



# Young People in 2000

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

## **8 Social and Personal**

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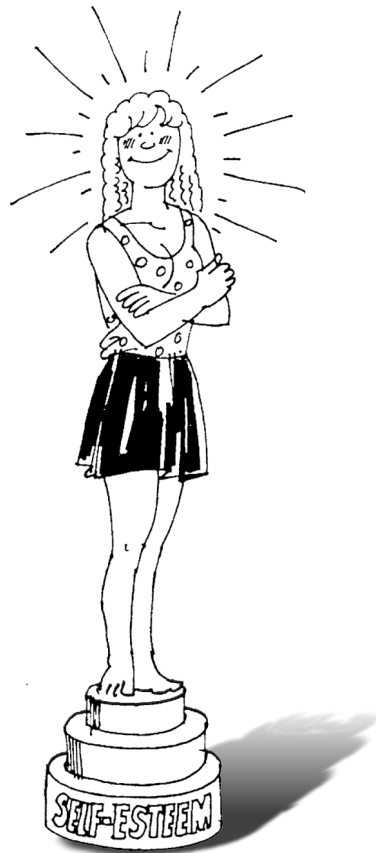
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2001

# 8 Social and Personal

The questions included in this group refer to social relationships, sources of information about sex, and problem-sharing. Questions to discover the pupils' awareness about AIDS and contraceptive services are also included.



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# Boyfriend or girlfriend

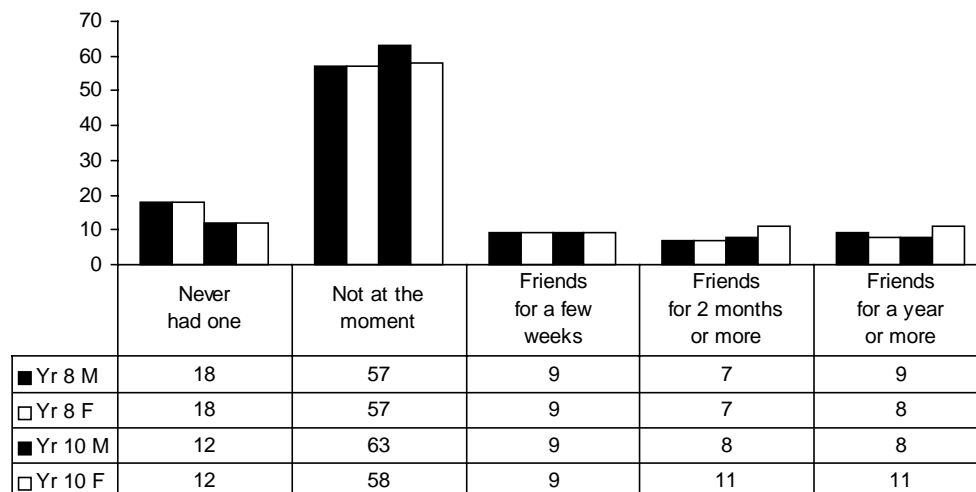
About 25% of all the young people had a 'steady' friend

## Have you a steady boyfriend or girlfriend at the moment? (R1)

### Comments

1. About a quarter of all the young people had a 'steady' friend.
2. By the time they have reached Year 10, only about 1 in 9 have never had a steady boyfriend or girlfriend.
3. More of the older females record having a partner than any other group.

1. Females tend to have boyfriends older than themselves, who may introduce them to 'riskier' behaviours than they had planned for.
2. The question does not specify that the relationship is with a member of the opposite sex.
3. The differences between the two age groups are not large, considering how quickly young people develop physically and emotionally at this time. The figures suggest that by the end of primary school many, or perhaps the majority of pupils will consider themselves to have had a boyfriend or girlfriend, although what may be understood by that term may be different.



Valid responses		
Yr 8 M	(12-13 yrs)	6710
Yr 8 F		7299
Yr 10 M	(14-15 yrs)	6784
Yr 10 F		7270

# Meeting the opposite sex

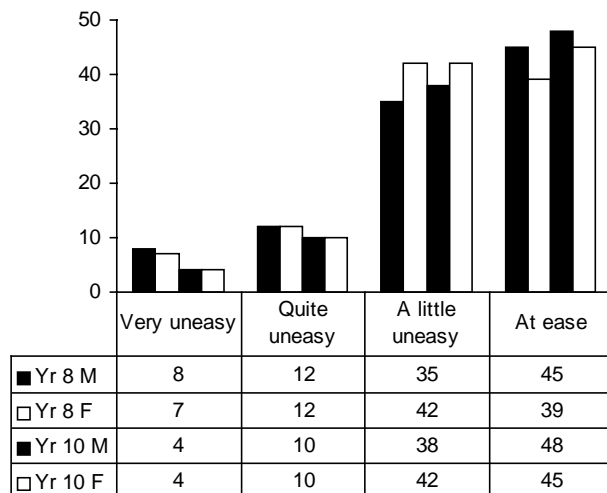
Almost half of young people feel *at ease*

## How do you usually feel when meeting people of your own age and opposite sex? (R2)

1. The Year 10 pupils express greater confidence than the Year 8 pupils, and males are more likely to say that they are *at ease*. However, the differences are not very large.
2. 14-20% are *quite* or *very uneasy*.

### Comments

1. This question is closely related to our measurement of self-esteem (page 114), which includes questions about self-confidence.
2. For reasons of space we have excluded the complementary question about ease with members of your own sex: typically young people were more *at ease* with members of their own sex.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6645
Yr 8 F	7218
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6761
Yr 10 F	7232

# Information about sex (1)

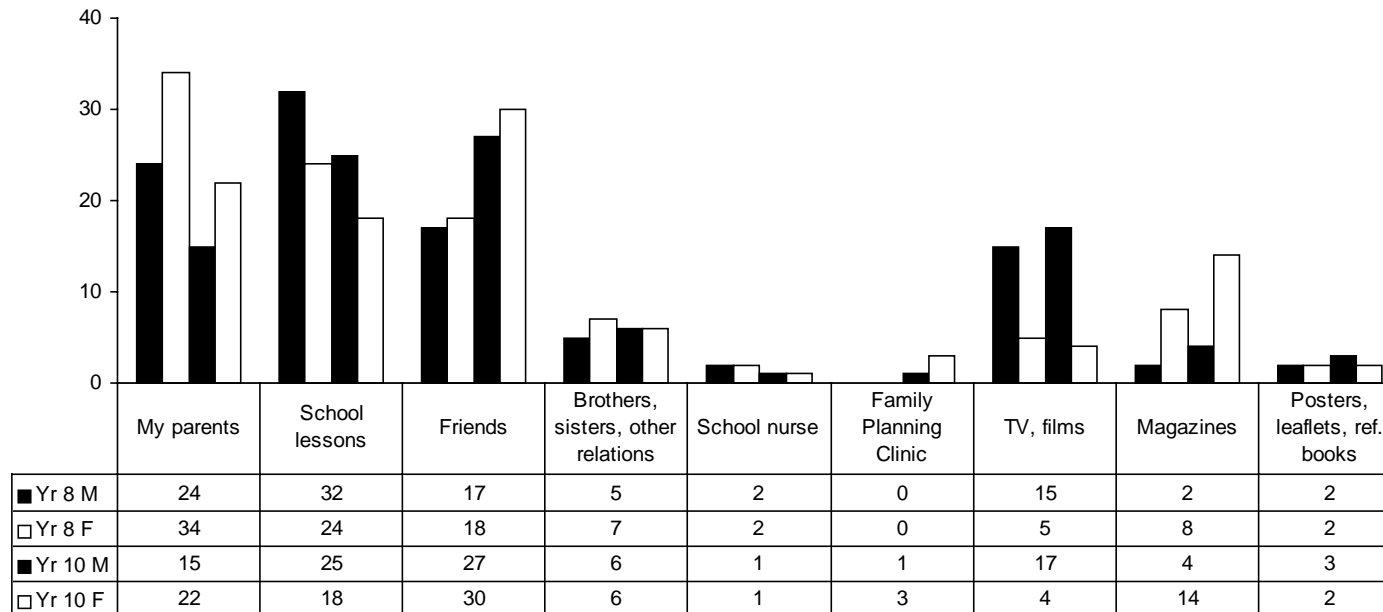
*School lessons* are an important source of information

## Which of these is your main source of information about sex? (R3)

### Comments

1. Between Years 8 and 10 we see a trend away from *parents* and *school lessons*, and a trend towards *friends*.
2. There are quite striking gender differences with respect to *TV or films* and *magazines* — almost 1 in 5 Year 10 females choose the latter.

