

**Project Challenge North Carolina, Inc.**  
**Report on**  
**2009 Program Evaluation Surveys**

**The Richard L. Hoffman**  
**Center for Assessment and Research Alliances**  
**at Mars Hill College**  
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## **Project Challenge North Carolina, Inc.**

### **2009 Evaluation**

Project Challenge North Carolina, Inc. was founded in 1994 as a therapeutic program for adjudicated youth, aged 10-17. Referred by the Juvenile Court, the youth participate in a wilderness experience, as well as community service. Often restitution to victims is part of an offender's plan of treatment. The program seeks to empower young people to understand their self-worth and to value their communities. According to its mission statement, "Project Challenge strives to help youth become confident, productive members of their community through the offering of their time and talent and through challenging activities."

The Richard L. Hoffman Center for Assessment and Research Alliances (CARA) at Mars Hill College was asked to assist in the evaluation of Project Challenge's effectiveness by compiling data from 759 phone surveys administered in 2009 to past participants at six and twelve months after their completion of the program. A total of 353 (46.5%) telephone surveys were completed. Among the completed ones, there are 215 (60.9%) six-month surveys, 98 (27.8%) twelve-month surveys, and 40 (11.3%) unidentified surveys. During the 2008 evaluation year, data was collected from 488 (41.1%) completed surveys. The surveys are voluntary and ask thirty questions, including two open-ended responses. Questions rate the helpfulness of the overall Project Challenge program, its staff, community service, and other program elements. Additional questions ask about participants' current life, whether they plan to pursue further education, and whether they have reentered the criminal justice system after leaving Project Challenge.

### **Gender**

Most respondents were male, with approximately 20% female.

**Table 1. Respondents' Gender**

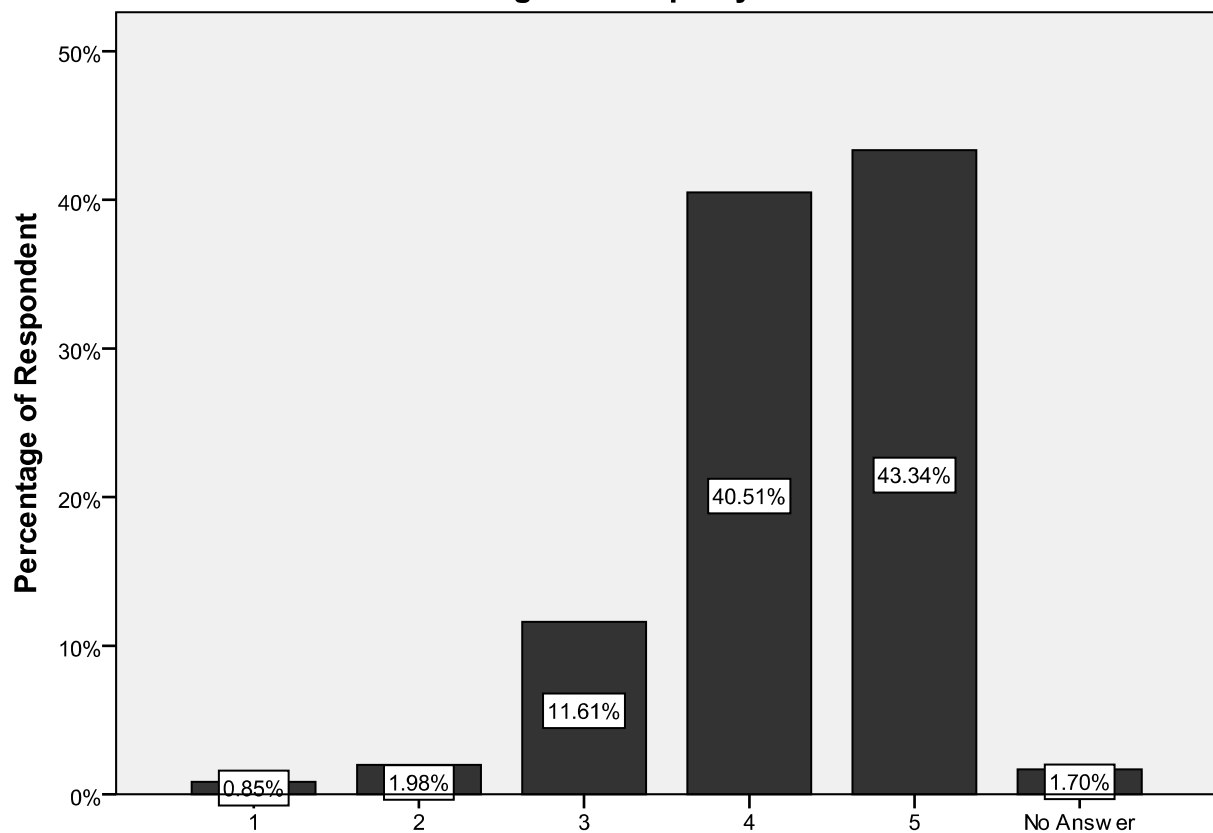
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>21.8</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>76.8</b>
<b>Not Recorded</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Overall Program's Helpfulness

Respondents were asked to rate Project Challenge's helpfulness to them on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "a lot." The majority of respondents, 296 or 83.8%, rated Project Challenge as either a four or a five. This signifies an increase compared to the 2008 results, when 80.9% gave the program a four or a five. Three respondents (0.85%) rated the program as "not at all" helpful.

