

Hygiene: good. Diet: fair. Sporting involvement: could do better.

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Young People in 1992

Thanks to the marvels of modern computer technology, the complete Health Related Behaviour data for over 20,000 young people collected in 1992 was printed and published, with commentary, in February 1993. This is the fastest 'turnaround' ever, and should be compared with the 10-month interval that elapsed before *Young People in 1986*, the first of our annual reports, appeared in November 1987.

The book has already been used by the media to generate gloomy articles about the drinking and drug-taking tendencies of today's 'alienated' young people. Since most of the recorded

behaviours do not show great changes from year to year (use of deodorants being one conspicuous exception!), these 'revelations' reveal at least as much about the current public appetite for news as about the news itself. The 1989 data was used by several national newspapers to demonstrate how hygienic, socially competent and well-balanced today's youngsters are!

The book is divided into eight parts, each one presenting data relevant to diet, doctor & dentist, health & safety, home, drugs, money, sport, and social & personal aspects. One table from each section is reprinted here. *Young People in 1992* contains altogether 106 tables.

Diet: Yesterday's lunch

Table 1. Percentage responses to the question *What did you do for lunch yesterday?*

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
School cafeteria	36.8	31.9	36.6	31.1	40.6	29.1	30.2	26.9
School set lunch	10.0	5.9	7.6	4.8	11.0	6.6	5.2	4.2
Packed lunch in school	26.1	42.4	34.5	42.8	26.7	42.2	29.6	35.4
Packed lunch out of school	4.3	2.7	2.9	3.4	1.9	1.3	4.2	4.0
Takeaway or shop	13.6	8.0	7.8	6.2	9.8	6.8	13.0	9.7
Went home	6.5	5.5	6.7	6.1	6.4	6.1	11.0	8.8
Did not have any	2.6	3.6	4.0	5.5	3.7	7.9	7.0	10.9
Valid responses	418	524	4161	3920	1267	1199	4301	4258

Schools and caterers would like to feel that they can have some practical influence on pupils' dietary choices. The reasons may well include:

1. Young people can have the chance of sampling less adulterated foods than they may experience at home.

2. If 'healthy eating' messages in the classroom are not backed up by 'healthy' dietary options, what conviction does this lend to coursework?

The problem is that with the market economy operating within the school catering service, the tastes of the pupils determine what has to be

Table 2. The percentage of year 10 pupils going home for lunch shows a marked decline since 1986.

Version	V10	V11	V11	V11	V12	V15	V15
Year	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Boys %	27.3	23.3	20.9	15.8	17.1	8.6	11.0
Girls %	25.9	21.1	18.3	18.1	13.8	8.3	8.8
Approx. No.	4000	6200	11500	4300	7000	7000	8500

offered. If youngsters are not attracted by 'healthy' foods, they will not be sold. How does one break into this circle of cause and effect?

School cafeteria/set lunch More popular with the boys than the girls. Other surveys have suggested fewer older pupils going for this option - the current table is less clear on this tendency.

The lunch arrangement in schools is usually flexible. Pupils do not need to take school lunch every day — they could bring sandwiches, or even miss lunch altogether. However, in case of emergency, the school needs to know if they are going to be on or outside the school premises during lunchtime. This means that the pupils' day-to-day options need to fall within the 'inside school' or 'outside school' categories.

Packed lunch in school/out of school This is more with the girls. Is this because boys would not enjoy having to prepare it themselves? The figures show no clear trend with age. Previous

analyses of the total daily diets of 'packed lunchers' suggests that they may be better than those of pupils taking the other alternatives.

Going home The fall in the number of year 10 pupils going home for lunch over the period 1986-1992 is recorded over four different versions of the questionnaire. The tendency is for slightly more boys than girls to go home for lunch.

How is this very noticeable secular trend to be explained? One explanation that has been offered is that with more mothers having jobs, fewer are at home during the day.

Lunch from a takeaway This option is likely to attract more boys than girls. The numbers in each column are the average of a wide range of values from pupils in different schools. This is because not all schools will have readily-accessible shops and takeaways in the vicinity.

