

# Young People into 2009

*The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire  
results for 80,548 young people between the ages of 10 and 15*

## **CHAPTER 2** **Doctor and Dentist**

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# 2 Doctor and Dentist



The 'doctor' questions are about the respondents' last visit to their GP. With respect to dental hygiene, the questions are about toothbrushing frequency and their last visit to the dentist.

### Question

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# Visiting the doctor

Most pupils have visited the doctor in the past three months

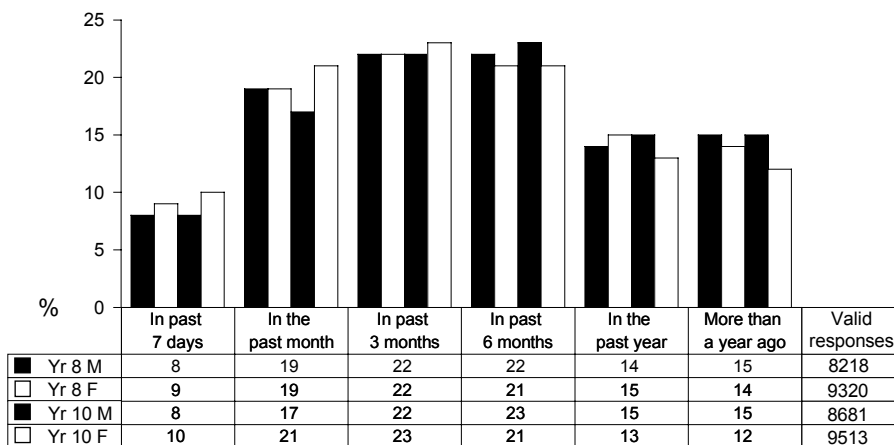
## How long ago did you last visit the doctor?

1. At least 47% report having visited their GP within *the past 3 months*.
2. Slightly more females than males report going to their GP in the past 7 days/month. More males than females report going to their GP more than a year ago.

## Comments

1. Are GPs aware of these perhaps surprisingly high frequencies of attendance? In the 'Introduction' (page xxv), we reported how one GP was so disbelieving of the attendance figures reported locally that he checked his own practice records, and found them consistent with the rates recorded in the survey.
2. Are the numbers going up or down? Since 1999 the percentage of those visiting the doctor in the past month are:

Visit GP in past month	1999 %	2003 %	2008 %
Yr 8 Male	26	27	27
Yr 8 Female	28	26	28
Yr 10 Male	26	21	25
Yr 10 Female	31	29	31



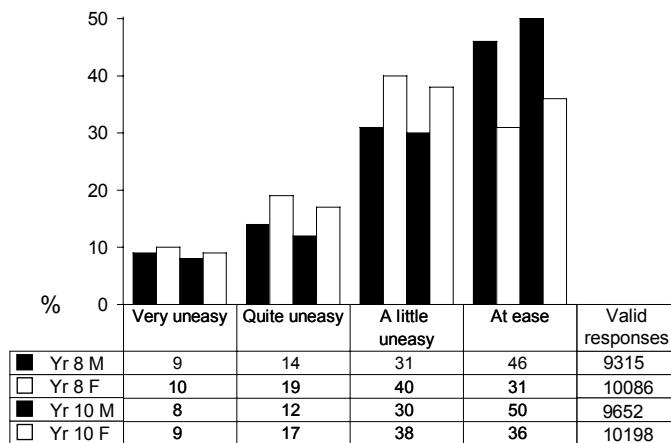
Gender and age differences are generally consistent and females have usually been visiting more frequently than males. The differences are small with the exception of older pupils.

# Talking to the doctor

Up to 29% of the females felt *quite uneasy* or *very uneasy*

## On this last visit, did you feel at ease with the doctor?

1. More males than females felt *at ease* on their last visit.
2. Up to 29% of the females felt *quite uneasy* or *very uneasy* with the younger females reporting higher figures.
3. As they get older, young people feel more at ease talking to the doctor.



### Comments

1. This question has been asked since 1981. Earlier surveys recorded the gender of the GP last visited, and suggested that both boys and girls were more likely to be at ease with female doctors, who are of course in the minority.
2. The level of ease with the doctor could reflect general confidence with adults, or concern about the reason for the visit.
3. A less trusting interpretation is that males are less likely to admit to unease.



In *Young People in 1997* we have shown that those young people who say they were at ease with their GP on their last visit were also likely to have visited their GP more recently:

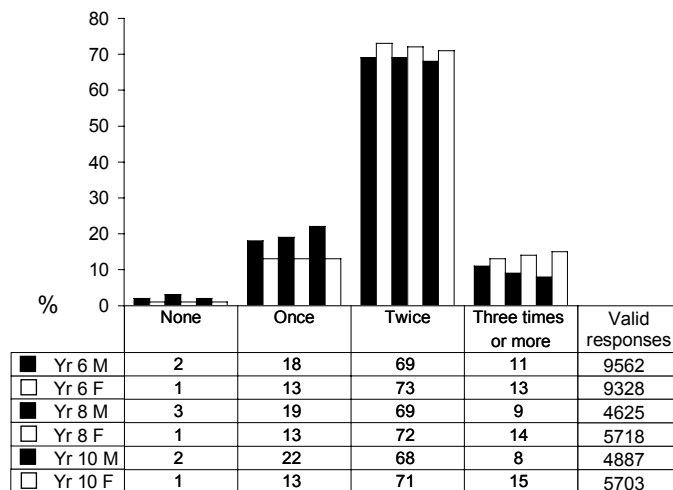
At ease (whole sample) : 50%  
 At ease (visited last week) : 55%  
 (visited last year) : 48%

# Cleaning teeth

Up to 22% of the males brush *only once*

## How many times did you clean your teeth yesterday?

1. Most brush twice a day with up to 69% of males and 73% of females.
2. Up to 22% of the males brush only once.
3. Across the three age groups represented, more females consistently report brushing their teeth at least twice on the previous day.



## Comments

1. Twice-daily brushing is recommended, and the majority of young people are achieving this.
2. The females are recording higher average brushing levels than the males, but these may be linked to having their teeth looking nice, and general concern about their appearance, rather than to 'health' issues.
3. Despite the improvement in children's dental health, decay remains a significant problem. It is estimated that between 52% and 77% children aged 8 to 15 years have some obvious tooth decay in their permanent teeth.
4. As well as toothbrushing, the use of floss or other inter-dental cleaning aids can be discussed with young people.



Toothbrushing frequency, as we have demonstrated over the years, is related to several other aspects of lifestyle, including birth order, ease with the opposite sex, region of the country, self-esteem and smoking.

# Visiting the dentist

Most had been within the past three months

## How long ago did you last visit the dentist?

### Comments

1. Around 80% of all the groups state that they have been within the past 6 months, which is the recommended interval.
2. The females' average frequency of visits is slightly higher than the males', and the Year 8 pupils tend to have been a little more recently than those in Year 10.

1. The '6-month rule' is only a recommendation, and we are advised has no strictly scientific basis. This doesn't mean it should be ignored!
2. Are the Year 8 respondents better at going to the dentist because they are more biddable, more conscientious, or suffer from more dental problems? Are they more likely to share a 'joint booking' with a parent, at least for the initial check-up?

