

Young People in 1995

Once again, the use of our Health Related Behaviour surveys has generated a detailed picture of the changing lifestyles of our young people. The sample from the 213 school surveys carried out in 1995 is a substantial, well-spread one from many parts of the country, the 23,918 pupils represented within it having been drawn from a total population of about 50,000 in the year groups surveyed.

This tenth report in our 'Young People' series, *Young People in 1995*, is the first to contain information about Year 6 (10-11 year old) pupils. Each year's sample is based upon the requirements of the Health Authorities that plan and fund the surveys. In 1995 they concentrated almost exclusively upon Years 8 and 10 in their secondary schools, and upon Year 6 in their primary schools (for which the simplified primary version of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire was used). We have therefore

presented a report on Year 6, 8, and 10 pupils (overall age range 10-15 years) where questions in the primary questionnaire overlap those in the secondary version. Where this does not happen, we present data for Years 8 and 10 only. In this article I have tried to concentrate on tables presenting data for all three year groups.

Young People in 1995 also includes, for the first time, information about personal safety and carrying 'protection'.

The report is divided into nine sections, each one of which concentrates on a particular aspect of the young people's lifestyle. A sample table from each section is presented here.

1. DIET: Breakfast

Table 1 shows that the number of girls consuming *nothing at all* rises rapidly across this age range, reaching 1 in 5 in Year 10. The figure is 1 in 3 for those who had *nothing to eat*.

Cereal is the most popular breakfast item. Only a small percentage of these young people had a *cooked breakfast*.

An analysis carried out in the previous report, *Young People in 1994*, showed that a quarter of the non-breakfasting girls also had no lunch on the previous day.

TABLE 1

	Year 6 (10-11)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Breakfast items						
Tea or coffee	25.3	25.5	36.4	34.9	43.5	39.2
Toast or bread	33.0	33.7	31.5	30.3	32.9	29.2
Cereal	63.4	52.9	57.1	44.5	59.0	36.4
Cooked breakfast	6.4	3.0	6.0	2.6	6.6	2.1
Nothing at all	5.5	7.6	9.4	16.6	9.2	19.2
Nothing to eat	-	-	10.9	22.2	16.7	33.6
Available sample	3542	3665	4804	4727	3683	3497

2. DOCTOR & DENTIST:

Dental treatment

Dental researchers remind us that the treatment and advice recalled by the patient may be different to that recorded by the dental practice.

However, the *advice on brushing* entry in Table 2 shows more boys than girls recalling this advice; and in this case it is surely the level of recall that matters.

Does this mean that fewer girls needed advice, or that fewer recall it? Was this advice helpful? Should it be part of the dentist's job to promote effective preventive practice?

The higher figures for *brace* among the girls suggest that they are more concerned than boys about the appearance of their teeth. Therefore it

TABLE 2	Year 6		Year 8		Year 10	
	(10-11)		(12-13)		(14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Dental treatment						
Routine check-up	70.9	76.2	75.3	77.3	79.0	79.5
Filling	15.6	14.9	18.3	17.1	19.5	17.1
Extraction	14.1	12.6	12.6	11.4	7.3	7.0
Polishing	11.4	12.0	17.6	15.9	21.2	19.4
Advice on brushing	16.0	13.1	26.6	22.0	24.9	19.7
Available sample	3542	3665	4804	4727	3683	3497

TABLE 3	Year 6		Year 8		Year 10	
	(10-11)		(12-13)		(14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Wash after using the toilet						
Never or almost never	3.1	0.9	2.4	0.9	3.5	1.1
Sometimes	39.3	31.5	28.1	20.3	27.6	20.8
Whenever possible	57.6	67.6	69.5	78.8	68.9	78.1
Available sample	3542	3665	4804	4727	3683	3497

TABLE 4	Year 6		Year 8		Year 10	
	(10-11)		(12-13)		(14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Activity after school						
Watched TV	82.4	84.8	81.1	85.7	86.0	86.2
Did homework	31.0	33.5	59.2	69.1	58.0	66.3
Played computer games	48.8	23.6	51.6	22.7	46.3	13.8
Watched video	26.2	16.7	14.0	10.4	14.7	10.2
Played with/met friends	65.4	52.3	52.9	44.2	61.6	53.6
Read a book	33.3	47.1	26.0	39.2	18.6	27.2
Played a musical instrument	15.0	26.0	12.6	17.1	10.5	10.3
Available sample	3542	3665	4804	4727	3683	3497

is surprising that in an earlier version of the questionnaire, which asked the young people why they cleaned their teeth, more boys than girls gave *appearance* as the most important reason (*Young People in 1989*).

