

PRESS RELEASE

The *Young People into 2025* report

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT:

Dr David Regis, Research Manager, SHEU Tel.(01392) 667272 Email: [david.regis@sheu.org.uk](mailto:david.regis@sheu.org.uk)

We have just published *Young People into 2025*, which presents figures from a sample of **over 120,000** young people from selected year groups (from a total available sample of 159,787) completing surveys in 2024. This report is the 38<sup>th</sup> in a series begun in 1987. The full report may be obtained in PDF format by [application to SHEU](#).

**The 124,141 pupils in the target year groups compose our largest published sample ever.**

Some of the latest figures are different from those we last published in 2024, but not all the differences are new – it's better to describe them as continuations of trends that we have seen going on for some time. And some might be meaningless 'wobbles' in the data set.

Angela Balding, Surveys Manager at SHEU, comments:

“Another record year! We are grateful for the cooperation from all the students and teachers in schools and colleagues in local authorities who continue to give this work the priority we think it deserves, among all the pressure on ‘results’. These too are results!

“ We note with no pleasure the continued downwards slide in self-esteem scores among 14-15-year-olds, especially the girls.”

Dr. David Regis, Research Manager at SHEU, comments:

“ Has the rise of vaping finally hit a ceiling? One year's figures are not enough to tell, but the level of reports of trying vaping among secondary pupils is actually lower this year, not just failing to increase. We will begin work immediately on the 2025 data set to see what it tells us.

“ And for the last two years, we have seen markedly fewer secondary pupils telling us that they agree that The school cares whether I am happy or not. This could be because we are surveying in unusual parts of the country – but most of our clients survey every other year, so the 2024 sample overlaps a lot with the one from 2022, and the 2023 sample overlaps with the one from 2021. So whatever is going on, we think it's a real change, and not an artefact of sampling.”

Juliette Tommons, Data Preparation Coordinator at SHEU, comments:

“ With the current media and government focus on the negative impact of social media on the wellbeing of young people, what can we find in this data set? Analysis for Year 10 females from three local authorities (N=2,695) in 2024 reveals an association between heavy internet use and poor emotional wellbeing (Chapter 4, page 47); heavy internet use is also associated with riskier health habits in general. But which is the previous egg, and which the consequent chicken, is not to be found in our results.”

**Where are the figures from?**

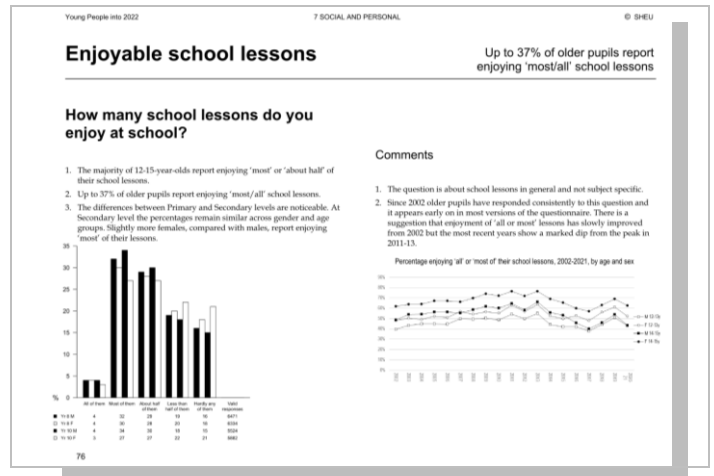
Every year, SHEU carry out healthy lifestyle surveys with young people for local authorities and each year these surveys involve tens of thousands of young people. At the end of each calendar year, we put all the results from all the surveys together, and publish a report. These reports contain findings from over 100 health-related behaviour questions using answers from pupils in primary and secondary schools. They tell us about what they do at home, at school, and with their friends.

**What’s in the report?**

The report has 7 chapters:

- CHAPTER 1 - Food choices & weight control
- CHAPTER 2 - Doctor & Dentist
- CHAPTER 3 - Health & Safety
- CHAPTER 4 - Family & Home
- CHAPTER 5 - Legal & Illegal Drugs
- CHAPTER 6 - Exercise & Sport
- CHAPTER 7 - Social & Personal

The pages in each chapter show results from one question (sometimes two) and may also show links between questions and trends in responses going back over decades.