**Figure 1. Helpfulness Rating of Project Challenge (percentages)**

**On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = none and 5 = a lot, how would you say Project Challenge has helped you?**

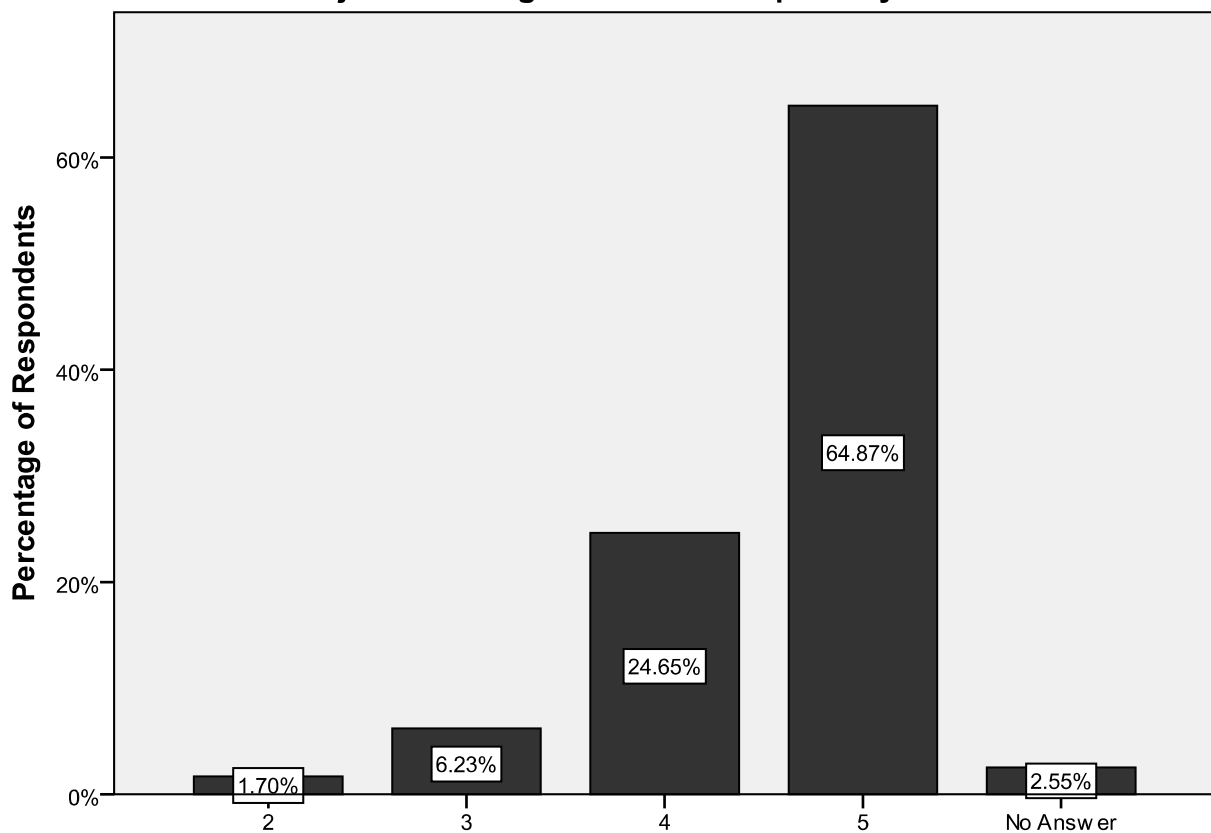


## Project Challenge Staff

Of the respondents, 316 (89.5%) rated the staff as either a four or a five (with most of them, 229 or 64.9%, rating the staff as a five). These numbers are close to the results in 2008. Overall, this is the most positive element of the program, receiving the highest mean score of six program elements measured; this was also the case in the previous five years (see Table 2 on page 8). Six respondents (1.7%) rated the staff as “not at all” helpful.

**Figure 2. Helpfulness Rating of Project Challenge Staff (percentages)**

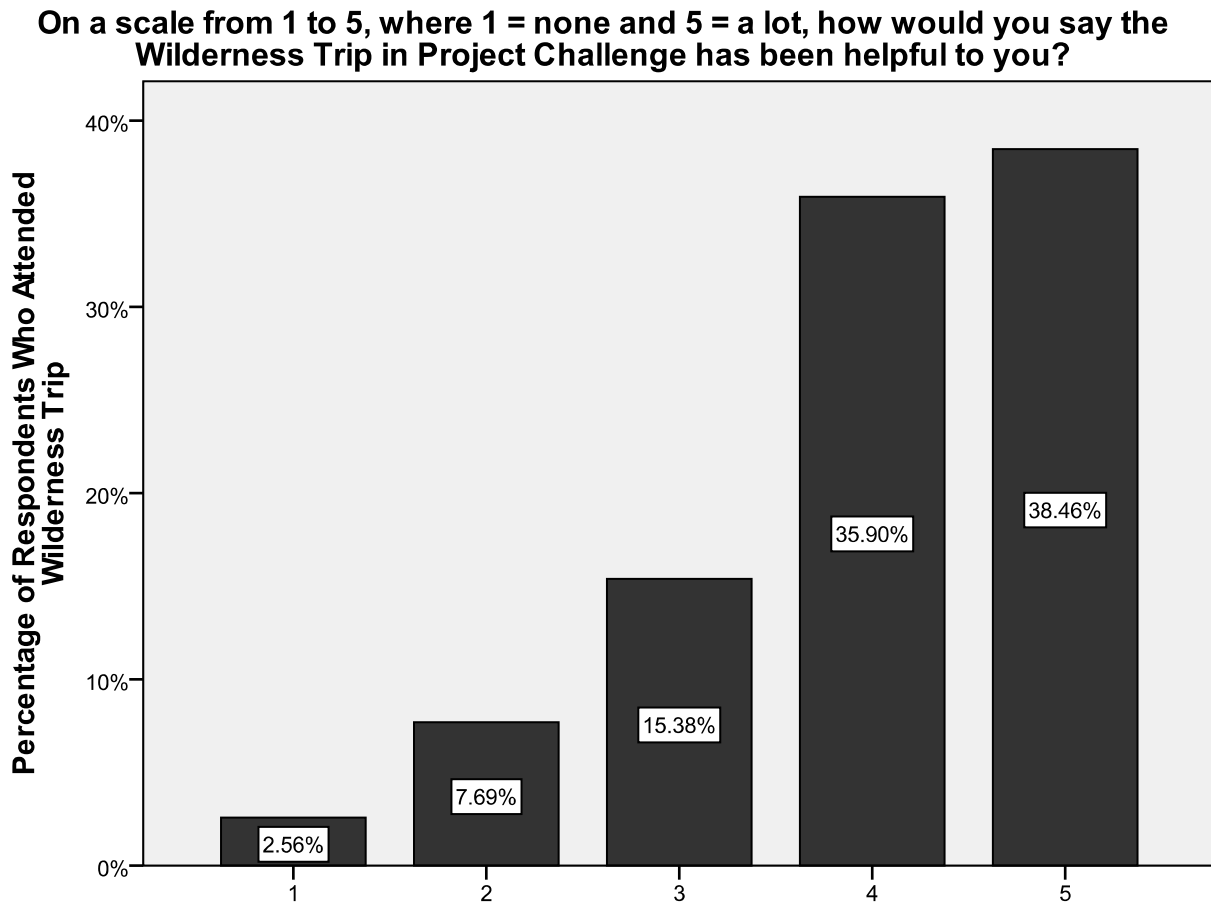
**On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = none and 5 = a lot, how would you say the Staff in Project Challenge have been helpful to you?**



## Wilderness Adventure Trip

The Wilderness Adventure Trip requires Project Challenge clients to spend three days and two nights in the outdoors. Shorter trips are available for those with special needs. The youth learn survival skills, such as constructing a proper fire and using a compass and a map. Decision-making and team building are emphasized throughout the experience. A total of 39 respondents (11.0%) attended the Wilderness Adventure Trip. Of the respondents who attended the trip, 29 (74.4%) rated it as either a four or five in helpfulness, which shows an increase to the 2008 data (53.6%). One respondent (2.56%) rated the trip as “not at all” helpful.

