

# 3 Health and Safety

Many of the questions in this group reflect a traditional view of health — physical cleanliness, use of medicines, and common ailments. We also have questions about accidents, and the vulnerability of young cyclists is also a major concern.



Question

When you cycle, do you wear a safety helmet? ..... 20

How often do you wash your hands after visiting the lavatory? ..... 21

How many baths or showers have you had in the past week? ..... 22

Do you have asthma? ..... 23

On how many days, in the last week, have you used remedies or medications? ..... 24

When you run, do you 'wheeze' and have trouble breathing (not just feel out of breath)? ..... 25

How do you rate your safety when going out during the day, and after dark,  
in the area where you live? ..... 26

Do you have friends who carry weapons for protection when going out? ..... 27

Do you ever feel afraid of going to school because of bullying? ..... 28

Do you think others may fear going to school because of you? ..... 29

In the past year, have you had any accidents that were treated by a doctor or at a hospital? ..... 30

Please think about your most recent accident within the last 12 months. What sort of accident  
was it? ..... 31

What were you doing or where were you? ..... 32

During the last 12 months have you had any accidents, which were treated by a doctor  
or at a hospital, while doing paid work? ..... 33

Do you try any of the following ways to avoid sunburn? ..... 34

# Safety helmets

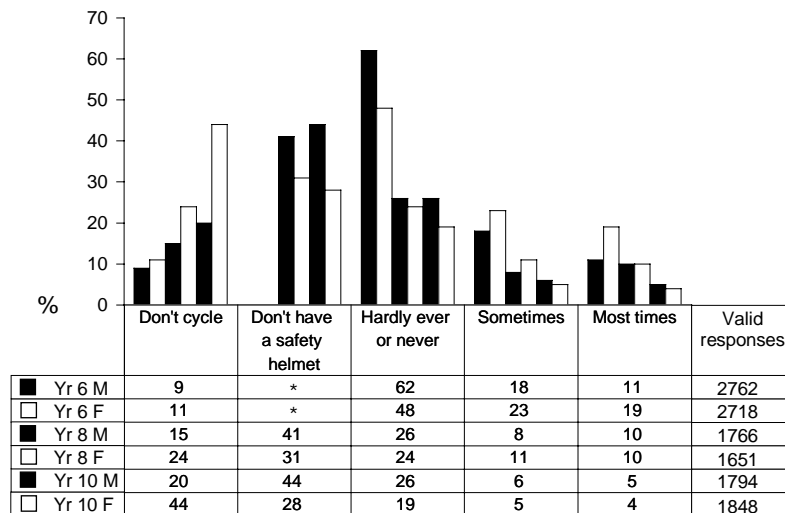
44% of the Year 10 males *don't have a safety helmet*

## When you cycle do you wear a safety helmet?

1. Most of the respondents cycle, although by Year 10 this figure is down to 56% for the females.
2. With age the percentage of cyclists who at *most times* wear a safety helmet is seen to fall, e.g. from 19% of females in Year 6 to 4% of females in Year 10.
3. 44% of Year 10 males *do not have a safety helmet*.

## Comments

1. Head injuries are the commonest cause of accidental death among young people.
2. Cycling seems to be currently fashionable, but does this extend to wearing a helmet? Over the years we have seen changes between years large enough to suggest that helmet-wearing may be a 'volatile' behaviour, sensitive to publicity campaigns and the opinions of others.
3. Cycling is environmentally friendly and promotes fitness, but it presents dangers to young people and is a cause of anxiety to their parents. Efforts to promote the wearing of cycle helmets have shown mixed results. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accident's website refer to some research papers about cycle safety helmets:  
[http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/info/cycle\\_helmets.pdf](http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety/info/cycle_helmets.pdf)



\* Year 6 not given this option



In an earlier book in this series we showed that young people who reported having been on a cycle training course were more likely to report wearing a cycle helmet at least most of the time.

