

# MAYFLY.....

In the month of May, 1983, the HEC Schools Health Education Unit received batches of questionnaires from 2780 pupils in 13 secondary schools in the United Kingdom. Of this group, 1237 were in their school's 4th year (in other words, aged 14+). It was decided to collect the results from this assemblage of 4th-year pupils into a permanent record: partly as a handbook for teachers to use in conjunction with their own Questionnaire results, and partly as a "profile" to be studied and enjoyed by anyone interested in the behaviour of these young people.

The project began in the autumn of 1983, when the Questionnaire results from the 13 schools were assembled in one file, codenamed MAYFLY (a corruption of MAY FILE). As soon as the combined tabulated results began to appear, it became clear that the Unit had a superb source of newsworthy material, which needed to be handled with sensitivity if it were not to be misused or trivialised by irresponsible reporting. Some of the cross-tabulations of health-related behaviours which have been published in *Education and Health* have been seized by the "media" and referred to in television and radio programmes, and in the Press, often out of context, and therefore failing to represent the nature and aims of the Unit's work.

A great amount of work has gone into preparing this material for publication. It has coincided with, and was originally designed to assist, the transfer of our Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire from Version 8 (used by the Mayfly schools) to Version 10, the one currently being used. Therefore, each question has been closely studied to see if improvements can be made in language or layout, and any important weaknesses are men-

tioned. These insights may be important to others engaged in the difficult business of controlled data-gathering. The answers to the questions, displayed in both tabular and graphical form, may raise a number of issues, all of which are referred to in fairly brief notes which could themselves be the departure-point for further investigations. Since the "active" reader may generate other questions upon reviewing the data with a fresh eye, space is left for notes and comments, and for schools using the Unit's Questionnaire to add their own data if required.

The book contains the answers to almost all of the 138 questions that were asked in Questionnaire Version 8, presented in the order in which they appear in that document. The general areas they cover include the following aspects of health-related behaviour:

- Alcohol consumption
- Dental care
- Diet
- Homework
- Hygiene
- Income/earning
- Medication
- Sharing problems
- Smoking
- Social activities
- Spending money
- Sporting activity
- Time to bed/time up
- Watching TV

Each question is presented in the following format:

1. The question itself, reproduced from the Questionnaire Version 8.
2. A table showing the percentage of boys and girls giving the different categories of answer; the total sample number; and the mean answer value, where appropriate.

3. "Observations": a direct summary of the table, without attempting any deep analysis.
4. "Comments": significances which may not appear at first sight; important methodological notes; analyses with respect to other data in the survey.
5. A list of other related questions to which the reader could refer.

This volume is being published in October, initially in a limited edition for circulation to interested parties, but in the hope that a second edition will soon be available for purchase. In this issue we are reproducing the "highlights" of some of the questions that have given rise to a high level of interest during the development and use of the Questionnaire. These are:

1. For how long did you watch television after school/college yesterday?
2. How many hours did you spend doing homework yesterday?
3. Do you wash your hands after visiting the lavatory?


4. Last week, how many times did you have a bath or a shower?
5. How many times did you clean your teeth yesterday?
6. What is your main reason for looking after your teeth?
7. Smoking: which of the following most nearly describes you?
8. How many times have you been in a pub or bar within the last two weeks?

The results are printed in the form of a table and histogram, as they appear in the publication, but with only a few selected observations and comments reproduced from the text.

Details about publication and price will appear soon. We are also planning a more "popular" version, designed for parents and the young people themselves, perhaps in paperback form and with a more immediate, visual appeal. Further plans envisage other reports.

Facsimile of the MAYFLY pages discussing the question *How many hours did you spend doing homework yesterday?*

### HOMEWORK



**Observations**

1. Within each category of response, there is a range of possible times; for example, "Up to 1 hour" could cover any period from 1 to 60 minutes. In calculating the mean times, therefore, "Up to 1 hour" is taken as 30 minutes, "Up to 2 hours" as 90 minutes, and so on.

2. The mean results gives values of 18 minutes and 30 minutes spent by boys and girls respectively on homework "yesterday". The girls' greater industry is supported by a consistent pattern of sex difference right across the table. Almost half of the boys, and a third of the girls, reported having done no homework at all.

**Comments**

3. Between 21 and 31 of the sample claimed to have done more than 3 hours' homework on the previous evening. Perhaps these children enjoy academic work, and are destined for higher education? Could they constitute the 21 minority who go to college or university?