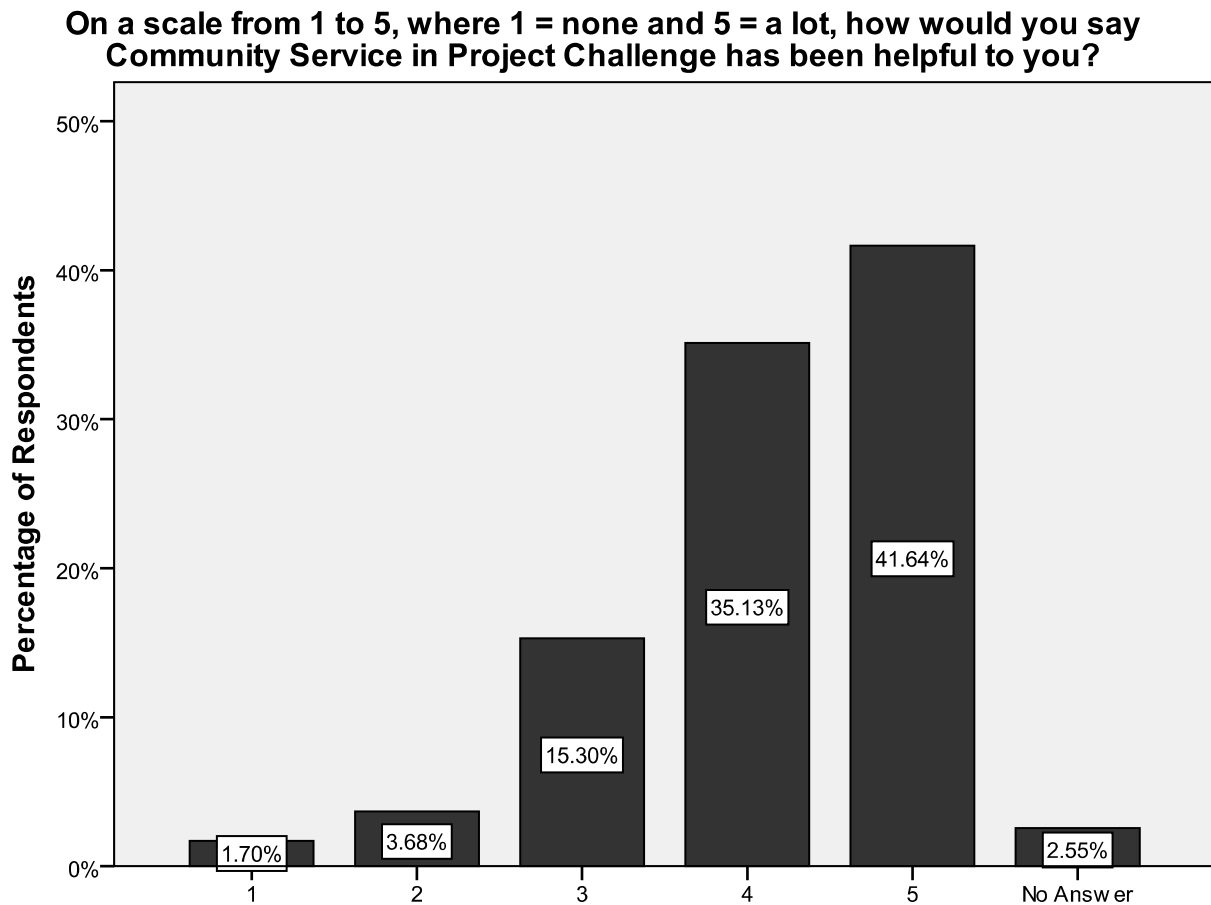
**Figure 3. Helpfulness Rating of Wilderness Adventure Trip  
by Those who Attended (percentages)**



## Community Service

Project Challenge's Community Service program requires juveniles to become involved in giving back to their communities. The purpose is to help them understand that helping those in need will enrich not only other people's lives but their own lives as well. It involves working for organizations and projects such as Relay for Life, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Neighbors in Need, Forest Service, Appalachian Trail and French Broad River cleanup, canned food drives, visiting the elderly, as well as working in the communities in which they live. Of the respondents, 271(76.8%) rated community service as a four or a five in helpfulness. This shows an increase compared to the 2008 survey results (73.0%). Six (1.7%) rated the community service as "not at all" helpful.

