

E A G L E S C O U T S

A Legacy of Values-Based Leadership and Service

Scouting  America



INTRODUCTION

Since 1912, more than 2.8 million young people have earned the rank of Eagle Scout. The highest award in Scouts BSA requires youth to demonstrate leadership, citizenship, and service to others, culminating in an Eagle Scout service project that benefits an organization in a Scout's community.

As they progress through the ranks of Scouts BSA on their trail to Eagle, young people learn skills that build resilience and confidence, enhance problem-solving, and develop leadership. Eagle Scouts earn a minimum of 21 merit badges that provide them with knowledge and hands-on experience in citizenship, financial and time management, fitness, first aid, personal communications, emergency preparedness, positive relationship-building, environmental stewardship, and career exploration and job readiness.





Research Objectives and Methodology

Previous studies have shown that participation in Scouting produces better citizens and adults who exhibit pro-social behaviors. The Eagle Scout: Merit Beyond the Badges study, conducted in 2010, examined the character-building advantages of participating in Scouting and the positive attributes that provide advantages and benefits to Eagle Scouts over non-Scouts as well as over other Scouts who never attain the rank of Eagle.

It has been more than 15 years since the last Eagle Scout study. Since then, Scouting has expanded to serve all youth, and society has been reshaped by rapid technological growth and a global pandemic. It is time to reevaluate the benefits of earning the Eagle Scout rank to determine if the advantages identified more than a decade ago remain relevant today.

To obtain answers to these questions, Scouting America commissioned The Harris Poll to study differences between Scouts and non-Scouts. The online survey was conducted from October 10, 2025, to January 9, 2026. The Harris Poll recruited non-Scout populations from a random sample of their panel and Scouting populations from lists of Scouting alumni and Eagle Scouts that were provided for this project. Study participants included 3,178 adults ages 18 and over, including 1,549 who were never members of Scouting America (“non-Scouts”), along with members of Scouting America, including 1,067 who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout (“Eagle Scouts”) and 562 who did not achieve the rank of Eagle (“non-Eagle Scouts”). A full methodology can be found at the end of the report.

The survey was closely aligned with the previous Eagle Scout study conducted by Baylor University but was updated for relevance to today’s available technology and contexts. The survey included subjects grouped within three main topics:

- Well-being (e.g., survey questions dedicated to recreational activities, emotional well-being, relational well-being, and physical well-being)
- Civic engagement and leadership (e.g., survey items focusing on membership in formal and informal groups, community donations, volunteering, community leadership, political participation, civic leadership, and environmental stewardship)
- Character development (e.g., survey items on commitment to learning, goal orientation, planning/preparedness, self-efficacy, accountability, moral attitudes, openness to others, civic attitudes, and spirituality)

Analyses were conducted to determine whether three groups of survey respondents—Eagle Scouts, Scouts who did not earn Eagle rank (henceforth, “non-Eagle Scouts”), and non-Scouts—differed in their survey responses. This report primarily includes the findings of Eagle Scouts compared to non-Eagle Scouts and non-Scouts. Regression analysis was employed, controlling for demographic differences.

A full description of the regression analysis can be found at the end of this report.

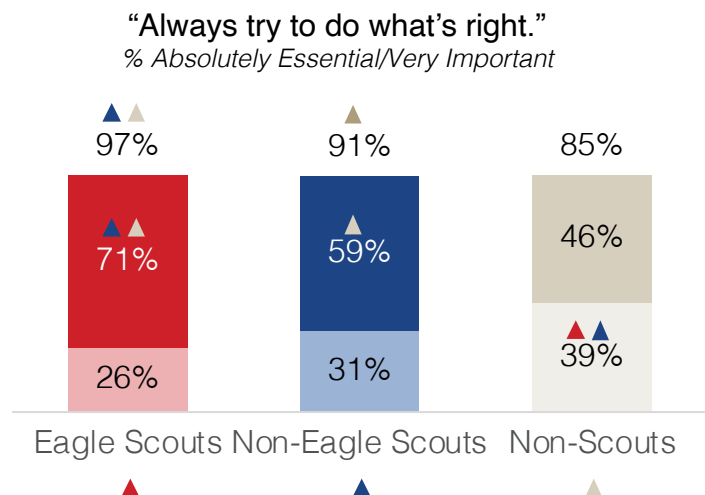
Symbols Used in the Report

The charts and graphs found throughout this report will show statistics for Eagle Scouts in red, non-Eagle Scouts in blue, and non-Scouts in khaki. Differences between Eagle Scouts, non-Eagle Scouts, and non-Scouts, which are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, are denoted by arrows with the comparison group’s respective color shown. For example:



Statistically significant differences found through the regression analysis are denoted with this symbol.

At right, the number of Eagle Scouts and non-Eagle Scouts who find this essential/important is statistically significant to non-Scouts.





Key Findings

ALL SCOUTS

Although this report is about the benefits youth experience from being Eagle Scouts, their story is intertwined with the story of all Scouts. Compared to those who have never been in Scouting, all Scouts are more likely than non-Scouts to:

- Have a more positive outlook on their everyday lives
- Have more positive interpersonal relationships
- Set short-term and long-term goals
- Be active in their local community
- Take leadership roles in their community

EAGLE SCOUTS

Eagle Scouts are likely to point to Scouting as having significantly influenced their lives.

- 99% of Eagle Scouts say Scouting has had an extremely or somewhat positive influence on their lives.
- 89% indicate Scouting America was most influential in shaping their values growing up.

Significantly more Eagle Scouts than Scouts report that Scouting has had a positive impact across key components of their lives, such as:

- Leadership capability (98% agree)
- Ability to work with others (96% agree)
- The ability to accomplish tasks (95% agree)
- Their personal values (95% agree)
- Their hobbies and interests (92% agree)

The distinct experience of earning the rank of Eagle Scout carries over after youth membership, with Eagle Scouts being more likely than Scouts or non-Scouts to report the following:

- Higher satisfaction with their lives

- Frequently experiencing feelings of enjoyment, gratitude, and purpose
- Less frequently experiencing loneliness, sadness, and fear
- Living the values found in the Scout Oath and Law
- Appreciation for nature and the environment



NON-SCOUTS

Those who have never been in Scouting recognize the strong impact that Scouting has on its members and wider society.