# Toilet hygiene

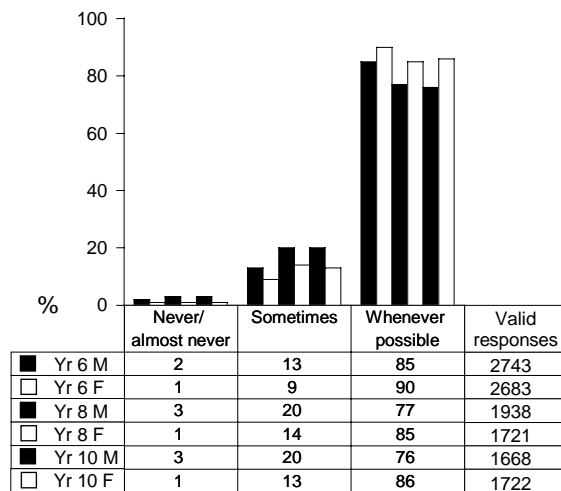
Few pupils *never* or *almost never* wash their hands

## How often do you wash your hands after visiting the lavatory?

### Comments

1. Around 77% of older males and over 86% of the females do wash *whenever possible*. This gender difference is consistent across the three age groups.
2. The percentage that *never* or *almost never* wash is very small.

1. Since 1999, the figures for washing hands *whenever possible* have remained consistent. Gender and age differences are consistent across the three age groups and percentages from the females remain higher than males. This is particularly noticeable for the Year 10 group (14-15 year olds) where around 10% more females than males report washing hands after visiting the lavatory.



# Baths and showers

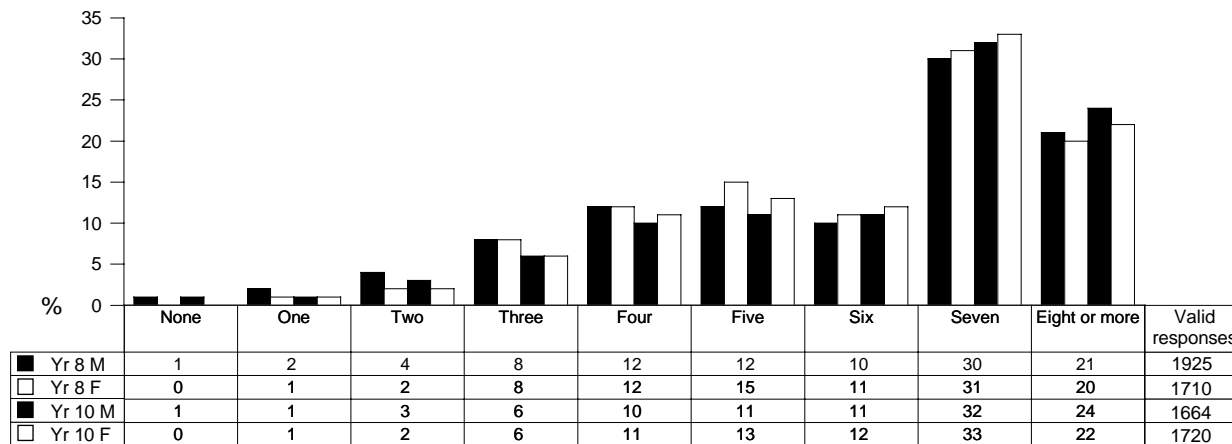
Around 50% report having more than seven baths or showers

## How many baths or showers have you had in the past week?

### Comments

1. About half the males and females in each year group report having had at least six baths or showers in the previous week.
2. Similar number of males and females report having seven baths or showers in the past week and slightly more of the older group.
3. Around 23% of the 14-15 year olds had eight or more baths or showers in the past week

1. We have seen a general increase in the mean number of baths or showers taken in the week from 1986.

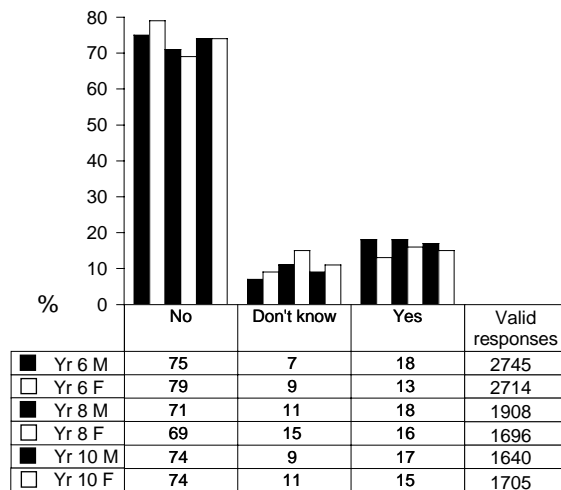


# Asthma

Up to 18% of pupils say yes

## Do you have asthma?

- Up to 18% of the year-gender groups report *yes*, with a similarity of responses between the two genders.
- With age there is a slight increase in the percentage of females who report not knowing if they have asthma.