**Figure 4. Helpfulness Rating of Community Service (percentages)**

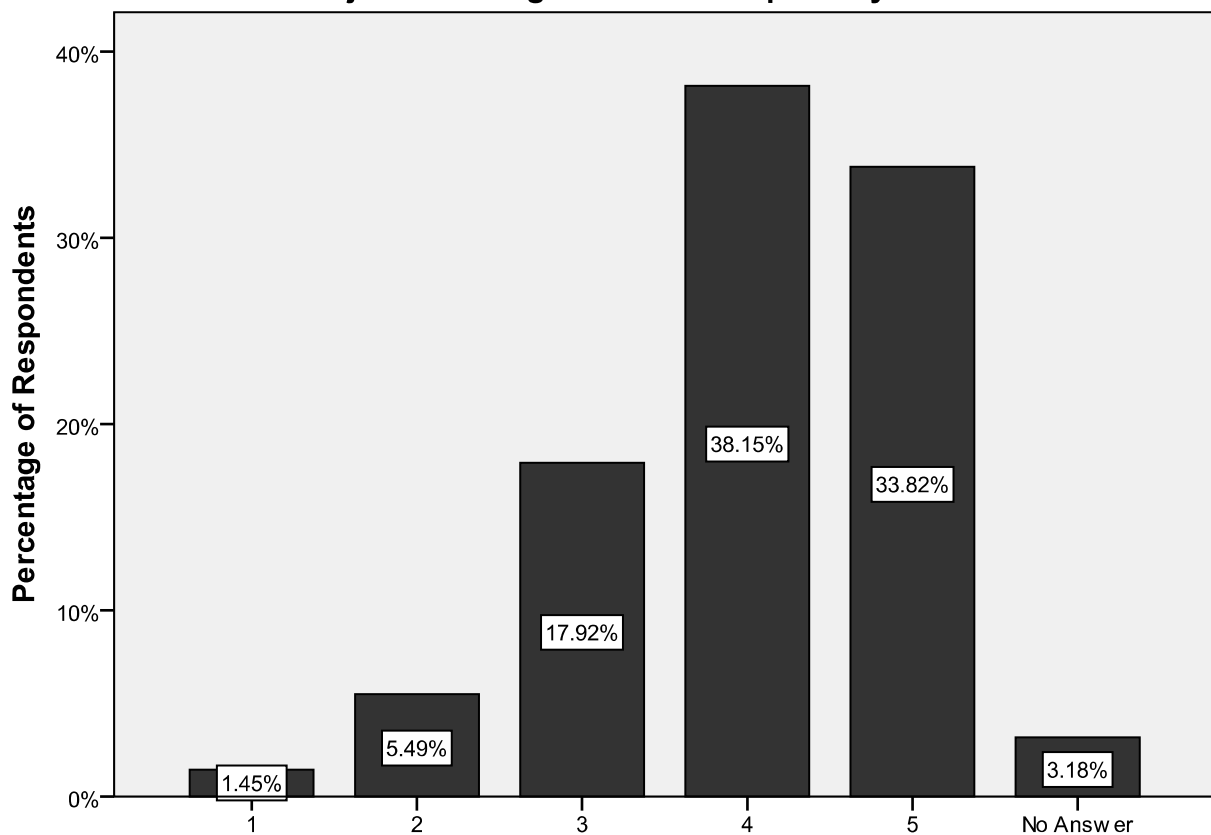


## Life Skills

Life Skills training in Project Challenge is an underlying theme through all of its components. The goal is to teach young people to make good life decisions and realize that their actions have an effect on the world around them. The helpfulness of Life skills was rated fairly highly, with 249 (70.5%) ranking it as either a four or a five, showing an increase from last year's 67.4%. Five respondents (1.4%) ranked Life Skills as unhelpful.

**Figure 5. Helpfulness Rating of Life Skills (percentages)**

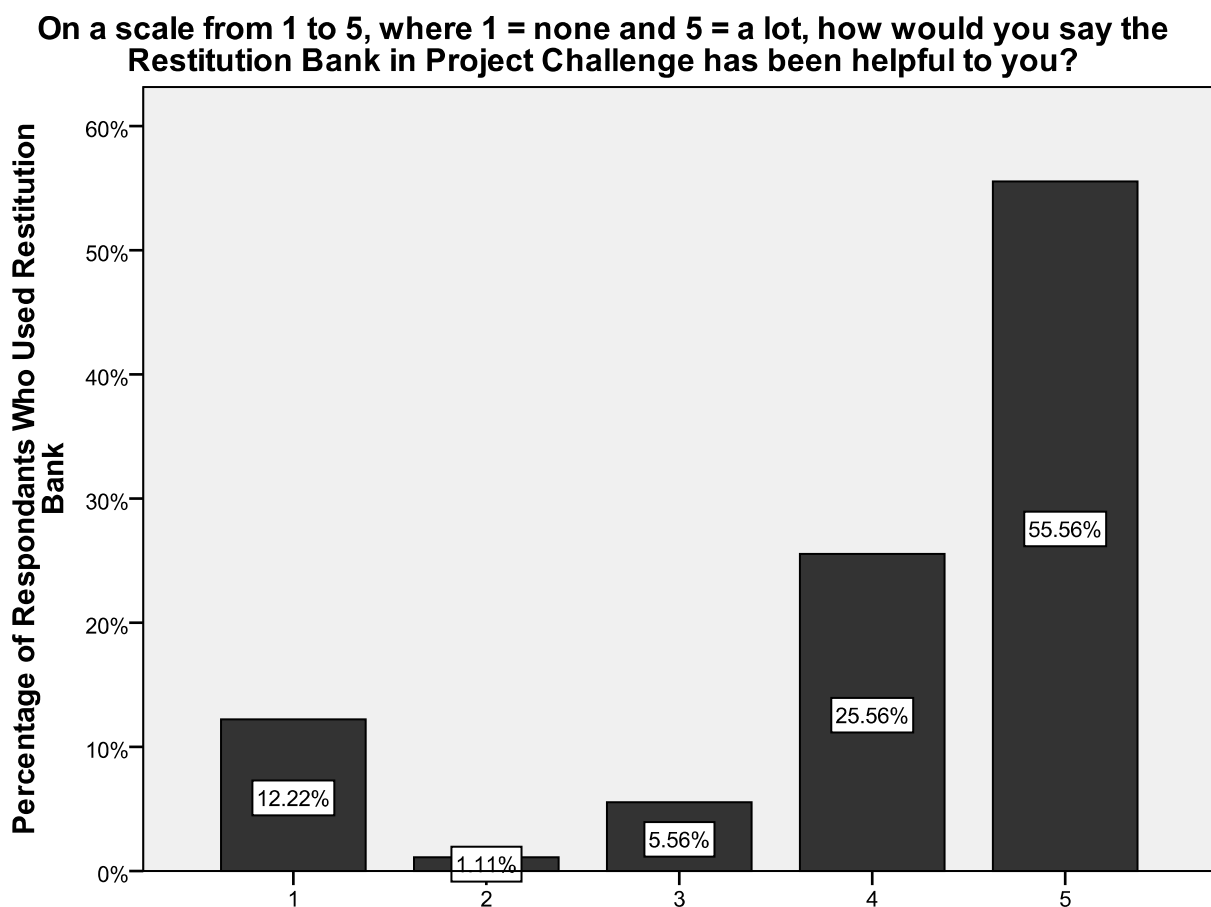
**On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = none and 5 = a lot, how would you say Life Skills in Project Challenge has been helpful to you?**



## Restitution Bank

Project Challenge has a Restitution Bank for those participants who have been ordered by the court to pay money to their victims. The bank is available only to those who cannot find employment. Youth are allowed to do extra community service to draw down the money for the victims. The Restitution Bank was used by 90 respondents (25.5%). Of those, 50 (55.6%) gave it a top ranking with a five in helpfulness, and 23 (25.6%) ranked it with a four. These statistics are similar to the data in 2008 (56.4% and 19.5%, respectively). Eleven respondents (12.2%) ranked it as a one in helpfulness, compared to 16.1% in 2008.

