



2002 Female Data Comparisons



Depression/Attempted Suicide and Substance Use

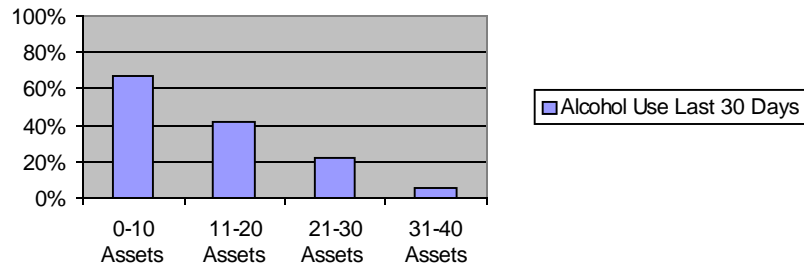
According to *The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls*, stress and depression are related to smoking and drinking for girls. In the most recent survey measuring stress and smoking among girls, when asked why they smoked or drank, 66% of girls who reported smoking said they did so to relieve stress, and 36% who reported drinking said they did so because it helped them forget problems. Girls with depressive symptoms or who report abuse were even more likely to turn to drinking or smoking for relief.

Data from the 2002 *Marquette and Alger Counties Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors (Marquette/Alger PSL: AB)* survey indicates 33% of females reported having used alcohol once or more in the last 30 days. This behavior starts early with 20% of respondents in the 8th grade reported using alcohol. Additionally, 20% of females reported they “got drunk once or more in the last two weeks.” We also know 27% of females smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days, and females are more likely to smoke than males. In comparing local data with data from the 2000 *Monitoring the Future* survey, we know our youth drink and smoke at higher rates than the national average.

Because the *Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls* found a relationship between stress and depression and smoking and drinking behaviors, it is important to this discussion to present Marquette and Alger county data on female levels of depression and attempted suicide. According to 2000 *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* data, 22% of girls reported they felt sad or depressed most or all of the time in the last month. Tenth grade girls (27%) are most likely to report depression than 12th graders (21%) and 8th graders (19%). Another 22% of females report having attempted suicide one or more times. Again, 10th grade appears to be the most volatile year with 28% of females reporting attempted suicide.

The 40 Developmental Assets Framework of positive youth development has proven, on a national level, the more assets youth have, the less likely they are to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco use, depression and attempted suicide. Through the data from the 2000 *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* survey, this correlation is affirmed. Of the 33% of females who reported using alcohol in the last 30 days, those females who are in the lowest asset category (0-10 assets) are much more likely to use alcohol than females in the highest asset category (31-40 assets). This is illustrated in the following chart:

Comparison of Alcohol Use by Asset Levels



This same declining slope occurs as we look at smoking behaviors by asset categories. Sixty-one percent of females in the lowest asset category reported having smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days. This compares to only 2% of females in the highest asset category reporting tobacco use. The 2002 *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* results clearly illustrate extreme challenges for females in the lowest asset category in the depression and attempted suicide risk-taking behaviors. Forty-three percent of these females reported depression and 44% reported attempted suicide. This compares with females in the highest asset category reporting these behaviors at 6% and 4% respectively.

Eating Disorders and Body Image

Eating disorders—such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder—include extreme emotions, attitudes and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. Eating disorders are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for females and males (National Eating Disorders Association).

The National Eating Disorders Association offers the following definitions on their website. This valuable website can be found at www.NationalEatingDisorders.org.

ANOREXIA NERVOSA is characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss. Along with this definition, the association presents five symptoms: 1) Refusal to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for height, body type, age and activity level. 2) Intense fear of weight gain or being “fat”. 3) Feeling “fat” or overweight despite dramatic weight loss. 4) Loss of menstrual periods. 5) Extreme concern with body weight and shape.

BULIMIA NERVOSA is characterized by a secretive cycle of binge eating followed by purging. Bulimia includes eating large amounts of food—more than most people would eat in one meal—in short periods of time, then getting rid of the food and calories through vomiting, laxative abuse or over-exercising. Again, the association presents five symptoms of this disorder: 1) Repeated episodes of bingeing and purging; 2) Feeling out of control during a binge and eating beyond the point of comfortable fullness; 3) Purging after binge (typically by self-induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, diet pills

and/or diuretics, excessive exercise, or fasting); 4) Frequent dieting; 5) Extreme concern with body weight and shape.

