


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 2, 2007

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS SURVEY RESULTS AND RECEIPT OF THE SURVEY'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISSUE: City Council presentation on the results of the Developmental Assets survey conducted in December 2006 and receipt of the survey's Executive Summary.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Receive the presentation by the Youth Policy Commission and staff on the results of the Developmental Assets survey.
- (2) Receive the Developmental Assets Summary Report.

BACKGROUND: The Alexandria Youth Policy Commission in collaboration with the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) surveyed more than 3,000 students in grades seven through twelve during the week of December 4, 2006, to gain their perceptions of the assets they, their peers, families, schools and neighborhoods have to promote thriving and well-being. The survey, which was developed by Search Institute, is called The Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behavior Survey. It has been administered to more than 500,000 youth nationwide over the past 10 years. The survey was available in English and Spanish. It was first administered to Alexandria youth during the 2000-2001 school year. The information collected will be used by City agencies and the Schools to develop and implement programs to address the needs of Alexandria's youth.

DISCUSSION: The survey includes 156 items on a large number of topics and was completed anonymously. The majority of the items focused on such things as values, school behavior, and relationships. There were a number of questions about alcohol and drug consumption (14), sexual behavior (2), and antisocial behavior (9). All of the questions were reviewed by the Youth Policy Commission and ACPS staff and were deemed appropriate for use with middle school and high school age students.

Through the survey a community is able to obtain a profile of the developmental assets, deficits, and thriving and high-risk behaviors of their youth. The information can help the community gain a better understanding of students' behaviors and needs, in order to establish or modify priorities,

strategies, and programs to meet the needs of youth. The survey results will be used to build City-wide commitment to the well-being of our youth and provides data for obtaining grant and foundation support. Additionally the survey adds "youth voice" to our community planning efforts.

Alexandria youth reported having an average of 18.3 of the 40 assets. While this is consistent with national results, it still shows that our community has some work to do to build the number of assets among our youth. Eighty-one percent of the youth had between 11 to 30 assets. Seventh graders had the highest number of assets at 19.1, as compared to twelfth graders with 18.2 assets. Ninth graders had the lowest number of assets at 17.8.

Over the next several months, the Youth Policy Commission, and staff from the Office of Youth Services and the ACPS Monitoring and Evaluation Services plan to conduct a series of meetings with youth, parents, civic and community leaders, and professionals to mobilize community action around building assets in youth. The ACPS staff presented the survey results to the Alexandria School Board on April 12, 2007.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact to the City's General Fund.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment I. Executive Summary of the Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth

Attachment II. Power Point Presentation of the Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth

STAFF:

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Debra R. Collins, Director of Human Services

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Ronald Frazier, Director of Youth Services, DHS

Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth

Executive Summary

Alexandria City Public Schools
Alexandria, VA

March 2007

Prepared by:



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Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth

Alexandria City Public Schools

Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets provides a tool for assessing the health and well-being of middle and high school age youth. The asset framework represents a common core of developmental building blocks crucial for all youth, regardless of community size, region of the country, gender, family economics, or race/ethnicity. This report summarizes the extent to which youth in your community experience these assets and how the assets relate to their behavior. These 40 Developmental Assets were assessed in December, 2006 using the survey *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*.

The following table describes the youth in your community who participated in the study.

Who Was Surveyed		Number of Youth	Percent of Total
Total Sample*		3041	100
Gender**	Male	1384	46
	Female	1625	54
Grade**	6	0	0
	7	520	17
	8	553	18
	9	485	16
	10	521	17
	11	516	17
	12	440	14
Race / Ethnicity**	American Indian	20	1
	Asian / Pacific Islander	204	7
	Black / African American	1093	37
	Hispanic	668	22
	White	671	22
	Multi-racial	335	11
* Five criteria are used to determine whether individual responses are of good quality. In your study, survey forms were discarded for not meeting one or more of these criteria. See full report for more information.			
** Numbers may not sum to "Total Sample" due to missing information.			

The Developmental Assets are grouped into two major types (see Figures 1 and 2). **External assets** are the networks of support, opportunities and people that stimulate and nurture positive development in youth. **Internal assets** are the young person's own commitments, values, and competencies. Figures 1 and 2 provide the percentage of all youth in your study reporting each asset.

Figure 1: External Assets

Percent of Your Youth Reporting Each of 20 External Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition	Percent
Support	1. Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.	67
	2. Positive family communication	Young person and his or her parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek parent(s)' advice and counsel.	22
	3. Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.	40
	4. Caring neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.	34
	5. Caring school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment.	29
	6. Parent involvement in schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.	29
Empowerment	7. Community values youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.	20
	8. Youth as resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community.	24
	9. Service to others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.	44
	10. Safety	Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.	45
Boundaries and Expectations	11. Family boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.	39
	12. School boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.	51
	13. Neighborhood boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.	41
	14. Adult role models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.	27
	15. Positive peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.	63
	16. High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.	51
Constructive Use of Time	17. Creative activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.	21
	18. Youth programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.	52
	19. Religious community	Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.	52
	20. Time at home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.	56

