

# 7 Exercise and Sport



There is widespread concern at what appear to be generally low levels of physical activity in the daily life of young people. If, as has been suggested, the four-year-olds starting in our primary schools will have a life expectancy in excess of a hundred years, then we need to ensure that they have a healthy respect for the role that physical fitness plays in their quality and enjoyment of life. Trends in physical activities can be found in 'Trends: Young People and Physical Activities 1987-2003'. The questions in this section cover physical activity, perceived fitness, and which sporting activities (if any) young people took part in out of school time.

Question

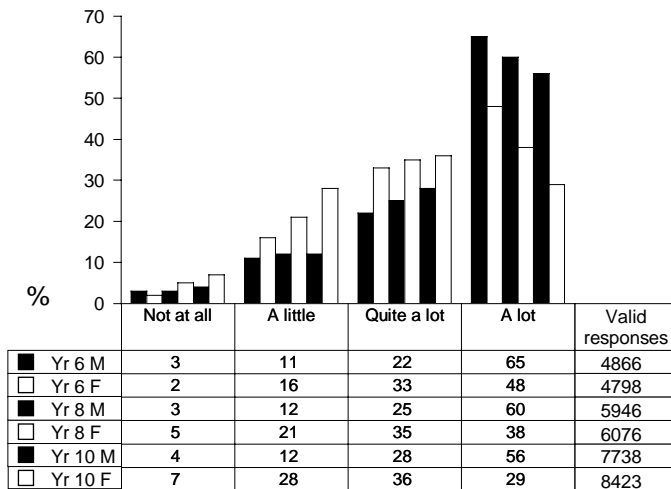
84	How much do you enjoy physical activities? .....	90
87a	Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school .....	91
87b	Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school .....	92
87c	Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school .....	93
87d	Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school .....	94
85	How fit do you think you are? .....	95
86	How many times last week did you exercise and have to breathe harder and faster? .....	96

# Enjoying sport

48% of the 10-11 year old females enjoy physical activities *a lot*

## How much do you enjoy physical activities? (84) (Pri.22)

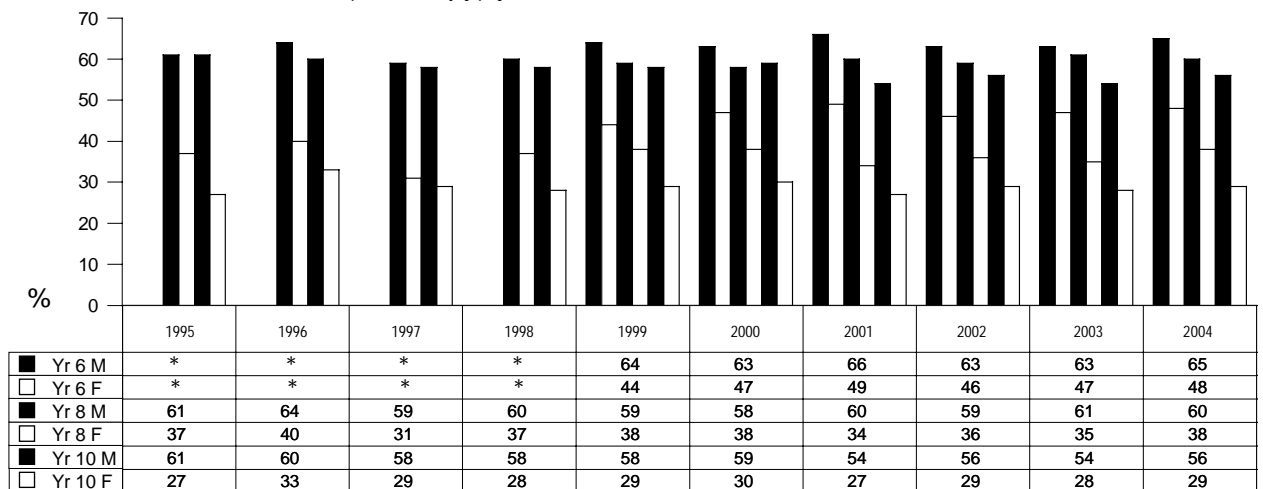
1. There is a large gender difference: far fewer females in each year group report liking sport *a lot*. The gender difference is already distinct in Year 6 (10-11 year olds) but the gap becomes wider as the age of the pupils increase.
2. The difference is especially marked in Year 10, nearly half as many females as males say they enjoy physical activities *a lot*.
3. It is noticeable, that as males get older fewer respond that they enjoy physical activities *a lot*.
4. Nevertheless, over 81% of primary school pupils and over 65% of the secondary school pupils report enjoying sport *quite a lot or a lot*.