Notes

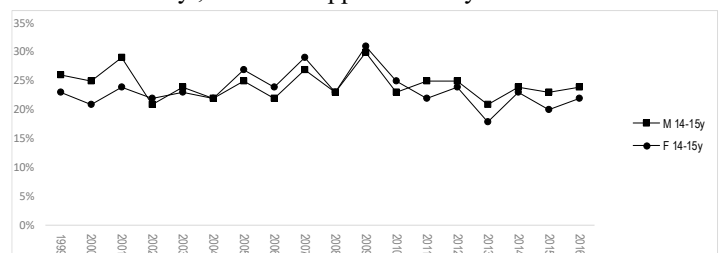
- SHEU (the Schools and Students Health Education Unit) was founded in Exeter University in 1977 by John Balding and has operated independently since 1997. It is the leading provider of health and lifestyle surveys for schools and holds a unique set of databanks showing levels of and trends in young people's behaviours since in the 1980s.
- The whole sample size was **159,787** but not all respondents answered all questions, and only **124,141** were in the target year groups (still our largest published sample ever).

**Ages and year groups reported were:**

Phase	Year group	Ages
Primary	Year 4	8-9 years old
	Year 6	10-11 years old
Secondary	Year 8	12-13 years old
	Year 10	14-15 years old

- We discourage surveys being conducted on Mondays, so 'the day before the survey' should have been a normal school day, and similarly 'the week before the survey' will not have been a holiday week.
- The accumulated databank from the hundreds of school surveys we support each year, involving tens of thousands of young people, is a valuable resource of information and provides many opportunities for insight and research. But we caution against simple reporting and interpretation of our figures as being from 'a national survey'; it didn't happen that way.

Many authorities use us every other year, and so will appear and disappear from the data sets, and there are some trends in which we can see evidence of a regional effect in the figures we obtain – as in the case of figures for eating wholemeal bread *on most days* in the middle 2000s, which shows a 'rollercoaster':



## Headlines and trends from the 2024 data set (*Young People into 2025*):

### CHAPTER 1 - Food choices & weight control

- Headlines*
- Around 10% of all pupils said they ate no portions of fruit or vegetables yesterday. Up to 30% of pupils aged 8-11 but less than 20% of 14-15-year-old pupils said they ate at least the recommended 5 portions on the day before the survey.
  - Up to 12% of pupils say they had no water to drink on the day before the survey.
  - There is a marked increase once we get to the secondary age group among females wanting to lose weight – 54% of 14-15-year-old females said they would like to lose weight.
- Trends*
- The trend for more pupils to skip lunch steadied about 10 years ago.
  - Daily consumption of crisps declined after about 2000 and has stabilised since.
- Links*
- Year 10 females who skipped breakfast on the morning of the survey were also more likely to have skipped lunch on the day before the survey, and to want to lose weight.

### CHAPTER 2 - Doctor & Dentist

- Headlines*
- Over half of pupils have visited a doctor in the last three months.
  - 22% of 14-15-year-old females felt *quite* or *very uneasy* on their last visit.
  - 70-85% of all groups had been to the dentist in the last year.
  - Over 80% of all groups brushed their teeth at least twice on the day before the survey.
- Trends*
- The proportion visiting the dentist in the last year dropped very slightly in this report.

### CHAPTER 3 - Health & Safety

- Headlines*
- Around 1/3 of primary pupils said they experienced bullying behaviours *often* or *every day* – these behaviours included *teasing* and *name-calling* but also being *pushed/hit*.
  - Of those bullied often, about ¼ report being bullied during school break times.
  - The most common reasons reported for being bullied were *size or weight* and *the way you look*, especially for older females.
  - Fear of bullying at school declines with age.
  - Up to a quarter of older pupils report unwelcome behaviours from boyfriends/girlfriends, like jealousy, hurtful language and checking my 'phone.
  - 85% of all groups say they have been told how to stay safe while online.
  - 6% of older females (14-15yo) say they have sent sexual images of themselves.
- Trends*
- 1/3 of pupils (more males) reported having an accident in the last year that needed medical attention.
  - The fear of being bullied have increased since 2011; any trends in reports of actual bullying have been unclear.
- Links*
- Getting plenty of sleep is associated with fewer worries and more contentment with their weight in 14-15-year-old females.
  - We have usually found a 'humped' association between wellbeing and time spent online or using a 'phone, with students reporting moderate use having the highest wellbeing scores.

