

PUBLIC OPINION NEWS SERVICE

For Release SUNDAY, Nov. 14, or MONDAY, Nov. 15, 1954

'WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT OUR TEEN-AGERS?' No. 1 in a Series

Teen-agers 'Go Wrong' Because Parents are 'Not Strict Enough'

U.S. Adults Indict Parents on 5 Major Counts as Reasons Why More Youngsters Acting up Today

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(First in a series of articles dealing with the public's views on America's juvenile delinquency problem, based on nationwide surveys by the Gallup Poll.)

PRINCETON, N. J., Nov. 13—Why is there so much juvenile delinquency throughout the country? What are the main reasons for teen-agers acting up? What can be done to make America's youngsters behave?

If the experts on youth problems were to ask those questions of the nation's parents, as the Institute has just done, they would find that they place the blame for teen-agers "going wrong" squarely on the shoulders of the PARENTS.

And the major indictment of parents, they say, is that they are not strict enough with their youngsters.

How would parents cure the situation?

Their volunteered answers to this question point to three major remedies: 1. Provide more home supervision, 2. Provide more recreation facilities in the community, and 3. Lay down stricter rules of discipline for youngsters.

When polled on two specific suggestions that have been put forward by many experts, an overwhelming majority of adults in the survey approved of both a curfew for youngsters and also holding parents responsible for property damage caused by their children.

Juvenile delinquency has been on the increase each year in this country since 1948.

According to Richard Clendenen, executive director of the Senate subcommittee on juvenile delinquency, the volume has increased more than 40 per cent in the five-year period between 1948 and 1953 and is greater today, in 1954, than it was at its World War II peak, in 1945.

Clendenen predicts that, by 1960, more than a million and a half youngsters will be in trouble with the law each year unless the trend is reversed.

To find out the views of America's parents, the Institute assigned its corps of reporters to put a series of questions to a representative cross-section of adults living in big cities, small towns and rural areas across the country, as follows:

"1. There's been a lot of discussion recently about our teen-agers getting out of hand. As you see it, what are the main reasons for their acting up?"

Here are the five major indictments of parents:

1. Parents are not strict enough, give youngsters too much freedom.
2. Parents do not provide proper home life, training in the home.
3. Parents have too many outside interests, not enough interest in their youngsters.
4. Parents are too indulgent, give youngsters too much money.
5. Parents both work, mother needed at home.

Other reasons mentioned included the draft, TV, comic books, and movies, lack of recreational facilities, and drinking, dope and narcotics.

"2. Well, as you see it, what do you think is the best thing that could be done to cure these conditions among our teen-agers?"

Here are the five leading cures mentioned:

1. Provide more home supervision, closer home ties, more attention to youngsters.

2. Provide more recreational facilities for youngsters, sports, group activities.

3. Lay down stricter rules of discipline, cut down on money.

4. Give greater responsibility to youngsters, treat them as adults.

5. Re-educate parents to their responsibility, adult education.

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The last two questions dealt with specific suggestions that have been made to help solve the problem:

"3. Do you think it would be a good idea or a poor idea to have a curfew in this town for children under the age of 16—that is, not allowing them on the street after, say, 9 or 10 p.m. unless they are with their parents?"

The vote:

	Men	Women	TOTAL
Good idea .	72%	82%	77%
Poor idea .	26	15	20
No opinion	2	3	3
	100%	100%	100%

"4. Do you think it would be a good idea or a poor idea to hold parents responsible for property damage that their children cause?"

	Men	Women	TOTAL
Good idea .	87%	85%	86%
Poor idea .	9	11	10
No opinion	4	4	4
	100%	100%	100%