**Figure 6. Helpfulness Rating of Restitution Bank by Those Who Used It (percentages)**





## Mean Scores and Previous Data

The mean score was calculated for each of the six program elements discussed above. Table 2 shows these results for 2009 compared to the past five years. “Project Challenge Staff” has been ranked at the top for the past five years and continues to rank the highest out of all six elements despite a slight decrease in percentage from 2008. The mean scores for all other elements have increased from last year. The Wilderness Trip still ranks the lowest. The change in percentage between 2009 and 2008 data is shown below in Table 2.

**Table 2. Ranked Mean Scores for Programs with Past Years**

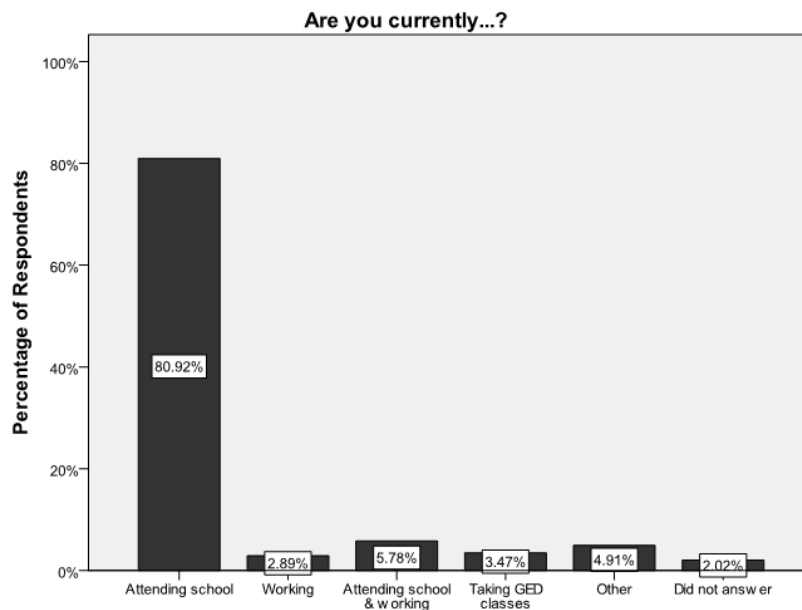
<b>Element</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2009N*</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
<b>Project Challenge Staff</b>	4.45	4.59	4.55	4.5	4.58	4.57	344	-0.22%
<b>Project Challenge</b>	4.16	4.28	4.2	4.3	4.22	4.26	347	+0.95%
<b>Community Service</b>	3.98	4.16	4.08	4.07	4.04	4.14	344	+2.48%
<b>Restitution Bank</b>	4.34	4.58	4.53	4.39	3.99	4.11	90	+3.01%
<b>Life Skills</b>	3.76	4.1	4.03	4.05	3.9	4.01	335	+2.82%
<b>Wilderness Trip</b>	3.58	3.57	3.58	3.61	3.85	4.00	39	+3.90%

\*Note: This column refers to the number of valid responses.

## School and Education

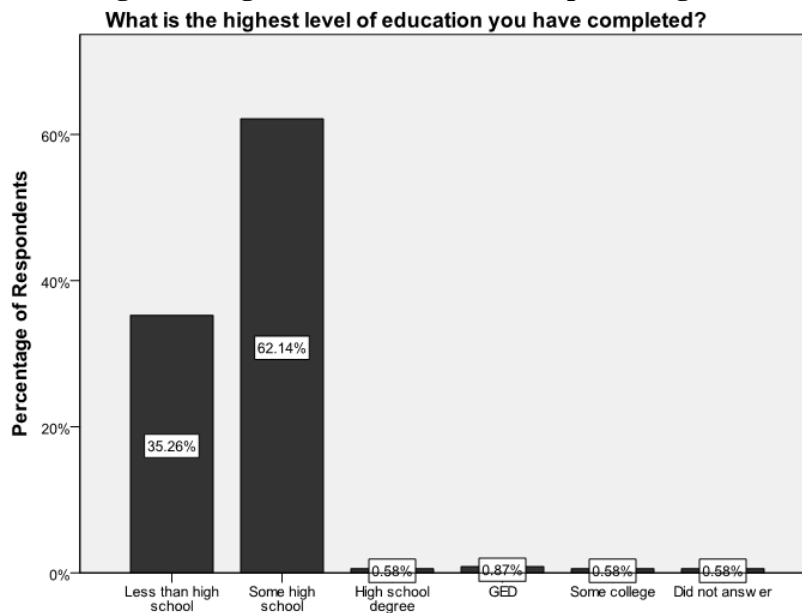
Most respondents, 316 (89.5%), reported to have been in school at some time since their completion of Project Challenge. At the time when the survey was taken, 300 (85.0%) were attending school, with 20 (5.7%) working at the same time. Twelve (3.4%) were taking GED classes. These percentages are similar to the results from 2008.

**Figure 7. Current Activities (percentages)**



Most respondents, 215 (60.9%) had attended some high school, while 122 (34.6%) had not. Five (1.4%) had graduated with a high school degree or had received a GED.

