

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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Satisfaction with Life

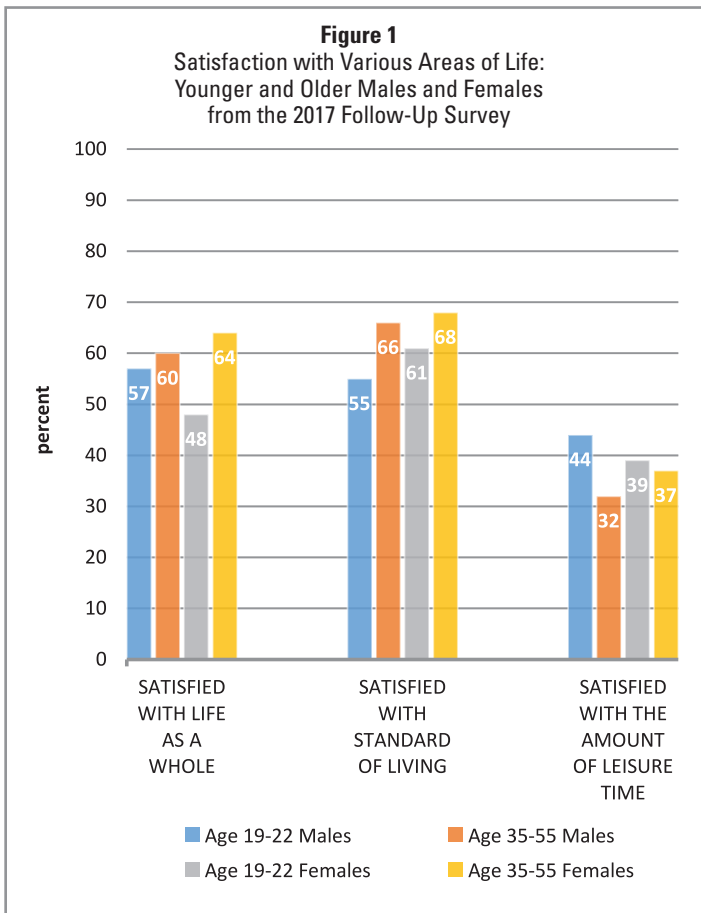
Are you content with your life as a whole these days, your standard of living and the amount of time you have for leisure activities? Do you think your level of satisfaction with these areas of your life has shifted around a bit as you have gotten older? One might expect different levels of satisfaction between people in their late teens to early twenties and those thirty-five and older. We compared answers to the following questions from younger respondents aged 19-22 (N=239) with older respondents aged 35-55 (N=4,077) in 2017. How satisfied are you with the following areas of life: your life as a whole these days; your standard of living—the things you have like housing, car, furniture, recreation, and the like; and the amount of time you have for doing things you want to do. Respondents used a seven-point scale, with 1=Completely dissatisfied, 4=Neither or Mixed Feelings, and 7=Completely satisfied. For this article, we defined being satisfied as having responded in either

category 6 or 7—“completely satisfied” or the category just below it (“quite satisfied”). In presenting the results, we combine the older age groups because their responses did not differ much by age.

Regardless of age, most participants seemed to be satisfied with their life as a whole and with their standard of living, but not as satisfied with the amount of time available for doing what they like to do. Figure 1 shows the responses for participants between the ages of 19-22 (combined) and 35-55 (combined). For the “life as a whole” question, just over half (53%) of our younger participants and 62% of the older participants responded that they were completely or quite satisfied. Older women participants were most likely to be completely or quite satisfied with their life as a whole (64%) and younger women were least likely (48%); 57% of younger men and 60% of older men were completely or quite satisfied. This does not necessarily mean that many people were actually dissatisfied with their lives. When we look at all three top response categories that indicate at least some satisfaction, the numbers increase considerably and the gender difference almost disappears. Seventy-five percent of younger men and 86 percent of older men were at least somewhat satisfied with their lives as a whole, as were 72% of younger women and 88% of older women.

