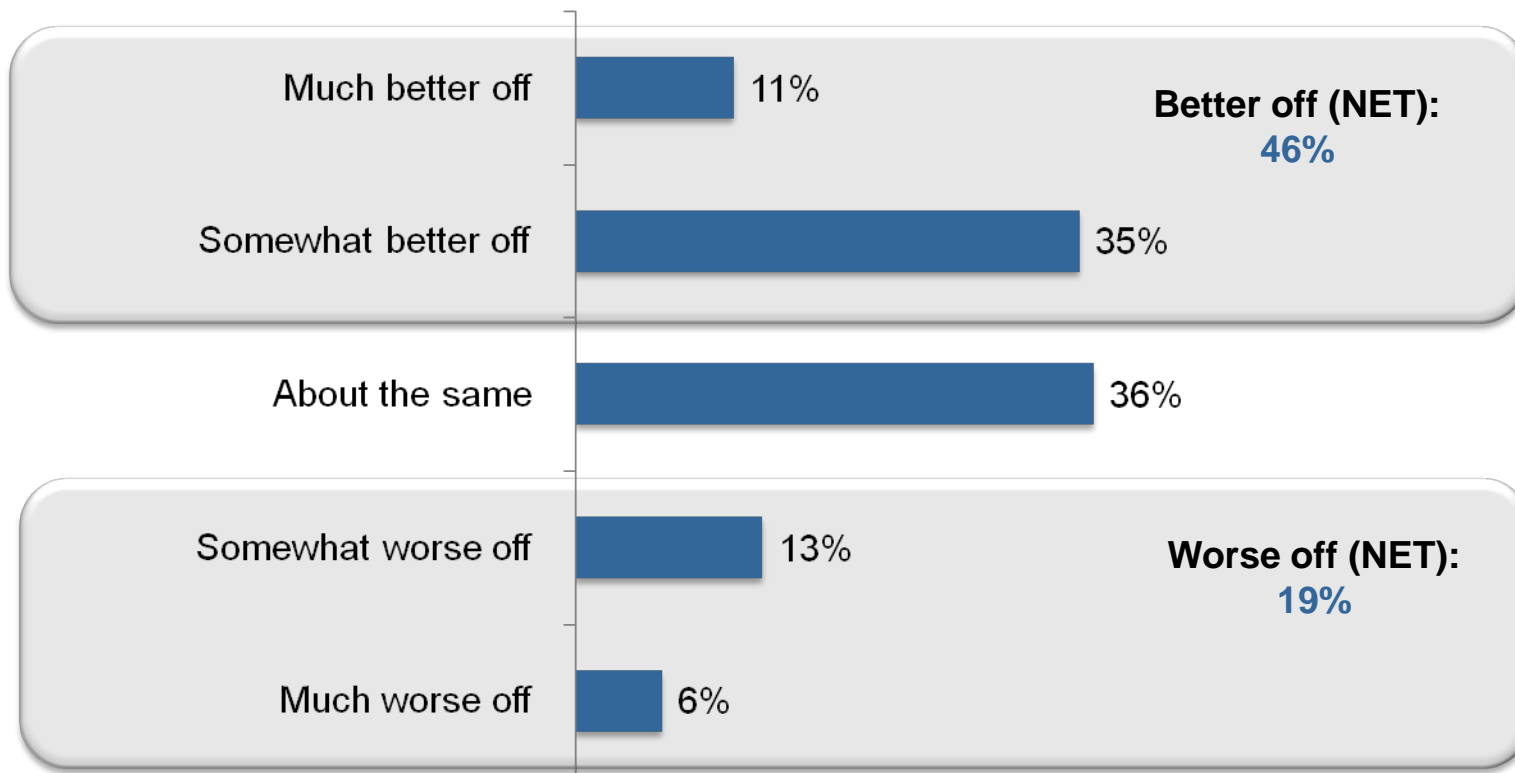


Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q915. All things considered, how would you say your success in life compares to other people you grew up with who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters?

Current Relative Financial Situation

Approximately half (46%) of adult Littles say they are currently in a better financial situation than the average American household. This is higher than alumni's own experiences growing up, in which only 19% reported that their financial situation was better off than the average household.

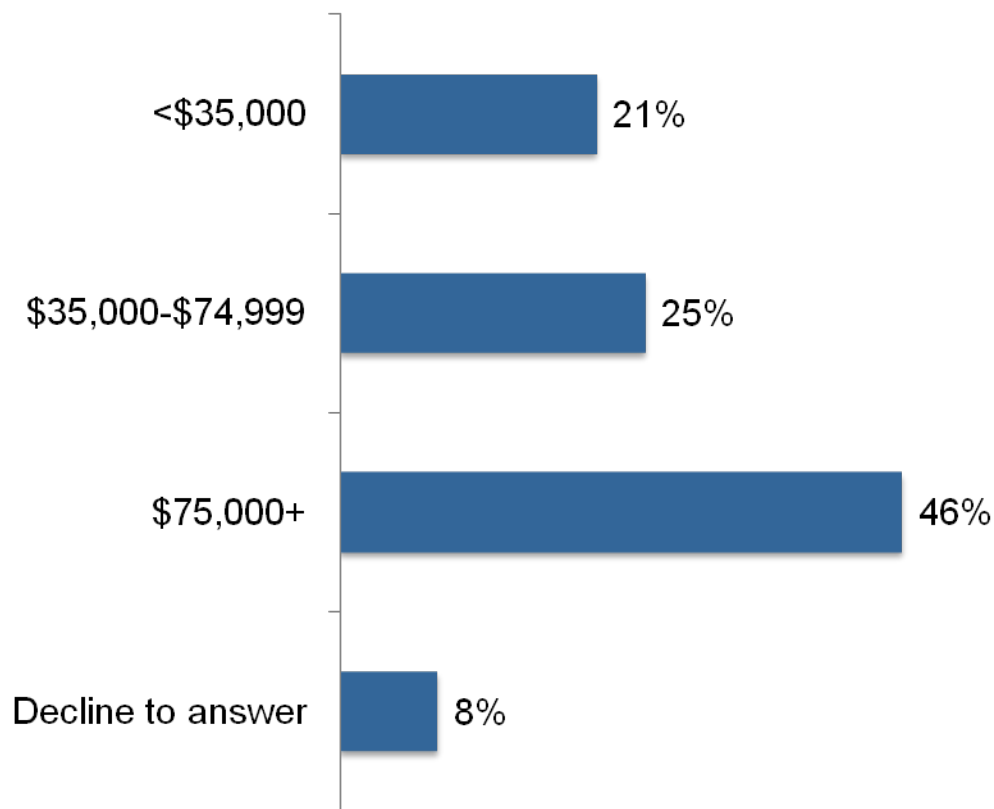
Financial Situation Compared to Average American HH



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q1130 In comparison with the average American household, how would you describe the financial situation of you or your household now?