**Figure 8. Highest Level of Education (percentages)**



## Educational Improvement

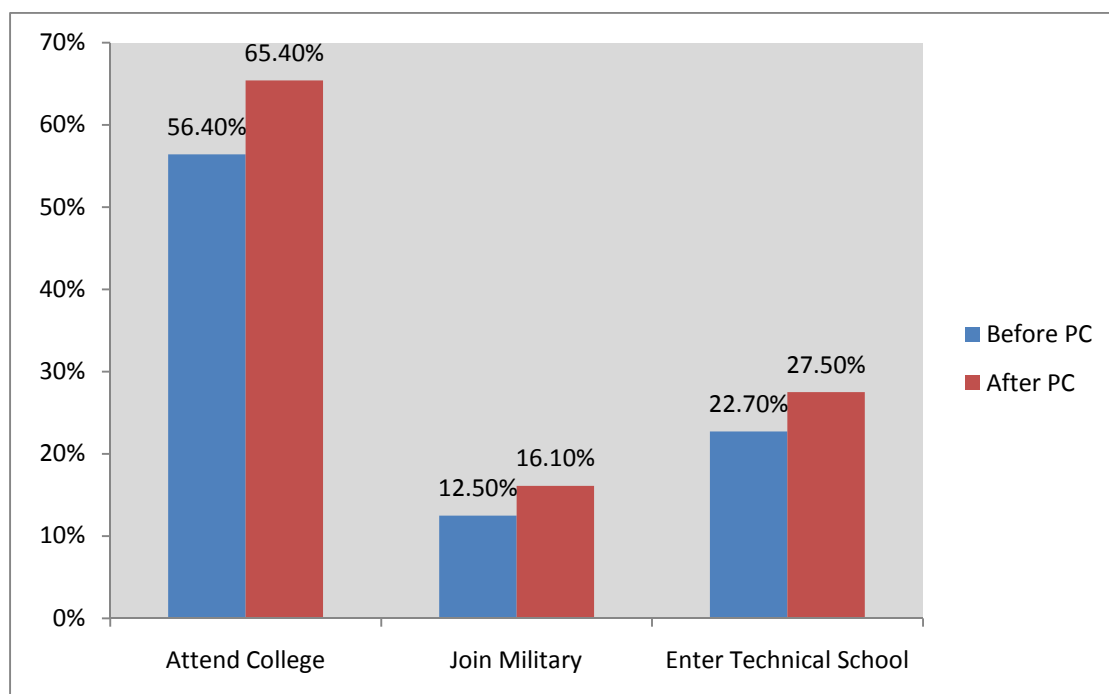
More than half of the respondents, 194 (55.0%) reported improved school performance as a result of Project Challenge. Less than 40% reported no improvement. Those who answered “yes” to the improvement of school performance were then asked if their grades and attendance had improved. Over half reported an improvement in both, 188 (53.3%) for grades and 189 (53.5%) for attendance.

**Table 3. Improvement of Performance (Grades and Attendance)**

	Improved Performance		Improved Grades		Improved Attendance	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	194	55.0%	188	53.3%	189	53.5%
<b>No</b>	138	39.1%	48	13.6%	51	14.4%
<b>No Answer</b>	21	5.9%	117	33.1%	113	32.0%
<b>Total</b>	353	100.0%	353	100%	353	100%

Of those who responded, 199 (56.4%) were planning to attend college or further their education before they participated in Project Challenge. After completing the program, 231 (65.4%) indicated they planned to attend college. The number of respondents who planned to join the military increased slightly after Project Challenge participation, from 44 (12.5%) to 57 (16.1%). Eighty (22.7%) respondents planned to enter a technical school before the program, compared to 97 (27.5) afterward. Educational goals increased throughout the duration of the program.

**Figure 9. Effects of Project Challenge on Future Goals (percentages)**

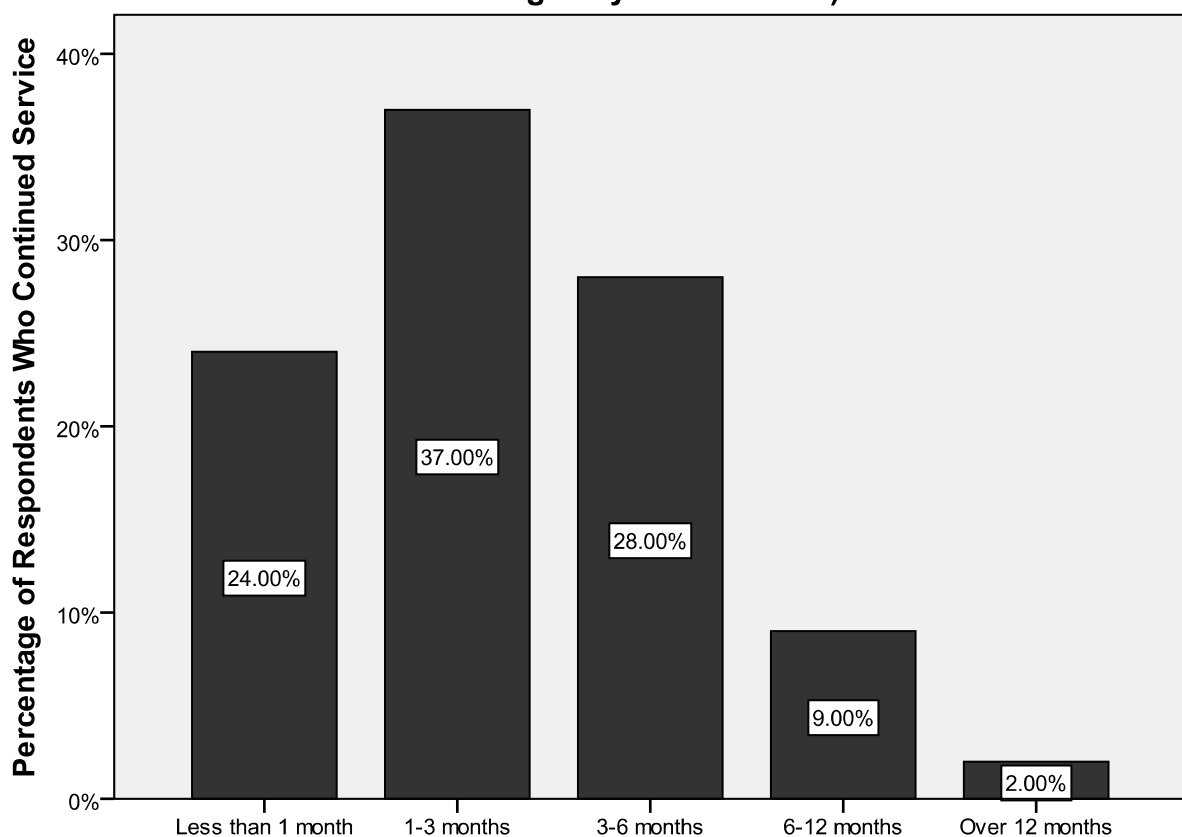


## Continuation of Community Service

Community service is an important requirement for all Project Challenge participants (see page 5). Most participants, 246 (69.7%), did not continue community service activities after they completed Project Challenge, and 100 (28.3%) respondents did continue. Among those who continued, 37 (37.0%) continued for 1-3 months, the highest percentage in five categories (see below).

