

# Monitoring the Future

## You cannot be replaced!

You were scientifically selected to be included in the follow-up sample so that your responses represent the views of thousands of people your age. If we lose contact with you, no substitution can be made, and the views of adults similar to you will not be as well represented by the study. The success of the study depends upon your willingness to continue to complete and return the questionnaire to Monitoring the Future. For this reason, we work hard to keep track of you and other participants around the country and the world. We are indeed grateful for your cooperation.



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## News Update

This newsletter contains results from the follow-up surveys that you completed for the Monitoring the Future study. It represents our commitment to sharing some of the results of the study with our participants. We are also committed to distributing the information we gain from this study to policymakers and the public. Political leaders, influential organizations, and the general public have consistently shown their interest in the attitudes and actions of young adults, and Monitoring the Future is an effective means of communicating your viewpoints and experiences to them.

This important study is designed to look at changing behaviors and preferences of young Americans. We believe that studying the way young adults are today will tell us a lot about the way the whole nation will be tomorrow.

This year's newsletter contains updates on some topics that you may have seen in previous newsletters, as well as some new topics.

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## EQUAL WORK = EQUAL PAY?

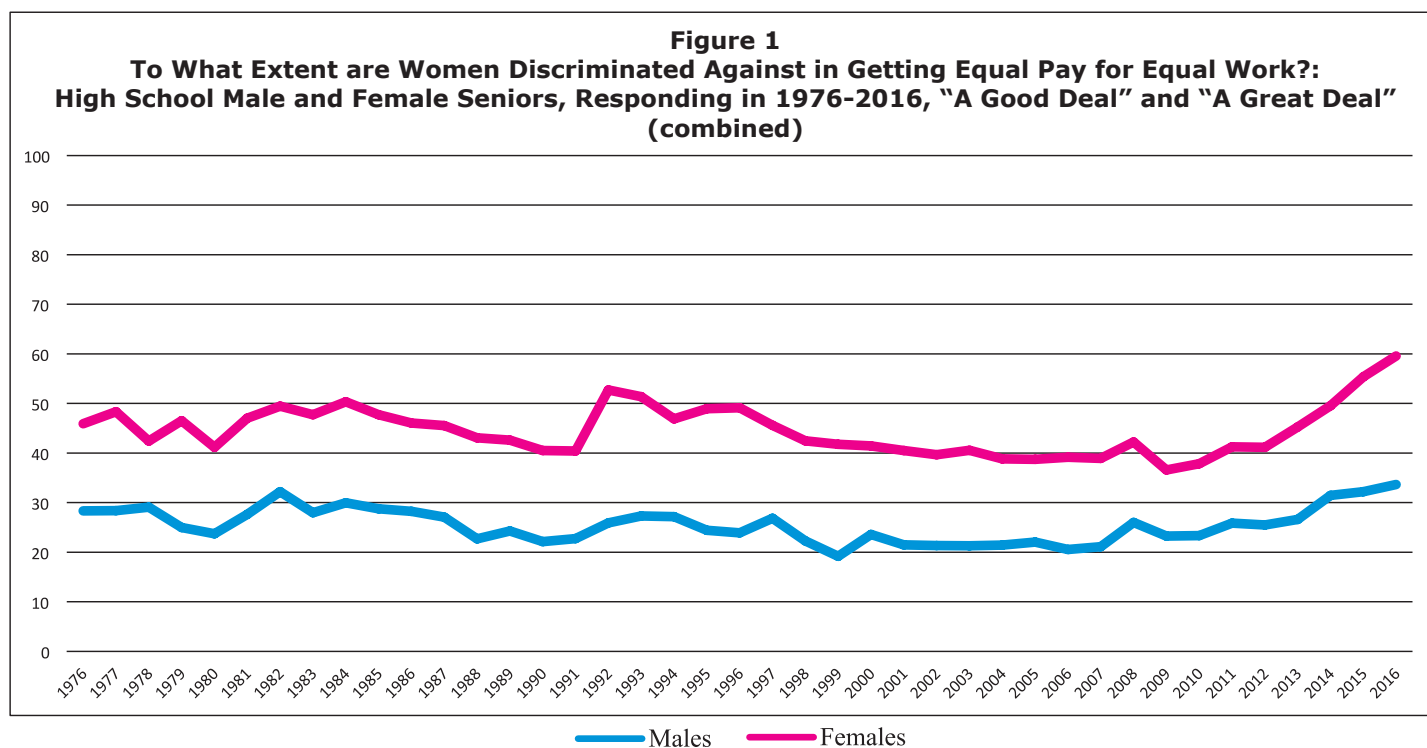
Since 1976, Monitoring the Future has asked high school seniors, “*To what extent are women discriminated against in getting equal pay for equal work?*” This article compares responses from in-school surveys from 1976 through 2016 to see if the perceptions have changed over the last four decades for men and women who are on the threshold of entering the job market. We also looked at the 2015 follow-up data from respondents aged 19 to 30 to see if there are difference in reporting after they leave high school and enter the job market. Please keep in mind that the responses are general perceptions of our participants; we do not ask if they personally are victims of this type of discrimination.