- Nine out of 10 agree that Scouting:
 - Helps youth develop character (93%)
 - Helps youth respect the differences of other people (92%)
 - Makes people more likely to volunteer in their community (90%)
- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of non-Scouts agree that America would be much worse off without Scouting.
- More than eight out of 10 say Scouting has a positive effect on a person's:
 - Ability to work with others (86%)
 - Personal values (85%)
 - Ability to accomplish tasks they set for themselves (83%)
 - Leadership capability (83%)
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) agree they would be more inclined to trust someone if they knew they were a Scout.



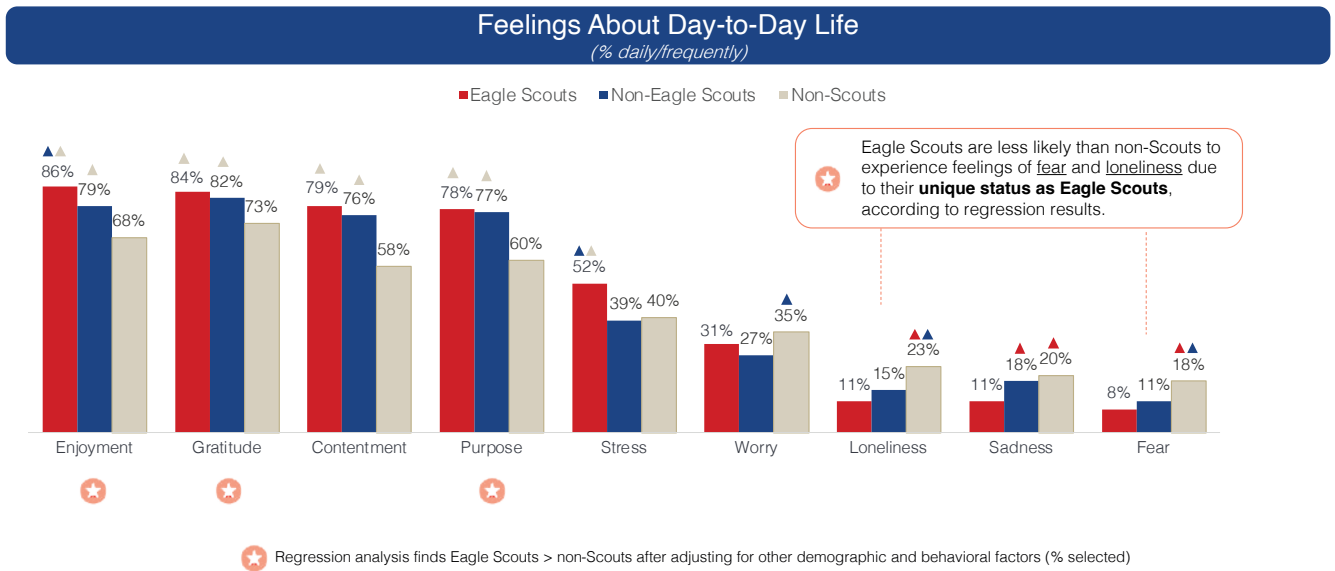
Eagle Scout Comparisons

WELL-BEING

Outlook on Life

Mental health has become a prominent topic in today’s media as rising rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness—particularly among young people—have drawn widespread attention. Men and women who were Scouts as youth, and particularly Eagle Scouts, are significantly more likely than those who have never been Scouts to have a positive outlook on life.

Compared to non-Scouts, Eagle Scouts report higher levels of daily/frequent enjoyment; feelings of gratitude, contentment, and purpose; and fewer feelings of loneliness, sadness, or fear.



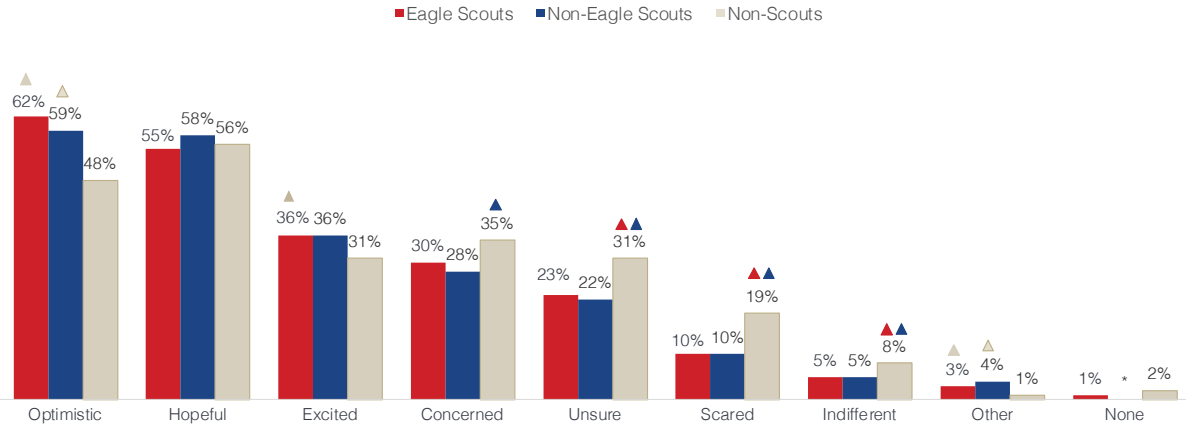
Eagle Scouts are less likely than non-Scouts to experience feelings of **fear** and **loneliness** due to their **unique status as Eagle Scouts**, according to regression results.

“[The best thing I got out of Scouting was] a sense of self-worth. The ability to set and accomplish goals. Belonging to something that is worthwhile and bigger than myself.” – Eagle Scout



Eagle Scouts also have a more positive outlook on their future, saying that they are optimistic and excited.