## Comments

1. Is it uncool for females in secondary schools to show an interest in sport?
2. Does the changing room experience for females play a role in the rapid decline in an interest in physical activity? Many schools have found that by installing shower curtains in their changing rooms they have seen a positive effect on the interest their female students show for PE.
3. In 2004 56% of 14-15 year old males report enjoying physical activities *a lot*. Since 1995, (see chart below), this percentage has ranged from 61% to 54% (2003) and, generally, shown a similar decline in relation to age and gender.

Responses to enjoy physical activities 'a lot'. 1995-2004



\* Data not available for Year 6

# Participation in active sports (1)

*Riding a bicycle* still remains the most popular activity for all pupils

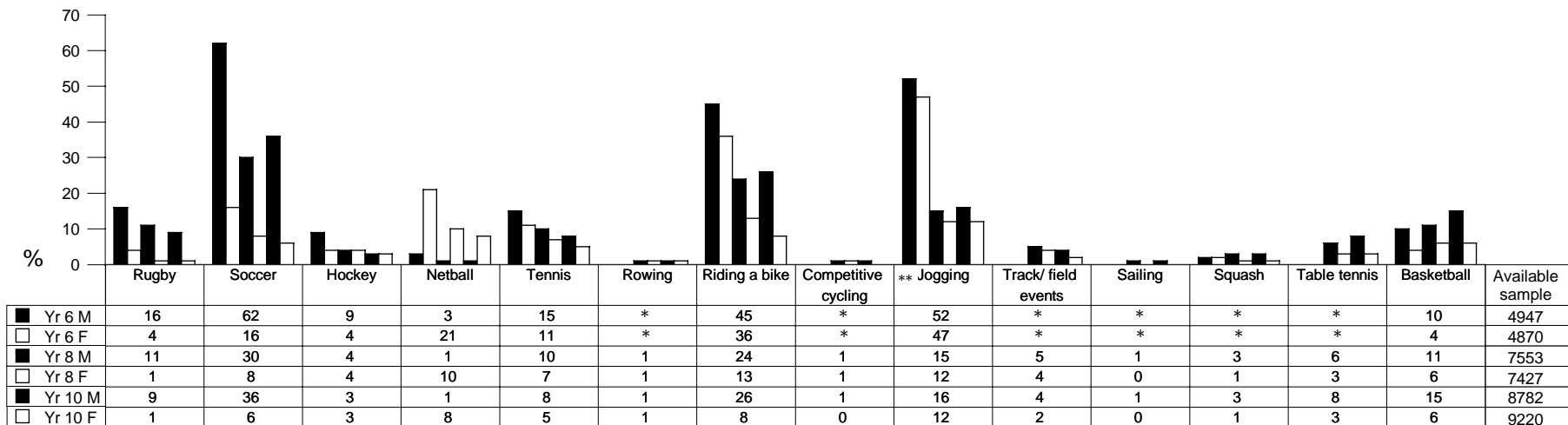
## Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (87a) (Pri.25)

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

### Comments

1. These figures should be seen in the context of the figures on the following pages.
2. *Riding a bicycle* still remains a popular activity for all groups.
3. *Jogging/Running for exercise* involves all groups but the levels are not maintained.

1. These sports and activities are carried out in the pupils' own time or in school clubs and not in school lessons.
2. For the females, interest in *basketball*, increases from primary to secondary school and then declines as they reach 14-15 years old. For males, interest in *basketball*, increases from primary to secondary school and continues as they reach 14-15 years old.