1. Respondents are asked to choose their main source, but this may not necessarily be their most accurate source.
2. 'Information about sex' could mean different things to different people, and the range of preferred sources presented here may reflect these differences.
3. The magazines option has seen a great increase over the years we have been asking this question.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6125
Yr 8 F	6786
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6211
Yr 10 F	6714

# Information about sex (2)

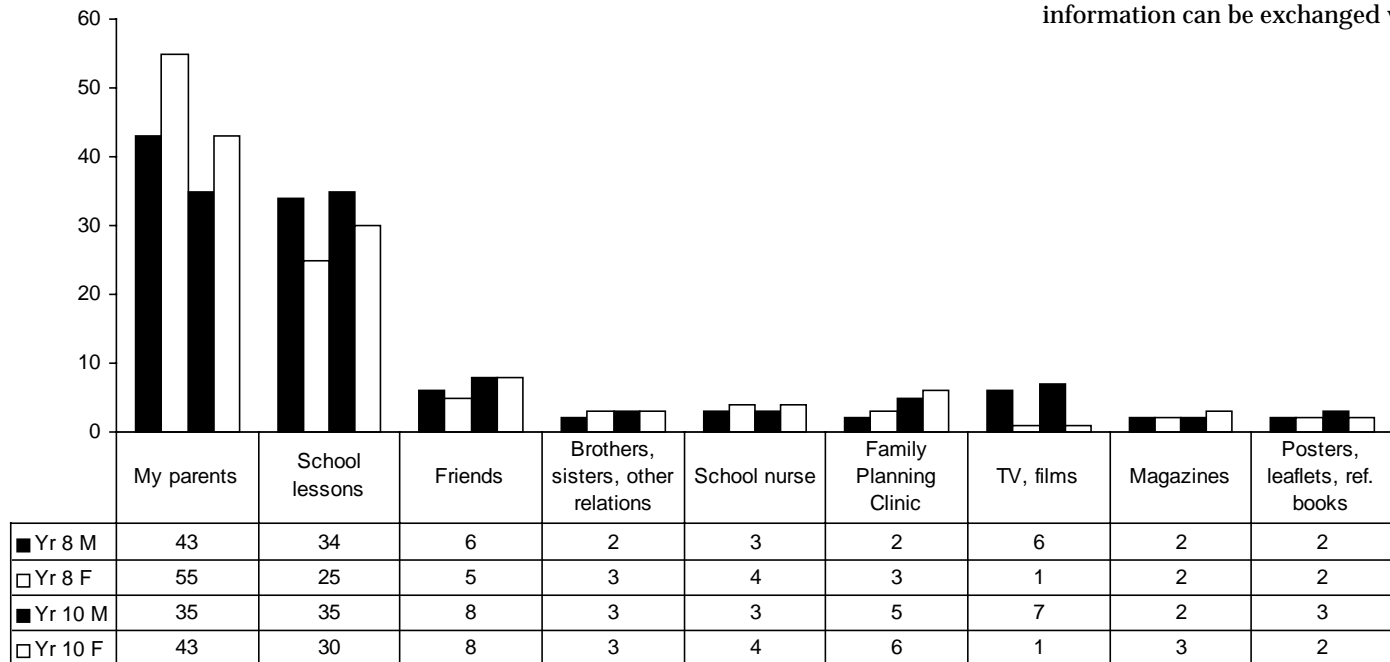
*My parents topped the list*

## Which of these do you think should be your main source of information about sex? (R4)

### Comments

1. *Parents* are the preferred group, with school lessons second.

1. These higher percentages for parents compared with the previous table do not necessarily mean that pupils feel their parents are failing them. Many, or most, parents find it difficult to talk openly and frankly about sex with their children and they are thankful to know that the school is doing something. The 'should' condition seems to refer to an ideal world where information can be exchanged without constraint on either side.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6246
Yr 8 F	6833
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6285
Yr 10 F	6740

# Worries

Year 10 females top the list of most problem areas

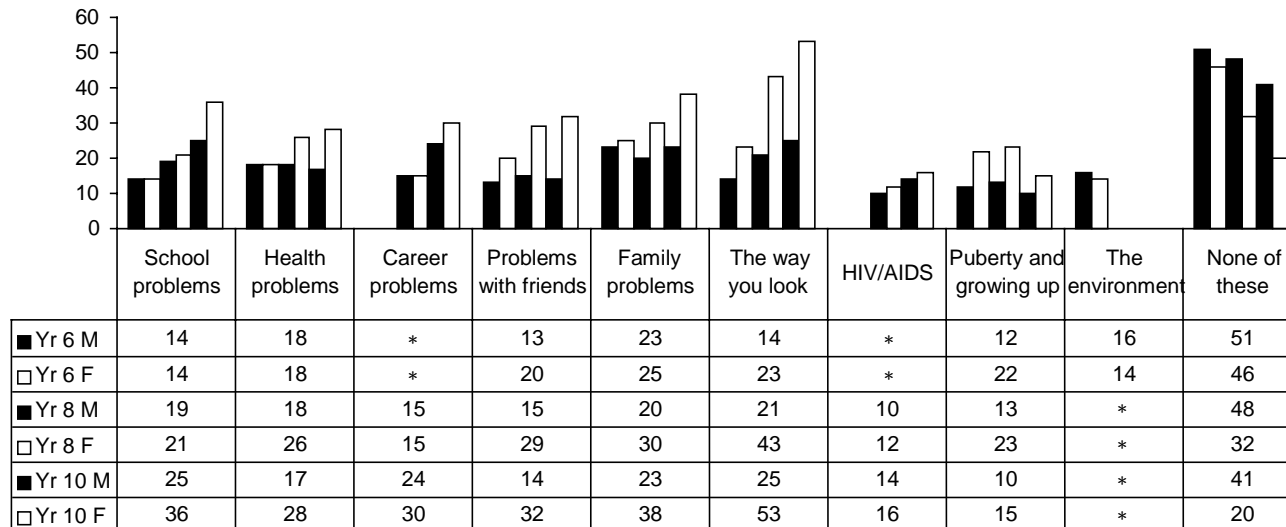
## How much do you worry about these problems? (R8) (Pri.50)

Responses to 'quite a lot / a lot'

1. *The way you look* worries these young people more than anything else.
2. The *none of these* category shows that more females than males worry about things in the list.

### Comments

1. These problems do not necessarily concern the respondents themselves, they could indicate worry about family or friends or even 'society'.
2. As girls grow older, higher percentages worry about all the categories listed here.
3. We can relate worry about smoking by young people that smoke with a desire to give up smoking (page 74).
4. We have seen a marked rise in worry about school work since 1996. We are not in favour of complacency, but it may be that the levels of worry some young people experience are disabling.



\* Options not available

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

# School problems

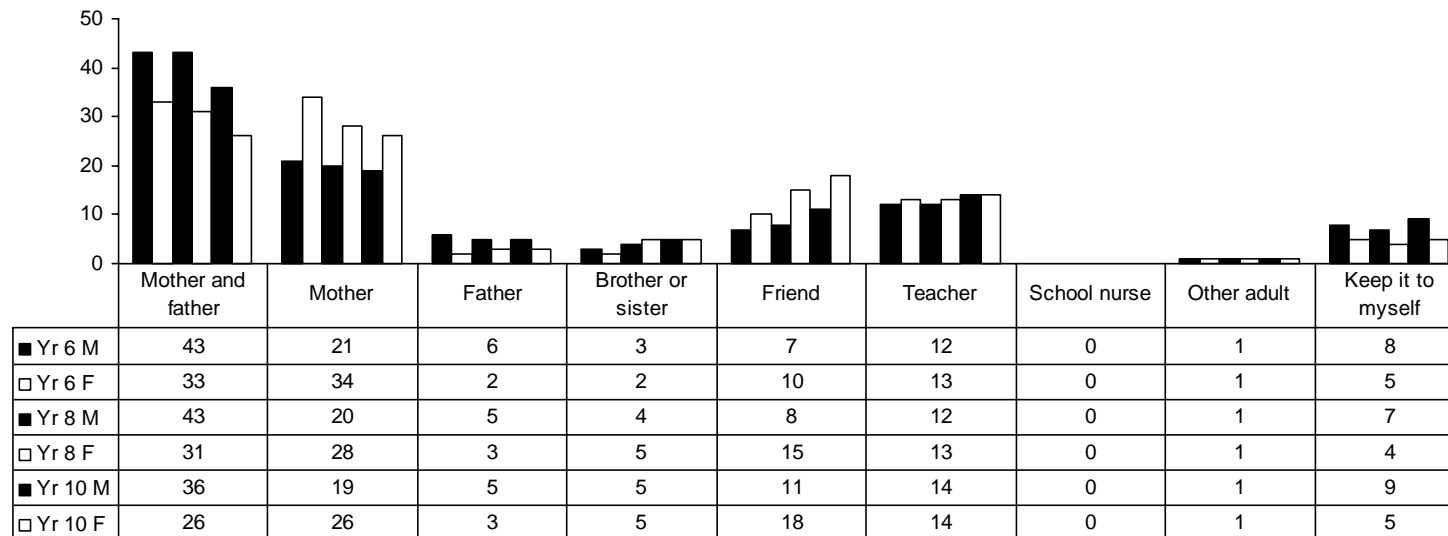
*Teachers are not the first choice*

## If you wanted to share school problems, to whom would you probably turn? (R9a)(Pri.49)

### Comments

1. *Mother and father* are the most common source of support.
2. The percentage giving *teacher* is higher than for any of the other listed problems. The proportion who would keep such a problem to themselves is small, smaller at least than for most other problems.
3. The various sources of support rise (*friend*) or fall (*mother*) with age, and there are some marked gender differences.