Current Household Income

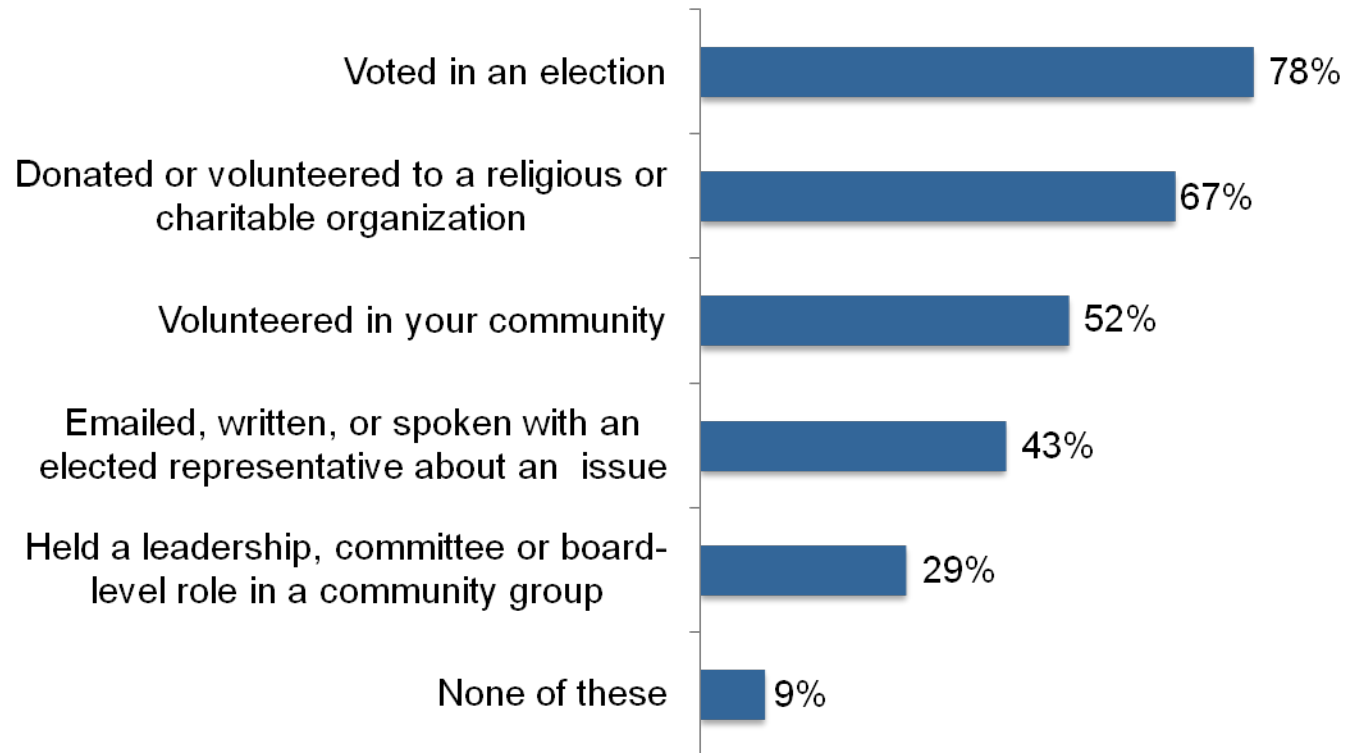
Almost half (46%) of alumni have a household income of over \$75,000.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q462 Which of the following income categories best describes your total 2008 household income before taxes?

Community Engagement

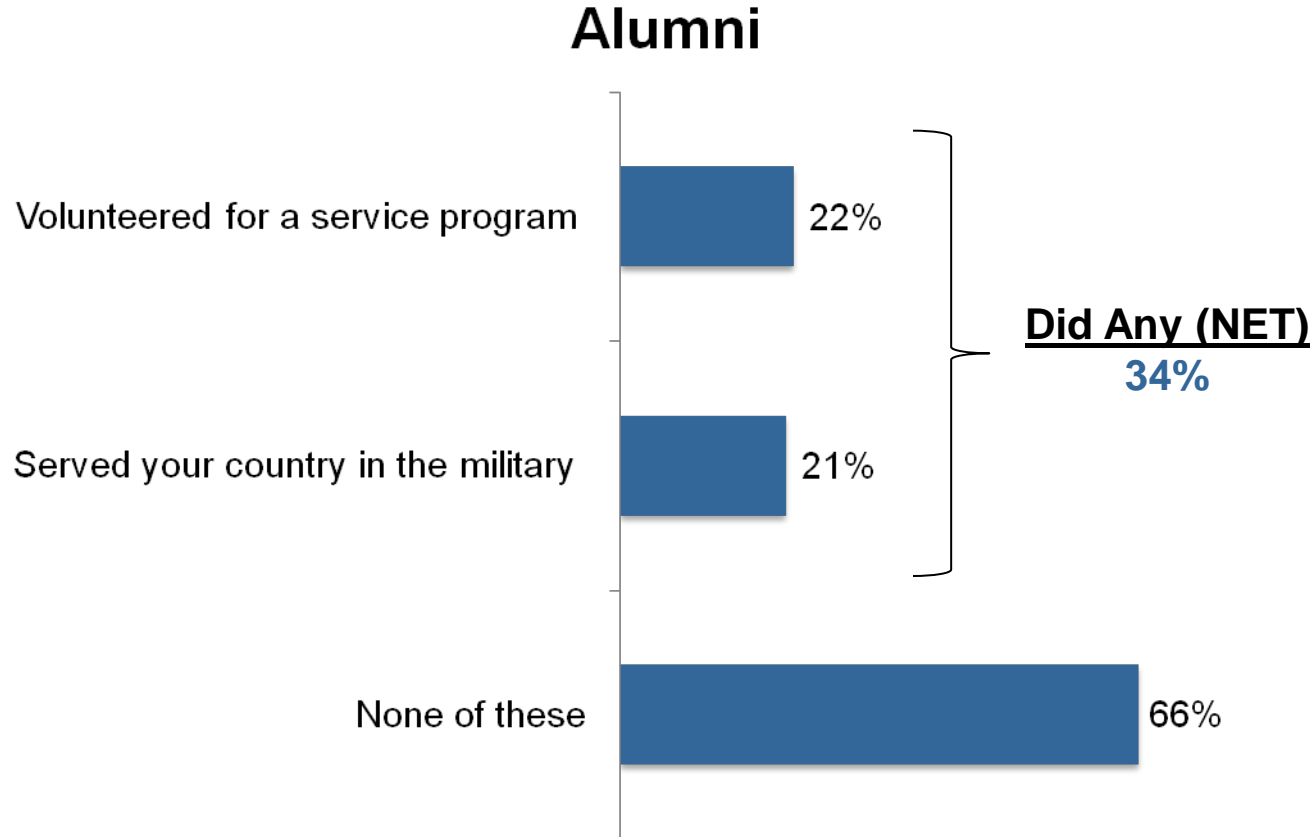
Adult Littles are likely to be engaged in their community over the past 12 months when it comes to volunteering and holding a leadership role.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q1140 Thinking back over the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Please select all apply.

