



SOCIAL COMPETENCY & SUBSTANCE USE

SUMN.org FACT SHEET

2016

Social Competency

Definition

The Developmental Assets framework was devised by the Search Institute* to identify skills and behaviors that contribute to positive adolescent development. Survey questions were generated and grouped to compose a series of scales to assess such development. For the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS), questions were added to facilitate analysis of the following scales: Social Competency, Positive Identity, and Empowerment (please visit SUMN.org for additional fact sheets).

The Social Competency Scale comprises 8 subsets of a question included on the 2016 Minnesota Student Survey as follows:

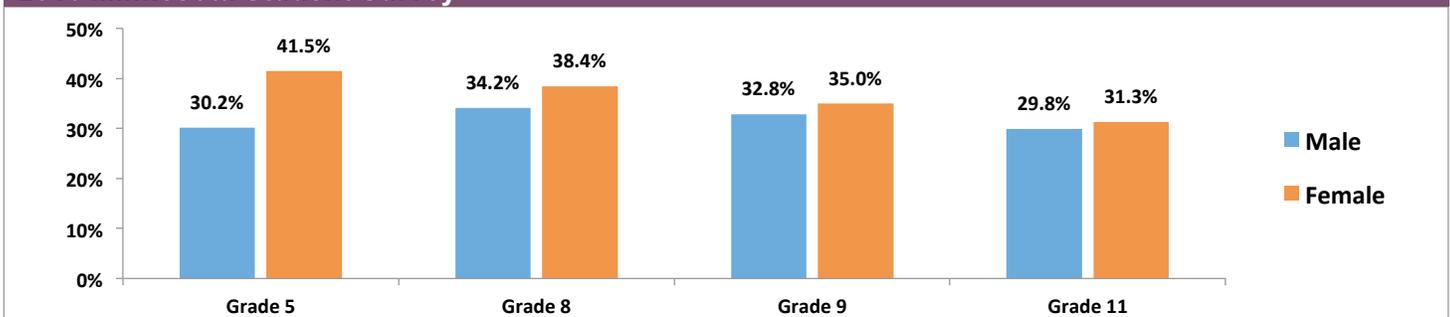
In general, how does each of the following statements describe you?

- I say no to things that are dangerous or unhealthy
- I build friendships with other people
- I express my feelings in proper ways
- I plan ahead and make good choices
- I stay away from bad influences
- I resolve conflicts without anyone getting hurt
- I accept people who are different from me
- I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others

The response options to these statements were, “Not at all or rarely,” “Somewhat or sometimes,” “Very or often,” and “Extremely or almost always.” Students who answered “Very or often” or “Extremely or almost always” for each of the 8 questions are considered by this scale to have higher levels of social competency.

For more information on alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, consequences, contributing factors, and treatment, as well as mental health data, visit SUMN.org

Minnesota Students with Higher Levels of Social Competency, by Gender and Grade Level, 2016 Minnesota Student Survey



Prevalence + Frequency

According to the 2016 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS):

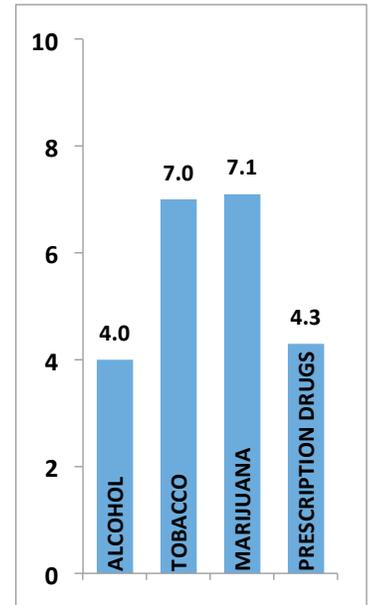
- Using the Social Competency scale, 35.8% of 5th graders, 36.3% of 8th graders, 33.9% of 9th graders, and 34.3% of 11th graders who took the survey had higher levels of social competency.
- Male students are less likely than female to have higher levels of social competence; the difference is greatest in 5th grade and narrows for students in higher grades. Overall levels of students with social competency are also lower in higher grades.

Risk for Substance Use

Substance use questions were not asked of 5th graders, so the data involving substance use refers only to 8th, 9th, and 11th graders.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Social competency is a strong protective factor against students' substance use. Students with lower levels of social competency are 4.0 times more likely to report past 30-day alcohol use. They are 7.0 times more likely to report tobacco use, 7.1 times more likely to report marijuana use, and 4.3 times more likely to report prescription drug misuse in the same time period (see graph).