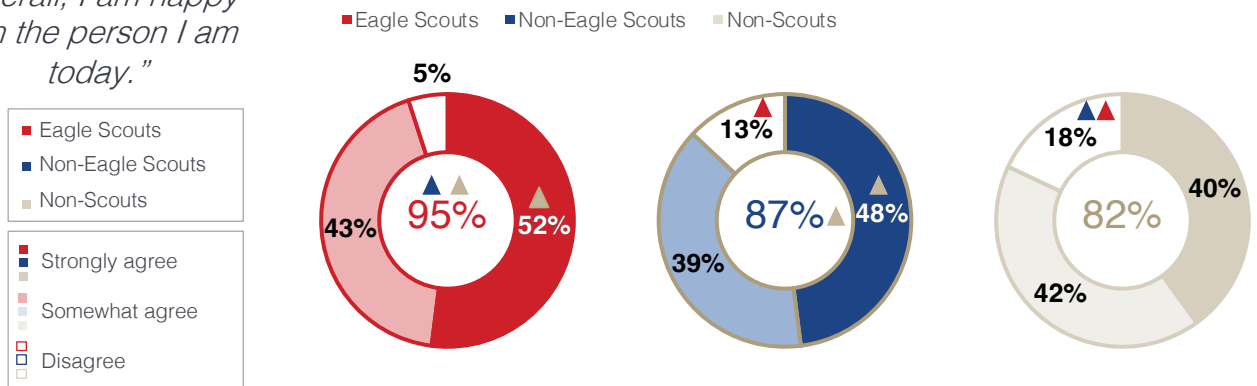
Feelings About the Future



“Scouting was where I found belonging. I made my best friends who grew into family in Scouting. I was encouraged to try hard things and was given the opportunity to achieve them. I was encouraged to safely pursue ambitions and had the connections necessary to build the confidence to reach them.” – Eagle Scout

And Eagle Scouts are happier with the person they are today.

“Overall, I am happy with the person I am today.”

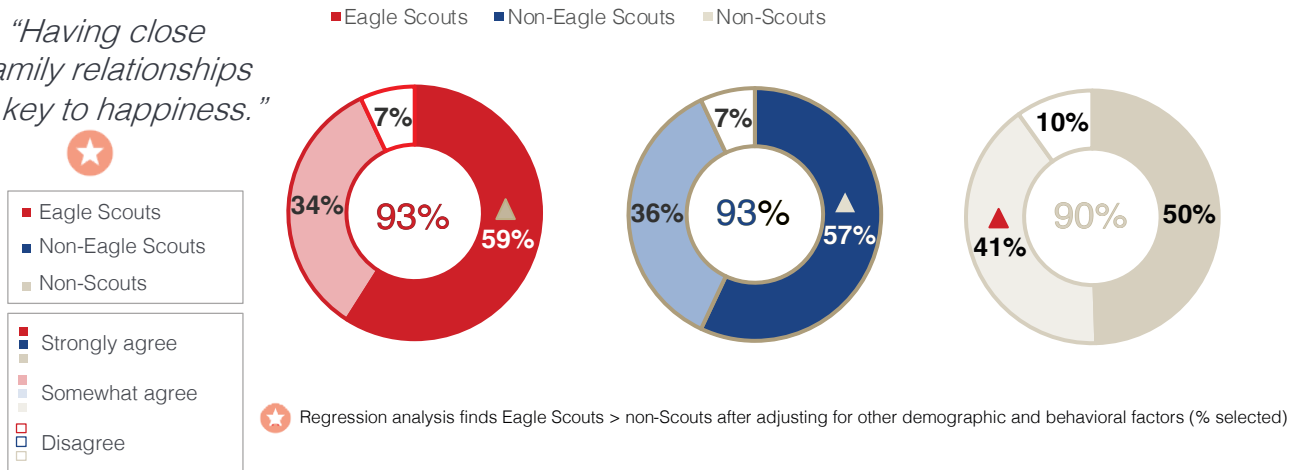


Eagle Scout Comparisons

Relationships

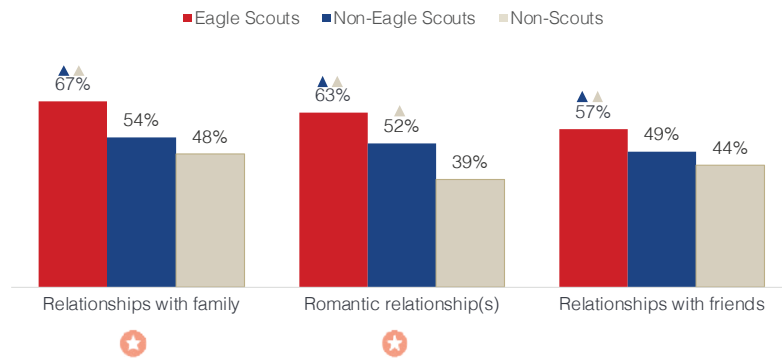
Eagle Scouts value their family relationships, with significantly more strongly agreeing that having close family relationships is a key to happiness.

“Having close family relationships is a key to happiness.”



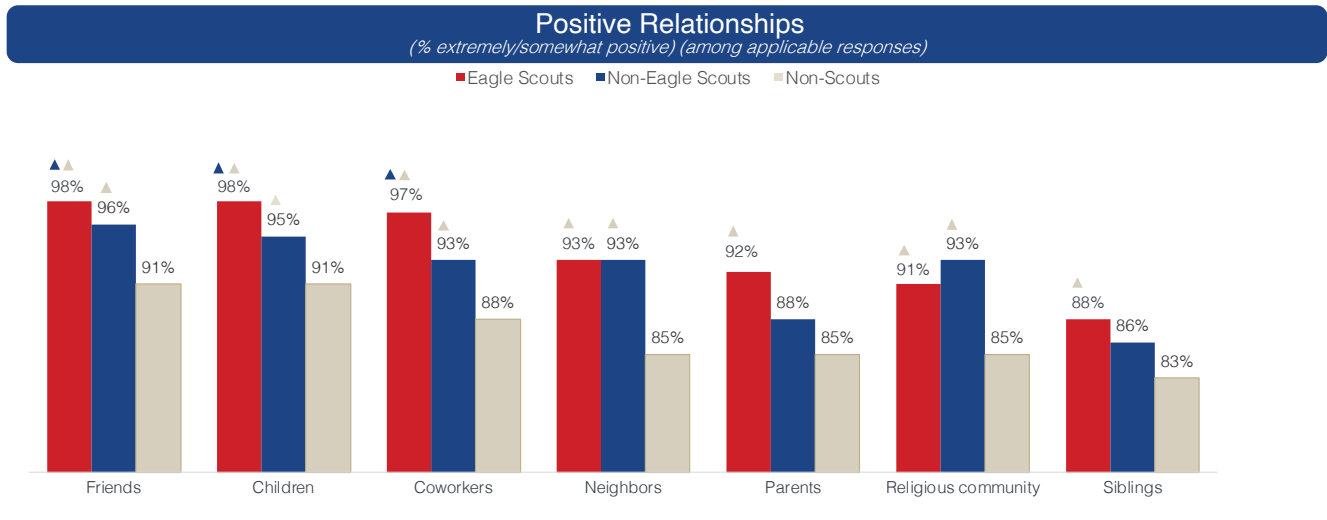
Eagle Scouts’ feelings of well-being extend into their personal relationships. They are more likely than other groups to be very satisfied with their family, romantic relationships, and friendships.

