

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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A Special Thanks to Our Respondents

As a Monitoring the Future study participant, you have completed many questionnaires for us since you graduated from high school. Your participation has contributed to the success of this research project, and it is very much appreciated.

Your continued response to the questionnaires has been crucial to the success of the project. The transitions you have experienced from high school until now provide a unique perspective for us to see how behaviors and attitudes change as people progress through their adult years.

This newsletter represents our commitment to distributing some of the results of the study to our participants. We are also committed to distributing the findings from this study to policymakers and the public. This important study is designed to look at changing behaviors and preferences of younger Americans as they grow into their middle years. We believe that studying the way young adults are today will tell us a lot about the way the whole nation will be tomorrow.

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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 gap pay was alive and well. This pattern of decreasing perception across the 20s was somewhat similar

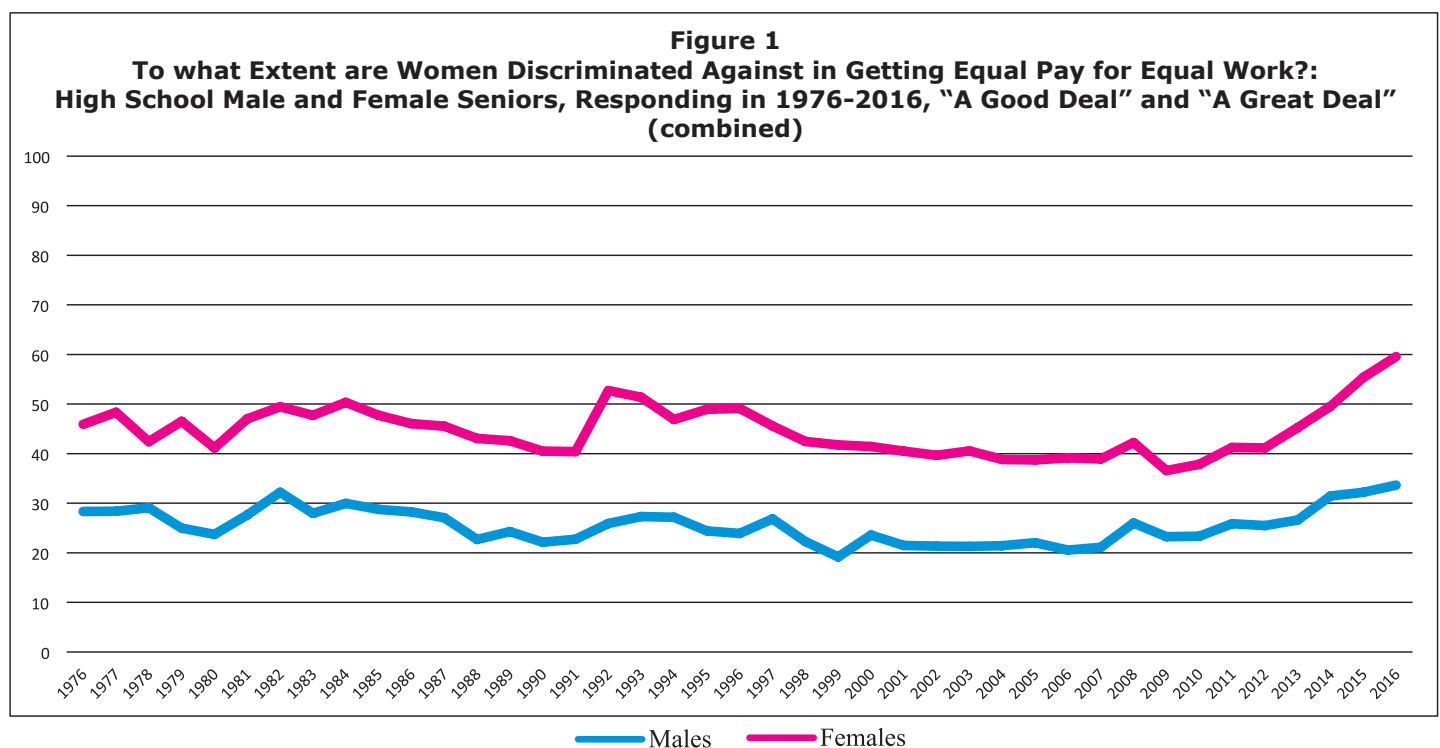
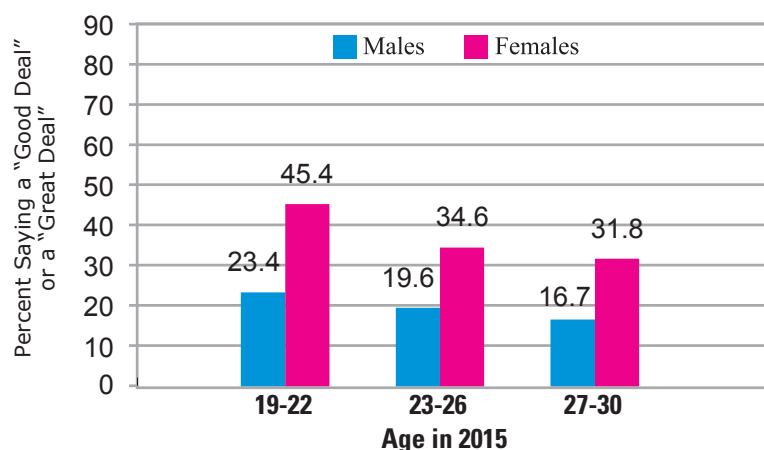


