

ABC NEWS/GOOD MORNING AMERICA WEEKEND POLL: PARENTS
EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AFTER 12 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010

Parents on Kids: Pierced Ears, Sure; But a Late Night Out – Not So Fast

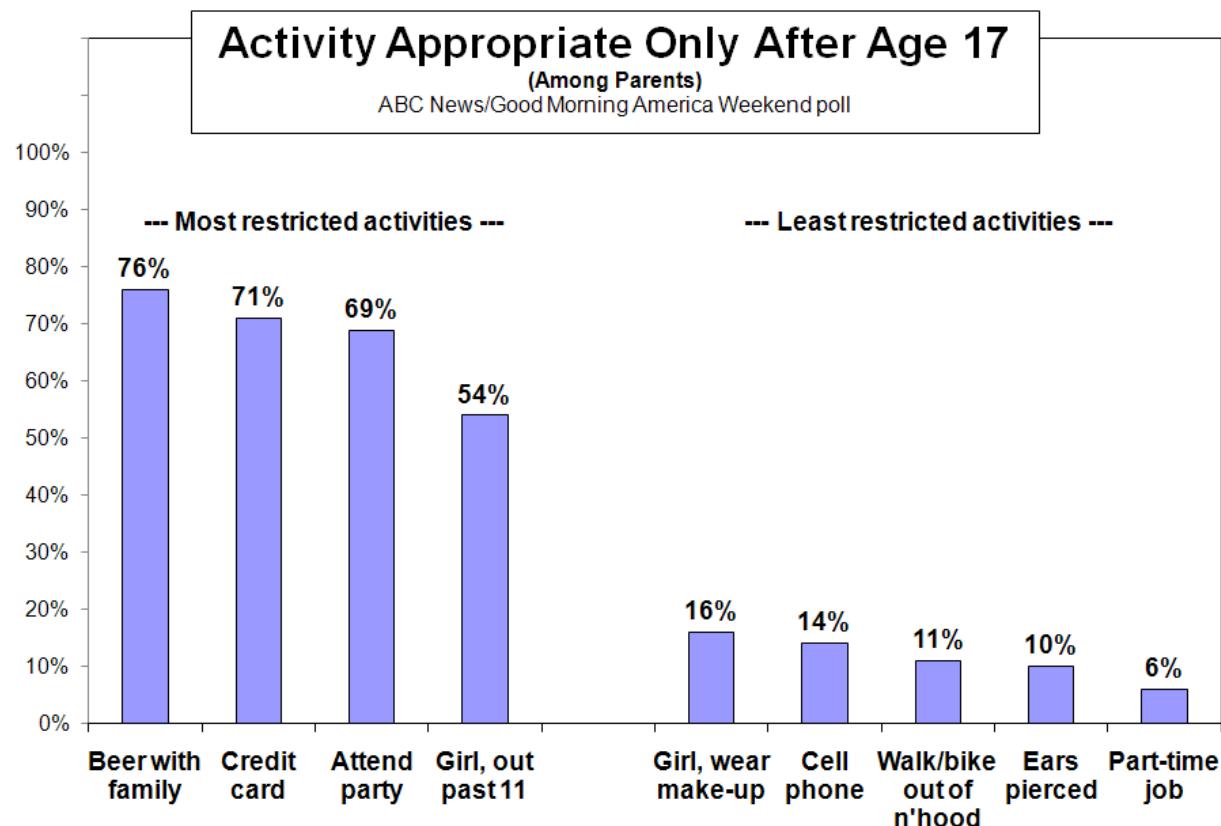
Question: Mom, Dad, can I have a credit card?

Answer: Nope.

Nor, for most parents, can a teen-ager have a glass of beer at a family event, attend an unsupervised party, or, if a girl, stay out past 11 p.m.

So much for rampant permissiveness. Instead this ABC News/Good Morning America Weekend poll finds significant parental constraints on children's activities. Four in 10, for instance, rule out social networking websites and unsupervised use of the Internet. A quarter forbid the pre-technology sport of hanging out at the mall. And for those who do see these and other activities as appropriate for teens, the starting age is the mid-teens, generally 15 or 16 years old.

