



College Access: Results from a Survey of Low-Income Parents and Low-Income Teens

February 2006



Key Findings - Student Attitudes

- ✓ **An overwhelming majority of low income teens (91%) believe they are likely to receive a college degree.**

Higher percentages of females, younger students (ages 13-14) and African Americans believed that they were likely to receive a college degree.

- ✓ **A large majority of low income teens (88%) disagree with the statement 'I don't believe that college is for someone like me.' However, 11% strongly or somewhat agree.**

Higher percentages of low income teen males, older students (15-17) and those from rural areas agree with the statement 'I don't believe that college is for someone like me.'

Key Findings- Student Perceptions

- ✓ **More than half of low income teens feel their parents have been very helpful in considering or applying to college. However, 14% feel that their parents have not been very or at all helpful.**
- ✓ **The majority of low income teens (62%) feel their parents have been extremely helpful in applying to or considering college. However, 9% feel that their parents have been of little or no help.**
- ✓ **While teens felt that parents (26%) and teachers (22%) were the most helpful to them applying to or considering college, many (15%) have been doing most of the work themselves.**
- ✓ **While almost 2/3 of low income teens thought about going to college before they entered high school, most of them did not think about a specific university they would like to attend until after they entered high school. Many teens (16%) indicated they have not thought about attending a specific college.**

Key Findings- Parent Attitudes and Behavior

- ✓ **While most low income parents strongly disagree that their child is not college material, over 10 percent of parents, to some extent, agree.**

Higher percentages of parents with older students (ages 15-17) and those from suburban settings agreed to some extent that their child was not college material.

- ✓ **Only 20% of low income parents have pushed their child to apply to or seriously consider college. Over half (57%) have indicated the decision is up to their child.**

- ✓ **Over 1/3 of low income parents believe that students should start thinking about college before they enter high school.**

Higher percentages of parents who are Hispanics, Moms, have younger teens (ages 13-14) and those from suburban settings felt that students should start thinking about college before they enter high school.

Research Objectives and Methodology

Research Objectives

Several questions about college access were added to a January 2006 tracking survey for the Ad Council's High School dropout prevention campaign. These questions were designed to measure:

- ✓ Student attitudes toward getting a college education
- ✓ Student perceptions regarding the help they receive in applying to colleges.
- ✓ Parent attitudes and behavior regarding their child's college education

Methodology

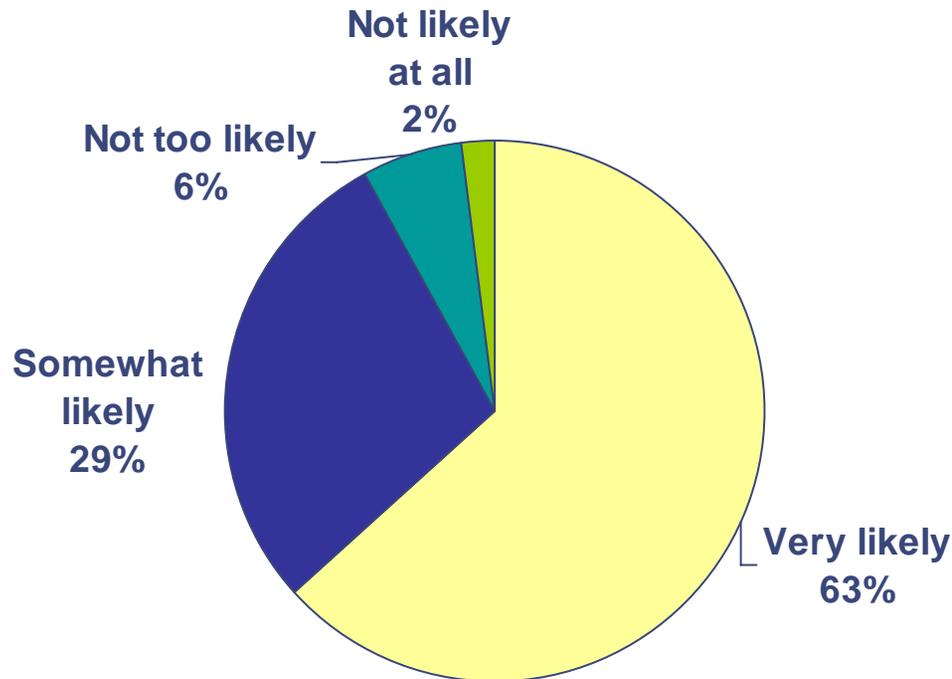
What?	Survey of low-income Parents and Teens (<i>Low-income: \$25K or less household income</i>)
When?	January 2006
Who?	396 low-income teens ages 13-18 currently enrolled in school 384 low-income parents of teenage students age 13-17
Where?	National sample*, RDD Methodology drawn from targeted national lists.
How?	Telephone Interviews Respondents were selected from a large telephone contact list, which includes identifies for presence of teens in the household and income level. The sample is demographically representative of the US online population.

** In order to analyze the tracking data by race and ethnicity the sample was augmented to meet specific quotas for African American and Hispanic respondents.*

Student Attitudes

Likelihood of getting a college degree

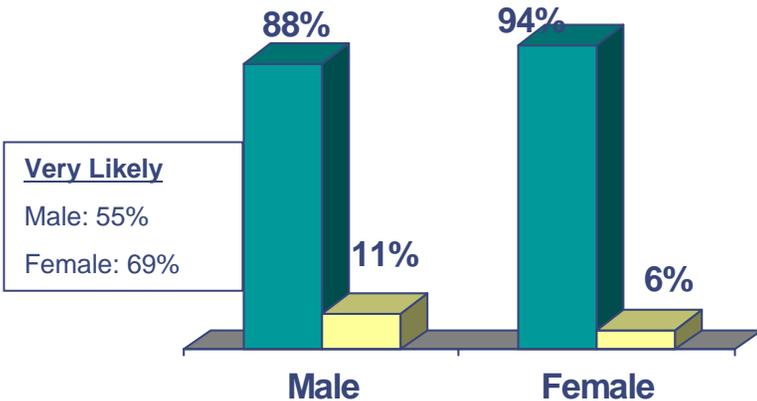
Over 90% of low income teenagers believe that they are likely to receive a college degree. Almost 2/3 (63%) of low income teenagers believe that it is *very likely* that they will get a college degree.



Q: How likely do you think it is that you will eventually get a college degree?