According to the 2002 *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* data, 19% of females reported having engaged in bulimic or anorexic behavior. Looking at this data by grade level, we found 14% of 8th graders and 22% of 10th and 12th graders have engaged in bulimic or anorexic behavior. Again, if we consider this behavior by asset category, our 0-10 asset females (31%) engaged in anorexic or bulimic behavior at much higher levels compared to females in the highest asset category (7%). Maintaining good health is an important thriving indicator for adolescent females. According to the 2002 *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* survey, less than half (48%) of adolescent females reported having this thriving indicator. Additionally, we have witnessed a decrease in this thriving indicator from 2000 to 2002. A full 80% of female adolescents in the highest asset category (31-40 assets) reported having the maintains good health thriving indicator compared to only 12% of youth in the lowest asset category (0-10 assets). Eighth grade females (56%) are significantly more likely than both 10th (46%) and 12th (40%) graders.

Nutrition and Body Image have been challenging issues for adolescent females. According to the 2001 *CDC Surveillance Summaries 49*, 62.1% of 9th grade girls reported attempting to lose weight. High school girls were significantly more likely than boys to think that they were overweight and more than twice as likely as boys to be currently trying to lose weight (2001 *CDC Surveillance Summaries 49*).

Although Marquette and Alger Counties do not survey elementary- age youth for these behaviors, other researchers have found disturbing evidence of very young girls wanting to lose weight and developing skewed body images. Collins found almost half of 1st through 3rd grade females desired to be thinner (Collins, 1991, p. 199-208). Mellin et al., 1991 found 81% of 10-year-olds are afraid of being fat, and further, 51% of 9 and 10-year-old girls feel better about themselves if they are on a diet (Mellin, McNutt, Je, Schreiber, Crawford, & Obarzanek, 1991, p. 27-37).

Self-Esteem

The National Association for Self-Esteem's definition of self-esteem is, "The experience of being capable of meeting life's challenges and being worthy of happiness." This association further explains this concept of self-esteem is founded on the premise that it is strongly connected to a sense of worthiness and competence and the relationship between the two as one life. The worthiness component of self-esteem is often misunderstood as simply feeling good about oneself. Actually, it is tied to whether or not a person lives up to certain fundamental human values, such as finding meanings that foster human growth and making commitments to them in a way that leads to a sense of integrity and satisfaction. A sense of competence is having the conviction that one is generally capable of producing desired results, having confidence in the efficacy of our mind and our ability to think as well as to make appropriate choices and decisions. (See more on the definition of self-esteem at www.self-esteem-nase.org)

According to the *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* survey, 49% of young people reported having the self-esteem asset in the 2000 survey round. However in 2002, only 42% of youth reported having this important asset. Further from the 2002 survey, a mere 38% of Marquette and Alger County females reported having the self-esteem asset. We can also look at reported self-esteem by grade level. This look at the data is sometimes helpful in planning programs to increase self-esteem. Efforts to maintain or increase self-esteem should consider the ecology of the female adolescent experience during times of transition. From the 2002 *Marquette/Alger PSL: AB* data, 39% of 8th grade girls, 31% of 10th grade girls and 45% of 12th grade girls reported having the self-esteem asset. At best, less than half of Marquette and Alger County adolescent females reported having the self-esteem asset (12th grade), and at worst, only about one-third of the girls have this asset (10th grade).

The lack of self-esteem can have devastating impacts on the developmental trajectory of adolescents. For example, Beane stated that a weakened sense of self-esteem is associated with teen pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, teen suicide, antisocial behavior, and self-destructive acts (Beane, 1991, 49, p. 25-30). A study conducted by Daniel and King, with the purpose of “determining the degree to which children’s perceived self-esteem is related to their overall academic achievement and to determine the dimensions of perceived self-esteem that would be most clearly associated with higher levels of student achievement.” Daniel and King discovered “...a persistent and significant positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement” (Daniel & King, 1995). The researchers in this study use the Self-Esteem Index (SEI) and thereby investigated four dimensions of self-esteem: academic competence, familial acceptance, personal security and peer popularity. “These findings suggest that of the four dimensions of the SEI, students’ perceived academic competence is most closely associated with academic achievement” (Self-Esteem Index, p. 19). “A second dimension of student’s perceived self-esteem, familial acceptance, was also found to be highly associated with the first predictor indicating a strong relationship with students academic performance across the subtests of the SAT” (Self-Esteem Index, p. 21).