There's at least one activity, though, that gets a break: Just 10 percent rule out a girl getting her ears pierced, and those who allow it say on average that it's OK at the tender age of 9.



There's good reason most other activities, when permitted, are seen as appropriate only starting in the mid-teens: Fifteen is the average age at which parents say childhood ends and young adulthood begins. Then again, more than a third say childhood continues right up through age 17 – and they're the parents who are much more apt to restrict kids' activities.

In addition to checking views on activities by children, this poll also examined two things parents may initiate: talking with their children about sex and about family financial problems. Finances, perhaps surprisingly, are more sensitive: Twenty-six percent of parents rule out such a talk entirely; however, the rest say the average appropriate age is a fairly young 13. Very few, 5 percent, rule out the talk about sex; the average age is 13 for a boy, 12 for a girl.

This survey supports a series of special reports on parenting, "How Young is Too Young?," airing on ABC's Good Morning America weekend programs starting this Saturday, Feb. 20.

NO-NOs – There's broadest agreement on three of the 16 activities tested: Seventy-six percent of parents say it's never appropriate for someone under age 18 to have a glass of beer or wine at a family meal or special event. Seventy-one percent rule out giving kids a credit card, even one that has a restricted balance and is linked to a parent's account. And about as many, 69 percent, say it's never OK for a minor to attend a party where there are no adults supervising.

A bit farther down the list, but still fairly widely rejected, are staying out past 11 p.m.; 54 percent say this is never acceptable for a girl, 49 percent for a boy. (There's also a single-digit double-standard on unsupervised dating, ruled out by 28 percent in the case of girls, 22 percent in the case of boys.) Forty-three percent of parents rule out social networking accounts and 37 percent turn thumbs down on any unsupervised use of the Internet. Thirty-six percent say it's never OK for a child to see an R-rated movie even with a parent.

Lower on the list of outlaw activities are hanging out unsupervised at the mall (27 percent of parents say that's not appropriate for any minor); girls wearing make-up regularly (16 percent); having a cell phone (14 percent); walking or biking unsupervised outside the neighborhood (11 percent); ear piercing (10 percent); and having a part-time job (6 percent).

GROUPS – Who are the most restrictive parents, and who's cutting some slack? You can tell by breaking parents into three groups – the most restrictive, meaning those who rule out at least eight of the 16 kids' activities tested in this poll; a middle group; and the most permissive, who rule out no more than three of the activities. It turns out there are differences.

Parents are defined in this survey as any adults who've had children, regardless of their kids' current age. The most restrictive parents are more likely to be over 65, and that's related to other parts of the group's demographic profile: more likely to have grown children, less likely to have Internet access or e-mail; more likely to be widowed or, retired. By contrast, parents whose children are still less than 18 are significantly more likely to fall into the most-permissive category, as are all parents between the ages of 30 and 64.

The most permissive also are more apt to be college graduates or postgraduates, and (in a related result) to have higher income than the most restrictive group. Whites are more apt to fall into the

most permissive group. By religion, Baptists are more apt to be restrictive; non-denominational Christians and those who affiliate with no religion, most permissive.

Moms are about as restrictive as dads, though.

	Parents: permissive vs. restrictive		
	Most permissive	Middle	Most restrictive
All parents	31%	40	29
Age less than 65	34	39	27
Age 65+	17	44	39
No internet/e-mail	18	38	44
Widowed	14	28	58
Retired	19	44	37
Kids under 18	34	40	26
Kids 18+	27	39	33
HS grad or less	28	37	35
College grad	41	41	18
White	31	46	22
Baptist	24	46	30
No religion	36	39	25
Less than \$50K	26	37	37
\$100K+	42	40	18

AGE OF CONSENT – Fifteen or 16 is the average age of consent for most of these activities – 12 out of the 16. The exceptions – again, for those who permit them at all – are using the Internet unsupervised (OK at age 14), having a cell phone (again 14), walking or biking outside the neighborhood (age 13) and, as noted, ear-piercing for girls (age 9).