1. As mentioned on the previous page, we have seen a marked rise in worry about school work since 1996. The nature of the school problem is not stated.
2. Bearing in mind that only about 65% of the sample live with their mother and father, the 'first column' percentages suggest more support from this resource than is apparent at first sight.



Valid responses	
Yr 6 M (10-11 yrs)	5869
Yr 6 F	5730
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6478
Yr 8 F	7078
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6619
Yr 10 F	7125



# Money problems

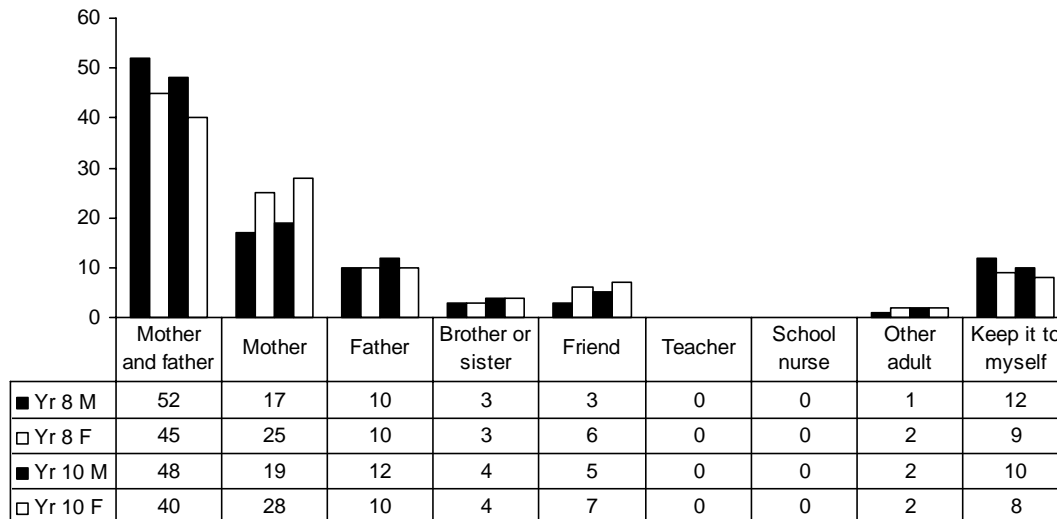
Around 45% would talk to *mother and father*

## If you wanted to share money problems, to whom would you probably turn? (R9b)

1. *Mother and father* are the most common source of support.
2. The percentage giving *father* is higher than for any of the other listed problems.

### Comments

1. Young people seem to keep money problems more firmly within the family compared with the other problems listed.
2. Are *fathers* more likely to have money than *mothers*?



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6402
Yr 8 F	7057
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6601
Yr 10 F	7133

# Health problems

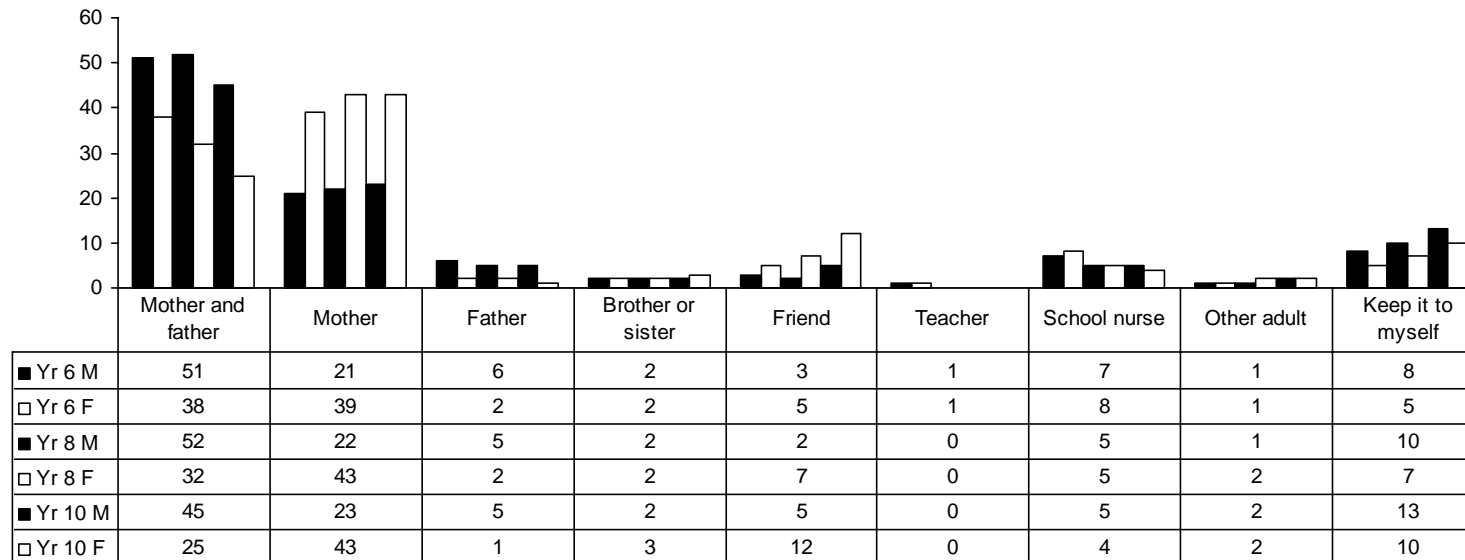
*Mother* features strongly for the females

## If you wanted to share health problems, to whom would you probably turn? (R9c) (Pri.49)

1. Almost half of all the males would go to *mother and father*, but *mother* is the most frequent choice of the females.
2. *Keep it to myself* is the third choice for males — 1 in 8 of the Year 10s would not share a health problem with anybody.
3. The third choice for the Year 6 pupils is the *school nurse*, the only health professional on the list.

### Comments

1. The expression 'health problems' is open to wide interpretation.
2. We wonder if the small proportion giving *school nurse* reflects a lack of opportunity rather than a reluctance to see him/her. The figures also suggest a decline in the percentage of young people seeking support from the *school nurse* with increasing age.



Available sample	
Yr 6 M (10-11 yrs)	5666
Yr 6 F	5639
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6435
Yr 8 F	7072
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6607
Yr 10 F	7121

# Career problems

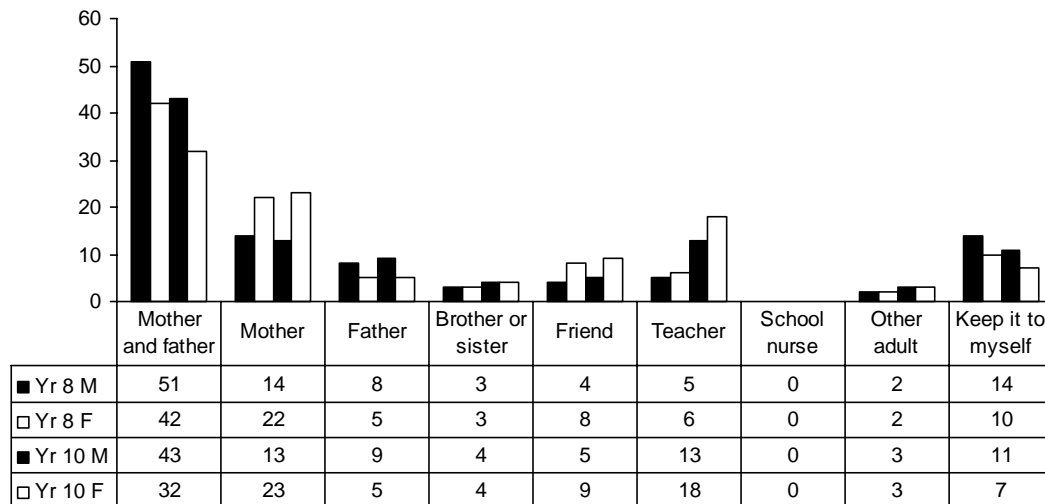
Up to 18% of older pupils would turn to *teacher*

## If you wanted to share career problems, to whom would you probably turn? (R9d)

1. For males and females the most likely source of support is *mother and father* with *mother* being the second most likely choice.
2. *Teacher* figures more strongly for the older pupils.