Through all the years of the study, many more female high school seniors than males have said that women are discriminated against in getting “equal pay for equal work.” (See Figure 1.) Among women, the percentage responding that women were discriminated against “a good deal” or “a great deal” has averaged 45% and ranged from a low of 37% in 2009 to a high of 60% in 2016. We found it interesting that female students’ perception of significant discrimination decreased steadily from 50% to 40% from 1984 through 1991, shot up to 53% in 1992, gradually decreased

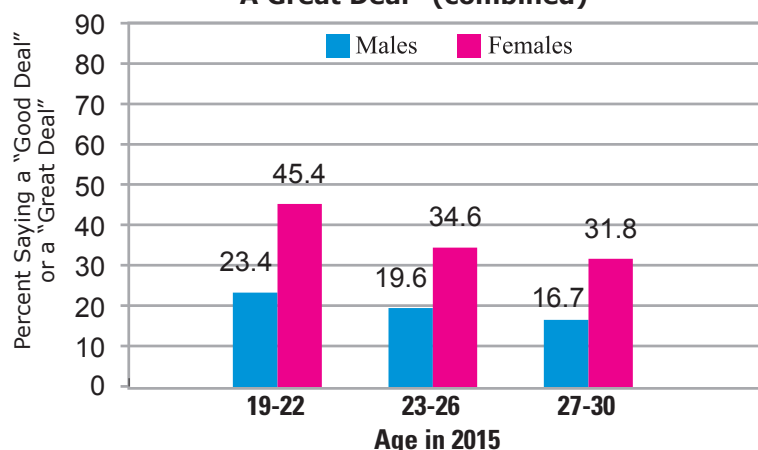
through 2001, and then, except for a slight rise in 2008 stayed about the same through 2010. From 2011 through 2016 the percentage increased dramatically, culminating with the highest level occurring with the most recent class year.

The proportion of male high school seniors responding that women were discriminated against regarding pay “a good deal” or “a great deal” has averaged about 25% and ranged from 19% to 34% across the years. As was true for high school females, the peak of perceived discrimination for high school males was in 2016 (34%), and the lowest point was in 1999 (23%). The average gap between males and females over the years in this perception has been 20 percentage points.

After high school, the perceptions of discrimination changed, with perceived pay discrimination decreasing. (See Figure 2.) Drawing on data collected in 2015, we found that among women in their early twenties (ages 19-22) forty-five percent reported there was a “good” or “great” deal of pay discrimination in the work place. It is interesting to note that at ages 23-26, when (perhaps) some women are graduating from college and entering a career path, there was “only” slightly more than one-third (35%) who said that the gender-based wage



**Figure 2**  
**To What Extent Are Women Discriminated**  
**Against in Getting Equal Pay for Equal Work?**  
**Young Adults, 2015, "A Good Deal" and**  
**"A Great Deal" (combined)**



more likely to report discrimination against women than those aged 23–30 (20% to 17%). However the gap between the younger men (19-22) compared to the older men (23-30) was not as striking as the difference between younger and older women.

In addition, after high school, female and male perceptions of wage discrimination become more similar. (See Figure 2.) At age 18 in 2015, the female–male gap was 26 percentage points. At ages 19-22 in 2015, the gender gap was 22 percentage points; and at ages 27-30, the gender gap was down to 15 percentage points. Most of this age-related gender difference is due to a greater decline with age for female than male respondents, declining from 55% at age 18 to 32% at ages 27-30 for females (compared to declining from 32% to 17%, respectively, among males).

Well before 1976, when Monitoring the Future started asking respondents about their perception of “equal pay” for “equal work,” federal laws prohibited pay discrimination based on gender. However, in the eyes of over one-half of 2016 female 12th graders and one third of male 12th graders, the laws have not effectively closed the door on wage discrimination. This issue is very much alive for today’s high school students and young adults. ☞

## LEISURE TIME

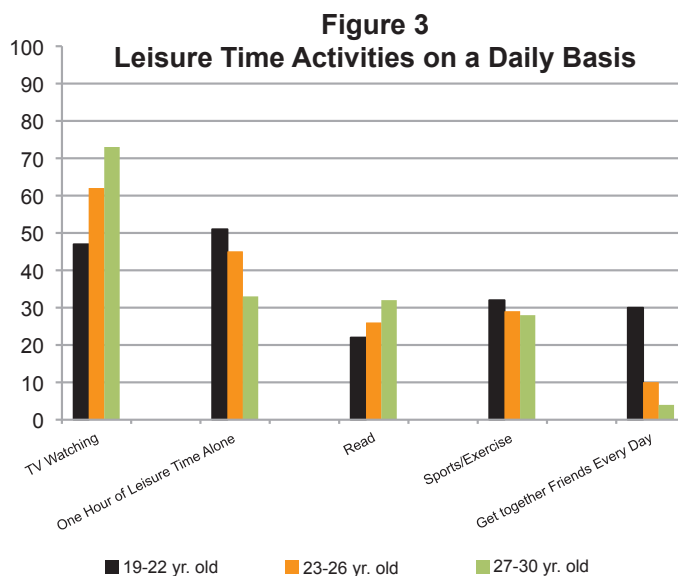
Perhaps more so than people of other ages, young adults like to have fun and socialize with their friends. What kinds of social activities do you enjoy? Do you find there is less time for social activities each year? Do you find yourself spending more time on activities alone as you get older? Do men and women spend the same amount of time on the same leisure activities? Monitoring the Future asks about a number of different social activities, and we would like to share some of those answers with you.