Service

When it comes to serving the country, 20% of alumni report volunteering for a service program or serving in the military.

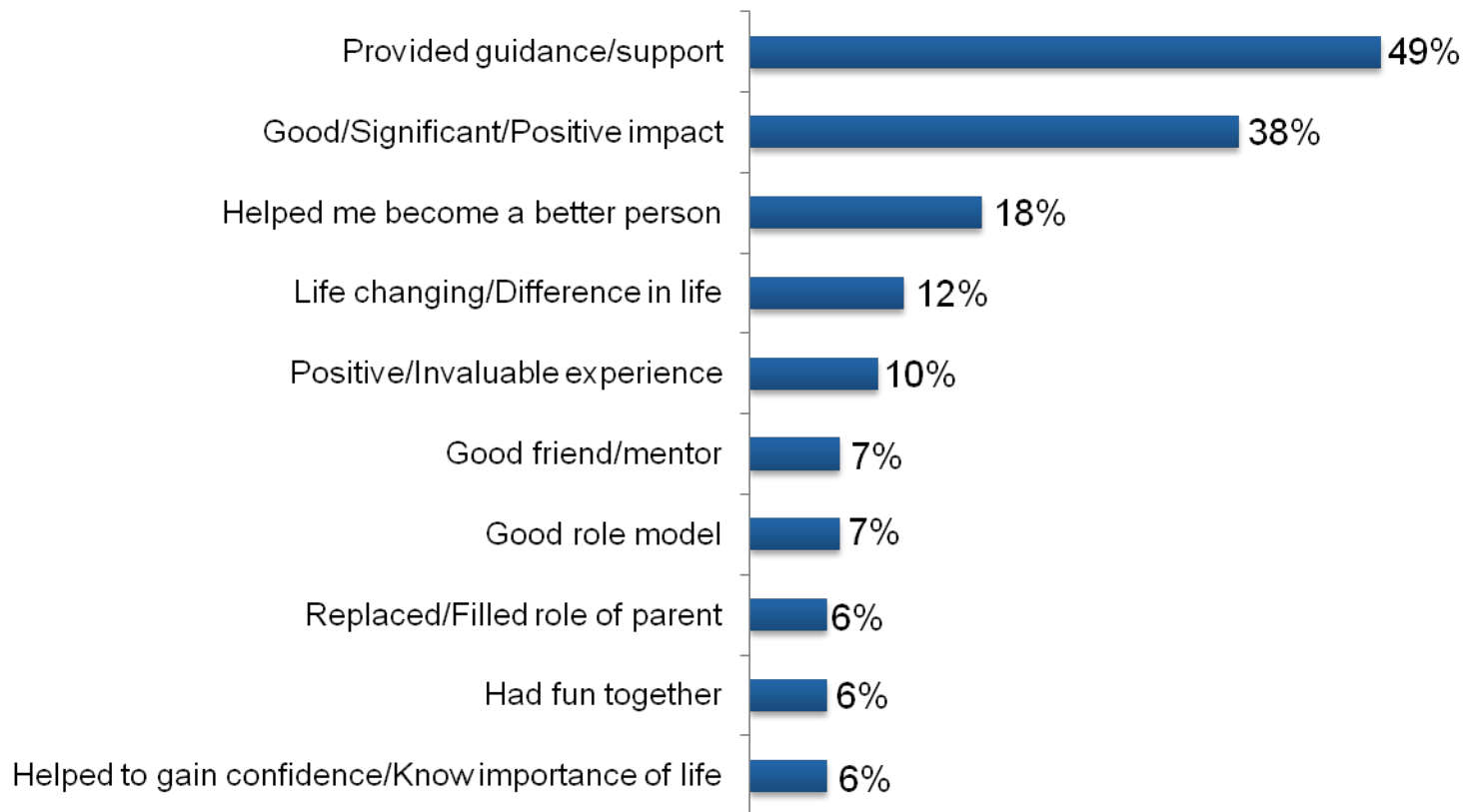


Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q1145 Have you ever done any of the following?

Value of Big Brothers Big Sisters

Top-of-Mind Recalls

An overwhelming majority of adult Littles had positive things to say about their experience when asked to describe it in their own words. The most commonly mentioned benefit was the guidance, advice and support provided by their Big. The overall positive impact was also mentioned by many and one in five said it helped them to somehow become a better person.



*Only showing mentions of 6% or more

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q740 How would you describe the impact of having a Big Brother or Big Sister in your life?

Top-of-Mind Recalls: Verbatims

Life changing. Provided me opportunities for broader and healthier view of myself and the world. Encouraged and supported my development and education into college and in transitioning to adulthood.