Satisfaction With Certain Relationships (% very satisfied)



“During my last two years (in Scouting), my sister was in Cub Scouts, and my mom was a den leader and adult leader in my girls’ troop. I got to spend tons of quality time with them and share what I was passionate about with them. This helped us all bond since we had this shared activity.” – Eagle Scout

In addition, Eagle Scouts are more likely than those who have never been Scouts to say they have more positive relationships with their friends, children, co-workers, neighbors, parents, religious community, and siblings.



“[The best thing I got out of Scouting was] earning my Eagle rank and the friends I made (and kept) along the way. The rank helped me land my first real job, and I still keep in touch with many of my friends in Scouting.” – Eagle Scout



Eagle Scout Comparisons

Physical Health

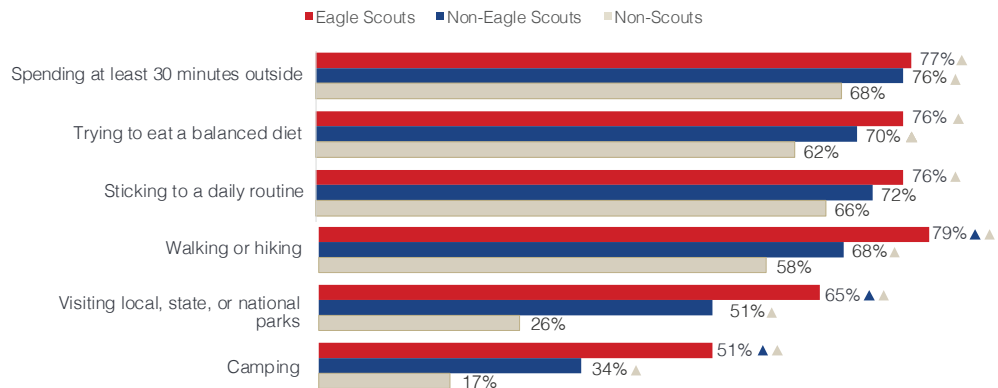
Physical health is also a priority for Eagle Scouts, who are more likely than non-Scouts to have goals related to personal health.

Goals Set



They are also more likely than non-Scouts to regularly engage in outside activities, eat a balanced diet, and stick to daily routines.

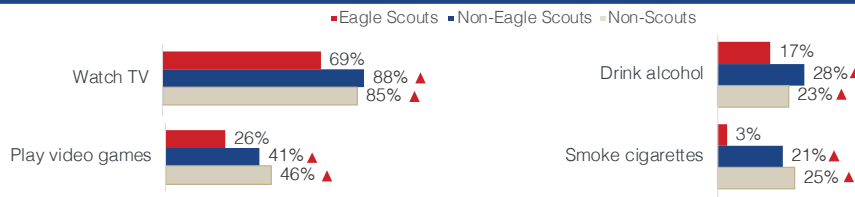
Activities Regularly Engaged In



Moreover, Eagle Scouts are less likely to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes or take part in sedentary activities like watching TV or playing video games, resulting in a healthier lifestyle.

Frequency of Engagement in Activities

(% daily/several times a week)



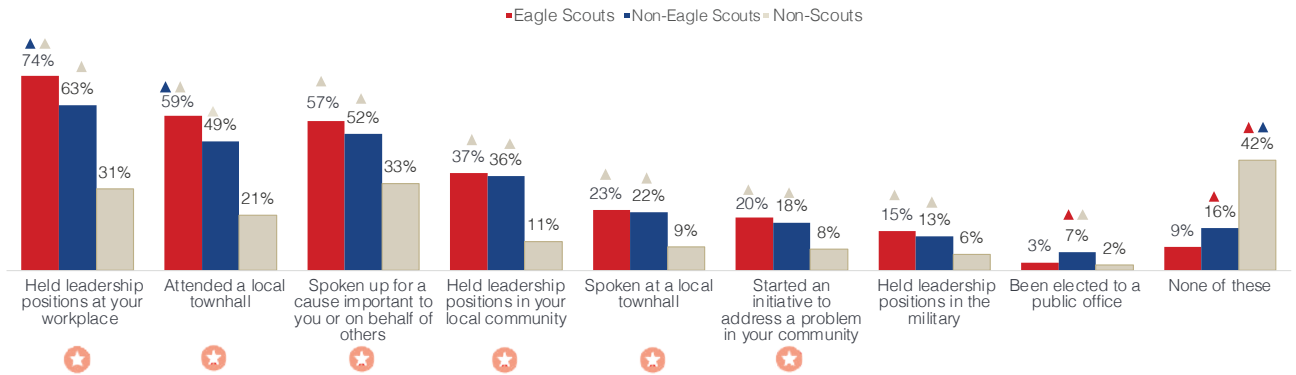


Eagle Scout Comparisons

Civic Engagement and Leadership

Through Scouting activities and experiences, Eagle Scouts hone their leadership skills and gain the confidence to speak up and act. They are more likely to hold leadership positions in their workplaces and local communities, attend and speak at local town halls, speak up for important causes, and start initiatives to address community problems.