## Comments

- The young people may 'have asthma' but be free from symptoms.
- There are several stages from the presence of symptoms to confirmation of asthma (e.g. *have symptoms* → *notice symptoms* → *report to parents* → *see GP for diagnosis* → *child reports this in survey*). It is not clear if the observed differences relate mainly or only to having asthma symptoms, as the young people's own reports are all we have to go on.
- The frequency records of asthma medication taken in the previous week are shown on page 24.
- Earlier reports on young people and mental health (*No Worries? Balding, 1998*), describes a high level of connection between general levels of worry and asthma and its symptoms. Figures for 2005 are shown below.

Asthma medication	Count	Percentage who worry about 5 or more topics
Males: No	9083	14%
Yes	1199	19%
Females: No	9354	24%
Yes	1129	27%

# Remedies and medication

50% of 14–15 year old females report taking painkillers in the past week

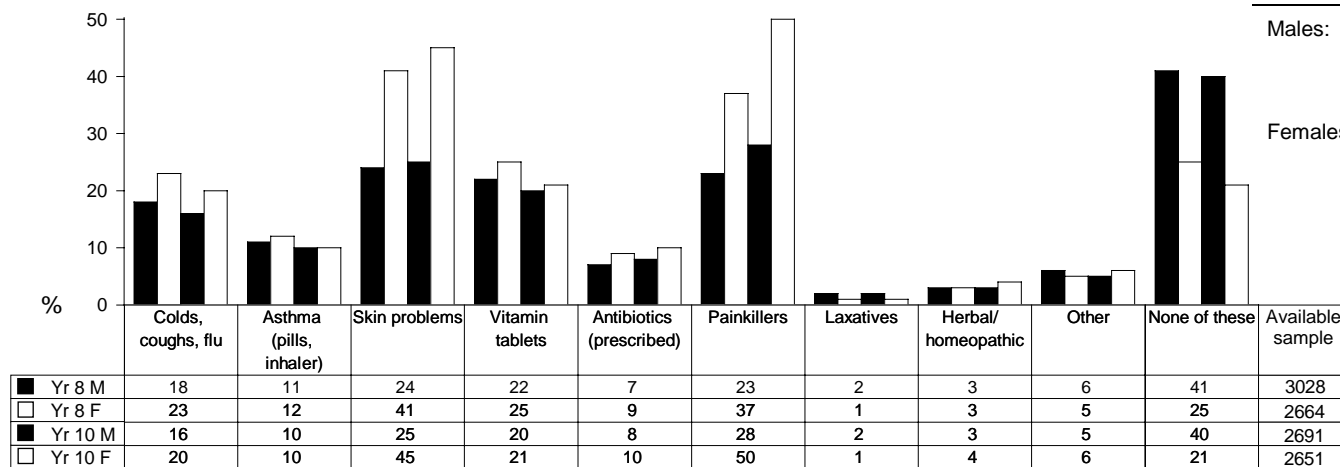
## On how many days, in the last week, have you used remedies or medications?

1. The 'remedies and medication' options now show *Painkillers* remaining the most frequently used remedy followed by medications for *Skin problems* and up to 25% report taking *Vitamin tablets* 'at least one day in the last week'.
2. In almost all cases, more females than males report having used these remedies and medications, the exception being *Asthma*.

## Comments

1. This is the third time this question has been asked using the options shown below which were previously covered by two questions.
2. 50% of the 14-15 year old females are taking *Painkillers*, but they cannot all be suffering from period pains during the week before the survey. Assuming that up to a quarter are, the remainder must be taking them for other reasons, compared with 28% of older males.
3. Worries may literally prove to be a headache: when we look at the number of significant worries against painkiller use, there is a clear association:

