



Youth Wellness Project: Young Adult Follow-up Newsletter

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

by Dr. Heidi Gazelle

Welcome back to the Youth Wellness Project (YWP)! You have received this newsletter because you (or your child) were a part of the YWP when you (or they) were in 3rd–7th grade in Kernersville or Winston-Salem North Carolina.

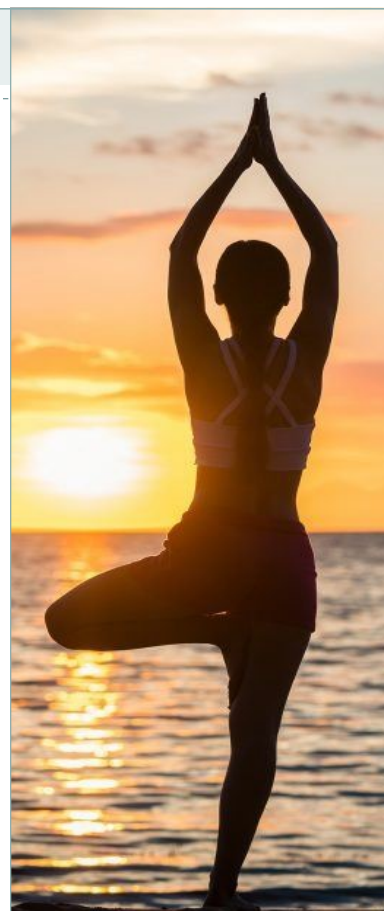
You were part of something great! YWP data has been published in prestigious journals, presented at professional conferences, and featured in news stories. See <https://humansciences.fsu.edu/socialdevlab/youthwellnessproject/> for details.

This newsletter features data on young adults (21-22 years of age) who participated in the YWP as children! We hope you’ll find our data on young adults and connections between childhood and young adult wellness as fascinating as we do. If there’s anything you’d like us to focus on in future newsletters, please let us know.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to each of the 95 YWP participants who has completed our young adult survey so far. *You made this newsletter possible!*

If you haven’t completed the survey yet, it’s not too late! Please contact us and *we’ll send you a link to the survey!* You’ll also receive a *\$20 Amazon e-gift card* in thanks after completion and we’ll include data on additional participants in our next newsletter.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

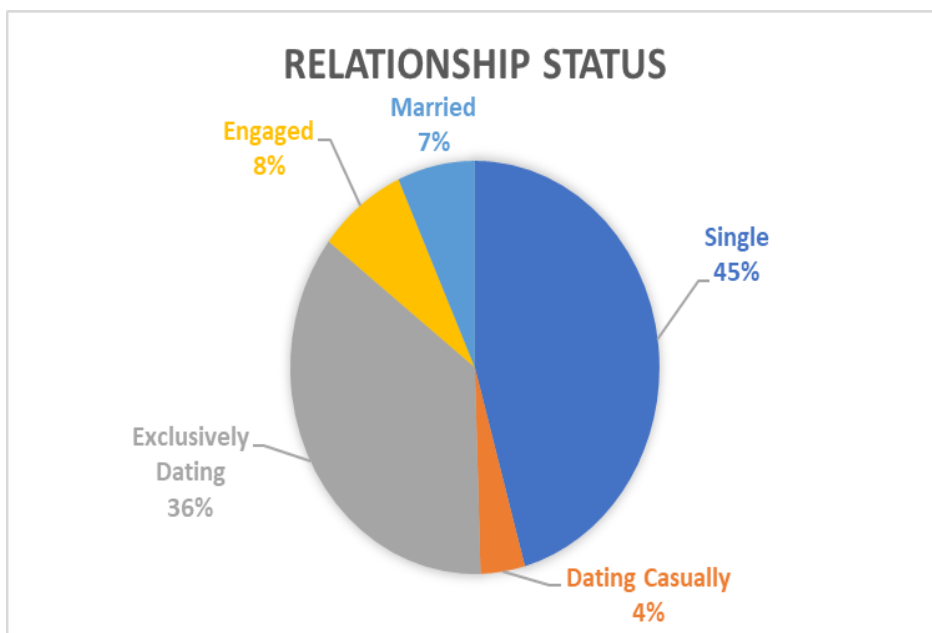
- Relationship Status and Romantic Appeal
- Education and Employment in Young Adulthood
- Stress, Self-compassion, Self-esteem, Loneliness, and Media Overuse
- Childhood Social Anxiety, Coping Strategies, and Social Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Young Adult

YOUNG ADULT DATING PATTERNS

By Jacob Williams

Relationship status. Our current survey results demonstrate that nearly half of the young adults who have taken the survey at age 21 or 22 are *single*, whereas the other half are in *committed or exclusive relationships*. Of those who are in committed relationships, 8% are *engaged* and 7% *married*.

Romantic appeal. Higher levels of relationship commitment were associated with greater self-perceived romantic appeal. For example, participants who are engaged or married perceive themselves as more romantically appealing than those who are casually dating or single.



“Young adults in relationships with higher levels of commitment perceive themselves as more romantically appealing.”