Leadership Behaviors and Attitudes

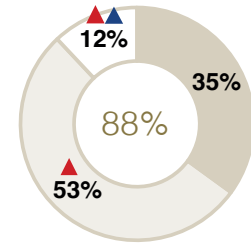
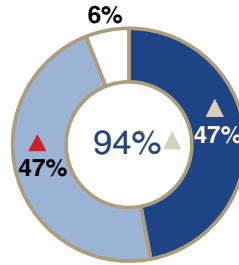
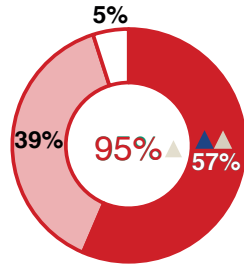
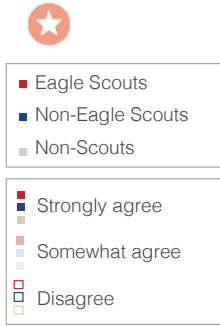


★ Regression analysis finds Eagle Scouts > non-Scouts after adjusting for other demographic and behavioral factors (% selected)

“[The best thing I got out of Scouting was] care for the community and understanding that making an impact by myself can have a ripple effect on those around me. Caring for the community is more than volunteering for me. It’s also speaking up for what is right and valuing everyone that makes up our community.” – Eagle Scout

Eagle Scouts take part in and lead community service projects and see the positive impact of those projects on their communities. So it is not surprising that Eagle Scouts are more likely than Scouts or non-Scouts to strongly agree that they and others can make a positive impact on their communities.

"I think people like me make a positive impact on our communities."

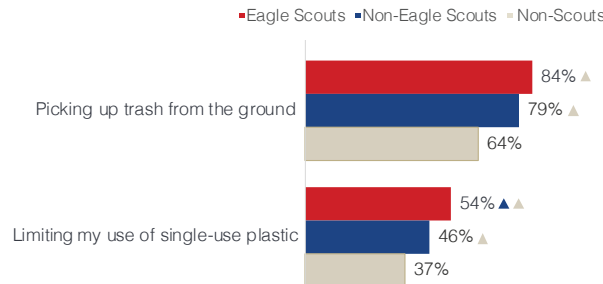


★ Regression analysis finds Eagle Scouts > non-Scouts after adjusting for other demographic and behavioral factors (% strongly agree)

"[The best thing I got out of Scouting was] a sense both that the world is a big, diverse, awesome, scary place and that I, both alone and in leading others, can make a positive impact in it for the good of my family, my country, and all of humanity." – Eagle Scout

Eagle Scouts are also more likely to show their citizenship through being good stewards of the environment. They are more likely than non-Scouts to pick up trash from the ground and limit their use of single-use plastics, contributing to reducing their carbon footprint in their communities.

Habits Regularly Engaged In

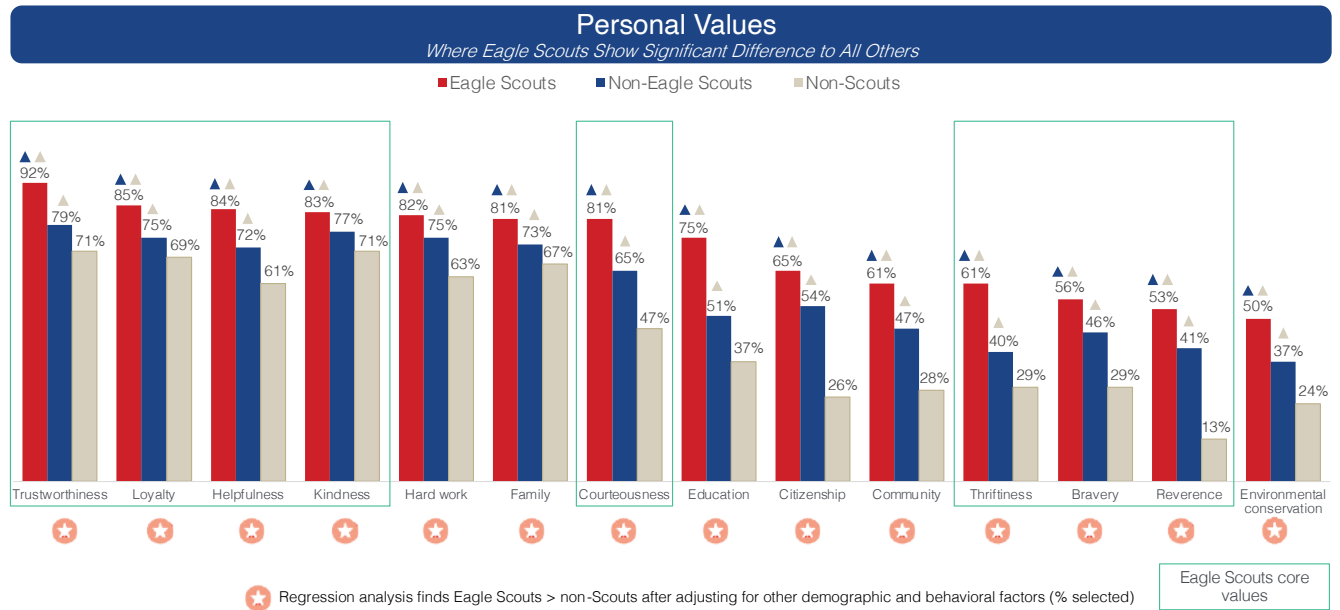


"[The best thing I got out of Scouting was] friendships, confidence, a sense of being able to make a difference, and having an impact on my environment and community." – Eagle Scout

