

YOUNG PEOPLE, FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND 5-A-DAY

The Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) has been talking to young people, about their health and wellbeing, since 1977. The results, from the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ), are used by health and education authorities to inform their planning. Over one million young people have responded to the HRBQ. Among the food topics that are explored in the surveys are the regularity of eating and the portion size of fruit and vegetables. Questions about eating fruit and vegetables have been asked in schools from the early 1980s.

As the HRBQ has evolved, there have been changes to the number of options included in the 'food' list in the questionnaire. The various options have appeared and disappeared over the years as determined by changing behaviour patterns of young people, user responses and survey feedback. Before 1990 there were 40 options which included 'oranges and apples'. After 1990 the options were reduced to 38 items and 'oranges and apples' became 'fresh fruit'. In 2001 there were 15 options. In recent years the number of food options included in the questionnaire has varied.

Chart 1 shows results, 1999-2011, from 10-15 year olds who reported eating fresh fruit on 'most days'.

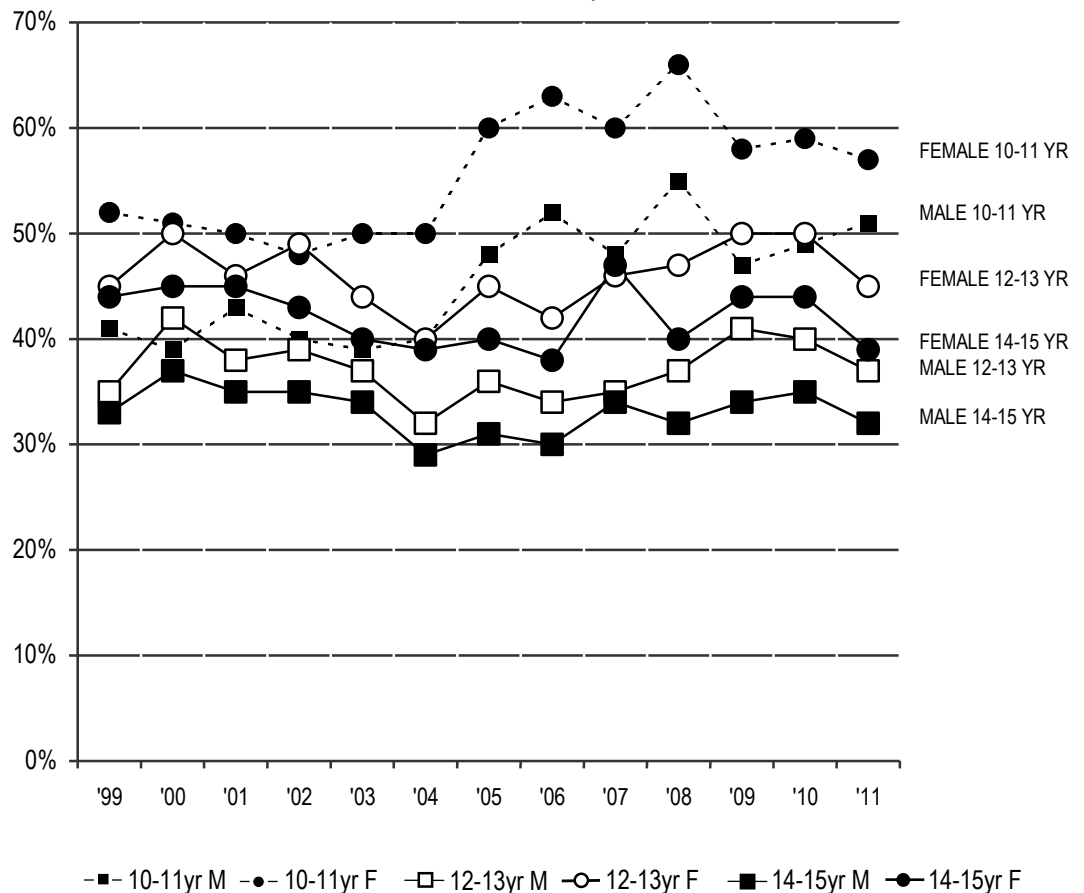
Chart 1. Ate fresh fruit on most days, 1999-2011

In each of the three age groups, females report eating more fresh fruit than the males.

As they get older, pupils report less often eating fresh fruit on most days.

Since 1999, the youngest female and the oldest male have consistently remained at the top and bottom of the chart.

Around 55% of 10-11 year old females and around 32% of the 14-15 year old males report eating fresh fruit on most days.