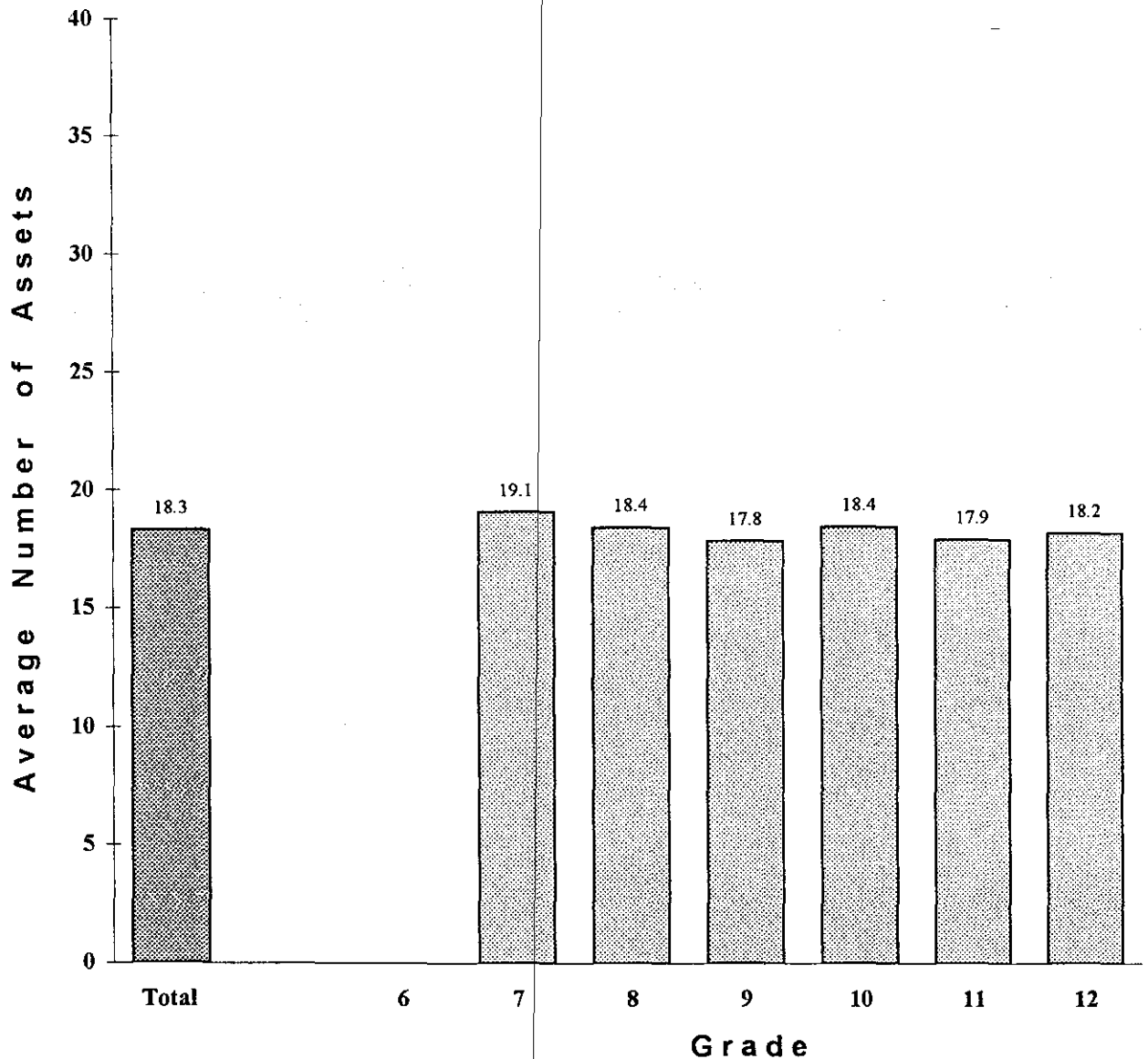
Figure 2: Internal Assets

Percent of Your Youth Reporting Each of 20 Internal Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition	Percent
Commitment to Learning	21. Achievement motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.	69
	22. School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.	48
	23. Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.	54
	24. Bonding to school	Young person cares about his or her school.	51
	25. Reading for pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.	26
Positive Values	26. Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.	56
	27. Equality and social justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.	62
	28. Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for his or her beliefs.	69
	29. Honesty	Young person tells the truth even when it is not easy.	64
	30. Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.	62
	31. Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.	39
Social Competencies	32. Planning and decision-making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.	30
	33. Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.	44
	34. Cultural competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.	50
	35. Resistance skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.	41
	36. Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.	36
Positive Identity	37. Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."	40
	38. Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.	56
	39. Sense of purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."	57
	40. Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about his or her personal future.	73