Remedies/medications taken at least one day



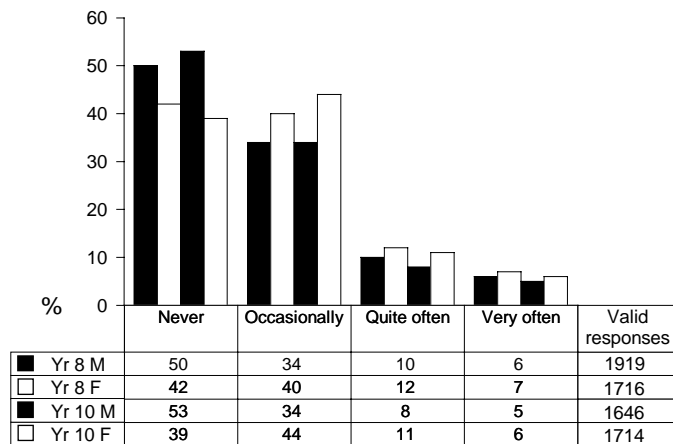
	Painkillers	Count	% who worry about 5 or more topics
Males:	No	5141	13%
	Yes	1856	18%
Females:	No	4187	21%
	Yes	3130	28%

# ‘Wheezers’

More females than males report some degree of discomfort

## When you run, do you ‘wheeze’ and have trouble breathing (not just feel out of breath)?

1. More females than males report some degree of discomfort.
2. Between 13% to 19% of each group exhibit these symptoms *quite often* or *very often*.



### Comments

1. This question is valuable because of its use as a marker for asthma. It is a belief among many paediatricians that there is a degree of under-diagnosis of asthma, and thus also a population of young people who, if they sought medical support to manage their symptoms, could have a better quality of life. (See the medication question, page 24.)
2. The wheezy noise of asthma is characteristic; however, the difference between ‘wheezing’ and ‘breathlessness’ may not always be clear to young people, and this question is probably picking up some young people who are just unfit.
3. Good asthma control may reduce wheeziness, even during exertion.
4. The perceptible fall with age in the percentage reporting *quite often* and *very often* could be linked to (a) improvement in their asthmatic condition, (b) less running and vigorous activity generally, or (c) greater understanding among older pupils of the difference between wheezy breathlessness and just lack of fitness.

# Community safety

Up to 25% of young people say that safety after dark is *poor* or *very poor*

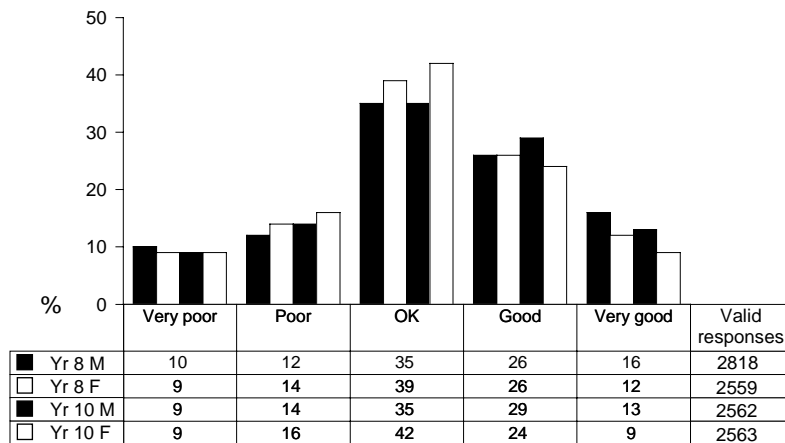
## How do you rate your safety when going out during the day, and after dark, in the area where you live?

1. Males are more likely to feel safe than females, and in general there is little difference in the perception of safety between the two age groups. Females report consistently for the 'OK' categories and similarly, males for the 'Very good' categories.
2. The perception of safety after dark is far lower than during the day for both age and gender groups.

### Comments

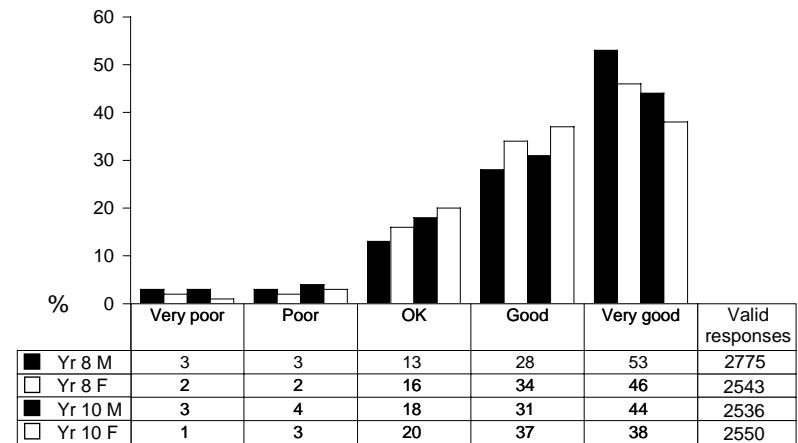
1. Whether perceived safety is related to actual safety, we do not know, but it is likely that perceived safety has an effect on young people's quality of life.
2. Are individual differences in perceived safety related to other attitudes and anxieties? We might expect those more anxious about safety to worry more about other matters.