### CHAPTER 4 - Family & Home

- Headlines*
- About 40% of the older pupils walked at least part of the way to school on the day of the survey.
  - About 2/3 of the sample live with mother and father; less as they get older.
  - Nearly 3/4 of the sample identify as White (British or other).
- Trends*
- A rise in time spent playing computer games is shown clearly in our figures for males of all ages, although levels may be approaching a ceiling.
- Links*
- Being a young carer is associated with several unwelcome outcomes – more reports of being bullied, of smoking, of money worries and of accidents.
  - Similarly, having free school meals is also associated with being bullied.

## CHAPTER 5 - Legal & Illegal Drugs

- Headlines*
- Over 10% of the 14-15-year-olds had drunk alcohol in the week before the survey. Drinking was done most often at home.
  - About 2-3% of 14-15-year-olds smoke weekly or more often.
  - Around 20% of pupils live in homes where someone smokes, but a bit less than 10% report someone smoking indoors.
  - Less than 15% of 14-15yo have tried tobacco cigarettes, but about 1/3 report trying e-cigarettes.
  - Less than 10% of pupils aged 14-15 years had ever tried drugs – nearly always cannabis, if nothing else.
- Trends*
- Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol are in long-term decline in our figures; cannabis experimentation has been fairly stable for the last decade.
  - Experimenting with vaping has been increasing; this year's figures may represent a break in that trend.
  - Figures for reported experience with cannabis are notable for an absence of much effect of legislation during changes 2004-2009.
- Links*
- There is an association between finding drugs education lessons more useful and lower substance use (see Chapter 7).
  - Alcohol use always used to be associated with higher self-esteem among older pupils, but this pattern has reversed in recent years.

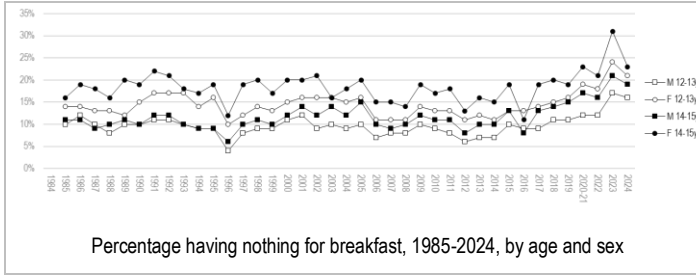
## CHAPTER 6 - Exercise & Sport

- Headlines*
- Around 90% of all groups say they did some sort of exercise last week but less than 15% said they exercised every day, and even fewer claimed to exercise hard enough to get hot. (Recommendations are for daily exercise of at least an hour in total, including some vigorous exercise and strength-building activities.)
  - Weekly sports and activities included *going for walks* (over 40% of secondary females) *soccer* (about half of secondary males) and *dancing* (over 20% of secondary females).
  - Among secondary pupils, the most commonly reported barriers to taking exercise were *time, cost, availability* and, especially in females, *shyness* (25% of girls).
- Trends*
- Enjoyment of physical activities is lowest among 14-15-year-old females and is broadly declining.
  - Perceived fitness is in broad decline among both secondary year groups and both sexes.

