

# UPDATE

## UPDATE - 2003

- At-Risk Behaviors
  - Experimental vs. Regular
  - Insights on At-Risk Behavior
- John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry-La Sierra University and the North American Division Office of Education*

Number 10— *Valuegenesis*<sup>2</sup> information you can use

May, 2003

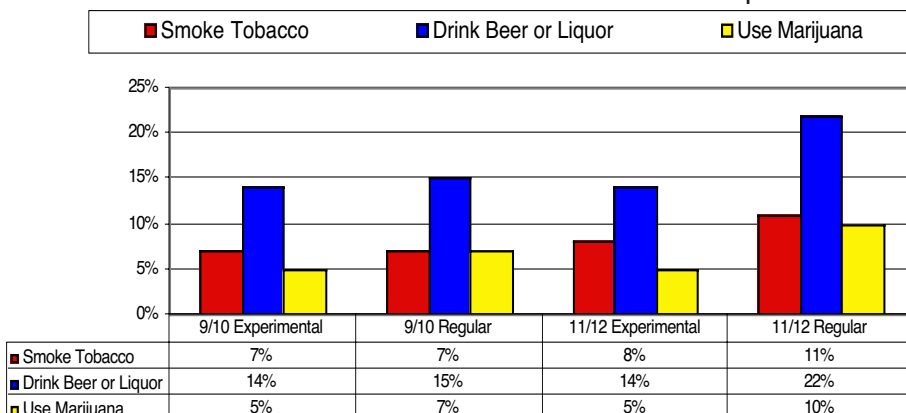
### How at-risk are our Kids?

If everyone made changes because they understood the facts, there never would be any one who weighed more than they should, and no one would ever smoke or take drugs. However, it is obvious that what people believe about what is good for them often does not make much difference when it comes to actual behavior and choices! As the Bible says, “The flesh is weak.”

So when Valuegenesis explored the attitudes of students in grades 6-12 about church standards, or dissatisfaction with the enforcement of those standards, and the degree to which standards were enforced in the family, school, and church, it is not the same as investigating the actual behaviors themselves. For example, I might believe that smoking is wrong, and that the church standard forbidding it is correct, and still I might still smoke. “It is quite clear that what one believes may or may not impact what one actually elects to do.”<sup>1</sup>

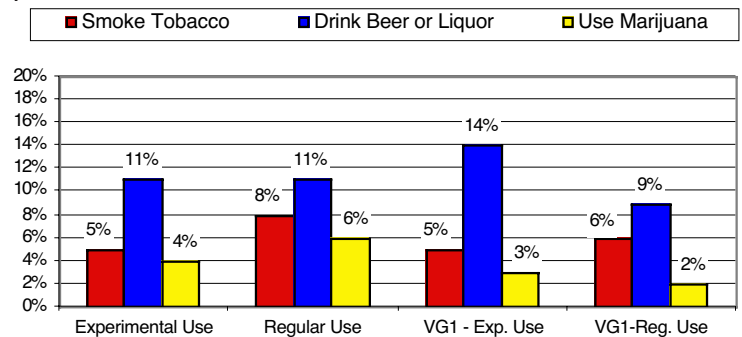
Two sets of questions were explored that dealt with behaviors that might put your youth at risk and threaten their loyalty and commitment to the church as well as their own personal success. We asked “How often, if ever, did you do each of the following during the last year?” The students had eight possible responses which ranged from “never” to “more than once a day.” Ten years ago we took the second lowest frequency (after “never”) which was “less than once a month.” We considered this response to be experimental behavior and not truly regular

#### VG<sup>2</sup> Experimental and Regular At-Risk Behavior



use, while the other categories depicted a regular usage— from “about once a month” to “more than once a day.” Look at their responses in *Valuegenesis*<sup>2</sup> at the bottom left of this page. And then compare the data there with the chart just below and you can see the contrast over the past ten years between our two research projects. *Valuegenesis*<sup>2</sup> is listed on the left of the chart with *Valuegenesis*<sup>1</sup> information on the right.

#### VG<sup>2</sup> and VG<sup>1</sup> Experimental and Regular At-Risk Behavior



For this set the reported usage of illegal drugs was low, and on most temperance issues the large majority of the youth were abstainers.

### More At-Risk Behaviors

It is troubling to report that some youth use tobacco by 13% (11% in *Valuegenesis*<sup>1</sup>), beer and liquor by 22% (23% in *Valuegenesis*<sup>1</sup>). But there are other at-risk behaviors that we must be concerned about as well. A second set of questions was a lot like the first, except that rather than asking how often the youth engaged in the behaviors, we asked: “How many times, if ever, during the last 12 months did you do each of the following?” We gave them seven options for their responses and they ranged from “0 times” to “40 or more times.” The percentages below combine all the choices except “0 times.” In other words, they give the proportions of those who were involved in these practices at all, whatever the amount of times they chose to participate.