4. Teachers may like to know whether the children who reported having done no homework were actually given none to do, or whether they refused to do work that had been set. Assuming that the same amount of homework was given to boys and girls, does this mean that girls are more conscientious, or that they are slacker?

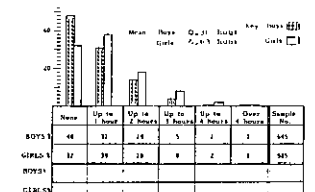
5. Is this term sufficiently precise? Some homework may have been done on the school bus that morning! The question has been made more specific in Questionnaire Version 10.

6. In the table below, the children who reported having done no homework on the previous day are divided up by school. The table shows large variations between schools, but some of this can be explained by assuming that the Questionnaire was administered after "heavy" or "light" homework nights.

Sample No.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	MEAN	TOTAL
BOYS	4	21	26	71	28	11	18	33	31	31	52	41	49	155	
GIRLS	11	25	47	17	22	41	31	32	41	26	24	24	31	181	

Table 10 shows the percentage of pupils doing no homework on the previous night.

### HOMEWORK

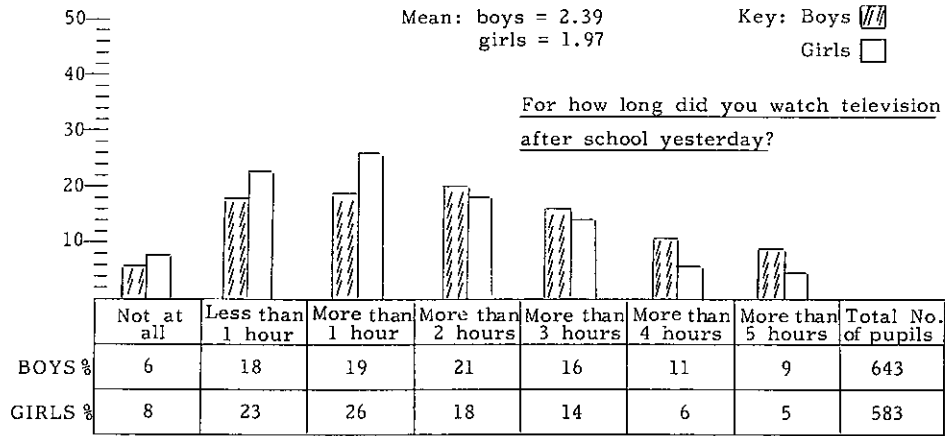


	None	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Over 3 hours	Sample No.
BOYS	46	31	14	5	2	155
GIRLS	32	39	18	6	2	181
TOTAL						

**Further notes**

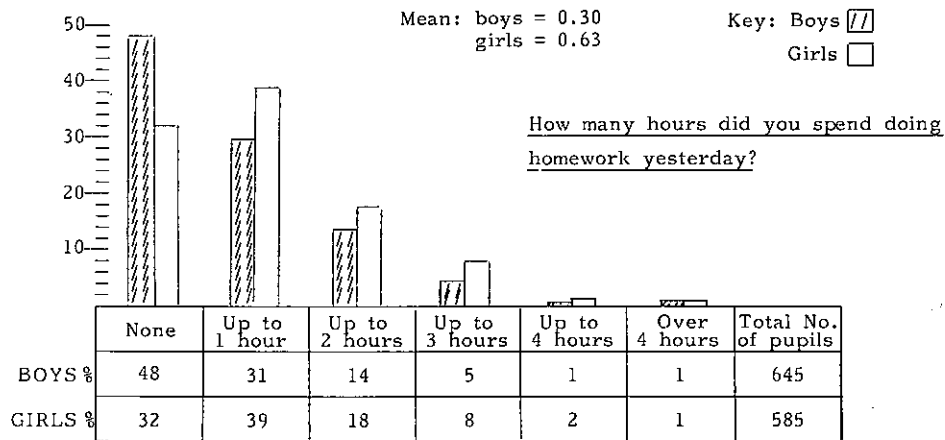
**Related questions**

- "Do you work for money?" (Page 20)
- "How many times have you been in a pub or bar within the last two weeks?" (Page 72)
- "When did you last go to a disco or dance?" (Page 103)



**Weekday viewing** It is important to remember that the Questionnaire should never be administered on a Monday, so that the responses relate to weekday rather than weekend viewing.