In fact 27 percent of parents say ear-piercing is OK for girls younger than 6 – no other item scored more than 1 percent in that category – including 16 percent who say it's appropriate at 1 year of age. Another 20 percent say ear-piercing is appropriate between ages 6 and 11.

Only two other activities get approval for 6- to 11-year-olds from more than 5 percent of parents: walking or biking outside the neighborhood (21 percent) and having a cell phone (13 percent). In both cases, the appropriate ages cited were mainly 10 and 11, not younger.

The views measured here, it should be noted, can change – kids can be persuasive and parents can be enlightened. Among those who currently have minor children, for example, nearly nine in 10 say cell phones are appropriate at some age, but many fewer, 45 percent, think they're OK for kids age 13 and under. However in a September 2009 Pew survey, many more 13-year-olds, 73 percent, reported having cell phones. That indicates that some parents who'd intended to hold out 'til their kids were 14 or older ultimately thought better of it.

OPERATING EXPERIENCE – Older parents, at the same time, may lack some experience. While those who have fully grown kids are more restrictive on some of these issues, it's also true that many older parents raised their children before the Internet age. Such parents are more likely to say it's never appropriate for children to have social networking accounts (50 percent of parents of adult children vs. 34 percent of parents of minors). They're also slightly more likely, by 8 points, to say it's never OK for minors to use the Internet unsupervised.

Other areas where parents with grown-up children are significantly more likely to nix activities by kids under 18: seeing R-rated movies (by 12 points), having credit cards or cell phones (by 10 and 7 points, respectively), and hanging out at the mall or attending a party unsupervised (by 9 and 7 points, respectively).

Among parents with kids under 18, there are a few differences depending on the ages of their children. The biggest is that parents with kids younger than 6 are more apt to be OK with unsupervised parties. Give them time.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News poll was conducted by telephone Feb. 3-7, 2010, among a random national sample of 779 parents (landline and cell-phone respondents). Results for the full sample have a 4-point error margin; click [here](#) for a detailed description of sampling error. Sampling, data collection and tabulation by Social Science Research Solutions at ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer and Mike Mokrzycki.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>

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Full results follow (*= less than 0.5 percent).

1. For each item I name, please tell me at what age you think it's appropriate for a child UNDER 18 to do that. If you think it's not appropriate for a child at ANY age, just tell me that. At what age do you think is it appropriate for a child to (INSERT ITEM)? IF ANSWER IS 18 OR MORE, READ: I mean any age through age 17, or not for any child?

2/7/10 - Summary table:

	Avg.	Only 18+
a. Walk or bike beyond the immediate neighborhood without adult supervision	13 yrs.	11%
b. Hang out at the mall without adult supervision	15	27
c. See an R-rated movie with a parent	15	36
d. Have a cell phone	14	14
e. Use the internet unsupervised	14	37
f. Have their own social networking account, such as on MySpace or Facebook	15	43
g. Attend a party where there will be no adults supervising	16	69
h. For a girl to get her ears pierced	9	10
i. For a girl to wear make-up regularly	15	16
j. For a boy to go on a date unsupervised	16	22
k. For a girl to go on a date unsupervised	16	28
l. For a boy to stay out past 11 p.m. with friends, without adult supervision	16	49
m. For a girl to stay out past 11 p.m. with friends, without adult supervision	16	54
n. Have their own limited-balance credit card linked to a parent's account	16	71
o. Have a glass of beer or wine with the family at		

dinner or at a special event	15	76
p. Get a part-time job	15	6
q. For a boy, at what age do you think it's appropriate to have a comprehensive talk about sex	13	5
r. For a girl, at what age do you think it's appropriate to have a comprehensive talk about sex	12	5
s. At what age would you talk to your child about financial problems you may be having	13	26

2. Finally, at what age do you feel that childhood ends and young adulthood begins? IF ANSWER IS 18 OR MORE, READ: I mean any age through age 17, or not for any child?

	Avg.	None	Depends (vol.)	No opinion
2/7/10	15 yrs	36%	5	1

*** END ***