Safety outside after dark



Safety outside during the day

Note different scale



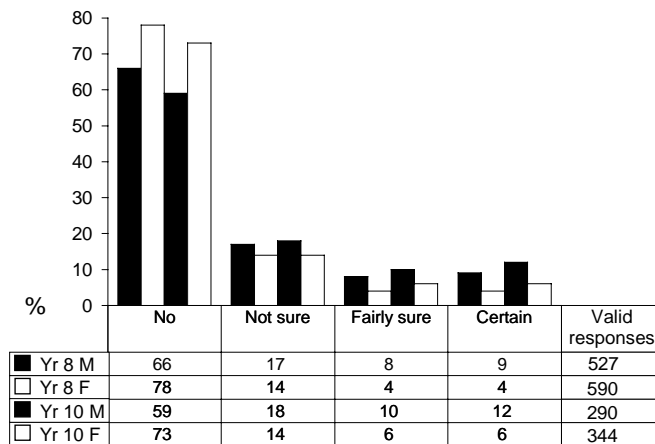


# Carrying weapons

22% of 14-15 year old males are 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that friends carry weapons

## Do you have friends who carry weapons for protection when going out?

1. 22% of 14-15 year old males responded they were 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that friends did carry weapons.
2. Up to 18% of the sample, were 'not sure' if their friends carried weapons for protection.
3. There are clear gender and age differences with males reporting higher percentages across the 'fairly sure' or 'certain' options.



### Comments

1. This is the third time we have asked a question, about friends carrying weapons, since 1996. A question in 1996 also contained an option - 'no friends carry weapons' (*Cash and Carry*, Balding 1996). The following show the question, option and percentage responses:

*Do any of your friends carry some protection, if so what?*

No friends carry weapons	%	Count
Yr. 8 M	70%	2709
Yr. 8 F	75%	2780
Yr. 10 M	57%	2146
Yr. 10 F	70%	2147

2. Given that the 1996 and subsequent questions are worded differently and their placement in the questionnaire are not the same we have not drawn conclusions about differences but included the earlier data for comparison. In 1996, 57 % of older males specified that friends didn't carry some protection, suggesting 43% did. We also found that those who had friends that carried protection were more likely to be 'armed' themselves. We have no reason to think that this association has changed and view the current figures in this context.
3. However one interprets the current figures from those who were 'not sure', over 26% of 14-15 year olds suggest that their friends may carry weapons when going out.

# Fear of being bullied

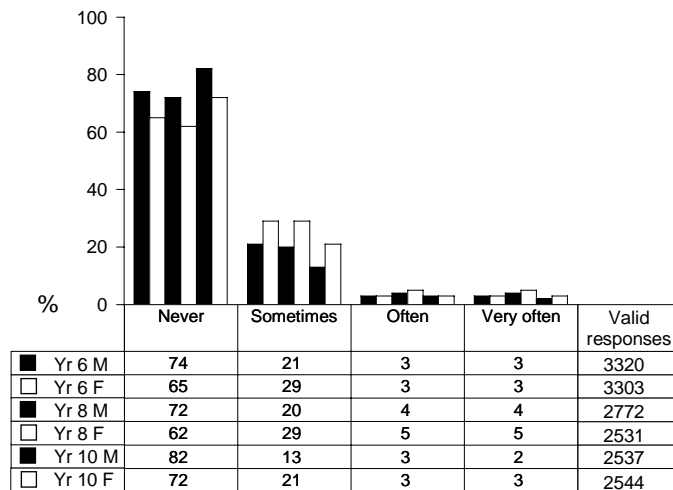
38% of the 12-13 year old females fear bullying at least *sometimes*

## Do you ever feel afraid of going to school because of bullying?

### Comments

1. 38% of the Year 8 females fear bullying at least *sometimes*.
2. The females are more fearful than the males, and the older they get the less afraid they become.