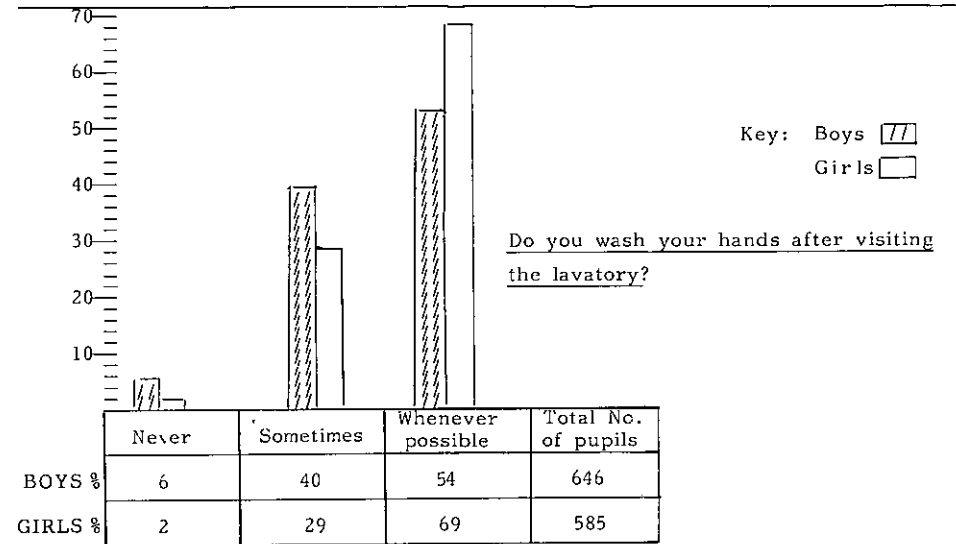
**Quality and quantity** The Questionnaire does not attempt to analyse the kind of programmes being watched, and interview work has revealed differences between what qualifies as "watching television". Perhaps the very long viewing times refer to more casual watching than the short times? Was it the sole occupation of the 20% of boys who watched it for 4 hours or more? Are the mean values of 2 hours 24 minutes for boys and 1 hour 58 minutes for girls surprising?



**The girls seem to work harder** The mean results give values of 18 minutes and 38 minutes spent by boys and girls respectively on homework "yesterday". The girls' greater industry is supported by a consistent pattern of sex difference right across the table. Almost half of the boys, and a third of the girls, reported having done no homework at all.

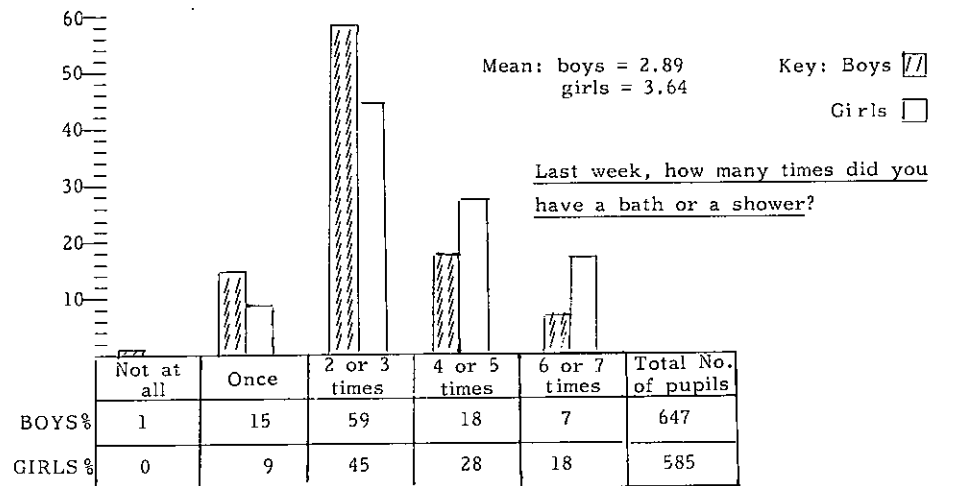
**No homework done - or none set?** Teachers may like to know whether the children who reported having done no homework were actually given none to do, or whether they refused to do work that had been set.