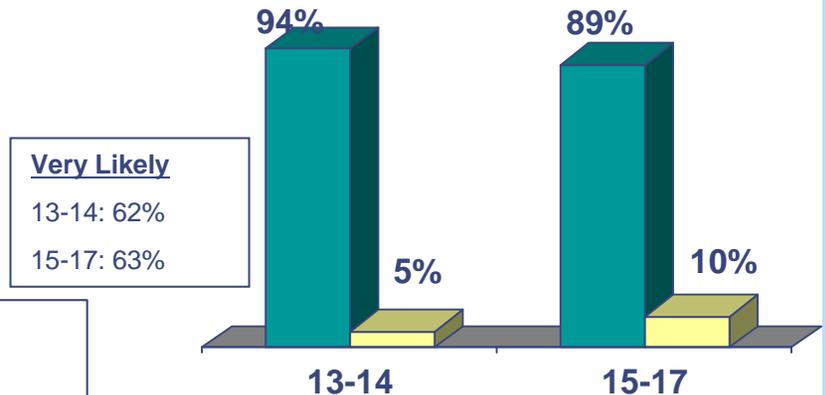
Likelihood of getting a college degree (Subgroups)

Gender



Very Likely
Male: 55%
Female: 69%

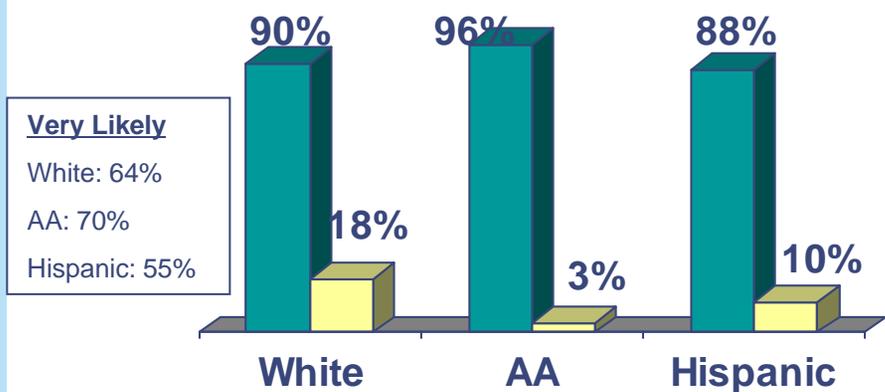
Age



Very Likely
13-14: 62%
15-17: 63%

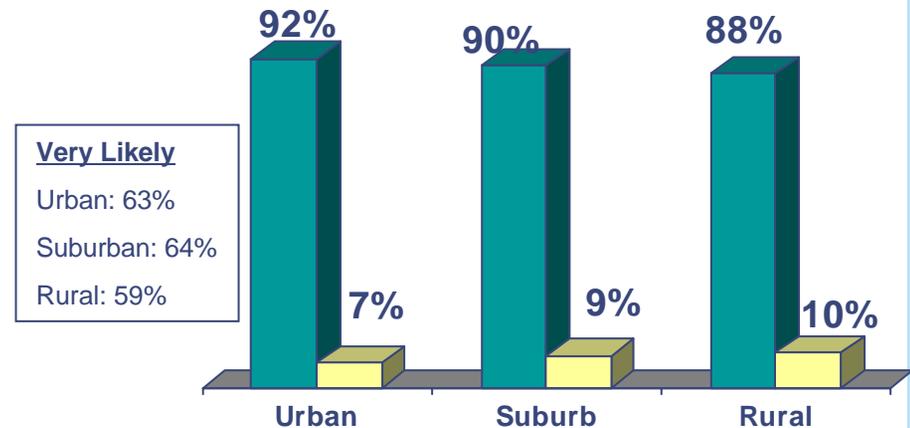
Likely
Not Likely

Race



Very Likely
White: 64%
AA: 70%
Hispanic: 55%

Urbanicity

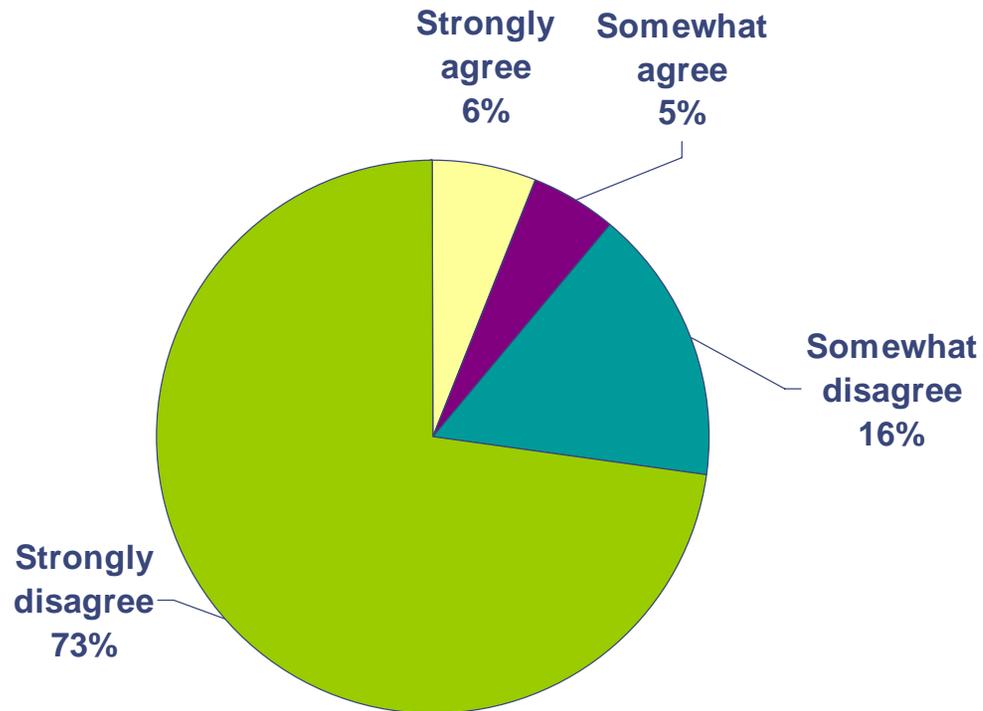


Very Likely
Urban: 63%
Suburban: 64%
Rural: 59%

Note: Due to small cell sizes differences in values are not statistically significant

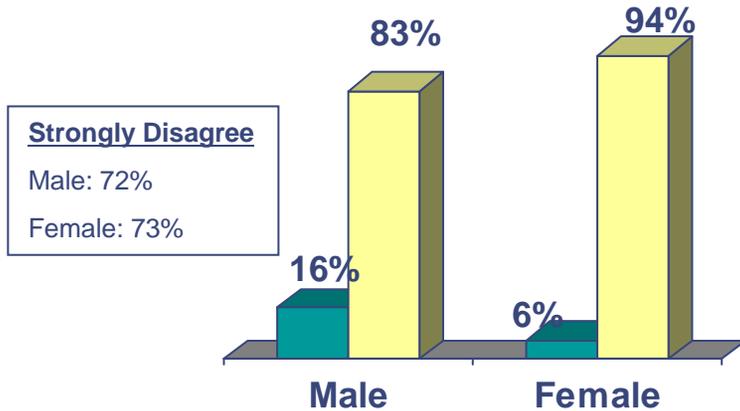
I don't believe that college is for some like me

The majority of low income teens (72%) strongly disagree with the statement 'I don't believe that college is for someone like me.'