Figure 3: Average Number of Assets Your Youth Report

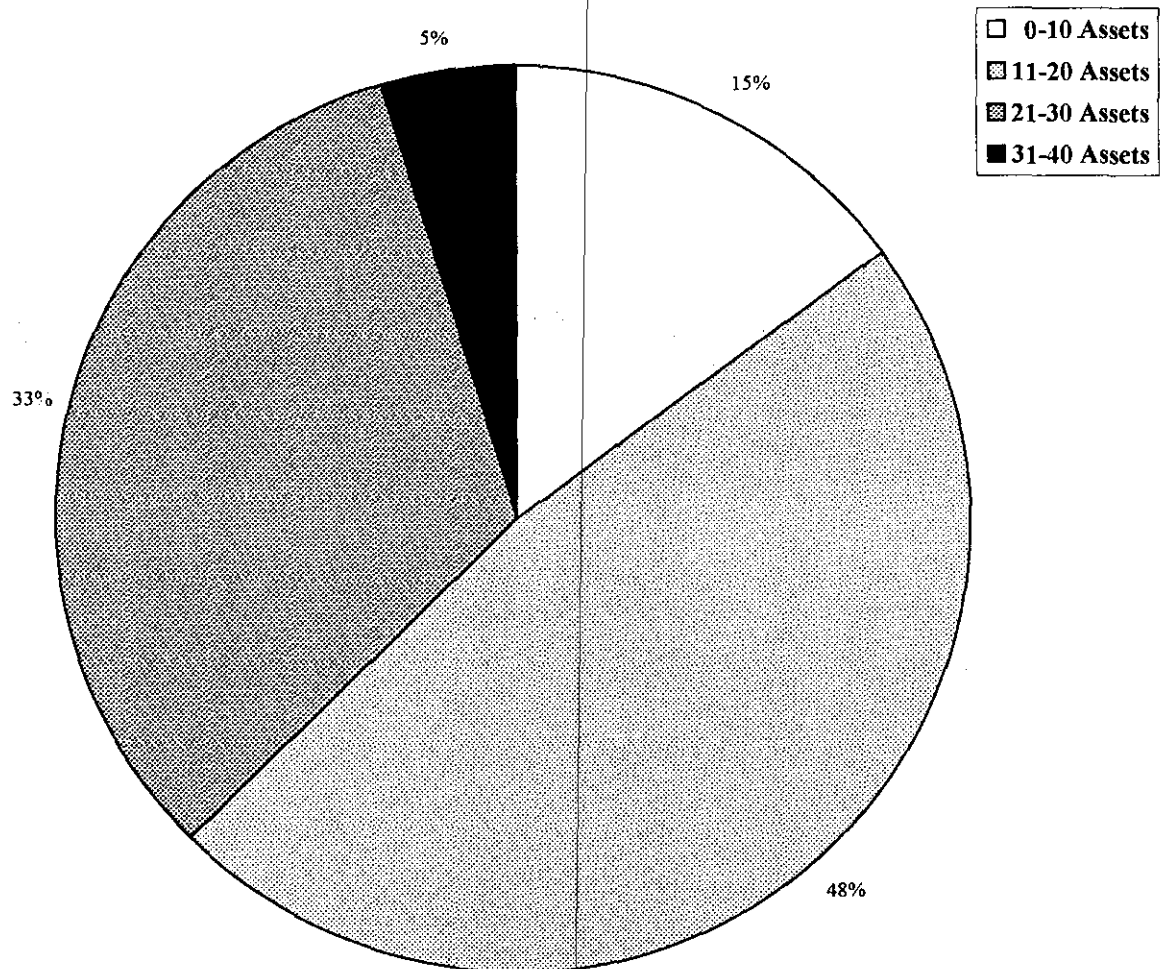
Most young people in the United States—regardless of age, gender, or region of the country—experience too few of the 40 assets. Search Institute's research on adolescents consistently has shown a small, but observable, decrease in assets among older adolescents (9th- through 12th-grade youth) as compared with young adolescents (6th- through 8th-grade youth). If the average number of assets in some of your grades is particularly low compared to other grades, it may suggest a need to more closely examine what is happening at that grade level. Here is the average number of assets reported by youth in your community at each grade level.



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Figure 4: The Challenge Facing Your Community

Ideally, of course, all youth would experience 31-40 of these assets. Each community needs to establish a goal for what percentage of youth it seeks to be at this level. This process can provide an important opportunity for creating a community vision for your youth. The figure below shows the percentage of your youth who experience each of four levels of assets: 0-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40.



Note. Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 5: The Power of Assets to Protect Against Risk-Taking Behaviors

This figure shows the power of assets to protect youth from risk-taking behaviors. Search Institute's research consistently shows that youth with higher levels of assets are involved in fewer risk-taking behaviors. Each vertical bar shows the *average number* of 24 risk-taking behaviors among all youth, grouped by asset level (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40). The 24 risk-taking behaviors are: alcohol use, binge drinking, smoking, smokeless tobacco, inhalants, marijuana, other illicit drugs, drinking and driving, riding with a driver who has been drinking, sexual intercourse, shoplifting, vandalism, trouble with police, hitting someone, hurting someone, use of a weapon, group fighting, carrying a weapon for protection, threatening physical harm, skipping school, gambling, eating disorders, depression, and attempted suicide.