**Figure 10. Length of Time Committed to Community Service after Completion**  
(percentages calculated from only those that continued service)

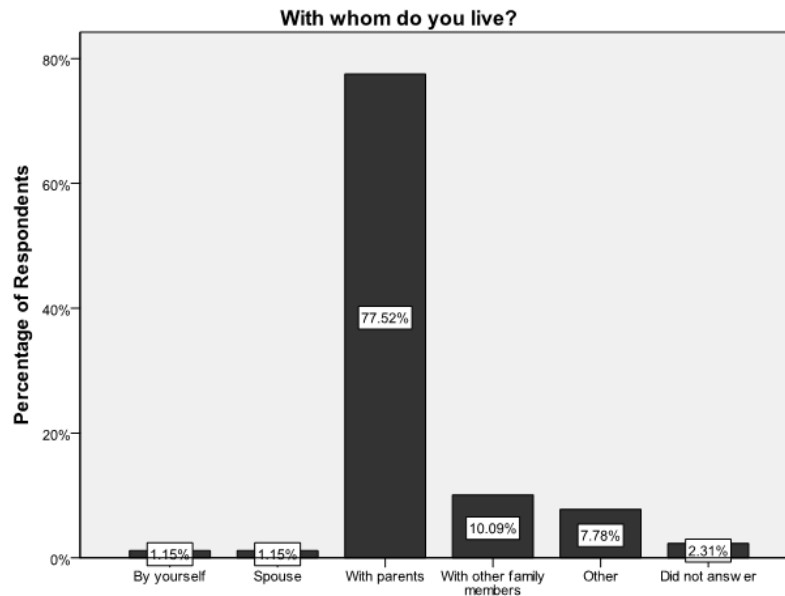
**Did you continue community service after completing Project Challenge?(If yes, about how long did you continue?)**



## Impact on Family Members and Others

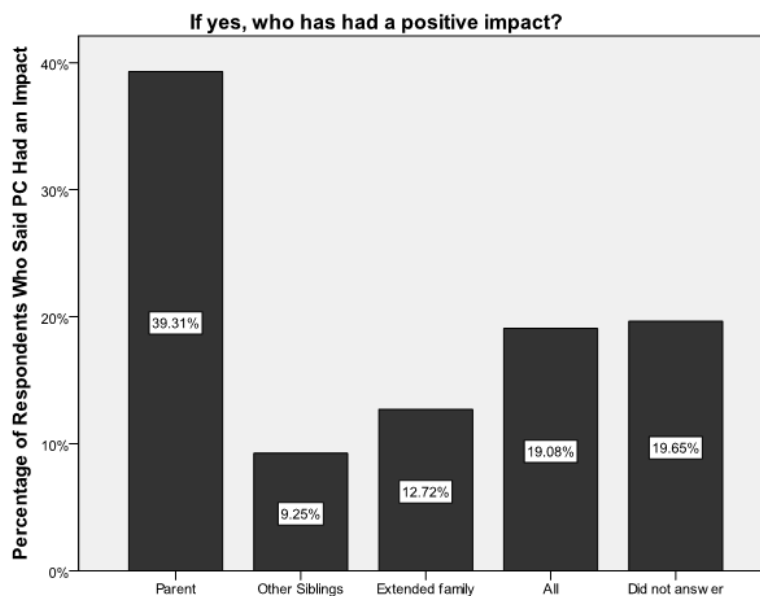
Most respondents, 269 (76.2%), live with their parents. In addition, 35 respondents (9.9%) live with other family members.

**Figure 11. Living Arrangements (percentages)**



Of the respondents, 143 (40.5%) said Project Challenge positively impacted their family members. Slightly more (171 or 48.4%) said the program had no impact. Of those who reported a positive impact, 68 respondents (19.3%) indicated that the program impacted their parents in particular. This data decreased from 29.7% in 2008.

**Figure 12. Positive Impact on Family Members (percentages)**



## Additional Offense

There were 48 respondents (6.3%) who reported new offenses for the 2009 calendar year, a decrease from the 2008 rate of 14.8%. Within the respondents who reported new offenses, 26 (54.2%) committed offenses within 6 months after completing Project Challenge, 12 (25%) committed offenses within 12 months, and 10 (20.8%) did not specify. In comparison, data compiled by Project Challenge staff indicate 71 new offences by 6 months, and 37 by 12 months, showing 108 in total with a recidivism rate of 14.2%, which is also a decrease from the 2008 rate of 16.6%.

**Table 4. Referrals/Arrests since Completion of Project Challenge by 6<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> Month Survey (Self-Reported)**

<b>Arrested or Referred since Completion</b>	<b>Follow-up Month</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>6 Month</b>	<b>12 Month</b>	<b>Unidentified*</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	26	12	10	<b>48</b>
<b>No</b>	183	62	48	293
<b>No Answer</b>	272	85	61	418
<b>Total</b>	481	159	119	759

Within the 48 new self-reported offenses, 8 (16.7%) were categorized as adult offenses, and 38 (79.7%) as juvenile offenses. Table 5 below shows the breakdown by survey month.

**Table 5. Charged as Adult or Juvenile by 6<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> Month Survey**

	<b>Follow-up Month</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>6 Month</b>	<b>12 Month</b>	<b>Unidentified*</b>	
<b>Adult</b>	2	4	2	8
<b>Juvenile</b>	23	8	7	38
<b>No Answer</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>	26	12	10	48

\*Note: in Table 4 and Table 5, "Unidentified" refers to respondents who did not choose either 6- or 12- month survey, as well as the ones who chose both.

Six of the 48 new offenses (12.5%) ended in conviction, 33 (68.75%) ended in adjudication, and 3 (6.25%) ended in neither. Within the 6 convicted, 2 (33.3%) were adult offenses, and 4 (66.7%) were juvenile offenses. Within the 33 adjudicated, 1 (3.03%) was classified as an adult offense, and 32 (96.97%) were classified as juvenile offenses.