Doctor & dentist: Last visit to the doctor

Table 3. Percentage responses to the question *How long ago did you last visit the doctor?*

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
In the past 7 days	11.2	9.9	8.9	9.9	9.1	9.7	8.3	10.2
In the past month	22.8	23.3	22.0	22.8	21.0	22.8	19.7	23.4
In the past 3 months	24.9	25.6	24.7	23.3	24.2	23.0	23.0	22.9
In the past 6 months	17.1	22.4	20.7	19.6	22.2	19.5	20.9	18.5
In the past year	12.6	13.3	12.9	13.3	11.9	13.1	13.6	12.9
More than a year ago	11.4	5.5	10.7	11.1	11.5	11.9	14.4	12.1
Valid responses	421	527	4137	3890	1258	1195	4285	4256

The frequency of visits to the doctor shows that half the young people reported paying visits to the doctor within the previous three months, while about 90% thought they had been within the previous year. Readers may remember Dr Peter Wallis's letter in the previous issue, in which he confessed to initial disbelief at the high consultation frequency reported by young

people in his locality who had completed the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, only to find them supported by his practice's computer records.

If the great majority of young people visit a doctor at least once annually, this means that doctors are well placed to promote health messages. It was suggested in *Young People into the*

Nineties that doctors should have specific health messages prepared for their patients according to age, sex and general condition.

Another table in the book shows that about two-thirds of the boys, but only about half the

girls, were at ease during their last visit to the doctor. Whether being tense or relaxed improves the reception of 'health messages' is not clear from the data in our possession!

Health & safety: Baths & showers

Table 4. Percentage responses to the question *Please try to remember how many baths or showers you have had since this time last week.*

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
None	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1
One	4.0	2.4	2.6	1.8	1.5	1.2	1.6	1.4
Two	7.0	7.3	6.7	5.8	6.6	3.8	5.2	4.0
Three	9.5	10.3	10.1	10.3	8.9	8.8	9.4	7.7
Four	13.3	13.8	12.9	12.1	12.2	10.3	12.4	12.0
Five	11.6	13.1	11.5	13.1	12.1	12.9	11.1	10.6
Six	8.1	10.7	10.8	10.6	10.7	10.1	11.1	10.6
Seven	11.6	11.4	13.3	14.4	15.1	17.1	15.9	18.8
Eight or more	34.4	31.0	31.7	31.6	32.6	35.7	32.9	34.8
Valid responses	430	535	4186	3932	1267	1199	4302	4267

Earlier questionnaires distinguished between baths or showers at school, or at home or somewhere else. This table, taken from Version 15, combines both these categories. It reveals that about a third of all the young people had eight or more baths or showers during the previous week, and almost half had at least seven — which could mean one a day.

The younger generation do seem to be very hygienic. It will be interesting to see how water metering affects these levels.

Only about 10% of all the pupils in the sample had fewer than four baths or showers in the previous week.

There is a small tendency for the older pupils

to bathe more frequently than the younger ones, but the overall impression given by this table is that washing habits established by year 7 (and probably earlier) tend to remain unchanged, or possibly become more rigorous, during the years of secondary schooling.

Evidence from earlier questionnaires, where baths or showers were divided into those taken at school and those taken at home or elsewhere, suggests that the use of school facilities drops very markedly for the older pupils, especially the girls (typically, in year 7, about 50% of both sexes reported use of school showers, falling to about 25% of boys and 10% of girls in year 11).

LIFESTYLES: *Data about pupils for pupils*

Lifestyles is a planned series of computer datafiles containing Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire results for 200 mixed year 10 pupils. The 18 selected variables in each datafile can be read by any database program used by schools, supporting a range of work from simple description of the sample to verification of hypotheses about linked behaviours. The first datafile is called *Mainly Social* and includes relationships, smoking and drinking, self-concept, and aspects of physical health. It can contribute to many NC subjects.

Price £10, including manual and postage, from the Schools Health Education Unit.

Home: Activities after school

Table 5. Percentage responses to the question *Look at the following list, and decide how long you spent doing each of these things after school yesterday. The figures indicate those who spent any time at all on them.*