**"Yesterday"** Is this term sufficiently precise? Some homework may have been done on the school bus!



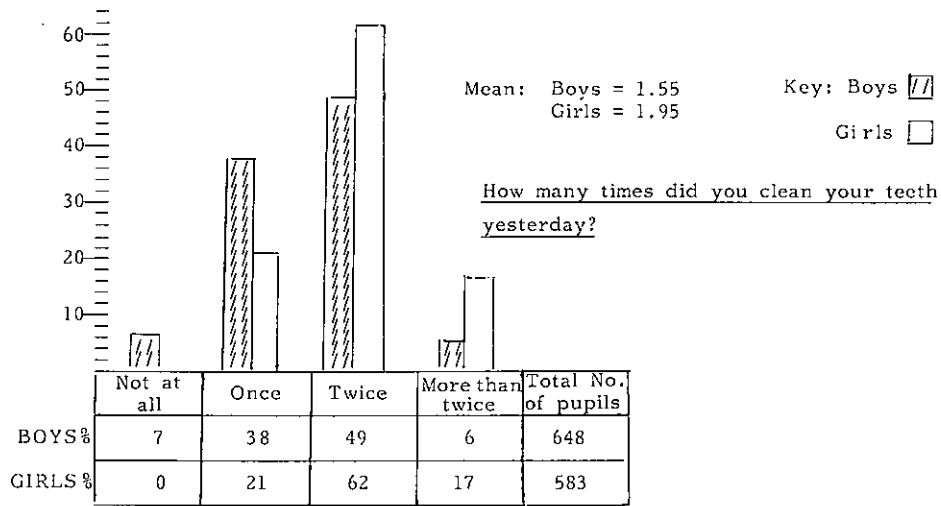
**The "Never" answers** It may be difficult to believe that any pupils should select the "Never" category, if the results are honest (see the section in the report's introduction on "Validation"). Are they thinking of the school rather than the home situation? If so, the figures could be a reflection of how the school goes about promoting hand-washing.

**An "attitude" question?** Are some of those answering "Whenever possible" anxious to see themselves as cleaner than they really are?



**Comparison between the sexes** These figures show that 25% of boys and 46% of girls have four or more baths or showers a week. The "average" boy has just under three baths a week (mean, 2.89), while the "average" girl has between three and four a week (mean, 3.64).

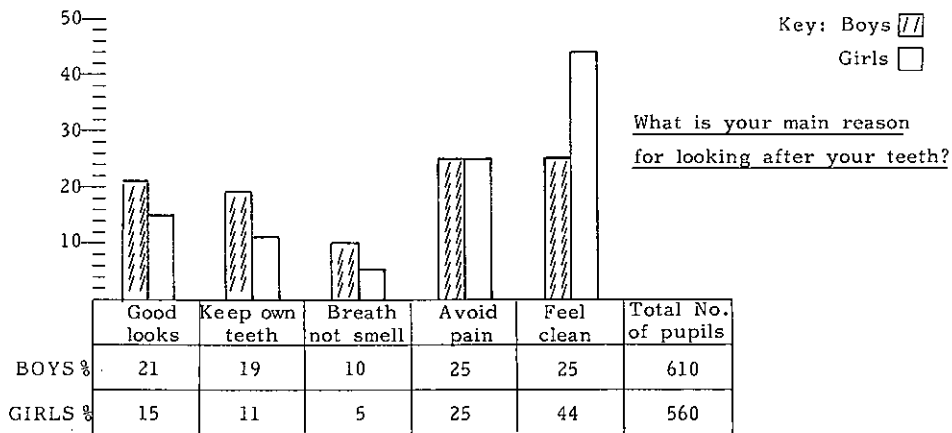
**Bathing at home and at school** In its Questionnaire Version 8 form, the question does not make any distinction between baths or showers in school, after club activities, or at home. It was intended to obtain an overall figure, but it would also be useful to reveal the home/school aspect.



Comparison between the sexes The outstanding facts evident from this table are that 7% of boys did not clean their teeth at all on the previous day, while 79% of girls brushed them at least twice. However, over half the boys (55%) also cleaned their teeth at least twice.