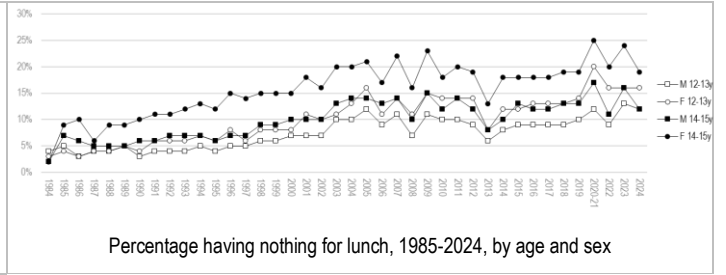
## CHAPTER 7 - Social & Personal

- Headlines*
- Over half of 10-11-year-olds agree that *the school cares whether I am happy or not* but less than a third of 14-15-year-olds say the same.
  - The majority of 12-15-year-olds enjoy *at least half* of their lessons.
  - Worries about *school* and *the way you look* are higher in secondary age groups, particularly among 14-15-year-old females (over 40% of whom are worried at least 'quite a lot' about each issue).
  - The most commonly reported response to having a problem or feeling stressed is to *talk to someone about it*. Some pupils distract themselves with *music* or comfort themselves with *eating more*; over 15% of 14-15yo females say they sometimes *cut or hurt myself* (twice as many as males of the same age).
  - Over 2/3 of secondary males and over half of females judge that they can *usually or always say no* if someone wants them to do something that they don't want to do.
  - About 40% of 14-15-year-olds know *where to get condoms free of charge* (much lower than 2019)
- Trends*
- We see a continued decline in the proportion of 14-15-year-old females who score in the top bracket of self-esteem scores, with more scoring in the lower brackets.
  - Scores for our new resilience measure also seem to be declining over the last 10 years.
  - Worry about *school, exams and tests* seems to be increasing among 14-15 year-olds.
- Links*
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual young people are more likely than their peers to report being bullied and also to have tried smoking or drugs.

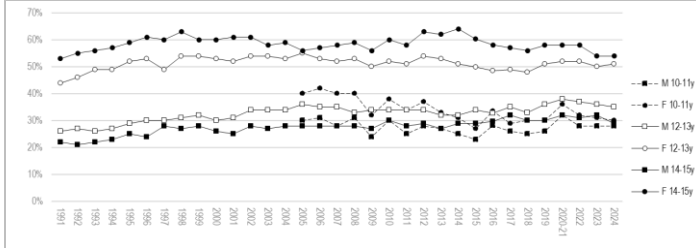
**Selected trends**



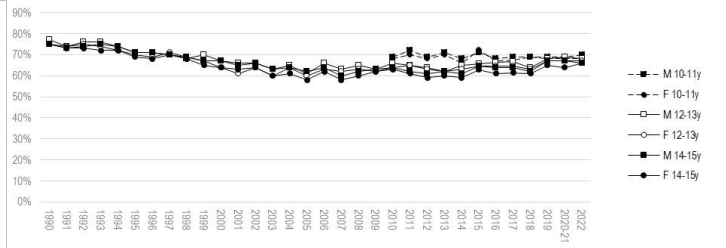
Percentage having nothing for breakfast, 1985-2024, by age and sex



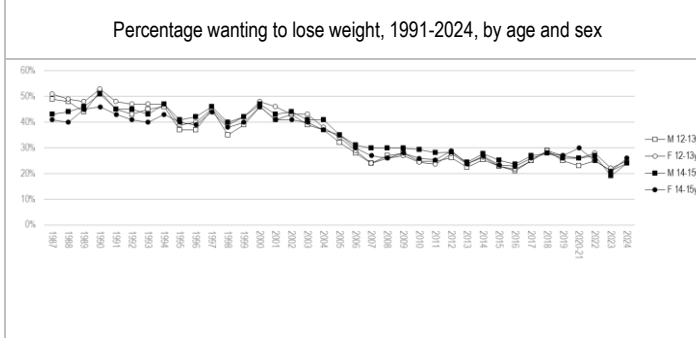
Percentage having nothing for lunch, 1985-2024, by age and sex



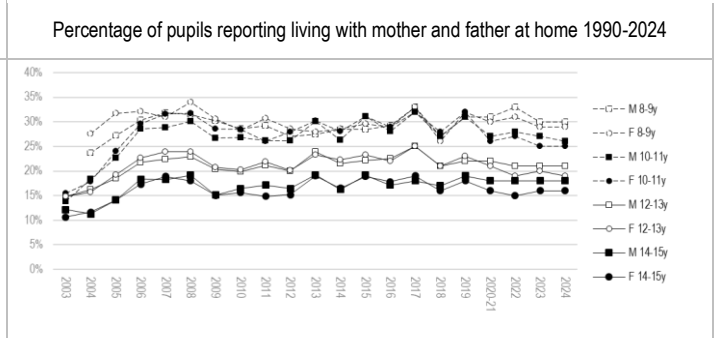
Percentage wanting to lose weight, 1991-2024, by age and sex