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Watched TV	67.2	77.7	78.1	81.1	75.9	84.3	80.3	82.9
Watched video	17.4	16.0	15.7	12.9	11.3	12.1	14.5	12.7
Listened to music	37.6	45.4	46.1	62.4	54.1	66.4	60.3	76.7
Played indoor games	29.1	23.0	27.8	16.3	24.3	12.6	17.7	8.3
Played outdoors	41.7	24.9	47.4	30.6	34.3	18.0	35.9	15.5
Met friends	36.5	35.5	45.4	45.3	43.1	40.3	50.6	50.6
Drawing, writing	28.4	39.8	22.8	30.6	20.5	26.2	16.3	21.0
Played instrument	12.2	24.7	12.6	22.4	16.0	20.5	11.0	14.4
Used computer	50.7	32.0	51.2	27.3	46.3	24.6	41.8	16.7
Pets	32.3	44.6	41.7	52.4	34.1	51.4	32.2	44.8
Read a book	31.7	53.3	29.1	47.0	30.5	43.2	20.8	36.0
Read magazines	28.0	23.6	31.0	34.6	33.3	34.6	32.8	36.3
Scouts, guides etc.	9.4	11.2	8.6	10.1	10.9	9.1	5.1	5.1
Homework	59.9	75.5	64.5	76.3	73.0	79.8	62.7	76.3
Hobbies	52.8	50.2	54.7	52.1	47.3	46.4	49.9	42.1
None of these	17.4	6.9	10.8	6.6	7.9	5.9	8.6	4.8

This table shows that boys and girls are doing a number of things on a typical weekday evening. Totalling all the year groups, boys' 'top 5' activities are watching television, doing homework, hobbies, listening to music, and meeting friends. The girls' 'top 5' are watching television, doing homework, listening to music, hobbies, and pets.

An increasing number of young people listen to music as they grow older. Conversely, playing indoor games, drawing and writing, reading, and using computers decrease in popularity with age.

The fact that the total obtained by adding the

figures in each column is 500% or 600% suggests that, on average, each individual is participating in five or six activities on one typical weekday evening. The activities on Friday evenings or at weekends are not covered by the questionnaire.

The pursuits showing the greatest change with increasing age are:

- Listening to music *Up*
- Indoor games *Down*
- Playing outdoors *Down (girls)*
- Using a computer *Down (girls)*
- Reading a book *Down (girls)*

Social and Personal: Health locus of control score

Table 6. Derived health locus of control scores from the combined responses to four attitude statements. (Percentage values.)

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
-4 to -2 (external)	7.4	6.7	5.3	5.3	6.0	6.4	5.3	4.0
-1 to 0	28.3	37.5	29.4	31.9	25.1	30.4	27.7	29.1
+1 to +2	43.4	43.0	45.3	45.5	45.4	47.2	44.9	47.6
+3 to +4 (internal)	20.9	12.8	20.0	17.3	23.6	16.1	22.1	19.3
Valid responses	378	493	4039	3828	1239	1189	4207	4204

It is a common tenet of modern health education that 'facts don't change behaviour'. One factor influencing the success of health initiatives is the deep-seated 'fatalistic' belief about one's power over personal health. If external, uncontrollable factors are seen to be important, this can put a damper on initiatives aimed at encouraging individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles.

A set of four questions tries to evaluate this 'health locus of control' by asking the respondents about the perceived contribution of care and chance to a healthy future. The combined responses are coded and scaled from -4 (helpless

or total external control) to +4 (in total command, or total internal control).

The slight preponderance of boys over girls in the 'internal control' category is interesting, as is the slight tendency for the older girls to increase their level of perceived personal control over their health. Overall, however, perhaps the most revealing fact is the lack of change between the year groups. If young people's health locus of control is already set before they enter secondary school, does this mean that their previous formative years are overwhelmingly important and that there is not much room for change?

Drugs: Use of illegal drugs

Table 7. Percentage responses to the question *Have you ever taken any of the drugs listed in Question 70?*

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Amphetamines	1.6	0.7	1.4	0.5	3.2	2.0	5.0	5.4
Barbiturates	0.7	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.7	1.5	1.8
Cannabis leaf	0.7	1.1	2.8	2.0	7.4	5.7	13.7	13.5
Cannabis resin	1.6	1.3	2.7	1.1	6.5	3.9	13.6	12.0
Cocaine	1.1	0.4	1.1	0.6	0.9	0.6	1.3	1.8
Ecstasy	1.4	0.9	1.8	1.0	2.8	1.9	4.4	4.1
Natural hallucinogens	0.9	1.3	1.6	0.7	3.8	3.6	6.5	5.1
Synthetic hallucinogens	0.9	0.6	0.9	0.5	3.4	2.0	5.7	4.8
Heroin	0.9	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.3	1.0	0.8
Opiates	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.0	1.0	0.6
Solvents	0.9	1.3	2.3	2.5	4.4	5.1	6.2	8.3
Tranquillisers	2.1	0.6	1.5	1.2	1.7	1.8	2.2	2.2
None of the above	93.3	96.5	91.6	94.0	85.9	87.4	76.7	76.6

Looking at the bottom line and subtracting it from 100% gives the number of young people who report having experimented with illegal drugs. These include single acts of experimentation as well as intermittent or regular use.

