

They may not brush their teeth so often, but our 'very young people' could teach teenagers a thing or two.

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Primary children are active, stay up late, and get on with Mum and Dad

We have recently published *Very Young People in 1993-95*, and this article looks at some sample tables from this report, which is based on data collected using Version 5 of the Primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire.

We began collecting primary data in 1991, using an abbreviated form of the secondary questionnaire as a basis; wherever possible we have tried to make corresponding questions compatible, so that data from the two age ranges can be combined to extend the developmental picture. Of particular interest is the possible effect on young people's behaviour of moving to secondary school — in other words, the jump from Year 6—Year 7. We have, therefore, included Year 7 data wherever possible, although they cover 1993 and 1994 only.

Table 1. I am fairly sure or certain that in the next few days I shall eat quite a lot of these foods.

Future food choices	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Brown bread	22.9	25.9	23.4	22.5	-	-
Fried food (e.g. chips)	53.8	44.3	55.5	46.3	-	-
Sweet things	66.2	61.8	71.0	66.1	-	-
Fresh fruit	70.2	78.2	70.0	77.3	-	-
Crisps	68.9	68.1	68.6	67.6	-	-
Fresh vegetables	46.1	57.5	44.9	52.8	-	-
None of these	1.6	1.1	1.3	1.5	-	-
Available sample	1822	1750	6058	5963		

Over half of the pupils discussed in the report were in Year 6. Almost all the data come from surveys of groups of schools organised by District Health Authorities, and the attention given to this year group reflects the importance attached to it by health care professionals.

The sample of pupils is as follows:

	Boys	Girls	Total
Year 5 (9-10)	1822	1750	3572
Year 6 (10-11)	6058	5963	12021
Year 7 (11-12)	1646	1690	3336
ALL YEARS	9526	9403	18929

The healthier eaters

This question (which is not included in the secondary questionnaire), selects some 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' foods as examples of dietary intention (Table 1). There is a marked difference between the two groups of food items with respect to the choices exercised by the boys and girls. Almost without exception, a higher percentage of boys than girls select the 'unhealthy' foods, with more girls than boys choosing the 'healthy' items.

This suggests that even young children are aware of dietary considerations to the extent of putting their knowledge into practice, and that parents are allowing them to exercise choices.

The conscientious brushers

Please note that the Year 7 response, taken from the secondary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, only goes up to a 4 or more category (Table 2).

The girls appear to be more conscientious than the boys about cleaning their teeth. Even so, about 30% of the boys and 20% of the girls in Years 5 and 6 had cleaned their teeth only once or not at all. The Year 7 data for the secondary pupils suggest markedly improved dental hygiene for this group, and the *Young People* reports show that brushing frequency tends to increase through secondary school. Is dental hygiene promoted more in secondary schools? Is it a result of enhanced concern about their appearance and personal freshness? Do they have more freedom to clean their teeth whenever they like? If the latter, are some parents and primary schools failing to establish or encourage healthy brushing routines by their youngsters?

What is a satisfactory frequency, and when is the best time of day to brush teeth?

The breathless girls

Over half of all the young people in the report say they experience wheezing at least sometimes (Table 3). *Young People in 1995* reveals the percentage of secondary pupils receiving medication for their condition. Do primary children also receive the necessary medication, and can it be administered easily in the primary school setting? (See Coleman et al., 1995.)

This particular discomfort — or in some cases distress — is associated with asthma, although (a) not all asthmatics may suffer from it, and (b) some non-asthmatics may. However, the professional view is that wheezing can disclose undiagnosed asthma, and, if recognised and supported, the symptoms can be alleviated and the person's quality of life enhanced.

Beyond the 9 pm watershed

The boys tend to go to bed later than the girls do, but also tend to get up earlier (Table 4).

The table shows that about 70% of the 10-11 year old boys are still up after 9 o'clock, and 25% are still up after 10. It seems a good bet that a lot or most of them are watching television. Is this with the family or alone in their bedroom? How much parental control is exercised over what they are watching?

Yesterday's brushing	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Not at all	5.9	2.1	5.8	3.0	4.3	0.9
Once	22.5	18.0	24.3	18.7	16.5	10.8
Twice	61.1	65.1	57.5	63.6	63.2	66.6
3 times	9.0	12.6	10.5	12.6	14.4	19.2
4 times	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.6	2.7
5 or more times	0.1	0.6	0.3	0.2	-	-
Valid responses	1771	1701	5842	5817	1625	1671

Table 2. How many times did you clean your teeth yesterday?

