



Cornell University



Cornell Research Program on  
Self-Injurious Behavior in  
Adolescents and Young Adults  
Family Life Development Center  
Cornell University

## **College Survey of College Mental Health and Well Being**

Thank you for your interest in the *Survey of College Mental Health and Well Being*. This survey is designed to assess a variety of mental health and wellbeing indicators. Since the survey is part of an in-depth study on self-injurious behavior (SIB), it also contains a set of in-depth questions about self-injurious practices. However, these are only viewable by those individuals who indicate that they have participated in self-injurious behavior. It is designed to yield maximal information about the mental health, wellbeing, and help-seeking patterns of all student participants.

The *Survey of College Mental Health and Well Being* was administered at Cornell and Princeton University in the spring of 2005. Over three thousand students participated. The data provided a rare and valuable portrait of student mental health on these college campuses. In addition to yielding a tremendous amount of important information about the prevalence, practices, severity, motivations, and meanings of self-injurious practices, it has also provided detailed and important information on a variety of other mental health indicators and help-seeking practices in the student population.

The survey is administered in a web-based format. Using a web-based survey contains several advantages. For example, questions intended to gather detail on a specific topic, such as suicidality, are only viewable for individuals who answer affirmatively to a designated screening questions. This permits us to essentially tailor the survey to each respondent. It also contains mechanisms which allow participants to make the screen go blank immediately if they are interrupted or otherwise fear being observed. There are also customized links to local resources on the bottom of every page and a “distraction” toggle that allows anyone who needs an emotional or mental break to quickly move to a completely unrelated web page.

### **Summary of Survey Objectives & Domains**

The survey requires anywhere from 10-25 minutes to complete and consists of five broad conceptual domains:

- 1) Sociodemographic Characteristics – Age, ethnicity, year in school, resident status, SES, sex, GPA, immigration status, residence, family composition during high school, sexual orientation, and participation in fraternal organizations.
- 2) Mental Health Status - Serious mental illness (using the K6), suicide-related behaviors, self-injurious behaviors, and eating disorders. For those answering positively to the SIB screening question, there is a detailed section of SIB-related questions designed to assess:  
a) form, b) severity, c) frequency, d) age of onset and contagiosity, e) onset influences, f)

intent, g) self-injurious routines / habits, h) addictive qualities, i) age and conditions surrounding cessation, and j) ascribed meaning and importance.

- 3) Well Being – Positive future outlook, social support, connectedness
- 4) Help-Seeking History and Preferences – Disclosure history (informal and formal), help-seeking history, self initiated vs. imposed help, treatment history, diagnoses, medications, and perceived quality of treatment.
- 5) Contextual Risk and Protective Factors - History of abuse or trauma, perceived social isolation, perceived pressure to succeed, use of drugs and/or alcohol, perceived family warmth during adolescence, current family support, religious and spiritual involvement, social connectedness, perceived peer engagement in SIB, and use of technology.

### **Longitudinal Study**

The survey is administered anonymously. However, to enhance our understanding of the developmental and health outcomes and trajectories of individuals with a variety of mental health statuses, we are requesting that Universities participating in the survey allow us to invite students who take the survey to **voluntarily** enroll in a longitudinal study. To accomplish this, survey participants are asked whether they would like to participate in additional research in this area at the close of the survey. If they answer in the affirmative, they enter their net id. This does not, in any way, determine or mandate future participation but does allow for the possibility of longitudinal follow-up. Participating Universities are not required to permit longitudinal tracking in order to use the survey.

### **Terms of Use**

The cost for using the *Survey of College Mental Health and Well Being* is determined based the extent administrative and technological support needed but is generally not prohibitive. It is also the responsibility of any University using the survey to assure compliance with their University's Human Subjects protocols. We have created a "toolkit" to assist users with the process of preparing for and administering the survey. Data gathered from each participating school will be cleaned and returned in a Microsoft Access database. Although all data gathered is added to our cumulative database and used in aggregate analyses, data from individual universities and colleges will never be identifiable in any publications generated from these studies.

**For additional information on the *Survey of Mental Health and Well Being* please contact:**

Janis L. Whitlock, Ph.D., MPH  
Director, Cornell Research Project on Self-Injurious Behavior  
Family Life Development Center  
Cornell University  
Beebe Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853-4011  
jlw43@cornell.edu  
607-254-2894  
<http://www.crpsib.com>