

*The world of work is connected with initiation into a variety of other health-related activities.*

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# Jobs for the boys and jobs for the girls

**A**t least 10% of 11–12 year olds, and about 40% of 14–15 year olds, work for money on a regular basis.

In *Education and Health*, Vol. 15 No. 5, we presented and discussed data furnished by a provisional sample of 20,111 young people that completed the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) during 1997. The percentages doing regular paid work were as follows:

Age	Boys %	Girls %
11–12	15.1	10.2
12–13	23.8	18.5
13–14	36.9	20.2
14–15	43.1	39.2

*Some young people work long hours, if you include school and homework*

Here is the set of jobs from which they made their selection:

- Babysitting
- Hairdressing
- Working in a shop
- Manual work
- Paper or milk round
- In a hotel, bar or café
- Farm work or gardening
- Paid housework

## What do they work at?

The table opposite looks in detail at how many young people work at the different jobs listed in the HRBQ. Some jobs — like babysitting and housework — are unregulated by law and do not count as work in official statistics, although clearly there may be no such distinction perceived by the participants.

We have already noted that about 20% of Year 8 and 40% of Year 10 pupils do regular work, with slightly more working boys than girls in each year group. However, in the detail of 'who does what' there are a lot of gender differences.

The workers' average weekly pay (from *Young People in 1997*) is as follows:

	Boys	Girls
Year 8	£9.93	£8.94
Year 10	£16.16	£16.42

While the average total weekly income (including pocket money, if any) is as follows:

	Boys	Girls
Year 8	£14.39	£13.37
Year 10	£21.45	£21.34

*Babysitting* is dominated by girls (a quarter of all Year 10 girls babysit), although it is one of the least well-paid activities by the hour and the girls who do babysitting have the lowest total income of all the workers.

*Hairdressing* is (or may be) 'proper' employment, also largely a female activity, but is also rather poorly paid and is in any event rather uncommon — fewer than 5% of the older girls appear in this category.

*Working in a shop* is much more common than hairdressing — more than 10% of Year 10 pupils, and more girls than boys — and although it is not much better paid, young people who work in shops attract a higher total income.

*Manual work* is done by between 5% and 10% of boys (and a few girls).

	Year 8		Year 10	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>No of paid workers</b>	<b>1146</b>	<b>820</b>	<b>1819</b>	<b>1522</b>
<i>Babysitting</i>				
% involved	5.5	31.8	5.5	26.4
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>1.88</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>2.38</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	7.58	9.13	13.26	12.54
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>11.30</b>	<b>13.98</b>	<b>18.28</b>	<b>18.02</b>
<i>Hairdressing</i>				
% involved	0.4	1.3	0.4	3.6
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>2.19</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	13.00	24.04	13.86	16.21
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>18.75</b>	<b>28.58</b>	<b>19.43</b>	<b>22.20</b>
<i>Working in a shop</i>				
% involved	5.3	4.4	9.1	16.4
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>2.48</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	12.34	14.65	22.02	20.72
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>17.85</b>	<b>19.77</b>	<b>27.54</b>	<b>26.04</b>
<i>Manual work</i>				
% involved	5.4	1.6	8.1	1.5
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>3.49</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	13.87	11.67	20.15	22.45
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>17.00</b>	<b>16.52</b>	<b>25.05</b>	<b>25.93</b>
<i>Paper or milk round</i>				
% involved	47.1	25.4	49.1	15.6
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>3.16</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>2.92</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	9.45	7.79	12.66	9.63
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>13.95</b>	<b>10.97</b>	<b>17.25</b>	<b>13.60</b>
<i>In a hotel, bar or café</i>				
% involved	2.2	2.4	5.8	17.7
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>2.90</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	18.63	15.03	26.67	22.80
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>22.74</b>	<b>18.38</b>	<b>30.31</b>	<b>26.87</b>
<i>Farm work or gardening</i>				
% involved	6.5	2.7	6.3	1.4
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>2.62</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	8.04	7.83	20.16	15.10
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>11.43</b>	<b>13.09</b>	<b>24.93</b>	<b>20.22</b>
<i>Paid housework</i>				
% involved	13.9	19.8	5.3	5.4
<b>Average hourly rate (£)</b>	<b>2.79</b>	<b>2.39</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>2.60</b>
Average weekly pay (£)	6.34	5.72	8.48	9.09
<b>Average total income (£)</b>	<b>10.77</b>	<b>10.55</b>	<b>14.74</b>	<b>13.90</b>

TABLE 1. The percentage of 'workers' employed in different jobs, with details of their hourly rate, weekly pay, and overall income from all sources. (Provisional 1997 sample.)

*Paper and milk rounds* account for about half of all boys' work, and about a fifth of all girls' work. Pay and income are modest, and while it is a useful source of income this type of work may be of concern to parents because of safety or the nature of the hours worked. It may be noted that milk rounds usually commence long before 7 a.m., the earliest time young people are supposed to be in paid employment.

