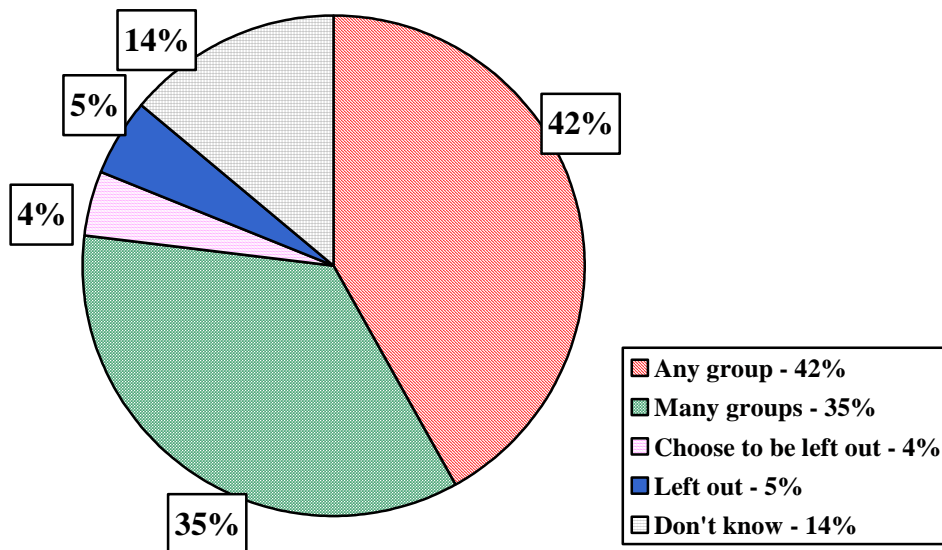


SWYS 2005 News - Friends and Activities Important for Teens



Friends are an important part of a teen's life; they are a source of support and influence. In fact, 42% of teens in Southwest Wisconsin would go to a friend if they had a personal problem. Three out of four teens report that they fit in with one or more groups of friends. However, 9% of teens say they choose to be alone or report feeling left out.

These 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. More than 3,700 students in grades 7 through 12 in the school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge and Seneca participated the survey 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.

Student Response to the question, "Where do you feel you best fit in?"

"Eighty-five percent of the teens surveyed agree or strongly agree that they can stand up for their beliefs and resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. Of that 85% of teens, almost all of them fit in with one or more groups of friends. On the flip side, 58% of the teens that choose to be alone or feel left out strongly agree or agree that they sometimes feel their life has no purpose. Whereas, less than one quarter of those that fit in with one or more

groups of friends feels the same way." reports Amy Mitchell, Crawford County 4-H Youth Development Agent.

The survey also asked teens how they spend their time. "Half of the teens report they spend five or more hours per week in extra-curricular activities, like sports, clubs, student government or 4-H Clubs," according to Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent Pamela Hobson. "Interestingly, 38% of the students who receive A's or A/B's say they spend 10 or more hours per week in extra-curricular activities. Three out of ten teenagers reported that they agreed with the statement that the cost of participating in school activities keeps me from participating as much as I'd like."

"More females than males spend time in out-of-school activities like music or dance lessons, art or drama," reports Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H Youth Development Agent. "Participating in activities outside of school affects how teens feel about themselves and their communities. Teens that spend more time in activities outside of school feel more satisfied with themselves and more attached to the community. In addition, students who spend time outside of the school day in extra curricular activities, studying, in non-school activities and students who do chores at home report higher grades than those who do not."

Teens are also busy with other activities. Almost half of teens spend five or more hours per week on the Internet. These numbers have increased compared to the same study conducted in 2001. Females spend more time per day on homework than males. Seventh through twelfth graders tend to spend one to two hours per day on homework. "Males and females spend equal amount of time playing video/computer games or watching T.V. (62% of teens spend five or more hours per week). However, many more males (42%) than females (13%) spend one or more hours per week looking at sexually explicit materials," says Tom Schmitz, Grant County Youth Development Educator. "In addition, half of the 12th graders in the survey report working 10 or more hours per week."

"With all of their activities, teens find it challenging to eat meals with their family. Based on survey results, eating at least three evening meals together per week influences a teen's self-esteem, their school satisfaction, their grades, their behavior and their attitudes," reports Bev Doll, Family Living Agent in Grant County. "In the survey, 57% of the 7th - 9th graders eat three or more evening meals per week with their families, but only 44% of the 10th-12th graders eat three or more evening meals per week with their families."

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out this summer. Potterton, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell and Hobson 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.