\*\* *Jogging* appears as *Running for exercise* for Year 6

# Participation in active sports (2)

*Swimming* remains a popular activity particularly with younger people

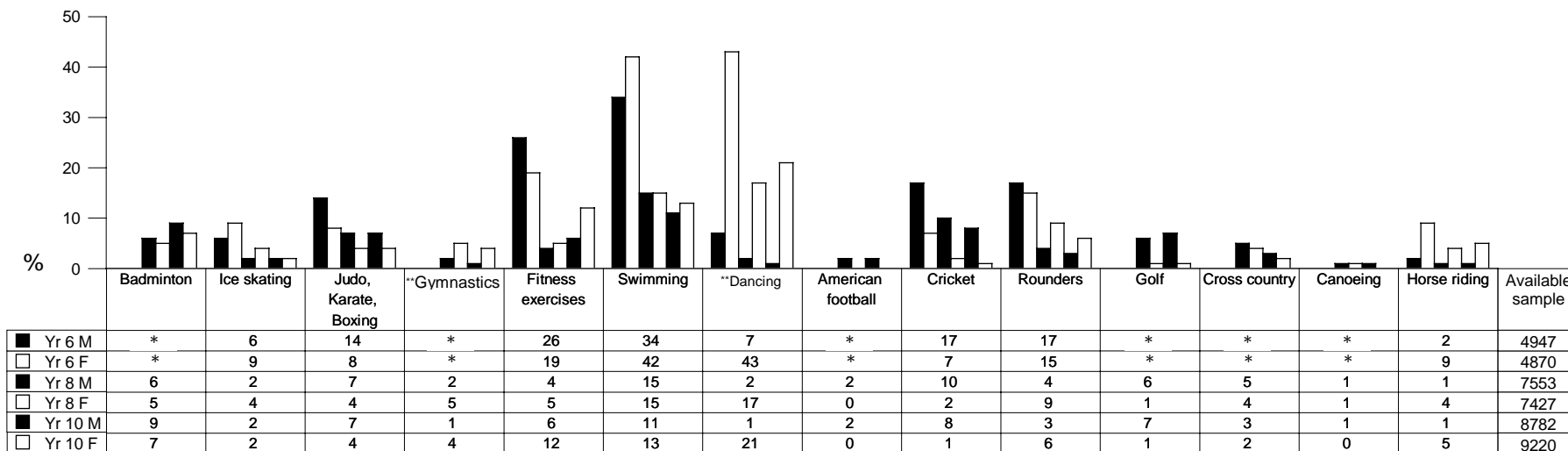
## Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (87b) (Pri.25)

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

1. *Swimming* is the most popular activity with most age groups and genders in this section.
2. *Dancing/gymnastics* are undertaken, outside school, each week by 43% of Year 6 females.
3. *Fitness exercises* and *badminton* are the only activities that show an upward trend for all pupils in the secondary age group in this section.

### Comments

1. American football may be becoming more popular in this country with new clubs forming but is not reflected in figures in recent years. Martial arts continue to receive interest from the younger males.
2. Dancing remains popular with females across the age range. Although it declines in the middle age group, perhaps this is an activity that could be further encouraged in secondary schools.



\* Options not available for Year 6

\*\* *Gymnastics/Dancing* appears as one item for Year 6

# Participation in active sports (3)

Up to 39% of females choose going for a walk

## Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (87c) (Pri.25)

