

Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey Bulletin

October 2003 – November 2003

June 2004

Contents

Behaviour and attitudes of post-primary school pupils towards:

- School
- General Health
- Nutrition
- Sport
- Leisure Activities
- Smoking
- Alcohol
- Drugs & Solvents
- Personal Safety
- Policing
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Sexual Experience & Knowledge
- Relationships
- The Environment
- Travelling to school
- Road Safety

A survey of the behaviour and attitudes of young people on areas and issues affecting their lives

This bulletin presents key findings from the second round of the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey, carried out in October and November 2003.

Central Survey Unit was commissioned by a consortium of government departments and public bodies to design and conduct a survey, covering a range of topics relevant to the lives of young people today. (See *Contents* section)

From a representative sample of post-primary schools in Northern Ireland, 74

schools agreed to participate in the survey. One class from each year group (Form 1/Year 8 – Form 5/Year 12) was randomly selected. A total of 7223 pupils aged 11 - 16 years took part in the survey.

In addition to this bulletin, tables of top-line results and a technical report are available. Details on how to access these are provided at the end of this bulletin.

A series of bulletins will be produced over the coming months to examine specific topic areas in more detail.

School

Over three quarters (77%) of pupils like school at present. The majority are in agreement that it is a place where the things they learn are important to them (93%), they have learned things that will be useful to them (94%) and which will help them in their adult lives (91%).

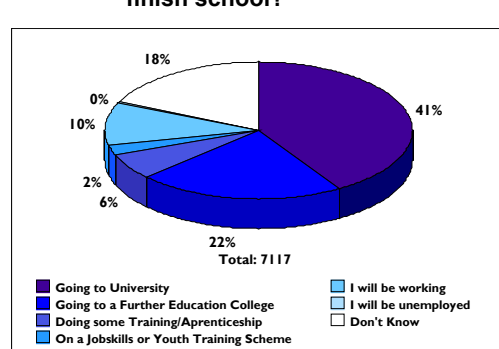
Ninety one percent attach importance to achieving good grades in all their subjects and 82% feel a certain amount of pressure due to the school work they have to do. Over a third (34%) feel that their parents expect too much of them at school.

Seventy six percent find school boring at least some days, 22% have skipped classes or school this term and 8% have been expelled or suspended from school.

General Health

The majority (88%) of pupils consider themselves to be healthy.

Sixteen percent have a long-standing illness or disability that has troubled them over a period of time, or is likely to affect them in the future. Of these, 68% feel that



All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

their illness or disability affects their activities in some way.

In the last 12 months, almost a quarter of pupils (24%) have had allergies/rashes and the same proportion have had a chest infection.

Nutrition

Just over half (51%) of all pupils eat fruit, and 37% eat vegetables and salads, at least once a day. Thirty six percent of pupils eat 5 or more portions of fresh fruit or vegetables most days or every day. Almost one third (31%) eat meat products every day and 39% eat fish less than once a week or never.

When asked what they usually do for lunch, just over half (52%) of pupils eat a school dinner and 30% take a packed lunch. For those who do not usually eat a school dinner or snack, 35% cited the

queue as a reason why they do not, followed by 32% who don't like school dinners or snacks.

Ninety one percent of pupils are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and 94% have been taught about it, mainly in Home Economics.

Fifteen percent of girls, compared to 7% of boys, are on a diet to lose weight, while 43% of girls, compared to a quarter of boys, think that they are too fat.

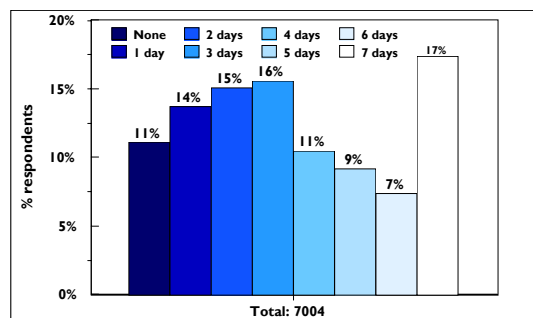
Sport

Four fifths of pupils generally enjoy taking part in physical activity or sports. During the week prior to the survey, three quarters had taken part in sport or exercise on at least 2 days, while 11% had not taken part on any day.

The majority (83%) of pupils strongly agree or agree that there are lots of opportunities for them to take part in sport, if they want to.

Almost three fifths (59%) of pupils think that school should be made to provide a minimum number of hours of physical activity per week and 67% agree that 2 hours is about right.

Figure 2: On how many days during the last week have you taken part in sport or exercise?



All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

Leisure Activities

Twenty nine percent of pupils go to a Public Library at least once a month, mainly to borrow books (65%) and to use books to look up information (45%). Over a third (37%) never go to a Public Library.

In the 12 months prior to the survey, a third of pupils have gone to a sports event as a spectator at

school, and 55% outside school, at least once every 2 or 3 months, while a fifth have attended an Arts performance or an event as a visitor or member of an audience.

At home, 87% of pupils have access to a personal computer and 72% have access to the Internet.

Smoking

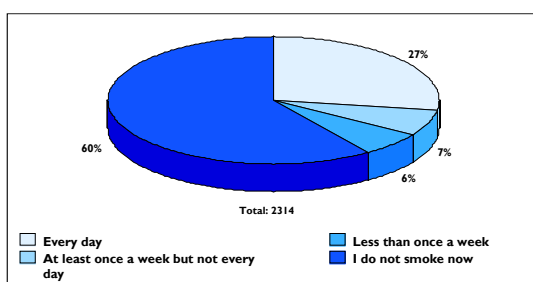
A third of pupils (30% of boys and 36% of girls) have smoked tobacco, most of these smoking for the first time before 13 years of age. On this first occasion, 65% were given cigarettes by a friend or other person their own age and 61% were somewhere outside such as a park, street, in an entry etc.

Over a third (34%) of those who have smoked tobacco, currently smoke at least once a week, however 39% of these smoke 20 cigarettes or less in a week.

As regards the dangers of smoking, the majority of pupils believe that: it can cause lung cancer (99%) and it can harm the health of non-smokers (97%).

Over two fifths (41%) of all pupils live in households where adults smoke inside the house.

Figure 3: How often do you smoke cigarettes now?



All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

Alcohol

Fifty nine percent of pupils (59% of boys and 58% of girls) have taken an alcoholic drink. Of these, 42% presently drink alcohol at least a few times a month and almost half (46% of boys and 48% of girls) report having had an alcoholic drink in the week prior to the survey.

The most common types of alcohol drunk are alcopops/spirit based mixers with 37% of pupils who have had an alcoholic drink, claiming to have drunk at least one bottle in the week prior to the survey, followed by shots (19%).

On at least one occasion, 55% of pupils who have taken an alcoholic drink, have had so much alcohol that they have been drunk and 43% have been in trouble because of drinking alcohol, mainly with parents (30%).

Over three quarters (78%) of pupils say they know a lot or quite a bit about the effects/risks of drinking alcohol. Three fifths of pupils who have received education on the use of alcohol and/or drugs state that it has made them less inclined to drink alcohol.

Drugs & Solvents

On at least one occasion, 18% of pupils have been offered solvents and 27% drugs. Just over two thirds (68%) of pupils have never been offered drugs or solvents.

Over a fifth (22%) of all pupils have used illegal drugs or solvents. Sixteen percent have used or tried cannabis, 3% have used or tried ecstasy and 10% have inhaled solvents. In the year prior to the survey, 17% of pupils have used or tried at least one drug or solvent and 11% have done so in the last month. Thirteen percent of pupils have used cannabis in the last year, compared to 6% who have used solvents.

Of those pupils who have used or tried drugs, 31% have been in trouble as a result of this, on at least

one occasion, mainly with parents (17%) or friends (14%). Just over a quarter (26%) of pupils who have used or tried solvents, have been in trouble because of this on at least one occasion.

Sixty five percent of all pupils say they know a lot or quite a bit about the effects/risks of taking solvents and 74% say they know the same amount about drugs. The majority (85%) of those who have received education on the use of alcohol and/or drugs state that it has made them less inclined to take drugs.

Pupils generally have a good awareness of which drugs are illegal with 82% thinking that cannabis is illegal.