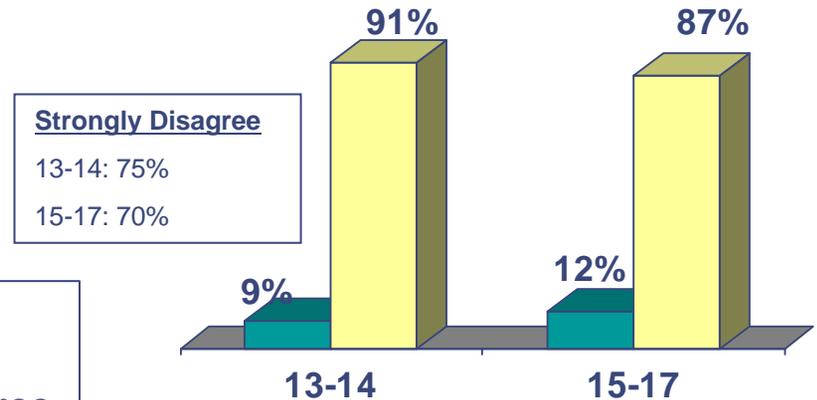


I don't believe that college is for some like me (Subgroups)

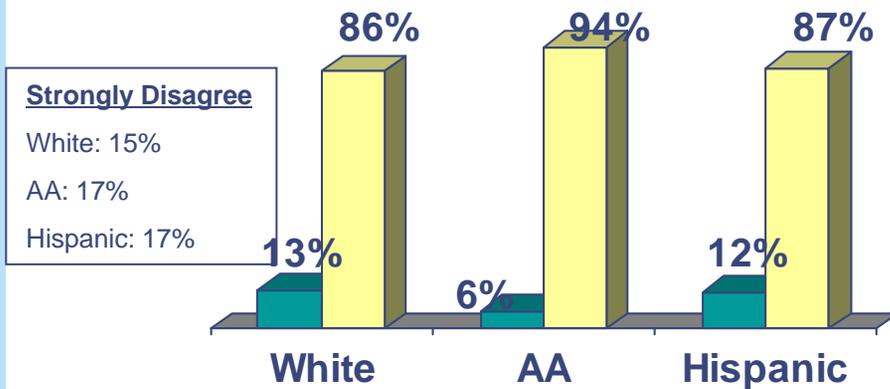
Gender



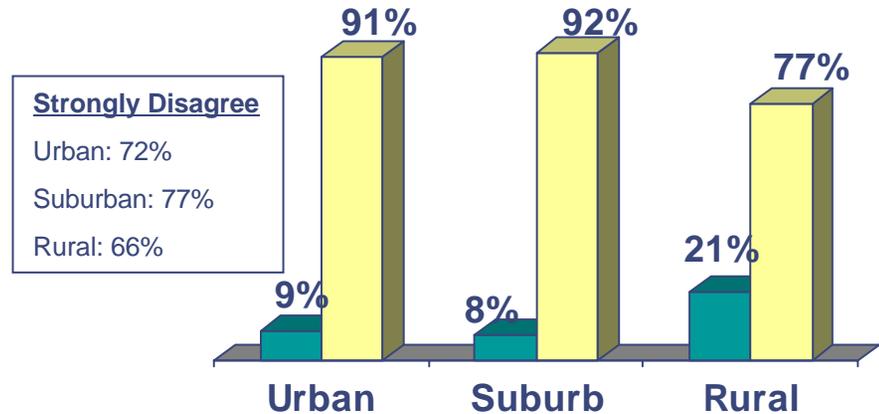
Age



Race



Urbanicity

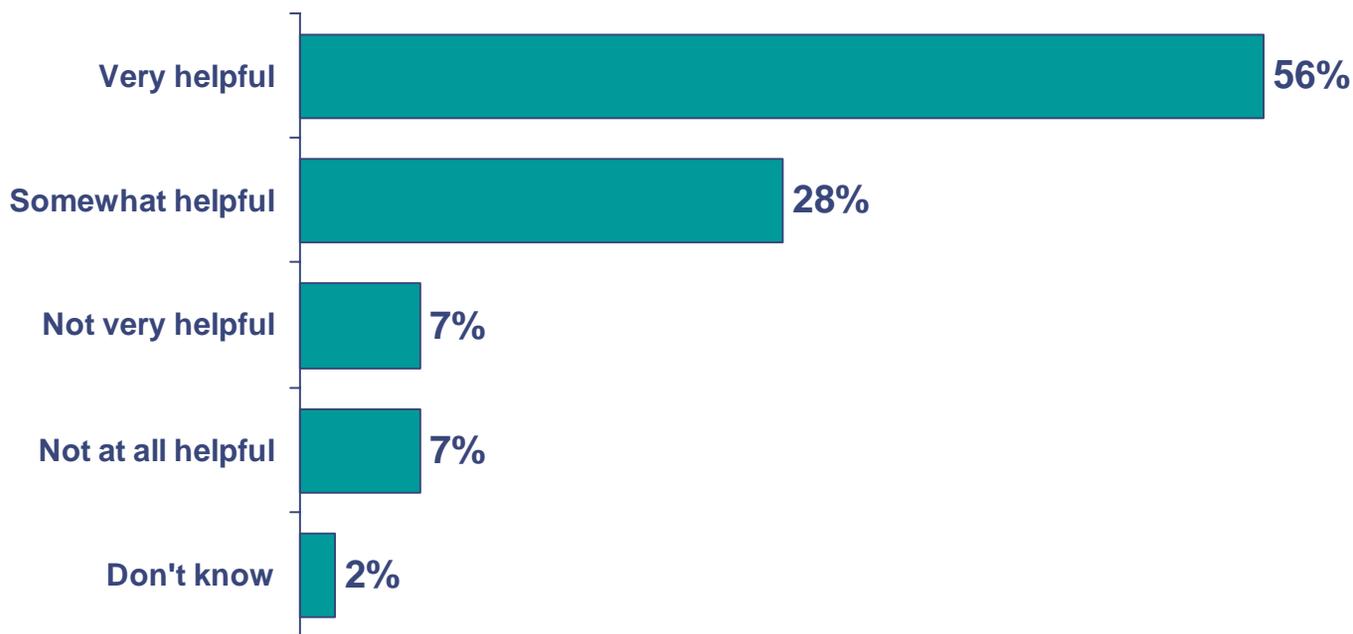


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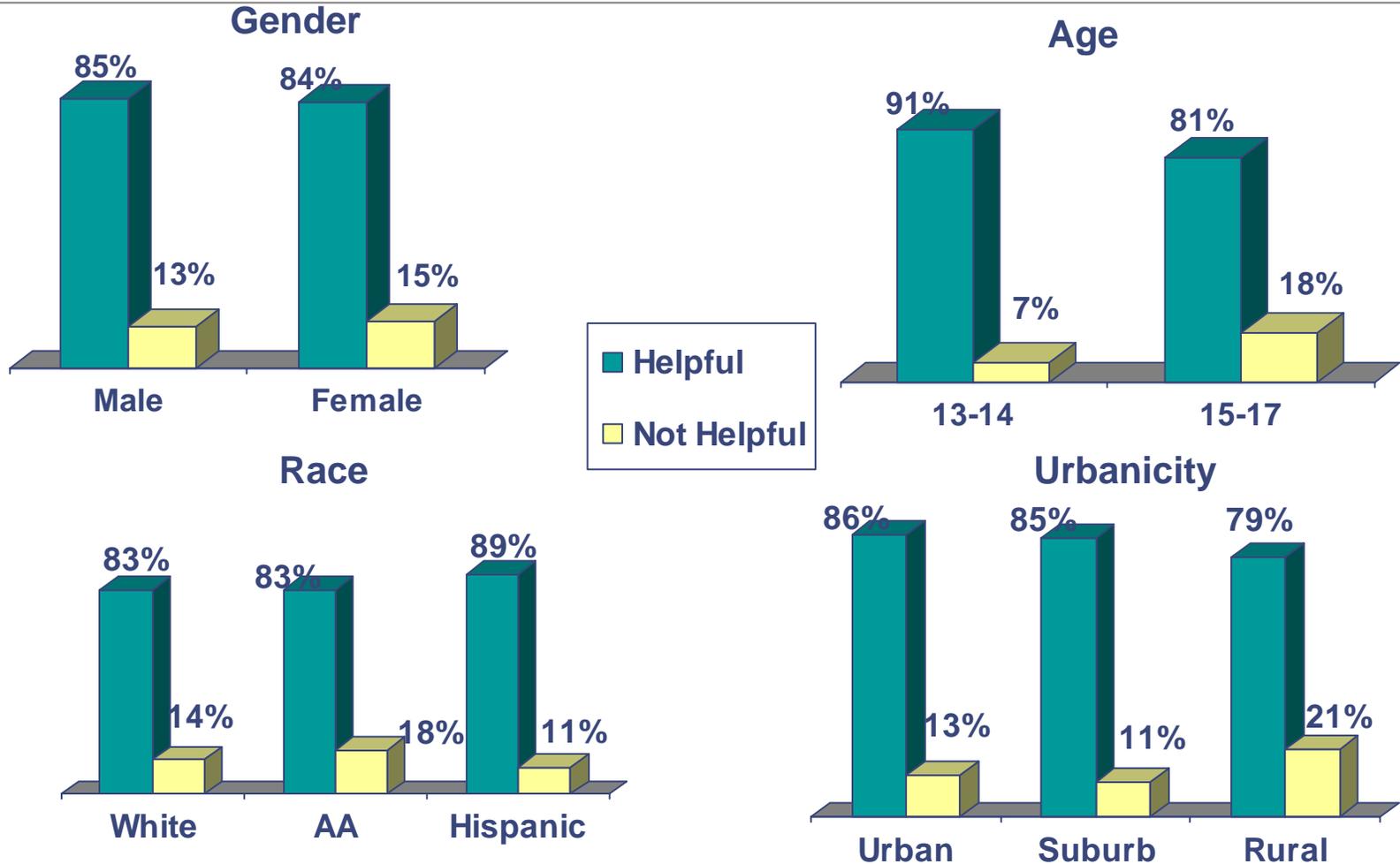