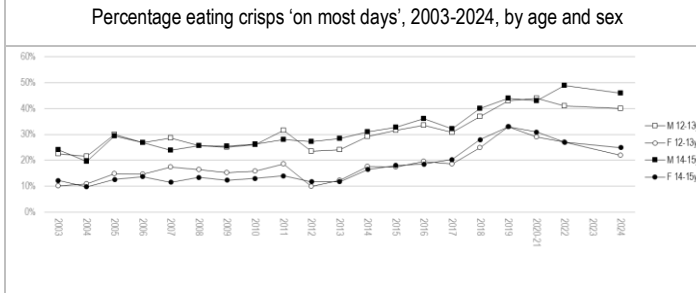
Percentage of pupils reporting living with mother and father at home 1990-2024



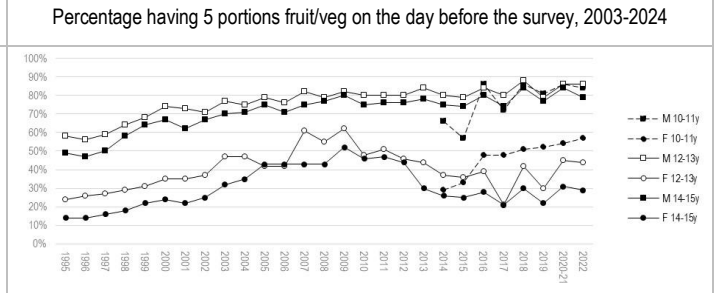
Percentage eating crisps 'on most days', 2003-2024, by age and sex



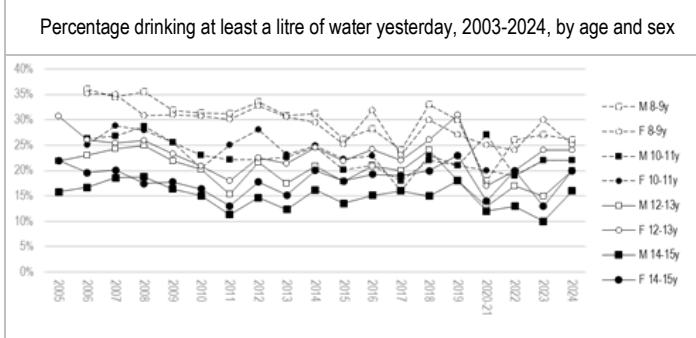
Percentage having 5 portions fruit/veg on the day before the survey, 2003-2024



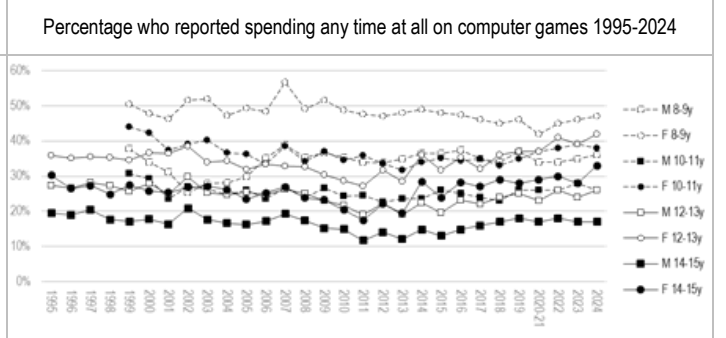
Percentage drinking at least a litre of water yesterday, 2003-2024, by age and sex



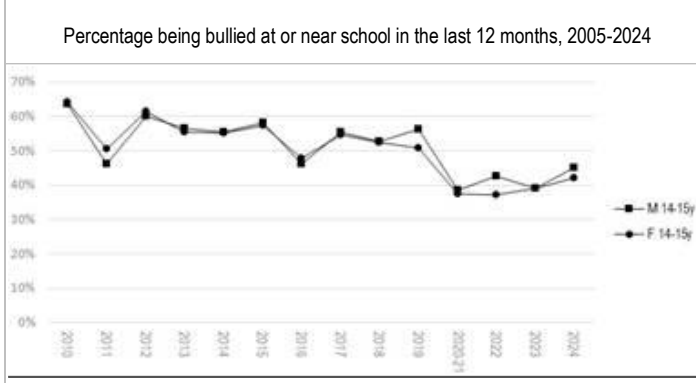
Percentage who reported spending any time at all on computer games 1995-2024



