

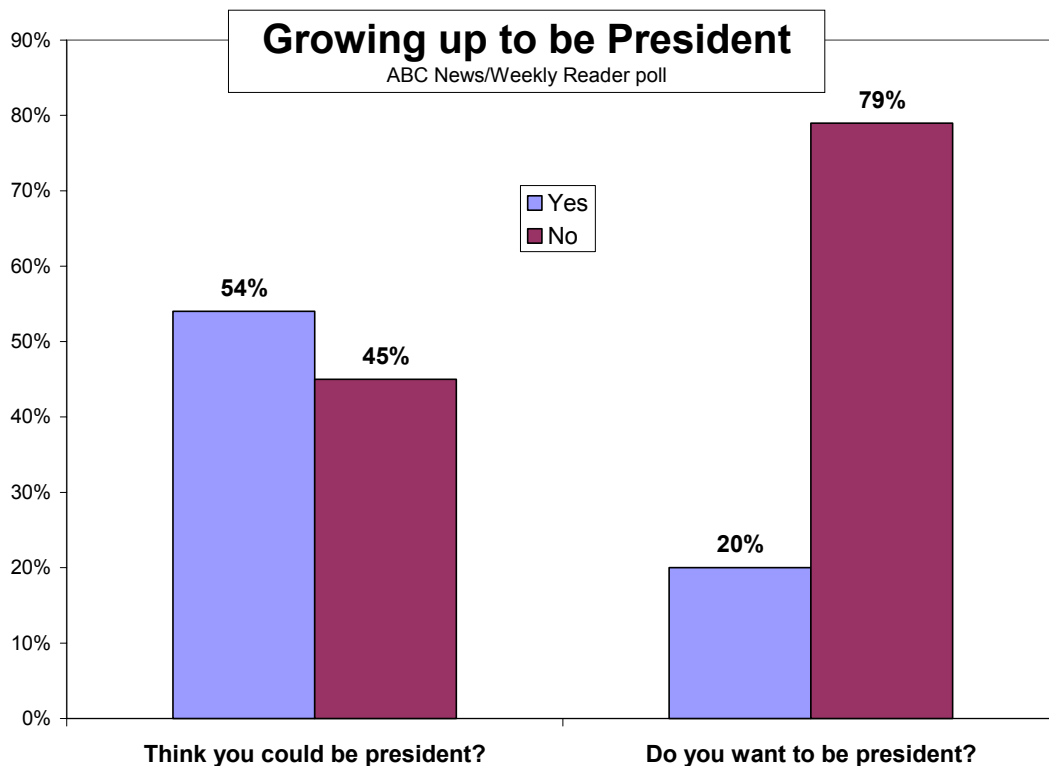
Run the Country? Most Teens Would Pass

At least one aspect of the American dream isn't quite what it's cracked up to be: While most teen-agers in this country do think they could grow up to be president of the United States, the vast majority wouldn't want the job.

Fifty-four percent of 12- to 17-year-olds in this ABC News/Weekly Reader poll think they could grow up to be president. That includes equal numbers of boys and girls, and more, 62 percent, of teens of color, despite a history of white male presidents.

But an overwhelming majority of teens – nearly eight in 10 – aren't interested in the job.