Student Perceptions

Parents' helpfulness

More than half of low income teens feel that their parents have been very helpful in considering or applying to college. Fourteen percent of low income teens do not find their parents helpful.



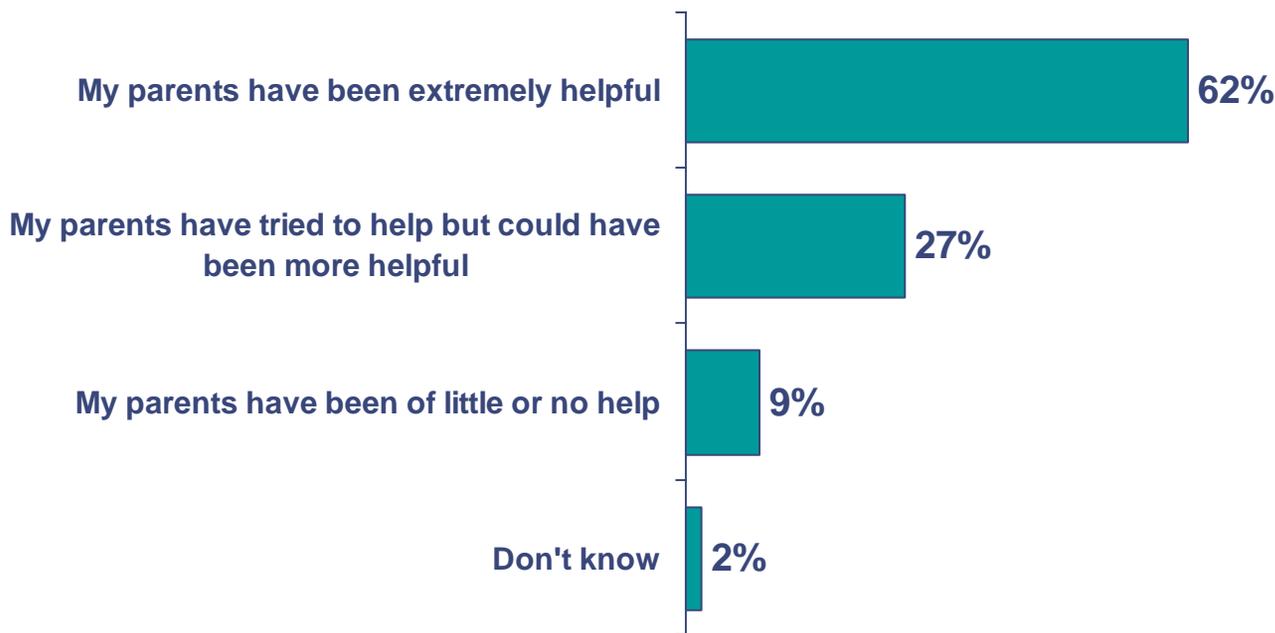
Parents' helpfulness (Subgroups)