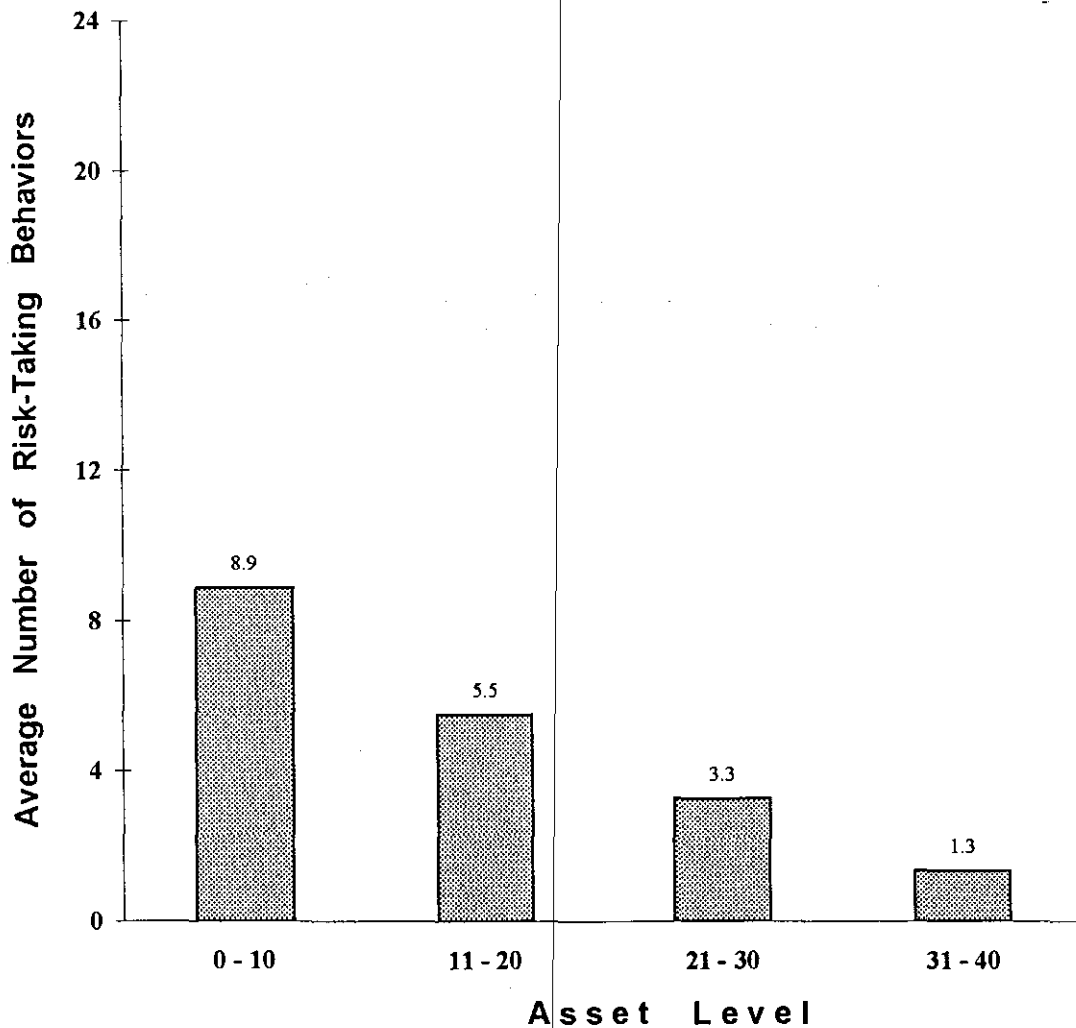
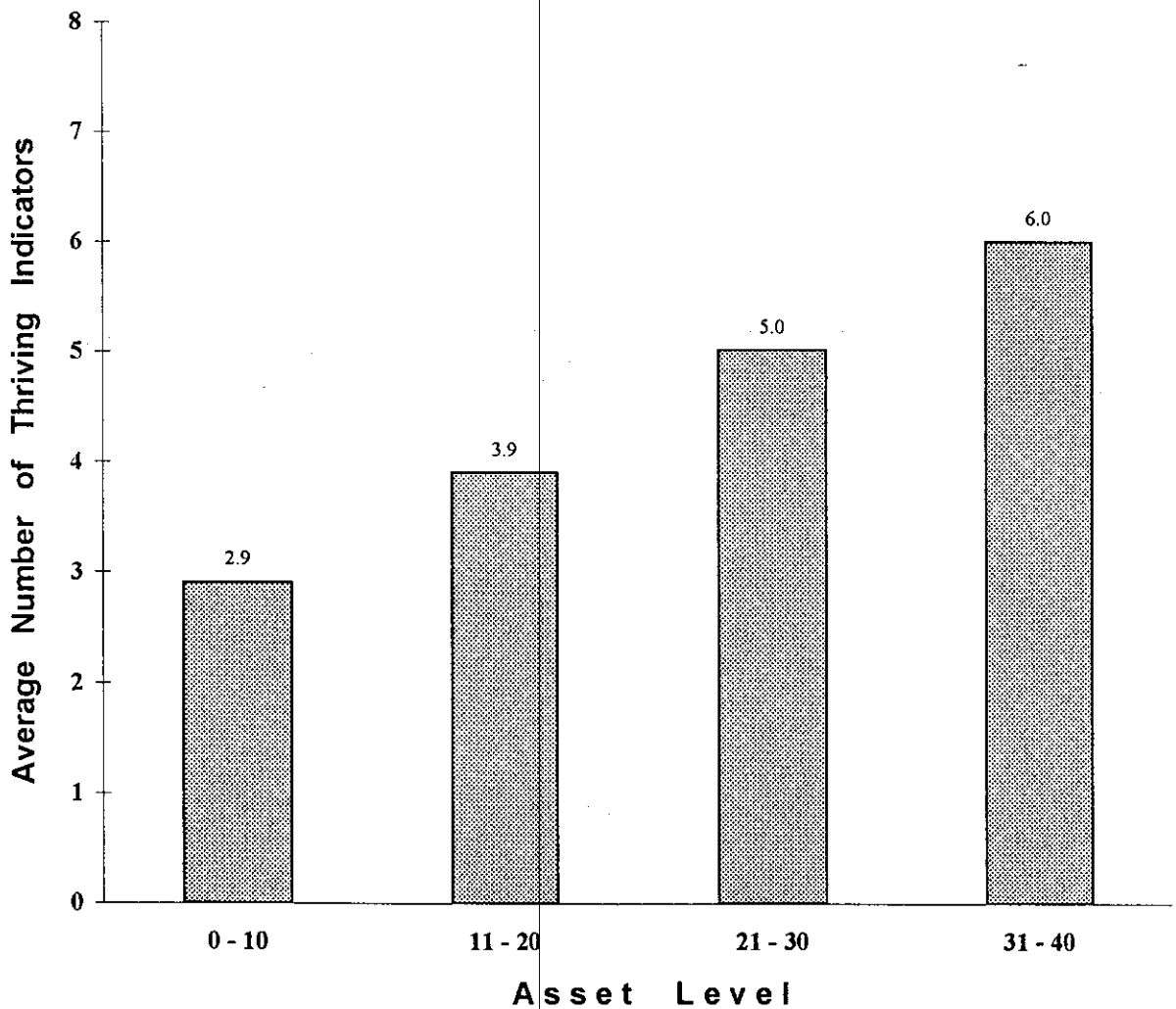