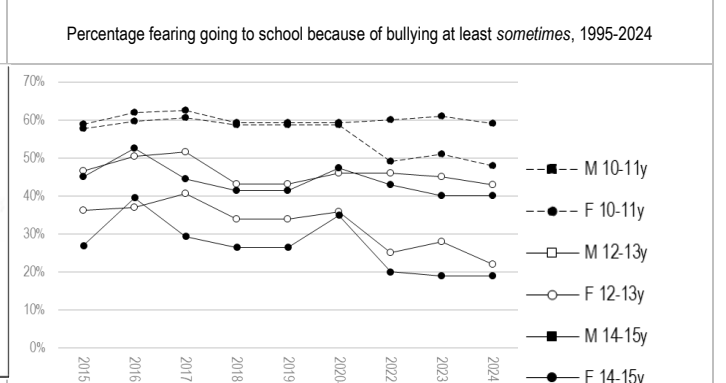
Percentage being bullied at or near school in the last 12 months, 2005-2024



Percentage fearing going to school because of bullying at least sometimes, 1995-2024

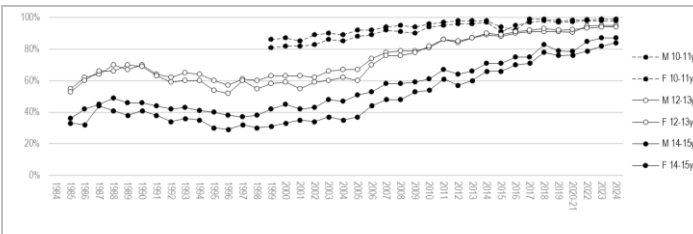


Percentage who know where they can get condoms free of charge 2010-2024

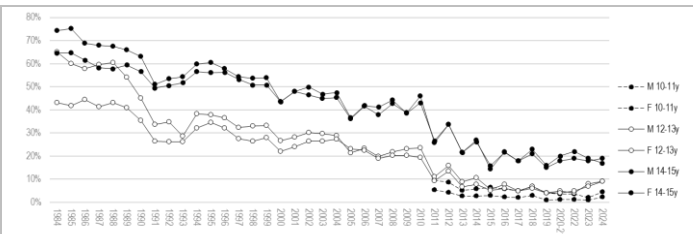


Percentage scoring in highest bracket of resilience scores 2015-2024

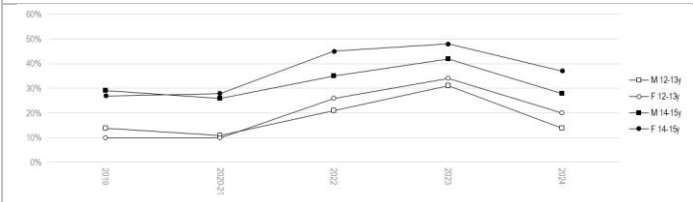




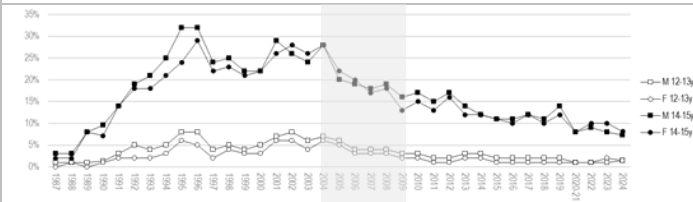
Percentage of pupils who have never smoked at all, 1985-2024



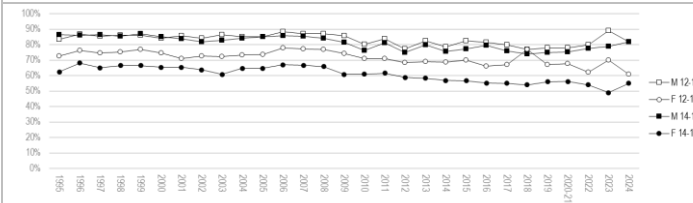
Percentage of pupils who drank last week, 1985-2024