Perhaps the executive decision about fitting a brace is taken by the dentist in conjunction with the young person's parents?

3. HEALTH & SAFETY: Toilet hygiene

Table 3 shows that more girls than boys are likely to wash their hands *whenever possible* after visiting the toilet.

The percentage of conscientious washers in the Year 6 sample is considerably smaller than in the older groups. This is one of the few instances we have found where 'healthy practice' seems to improve with age! Are young people sufficiently aware that washing hands after visiting the lavatory *and before eating* is vital to breaking the cycle of threadworm transmission?

Toilet hygiene refers to a variety of environments. School toilets may be uninviting or even hostile, and have poor provision for washing hands.

4. HOME: Activities after school

Table 4 shows the percentage of young people that spent any time at all on these different pursuits on the previous evening. Amounts of time are not presented here, although they are recorded in the databank for watching television and doing homework.

Television watching, homework, and meeting or playing with friends come high in the list. Computer games are important in the lives of many boys. Reading books is a declining interest with increasing age, but more girls than boys spend time doing so.

This checklist of activities was originally derived from the free responses of young people.

Listening to music, reading magazines, and caring for pets are not included in the Year 6 questionnaire, but score strongly with all the Year 8 and 10 respondents, especially the girls.

5. DRUGS: Drinkers and non-drinkers

Table 5 shows a steady decrease in the *none* responses with increasing age. This confirms the expected increase in the proportion of drinkers in the sample.

More boys than girls drank alcohol on at least

one day during the previous week. This includes a quarter of the Year 6 boys.

This table does not include consumption of canned shandy or 'low-alcohol' drinks.

6. MONEY: Weekly pocket money

The figures in Table 6 show expected increases in the levels of parental contribution for the older respondents. Of the Year 10 group, 10% received more than £10 during the previous week and a half received up to £5.

The *nothing* group could represent young people paid monthly. Some of our data, reported in *Young People in 1994*, suggest that parental

allowance may be adjusted as the young people's money-earning capacity increases.

The average weekly amounts of pocket money for Year 8 and Year 10 respondents (including those who did not receive any) have been calculated as follows:

	Year 8	Year 10
Boys	£4.56	£6.27
Girls	£4.46	£6.31

Other sources of income, such as paid work, are also examined in the report.

7. SPORT: Personal fitness

Table 7 presents the young people's judgment of their own fitness. The proportion considering themselves *unfit* rises with age for all respondents, but much more obviously for the girls; the proportion considering themselves *fit* falls with increasing age for the girls. With increasing age, both genders have less cause to consider themselves *very fit*.

The boys' better impression of their own fitness seems to match their greater involvement in active pursuits, which are identified in the report. It should be pointed out that community facilities in general may offer fewer opportunities for girls than boys.

Belief and behaviour may combine to the disadvantage of some. Young people that believe they are *unfit* may be reluctant to 'show themselves up'. Therefore inactivity is promoted.

8. SOCIAL & PERSONAL: Talking about AIDS

The bottom line in Table 8 shows that more girls than boys have talked 'a few times' or 'a lot' about AIDS. About half the Year 10 boys and a quarter of the Year 10 girls have not talked about the subject very much with anybody.

The percentage in Year 10 that have talked with *parents* is matched by *teachers* and greatly exceeded by *friends*.

The figure for *teachers* under Year 6 shows that some primary schools are mentioning the topic.

Analysis of earlier SHEU survey data has shown a positive link between the amount young people talk about the subject and their correct knowledge of ways of HIV transmission. This suggests that some of these discussions, at least, help to clarify what can be a confusing situation.

TABLE 5	Year 6		Year 8		Year 10	
	(10-11)		(12-13)		(14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Alcoholic drink days in past week						
None	74.1	84.7	62.0	65.5	39.4	43.8
One day	14.5	9.4	21.6	20.4	27.6	27.8
Two days	5.7	2.6	8.0	8.1	17.2	15.5
Three days	2.4	1.5	4.0	3.3	8.1	7.5
4-7 days	3.2	1.7	4.4	2.9	7.6	5.3
Valid responses	3497	3641	4333	4433	3476	3387