**Table 6. Convicted or Adjudicated for Those Charged**

	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>No Answer</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Convicted</b>	2	4	0	6
<b>Adjudicated</b>	1	32	0	33
<b>Neither</b>	2	1	0	3
<b>No Answer</b>	3	1	2	6
<b>Total</b>	8	38	2	48

There were 6 (12.5%) felonies reported, 27 (56.3%) misdemeanors, and 7 (14.6%) status offenses. Table 7 below shows the breakdown by type of offenses (adult/juvenile).

**Table 7. Types of Charge**

	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Juvenile</b>	<b>No Answer</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Felony</b>	2	4	0	6
<b>Misdemeanor</b>	4	23	0	27
<b>Status Offense</b>	1	6	0	7
<b>No Answer</b>	1	5	2	8
<b>Total</b>	8	38	2	48

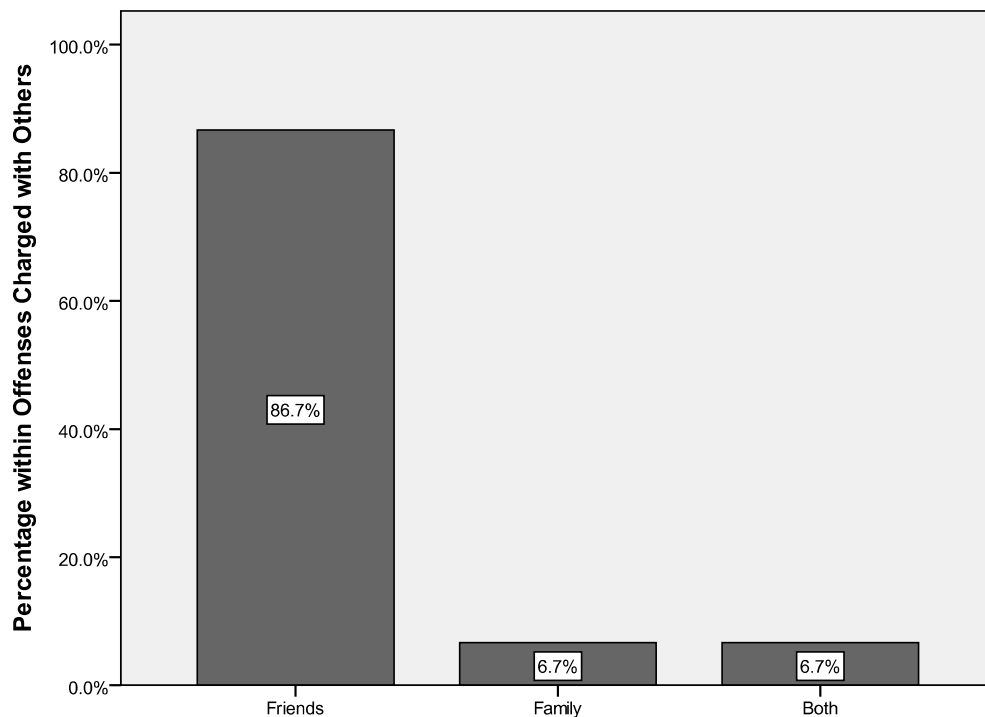
There were 15 offenses (31.25%) in which someone else was charged along with the Project Challenge client. The majority, 28 (58.33%), were charged alone. Among those charged with others, 4 (26.67%) were adult offenses, and 11 (73.33%) were juvenile offenses.

**Table 8. Others Charged Along with Program Client**

	Adult	Juvenile	No Answer	Total
<b>Yes</b>	4	11	0	15
<b>No</b>	3	25	0	28
<b>No Answer</b>	1	2	2	5
<b>Total</b>	8	38	2	48

The 15 individuals who had new offenses and were charged with others were also categorized by the identity of the other person involved. Most respondents, 13 (86.7%) reportedly had friends involved in the act, while 1 (6.7%) had family members involved, and 1 (6.7%) had both involved.

**Table 9. Relationship to Others Charged**





## Discussion

Survey results from 2009 indicate that Project Challenge has improved client satisfaction in most areas. Five of its six elements—the overall program, “Community Service,” “Restitution Bank,” “Life Skills,” and “Wilderness Adventure Trip”—have increased mean rating scores compared to 2008; only the score for Project Challenge staff shows a small decrease (-0.22%).

Project Challenge staff was rated the highest out of the six elements in 2009 as was the case in previous years. All the categories have received scores above 4.0, an improvement from 2008 when only three were rated above 4.0. The mean score of Wilderness Adventure Trip shows the highest percentage increase (+3.90%) from 2008 to 2009. No element has a percentage change—either positively or negatively—by more than 4.0% from the 2008 data, indicating relative stability in the program’s evaluation scores.

Of those who responded, 55.0% reported that their school performance had improved, an increase from 51.7% in 2007. Of those respondents with improved performance, 96.9% reported an improvement in grades, and 97.4% reported an improvement in attendance. Both show an increase from the 2008 data of 88.6% and 95.5% respectively.

After the completion of Project Challenge, 65.4% of respondents planned to further their education by attending college, an increase from 64.9% in 2008; 16.1% planned to join the military, an increase from 12.8% in 2008; and 27.5% planned on entering a technical school after graduation, also an increase from 25.2% in 2008. The percentage of respondents who continued community service after completing Project Challenge also increased, from 18.9% in 2008 to 28.3% in 2009.

Of those who responded, 40.5% said that Project Challenge had a positive impact on their families, similar to 40.8% in 2008, which shows a positive change compared to previous years’ declining numbers. Of those who reported positive impact, 19.08% said the impact was made on all their family members, and 39.31% said the impact was on their parents in particular.

The great majority of the comments made about Project Challenge were positive, talking about how well the participant is doing since the completion of the program, how thankful he or she is, how much he or she had enjoyed the program, and how helpful the program has been. Several aspects of the program, such as the staff and community service, were pointed out as specific positive influences. Some comments—such as “I comply better with my parents’ wishes” and “Mom likes my attitude better”—indicate that Project Challenge has positive effects on family members of its clients. Relatively neutral comments say the program was “okay.”

The number of re-offenders shows that Project Challenge is effective. Of the 759 completed surveys, there were a total of 108 new offenses, yielding a recidivism rate of 14.2%. This recidivism rate has decreased from 16.6% in 2008 (with 488 completed surveys) and is slightly higher than 13.8% in 2007.