Eagle Scout Comparisons

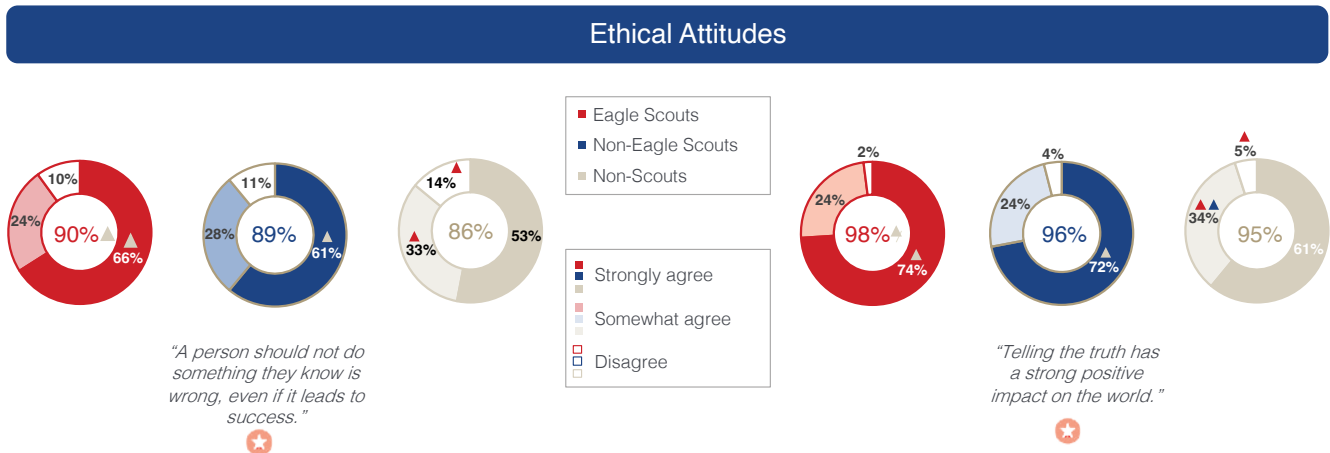
CHARACTER

Eagle Scouts are more likely to live their lives by the Scout Oath and Law and hold these as strong personal values.



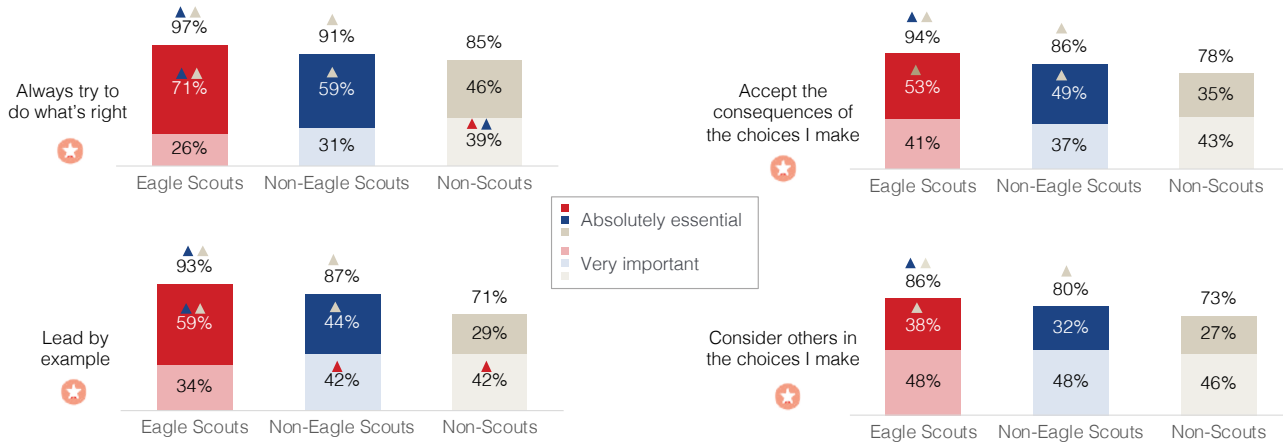
"I think the best thing I learned is that helping others is most important, and when you help others, that kindness will eventually be returned to you." – Eagle Scout

This moral compass makes Eagle Scouts more likely than non-Scouts to hold strong perspectives on ethical stances. They are more likely than Scouts or non-Scouts to believe telling the truth has a positive impact and to say a person should not do something they know is wrong, even if it leads to success.



"[The best thing I got out of Scouting was] my sense of right and wrong. I definitely believe I think more deeply about questions and consequences because Scouting trained me to do so intentionally. Scouting also allowed me to hone my skills by creating a space where I could fail when I made a bad choice as a leader and I could then learn from it." – Eagle Scout

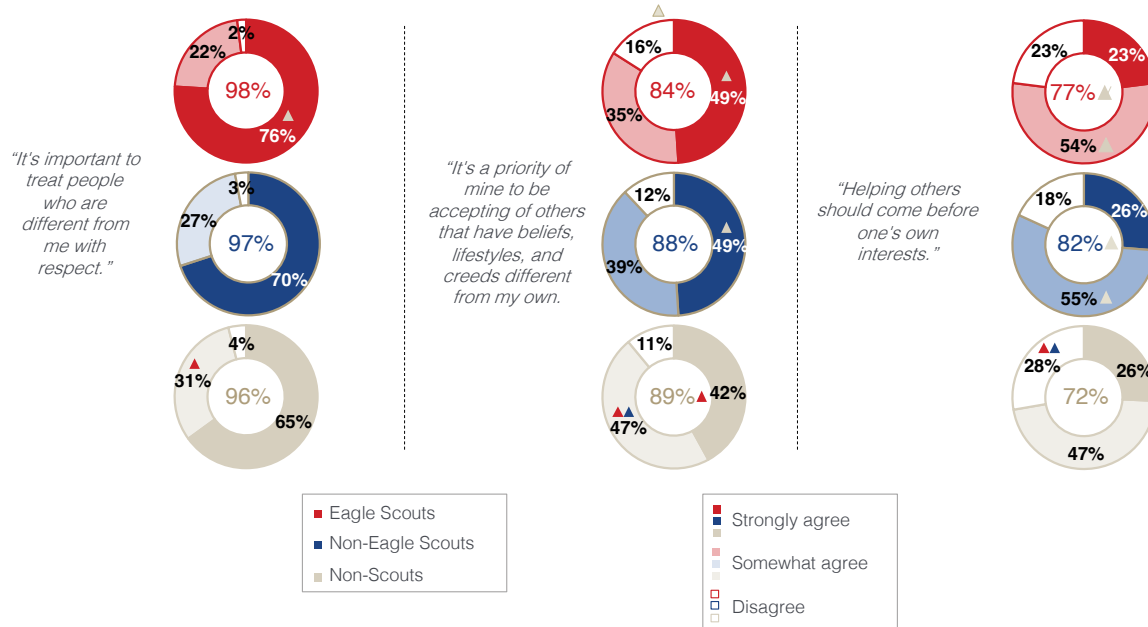
And, because of this strong moral compass developed in Scouting, Eagle Scouts are more likely than Scouts or non-Scouts to say it is essential to:



Eagle Scout Comparisons

Scouting instills principles of respect and support for others. Eagle Scouts are significantly more likely than all others to strongly agree that accepting those of different backgrounds is a personal priority.