We find from this table that about a quarter of the year 10 pupils in the sample have had some experience of drug use. By far the most common drug selected by the older pupils is cannabis, with solvents, hallucinogens, and amphetamines leading the rest.

Adding the year 10 totals produces a figure of over 50%. Since, from the bottom line, we know that only half this percentage have actually taken any of the drugs, it follows that each of these drug-takers has, on average, experienced two different drugs.

Note that this table gives no information about the frequency of drug use. Some of these young people may be in the 'tried but gave up' category, while others may be regular users.

The Primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire

The new Version 5 is now available, and is suitable for pupils aged between 7 and 11. It includes a practice page, and the teacher's notes make it straightforward to administer.

For further information, telephone Anne Wise (0392 264728).

Sport: Involvement

Table 8. Percentage responses by year 10 pupils to the question *Outside lesson time, how often did you take part in the following sports and activities during the past 12 months?* (Values of 10% and above.)

Year 10 boys		Year 10 girls	
	%		%
Bicycling	60.3	Bicycling	30.7
Soccer	51.5	Swimming	23.6
Basketball	21.8	Fitness exercises	23.4
Weight training	21.3	Dancing	22.7
Swimming	20.8	Netball	17.5
5-a-side soccer	20.7	Hockey	16.2
Jogging	19.7	Tennis	15.7
Badminton	19.4	Badminton	15.5
Rugby	17.3	Jogging	14.7
Tennis	15.2	Rounders	13.6
Cricket	14.6	Horse riding	10.9
Fishing	11.2	Basketball	10.2
Table tennis	10.8	Track/field	10.1
Track/field	10.8		
Golf	10.0		

The table includes those sports and activities in which at least 10% of boys or girls in year 10 recorded weekly or more frequent involvement when in season.

Some observations on this table include:

1. Although the number of pursuits above the 10% level is similar for both sexes, the boys exhibit a higher percentage of involvement.
2. There are some notable discrepancies between the popularity of pursuits, including:

- Only half as many girls as boys ride a bicycle.
- Dancing is vastly more popular with girls than with boys. Who are their partners? (Data for other calendar years, which includes year 11 pupils, gives very low dancing levels for all boys.)

Fitness exercises score high for girls and very low for boys.

Money: Total income from all sources

Table 9. Percentages derived by totalling all recorded sources of income during the previous week.

Responses	Year 7 (11-12)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 9 (13-14)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Nothing	8.7	10.0	5.8	7.1	4.6	5.6	4.3	5.2
Up to £1	11.4	11.0	6.6	6.8	2.6	3.6	1.1	1.2
£1.01 - £5.00	44.8	52.6	42.9	46.4	34.7	39.1	25.4	25.8
£5.01 - £10.00	17.9	17.1	23.8	23.5	26.1	25.0	26.1	26.0
£10.01 - £15.00	10.1	5.2	11.3	9.4	15.2	12.9	18.3	17.8
£15.01 - £20.00	3.3	2.4	4.6	3.8	8.0	6.8	10.6	10.3
£20.01 - £25.00	1.6	1.5	2.3	1.4	3.7	2.5	5.4	5.7
£25.01 - £30.00	0.5	0.2	1.0	0.7	1.6	2.0	3.3	2.8
£30.01 - £35.00	0.8	0.0	0.4	0.3	1.2	1.1	1.9	2.1
Over £35.00	0.8	0.0	1.2	0.5	2.3	1.4	3.7	2.9
Valid responses	368	462	3783	3487	1162	1109	3950	3925

Table 10. Mean weekly income, derived from the data in Table 9.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Boys	£5.88	£7.10	£9.52	£12.14
Girls	£4.65	£6.17	£8.51	£11.52

Although the table 'collapses' values into bands, the young people are allowed to state the exact amount recalled, and these have been used to compute the values given above (Table 10).

As expected, the amounts increase for the older pupils. The discrepancy between the boys' and the girls' incomes will also be noted!

Another question reveals the items on which the young people spent their money during the previous week. Spending power is a major factor in determining young people's lifestyle, and the detailed attention paid in the questionnaire to sources of income (paid work, allowance, and pocket money) reflects its importance.