*Working in a hotel, bar or café* appears lucrative, and the 17% of older girls who have this opportunity are their group's highest earners.

*Farm work and gardening* are uncommon practices nationally, with something over 5% of boys taking part, together with a few girls.

*Paid housework* is particularly popular with younger children. Rates of pay seem comparable to the lowest wages offered in the regulated sector; it is not known if the work referred to is actually in the child's own home.

## Weekly 'working' hours

We performed a calculation to estimate how much time young people spend 'working' during term, not just for money but also while they are at school and doing homework. We guess that they spend 28 hours a week at school, and we add this to the number of hours (W) that they reported spending doing paid work during the previous week. The amount of time spent on homework after school on the previous day (always a weekday) is recorded in the HRBQ, and for the purpose of the exercise this is assumed to be an average amount (H), which is multiplied by 5 and added to the weekly total, thus:

	Hours
Time spent at school	28
Time spent working last week	W
5 x Yesterday's homework time	5H

There are many hesitations about this calculation, but we have tried to be consistent and conservative in our assumptions. The results show that in Year 10 there may be 3.4% of boys and 4.3% of girls working more than 45 hours a week, and 1.5% of boys and girls working more than 50 hours a week. Remember that this includes time spent on homework. The European guideline for the maximum adult weekly working time (which does not yet apply in the UK) is 48 hours.

On average, girls 'work' longer during the week than boys do; this is mostly due to their spending longer doing homework.

	Boys %		Girls %	
	NE	E	NE	E
Current dating/partner	19.8	25.6	26.1	32.5
High esteem score (15+)	44.8	45.1	31.0	36.5
Drank alcohol last week	48.0	59.4	47.1	60.4
Been offered illegal drug	32.9	40.6	32.2	40.3
See self as fit or very fit	53.9	59.4	29.2	32.7

TABLE 2. The percentage of 14–15 year old non-earners (NE) and earners (E) that come into the listed categories.

### Young people's work in the context of other behaviours

Table 2 reveals several systematic differences between Year 10 earners and non-earners (here we have excluded babysitting and paid house-

work). All figures are percentages. These differences are mostly statistically significant at the  $p=0.05$  level; the scores for self-esteem, however, are not statistically different between earning and non-earning boys.

These differences are in keeping with a more confident or more outgoing type of person; whether this is as a result of the extra income and experience, or whether these young workers had these qualities before their employment, we cannot tell from these figures.

Nonetheless, it does seem that participation in the world of work, as well as raising health and safety issues, is also connected with initiation into a variety of other health-related activities.

### 'Critical incidents' continued from page 11

Interestingly, results from our survey and two national surveys carried out at the same time indicate that the girls' and boys' reported frequency of *drunkenness* are similar. This represents a change from the trend observed in studies of young people's drinking from the 1970s to the early 1990s, when the boys' frequency was consistently the higher of the two.

#### Reports of illegal drug use

	Boys %	Girls %
Yes	34.8	28.1
No	65.2	71.9

The reported use of *illegal drugs* in our survey appears to be lower than in the two national surveys, but in all three surveys cannabis was overwhelmingly the most likely substance to be mentioned.

It would be easy to respond in a rather sceptical way to claims that smoking and drinking are being used to relieve *stress*, either on the grounds that young people experience relatively little stress relative to the pressures faced by adults, or else that the young are merely justifying their behaviour by using part of a vocabulary of accepted adult motives.

However, the accompanying table of likely hazards to their health highlights that the perception of being under mental stress is high among young people. Perceptions and experiences of the benefits of health-related risk-taking are also widespread, with many young smokers saying that they like cigarettes because they help them

to relax, and many young drinkers stating that they look forward to a drink at the weekend as a good way of winding down after a stressful week. — Scraftoft Campus, Leicester LE7 9SU (0116 2551551, ext. 8782/8785).

#### Perceptions of 'likely or very likely' hazards to their health

##### Boys %

1. Traffic accident (17.8)
2. Alcohol (17.2)
3. Violent attack (13.3)
4. Mental stress (12.6)
5. Pollution (12.5)
6. Other (11.0)
7. Cancer (10.9)
8. Heart attack (10.6)
9. Drugs (8.7)
10. Natural disaster (8.5)
11. Eating disorder (6.5)
12. HIV/AIDS (3.7)

##### Girls %

1. Mental stress (18.0)
2. Pollution (17.5)
3. Alcohol (16.8)
4. Traffic accident (15.6)
5. Eating disorder (13.3)
6. Natural disaster (13.1)
7. Other (12.3)
8. Cancer (11.9)
9. Violent attack (8.4)
10. Drugs (7.9)
11. Heart attack (6.6)
12. HIV/AIDS (4.0)