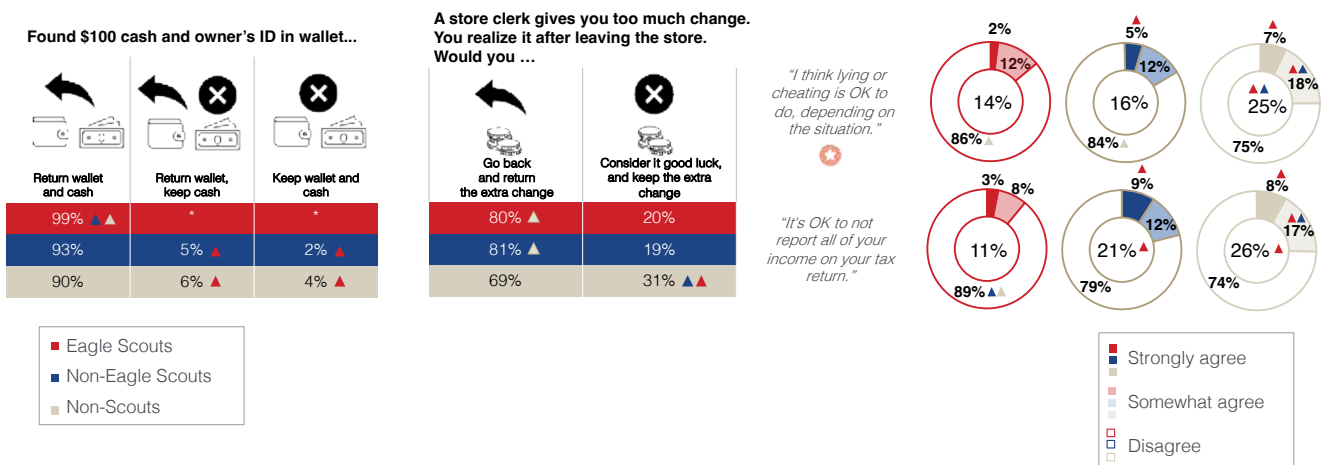
Attitudes About Community Values



"I am still involved with Scouting America. I now have the opportunity to give back and continue to spread the ideals to our youth that the leaders before spread to me—to love one another and serve each other." – Eagle Scout

Eagle Scouts are also more likely to do the right thing when presented with an ethical dilemma, such as returning a cash-filled wallet to its rightful owner.

Situational Behavior and Attitudes About Lying and Stealing

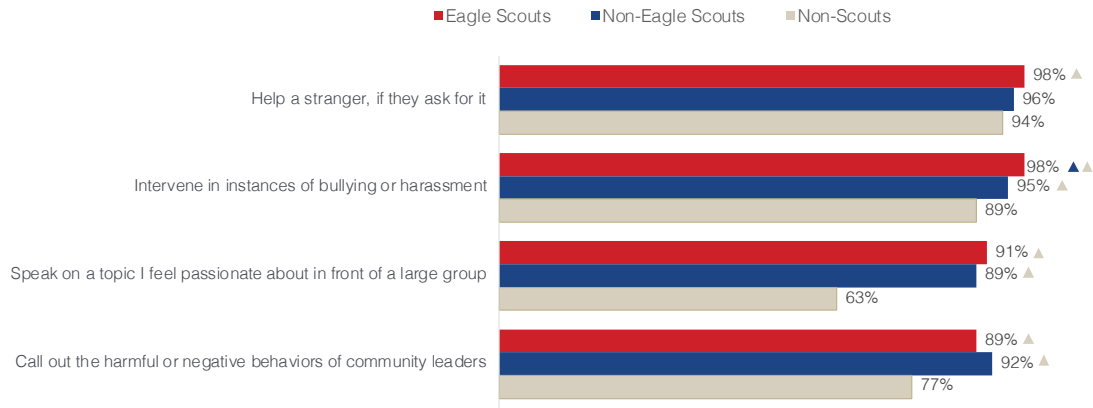


★ Regression analysis finds Eagle Scouts < non-Scouts to strongly agree after adjusting for other demographic and behavioral factors (% selected)

Scouts recite the Scout Oath and Law, which emphasize the Scout's duty to others, God, and country. Eagle Scouts take these words to heart and live their lives by the Scout Oath and Law. They are likely to put into action the words, "On my honor, I will try to do my duty to God and my country, to help other people at all times ..."

Eagle Scouts show their willingness to help other people at all times by being more likely than non-Scouts to intervene in instances of bullying and calling out harmful behaviors.

Willingness to Complete Actions (% extremely/somewhat willing)



"Along with my faith, Scouting gave me a set of values that still shapes how I interact with and treat other people." – Eagle Scout

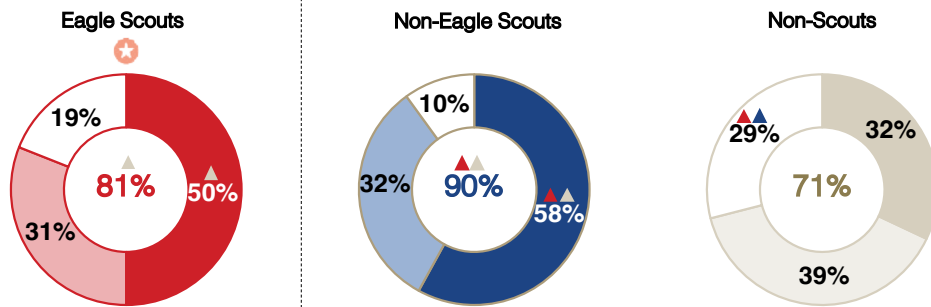


Eagle Scout Comparisons

Duty to Country

Eagle Scouts are more likely than non-Scouts to honor their duty to their country and express a willingness to defend it.

“I would be willing to fight for my country.”



Both Eagle Scouts and non-Eagle Scouts are significantly more likely to be an active military member or veteran (17% for both), compared to non-Scouts (8%).