Figure 6: The Power of Assets to Promote Thriving Indicators

This figure shows the power of assets to promote thriving indicators among your youth. Search Institute's research consistently shows that youth with higher levels of assets are more likely to report more thriving indicators. Each vertical bar shows the *average number* of eight thriving indicators among all youth, grouped by asset level (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40). The eight thriving indicators are: school success, informal helping, valuing diversity, maintaining good health, exhibiting leadership, resisting danger, impulse control, and overcoming adversity.



What Next?

Moving from Awareness to Action

This report provides insights about the young people in your community and can be a powerful tool for community-wide discussion about how to improve the well-being of your youth. The good news is that everyone—parents, grandparents, educators, neighborhoods, children, teenagers, youth workers, employers, health care providers, coaches, and others—can build assets. Ideally, the whole community is involved to ensure that young people have the solid foundation they need to become tomorrow's competent, caring adults. Here are some suggestions for how to begin strengthening the assets among the youth in your community.

What adults can do . . .

- Smile at every child or adolescent you see.
- Send a "thinking of you" or birthday card, letter, or e-mail message to a child or adolescent.
- Invite a young person you know to do something together, such as playing a game or going to a park.

What young people can do . . .

- Take advantage of interesting and challenging opportunities through youth programs, cocurricular activities, and congregational youth programs.
- Get to know an adult you admire.
- Find opportunities to build relationships with younger children such as service projects, tutoring, or baby-sitting.

What families can do . . .

- Model—and talk about—your own values and priorities.
- Regularly do things with your child, including projects around your house, recreational activities, and service projects.
- Talk to your children about assets. Ask them for suggestions of ways to strengthen theirs and yours.

What organizations can do . . .

- Highlight, develop, expand, or support programs designed to build assets, such as mentoring, peer helping, service-learning, or parent education.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to others in and through your organization.
- Develop employee policies that encourage asset building, including flexible work schedules for parents as well as other employees, so that they can volunteer in youth development programs.

For more information about what you can do to build assets or start an asset-building initiative in your community, call Search Institute at 1 - 800 - 888-7828.

If available, the name and phone number of a local contact person or initiative appears below.

Developmental Assets: A Profile of Alexandria Youth

**Presentation to
Alexandria City Council
May 8, 2007**

***Alexandria City Public Schools*
Monitoring and Evaluation
and
Alexandria Office of Youth Services**

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Attachment 2

What are developmental assets?