### Comments

1. The large difference between *mother and father*, for what would appear to be a problem they could both help with, may reflect their accessibility.
2. This problem is perhaps still fairly remote for many of these youngsters, particularly the younger pupils.
3. The low standing of *brother or sister* and *friend* suggests that these young people expect to have to look to older people for advice.



Valid responses		
Yr 8 M	(12-13 yrs)	5247
Yr 8 F		5927
Yr 10 M	(14-15 yrs)	5439
Yr 10 F		6013

# Friend problems

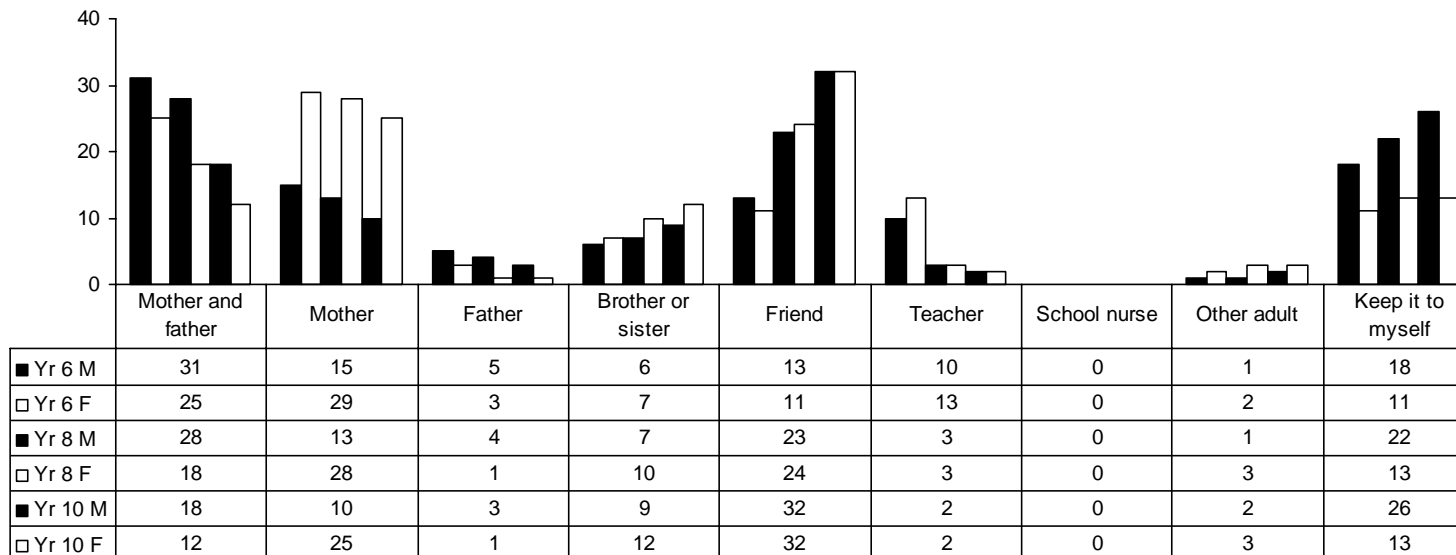
Gender differences are pronounced

## If you wanted to share problems about friends, to whom would you probably turn? (R9e) (Pri.49)

1. Gender differences are pronounced. More males say *mother and father*, or would *keep it to myself*; more females say *mother*. A similar proportion, however, would share the problem with another *friend*.
2. Older pupils tend to seek less support from their parents and teachers but rely more on *siblings*, *friends* or simply keep things to themselves.

### Comments

1. Year 6 pupils were more likely to turn to their teacher than the older pupils within secondary schools. Perhaps this is due to the closer bonds they have with their primary school teachers developed through the higher level of contact.
2. Perhaps the increasing likelihood of older pupils keeping this type of problem to themselves is due in part to their increasing ability to cope?



Valid responses		
Yr 6 M	(10-11 yrs)	5713
Yr 6 F		5691
Yr 8 M	(12-13 yrs)	6394
Yr 8 F		7013
Yr 10 M	(14-15 yrs)	6557
Yr 10 F		7107

# Family problems

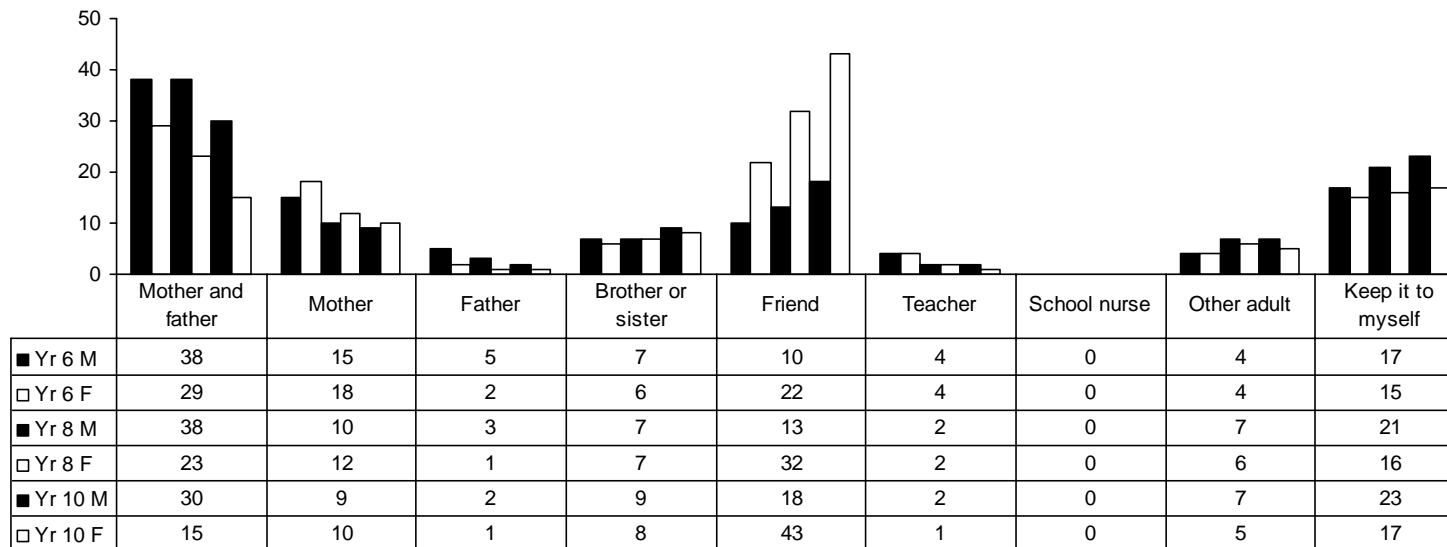
Females are twice as likely than males to turn to a *friend*

## If you wanted to share family problems, to whom would you probably turn? (R9f) (Pri.49)

### Comments

1. For the older females, a *friend* is the likeliest resource. The males are much more likely to go to *mother and father*, or to *keep it to myself*.

1. It is interesting that many more males than females would seek help with family problems within the family. It is possible that the interpretation of 'family problems' is not the same for the two genders.