1. We have shown elsewhere, (*Young People in 1998*, Balding, 1999), that the proportion fearing bullying in different schools varies widely. Many items in the survey have been linked with fear of bullying, most notably low self-esteem and poor perceived control, but also asthma, eczema and birth order (*Bully Off*, Balding 1996).
2. Since 1999, the figures for fear of being bullied, at least *sometimes*, show that the percentages from the females remain higher than males. This is particularly noticeable for the Year 6 females (10-11 year olds) – in this group, up to 14% more females than males have reported feeling afraid of going to school because of bullying. (see also pages 29, 129-130.)



# Bullying

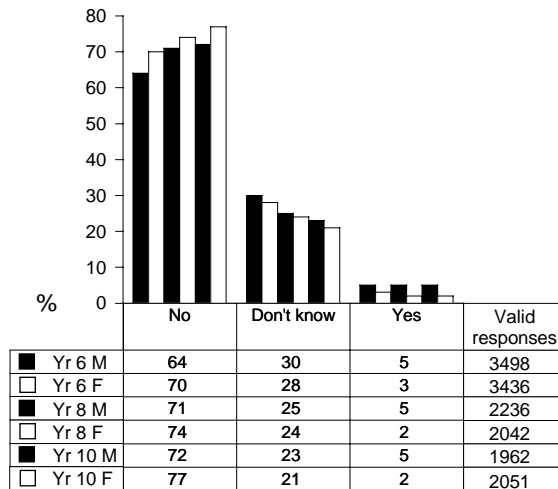
Slightly more males than females say Yes

## Do you think others may fear going to school because of you?

### Comments

1. Up to 5% report they are the cause of why others may fear going to school and up to 30% 'don't know'.
2. There are clear gender and age differences seen from those reporting 'No'.
3. Slightly more males than females report being bullies.

1. This question has been asked of primary pupils for a number of years. Although we have asked older pupils this question since 1998 this is the second time it has been included in section 3 following the 'Fear of bullying' question.
2. Figures for older pupils from previous years show, as one might expect, the older males to report higher percentages in the 'Yes' option but the differences between the genders is not great.
3. The 'don't know' responses could suggest honest lack of certainty or perhaps reluctance to admit a definite Yes.

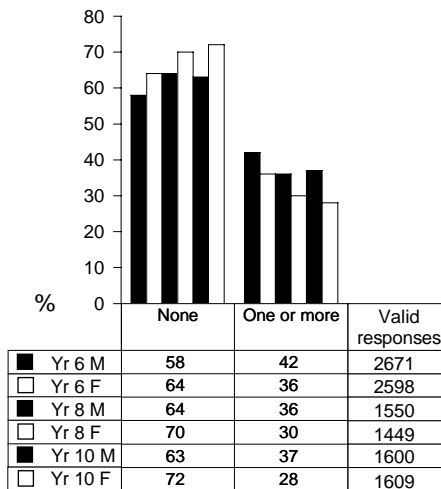


# Accidents (1)

Up to 42% of the males had accidents

## In the past 12 months, how many accidents have you had which were treated by a doctor or at a hospital?

1. Up to 42% of the respondents reported having an accident that needed some sort of treatment by a doctor or at a hospital.
2. Consistently more males than females report involvement in such an accident.



### Comments

1. Over half the fatal accidents in very young people occur at home, but once children reach school age there is an increase in deaths through road accidents, particularly head injuries.
2. Teenagers will always take risks: is it possible to take risks safely?
3. Males may well pursue activities with a higher risk of injury. Are older girls generally more risk-averse? Perhaps, but the picture is complex. Some health-risky behaviours, like smoking, are actually most frequent among older girls.
4. We can support other research (Thom et al, 1999) and show links between reported accidents and health-risky behaviours relating to substance use: for example, pupils reporting a recent accident are more likely to report smoking and drinking in the last week, or ever having used illegal drugs, and these difference apply in all age groups. The figures in the table below are for the year 10 males:

Accident in last year?	Smoked last week	Drank last week	Ever used drugs
No	7%	29%	15%
Yes	16%	43%	28%