- Building blocks that support positive, healthy development of children and youth
- Assets can be :
 - External: strengths/experiences created by families, peer groups, schools and communities
 - Internal: skills/capacities present within individuals

Search Institute's Categories of Developmental Assets

External (20)

- Support
- Empowerment
- Boundaries and expectations
- Constructive use of time

Internal (20)

- Commitment to learning
- Positive values
- Social competencies
- Positive identity

Important Facts

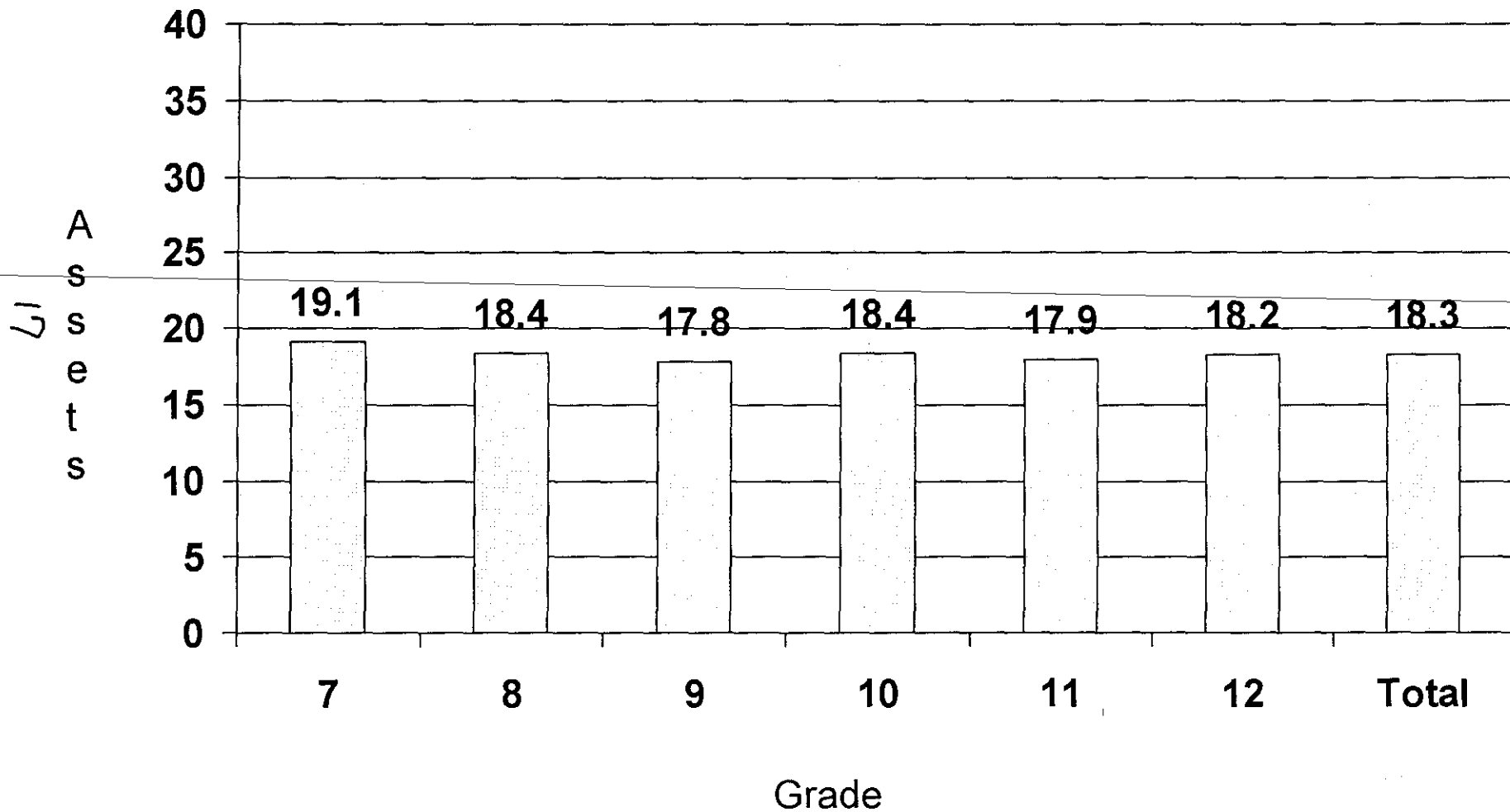
- Developmental assets are important for all children
- Research shows that as assets increase, risk behaviors decrease and thriving behaviors increase
- Assets need to be consciously developed
- Communities must invest in treatment, prevention and **promotion of assets**

Who was surveyed?