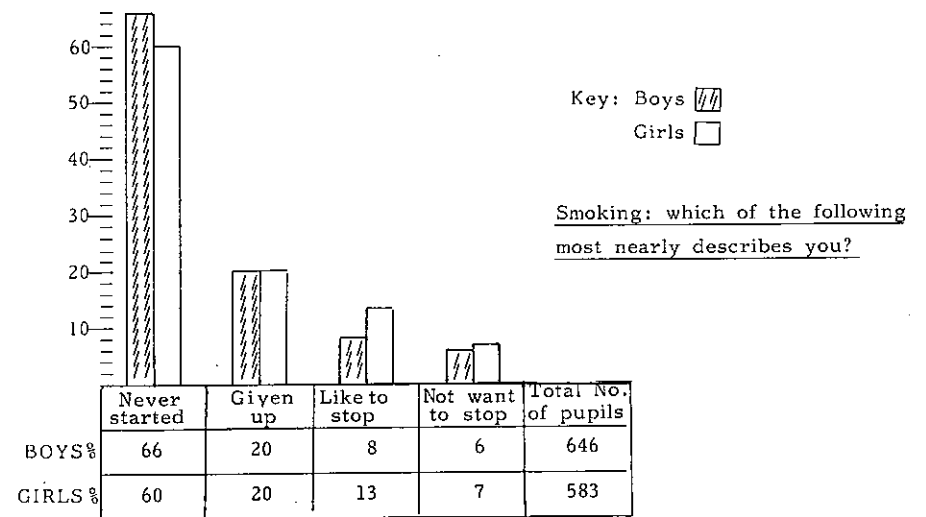
"More than twice" For the purpose of calculating the means, it is assumed that "More than twice" corresponds to three times. Some individuals, however, may brush their teeth even more frequently than this, so that the means are probably slightly lower than they should be.

"0%" of girls Rounding the percentage to the nearest whole number loses the two girls out of 583 who stated that they did not clean their teeth yesterday.

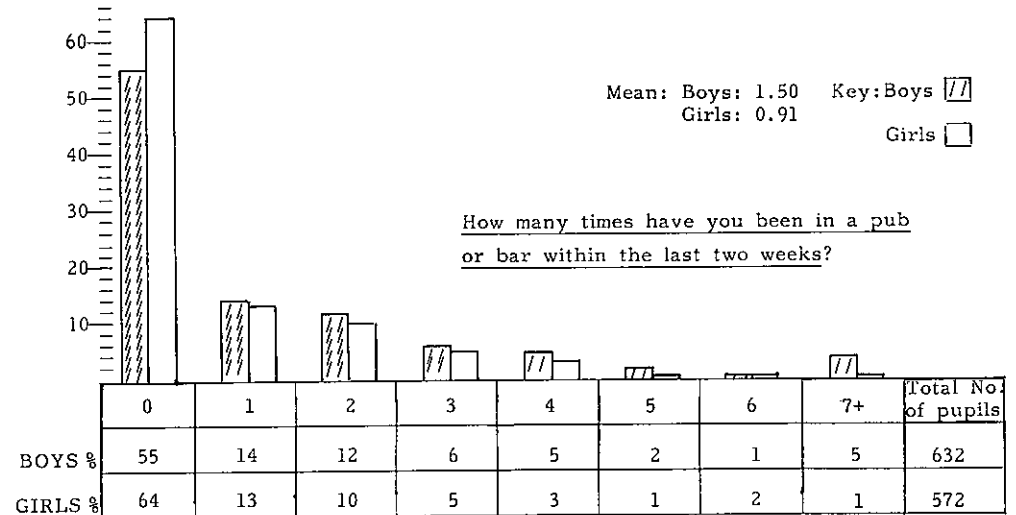


Comparison between the sexes There are noticeable differences between the responses of the boys and girls to all the possible answers except the avoidance of toothache (25% each). The boys are fairly well divided between the answers, but 44% of the girls selected the "Feel clean" option, and only 5% were principally concerned about "Clean breath".

School differences Analysis of the results by "site" shows that the reasons vary considerably, possibly due to the emphasis of recent dental care courses.



Comparison between the sexes Simplifying the table, it can be seen that 14% of boys and 20% of girls are declaring themselves as "smokers". This figure is lower than that obtained by some other surveys for this age group. The higher percentage of girls falling into this category may reflect the fact that girls tend to associate with boys older than themselves.



Comparison between the sexes The results show that 45% of boys and 36% of girls had visited a pub or bar at least once within the previous two weeks. 5% of boys made 7 or more visits, compared with only 1% of girls.

Consumption of alcohol This question does not seek information on what, if anything, they had to drink. It is legal for a 14-year-old to visit a pub. Another question asks about alcoholic drinks, and 19% of boys and 14% of girls stated that they had obtained alcohol from a pub during the previous week.