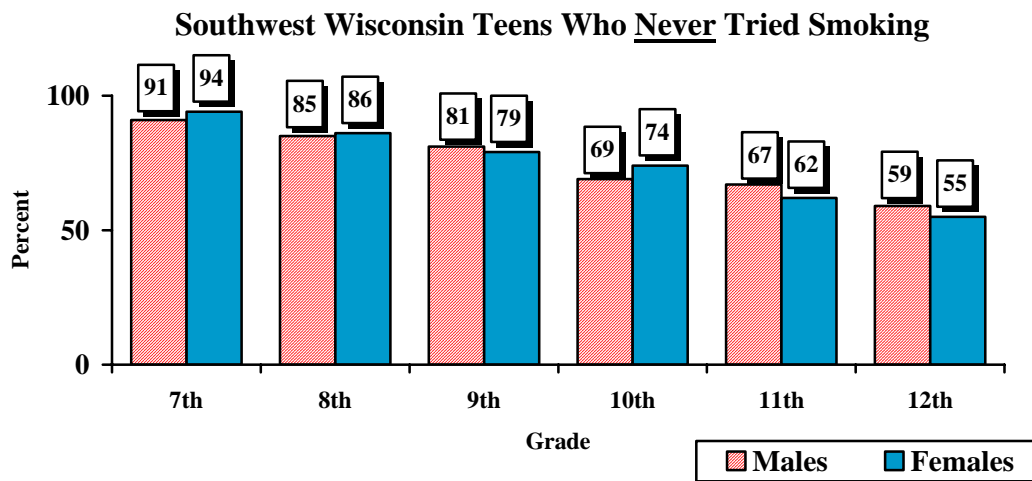


Many Factors Influence Teen Smoking



Eighteen percent of 7th through 12th graders in Southwest Wisconsin reported smoking at least one cigarette in the past 30 days and 6% of teens report smoking 40 times or more during the past 30 days. Overall one in four teens have tried smoking cigarettes. One in four males and 6% of females have tried chewing tobacco. Parents, peers, the school and community impact teen tobacco use.

Those are among the findings of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) conducted by 15 school districts in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) District 3 as reported by UW-Extension. The school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge, and Seneca, surveyed more than 3,700 students in September of 2005. UW-Extension faculty in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette, and Richland counties are involved in processing and presenting the findings. The survey was funded by participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

“Of the teens who said that their parents think it is wrong for teens their age to smoke cigarettes, only 14% report smoking cigarettes in the past month”, says Tom Schmitz, Grant County UW-Extension Youth Development Educator. “On the other hand, 53% of those who say their parents think it is not wrong for teens their age to smoke cigarettes smoked in the past 30 days. Consistency in family rule enforcement, eating meals as a family and providing family love and support are linked to decreased teen smoking.”

The survey also found that high levels of parental monitoring are linked to lower rates of teen smoking. Only 13% of teens who report high levels of parental monitoring smoked in the past month, while 35% of the teens with very little parental monitoring smoked more than 40 times in the past month. Parental

monitoring was measured in the survey by looking at seven questions related to what parents knew about their teen, their teen's peers and their teen's activities.

"Teens are exposed to tobacco at a young age, SWYS found that nearly 4% of all students experimented with smoking by the age of 10", reports Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H Youth Development Educator. "In fact, of the youth who have tried smoking, almost one out of five males and one in ten females had their first cigarette by their 10th birthday. We also see early experimentation with chewing tobacco among males. Nearly a third of males who chew tobacco, tried it before their 13th birthday. The majority of females who have tried chewing tobacco did so after their 13th birthday."

According to Amy Mitchell, Crawford County 4-H Youth Development Agent, teen attitudes have the potential to make a positive impact on teen smoking. "The survey found three out of four teens think that it is "wrong" or "very wrong" for teens their age to smoke," reports Mitchell. "Also, half the teens think that smoking even one or two cigarettes a day poses a moderate to great risk to ones' physical well-being. As we expected, the survey found that teens who thought it was wrong for teens their age to smoke and teens who perceived at least moderate risks associated with smoking were less likely to smoke."

"School success gives us clues as to how likely a student is to smoke", adds Pam Hobson, Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent. "Only 5% of teens who report getting mostly A's report smoking in the past 30 days, while 17% of those who get mostly B's, 36% of those who get mostly C's and 84% of those who get mostly D's smoked in the past 30 days. School satisfaction also linked to teen smoking. Seven percent of students who were highly satisfied with school smoked in the past 30 days, while 63% of students who were highly dissatisfied with school smoked and they also smoked more frequently."

"There is reason to believe that the community can make a difference in teen smoking as well", says Bev Doll, Grant County Family Living Agent. "We looked at the level of community attachment by measuring a number of factors including whether teens felt that adults respect and listened to them, that police will help them if they needed it and that they had a chance to make a difference in their community. We found that teens that were significantly unattached to their community were six times more likely to smoke than teens that felt a strong community attachment. We also found that teens who felt adults in their community opposed teen smoking and teens that felt adults would tell their parents if they smoked, were much less likely to smoke."

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out this summer. Hobson, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell, and Potterton are also giving community presentations on the data. For more information on the survey contact your local school district, Schmitz and Doll at 608-723-2125, Potterton at 608-776-4820, Mitchell at 608-326-0223, or Hobson at 608-647-6148.

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