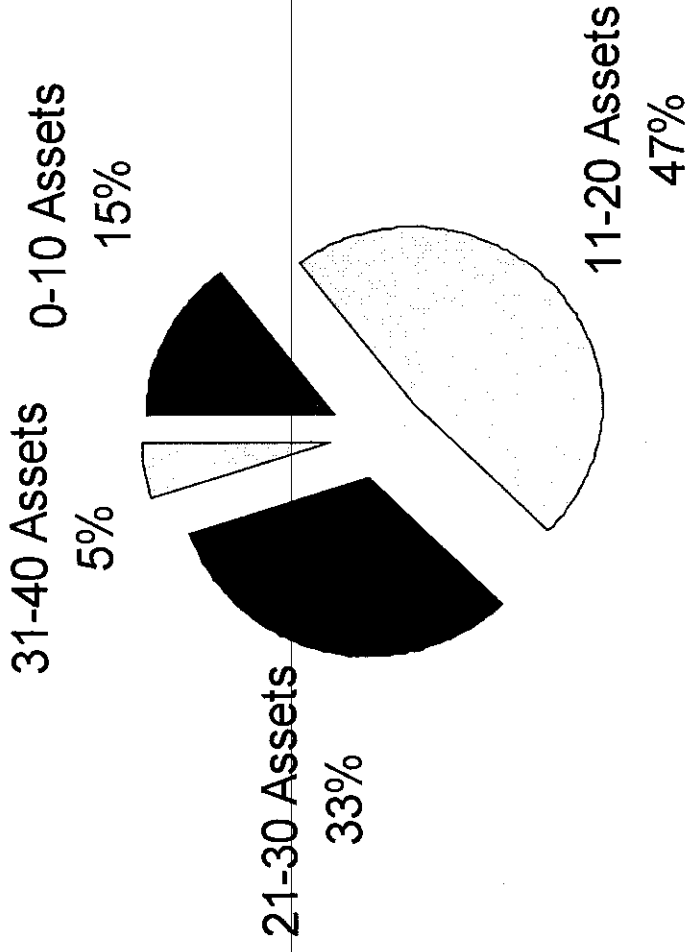
ACPS youth

- December 2006
 - Grades 7-12
 - N = 3,041
 - Males = 46%
 - Females = 54%
-
- Native American = 1%
 - Asian = 7%
 - Black = 37%
 - Hispanic = 22%
 - White = 22%
 - Multi-racial = 11%