Life would have been much different. Having my Big kept me grounded most of the time. I was not perfect but was always able to drag myself back to who I was meant to be. I enjoy a nice measure of success today along with several skills and life lessons that I attribute to my 40+ years of friendship with my Big Brother.

The impact was invaluable in many ways. My Big provided stability, friendship and a mentor.

It was very important. He was a role model that I could look up to. He gave me some really good core values that I use in my life. The reflection is the best part, a young man giving up his weekends to spend time with a kid from the hood. That showed me that I should look past where someone came from and just see the person for who they are.

It saved me from doing stupid things.

My Big gave me great goals in life. Of eight children I am the only one to graduate high school and attend college. I give much of that credit to my Big and her family...

Having a Big Sister was a tremendous benefit. I had another adult besides my parents and family who cared about me and my future which I know today a lot of children don't get to experience. She also exposed me to a lot of neat things I might not have experienced otherwise.

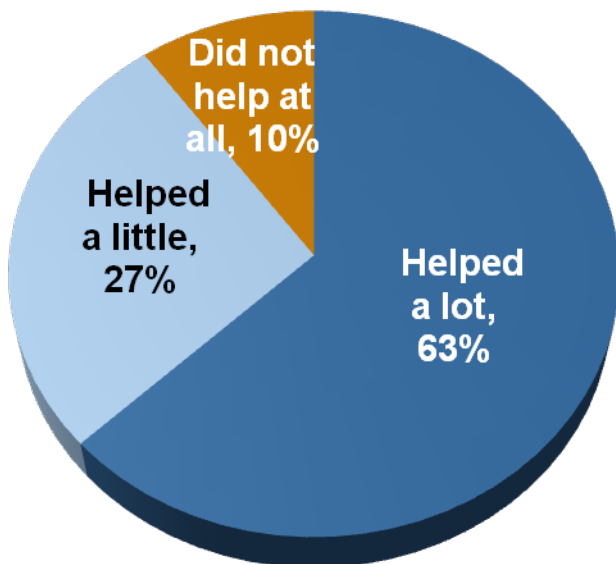
It was nice to be treated as an individual. My Mother raised me with five of my cousins and sometimes I felt like I was lost in the shuffle. Big Brothers Big Sisters allowed me to have this time just for me with someone I could learn from...

It helped me through the most roughest time in my life.

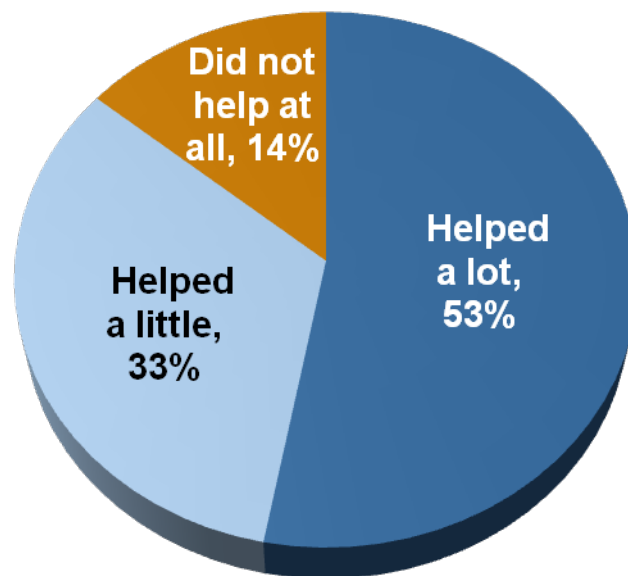
Impact on Making Better Choices

A large majority (90%) of adult Littles say that their relationship with their Big helped them make better choices while they were growing up. Almost as many (86%) say decisions in their adult life were also influenced by their relationship.

Throughout Childhood and Adolescent Life



Throughout Adult Life



Alumni more likely to say their Big helped a lot to make better choices throughout childhood are more likely to:

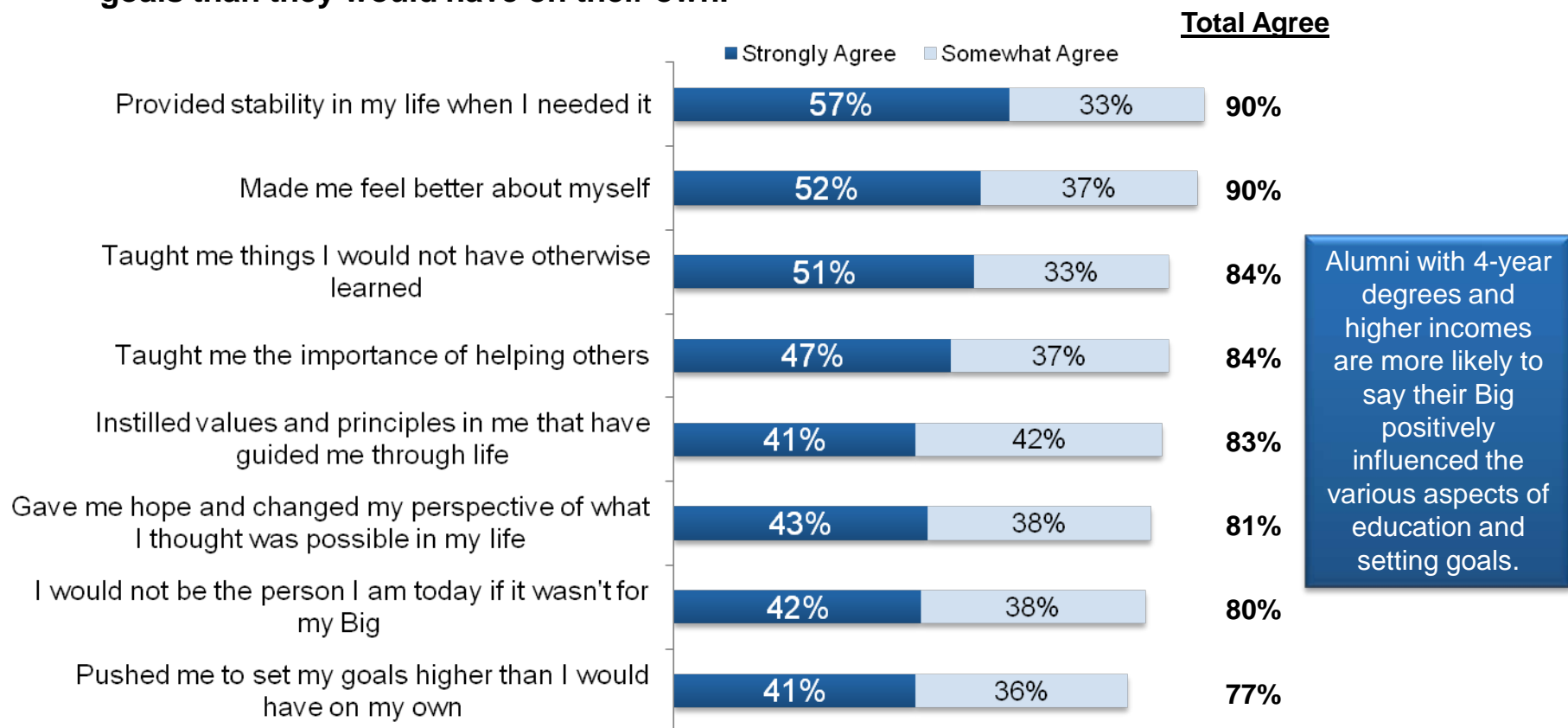
- Have at least a 4-year college degree (72% vs. 57% no degree)
- Have a household income of \$75,000 or more (77% vs. 53% <\$75,000)
- Be extremely or very satisfied with life (67% vs. 40% less satisfied)
- Have been matched for at least 3 years (85% vs. 44% <3 years)

Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)

Q900. Thinking back to your relationship with your Big, how much would you say your Big helped you in making better choices throughout your [childhood and adolescent life/adult life?]

Impact of Big on Life Aspects

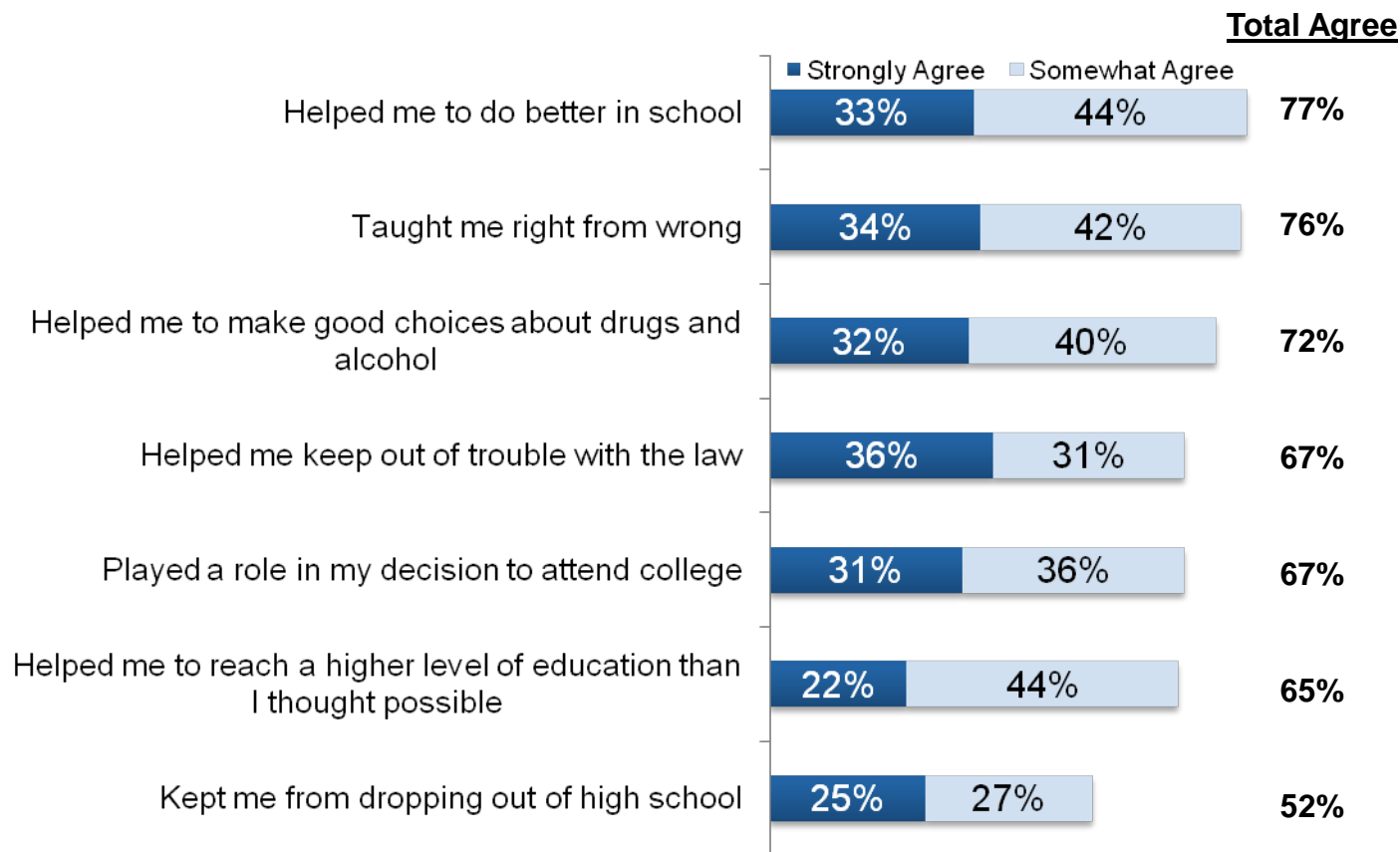
Almost six in ten (57%) strongly agree that their Big provided stability for them and around half feel strongly that their Big increased their self-esteem (52%), taught them new things (51%) and showed them the importance of helping others (47%). Over four in ten (43%) say their Big changed their perspective on life and almost as many (41%) owe it to their Big for setting higher goals than they would have on their own.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
 Q905. Now we would like you to think about the impact your Big might have had on various aspects of your life. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Impact of Big on Life Aspects (cont'd)

