



The Free Enterprise National Survey:  
**Viewpoints from  
U.S. High School Juniors**



# Executive Summary

Junior Achievement (JA) and the National Chamber Foundation (NCF) believe that a solution to the current national economic instability lies in the principles of a free enterprise system and entrepreneurship. As such, they set out to discover exactly what the next generation of entrepreneurs, particularly high school students, understood about the basic tenets and benefits of a free enterprise system or entrepreneurship. To ascertain the level of knowledge and where knowledge gaps might exist in the population, the partners commissioned Harris Interactive to research high school juniors' understanding of the free enterprise system and entrepreneurship, and how those systems impact job creation.

In order to discover their perceptions of entrepreneurship, free enterprise and capitalism and how these factors are influencing their future career choices, the students were asked a variety of questions, including their opinion regarding the value of topic specific education, their perception of the aforementioned key economic elements, their interest in pursuing entrepreneurship/business ownership and their beliefs about the economic future.

Several key findings/conclusions resulted:

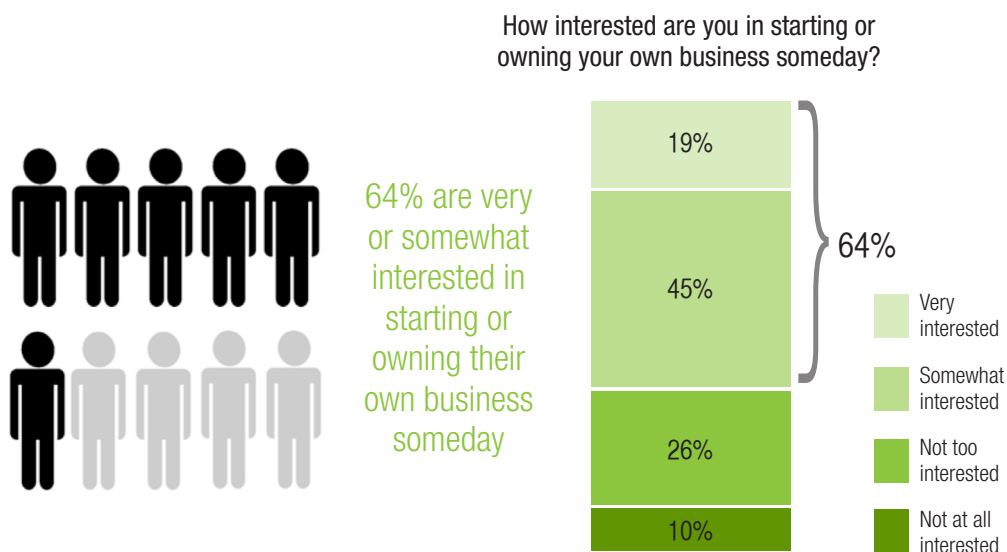
- The majority of high school juniors are interested in entrepreneurship, but are concerned about the economy.
- Six in 10 juniors have been taught about entrepreneurship or free enterprise. Nine in 10 juniors believe it is important that students are taught about entrepreneurship, free enterprise and capitalism. Nearly two-thirds would be interested in taking a class on entrepreneurship.
- Juniors who had been taught about free enterprise felt more positively about it, and were more likely to support limits on government regulation.
- Believing that education is key to empowering young people to embrace the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship and drive economic growth, JA and the NCF are using this study to raise awareness of the need for additional student education in the areas of entrepreneurship, free enterprise and capitalism. Additionally, the organizations intend to further partner to bring JA's innovative entrepreneurship programs to more students.



# Key Findings

**High school juniors are interested in entrepreneurship.** A majority of juniors express an interest in business ownership, providing an opportunity to position the next generation of entrepreneurs for success through education and mentoring.

More than six in ten juniors are interested in starting or owning their own business someday.



BASE: High School Juniors (n=2213); Q730. How interested are you in starting or owning your own business someday?

**Juniors value educational opportunities.** The majority of juniors have been taught about entrepreneurship, free enterprise, and capitalism; believe it's important that high school students are provided with these educational opportunities; and would be interested in furthering their education in entrepreneurship.

High school juniors believe it is important that high school students are taught about entrepreneurship, free enterprise and capitalism in school.