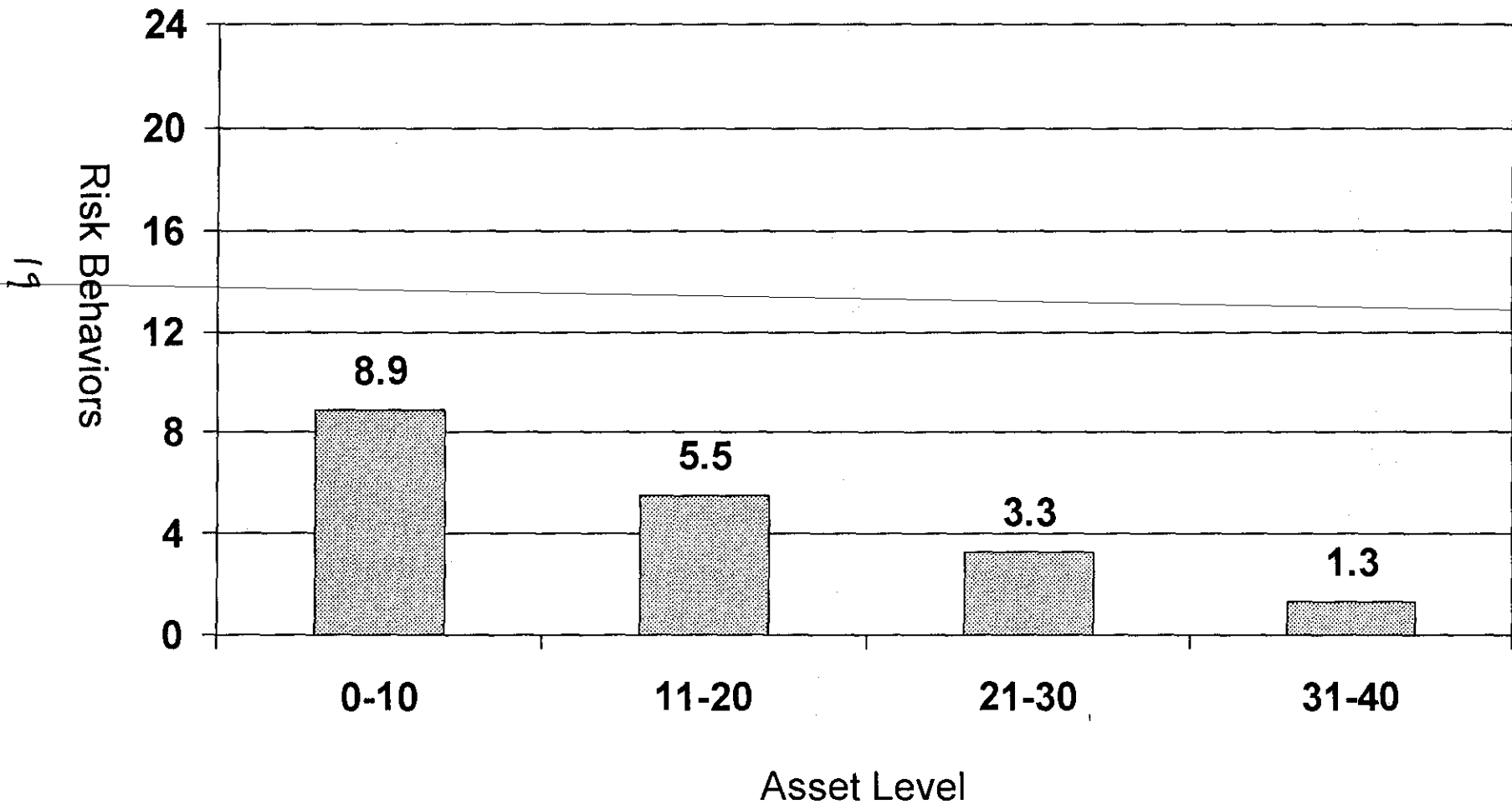
Average Number of Assets



Asset Levels



Average Number of 24 Risk Taking Behaviors, by Asset Level

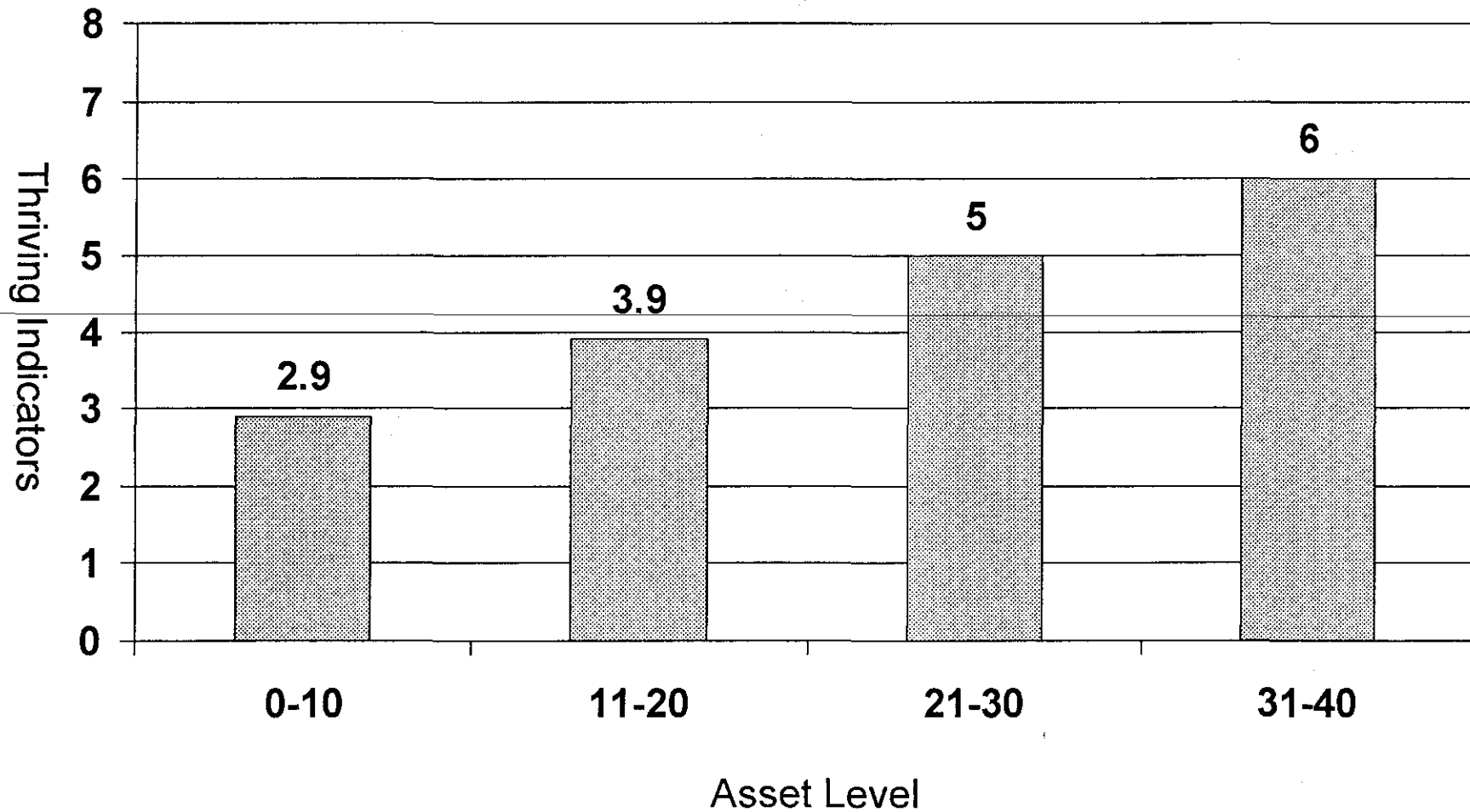


High Risk Behavior Patterns

1. Tobacco (5%)
2. Illicit drugs (13%)
3. Gambling (15%)
4. Drinking and driving (15%)
5. Alcohol (19%)

6. School problems (24%)
7. Sexual intercourse (25%)
8. Anti-social behavior (26%)
9. Depression/suicide (28%)
10. Violence (39%)

Average Number of 8 Thriving Indicators, by Asset Level



21

Thriving Indicators

1. Helps others (76%)
2. Exhibits leadership (69%)
3. Overcomes adversity (68%)
4. Values diversity (65%)
5. Maintains good health (53%)
6. Delays gratification (47%)
7. Resists danger (27%)
8. Success in school: mostly As (16%)

External Assets

Strengths

- Family Support (67%)
- Positive Peer Influence (63%)
- Time well spent (56%)
- High expectations (51%)
- School boundaries (51%)

Weaknesses

- Community values youth (20%)
- Engagement in creative activities (21%)
- Positive family communication (22%)
- Youth as resources (24%)