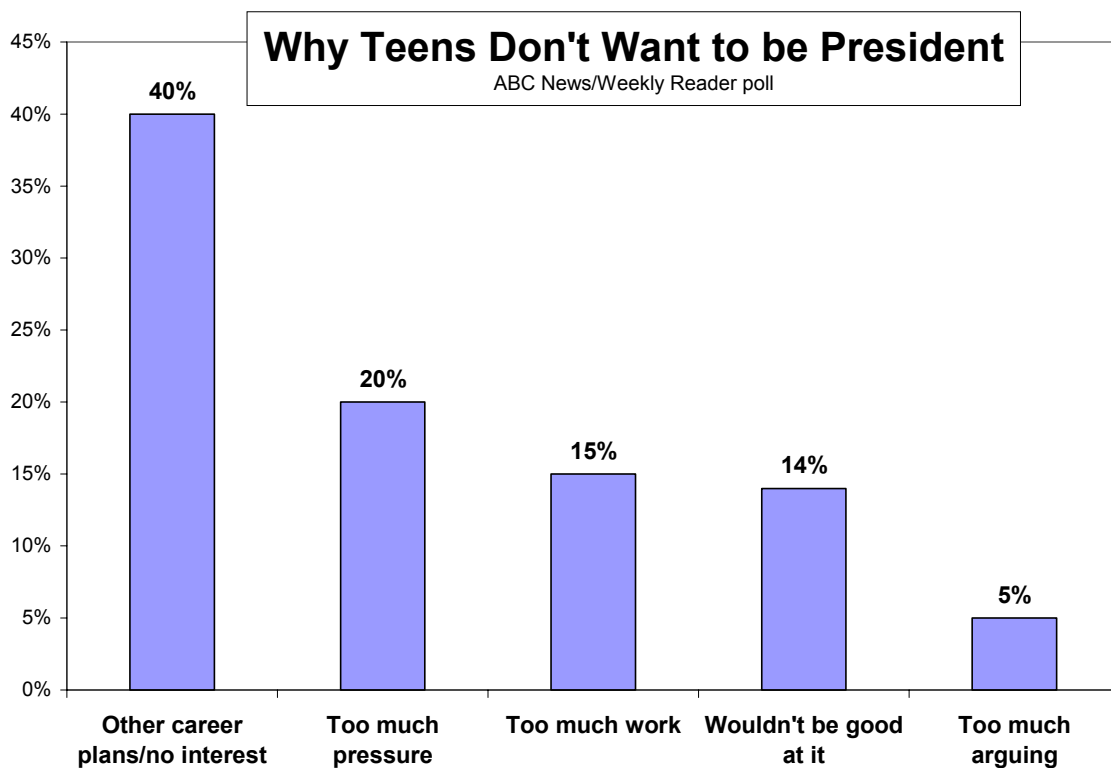
Why not? The top reason by far, cited by 40 percent, is either a lack of interest in politics, or other career plans. An additional 20 percent say there's too much pressure or responsibility in the job, 15 percent say it's too much work and 14 percent think they wouldn't be good at it. Five percent say there's "just too much arguing" involved.



The number of teens who think they could be elected president has slipped from 62 percent in an ABC News poll five years ago. This being an election year, getting the job might look especially tough.

Younger teens are somewhat more optimistic about their prospects of getting elected president, and are twice as likely to want the job. Kids age 12-14 say they could be president by a 17-point margin (58-41 percent); those age 15-17 are evenly split. And 26 percent of the younger group would like to be president, compared with 13 percent of older teens.

Girls are 15 points more likely than boys to say they're not interested in the country's top job because of other career plans or a disinterest in politics. Boys are more apt than girls either to say that it's too much responsibility or too much work.



2004 ELECTION – But lack of interest in politics does not translate into lack of interest in this year's presidential election. Indeed, most teens, 57 percent, say they're at least somewhat interested in the campaign. And for good reason: Seventy-two percent say that in terms of an impact on their own lives, it does matter who gets elected.

Just one in six are "very" interested in the election, but with the general election 10 months away, this has time to grow. Interest is higher among teens with college-educated parents – and it's twice as high (66 to 32 percent) among kids who think it matters in their life who's president, compared with those who don't.

REASONS – In addition to the responses mentioned above, some respondents gave other reasons for not wanting to be president. Some reflect the current state of the world – "I don't like war"; another, perhaps reflecting the Clinton years, was "too many scandals." One respondent cited security fears – "I don't want to get assassinated." Another critiqued the country's political structure: "I think that no one should have that much power." And one other summed it up neatly: "It doesn't sound like fun."

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Weekly Reader poll was conducted by telephone Jan. 7-11, 2004, among a random national sample of 505 12- to 17-year-olds. The results have a 4.5-point error margin. Field work by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Dalia Sussman.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Poll_Vault/Poll_Vault.html

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Results follow:

*= less than 0.5 percent

1. Do you think that you could grow up to be President of the United States if you wanted to, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
1/11/04	54	45	1
2/7/99	62	36	1

2. Would you want to be President when you grow up, or not?

	Yes	No	No opinion
1/11/04	20	79	1
2/7/99	17	81	1

3. (IF NO, Q2) What's the main reason you would not want to be president? Is it because (it's too much work), (there's too much arguing), (you don't think you'd be good at it), (there's too much pressure or responsibility), (you have other career plans or no interest in politics), or what?

	Too much work	Too much arguing	Wouldn't be good at it	Too much pressure	Other plans, no interest	Other	No op.
1/11/04	15	5	14	20	40	6	1

4. How interested are you in this year's presidential election: very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested or not interested at all?

	-----Interested-----			-----Uninterested-----			No opin.
	NET	Very	Somewhat	NET	Not too	Not at all	*
1/11/04	57	17	41	42	22	20	*

5. In terms of any impact on your own life, do you think it matters who's elected president, or not?

	Matters	Doesn't matter	No opinion
1/11/04	72	25	2

END