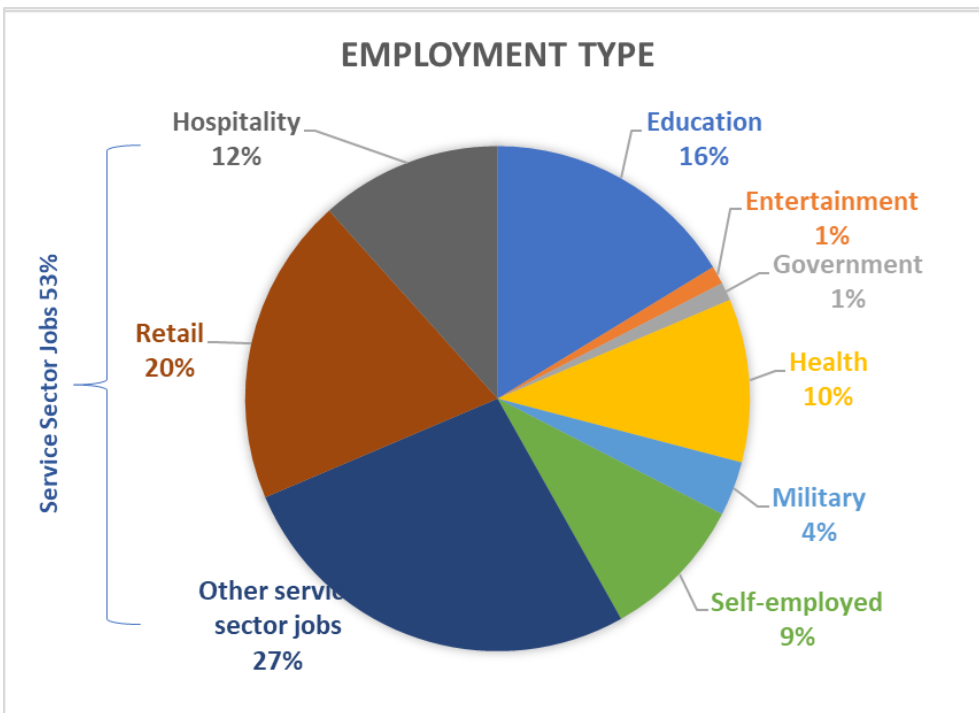
YOUNG ADULT WORK AND EDUCATION

By Jacob Williams

Education. Nearly half of young adults attended, or are currently attending a 4-year college. Additionally, nearly 20% of young adults were attending community college, whereas the remaining 30% had either not attended college, or had completed some college but were not currently enrolled.

Employment. 80% of young adults (age 21/22) who have completed the survey are employed, while the remaining 20% are not. This employment rate is higher than the national employment rate for individuals in this age range. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment rate for individuals age 16-24 is 56% as of July 2019.

What kind of work are your peers doing at 21-22 years of age? The majority of young adults are working in service sector jobs, including retail and hospitality, followed by education, respectively (see pie chart next page). These trends align with the national trends reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, reporting that individuals in this age range predominately work in service-oriented jobs, including both retail and hospitality.



YOUNG ADULT STRESS AND WELLBEING

By Jessie Shafer

Young adulthood can be a time of opportunity, life-changing decisions, and social and emotional challenges.

We asked young adults (age 21/22) about their stress levels as well as their general well-being. We were interested in whether young peoples' level of stress was related to aspects of their well-being (or lack thereof) such as *self-compassion* (being caring and kind towards oneself), *self-esteem* (sense of one's own worth), *loneliness*, and *media overuse* (e.g., wanting to decrease or conceal the amount of time you spend online).

Our findings suggest that young adults' reported stress was related to all measures of wellbeing (i.e., self-compassion, self-esteem, loneliness and media overuse). Less stress was related to higher self-compassion and self-esteem, as well as less loneliness and media overuse.

Overall, stress was directly related to multiple aspects of well-being. As young adults progress through life and their careers, they will encounter challenging and stressful situations. See tips in the box to the right on how to monitor and manage your stress.

“Less stress was related to higher self-compassion and self-esteem, as well as less loneliness and media overuse.”

TIPS TO MANAGE STRESS

By Jessie Shafer

- 1. Understand signs of stress.** How do you know when you are stressed? Think about how your thoughts or behaviors differ from times when you are not stressed. You may have a hard time concentrating or making decisions; feel angry, irritable, or out of control. People experience stress in different ways.
- 2. Identify sources of stress.** What events or situations trigger stressful feelings? Is your stress related to: family, health, finance, work, or something else?
- 3. Recognize how you deal with stress.** Determine if you are using unhealthy behaviors (i.e., smoking, drinking, over/undereating, etc.) to cope. Is this a routine behavior or is it specific to certain stressors?

4. Find healthy ways to manage stress. Try stress-reducing activities (i.e., meditation, exercising, or talking things out with friends and family). Eat right, get enough sleep, drink plenty of water, and engage in regular physical activity. No matter how hectic life gets, make time for yourself. Unhealthy behaviors develop overtime and can be difficult to change. Focus on changing one behavior at a time.