Buffering Risk Factors

Social competency is related to other risk and protective factors that also affect students' substance use. It may, therefore, buffer or enhance those factors.

Behaviors

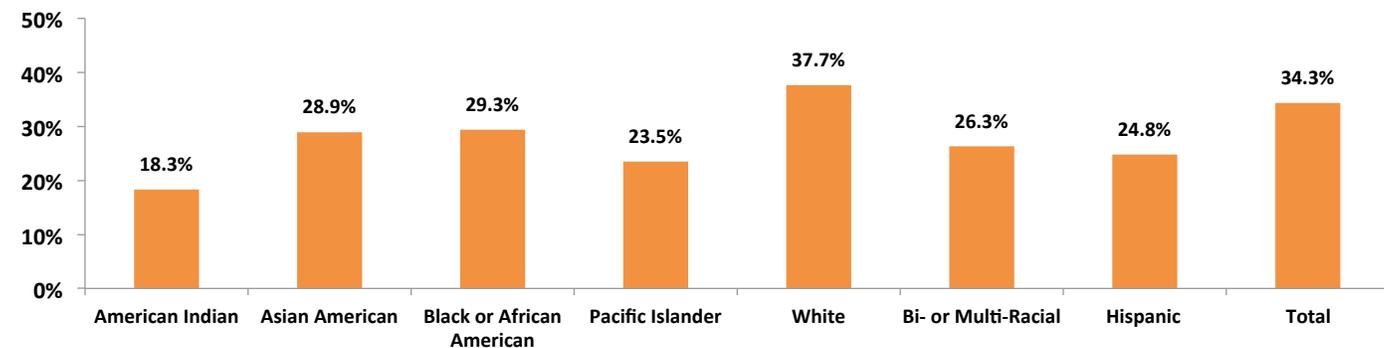
- Students who report being bullied in the past month are nearly 3 times as likely to have lower levels of social competency, and students with higher levels are less than half as likely to engage in bullying behavior themselves. Although students who are bullied are more likely to report past 30-day alcohol use, those who also have high levels of social competency are 3.2 times less likely to report alcohol use than those who are bullied but have low social competency.
- Students involved in school sports and leadership activities are more likely to have higher levels of social competency, and less likely to report substance use. Further, students with higher social competency are more likely to engage in such activities.

Relationships

- Students with low levels of social competency are about 8 times as likely to say their parents only care about them some, a little, or not at all. In the same vein, students with parents who are verbally abusive are 3.7 times as likely to have lower levels of social competency.
- Social competency can act as a buffer against some risk factors: while students who have had an incarcerated caregiver are 3 times as likely to report past 30-day alcohol use, those who also have higher social competency are even less likely to have reported alcohol use than their peers whose parents have not been incarcerated.

Factor by Which Students are More Likely to Engage in Substance Use if They Have Lower Levels of Social Competency (8th, 9th and 11th Graders, 2016 Minnesota Student Survey)

Minnesota Students with Higher Levels of Social Competency, by Race or Ethnicity, 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th Graders, 2016 Minnesota Student Survey



Disparities

Race and Ethnicity

- White students are most likely to report higher levels of social competence (37.7%), with Black or African American and Asian students close behind (with 29.3% and 28.9%, respectively). American Indian students are least likely to have higher levels of social competency, at 18.3%.

Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual 9th and 11th graders are most likely to report higher levels of social competency, at 34.4%. Fewer gay and lesbian, bisexual, and questioning students have higher levels, at just under 16%, 11.5%, and 19% respectively. For these groups, the gender gap reverses; only 10.7% of bisexual girls report higher levels of social competency.

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State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup

Minnesota's SEOW has been monitoring substance abuse trends since 2007. The Workgroup helps guide prevention planning at the state level, and provides training and technical assistance to communities. In, 2008 the SEOW launched the Substance Use in Minnesota (SUMN) website to ensure quick and easy access to data for prevention professionals.

SUMN.org

SUMN is a one-stop-shop for data, tools, and prevention resources. Visitors can search county, regional, and state level data by topic, by location, and by demographic producing tables, charts, graphs, and maps. View and download data products, such as this fact sheet, and find tips on finding, analyzing, translating, using, and disseminating data.

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Contact Us

For questions or more information regarding the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup or SUMN.org, please email: info@sumn.org

To contact the Regional Prevention Coordinator for your region, please visit: www.rpcmn.org