Relatively high percentages of each age group reported being satisfied with their standard of living (58% of 19-22 year olds and 67% of age 35 and older). As shown in Figure 1, older men were more likely to be completely or quite satisfied with their standard of living (66%) compared to younger men (55%); similar age differences were found for women (68% vs. 61%). The numbers of people who were at least somewhat satisfied (top three responses combined) were much greater; the percentages of the 19-22 age group went up to 75% and up to 87% for the 35-55 year olds.

However, many participants were less satisfied with the time they had to do the things they want to do. Overall, little more than one-third of participants said they were completely or quite satisfied with the time they have to do what they want to do. The younger participants (42%) were more likely to be completely or quite satisfied than age 35-55 participants (35%),



especially for men. Forty-four percent of 19-22 year old men said they were satisfied with the amount of time they had for things they want to do, compared to only 32% of the older men. There was little difference between the younger and older women participants, with 39% of younger women and 37% of older women saying they were completely or quite satisfied

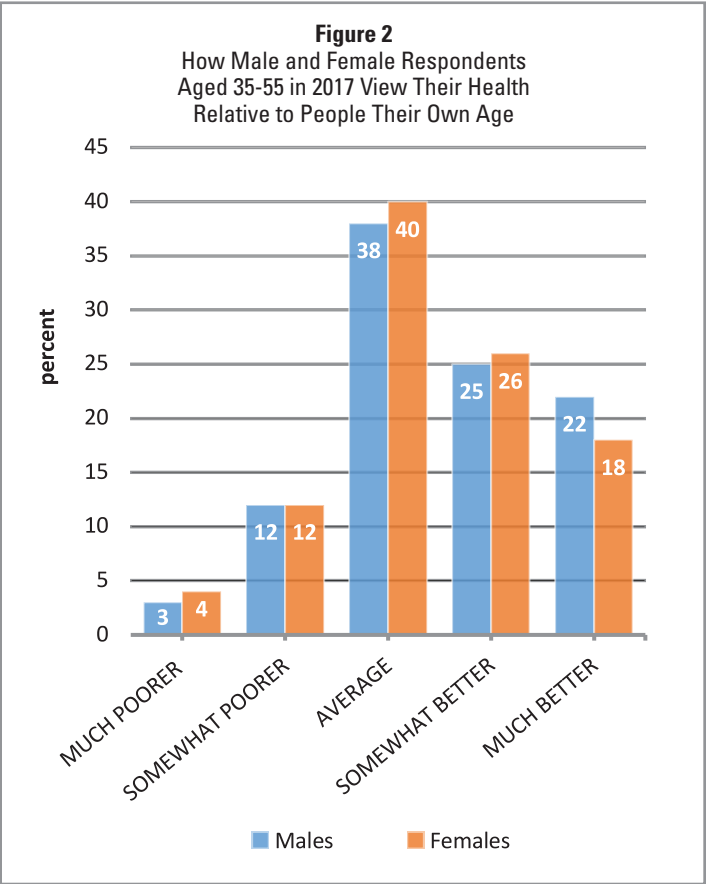
with the amount of time they had for things they want to do. As with the other areas, satisfaction with time available was much greater when the third satisfaction category was included (64% overall); however, this percentage is much lower than corresponding percentages for satisfaction with life as a whole or standard of living. ☞

Healthy Habits

Health plays an integral role in every aspect of daily life. Unfortunately, we often do not realize how important it is to our enjoyment of life until we become ill. Health is determined in part by many uncontrollable factors such as genetic diseases and 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 well-being; good habits such as getting regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and eating a balanced diet can enhance one’s chances of remaining healthy.

We wanted to see how our midlife respondents aged 35 to 55 (N=4,077) 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 answers 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 seem to be a relatively healthy group. Overall, almost a fifth (19%) of participants said their health was much better than average and a quarter said that their health was somewhat better than average. Forty percent of participants said their health is about average for their age. Slightly more than one in ten (12%) said that their health is



somewhat poorer than average, and only 4% said their health was much poorer than average. Figure 2 shows responses to the comparative health question by gender. Men were slightly more likely than women to say that their health was better than average (45% vs. 43%). On the opposite end of the spectrum, about equal percentages of men and women reported poorer than average health (15%-16%).