TABLE 6	Year 6		Year 8		Year 10	
	(10-11)		(12-13)		(14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Weekly pocket money						
Nothing	13.6	16.2	9.6	8.4	10.8	9.8
Up to £5.00	76.1	75.3	67.4	69.7	52.3	52.0
£5.01-£10.00	8.1	7.3	17.1	17.3	25.8	27.6
£10.01-£20.00	2.1	1.0	5.3	4.3	9.4	9.1
More than £20.00	-	-	0.5	0.2	1.7	1.5
Valid responses	3461	3562	4415	4489	3496	3371
* More than £10 (Year 6)						

TABLE 7	Year 6		Year 8		Year 10	
	(10-11)		(12-13)		(14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Estimate of personal fitness						
Very unfit	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.2	2.6
Unfit	2.8	2.6	6.8	10.1	8.8	18.3
Moderately fit	29.8	44.1	29.9	44.8	31.5	50.4
Fit	43.2	40.0	46.3	35.8	44.0	24.8
Very fit	22.3	11.7	15.6	7.6	14.4	3.8
Valid responses	3655	3707	4239	4401	3447	3379
* Don't know (Year 6)						

YOUNG PEOPLE IN 1995

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9. PERSONAL SAFETY:

Fear of being bullied

The Year 6 sample is not represented in this section, as no 'personal safety' questions were included in the primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire. However, research that has been carried out in primary schools suggests that a still greater percentage of these younger children are affected by bullying.

Table 9 shows that about a third of the girls and a quarter of the boys fear being bullied at least *sometimes*. The Year 8 group is more 'fearful' than the Year 10. No attempt is made in the questionnaire to define bullying, as different young people will have their own (equally valid) concept of bullying as it affects them.

The implications of this and other 'personal safety' questions have been explored in the Unit's publication *Bully Off*. Correlations between fear of being bullied and many other lifestyle factors, such as poor parental support, proneness to asthma, and self-esteem, are identified.

The sample

The vast majority of our information comes from pupils in mixed comprehensive schools,

and the schools are encouraged to represent the whole ability spectrum in their classroom surveys. We therefore believe that the data give a good picture of the young people in each area (usually corresponding to a District Health Authority) surveyed.

This very large sample thus represents a much larger group of young people than the one from which it was drawn — probably more than twice the number. However, we do not know to what extent these samples and drifts are representative of the country as a whole, although where comparison data are available our figures are usually in line with more deliberately sampled national data from, for example, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Some examples of these comparisons are presented in *Young People in 1995*.

In areas with a substantial independent school provision, some of the 'cream' may be lost from the comprehensives, resulting in a bias with respect to academic ability and home background. However, the absence of up to 10% of the school population through illness or truancy, affecting principally the low-achieving pupils, may help to counteract this effect.

Conclusion

Across the last ten years the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire survey has been used in over one thousand secondary schools and in hundreds of primary schools. Many secondary schools have used the service more than once — two have carried out a survey on six occasions! Some Health Authorities have carried out up to four surveys at District level, and one Regional Health Authority has carried out extensive surveys on three occasions.

The variety of ways in which the data are used by schools now includes examination of their own data on computer disc in IT lessons to look for connections between behaviours and to consider lifestyles. This parallels the *Lifestyles* resource we have produced, which uses an unidentified sample.

We now also calculate a Health Risk Appraisal score for all pupils, who use a code number known only to themselves to identify their score. Ways of making the data more accessible and meaningful to schools include relating their pupils' responses to the average for all the schools in the survey, and inserting their tabulated data into a 'school report' with enlightening commentary.

TABLE 8

	Year 6 (10-11)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Talked about AIDS a few times or a lot*						
Parents	31.3	37.2	15.3	23.6	21.6	33.5
Brothers, sisters	6.8	7.6	6.6	10.7	10.7	20.0
Close relations	6.7	9.1	3.4	6.4	5.9	14.6
Friends	12.5	18.1	21.7	38.6	37.6	63.3
Teachers	16.9	18.5	9.3	12.2	28.5	33.2
None of these	56.1	49.2	65.9	48.4	44.7	24.2
Valid responses	3461	3562	4415	4489	3496	3371

* Have any of the following talked with you about AIDS (or HIV)? (Year 6)

TABLE 9

	Year 6 (10-11)		Year 8 (12-13)		Year 10 (14-15)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Fear of being bullied						
Never	—	—	72.6	64.1	80.6	69.7
Sometimes	—	—	21.7	29.2	16.0	25.4
Often	—	—	3.0	3.5	2.4	2.5
Very often	—	—	2.7	3.2	1.0	2.4
Valid responses	—	—	1545	1612	1596	1688

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