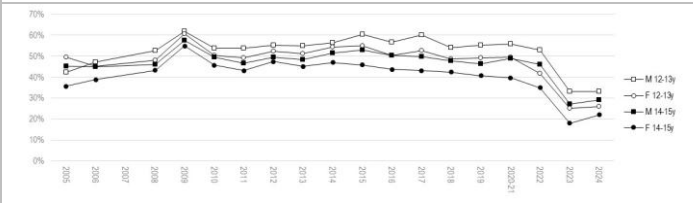
Percentage of secondary pupils who report they ever tried vaping, 2019-2024



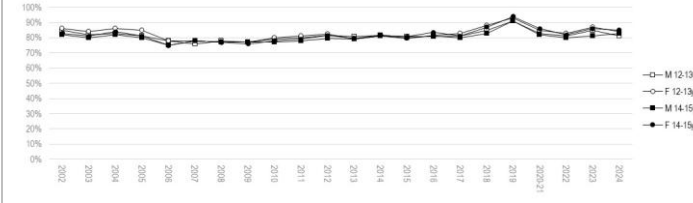
Percentage of pupils ever trying cannabis, 1987-2024, by age and sex (shaded = period when Cannabis was moved from Class B to Class C)



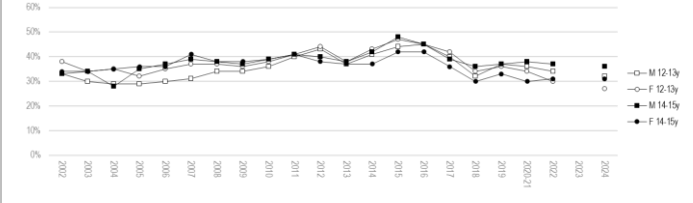
Percentage of secondary pupils who enjoy physical activities 'quite a lot' or 'a lot', 1995-2024



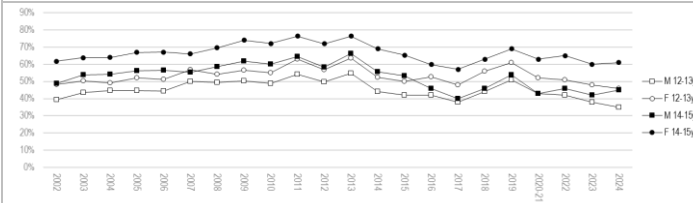
Percentage of secondary pupils who agree *The school cares whether I am happy or not*, 2005-2024



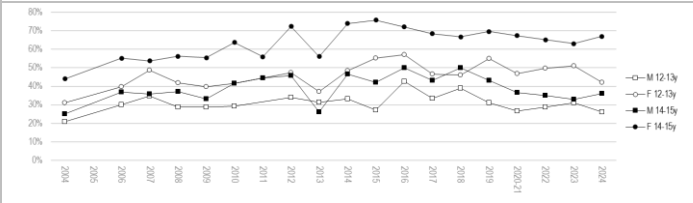
Percentage visiting dentist last 6m 1986-2018/last year 2019-2024 by age and sex



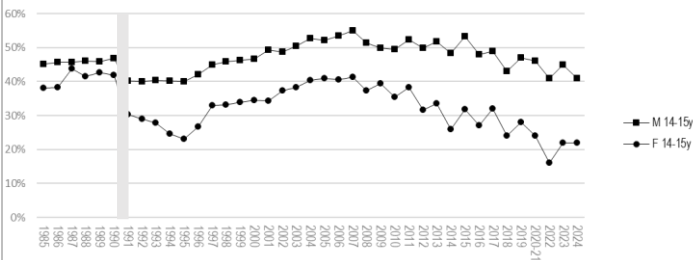
Percentage enjoying 'all' or 'most' of their school lessons, 2002-2024



Percentage intending to continue full-time education, 2002-2024, by age and sex



Percentage of 14-15yo pupils worrying at least 'quite a lot' about exams and tests, 2004-2024



Percentage of young people 14-15y scoring in highest bracket of self-esteem scores, 1985-2024, SHEU aggregate figures, by age and sex (1991 change of design)

Vaping?  
CAREHAPY?

- KEY
- M 10-11y
  - F 10-11y
  - M 12-13y
  - F 12-13y
  - M 14-15y
  - F 14-15y