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**CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN DREAM  
KIDS AND COMMERCIALISM  
FINAL RESULTS**

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### **Summary**

This summary highlights the major findings of a nationally representative telephone study conducted among 750 American teens ages 12 to 17. The “Youth and Advertising” poll was conducted by Widmeyer Communications for the Center a New American Dream. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 3.5%.

The major **conclusions** of the study are as follows:

1. A major reason American teenagers love to buy things is to build self-esteem. Owning certain products simply makes teens feel better about themselves.
2. Most American teenagers are influenced by product advertising. They like to ask their parents for products they see advertised in magazines, on TV and on the Internet.
3. A significant number of teenagers want to buy advertised products that their parents do not approve of, such as certain videogames, CDs, clothes and body piercings. And most keep asking and asking and asking until their parents finally give in.

### **Major Findings**

1. **A major reason American teenagers love to buy things is to build self-esteem. Owning certain products simply makes teens feel better about themselves.**

A majority of American teenagers associate self-esteem with buying things. More than half of teens (53%) surveyed say that “buying certain products make them feel better about themselves.” This is especially the case for younger teens and boys.

- Younger teenagers ages 12 to 13 (62%) are 20% more likely than teenagers ages 14-18 (51%) teenage to say that buying certain products make them feel good about themselves. And a majority of this age group (54%) say they feel pressured to buy certain products just because their friends have them.
- Teenage boys (57%) are more likely than teenage girls (49%) to say that buying certain products make them feel good about themselves.

**2. Most American teenagers are influenced by product advertising. They like to ask their parents for products they see advertised in magazines, on TV and on the Internet.**

Advertising and the desire (to purchase) are closely linked for teenagers. More than 8 in 10 teenagers (81%) say they have asked their parents for money to buy something or to let them buy something with their own money that they saw advertised in a magazine, on television or on the Internet.

- The reach of advertising and its impact on behavior is strongest among younger teens, particularly those ages 14 to 15. Nearly 9 in 10 (86%) 14 to 15 year olds and 83% of 12 to 13 year olds have asked parents for money or permission to buy something they saw advertised, compared to 3 in 4 (74%) teens ages 16 to 17.
- The desire to consumer is gender-neutral: teenage boys (80) and girls (81%) are equally likely to have asked for money or permission to buy something they saw advertised.

**3. A significant number of teenagers want to buy advertised products that their parents do not approve of, such as certain videogames, CDs, clothes and body piercings. And most keep asking and asking and asking until their parents finally give in.**

Americans teenagers are heavily influenced by advertising. Among the vast majority of teenagers who ask their parents for money or permission to buy a product, 4 in 10 say they know in advance that their parents will disapprove of the purchase *before* they even ask. And nearly 6 in 10 of these teenagers keep nagging – on average 9 times – in the hopes they can get their parents to give in. This “keep asking strategy” is paying dividends: a large majority of teenagers say they are usually successful in getting their parents to give in.

- Four in ten (40%) teenagers say they have asked their parents to buy something or permission to do so for an advertised product they thought their parents would not approve of. This is more common among teenage boys (44%) than girls (37%).
- Among these teenagers who have asked their parents to buy something the latter disapproves of, nearly 6 in 10 (59%) say they do not give up – they keep asking in the hopes their parents will finally say yes. Teenage girls (68%) and younger teens ages 12 to 13 (71%) are most likely to pursue this aggressive keep-asking strategy.
- The average teenager says that it takes asking 9 times before their parents give in and let them have what they want. Teenage girls ask less (8 times on average) than teenage boys (10 times) only because they are usually more successful: many more girls (65%) than guys (44%) say they are usually successful in getting their parents to acquiesce.

What products do teenagers want so badly? There are differences among teenagers based on gender and age when it comes to products they identify as the hardest to get their parents to buy, but they generally fall into two categories: consumers electronics and personal appearance.

What was the one thing that was hardest to get your parents to pay for or let you buy for yourself?	ALL (%)	M (%)	F (%)	12-13 (%)	14-15 (%)	16-17 (%)
<b><i>Consumer Electronics (Net)</i></b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>20</b>
Video games seen as inappropriate	8	14	3	10	10	4
Video console	7	10	3	5	9	3
CD's seen as inappropriate	7	5	8	7	7	5
Stereo	7	1	12	5	10	5
Television	3	1	5	7	1	3
<b><i>Personal Appearance</i></b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
Clothes seen as inappropriate	8	7	9	8	9	7
Body piercings	7	7	7	3	7	10