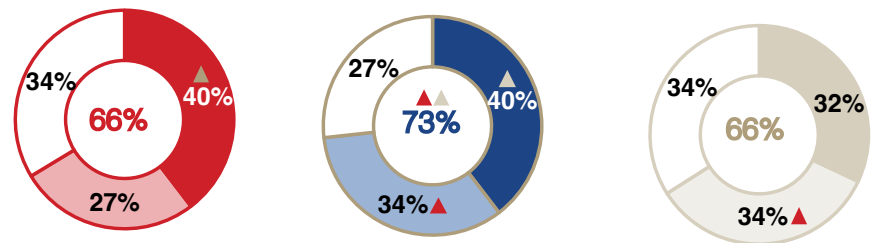
★ Regression analysis finds Eagle Scouts > non-Scouts after adjusting for other demographic and behavioral factors (% selected)

“Being an Eagle Scout was a key reason that I received a nomination to attend the United States Naval Academy. That set me up for success throughout my life. I continue to live by the ideals of the Scout Oath and Law.” – Eagle Scout

Eagle Scouts also demonstrate their duty to God and are significantly more likely than non-Scouts to strongly agree that attending religious services together as a family is important.

Attitudes About Religion

“Attending religious services together as a family is important.”



Demographics

	Scouts n=1628	Non-Scouts n=1549
Gender		
Man	90%	41%
Woman	9%	58%
Prefer not to answer	*	1%
Age		
18-24	5%	11%
25-34	14%	18%
35-44	18%	17%
45-54	14%	16%
55-64	16%	15%
Average	52	48
Race		
White	74%	58%
Hispanic	13%	19%
Black or African American	7%	13%
Asian	3%	7%
Other	*	1%
More than one race	2%	3%

	Scouts n=1628	Non-Scouts n=1549
Urbanicity		
Urban	27%	37%
Suburban	49%	47%
Rural	23%	16%
Education		
Less than high school (NET)	2%	3%
High school to less than 4-year degree (NET)	40%	65%
4-year college degree or more (NET)	58%	32%
Employment Status		
Employed (NET)	67%	60%
All other (NET)	33%	40%
Household Income		
Less than \$35k	8%	17%
\$35k to less than \$50k	5%	10%
\$50k to less than \$75k	15%	16%
\$75 to less than \$100k	10%	13%
\$100k+	61%	45%
Marital Status		
Never married	21%	32%
Married/living with partner	66%	50%
Divorced/separated/widowed	13%	19%
Household Size		
1 HH member	19%	15%
2 HH members	33%	35%
3 HH members	17%	19%
4 HH members	18%	16%
5+ HH members	13%	15%

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	Eagle Scouts n=1066	Non-Eagle Scouts n=453
Scout Leadership Positions Held (top 5 for each shown)		
Patrol leader	86%	43%
Senior patrol leader	76%	28%
Assistant senior patrol leader	67%	29%
Junior assistant Scoutmaster	44%	17%
Order of the Arrow representative	39%	15%
Quartermaster	37%	21%
Den chief	29%	21%
Involvement in Scouting America (Past 3 years)		
As a registered leader	35%	27%
As a donor	28%	22%
As a parent of a Scout	17%	24%
As a council/district committee member	14%	8%
I attend alumni events	11%	14%
As a council board member	7%	7%
As a national board member	1%	5%
Other	10%	6%
I do not actively participate as a Scouting Alumni	46%	47%

	Registered Leader Eagle Scouts n=453	Registered Leader Non-Eagle Scouts n=153
Programs Have Been Registered Leader For (Past 3 years)		
Scouts BSA/Boy Scouts	89%	87%
Cub Scouts	56%	66%
Venturing	24%	32%
Exploring	8%	29%
Sea Scouts	5%	29%
Number of Years Been An Adult Leader		
Average	17	15

DEMOGRAPHICS

Methodology



The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Scouting America among 3,178 U.S. adults ages 18-plus, including 1,549 who were never members of Scouting America (“non-Scouts”) and members of Scouting America (“Scouts”), including 1,067 who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout (“Eagle Scouts”) and 562 who did not achieve the rank of Eagle Scout (“non-Eagle Scouts”). The survey was conducted initially from October 10 through November 17, 2025, and relaunched from December 16, 2025, through January 9, 2026.

Non-Scout and non-Eagle Scout data are each weighted, where necessary, by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, employment status, household income, and political party affiliation to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Eagle Scout data are weighted where necessary by age and gender to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. The non-Eagle Scouts and the Eagle Scouts were combined into a group called Scouts, using a post-weight to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were from Scouting America’s list of Scouting America alumni (n=1,336) or selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys.

The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within the following percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

- Scouts: ± 5.3
- Non-Scouts: ± 3.3
- Eagle Scouts: ± 3.8
- Non-Eagle Scouts: ± 6.0

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error, which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Regression analysis was employed to measure the relationships between variables after controlling for differences. In this research, the relationship between Scouting and various positive social outcomes was measured, as well as other potential confounding variables, in a stepwise model of positive social outcomes. The analysis answers the following question:

To what extent does the singular and unique experience of Scouting—and Eagle Scouting in particular—impact the behaviors and perceptions of its members after accounting for other variables?

Below are the drivers and outcomes tested.



Drivers (Independent Variables) Tested

- Scouting member status
- Membership of other groups or organizations (Q10)
- Scouting involvement as an adult (Q6002)
- Involvement in extracurriculars as a youth (Q6010)
- Political affiliation (DmPolAff)
- Frequency of religious service attendance as an adult and child (Q6030/Q6035)
- Primary religion (Q6025)
- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Employment status
- Household income
- Marital status
- Urbanicity



Outcomes (Dependent Variables) Tested

- Satisfaction with major life components (Q100, Top Box)
- Frequency of negative and positive feelings toward everyday life (Q110, Top Box)
- Agreement with attitudinal statements toward life outlook (Q130, Top Box)
- Importance of moral guidelines in everyday life (Q200, Top Box)
- Self-selected values (Q305)
- Agreement with attitudinal statements toward patriotic, religious, and civic ideas (Q425, Top Box)
- Military service (Q6015, active; veteran; planning to enlist)
- Religious service attendance (Q6030, at least once a week)

Where the unique experience of Scouting has an impact on the responses of Eagle Scouts when compared to non-Scouts, findings are denoted with: ★



