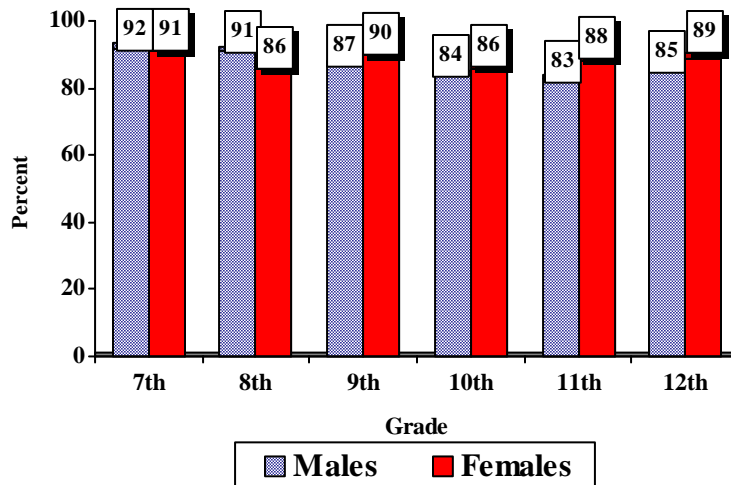


TEENS FEEL SAFE IN SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN

Teens Who Feel Safe in Their Homes, School, and Community



Teens who "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement, "I feel safe at home, at school and in my community".

Nearly 90% of 7th through 12th graders in southwest Wisconsin feel safe at home, school and in their communities. Over 90% of southwest Wisconsin teens report they have not been threatened or injured by a weapon at school, although teens report high levels of verbal abuse at school. Teens report cyber bullying on the increase.

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. The survey was funded by participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

"The teen survey asked students to provide information on a wide variety of topics including personal safety issues. When asked how much they agreed with the statement 'I feel safe at home, at school and in my community,' 42% of the teens "strongly agreed" and 46% "agreed". Teens who "strongly disagreed" with feeling safe in the community also reported lower levels of family rule enforcement and parental monitoring", says Pam Hobson, Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent. "Four percent (4%) of teens are very unattached to their community, however of the teens who "strongly disagree" with the

statement, "*I feel safe at home at school, and in my community*", 54% are very unattached to their community."

"Ninety-three percent (93%) of all students surveyed report they have not been threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past 12 months", says Tom Schmitz, Grant County UW-Extension Youth Development Educator. "However, twenty percent (20%) of all students report they have had personal property stolen or deliberately damaged at school in the past 12 months."

"Another personal safety issue centered on sexual harassment which the survey defined as unwanted sexual attention such as sexual comments, jokes, graffiti, touching, blocking or cornering," reports Amy Mitchell, Crawford County 4-H Youth Development Agent. "Overall, 10% of males and 7% of females report they *"often"* have been victims of sexual harassment by another teen at school in the past year. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of 10th grade females report they have been victims of sexual harassment by another teen at school."

According to Grant County Family Living Agent, Bev Doll, cyber bullying is becoming a personal safety issue for some teens in southwest Wisconsin. Cyber bullying refers to the use of the internet to embarrass, humiliate, or threaten harm to someone. "Thirteen percent (13%) of all students reported they have engaged in cyber bullying at some time. Fifteen percent (15%) of males and 11% of females report they have been a victim of cyber bullying", says Doll.

Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H Youth Development Educator reports that some teens say they experience sexual advances on the Internet. Potterton says, "While the majority of teens *"never"* experience unwanted sexual advances when they are on the Internet, 14% of 8th grade males and 17% of 9th grade females report *"often"* experiencing unwanted sexual advances through the Internet. Overall, 28% of males and 41% of females say they have experienced unwanted sexual advances when they are on the Internet."

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out shortly. 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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