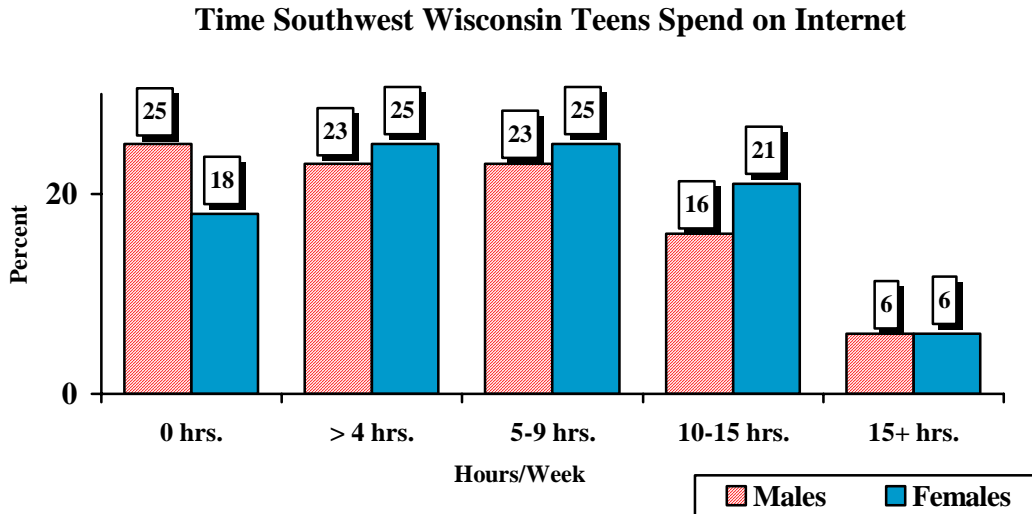


Teen Computer and Internet Usage



Twenty-five percent of 7th through 12th graders in southwest Wisconsin report spending 10 or more hours on the Internet per week while another 21% report spending no time at all on the Internet each week. Only 13% of the teens report not spending any time playing computer or video games. Parents impact Internet and computer usage and the amount of time spent online. Southwest Wisconsin teens are engaging in and are victims of cyber bullying.

Those are among the findings of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) survey 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. Participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition funded the survey.

“Twenty-five percent of male teens report spending no time on the Internet each week”, says Pam Hobson, Richland County UW-Extension Youth Development Agent. “Females tend to spend more time on the Internet than their male counterparts. Eighteen percent of the female teens reported they didn’t spend any time on the Internet; while about 50% of all teens report spending one to nine hours on the Internet each week.”

According to Amy Mitchell, Crawford County 4-H Youth Development Agent, many parents monitor the Internet sites their teens are visiting. “The survey

found nearly three out of four females and 64% of the males reported parents know sometimes or often what Internet sites they were visiting,” reports Mitchell. “The report also finds parental monitoring of Internet sites goes down dramatically as the grade increases. Fifty-eight percent of 7th grade males and 68% of 7th grade females report their parents often know the sites they are visiting, while 30% of the male and 38% of the female 12th graders report their parents often know the sites they visit.”

“Teens were also asked about the time they spent playing computer and video games,” says Bev Doll, Grant County Family Living Agent. “Overall, slightly over 12% of the teens reported they did not play video or computer games at all. While there was no real difference between the teen’s grade and how much time they spent playing games, 29% of the females and 22% of the males reported playing video and computer 5-9 hours per week. Over 11% of the males report they play video or computer games more than 15 hours per week, while less than 8% of the females report spending more than 15 hours per week playing computer or video games.”

Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H Youth Development Educator, reports, “Sixty-six percent of the teens said they had no limit to the time they could be on the computer each night. Only 12% of the teens report their parents set a time for them to be off the computer. Younger students also report they are allowed less time on the computer each night than the older students.”

“Cyber bullying is a new and emerging issue among teens as Internet usage increases,” reports Tom Schmitz, Grant County 4-H Youth Development Educator. “While the majority (89%) report they are not being a victim of cyber bullying, four percent of the teens reported being cyber bullied in the past 30 days. When teens were asked if they engaged in cyber bullying, eighty-five percent reported they didn’t, while six percent said they had participated in cyber bullying in the past 30 days. As the teens academic performance decrease, the incidents of teens engaging in cyber bullying or being cyber bullied increases dramatically.”

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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