Valid responses	
Yr 6 M (10-11 yrs)	5722
Yr 6 F	5696
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6364
Yr 8 F	6975
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6550
Yr 10 F	7044

# Gambling problems

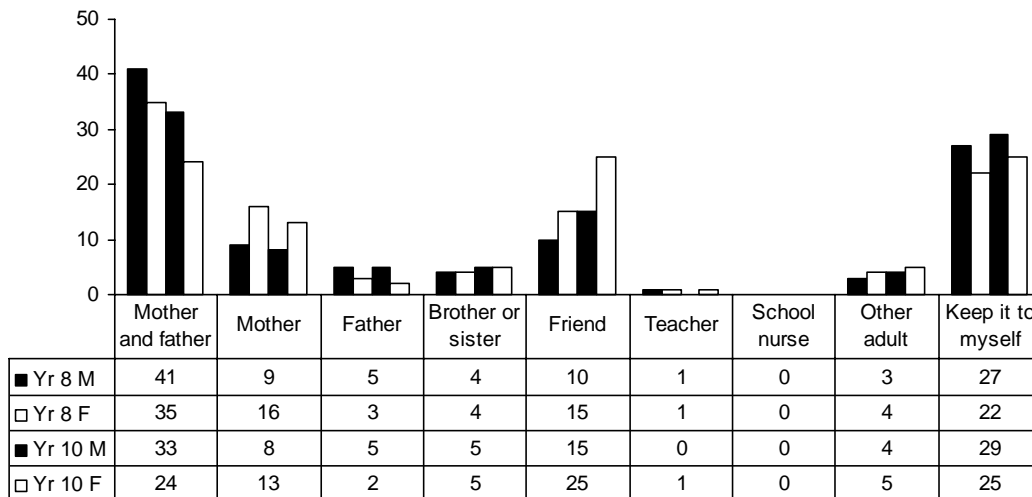
Around 25%  
would *keep it to themselves*

## If you wanted to share gambling problems, to whom would you probably turn? (R9g)

### Comments

1. *Mother and father* would be the most common resource, but another large group say that they would *keep it to myself*.
2. The percentage seeking support from their friends is higher for the older females.

1. Gambling problems could affect the young people even if they do not gamble themselves, since the activities of other family members or friends may affect them.



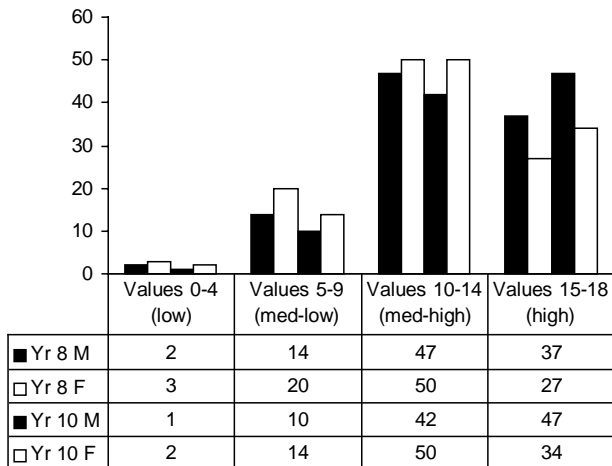
Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	5102
Yr 8 F	5725
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	5288
Yr 10 F	5724

# Index of self-esteem

49% of the Year 6 females score between *medium-low* and *low* self-esteem.

## Self-esteem measurement (0–18) (P8) Self-esteem measurement (0–14) (P8) (Pri.31)

1. The scales used in the primary and secondary versions of the survey are not directly comparable; we give two sets of figures below, the overall secondary figures, and figures from the primary dataset which are comparable.
2. The *high* group included more males than females.
3. The first measure (0-18) shows that the great majority scored more than 10/18, and more than a third of the whole sample were in the *high* group.
4. The second measure (0-14), includes the year 6 pupils.
5. The level of self-esteem tends to increase with age.

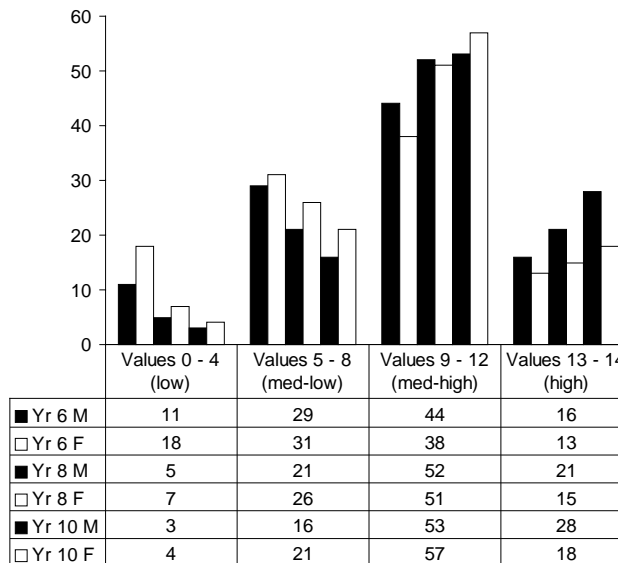


Self-esteem measurement (0-18) (P8)

Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	7036
Yr 8 F	7457
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6956
Yr 10 F	7362

## Comments

1. This measurement is derived from the responses to a set of nine statements, taken from a standard self-esteem enquiry method developed by Denis Lawrence (Lawrence 1981).
2. Many health educators believe high self-esteem may motivate positive behaviour, as well as being a general contributor to emotional well-being
3. The gender differences are a challenge: we do not see them in every school, which means that they are more marked in some other schools.



Self-esteem measurement (0-14) (P8) (Pri 31)

Valid responses	
Yr 6 M (10-11 yrs)	6183
Yr 6 F	6125
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	7050
Yr 8 F	7461
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6956
Yr 10 F	7363

# Control over health (1)

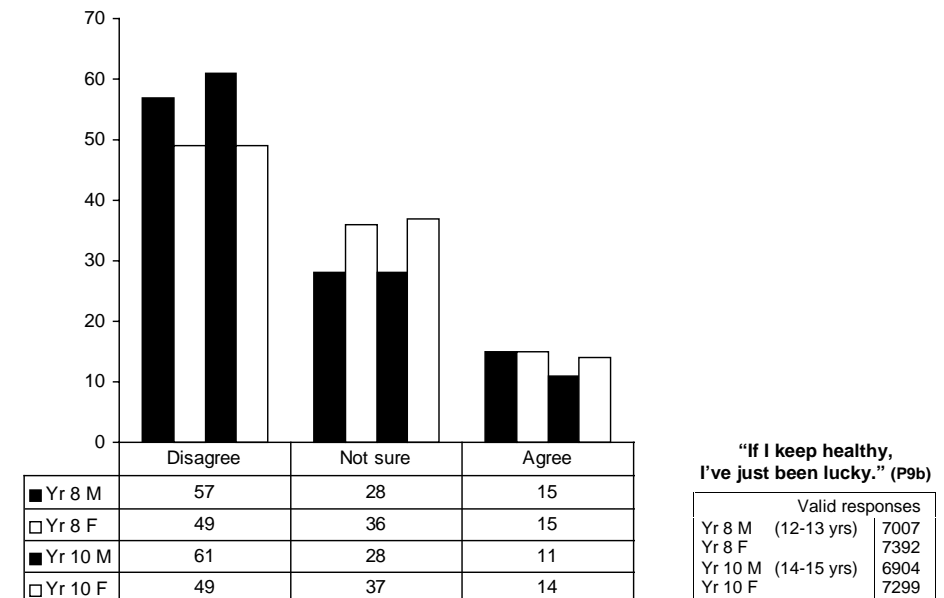
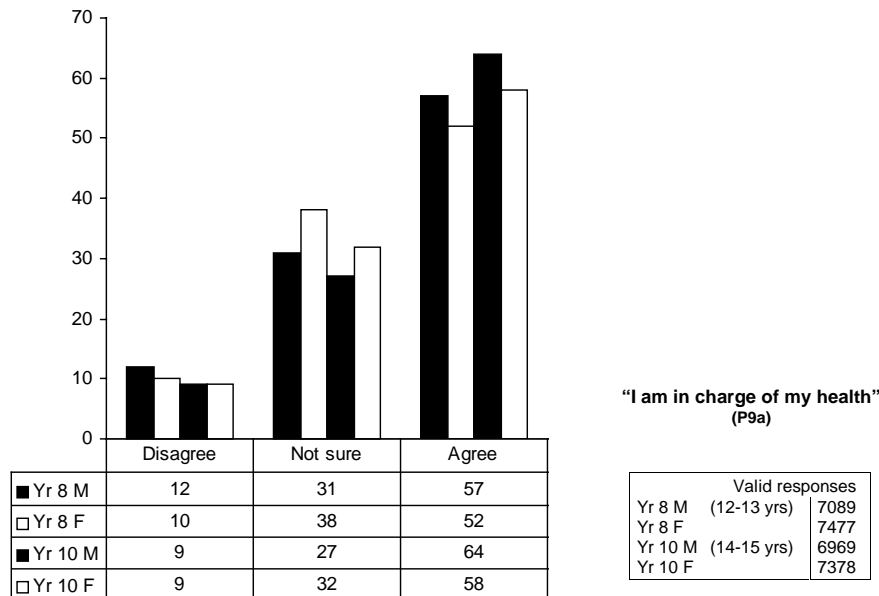
The majority feel they are in control of their health

**“I am in charge of my health.” (P9a)**  
**“If I keep healthy, I’ve just been lucky.” (P9b)**

1. The four groups in the sample were fairly close in their responses, although more males than females agreed with (a) and disagreed with (b).

## Comments

1. These two sets of statements are used, together with the two on the following page to generate a ‘health locus of control’ score (page 117).
2. We have discovered some interesting correlations with these responses. For example, a feeling of low health control links with fear of bullying (page 31).





# Control over health (2)

Most feel they can do something about their health

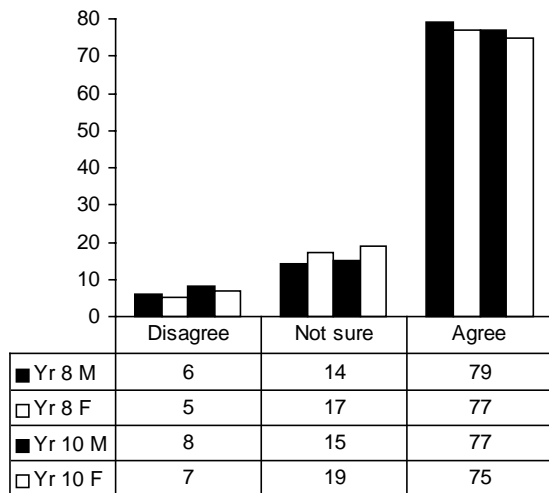
**“If I take care of myself I’ll stay healthy.” (P9c)**

**“Even if I look after myself, I can still easily fall ill.” (P9d)**

### Comments

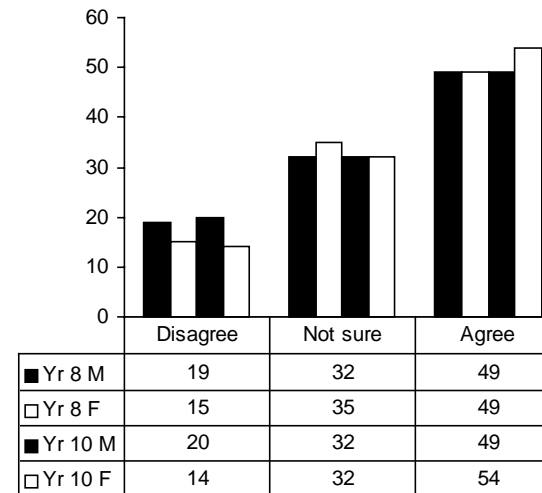
1. The four groups in the sample were fairly close in their responses, although more males than females agreed with (a) and disagreed with (b)

1. We find that about 75% think they will stay healthy if they take care, and about 50% think that they can still fall ill even if they do take care. The apparent contradictions between the items seem to be more in the mind of the logician than the young person.



**“If I take care of myself I’ll stay healthy.” (P9c)**

Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	7090
Yr 8 F	7473
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6965
Yr 10 F	7352



**“Even if I look after myself, I can still easily fall ill.” (P9d)**

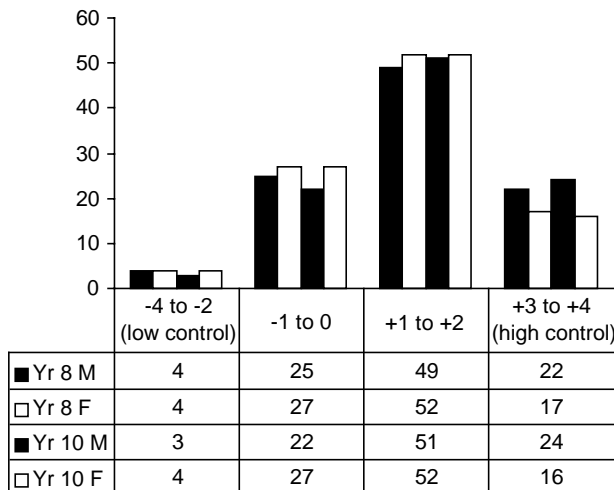
Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	7073
Yr 8 F	7473
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6950
Yr 10 F	7362

# Control over health (3)

The majority recorded positive control

## Health locus of control score (-4 to +4) (P9)

1. Half of all the groups recorded positive control at the +1 to +2 level.
2. Slightly more males than females felt that they were in positive control of their health.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	6971
Yr 8 F	7355
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6870
Yr 10 F	7263

## Comments

1. 'Health locus of control' is an attempt to establish whether young people feel in control of their health (positive score) or unable to influence it (negative score).
2. The HLOC score reflects the person's overall perception of whether they are personally in control of their health ('internal locus of control') or not and are thereby at the mercy of outside influences ('external locus').
3. We learn from these results that at least a quarter of all the groups do not think that they can influence their health by their own efforts.
4. We know from the work of ourselves and others that the answers to these questions can be strongly correlated with behaviours. For example:



39% of Year 10 females with scores of 3 or 4 on this scale have never smoked at all, whereas of the females whose replies yield neutral or negative scores 28% have never smoked.

In *Bully Off* (Balding, 1996), we described a strong link between scores of these questions and fear of going to school because of bullying.

# Favourite adult

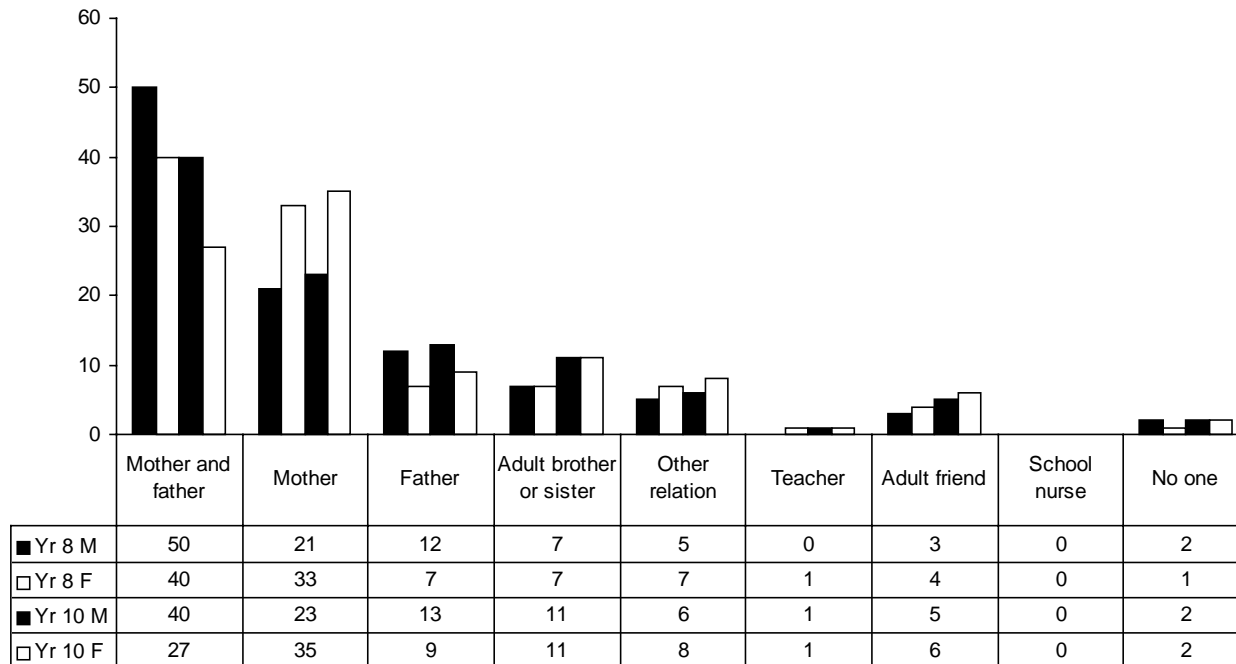
Up to 50%  
get on best with both parents

## With which of these adults do you get on best? (R6)

### Comments

1. One or both parents are the favourite adult for the great majority.
2. The Year 10s show a move away from *mother and father*. The percentages saying *mother* or *father* alone are higher for this age group but we also see increases in the percentages selecting *adult brother or sister* and *adult friend*.
3. Up to 2% 'get on best' with no one (compare next page).