- Nine in ten (91%) believe it is important that students are taught about **entrepreneurship**, including 41% who believe it is absolutely essential.
- Nine in ten (90%) believe it is important students are taught about **free enterprise**, including 41% who believe it is absolutely essential.
- Nine in ten (90%) believe it is important that students are taught about **capitalism**, including 46% who believe it is absolutely essential.

Around six in ten juniors have been taught about entrepreneurship or free enterprise at school.

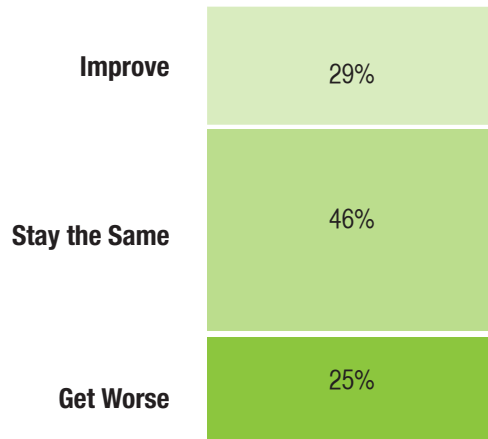
- More than one-half of juniors (56%) have been taught about entrepreneurship or starting or owning a business, either during a class at school (45%), a school organization or program (13%), or an organization or program outside of school (7%).
- Six in ten juniors (63%) have been taught about free enterprise, either during a school class (57%), a school organization or program (7%), or an organization or program outside of school (4%).

Nearly two-thirds of juniors are interested in taking a class on entrepreneurship.

**Juniors are concerned about the economic outlook.** Almost all juniors are worried about being able to get a good job when they finish school and many believe that the job market will be somewhat or very bad.

Three in ten juniors believe the economy will improve in the coming year, but most feel that the economy will either stay the same or get worse.

In the coming year, do you expect the economy to...?



BASE: High School Juniors (n=2213); Q710. In the coming year, do you expect the economy to...?

## A Call to Action

- “Knowledge of the free enterprise system, its benefits to citizens and its relationship to job creation is important for
- young people across the nation, to the vitality of our communities and to the availability of a well-educated workforce.
- Junior Achievement programs reach more than 4 million students every year, but we must continue to expand these
- programs in an effort to educate our future leaders. As a result of this survey, JA will work with the National Chamber
- Foundation to strengthen our existing entrepreneurial education programs, including *JA Be Entrepreneurial*®.”

— *Jack E. Kosakowski, president and chief executive officer, Junior Achievement USA*

- “The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is constantly focused on emerging business issues, and members of Congress and
- the administration should take note that our nation’s young people are sharing many of the same concerns about
- the economy as the majority of working Americans. In business, we value employees that can think strategically and
- outside the box, and we as leaders need to encourage learning opportunities that enhance the core principles of free
- enterprise to develop these skills early on.”

— *Margaret Spellings, former U.S. Secretary of Education and president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Forum for Policy Innovation*

# Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Junior Achievement and the National Chamber Foundation from July 11 - August 1, 2011. Surveys were conducted among 2,213 16-17 year olds who were high school juniors during the 2010/2011 school year. Sample was drawn from the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) panel and from one of Harris Interactive's approved sample providers. Data were weighted to be representative of the U.S. high school junior population using targets obtained from the U.S. Census. Figures for sex, race/ethnicity, region, parental education, and school location were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. For more information contact Shannon Dick – Vice President-Evaluation, Research, and Innovation, Junior Achievement USA, at [sdick@ja.org](mailto:sdick@ja.org).



## About Junior Achievement USA™ (JA)

Junior Achievement is the world's largest organization dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to own their economic success, plan for their future, and make smart academic and economic choices. JA programs are delivered by corporate and community volunteers, and provide relevant, hands-on experiences that give students from kindergarten through high school knowledge and skills in financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship. Today, JA reaches four million students per year in 124 markets across the United States, with an additional six million students served by operations in 119 other countries worldwide. Visit [www.ja.org](http://www.ja.org) for more information.



The **National Chamber Foundation (NCF)**, a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, is dedicated to identifying and fostering public debate on emerging critical issues.

The **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** is the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations.