Young People in 2000

The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire results for 42,073 young people between the ages of 10 and 15

7 Exercise and Sport

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There is widespread concern at what appear to be generally low levels of physical activity in the daily life of young people. If, as has been suggested, the four-year-olds starting in our primary schools will have a life expectancy in excess of a hundred years, then we need to ensure that they have a healthy respect for the role that physical fitness plays in their quality and enjoyment of life. The questions in this section cover physical activity, perceived fitness, and which sporting activities (if any) young people took part in out of school time.

Question
E2 How much do you enjoy physical activities? ................................................................. 94
E1 Sports and activities participated in during the past 12 months outside school .................. 95–98
E3 How fit do you think you are? .......................................................................................... 99
E4 How many times last week did you exercise and have to breathe harder? .......................... 100
Enjoying sport

How much do you enjoy physical activities? (E2) (Pri.19)

1. There is a large gender difference: far fewer females in each year group report liking sport a lot.
2. The difference is especially marked in Year 10, half as many females as males say they enjoy physical activity a lot.
3. Nevertheless, 80% of primary school pupils and over 60% of the older groups enjoy sport quite a lot or a lot.

Comments

1. The gender difference is already distinct in Year 6 but the gap becomes wider as the age of the pupils increase.
2. Is it uncool for females in secondary schools to show an interest in sport?
3. Does the changing room experience for females play a role in the rapid decline in an interest in physical activity? Many schools have found that by installing shower curtains in their changing rooms they have seen a positive effect on the interest their female students show for PE.
4. There is also a call for PE specialists to look into the provision of the types of activity that will appeal to the groups involved. Basketball is seen to have some success with female students, what other activities might be similarly attractive to them?
Participation in active sports (1)

Riding a bicycle still remains the most popular activity for all groups

Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (E1) (Pri.21)
The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

1. These figures should be seen in the context of the figures on the two following pages.
2. Riding a bicycle still remains a popular activity for all groups.
3. Jogging/Running for exercise involves all groups but the levels are not maintained.

Comments

1. These sports and activities are carried out in the pupils’ own time or in school clubs and not in school lessons.
2. With the exception of basketball there is a decline in all the activities for the older females.
3. It is interesting to see the figures for females interested in soccer. In America and Canada, girls’ soccer leagues have proved a great success.

Available sample

Yr 6 M (10-11 yrs) 6511
Yr 6 F 6391
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs) 7180
Yr 8 F 7548
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs) 7034
Yr 10 F 7409

* Options not available for Year 6

** Jogging appears as Running for exercise for Year 6
Participation in active sports (2)

Swimming remains a popular activity particularly with younger people

Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (E1) (Pri.21)

The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

1. *Swimming* is the most popular activity with all age groups and genders in this section.
2. We imagine that the fitness exercises are perceived differently between primary and secondary school pupils.
3. *Badminton* and *fitness exercises* are the only activities that show an upward trend in the secondary age group in this section.

Comments

1. American football is becoming more popular in this country with new clubs forming. Martial Arts are receiving increased interest at the moment, so it will be interesting to observe any increase in these figures over the next few years.
2. Dancing remains popular with females across the age range. Although it declines as age increases, perhaps this is an activity that could be further encouraged in secondary schools.

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* Options not available for Year 6  
** Gymnastics/Dancing appears as one item for Year 6
Participation in active sports (3)

20% of the Year 10 females do not participate in any active sports

Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (E1) (Pri.21)
The responses to this question have been divided into three pages.

1. At least 20% of the Year 10 females and 10% of the Year 8 females do not participate in any active sport on a weekly basis.
2. The considerable increase in popularity of weight training for the older males is against the general trend of decreasing involvement.
3. Rollerblading is popular, with 15% of the Year 8 pupils, both male and female.

Comments

1. Comparing the Year 10 female no active sports at all data for the past nine years gives the following percentages:
   - 1992 19
   - 1993 18
   - 1994 18
   - 1995 23
   - 1996 20
   - 1997 19
   - 1998 14
   - 1999 20
   - 2000 21

* Options not available for Year 6

** Rollerblading appears as Roller/ice skating for Year 6
Participation in ‘pub/club’ sports

Sports and activities participated in, at least weekly, during the past 12 months outside school (E1)

1. There is a distinct gender difference seen in the data for these options.
2. 10% of the males play darts on a weekly basis and over 20% of them regularly play snooker and pool.

Available sample
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs) 7166
Yr 8 F 7544
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs) 7034
Yr 10 F 7409

Comments

1. Are these activities being pursued within a pub setting, or at a youth club, or do these youngsters have access to pool tables etc at home? We can see that among Year 10 males that the more often they take part in these games, the more often they have drunk alcohol in the previous week:

Mean number of days drinking alcohol last week for different frequencies of ‘pub and club’ sports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Pool</th>
<th>Snooker</th>
<th>Darts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never or hardly ever</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice in a month</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a week or more</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. These highly social games, like many computer games, also require hand and eye co-ordination skills, as well as some strategic thought.
Personal fitness

How fit do you think you are? (E3) (Pri.20)

1. More Year 6 males assess themselves as very fit than any of the other groups.
2. Over 20% of the Year 10 females describe themselves as unfit or very unfit.
3. Perceived fitness declines with age in males and females.

Comments

1. The higher self-assessment of the males is consistent with their higher participation in sporting activities.
2. Do the females see themselves as less fit than the males because they participate in less physical activity or indeed are they less fit than the males?
3. This subjective method of assessing fitness may not seem very rigorous, but individual physiological measurements, in conjunction with similar data-collection, have shown good agreement. We can also show links within the survey data we hold to their general levels of activity.
Aerobic exercise

How many times last week did you exercise and have to breathe harder? (E4) (Pri.22)

1. Over 80% of all groups had exercised to this level at least once last week, but again the gap is seen to widen between males and females among the frequent exercisers as they increase in age.

Comments

1. The data suggest that up to 46% of males, and up to 33% of females, are exercising vigorously three times or more.
2. We have increasing opportunities for youngsters to adopt sedentary lifestyles: many youngsters today have seemingly endless choices for the time they spend watching television with the increased viewing options available on satellite TV, they even have televisions in their rooms; or they spend time playing computer games; and indeed the popularity of surfing the Internet is increasing on a daily basis. But how much do young people depend on parents/carers for permission and support to be active?
3. Are we observing the collection of mini time-bombs where youngsters are choosing leisure options that are likely to have a detrimental effect to their general health and fitness in the years to come?
4. The question has in mind the old recommendation of exercising vigorously for at least 20 minutes a time, three times a week. Current recommendations are more likely to suggest daily exercise.