1. It is reassuring to see that the great majority within this age group find their favourite adult within their immediate family.
2. It must be remembered that not all pupils live with both *mother and father*.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	5433
Yr 8 F	6131
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	5539
Yr 10 F	6070

# Trustworthy adults

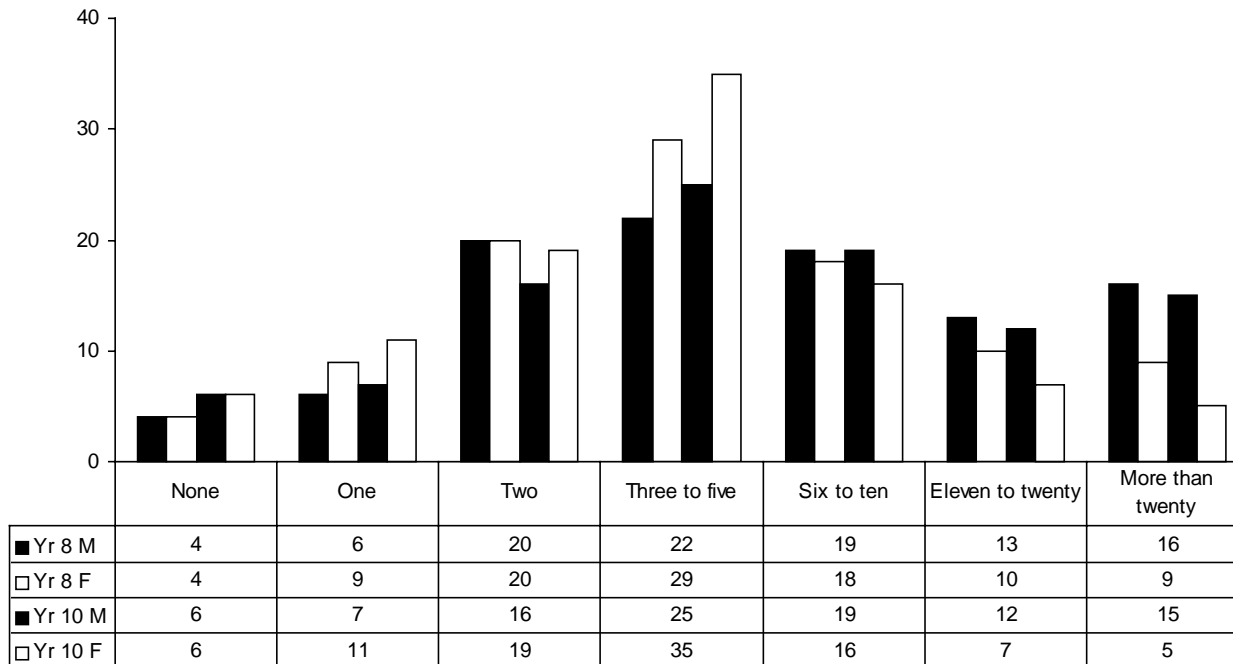
6% of older pupils trust no one

## How many adults can you really trust? (R7)

### Comments

1. More than 84% trust at least two adults.
2. We notice that trustworthiness levels drop slightly in Year 10, and that more males than females are inclined to trust a lot of adults.

1. The group that demand particular attention are those responding none — 4% in Year 8 and 6% in Year 10. This is larger than the proportion saying that they 'get on best' with no one (previous page); but getting on with someone does not necessarily mean really trusting them.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	5479
Yr 8 F	6148
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	5579
Yr 10 F	6127

# Satisfaction with life

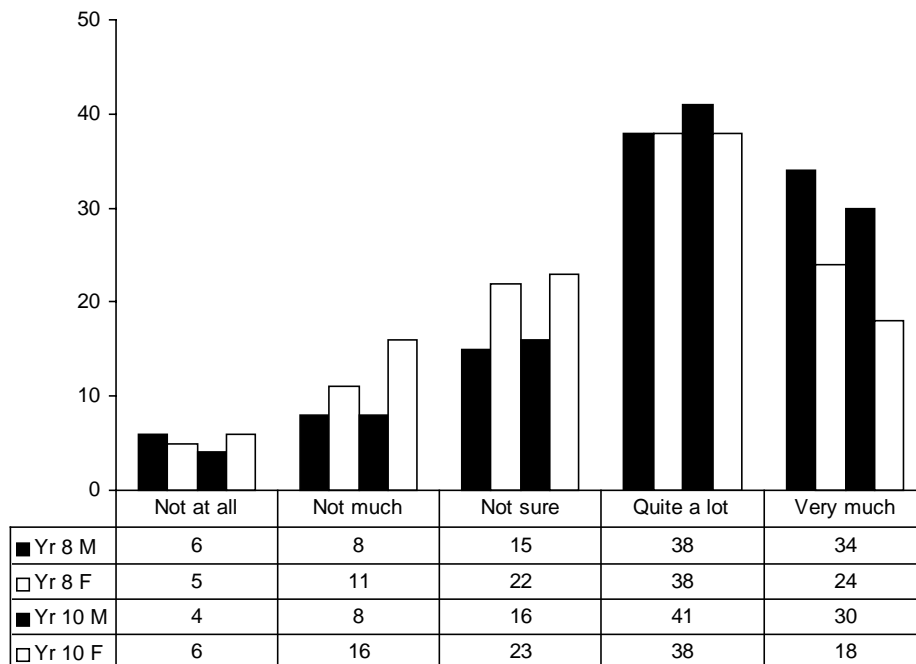
Males are more satisfied than females

## In general, how satisfied do you feel with your life at the moment? (R5)

1. More males record *very much*; more females record *not much*.
2. Overall, more than 56% are quite or very satisfied, and between 12% and 22% are dissatisfied to some extent.
3. The girls' level of dissatisfaction increases a little with age.

### Comments

1. The difference in the percentage of satisfied males and females is in line with the evidence on page 106 that females worry about more things than males do.
2. Are people born optimists and pessimists? We have not looked at the level of individuals to discover this.



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	5536
Yr 8 F	6197
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	5649
Yr 10 F	6176

# Transmission of HIV

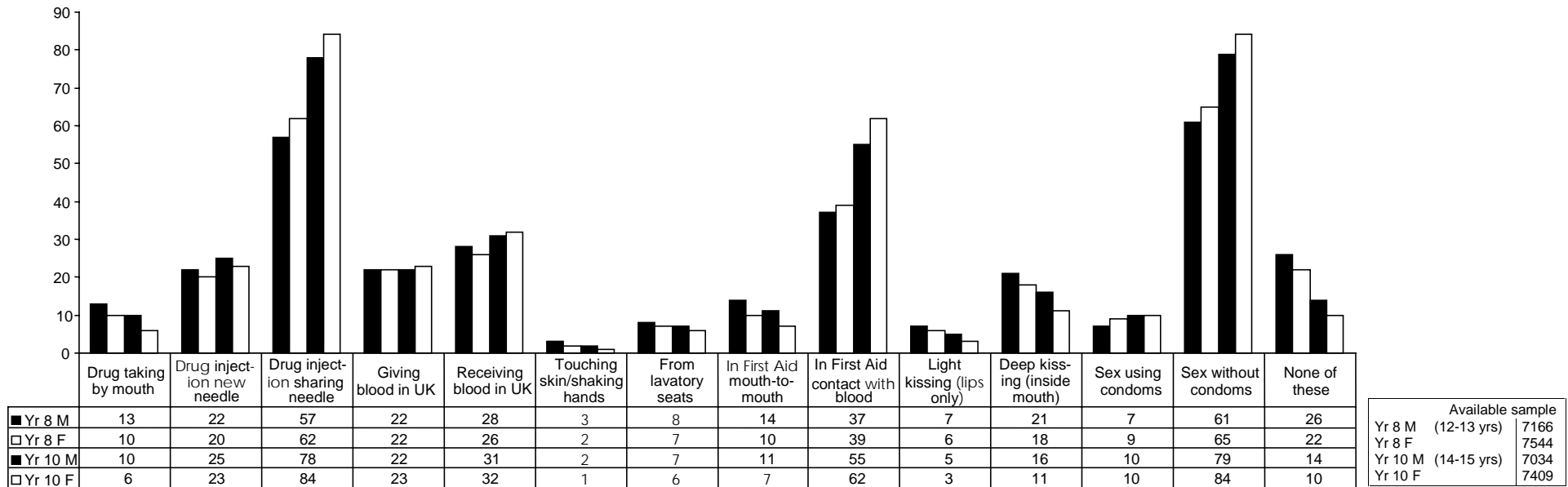
*Sharing needles and unsafe sex are seen as the top risks*

## Can the HIV virus be passed on by any of the following? (R15)

### Comments

1. *Sharing a needle and unprotected intercourse* were seen as dangerous by the greatest number. *Contact with blood during First Aid* was the third most widely-quoted source of infection.
2. A study of the separate answers suggests that, within each year group, the females' knowledge is more accurate than the males'.