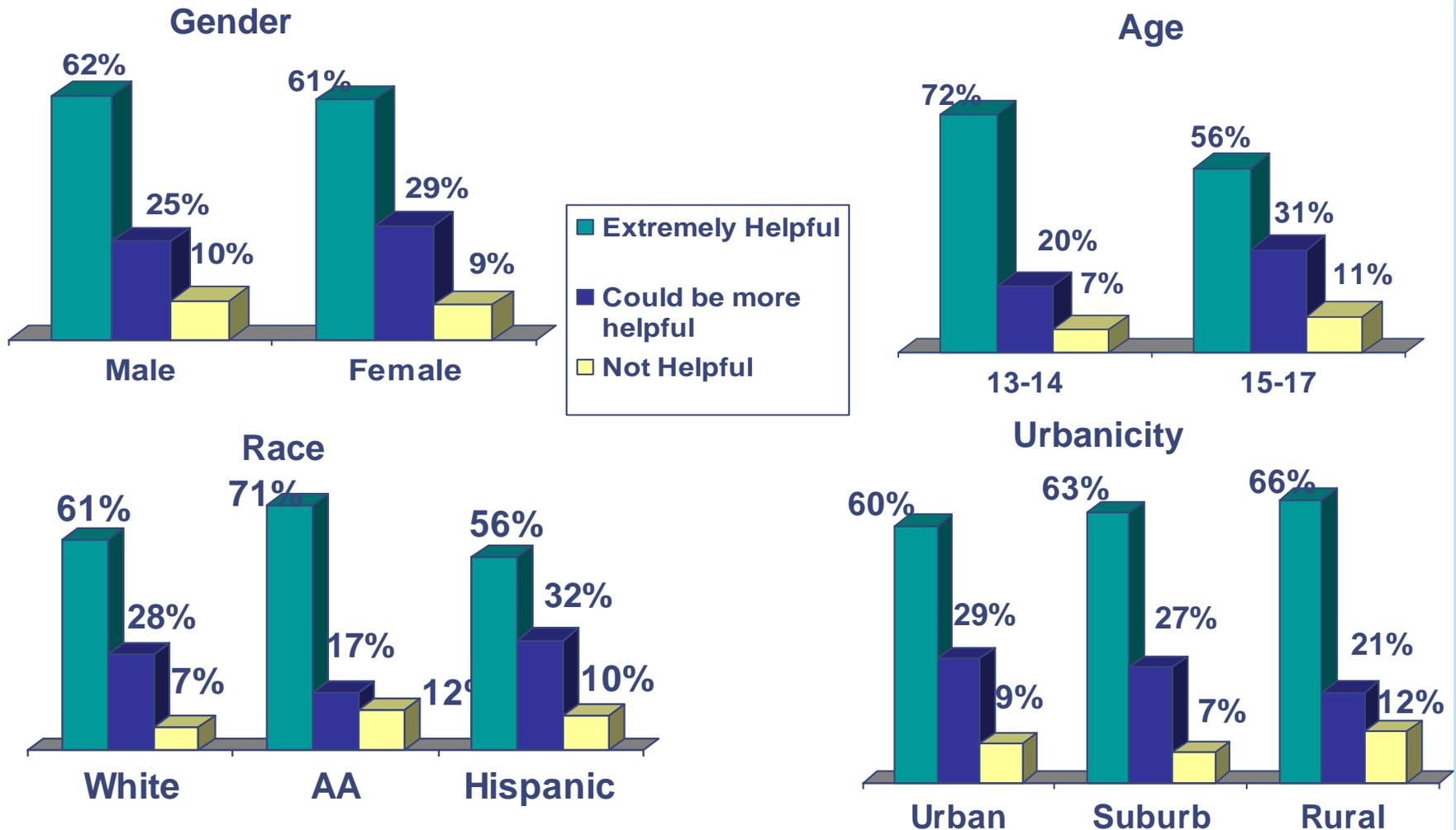
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Parents' helpfulness

Over 60 percent of low income teens believe that their parents have been *extremely* helpful in applying to or considering college. Over $\frac{1}{4}$ believe that their parents can do more and almost 10% of teens that their parents have been of little or no help.



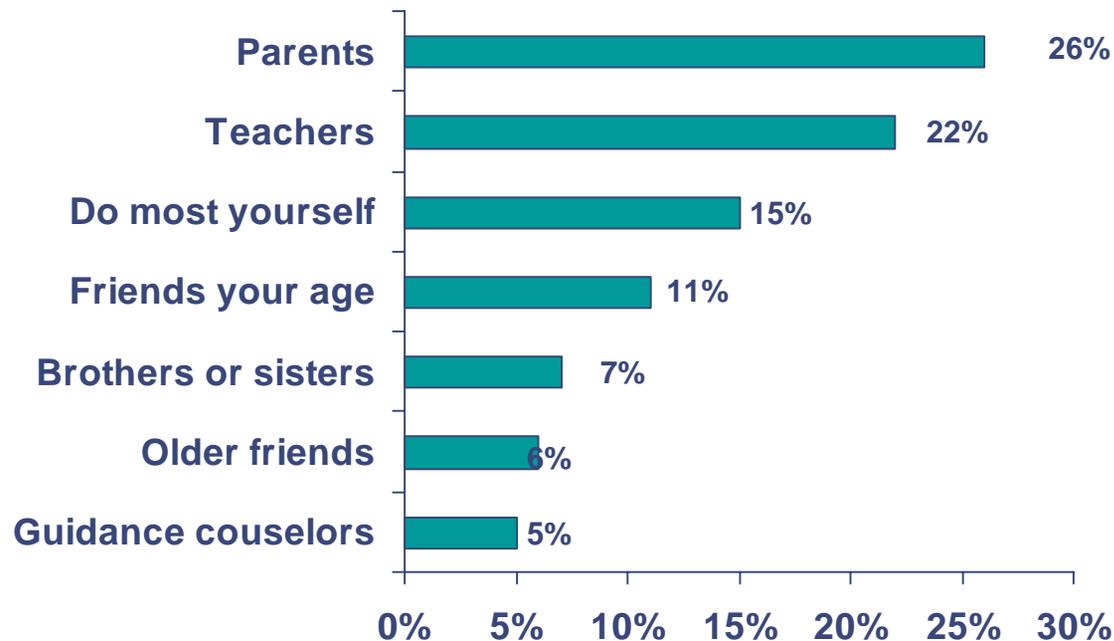
Amount of help parents have given in applying to or considering colleges (Subgroups)



Note: Due to small cell sizes differences in values are not statistically significant

Who is most helpful in applying to or considering college

Just over one-quarter of low income teens feel that their parents are most helpful to them in applying to or considering college. Slightly fewer feel that teachers are the most helpful (22%). Interestingly, 17% of low income teens find their friends to be most helpful and only 5% feel that guidance counselors are the most helpful to them when it comes to applying to or considering college.



Amount of help parents have given in applying to or considering colleges (Subgroups)

Some low income teens were more likely to find specific people to be the most helpful when considering or applying to college.

Teachers

Whites (25%)	Vs.	African Americans (19%) and Hispanics (17%)
13-14 year-olds (25%)	Vs.	15-17 year olds (19%)

Parents

Whites (27%) and African Americans (28%)	Vs.	Hispanics (24%)
13-14 year-olds (34%)	Vs.	15-17 year olds (22%)

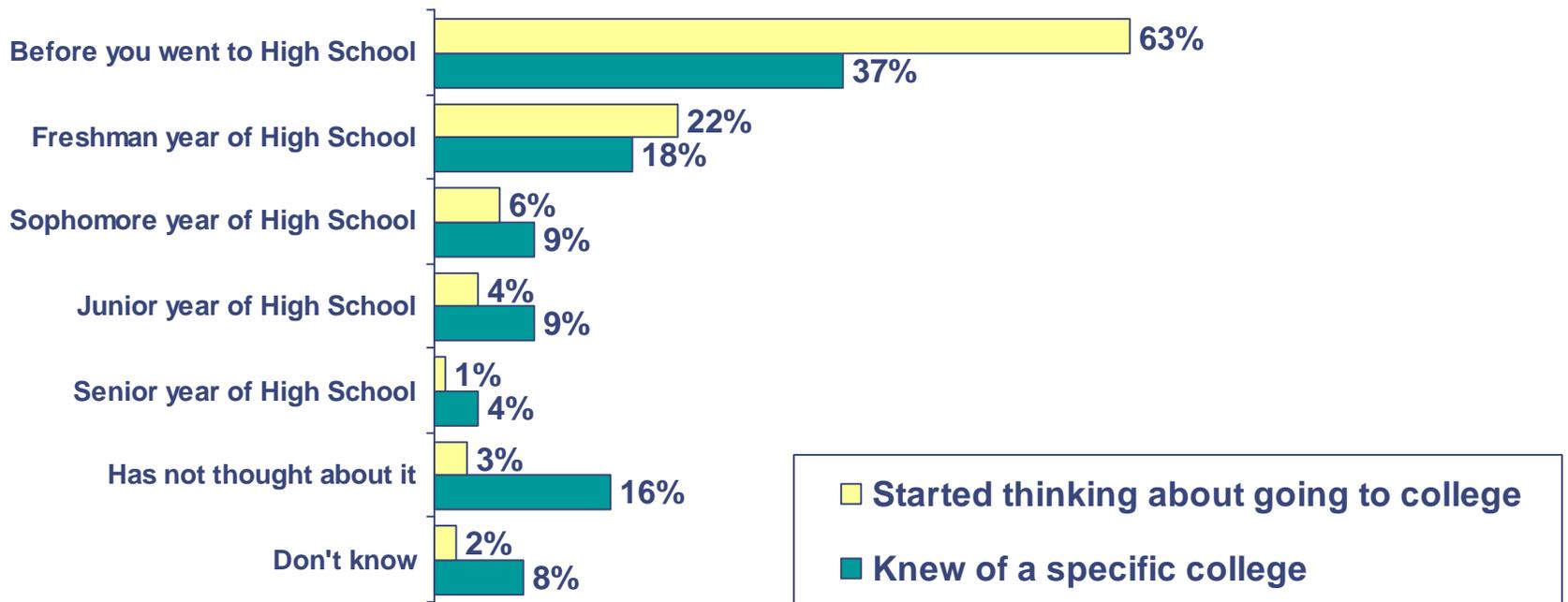
Do most of it yourself

Hispanics (20%) and African Americans (19%)	Vs.	Whites (10%)
15-17 year olds (18%)	Vs.	13-14 year-olds (10%)

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Point that teens started thinking about attending college vs. point when they knew of a specific college they might want to attend

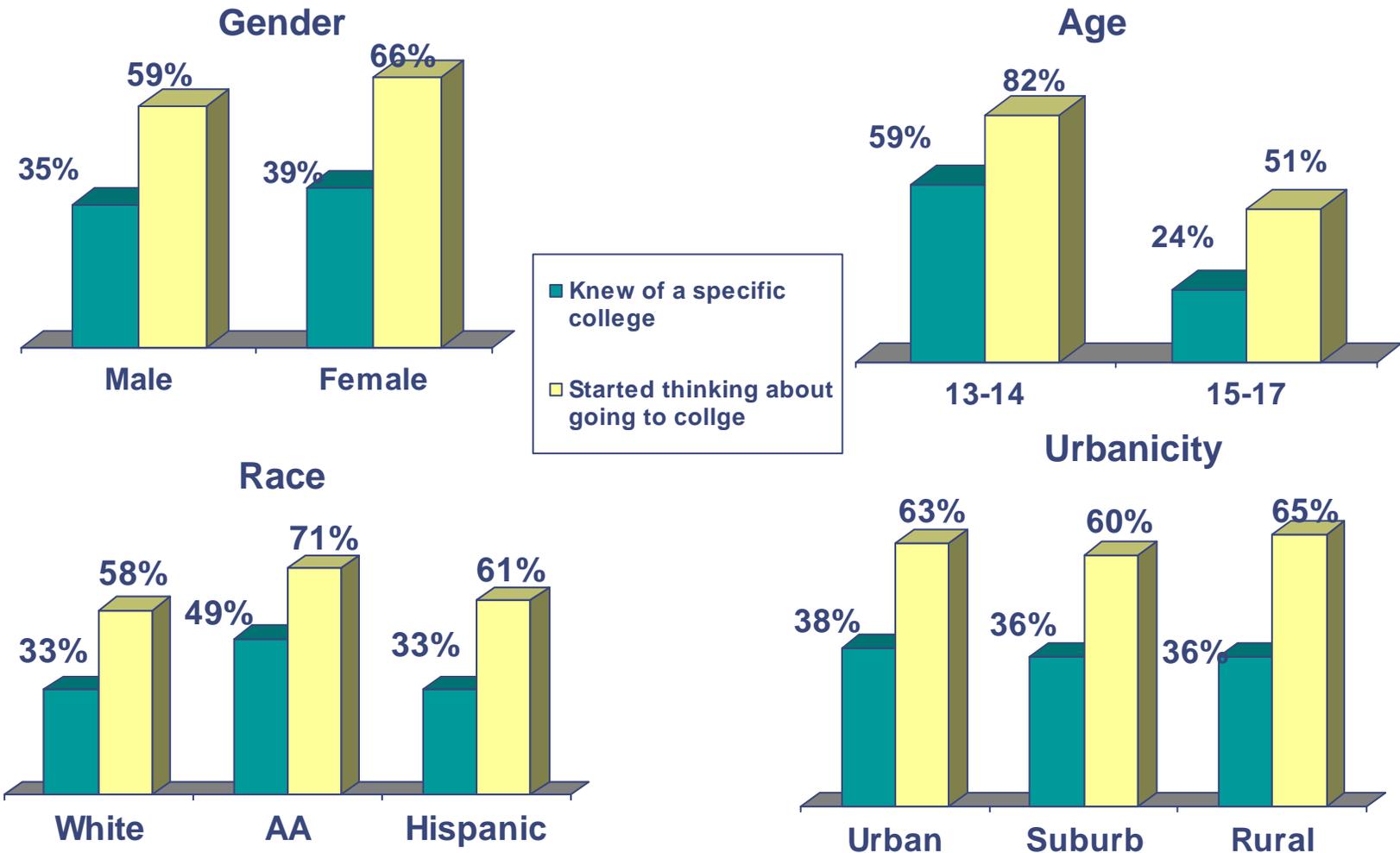
Approximately three out of every five low income teens (63%) started thinking about attending a college or university before they entered High School while 11% waited until after their freshman year. Comparatively, fewer teens (37%) knew of a specific college or university that they would like to attend before they entered high school.