Figure 2
To What Extent Are Women Discriminated Against in Getting Equal Pay for Equal Work?



among male respondents. Men aged 19–22 (23%) were 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. ☞

HEALTHY HABITS

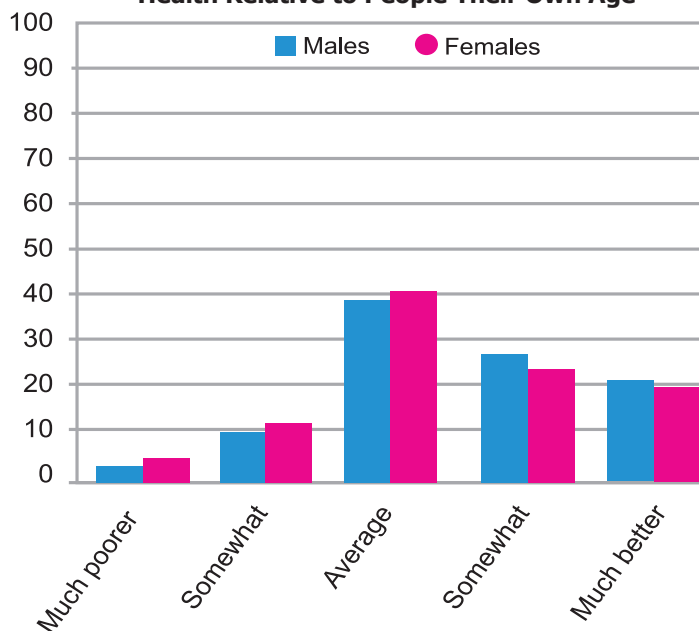
Health plays an integral role in human existence and relates to every aspect of daily life. If people do not have good health, they are not able to perform the tasks they need and want to do. Unfortunately, it is often not until health is lost that people realize how important it is to their enjoyment of life. Health is determined in part by many uncontrollable factors such as genetic diseases and accidental injury, but also by other factors we can control, such as diet, exercise, and sleep habits. These controllable habits can have a considerable impact on overall health and wellbeing.

Good habits such as getting regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and eating a balanced diet can greatly enhance one’s life and longevity.

We wanted to see how our midlife (age 35 through age 55) participants perceived their overall health compared to others their age, and find out what they were doing to take care of their health. To do so, we looked at the responses in 2015 to the following questions: “Overall, relative to other people your age, how do you think your physical health over the past year has been?” and “How often do you . . . Exercise vigorously? Get at least seven hours of sleep? Eat at least some green vegetables? Eat some fruit?”