Personal Safety

In the 12 months prior to the survey, some pupils have been bullied (17%) or have had their belongings damaged or deliberately broken (16%). More than a tenth (13%) have been called names or harassed because of their religion, race or skin colour and 27% for some other reason.

Pupils tend to worry most about having things they are carrying or wearing stolen (52%) and being sexually or physically abused (47%).

The majority of pupils (91%) feel safe in the area they live in. More than two fifths (43%) of those who do not feel safe are afraid of burglary/having their home broken into.

Nearly a third (31%) of pupils are worried about their safety when going into their nearest town centre at night. This is mostly due to a fear of gangs of people looking for trouble (70%) and of people being rowdy or drunk in public places (66%).

Policing

More than a third (38%) of pupils have spoken to, or been spoken to by, a police officer in Northern Ireland in the 12 months prior to the survey, mainly through attending a talk in school relating to drugs or road safety etc.

Just over half (51%) think the police in Northern

Ireland treat young people very or quite fairly and 46% are very or quite satisfied with the way the police do their job.

Almost one in ten (9%) of all pupils say they would be interested in joining the police in Northern Ireland when they finish their education.

Anti-Social Behaviour

In the 12 months prior to the survey, nearly one fifth (19%) of all pupils have been so noisy or rude near their home that the neighbours have complained, 15% have written or sprayed graffiti and 14% have tried to avoid paying the correct fare on the bus or train.

A small proportion of pupils say they have attacked, threatened or been rude to someone in the past 12

months because of their religion (9%) or their race or skin colour (3%). Just over one in five have done so for some other reason (21%).

Almost one in ten (9%) pupils say they have carried a knife or other weapon for their own protection during the past year. Only 3% claim to have stolen something that someone was carrying or wearing, whereas 11% have stolen something from a shop.

Sexual Experience & Knowledge

Three quarters of pupils have had a girlfriend or boyfriend. Eleven percent have had sexual intercourse, with the most common age for these pupils being 14 years the first time. On this first occasion, 79% used some form of contraception, the most commonly used being a condom.

Fifty six percent of all pupils would find it easy to get contraceptives and most would get them from shops or chemists and bars, public toilets etc.

Table 1: How much sexual experience have you had?

None	Small amount	Some, but no sexual intercourse	Experienced including sexual intercourse	n
28%	38%	24%	11%	5971

All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

Relationships

In general, 47% of pupils feel very happy about their life at present and almost half (48%) never feel lonely. Four fifths of pupils have three or more close friends and 84% have no difficulty making new friends.

Over a half (53%) think their parents are at least as easy going as their friends' parents when it comes to allowing them to go out at night etc. A quarter of pupils find it easy to talk to one or both of their parents about sexual matters.

The Environment

An important environmental issue for 74% of pupils is the loss of plants, animals and habitats, followed by litter (70%). Sixty three percent think that through their own actions, they can make a difference to

litter. Twenty three percent of pupils always dispose of their rubbish carefully, yet 44% never sort glass, newspapers etc for recycling. Sixty nine percent learn most about environmental issues at school.

Travelling to School

Approximately half of pupils travel to (47%), and from (51%), school by bus or train. Of these, 26% get left to, and 14% get picked up from, the bus or train by car. Over a quarter (28%) travel less than

one mile to school and of these, 45% do not walk or cycle. The reasons given include, not having enough time in the morning, being too lazy/can't be bothered, or having too much to carry.

Road Safety

On at least some occasions, 41% of pupils use a mobile phone to text or make a phone call while crossing the road, and 32% run across the road without checking for traffic. Thirty eight percent of

pupils always use pedestrian crossings if available. Almost half (48%) never wear bright coloured clothes while cycling or walking at night, and 57% never wear a cycle helmet.

For additional copies of this bulletin or the reports, please contact:

Central Survey Unit
McAuley House
2-14 Castle Street
Belfast, BT1 1SY

Tel: (028) 9034 8219 / 9034 8250
Fax: (028) 9034 8205
Email: liz.morrison@dfpni.gov.uk
judith.bell@dfpni.gov.uk

Visit the CSU website
www.csu.nisra.gov.uk