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

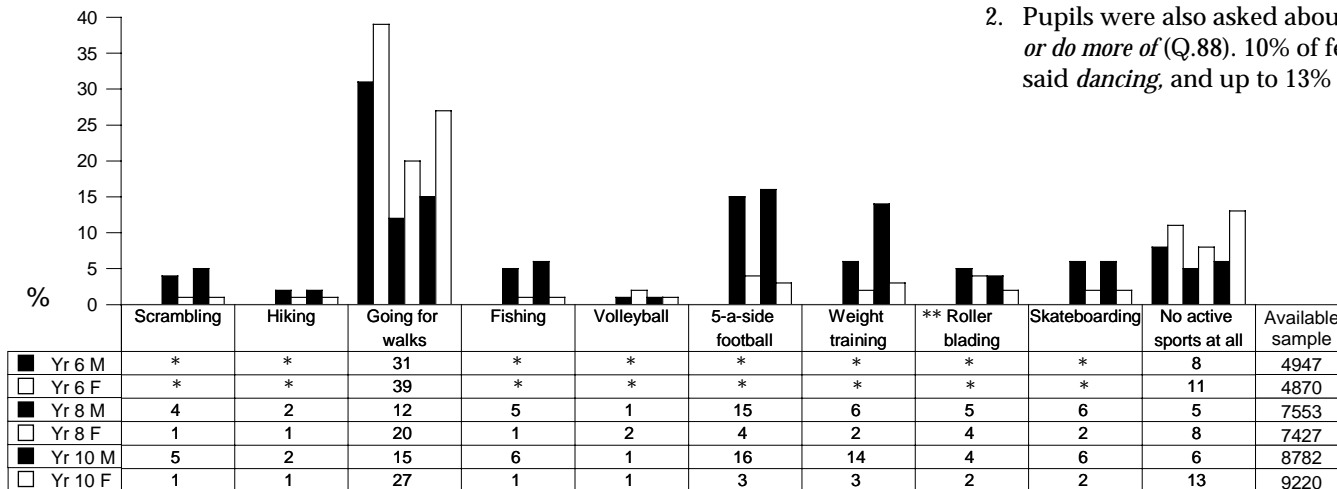
### Comments

- 13% of the Year 10 females and 11% of the Year 6 females do not participate in any active sport on a weekly basis.
- The considerable increase in popularity of weight training for the older males is against the general trend of decreasing involvement.
- Going for walks* was a new category in 2002 and is a popular activity with up to 39% of females.

- Comparing the Year 10 female *no active sports at all* data since 1992 shows a range from 13%-23%. For further information see 'Trends: Young People and Physical Activities 1987-2003'.

1992	19%	1998	14%	2004	13%
1993	18%	1999	20%		
1994	18%	2000	21%		
1995	23%	2001	22%		
1996	20%	2002	14%		
1997	19%	2003	16%		

- Pupils were also asked about which activities they *would like to start doing or do more of* (Q.88). 10% of females said *roller/ice skating*, 11% of females said *dancing*, and up to 13% of older females said *swimming*.



\* Options not available for Year 6

\*\* Rollerblading appears as Roller skating for Year 6

# Participation in 'pub/club' sports

Up to 20% of males play snooker or pool each week

## Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (87d)

1. There is a distinct gender difference seen in the data for these options.
2. Up to 14% of the males play darts on a weekly basis and up to 20% of them regularly play snooker and pool.

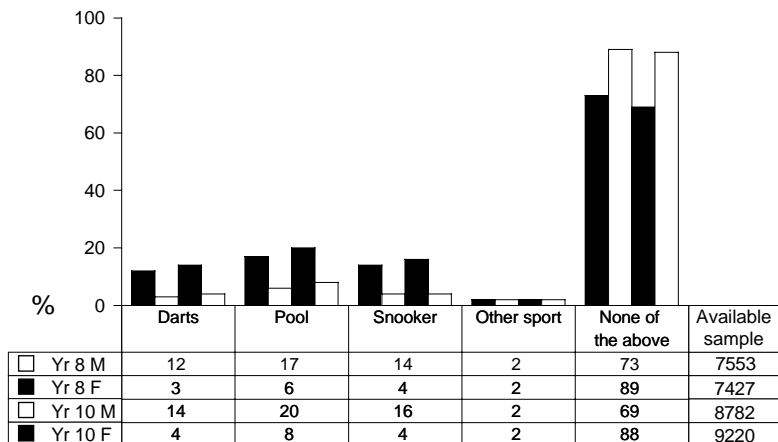
### Comments

1. Are these activities being pursued within a pub setting, or at a youth club, or do these youngsters have access to pool tables etc at home? We can see that among Year 10 males that the more often they take part in these games, the more often they have drunk alcohol in the previous week:

Mean number of days drinking alcohol last week for different frequencies of 'pub and club' sports.

	Pool	Snooker	Darts
Never or hardly ever	0.7	0.7	0.8
Once or twice in a month	0.8	0.9	0.9
Weekly	0.9	1.0	0.9
Twice a week or more	1.0	1.0	1.2

2. These highly social games, like many computer games, also require hand and eye co-ordination skills, as well as some strategic thought.