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Chart 2 (below) shows results, 1999-2011, from 10-15 year olds who reported eating vegetables on ‘most days’.

Females report eating more vegetables.

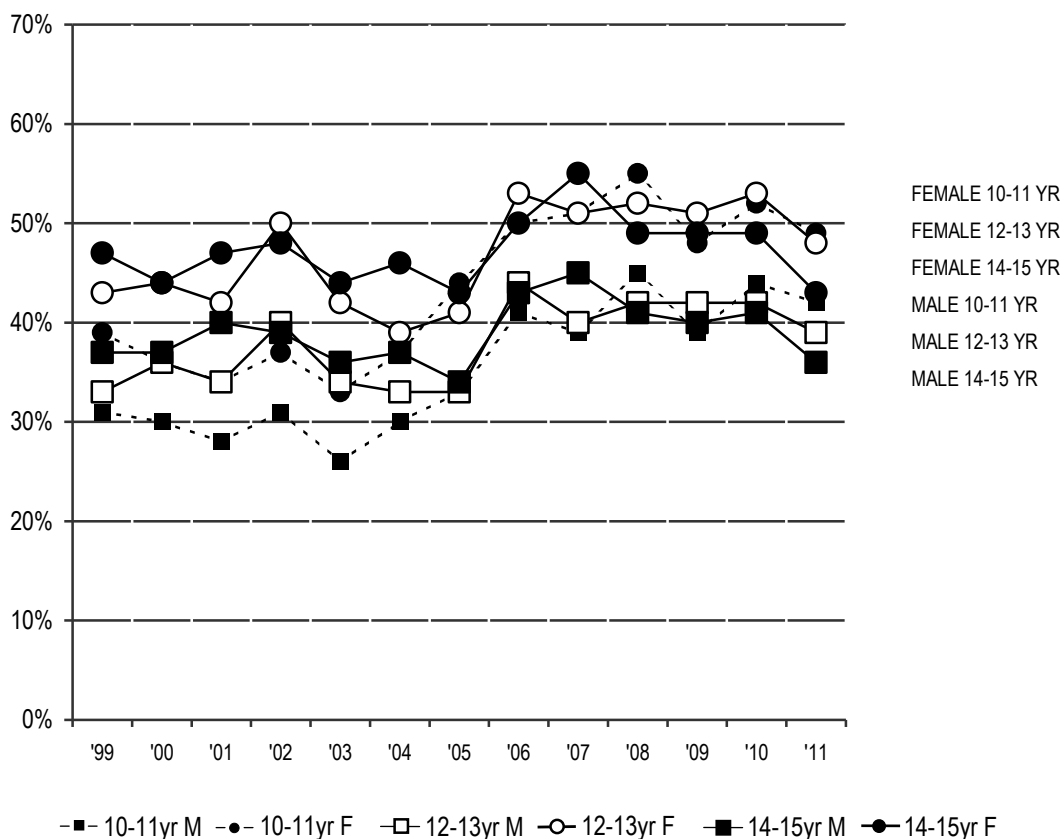
As they get older, pupils generally report less often eating vegetables on most days.

Since 1999, females have mainly reported eating more vegetables than the males although between age groups there are no clear trends.

In recent years around 50% of the females and around 42% of the males report eating vegetables on most days.

Data from 1999 onwards provides an interesting backdrop to the many school food education and food programmes aimed at increasing fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. Despite the lack of a clear trend post-1999, we see many associations between food options in the list. When we looked among older males and females in our databank, we found that young people who eat fresh fruit on most days were also more likely to eat healthy items like fish, wholemeal bread, high fibre-cereals salads and vegetables on most days as well. Older females who ate fresh fruit on most days were also less likely to eat crisps and sweets on most days or to drink sugary fizzy drinks.