Breathing difficulties	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Never	43.8	37.9	42.5	35.6	45.8	35.5
Sometimes*	39.3	41.2	40.7	45.0	36.2	40.8
Quite often	8.4	11.3	9.2	10.5	9.0	14.3
Very often	8.6	9.6	7.6	9.0	7.9	9.3
Valid responses	1806	1741	6007	5933	1622	1672

Table 3. When you run, do you 'wheeze' and have trouble breathing (not just feel out of breath)?

Bedtime	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Before 7.00	0.9	1.3	0.3	0.2	-	-
7.01-7.30	0.9	1.1	0.5	0.4	-	-
7.31-8.00	4.8	6.0	2.0	2.3	-	-
8.01-8.30	8.3	10.0	4.0	5.1	-	-
8.31-9.00	21.7	26.2	16.8	21.4	-	-
9.01-9.30	20.1	21.0	17.5	22.1	-	-
9.31-10.00	21.4	18.5	23.8	22.7	-	-
10.01-10.30	11.1	8.7	15.1	12.5	-	-
After 10.30	10.9	7.2	19.9	13.3	-	-
Valid responses	1806	1745	5977	5938		

Table 4. What was the time when you went to bed last night?

In a few years' time, we shall probably be asking them: *How much time did you spend on the Internet after school yesterday?*

Talking about drugs

More than half the young people have talked with their *parents* about illegal drugs (the prompt being *e.g. ecstasy, glue, heroin*), and overall there is not much gender difference in these responses (Table 5).

The percentages for *teachers* are higher than for *friends*, and suggest that the topic forms a remembered part of the curriculum in about a third of the schools surveyed.

We suggest that a primary school could usefully consider drug education in partnership with parents, who might welcome sympathy and guidance at the beginning of this difficult transition period in their children's lives.

Talking about drugs	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Your parents	54.7	58.2	50.8	54.8	-	-
Brothers, sisters	13.0	15.5	14.4	13.6	-	-
Relations	17.4	16.1	17.6	18.4	-	-
Friends	21.8	21.1	23.7	26.3	-	-
Teachers	29.0	28.5	33.7	34.8	-	-
None of these	30.5	30.8	36.4	32.8	-	-
Available sample	1822	1750	6058	5963		

Table 5. Have any of the following talked with you about illegal drugs?

Pocket money	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Nothing	17.4	20.2	13.8	15.5	13.2	13.5
Up to 50p	3.0	5.2	2.3	2.5	1.6	1.7
51p-£1.00	19.6	20.4	11.6	13.9	8.9	10.2
£1.01-£2.00	24.2	24.0	23.9	24.4	22.1	23.2
£2.01-£3.00	13.7	11.8	15.6	15.6	17.5	15.2
£3.01-£4.00	4.6	3.3	7.1	6.8	7.1	6.8
£4.01-£5.00	9.1	7.3	13.6	11.4	15.1	16.0
£5.01-£10.00	5.8	6.3	10.1	8.5	10.5	10.6
More than £10.00	2.7	1.4	2.1	1.5	4.0	2.5
Valid responses	1722	1689	5697	5693	1575	1607

Table 6. How much pocket money did you get last week?

GOING, GOING . . .

At the last count we had fewer than 200 copies of **YOUNG PEOPLE IN 1995** left. **YOUNG PEOPLE IN 1994**, which we offered with YP95 at the two-thirds price of £40 the pair, has completely sold out. You may still purchase YP95 for the reduced price of £33 including postage.

To order this or any of our other publications, ring Sally Forster (01392 264722).

The boys get more money

Using the figures in Table 6, the mean amounts received are approximately as follows:

Year 5: boys £2.20, girls £1.90.

Year 6: boys £2.70, girls £2.45.

Year 7: boys £3.05, girls £2.85.

The familiar pattern of girls receiving less than boys (the difference being about 25p per week) is demonstrated once again!

Many of the older pupils will do some sort of paid work, and so will have more spending money than appears in this table.

Quite a lot of activity

With respect to after-school activities, as might be expected, there are some obvious preferences by boys and girls (Table 7). On the whole the boys show greater involvement, dancing and netball being clear exceptions in favour of the girls. One has to ask where these dancing girls obtain their partners, if they are not just dancing with each other!

The most popular pursuits overall are athletics, cycling, and swimming.

Comparison with Year 8 and 10 data in *Young People in 1995* shows a general decline in active involvement. *Badminton, fitness/aerobics* (girls) and *weight training* (boys) are the only pursuits that show a clear increase in popularity during secondary schooling.

Both parents are best . . .

. . . but it will be noticed in Table 8 that the very large majority selecting *Mum and Dad* reduces appreciably for the older girls, *Mum* achieving an increasing importance. Typically, by Year 10, more girls choose their mother than both parents. *Dad* on his own is not the most

Activities outside school	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Athletics	58.5	53.2	61.4	54.2	-	-
Basketball	22.0	9.7	23.6	11.2	22.1	10.1
Dancing	4.4	30.4	6.4	33.2	4.4	21.4
Football	71.6	21.8	80.7	29.6	57.3	11.0
Gymnastics	5.5	16.3	7.1	17.7	6.9	12.8
Hockey	10.0	5.3	10.8	6.6	9.3	16.5
Judo	17.0	6.6	15.5	7.0	12.1	5.2
Netball	4.0	28.6	4.6	33.1	2.2	25.0
Riding a bicycle	64.4	61.0	65.5	59.1	57.5	46.6
Roller skating	17.8	37.1	19.7	40.2	-	-
Rugby	24.9	3.5	16.1	3.2	22.0	2.0
Swimming	48.6	55.5	55.1	56.6	40.9	44.0
Badminton	10.9	7.9	11.8	8.7	11.2	10.9
Tennis	23.4	18.6	21.7	16.1	14.0	14.7
Cricket	30.2	11.7	27.6	10.2	17.3	3.8
Other	17.0	16.8	14.4	16.6	-	-
None of these						
Available sample	1822	1750	6058	5963	1646	1690

Table 7. Sports and athletic pastimes, outside lesson time, reported being pursued once a week or more frequently.

'Best adult'	Yr 5 (9-10)		Yr 6 (10-11)		Yr 7 (11-12)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Mum	19.7	22.0	21.0	27.8	24.5	32.9
Dad	8.5	5.3	9.0	5.2	10.3	5.8
Mum and Dad	59.5	57.3	57.7	54.3	52.1	45.9
Other adult relation	5.8	6.9	6.0	6.7	-	-
Teacher	1.1	2.1	1.6	1.7	0.7	0.3
Adult friend	2.6	4.5	2.4	2.6	1.6	2.3
No one	2.8	2.0	2.3	1.7	1.0	2.3
Valid responses	1763	1720	5880	5819	1578	1631

Table 8. Which adult do you get on with best?

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popular selection except in a minority of cases, and his level shows no age effect right through secondary schooling.

Using the data

I hope that this sample of the tables in *Very Young People in 1993-95* shows what a wide range of behaviours is presented for study. The content is relevant to primary-age children and has obvious potential in maths, information technology, and other curriculum areas.

As with the secondary data, we can make a selection of this information available as a database for computer analysis using almost any program likely to be available in schools. Some of the results are being incorporated in *Primary Lifestyles 1*, our latest computer resource, designed to be used by Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Reference

Coleman, H. et al. (1995). Asthma management in Southampton schools. *Education and Health*, 13, 1, 12-14.



For further information about the Primary Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire or the information arising from the surveys, please contact Anne Wise (01392 264728). *Very Young People in 1993-95* costs £23.00, including postage, from the Unit.

With *Primary Lifestyles 1* we hope to introduce youngsters to relevant and interesting information about their contemporaries, and give them the power to make it work for them.

Anne has produced the friendliest possible database. The values are all in words rather than numbers, so that the 'raw data' has immediate meaning.

Carefully-graded exercises invite the youngsters to work in pairs, 'guesstimating' answers to questions about, for example, television-watching or bicycling, and then using the computer as a check. Having displayed and labelled their results, they are then encouraged to ask the data more sophisticated questions to check a hypothesis, perhaps about the difference between boys and girls with respect to one of the recorded behaviours.

Wonderful stuff for Key Stage 2 Mathematics! *Primary Lifestyles 1* is planned for publication in March, but do talk to Anne if you want to find out more now.