# Accidents (2)

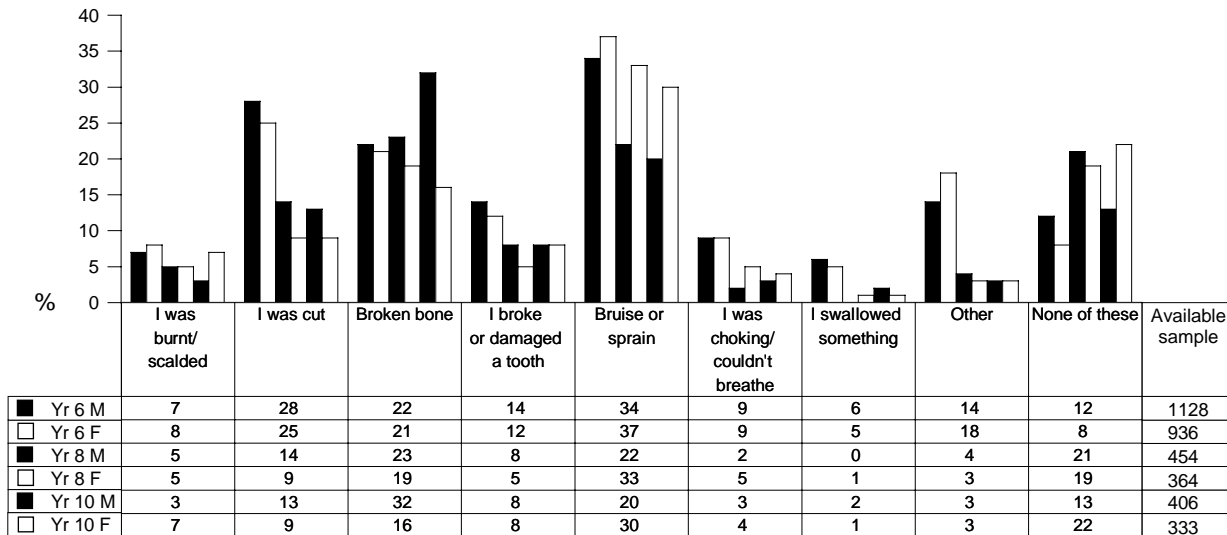
Many accidents are age related, *broken bones* increase as males get older

## Please think about the most recent accident within the last 12 months - what sort of accident was it?

1. The percentages on the table are of those that reported having an accident at all.
2. Percentages reporting that their most recent accident involved a *break* or a *cut* reveal higher percentages, consistently, for the males. For a *bruise/sprain* this gender pattern is reversed.
3. *Bruises, breaks* and *broken teeth* also show a marked age gradient.

### Comments

1. The gender differences are striking and probably reflect the different activities pursued by males and females. (The activities being pursued at the time of the accident are reported overleaf.)
2. Other explanations are possible; for example, the different attitudes they and their carers have to injuries severe enough to require medical attention.
3. The age differences may be interpreted in similar ways.



# Accidents (3)

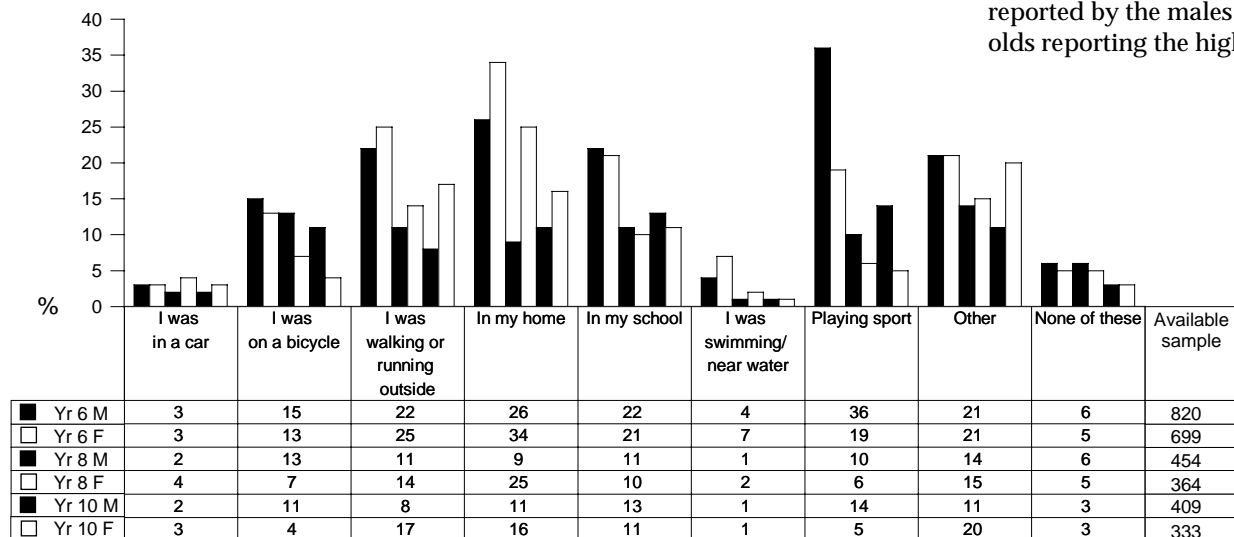
Most accidents occur while *playing sport*, for males, and *in my home* for females