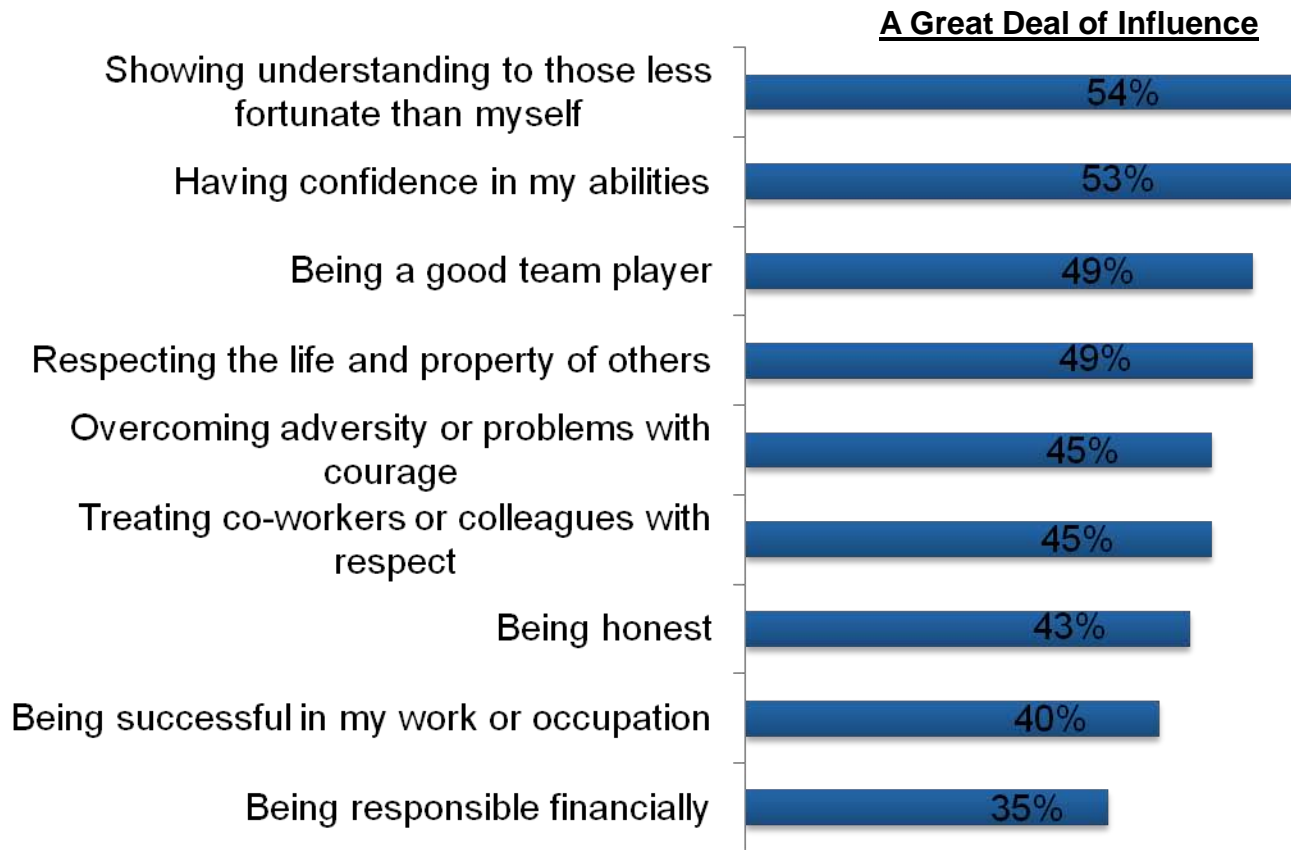
At least a third of adult Littles also feel strongly that their Big helped them stay out of trouble with the law (36%), taught them right from wrong (34%) and helped them do better in school (33%). Further, three in ten (31%) at least partially attribute their decision to go to college to their Big and another quarter say their Big kept them from dropping out of school.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q905. Now we would like you to think about the impact your Big might have had on various aspects of your life. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Influence on Character Traits

Over half say their compassion for the less fortunate (54%) and self-confidence (53%) has been influenced a great deal by having been a Little. For a large minority of alumni, respecting others, overcoming challenges, honesty, and success in the workplace are all traits also significantly influenced by their experience.

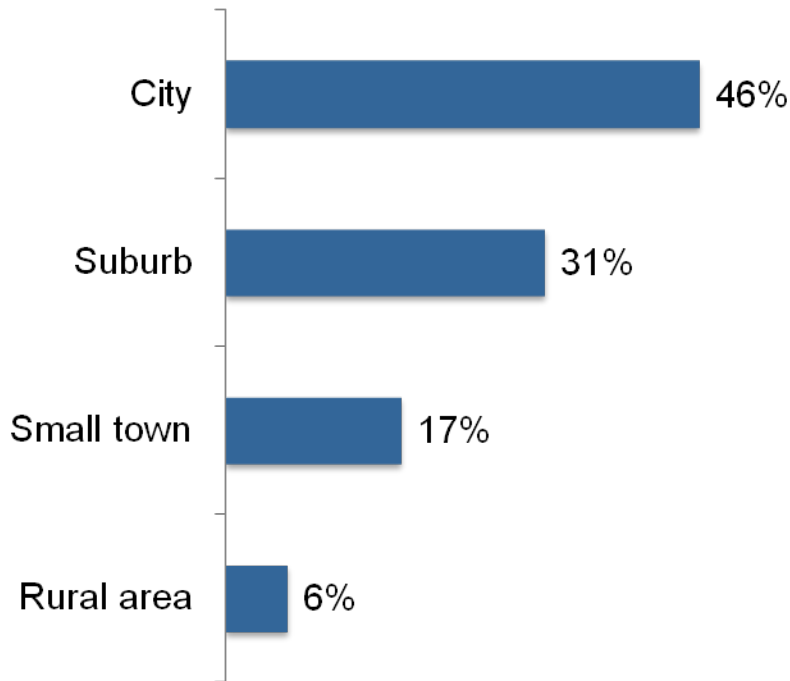


Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q910. Please tell me how much you think having been a Little has influenced the development of the following character traits in yourself.