5. Reach out for support. Accepting help from supportive friends and family can improve ability to manage stress. If you feel overwhelmed by stress, you may want to speak to a psychologist who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behaviors.

Source: American Psychological Association (2007, October 5). *Stress Tip Sheet*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2007/10/stress-tips>

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YOUTH WELLNESS: THEN AND NOW

By Jessie Shafer

Wellness has always been the heart of the Youth Wellness Project, and understanding connections between childhood and adult wellness is crucial to our understanding of human growth and development.

Part of what makes this follow-up project so important is our ability to link information about participants when they were in 3rd to 7th grade to current young adult outcomes at age 21-22!

Our research has revealed that three indicators of childhood wellness (or lack thereof, including childhood social anxiety, coping strategies, and social self-efficacy) predicted multiple aspects of wellness in adulthood.



CHILDHOOD SOCIAL ANXIETY PREDICTS YOUNG ADULT STRESS AND SELF-ESTEEM

As part of the original Youth Wellness Project, we asked children about their social anxiety—the fear of interacting with other people. For the Youth Wellness Project: Young Adult Follow-up study, we asked the same individuals (who are now young adults) to report on various measures of wellness at 21 or 22 years of age.

Based on both these child and young adult reports, we found that childhood social anxiety predicted young adult self-esteem. Specifically, children who were less socially anxious later had greater self-esteem as young adults.

Additionally, childhood social anxiety predicted young adult stress levels. Young adults who were less socially anxious as children later reported less stress in young adulthood.

These findings suggest that lower childhood social anxiety contributes to higher self-esteem and less stress in young adulthood.

CHILDHOOD COPING STRATEGIES AND SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY PREDICT YOUNG ADULT SELF-COMPASSION

We also investigated childhood coping strategies and social self-efficacy. We found that children who did not cope with their problems through *internalizing* (e.g., going off by themselves, becoming upset, crying, worrying about what other think, etc.) or *externalizing* coping strategies (e.g., taking their anger out on others, yelling, cursing, getting mad and throwing things, etc.) reported greater *self-compassion* (feelings of caring and kindness towards oneself) in adulthood than adults who utilized such maladaptive coping strategies in childhood.



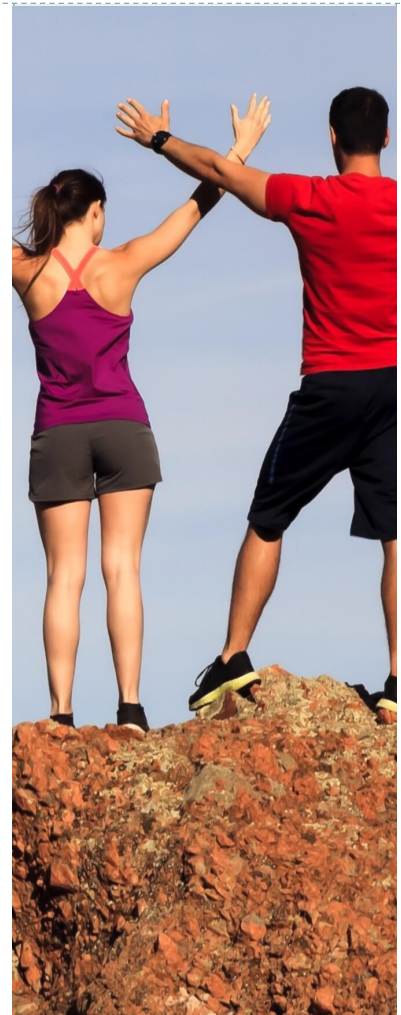
“Lower childhood social anxiety predicted greater self-esteem and less stress in young adulthood. Additionally, both fewer maladaptive coping strategies and more social self-efficacy in childhood predicted greater self-compassion in young adulthood.”

Additionally, we found that greater childhood social self-efficacy also predicted greater self-compassion in young adulthood. Specifically, children who were confident about their ability to skillfully interact with their peers later reported greater self-compassion in adulthood.



Overall, data from the Youth Wellness Project and the Youth Wellness Project: Young Adult Follow-up has provided important evidence for the connection between childhood and young adult wellness. We found

that lower childhood social anxiety predicted greater self-esteem and less stress in young adulthood. Additionally, both fewer maladaptive coping strategies and more social self-efficacy in childhood predicted greater self-compassion in young adulthood. As we continue the project, we will deepen our understanding of connections between childhood and adulthood wellness. This information will support efforts to promote wellness throughout the life course.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT LAB

Our research focuses on understanding how individual characteristics and interpersonal relations jointly influence young peoples' development, especially in terms of healthy interpersonal relationships and emotional health.

We often focus on development during times of transition, including the transition to school, the middle school transition, and the transitions of emerging adulthood. Transitions are particularly fascinating periods to study development because individuals sometimes respond to changed environmental circumstances in ways that represent positive turning points in their life pathways.

Our current research makes connections between patterns of development in middle childhood and early adolescence and young adult emotional health and developmental milestones, such as education, employment, interpersonal relationships including romantic relationships, and having children.

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MEET THE STAFF OF THE YOUTH WELLNESS PROJECT: YOUNG ADULT FOLLOW-UP!

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