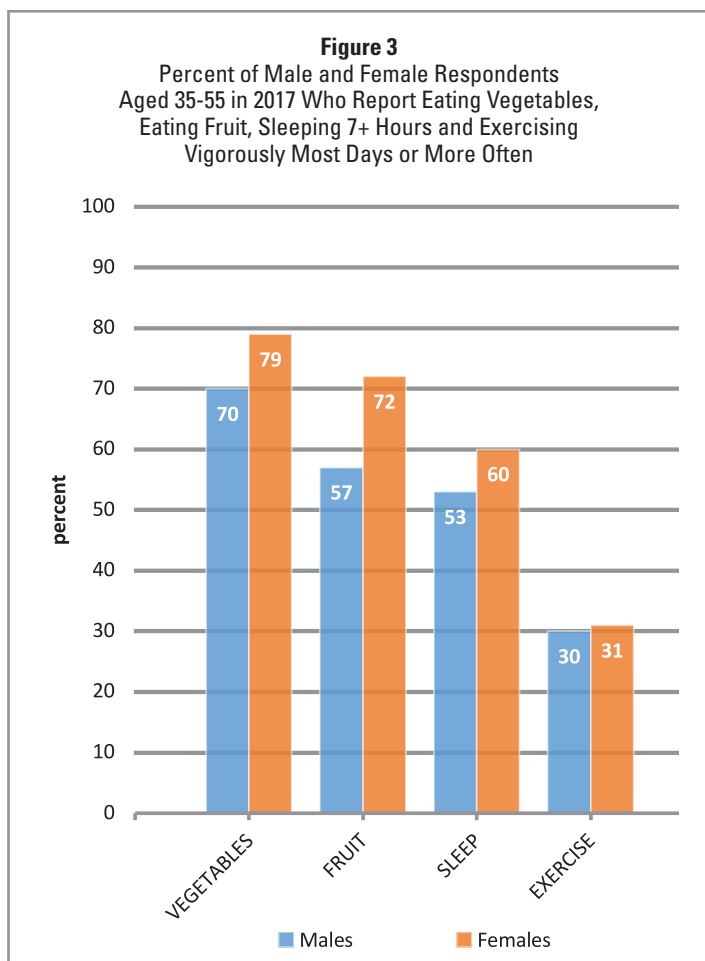
In terms of health-related habits, we found that our participants were doing much better on diet and sleep

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than on vigorous exercise. Figure 3 shows the distribution for these four questions dealing with diet, exercise, and sleep. We combined the top three categories—most days, nearly every day, and every day—into a category called “most days or more often.”

We found that less than a third of our participants (30%) frequently exercise vigorously, while one in four (40%) seldom or never 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 was very little difference in exercise frequency between male and female participants.

Regarding sleep habits, we were pleasantly surprised to see that almost six out of ten participants were getting seven or more hours of sleep on most

nights. Women were more likely than men to get this much sleep, 60% versus 53%. The percentages who seldom or never get seven or more hours of sleep in a night were more similar by gender, however--18% of men and 15% of women.

The last category of health-related behavior we looked at was diet. Although the questions were a bit limited, asking only if participants ate “at least some green vegetables” and “some fruit,” these two items are fairly good indicators of a healthy diet. We found that both men and women eat green vegetables more often than fruit. Overall, 74% of participants reported eating some green vegetables at least “most days”, compared to 64% who ate fruit that frequently. On the other hand, just 5% seldom or never ate green vegetables, while 9% seldom or never ate fruit. Among women, 79% ate green vegetables at least most days, while 70% of men did the same. There was a 15 percentage point difference in frequent fruit eating between women and men; 72% of women and 57% of men said they ate fruit “most days” or more often.

Whether you watch television or follow the news on the internet, it is hard to avoid hearing about the benefits of proper exercise, diet, and sleep. You appear to be listening to the message, as most of you seem to be doing quite well at getting a reasonable amount of sleep and eating a healthy diet. We were pleased to find that 84% of you described your 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 70 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.