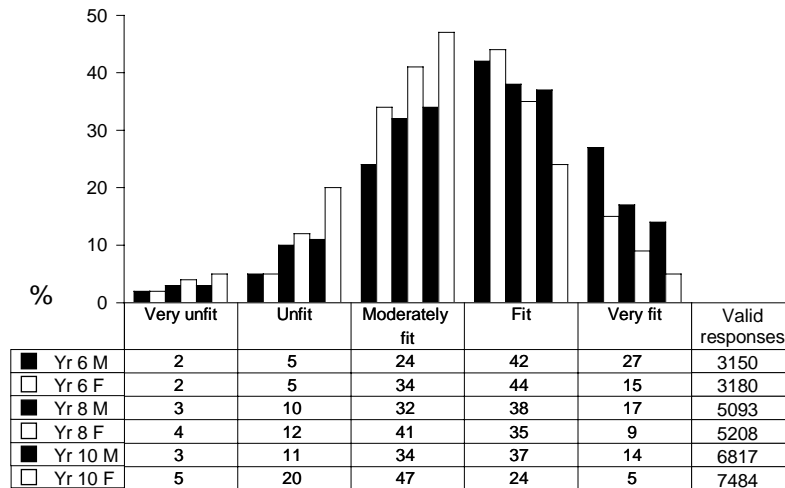


# Personal fitness

29% of 14-15 year old females think they are *unfit* or *very unfit*

## How fit do you think you are? (85) (Pri.20)

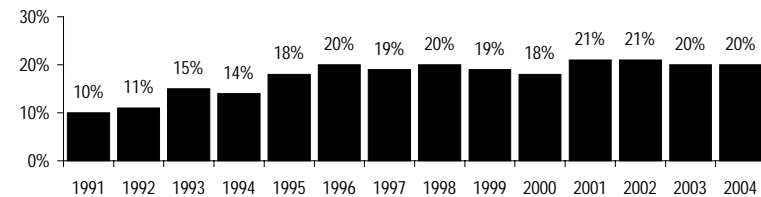
1. More Year 6 males continue to assess themselves as *very fit* than any of the other groups.
2. 29% of the Year 10 (14-15 year old) females describe themselves as *unfit* or *very unfit*.
3. Perceived fitness declines with age in males and females.



## Comments

1. The higher self-assessment of the males is consistent with their higher participation in sporting activities.
2. Do the females see themselves as less fit than the males because they participate in less physical activity or indeed are they less fit than the males?
3. This subjective method of assessing fitness may not seem very rigorous, but individual physiological measurements, in conjunction with similar questions, have shown good agreement.
4. Data from the Trends report, 'Young People and Physical Activity 1987-2003', showed an overall downward trend in reports of fitness levels from 1991 onwards. This was considered in relation to the upward trend in those reporting being 'unfit' (see chart below).

Responses from Year 10 Females who report being 'unfit'. 1991-2004

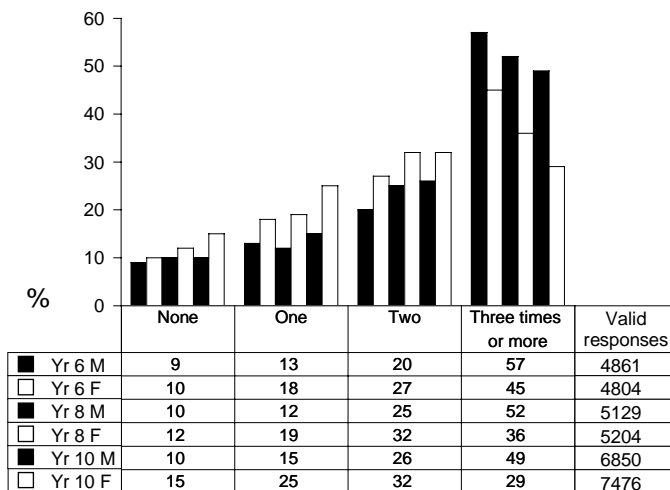


# Aerobic exercise

Over 85% of 10-15 year olds report exercising at least once *last week*

## How many times last week did you exercise and have to breathe harder and faster? (86) (Pri.21)

- Over 85% of all groups report exercising at least once last week, but again the gap is seen to widen between males and females among the frequent exercisers as they increase in age.
- Between 9%-15% of over 33,000 10-15 year olds, report taking no exercise *last week*.
- Up to 25% of all males and between 28%-40% of all females report doing no exercise or exercising only once *last week*.



### Comments

- The data suggest that around 52% of males, and between 29%-45% of females, report exercising vigorously three times or more.
- We have increasing opportunities for youngsters to adopt sedentary lifestyles: many youngsters today have seemingly endless choices for the time they spend watching television with the increased viewing options available on satellite TV, they even have televisions in their rooms; or they spend time playing computer games; and indeed the popularity of surfing the Internet is increasing on a daily basis. But how much do young people depend on parents/carers for permission and support to be active?
- Are we observing the collection of mini time-bombs where youngsters are choosing leisure options that are likely to have a detrimental effect to their general health and fitness in the years to come?
- The question has in mind the old recommendation of exercising vigorously for at least 20 minutes a time, three times a week. Current recommendations are more likely to suggest *daily* exercise.
- Trends data from 'Young People and Physical Activities 1987-2003' suggest that since 1995, males more than females report exercising three times or more 'last week' and younger more than older pupils.