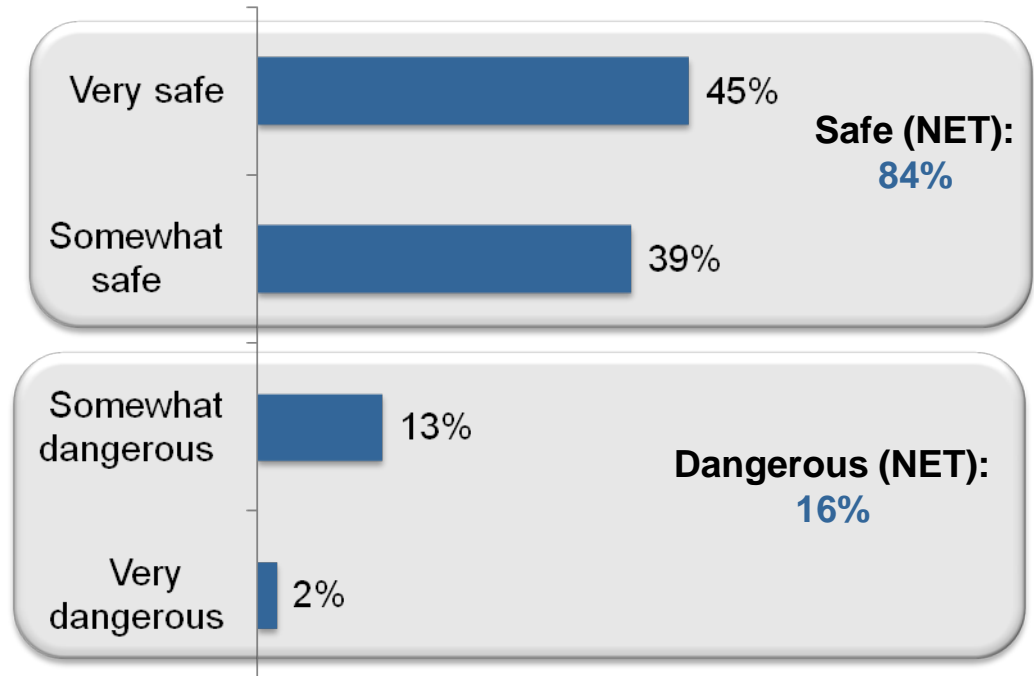
Childhood Characteristics

Location Growing Up

Approximately half (46%) of adult Littles grew up in an urban location. Although most perceived their neighborhood to be relatively safe, one in six (16%) grew up in a dangerous area.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q625. During most of the time you were growing up, where did you live?

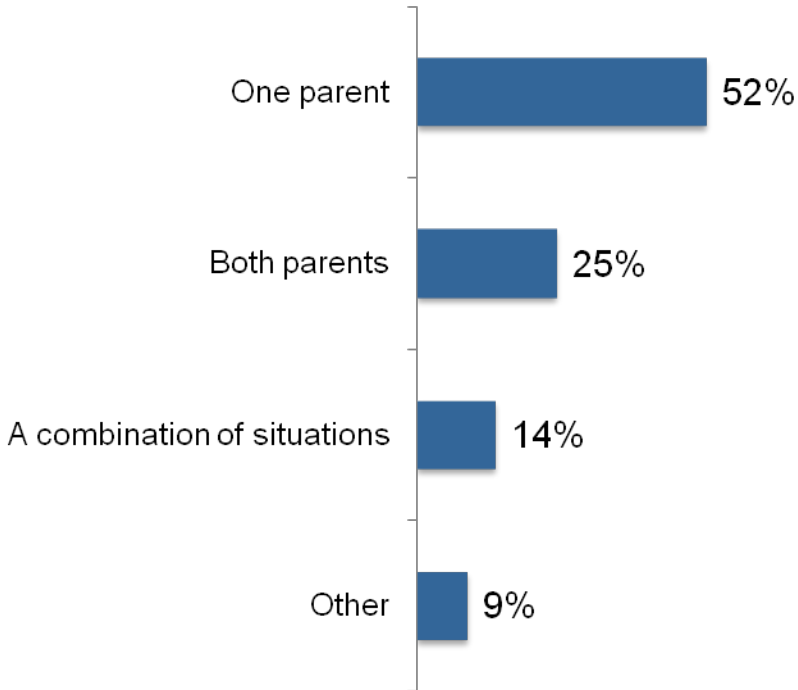


Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q1000. How would you describe the neighborhood you lived in?

Household Situation Growing Up

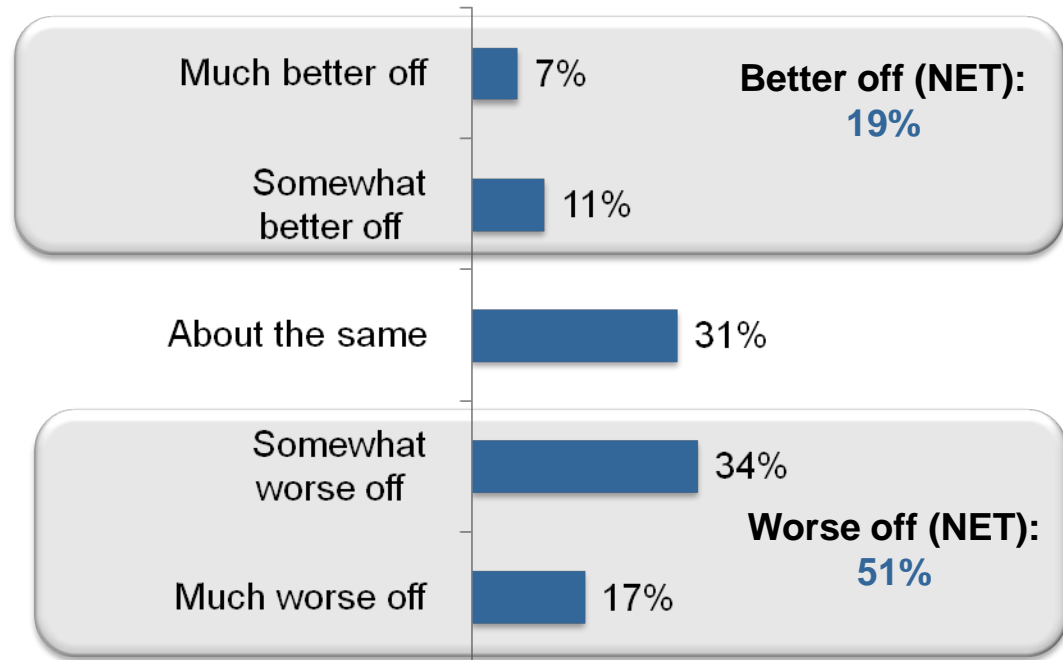
Just over half (52%) of adult Littles grew up with only one parent in their household and about the same percentage described their childhood financial situation as worse off than the average American household. Only one in five would describe their financial situation growing up as better than average.

