



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Adult Little Research

Conducted by Harris Interactive
March 3 — April 16, 2009

Executive Summary



METHODOLOGY

Between March 3 and April 16 2009, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of 449 adults, 200 of whom participated in Big Brothers Big Sisters as “Littles” for at least one year during their childhood and 249 who never participated in the program. Alumni Littles were sampled from a combination of Harris Interactive’s panel of respondents and Big Brothers Big Sisters lists. All 249 of the non alumni were sampled from the Harris Interactive panel of online respondents. The non-alumni segment allows for a comparison between Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni and adults who had a similar profile as youth but who did not have a Big Brother or Big Sister as a youth. A full methodology is available.

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 negative cycles. Headquartered in Philadelphia and with nearly 400 agencies across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters serves more than a quarter million children. Learn how you can change how children grow up in America by going to BigBrothersBigSisters.org.

ABOUT HARRIS INTERACTIVE

[Harris Interactive](http://HarrisInteractive) is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research, powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms. For more information, please visit harrisinteractive.com.

Background

Big Brothers Big Sisters believes one of the most effective strategies for successful fundraising is to demonstrate the long-term value of the program. Therefore, Big Brothers Big Sisters commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a cross-sectional study in an attempt to assess if there were indications that the program's efforts reach far beyond the time when Littles are enrolled in the program.

Objectives

Specifically, the study conducted by Harris Interactive sought to:

- Understand various aspects of adult Littles' childhood
- Determine productivity and success of adult Littles in today's society
- Compare adult Littles to similar non-participants in order to identify associations between participation in Big Brothers Big Sisters and achievements later in life
- Gauge the extent to which adult Littles perceive Big Brothers Big Sisters to have made a difference in their life

Methodology

Sample

- 200 adult Littles (Alumni) with one or more years of participation in Big Brothers Big Sisters
- 249 Non-Alumni, similarly profiled to Alumni on a selection of childhood characteristics and demographic variables

Sample sources

- Alumni: 109 were sampled from Harris Interactive's panel of online respondents and 91 were sampled from lists provided by Big Brothers Big Sisters.
- Non-Alumni: All 249 were sampled from Harris Interactive's panel of online respondents.

Method

- 12-minute Online Survey (approximately 50 questions)

Weighting

- Alumni were statistically weighted to a profile of Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni, comprised of combined Harris Interactive and Big Brothers Big Sisters samples, on education, age, gender, race, region, income and propensity to be online.
- The non-alumni were also weighted to the same characteristics as alumni as well as some other elements while growing up, which included location and safety of neighborhood, family composition and childhood household relative financial situation, in order to control for these variables.

Notes on Reading the Report

Non-alumni:

The non-alumni segment allows for a comparison between Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni and adults of a similar profile who did not participate in the program as a youth. In addition to controlling for certain demographics like gender, age and race, we also controlled for other characteristics while growing up (location and safety of neighborhood, family composition, and childhood household relative financial situation) in order to minimize the likelihood that differences we see in the results are due to differences in demographics or characteristics of childhood life.

Causation vs. Correlation:

Since Littles and non-Littles were not selected through a randomized process as youth and tracked through to adulthood, it is important to note that differences between alumni and non-alumni do not establish causation (i.e., we do not know that involvement with Big Brothers Big Sisters was the cause of the differences). Rather, the Adult Little Research establishes a correlation (i.e., we can say that program involvement is associated with the differences. Being involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters is one explanation of the differences but there may be other explanations).

Key Findings

Overall

- The majority of Adult Littles believe that having been a Little contributes significantly to the person they are today. According to them, having been in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program as a child results in genuine, positive outcomes.
- The value of Big Brothers Big Sisters becomes apparent when comparing former Littles to their counterparts who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters. Adult Littles are more likely than non-alumni to be confident, more educated, successful and satisfied with life.
- As shown in previous Big Brothers Big Sisters research, having a longer or more meaningful match with a Big oftentimes correlates with more positive outcomes.

Value of Big Brothers Big Sisters

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

- When asked in their own words to describe the value of being involved in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, the responses were overwhelmingly positive.
 - Having someone in their life who provided guidance and individual attention was the most frequently mentioned benefit. Many also mentioned the overall positive impact and some specifically mentioned that it helped them to become a better person, to change their life, to gain confidence, and to get them through school.
- Over six in ten (62%) alumni consider themselves to be more successful than their peers who weren't involved in the program. Only 31% of the non-alumni say they are more successful today than the people they grew up with.

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 most (52%) strongly agreeing. Further, 85% say being a Little has influenced 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 highly 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 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 had a major influence on school life. Over three quarters (77%) reported doing better in school because of their Big, two-thirds (65%) agree that their Big helped them reach a higher level of education than they thought possible and half (52%) agree that their Big kept them from dropping out of high school.
- Three in four (74%) say their relationship with their Big helped a lot in making better choices through their childhood. Nearly just as many (69%) said the same about making better choices throughout adult life.

Most former Littles perceive themselves to have strong relationships with others. They also have more solid relationships than their non-alumni counterparts.

- A majority of alumni are extremely or very satisfied with their relationships to friends (72%), family (65%) and spouses (62%). Significantly fewer non-alumni report the same level of satisfaction (46%, 50% and 40%, respectively).
- Many alumni also say with confidence that they have strong relationships with family (54% strongly agree) and friends (51%).
 - Also, of those who have children, almost all alumni feel either extremely (48%) or very (34%) close to them.

Adult Little Outcomes

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

- Alumni are more satisfied with their volunteering (46% extremely/somewhat satisfied) and community engagement (42% extremely/somewhat satisfied) than non-alumni (25% and 26%, respectively).
- Two-thirds (67%) of former Big Brothers Big Sisters participants donate to or volunteer at a religious or charitable organization, approximately half (52%) volunteer in the community and three in ten (29%) hold some type of leadership position in a community group.
 - Significantly fewer non-alumni (35%) volunteer and they are half as likely to serve on a board or hold a position in a local organization (16%).
- Almost a quarter (22%) of adult Littles have participated in a service program like AmeriCorps, which is double the number of non-alumni (10%). Further, 21% of alumni have served in the military.

When it comes to overall satisfaction with life, Adult Littles are contented, especially compared to others who were not involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters.

- Approximately two in three (64%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with life which is significantly more than the third (35%) of non-alumni who say the same.
- Large majorities (86%) of alumni agree that they lead a fulfilling life and 41% strongly agree with this.

A large number of adult Littles have reached a significant educational milestone – earning a four-year college degree.

- Many alumni have achieved higher levels of education than their parents. About half (46%) of alumni's fathers completed high school or less. For alumni, high school completion or less is just 21%. Instead, most went on to earn their four-year college degree or more (42% alumni vs. 22% father, 25% mother).
- Alumni are also more likely than non-alumni to have received a four-year college degree (28% of alumni vs. 16% of non-alumni).

Alumni are more satisfied with their work and financial situation, and perceive themselves to have achieved high levels of success as compared to non-alumni.

- Over half (54%) of alumni are extremely or very satisfied with work compared to only 30% of non-alumni. Further, four in ten (38%) alumni are extremely or very satisfied with their current financial situation whereas just one in six (16%) non-alumni feel the same level of financial satisfaction.
- Almost half (46%) of adult Littles say they are better off than the average American household, which is significantly higher than the non-alumni (29%).
 - In fact, alumni have significantly higher household incomes than non-alumni. Almost half (46%) of alumni have a household income of \$75,000 or more, compared to a third (33%) of non-alumni.

About Harris Interactive®

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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 (215) 567-7000.