Q: When was the first time you started thinking about attending a college or university?
Q: And when was the first time you knew of a SPECIFIC college or university that you might want to attend?

Percentage of low income teens who started thinking about attending college and attending a specific university before they went to High School

(Subgroups)



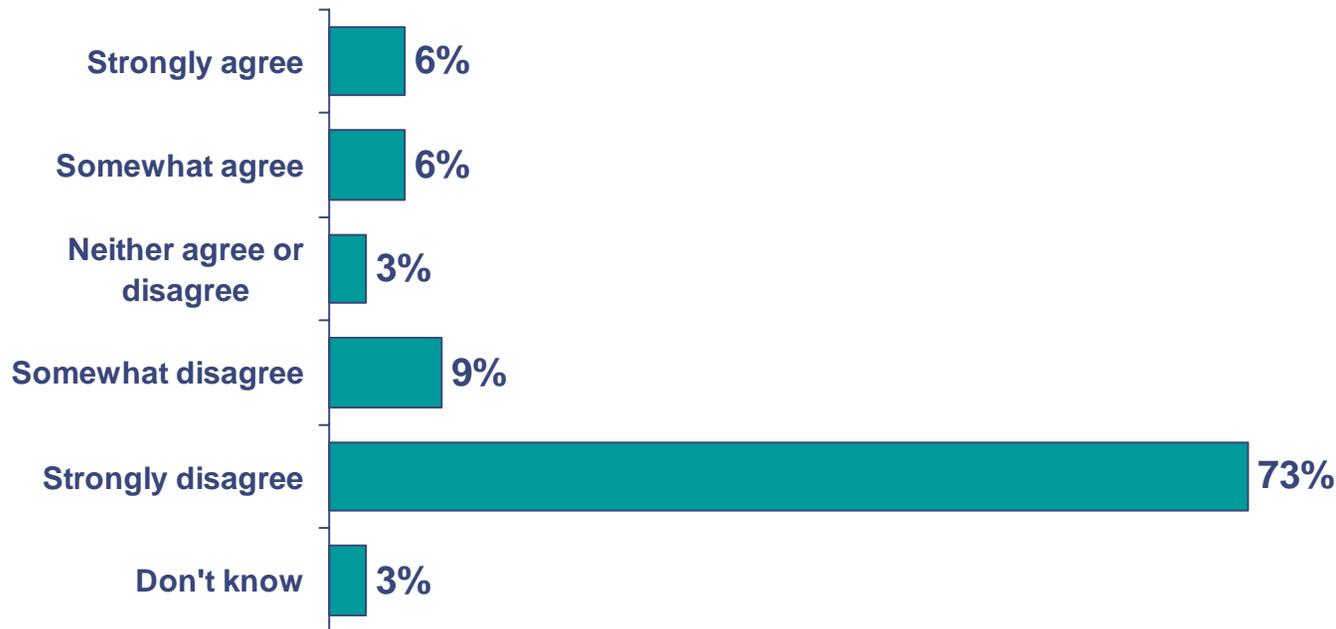
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Q: When was the first time you started thinking about attending a college or university?
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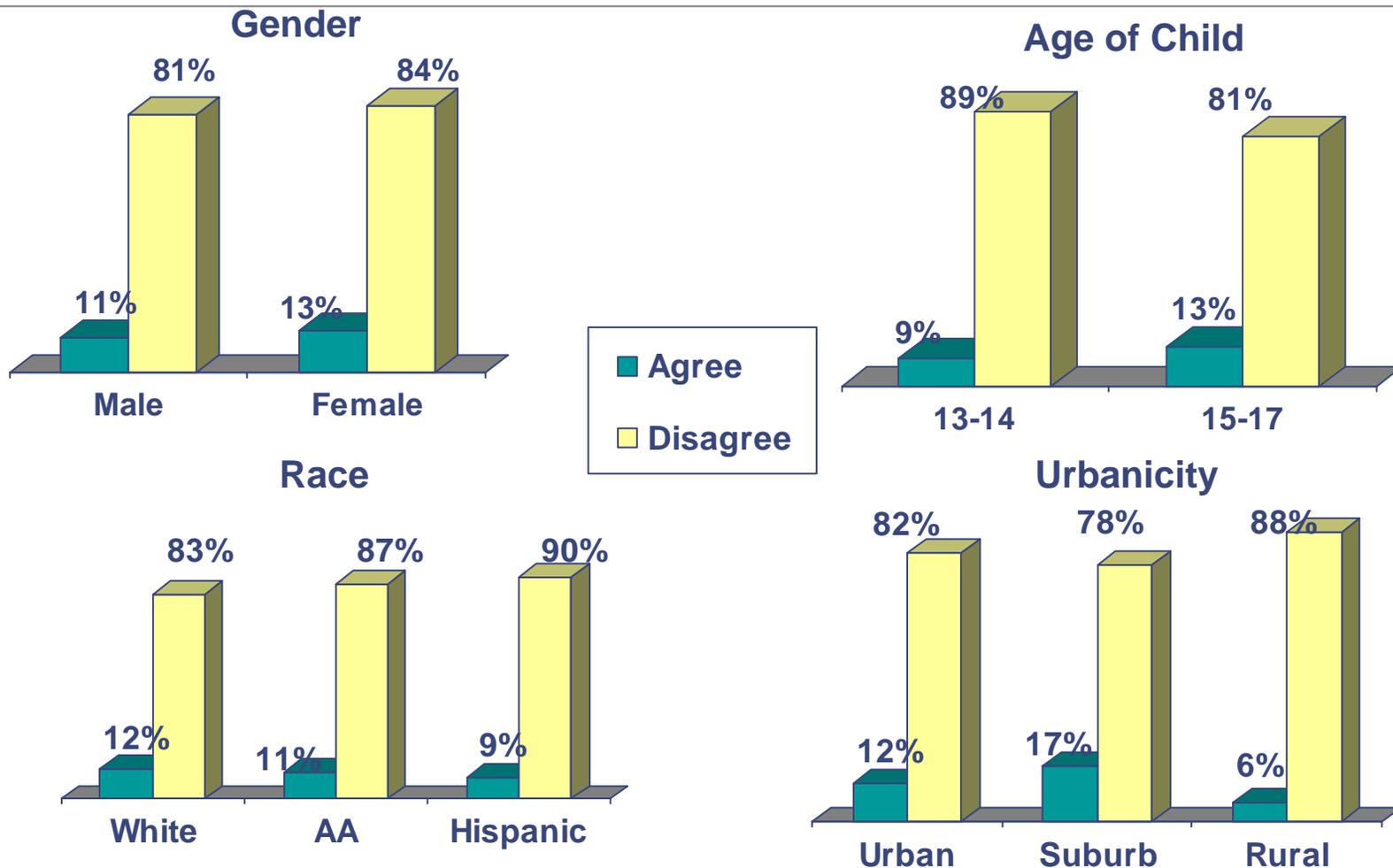
Parent Attitudes and Behavior