In general, our participants report being in relatively good health. Figure 3 shows responses to the compar-

Figure 3
How Respondents Aged 35-55 View Their Health Relative to People Their Own Age



tive health question by gender. Overall, about one fifth (21%) of participants said their health was much better than average and about one quarter (26%) said their health was somewhat better than average. Forty percent of participants said their health is about average for their age. About one in nine (11%) described their health as somewhat poorer than average, and only 3% said their health was much poorer than average. Males and females were very similar in their ratings, with males very slightly more likely than females to see that their health was better than average (49% vs 44%). On the opposite end of the spectrum, similar proportions of males and females reported poorer than average health (12% and 15%, respectively).

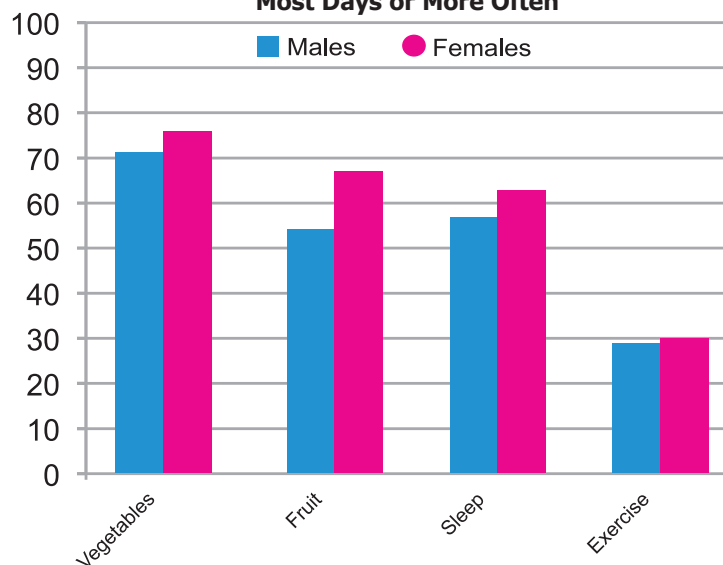
In terms of health-related habits, we found that our participants were doing much better on diet and sleep than on vigorous exercise. Figure 4 shows the distribution for these four questions dealing with diet, sleep, and exercise. We combined the top three categories—most days, nearly every day, and every day—into a category called “most days or more often.”

Regarding diet – eating vegetables and fruit most days of more often – our participants reported relatively high percentages of doing both. Although these two questions were a bit limited, asking only if participants ate “at least some green vegetables” and “some fruit,” we felt that these two items were fairly good indicators of a healthy diet. We found that both men and women eat green vegetables more often than fruit. Overall, 73% of participants reported eating some green vegetables on most days or more often, compared to 61% who ate fruit that frequently. On the other hand, just 6% seldom or never ate green vegetables, while 10% seldom or never ate fruit. Among women, 76% ate green vegetables at least most days, while 71% of men did the same. The difference was larger for fruit: 67% of women versus 54% of men said they ate fruit most days or more often.

Regarding sleep habits, about six out of ten participants said they got seven or more hours of sleep per night on most days or more often. Women were a bit more likely than men to get that much sleep, 63% versus 57%. The percentages reporting seldom or never getting seven or more hours of sleep in a night were somewhat higher for men than for women—19% vs 14%.

We found that less than a third of our participants (30%) report exercise vigorously most days or more often, while about four in ten (41%) seldom or never

Figure 4
Percent of Respondents Aged 35-55 Who Report Eating Vegetables, Eating Fruit, Sleeping 7+ Hours and Exercising Vigorously Most Days or More Often



do so. Of course, this does not mean that those in the latter category do not exercise at all. They could be doing less vigorous exercise, such as walking or doing household chores, which has also been shown to have health benefits. There were very small differences in exercise frequency between men and women.

Whether listening to the radio or watching television, it is hard to avoid hearing about the benefits of proper diet, sleep, and exercise. Our respondents appear to be listening to the message, as most seem to be doing quite well at getting reasonable amounts of sleep and eating a healthy diet. We are pleased to find that 86% described their overall health as average or better. We hope that will continue in future years. ☺

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.