We asked all of our follow-up respondents how often they do each of the following activities:

- Watch television
- Spend at least an hour of leisure time alone
- Read
- Participate in sports, athletics or exercise
- Get together informally with friends

Between the ages of 19 and 30 our respondents undergo various transitional phases of life. Most of you are attending college, moving out on your own, starting full-time jobs, marrying, or starting a family of your own. We thought it would be interesting to see how the amount of time you spend on leisure activities shifted as you negotiated all the new important changes across the 20s. Figure 3 shows the percentages of respondents in 2015 from different age groups who say they do various activities **almost every day**.

It will probably be no surprise that **watching TV** is the most common leisure activity for young adults,



with nearly two-thirds saying they do this almost every day. The percentage increased with age, starting at 47% for 19 to 22 year olds and reaching 73% for the oldest respondents. Among 19-22 year olds, considerably more males than females (51% of males compared to 44% of females) reported watching TV almost every day. The percentage of male respondents watching TV remained fairly consistent until ages 27 to 30 when three quarters (76%) said they watch television on an almost daily basis. The percentage of women who were daily television watchers increased significantly between ages 19-22 and ages 23-36 (44% vs 66%, respectively).

Although television watching was clearly the most common pastime, **spending an hour or more alone** each day came in second—about four in ten respondents said they do this. Over one half (54%) of male participants between the ages of 19-26 spend at least an hour of leisure time alone per day. It is not until ages 27-30 that we see a decline (to 36%) of men who spend at least an hour of leisure time alone. Similar to our younger male participants, 49% of females between 19-22 years old also had at least an hour daily to spend alone. However, this gender similarity in daily alone time ended by the mid-20s. The percentage of women who report spending time by themselves on a daily basis decreased to 40% by ages 23-26 and to 31% by ages 27 to 30.

Another popular leisure pastime was **reading** books, magazines or newspapers, with over a quarter of those aged 19-30 doing this almost every day. Gender did not seem to play a significant role in the popularity of this leisure activity; about 27% for both males and females compared to 32% females) spent daily time reading. However, daily reading, like TV watching, increased with age. Slightly more than one fifth (22%) of people between 19-22 years old said they read books, magazines or newspapers daily. The percentage increased to a quarter (26%) for participants who were between the ages of 23-26 and continued to rise to 32% for 27-30 year olds.

It was nice to see that **being active** was also a frequent activity for our participants. Almost one-third (30%) said that they participate in sports, athletics or exercise almost every day. The highest percentage of daily sports/exercise participants were males between the ages of 19 to 22 at 40%. However, men also showed the most decline in numbers; daily exercise for men dropped to 28% by age 23-26. On a positive note, the decline stopped there for men, with one-

quarter reporting daily exercise between ages 27-30. Although the percentage of women who exercised daily was consistently lower than the percentage of men (28% overall for women compared to 31% for men), women were more consistent than males across the age categories. Among the youngest women (ages 19-22) 27% report daily exercise; this percentage increased slightly to 29% for women aged 23-27 and then decreased slightly to 24% for those aged 27-30.

**Getting together informally with friends** is also a favorite leisure activity. About one-third (30%) of all 19-22 year old respondents said they do this almost every day. However, for young adults between the ages of 23-26, this activity drops off dramatically, with only 10% of participants in this age group reporting leisure time with friends on a daily basis. Among participants who had reached their late twenties (ages 27-30), daily leisure time with friends is almost non-existent, with only 4% reporting such frequent visits with their cohorts.

This article has focused on the percentages of study participants aged 19-30 who engage in certain leisure activities almost every day. In general, TV time and reading books/magazines/newspapers increased with age, and alone time, exercise time, and leisure time with friends decreased with age across the 20s. We also found that at all ages, even among 19 and 20 year olds, our female respondents were less likely than the men to say that they participate almost every day in any of these five leisure activities. Finally, we note that very few respondents report never participating in a given activity; for each activity, less than 10% say they never participate. That is true for the women as well as the men. ☞

**From our house to yours we wish you a very happy holiday season!**

### **Survey Research Center**

The University of Michigan's Survey Research Center has been conducting nationwide surveys of adults and young people for over 60 years. It is part of the world's largest university-based social science research organization, the Institute for Social Research. It has a worldwide reputation for its work in the fields of sociology, psychology, political science, economics, and education.