Parent perception regarding whether or not their child is “college material”

Approximately three out of four low income parents of children ages 13-18 strongly disagree with the statement: ‘I don’t believe my child is college material.’ However, many parents (12%) agree to some degree that their child is not college material.



Percentage of low income parents who agree/disagree that their child is not “college material” (Subgroups)



Note: Due to small cell sizes differences in values are not statistically significant

Parent experiences when child is interested in attending college

Two out of five low income parents have gone to their child to talk about college but will leave the decision up to them. Another 1/5 of parents have pushed their child to seriously apply to or consider college. Fifteen percent of parents had their child approach them and told them the decision to attend college was up to them.



Parent experiences when child is interested in attending college (Subgroups)

Some groups of parents were more likely to have pushed their child* to seriously consider college

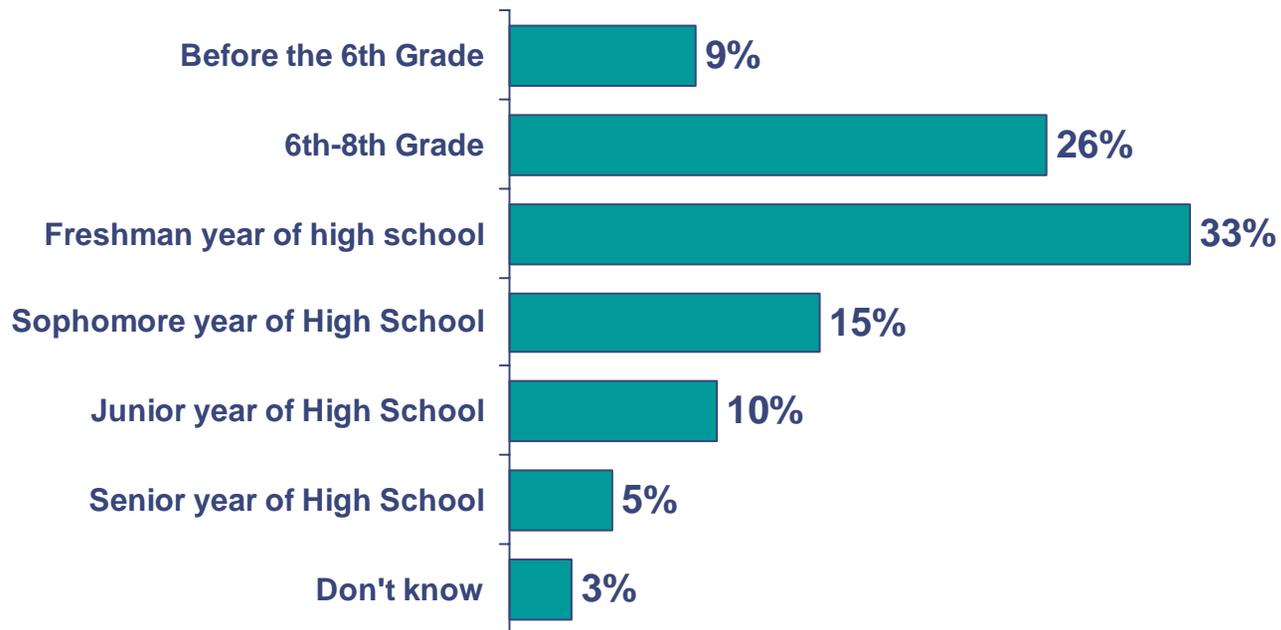
African American (23%) and Hispanic (29%)	Vs.	White (18%)
Moms (25%)	Vs.	Dads(14%)
Child aged 13-14 (24%)	Vs.	Child aged 15-17 (19%)
Suburban (21%) and Rural (22%)	Vs.	Urban (17%)

* Results do not include parents who were approached by their child (response category 4)

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Parents' opinion on the best time for students to start seriously thinking about college

Over 1/3 of parents (35%) believe that students need to start thinking seriously about college before they reach high school. One-third of parents believe the best time is when they are a Freshman in high school and 30% believe that students should think about college in their Sophomore, Junior or Senior year.



Q: *In your opinion, what is the best time for students to start seriously thinking about college?*

Parents' opinion on the best time for students to start seriously thinking about college (Subgroups)

Some groups of parents were more likely to think that 'middle school' or 'before middle school' was the best time for students to start thinking about college.

Hispanic (46%)	Vs.	African American (40%) and White (34%)
Moms (37%)	Vs.	Dads (33%)
Child aged 13-14 (50%)	Vs.	Child aged 15-17 (32%)
Suburban (43%)	Vs.	Urban (35%) and Rural (34%)

Note: Due to small cell sizes differences in values are not statistically significant

Conclusions

Conclusions and Implications

- ✓ Aspirations for college is high among both parents and teens.
- ✓ The 'idea' of college is on the radar, however the level of preparation is not as strong.
- ✓ Many teens turn to their parents for support, however many are relying on themselves and their friends to help them through the process.
- ✓ Younger teens (13-14) appear to be more optimistic about getting a college degree and find their parents more helpful in considering college than older teens (15-17)

Appendix

Demographics

	Low-income teens	Low-Income Parents
Sample size	385	385
Household income	100% < \$25K	100% < \$25K
Gender	50% Male 50% Female	48% Male 52% Female
Age	64% age 13-15 36% age 16-18	43% < age 45 57% > age 45
Race	48% White 26% African-American 26% Hispanic (of which 38% speak Spanish at home)	50% White 25% African-American 25% Hispanic (of which 55% speak Spanish at home)
Household composition	58% 2-parent HH 40% 1-parent HH	58% 2-parent HH 38% 1-parent HH
Urbanicity	53% Urban 27% Suburban 20% Rural	37% Urban 36% Suburban 27% Rural
Region	13% Northeast 27% Midwest 39% South 20% West	17% Northeast 32% Midwest 37% South 15% West