## What were you doing or where were you?

### Comments

1. The main categories for females are: *walking or running outside*, *in my home*, and *playing sport*. For males, the main options are *in my school* and *playing sport*.
2. Many of these categories are strongly age-related. Accidents, that happen while *playing sport*, increase as females get older. However accidents, that happen while *in my school*, decrease as pupils get older.
3. Up to 34% of accidents, for the females, happen *in my home*.

1. There are clear gender differences. For males, the most important cause of accidents from the list is through *playing sport*, naturally causing the question to be posed: 'Is exercise good for your health?' (see: Masters, 'Sport as a health risk', 2003). Unquestionably it is, but sports injuries are so common that we wonder if sufficient care is being taken. For females, the highest number of accidents happen *at home*.
2. Figures from the last five years show a similar pattern, up to 30% (2002) of accidents reported by the females happened *in my home* and, the 10-11 year olds reporting the highest percentages. Up to 41% (2003) of accidents reported by the males happened while *playing sport* and, the 14-15 year olds reporting the highest percentages.

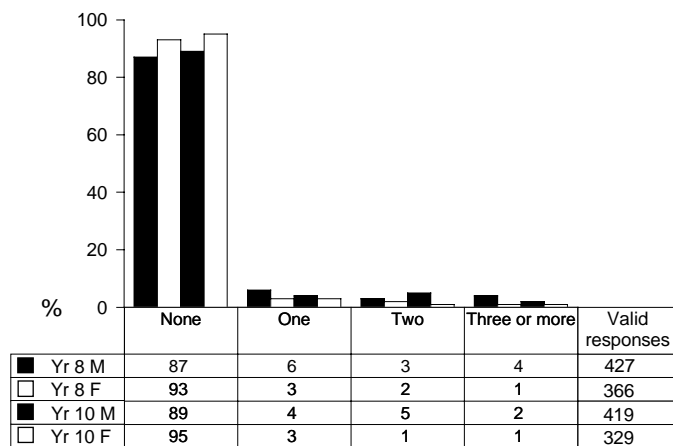


# Accidents at work (4)

Up to 13% of males needed GP or hospital treatment

## During the last 12 months have you had any accidents, which were treated by a doctor or at a hospital, while doing paid work?

1. Figures range from up to 7% for the females and 13% for the younger males that report having an accident, while at work, that required treatment by a doctor or at hospital.
2. The relatively low response rate is related to the numbers involved in paid work (see page 80) who also report having an accident.
3. Males report a slightly higher number of incidents of accidents than the females.



### Comments

1. This is the fourth time we have reported this question although it has been asked for a number of years. Work-related injury is a category with low frequency, but given the dangerous nature of many workplaces the injuries may be more serious. Figures from 1999-2005 show:

Accident at work: GP/hospital treatment	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
14-15 yr. Males	4%	7%	9%	9%	11%	8%	11%
14-15 yr. Females	2%	3%	5%	4%	6%	6%	5%

2. We have seen (page 30) that 37% of the 14-15 year old males, compared with 28% of the females in the same age group, required GP or hospital treatment for an accident. Figures from those doing regular paid work (page 78) show that around 32% of 14-15 year olds have a regular paid job. However, slightly more older males (11%) report having treatment for accidents at work compared with the older females (5%).

# Sunburn

Up to 22% *never* try to avoid sunburn

## Do you try any of the following ways to avoid sunburn?

1. Up to 22% *never* try to avoid sunburn.
2. More younger than older males and females *always* try to avoid sunburn.
3. As they get older fewer pupils try to avoid sunburn.

### Comments

1. This is an old question that has been rephrased.
2. In previous years pupils favoured *putting on sun screen* and males more than females preferred to *wear a hat* and *wear long sleeves*.
3. Despite the warnings, older pupils are choosing to risk exposure to the sun that may result in sunburn.