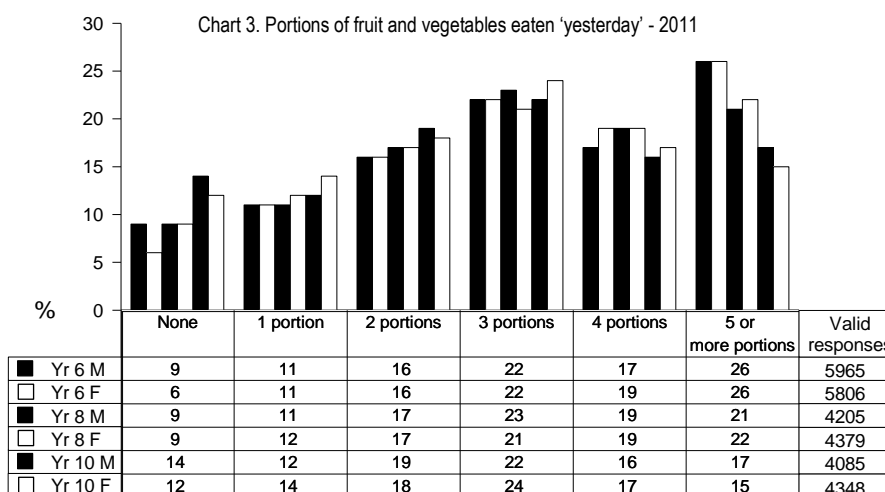
Chart 2. Ate vegetables on most days, 1999-2011



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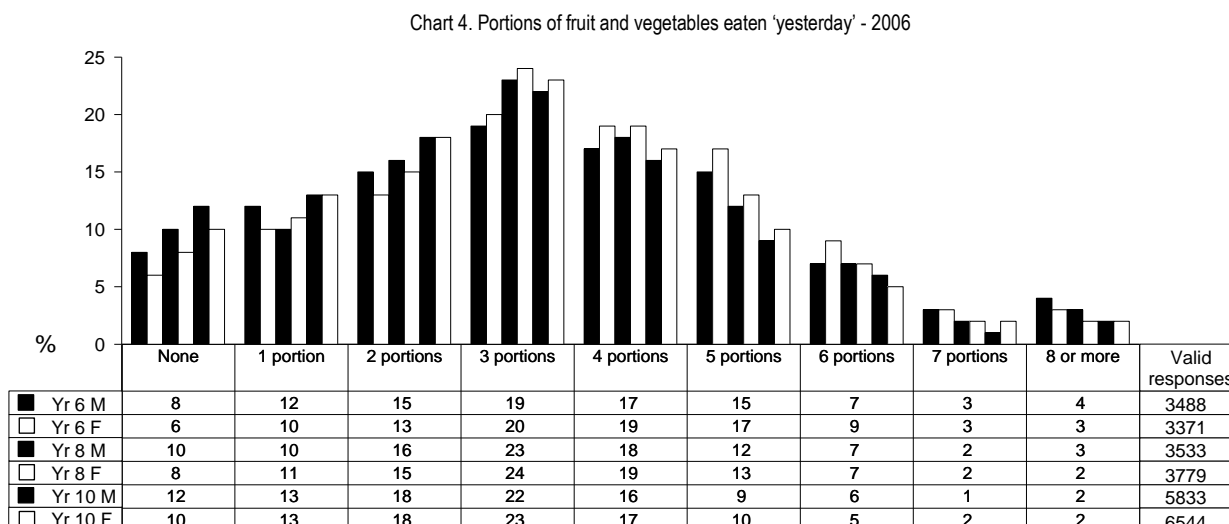
Chart 3 (below) shows 2011 results from 10-15 year olds who replied to the question, “How many portions of fruit and vegetables did you eat yesterday”.

Pupils are given eight options and asked to circle one. We offer a brief guidance as to what a ‘portion’ is following Government Food Standard Agency ‘5-a-day’ guidelines.



The 2011 results show that most 14-15 year olds (up to 24%) report eating 3 portions of fruit and vegetables. 26% 10-11 year olds report eating 5 or more portions. Up to 23% 12-13 year olds report eating 3 and 5 or more portions. In the 2011 chart there is little difference between the female and male responses to the number of portions. As they get older, fewer pupils report eating 5 or more portions

This was a new question in 2006 and the chart below (chart 4) is a useful chart to show people who say, “young people will just tell you what you need to know”. Given the ‘right’ answer is clearly ‘5 or more portions’ we would expect some discontinuity between 4 & 5, but the distribution is remarkably smooth.



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The charts below show data from 2006-2011 from over 305,000 10-15 year olds who replied to the question, “How many portions of fruit and vegetables did you eat yesterday?”.

Each chart shows responses to one of the options.

The results have generally remained consistent over the years.

Around 30% of 10-11 year old pupils usually respond to the 5 or more option.

The majority of 12-13 year olds tend to opt for the 3 or 5 or more options.

Around 25% of 14-15 year olds tick the 3 portions option.

-■- 10-11yr M -●- 10-11yr F
 -□- 12-13yr M -○- 12-13yr F
 -■- 14-15yr M -●- 14-15yr F