At-Risk Behavior Involvement	VG <sup>1</sup>	VG <sup>2</sup>
• Drink Alcohol while alone or with friends	26%	33%
• Use marijuana	7%	10%
• Use cocaine (coke, snow, crack)	4%	3%
• Go to a party where kids your age were drinking	27%	31%
• Have 5 drinks or more in a row	13%	11%
• Hit or beat up someone	35%	44%
• Shoplift	15%	18%
• Get into trouble in school	47%	58%
• Sexual activity (intercourse)	17%	11%

Maybe it is a sign of the times that almost every at-risk behavior in the list above has increased, ever-so-slightly over the past ten years. This generation is challenged in this area every day. A close look at the Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup> information is even more revealing. Let's look only at the high school data—grades 9-10 and 11-12.

SDA High School At-Risk Behavior	9/10	11/12
• Drink Alcohol while alone or with friends	28	35%
• Use marijuana	12%	16%
• Use cocaine (coke, snow, crack)	2%	2%
• Go to a party where kids your age were drinking	44%	52%
• Have 5 drinks or more in a row	13%	19%
• Hit or beat up someone	45%	30%
• Shoplift	19%	19%
• Get into trouble in school	52%	49%
• Sexual activity (intercourse)	11%	20%

### Insights About At-Risk Behaviors

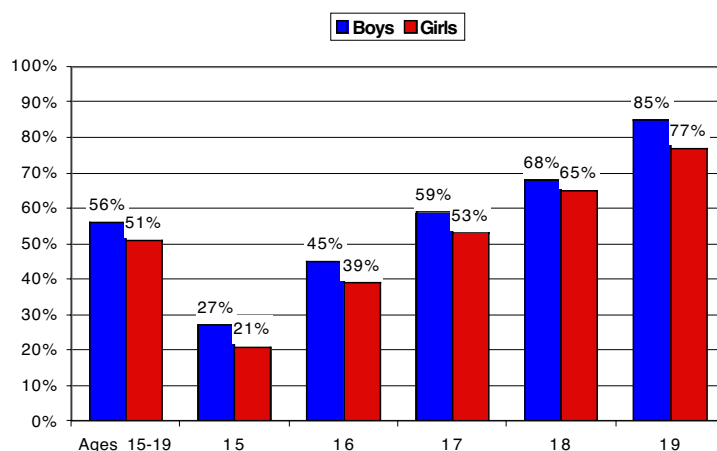
Here are some national statistics on alcohol use that you can use to compare with Adventist students. According to national information about binge drinking (falling down drunk), we learn that it often begins around age 13, tends to increase during adolescence, peak in young adulthood (ages 18 to 22), then gradually decrease. Binge drinking during the past 30 days was reported by 8 percent of youth ages 12 to 17 and 30 percent of those ages 18 to 20.4 in the general public school population. Among persons under the legal drinking age (12 to 20), 15 percent were binge drinkers and 7 percent were heavy drinkers.<sup>2</sup>

A study published in *Pediatrics* reported that sexual activity is an indicator that an adolescent is at a higher risk of being involved in substance use and violence -- and vice versa.<sup>3</sup> If you compare public school data with that of Adventist students in Adventist schools in this area, there is even more contrast in the two environments in the area of sexual activity.

**PLACE YOUR ORDER NOW and READ ALL ABOUT IT**

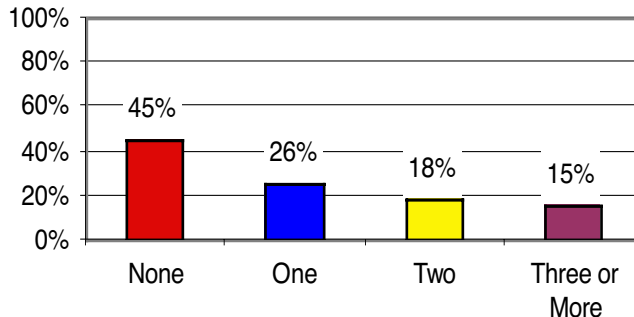
The Book: *Ten Years Later: A Study of Two Generations* will be available this summer, if you want to reserve yours at a 15% discount now, email— [hcyfm@lasierra.edu](mailto:hcyfm@lasierra.edu)

Percent of public school students who have had sexual intercourse at different ages, 1995<sup>4</sup>



As you can see by comparing the above graph with the listings on the left most of the students in Adventist education declared themselves to be virgins, but of those who were sexually active, the greatest number had multiple experiences. For this behavior as in each of the others listed above, the survey was dependent on self-reporting. It is possible, and as Roger Dudley said, “even likely” that some of the young people were hesitant to talk

### At-Risk Behaviors



about this intimate behavior fearing a breach of confidentiality. This might lead for under-reporting of this experience. Even with this, Adventist youth are very moral. Even if our statistical information does not reflect a 0%, there is still much less involvement in comparison with national data. Our schools provide a safer environment. 45% of students have no at-risk behaviors and only 15% have three or more. Adventist valued *do* protect our children.

### Endnotes and New Book on Valuegenesis<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Roger Dudley with V. Bailey Gillespie, *Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 256.

<sup>2</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Survey Results on Drug Use from The Monitoring the Future Study, 1975-1997, Volume I: Secondary School Students, Rockville, MD: Department of Health and Human Services, 1998

<sup>3</sup> DP, Beiter M, & Ingersoll G. (February 1, 1991.) “Premature sexual activity as an indicator of psychosocial risk.” *Pediatrics*, Vol. 87, No. 2, pp. 47.

<sup>4</sup>1995 National Survey of Family Growth and 1995 National Survey of Adolescent Males.