### Detailed Tables

<b>Do you sometimes feel pressure to buy certain products, such as clothes, shoes, CDs, or anything else because your friends have them?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
Yes	32	31	33	54	30	17
No	68	69	67	46	70	83

<b>Would you say that buying certain products sometimes make you feel better about yourself?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
Yes	53	57	49	62	49	52
No	47	43	51	38	51	48

<b>Have you ever asked your parents for money to buy something or to let you buy something with your own money that you saw advertised in a magazine, on television, on the web or anywhere else?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
Yes	81	80	81	83	86	74
No	19	20	19	17	14	26

<b><u>AMONG 81% THAT ASKED</u> Have you ever asked your parents to buy something or to let you buy with your own money that you saw advertised that you thought they didn't want you to have or disapproved of?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
Yes	40	44	37	42	41	40
No	60	56	63	58	59	60

<b>What was the one thing that was hardest to get your parents to pay for or let you buy for yourself?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-18 (%)</b>
Clothes seen as inappropriate	8	7	9	8	9	7
Video games seen as inappropriate	8	14	3	10	10	4
Car	7	7	7	1	1	16
CD's seen as inappropriate	7	5	8	7	7	5
Body piercings	7	7	7	3	7	10
Video console	7	10	3	5	9	3
Stereo	7	1	12	5	10	5
Concert tickets	4	3	4	5	1	4
Computer	3	3	3	5	1	3
Make-up/cosmetics	3	0	5	3	4	4
Television	3	1	5	7	1	3
Tattoo	3	3	3	1	4	3
Bike	1	3	1	1	3	1
Condoms	1	1	1	0	3	1
Cell phone	1	1	3	1	1	1
Guitar	1	1	1	1	1	1
Knife	1	4	1	5	1	0
Camera	1	3	0	1	1	0
Cigarettes	1	1	1	1	1	1

<b>What is the one thing that you want most that you haven't been able to get your parents to pay for or let you buy for yourself?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
Car	22	14	31	4	25	38
Shoes	8	4	8	3	14	4
Video console	8	17	4	17	13	4
Clothes seen as inappropriate	8	4	10	10	5	4
Computer	6	3	8	6	6	4
Pet	4	4	4	6	6	3
Video games seen as inappropriate	4	7	1	7	1	3
CD's seen as inappropriate	3	3	3	8	1	1
Cell phone	3	3	4	4	4	3
Body piercings	3	1	4	3	3	3
Four wheeler/dirt bike	3	6	1	7	3	1
Television	3	1	6	4	4	3
DVD player	1	1	1	1	1	1
Knife	1	3	0	4	1	1

<b><u>AMONG 81% THAT ASKED</u></b> When your parents won't let you have something that you saw advertised, do you simply give up asking if your parents say no or do you keep asking in the hopes they will finally say yes?	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
Keep asking	59	50	68	71	55	55
Give up	41	50	32	29	45	45

<b><u>AMONG KEEP ASKING</u></b> On average, how many times do you have to ask your parents until they finally give in and let you have what you want?	<b>ALL</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>12-13</b>	<b>14-15</b>	<b>16-17</b>
<b><i>Mean (average)</i></b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>
1 - 5	46	36	52	48	45	45
6 - 10	23	30	19	24	26	19
11- 15	8	10	6	7	11	6
16 - 20	4	0	7	2	8	2
21 – 30	2	2	1	4	0	0
31 – 40	1	4	0	0	0	4
41 – 50	4	4	4	2	8	2
More than 50	6	4	7	11	0	6
Don't know	6	10	4	2	2	16

<b>Do you . . . that you are usually successful in getting your parents to let you have something you want that you saw advertised even if they don't want you to have it?</b>	<b>ALL (%)</b>	<b>M (%)</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>12-13 (%)</b>	<b>14-15 (%)</b>	<b>16-17 (%)</b>
<b>AGREE (NET)</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>57</b>
Strongly agree	14	10	17	10	13	17
Somewhat agree	41	34	48	40	45	40
<b>DISAGREE (NET)</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>
Somewhat disagree	25	32	17	31	24	22
Strongly disagree	16	21	12	15	16	16
Don't know	4	3	5	4	2	5

<b>On an average weekday, how many advertisements do you see?</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>12-13</b>	<b>14-15</b>	<b>16-17</b>
<b>Mean (average)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>37</b>
	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>(%)</b>
1 - 9	15	16	14	17	16	12
10-19	17	20	17	26	13	17
20-29	19	20	17	17	19	22
30-39	10	9	11	9	15	6
40-49	7	7	7	4	10	6
50-99	13	14	11	10	11	14
100 or more	11	9	13	12	12	10
Don't know	7	5	9	5	4	12