1. The figures suggest some uncertainty about how HIV is transmitted. For example, a new (sterile) needle cannot carry any infection, and neither can giving blood in the UK.
2. There are some areas of doubt even between HIV/AIDS experts, (though not over the listed sources); oral sex being one.



# Precautions against HIV

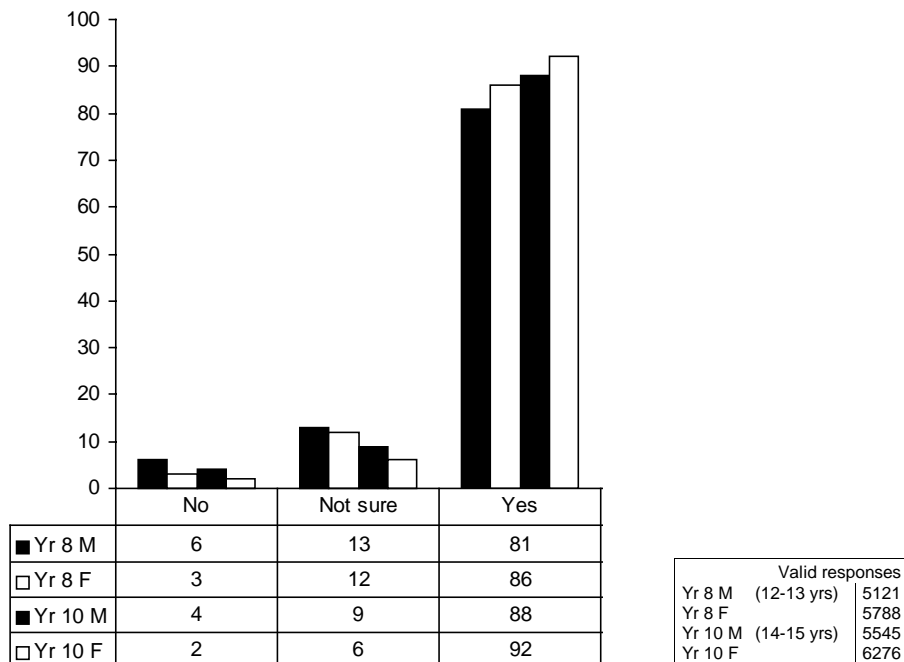
Nearly 20% of the Year 8 males say *no* or *not sure*

## Do you think that you will take care not to get infected with the HIV virus? (R16)

### Comments

1. More males than females say they will not, and more Year 10s say that they will.

1. It is possible that some of the no responses are caused by a misreading of the question, causing them to answer “no, I don’t want to get infected”.
2. The not sure group could be registering uncertainty about what they will have to do to avoid it; or they may not envisage having anything to avoid.
3. We used to ask the respondents for the methods of prevention they know about, and the most common answer was a condom.

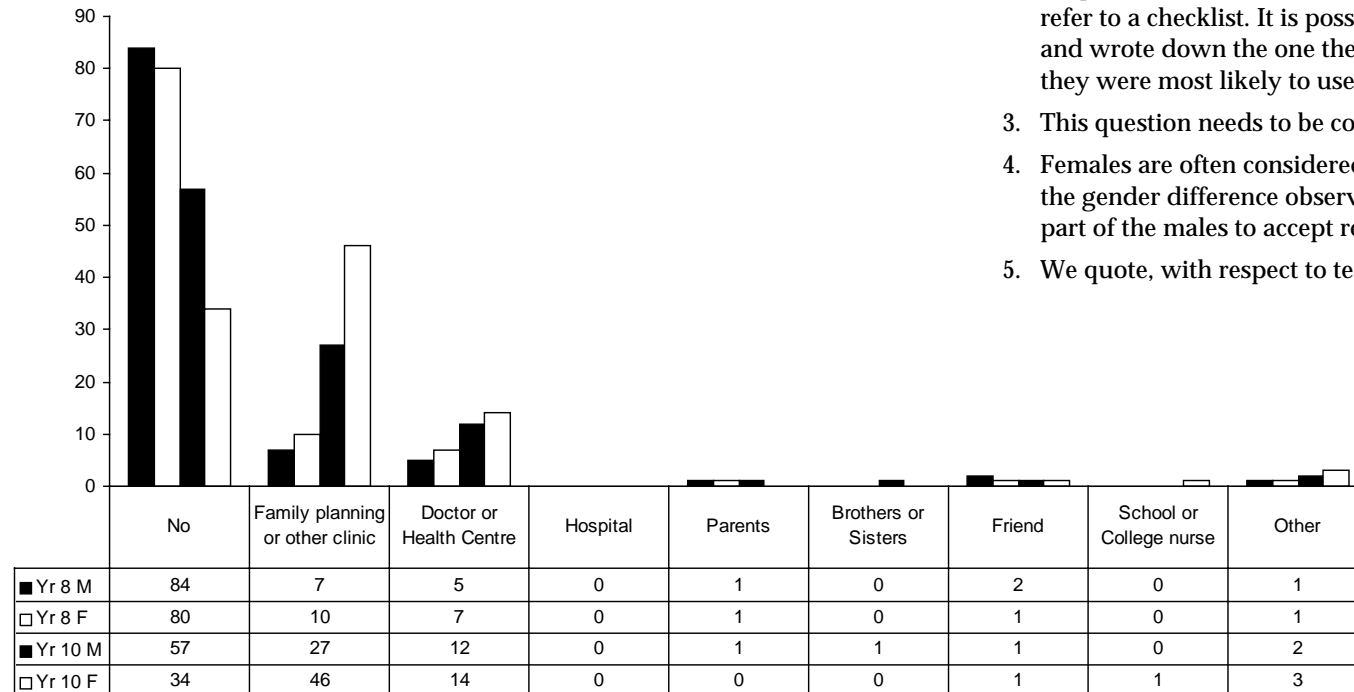


# Free condoms

57% of the Year 10 males do not know where to get free condoms

## Do you know where you can get condoms free of charge? (R17)

1. The increased knowledge, or belief, of the Year 10 respondents is clear.
2. In Year 10, two-thirds of the females say they know of a source, whereas fewer than half the males do.



### Comments

1. 'Knowing of a source' does not mean that it will or could be used, and we in Exeter have no means of knowing if the information is accurate. The schools and health authorities examining the data from their own surveys should be in a position to judge.
2. Respondents were asked to write down the name of the source, rather than refer to a checklist. It is possible that some knew of more than one source, and wrote down the one they could most easily spell rather than the one they were most likely to use.
3. This question needs to be considered together with question R13 (next).
4. Females are often considered to be 'more mature', dating older boys, and the gender difference observed here need not represent a reluctance on the part of the males to accept responsibility for contraception.
5. We quote, with respect to teenage pregnancy, 'boys are half the problem'.

Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	5548
Yr 8 F	6266
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	5339
Yr 10 F	6208



# Birth control service

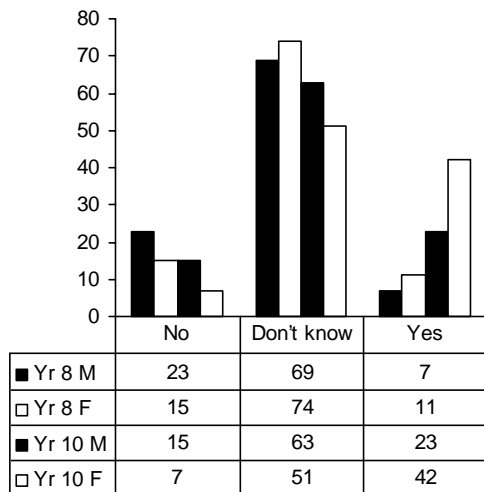
42% of the Year 10 females knew about the service

## Is there a special birth control service for young people available locally? (R18)

1. The females were more likely to know if there was one, and knowledge was much greater in Year 10.

### Comments

1. With the continuing concern over teenage pregnancies, as well as the spread of AIDS, a lot of money and effort is being directed towards this area of health education. The histograms on this and the preceding page are two measures of its success.
2. As with the previous question, local knowledge will be required to assess the responses. Districts vary in the amount of publicity given to contraceptive services for young people, as well as in the nature and scale of provision.
3. Is it a satisfactory state of affairs when half the 14-15 year old females, and two-thirds of the males, don't know about local services — even the fact that there aren't any?



Valid responses	
Yr 8 M (12-13 yrs)	5983
Yr 8 F	6572
Yr 10 M (14-15 yrs)	6133
Yr 10 F	6643