Adults in Household



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q1020 What adults did you live with most of the time while you were growing up?

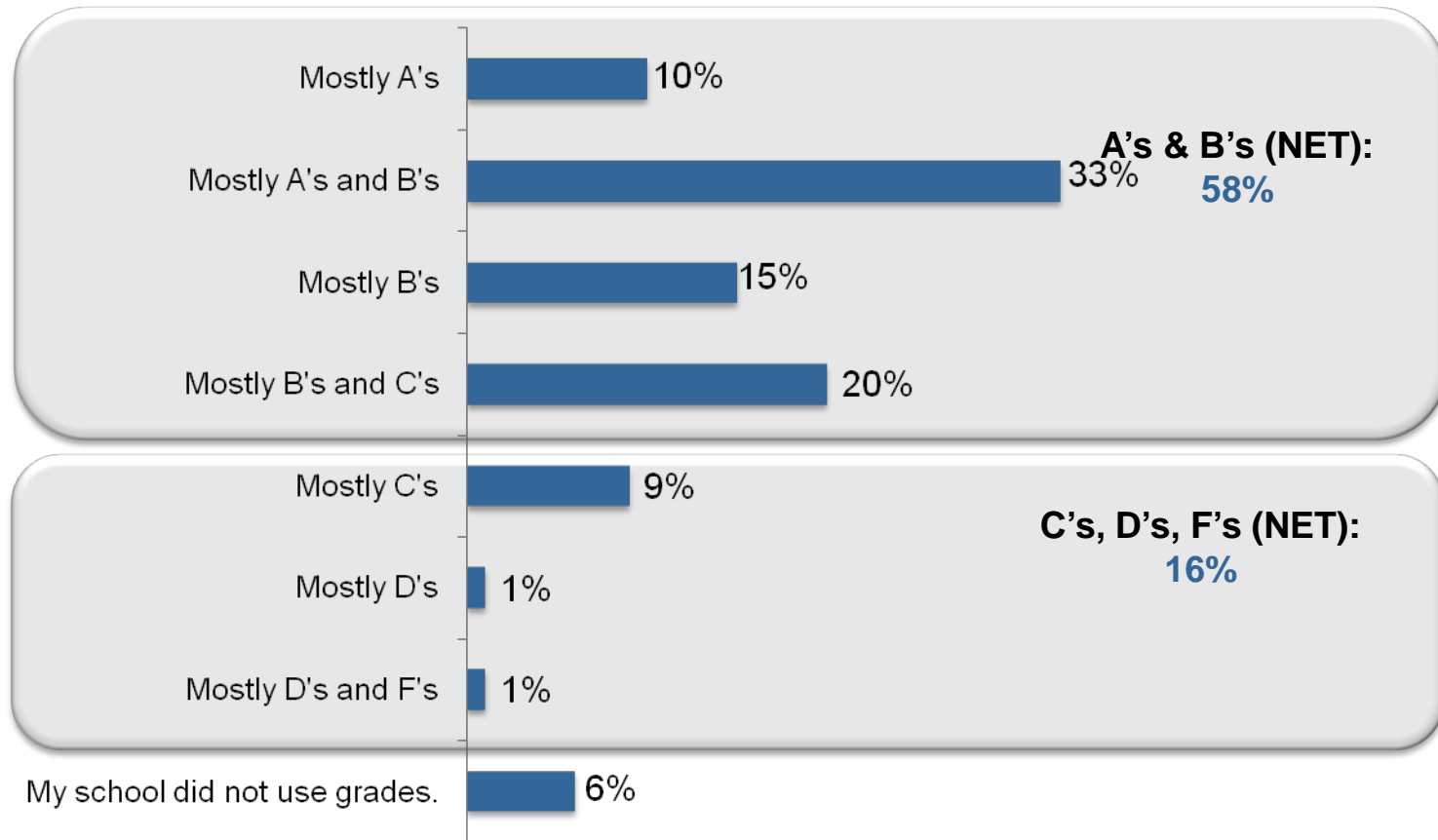
Financial Situation Compared to Average American HH



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q630 In comparison with the average American household, how would you describe the financial situation of the household in which you grew up?

Grades Growing Up

The majority of Adult Littles (58%) received A's and B's in school.



Base: Big Brothers Big Sisters Alumni (n=200)
Q1005 What grades did you usually get in school while you were growing up?

Current Demographics

Current Demographics

Gender	
	Alumni
Male	51%
Female	49%

Age	
	Alumni
18-34 (NET)	56%
18-29	38%
30-34	18%
35-44 (NET)	30%
35-39	12%
40-44	18%
45 AND OLDER (NET)	14%
45-54	10%
55 and over	5%
<i>MEAN</i>	<i>34</i>

Race/Ethnicity	
	Alumni
White	64%
Black/African American	13%
Hispanic	10%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2%
Native American or Alaskan Native	2%
Other	3%
Mixed Race	5%
Decline to answer	1%

Region	
	Alumni
East	33%
Midwest	16%
South	23%
West	27%

Current Demographics

Occupation	
	Alumni
Managerial	19%
Professional/Technical	18%
Student	13%
Medical	6%
Blue-Collar/Production	6%
Sales	5%
Teacher/Education	5%
Service	5%
Clerical	4%
Unemployed/Retired	4%
Stay-at-home parent/caregiver	3%
Military	2%
Other	10%

Marital Status	
	Alumni
Never married	33%
Married or Civil union	56%
Divorced	7%
Separated	-
Widow/Widower	-
Living with Partner	4%

Children	
	Alumni
None	49%
At Least One (NET)	51%
1	21%
2	20%
3 or more	12%

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.